

ABSTRACT

111

**A HISTORY OF WESTERN EDUCATION
AMONG THE KIKUYU, 1898 - 1952**

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

viii

ABBREVIATIONS

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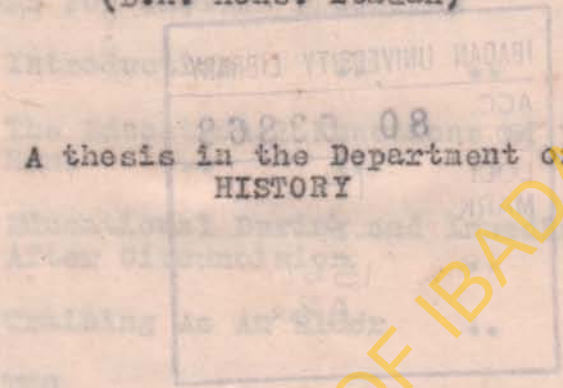
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A thesis in the Department of
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requirements for the degree of
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The Social Administration and
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ABSTRACT

The response of most Kikuyu to Western education was initially negative. This was due in part to the nature of their indigenous system of education which was intimately related to their political, social and economic set-up, and partly due to their reaction against the initial impact of colonialism on their society. This attitude was abandoned largely as a result of the First World War when colonial demands became intensified and many people were forced to leave their homes to work as carriers. Their experience of meeting others, in camps and during journeys, from societies so much different from their own, suddenly opened up a new world of experience that the indigenous educational precepts could not fully explain or cater for. Their hope after the war that the missionaries would assist them to obtain an education which would enable them to play roles other than serving the white settlers as labourers did not materialise, neither was the government anxious to take over responsibility for African education from the mission societies. This in turn forced the Kikuyu to look for alternative means of securing a type of education which would not be preoccupied with either vocational training or proselytization. The 'independent' schools which became widespread in Kikuyu

from the 1920s; the 'Githunguri Scheme'; the willingness of the people during the Second World War to devote a substantial amount of money they got through the war to education; the dispute between the AIM and their Kikuyu adherents in Muranga district which led to the establishment of yet another independent educational body; and the rejection of the Beecher Commission on African Education, which in turn led to the closure of all the schools that would not accept its recommendations; were all part of the efforts of the Kikuyu to make their education relevant to the needs of their society.

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Dr. J. A. Atanda was my first supervisor, but Dr. G. A. Akinola had to take over when Dr. Atanda became a State Commissioner. Dr. Akinola's interest in the research however started long before he was made my supervisor. He saw me through every stage of the study with prompt attention, guidance and encouragement. For his invaluable support I am very grateful.

I am indebted to many Kenyans in the conduct of my

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Last but not the least, I acknowledge the understanding of my wife who at a time she was expecting our first child did not mind my leaving the country for Kenya. Her encouragement went a long way in enabling me to complete this work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AA</u>	African Affairs
<u>ACCS</u>	African Christian Church and Schools
<u>AIM</u>	African Inland Mission
<u>CCEA</u>	Christian Council Education Authority
<u>CMS</u>	Church Missionary Society
<u>CNC</u>	Chief Native Commissioner
<u>CP</u>	Central Province
<u>GSM</u>	Church of Scotland Mission
<u>DC</u>	District Commissioner
<u>EAS</u>	East African Standard
<u>EAUM</u>	East Africa and Uganda Mail
<u>EDAR</u>	Education Department Annual Reports
<u>FH</u>	Fort Hall District (now Muranga)
<u>HGFM</u>	Holy Ghost Fathers Mission
<u>IRM</u>	International Review of Missions
<u>JAS</u>	Journal of the African Society
<u>JNH</u>	Journal of Negro History
<u>JRAI</u>	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
<u>KBU</u>	Kiambu District
<u>KCA</u>	Kikuyu Central Association
<u>KHR</u>	Kenya Historical Review

<u>KISA</u>	Kikuyu Independent Schools Association
<u>KKEA</u>	Kikuyu Karinga Education Association
<u>Leader</u>	Leader of British East Africa
<u>LO</u>	Land Office
<u>MAA</u>	Ministry of African Affairs
<u>NADAR</u>	Native Affairs Department Annual Reports
<u>NY</u>	Nyeri District (sometimes called South Nyeri)
<u>PC</u>	Provincial Commissioner
<u>UCN/HD</u>	University College, Nairobi - History Department Archives

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The emergence of the independent schools is one of the additional factors that has been misinterpreted by abstraction from the context of the whole history of education in the area. The effect of this is that the role of the Kikuyu in the history of Western education during the colonial period has either been limited to the peripheral position by the individual writers, (positioned according to their pre-occupations), or interpreted to suit the issues being examined in each work.

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PREFACE

There is no doubt that the issue of educational development in Kikuyu during the colonial period has received the attention of many writers. It is, however, also true that except for the general historical survey of education in Kenya by J. Anderson, none of these writers has made such a study central to their investigation. Most of the writers referred to have written on missionary activities in parts of Kenya which also included Kikuyu, or on political developments in the area. Even M. Kovar who examined the independent schools, sought to relate activities in these schools to political developments in the area. The effect of this is that the role of the Kikuyu in the history of Western education during the colonial period has either been limited to the period under review by the individual writers, (periods chosen according to other pre-occupations), or interpreted to suit the issues being examined in each work.

The emergence of the independent schools is one of the educational issues that has been misinterpreted by abstraction from the context of the whole history of educational development in Kikuyu. Virtually all the writers who have paid attention to this subject traced the origin of these schools to the female circumcision dispute which reached a climax in 1929. Even those that state that there was more to the demand for independent schools than

the dispute over female circumcision nevertheless fail to discuss adequately the other issues involved. In particular, the purely educational aspect of the matter has been persistently underplayed.

The closure of most of the independent schools by 1953 has also been explained as due mainly to the fact that they had been used to promote 'mau mau' activities. Their alleged prime association with 'mau mau' is usually presumed rather than established.

While it cannot be denied that there was a link between the circumcision dispute or the 'mau mau' uprising and the independent schools, the view expressed in this work is that the circumstances that led to the opening and closure of these schools could best be understood by studying the history of Western education in Kikuyu, and the rhythmic movement of Kikuyu involvement in it, from the time the first missionaries arrived in the area to start the first school in 1898, up to 1952, when the independent schools were forced to close down. This is because Western education evolved through a process of dialectic, involving the educational idea and the biased packages of its content offered by mission and government on the one hand, and the Kikuyu struggling for mastery over their destiny on the other.

These elements met in a series of ever changing situations, with each crisis-event leading to another. To emphasise one event at the expense of any other, could damage an understanding of the whole process. The independent schools could not have come into being if the Kikuyu demand for Government schools either soon after the First World War or in 1929 during the circumcision dispute had been met. On the other hand, the Kikuyu would not have asked for government schools if, when they suddenly realised the advantages to be derived from Western education during the First World War, the missions demonstrated that they were sufficiently equipped to satisfy the educational aspirations of the people.

The same thing applies to the closure of most of the independent schools in 1953. In answering the question 'why the closure?', one must go back to the circumstances surrounding the opening of the schools and the numerous attempts that had been made by the government, before the 'mau mau' uprising broke out, to bring these schools under its control. The encouragement which the Kikuyu derived from the success of the independent schools to put up more schools on their own, especially during and after the Second World War, as well as the Beecher Plan which ignored this trend in Kikuyu by recommending a reduction of schools in

Kikuyu and elsewhere, must all form the background against which the closure of the schools should be examined. Such an approach, which has been adopted in this work, does not only unfold the unity in the history of Western education by showing the link between one event and the next; in the process, it also reveals the contribution of the Kikuyu to educational development. This in turn makes the history of Western education in the area not just the history of missionary activities or those of the administration, but also that of the Kikuyu, whose involvement in that education altered the course of developments in the area.

Materials for the writing of this work were collected in Kenya between November 1974 and November 1975. Materials from government sources were collected from the Kenya National Archives and were not only abundant but useful. Documents on educational activities in Nyeri district were however inadequate and this shortcoming has created some gaps in the treatment of that district in this work.

Except for the few materials brought together under the Christian Council of Kenya (CCK) collections in the National Archives, and occasional reference to missionary activities in the District and Provincial Report, nothing more was available on the educational work of the mission

has been shown in this work.

societies. Both the archives of the Presbyterian Churches of East Africa (PCEA) and the African Inland Churches (AIC) were under reorganisation throughout my stay in Kenya, and due to financial constraints, it was not possible for me to travel to Europe. The role of the missionaries in educational development has therefore not received the full treatment it deserves.

Efforts were also made to interview those who benefitted from both the mission and independent schools during the period under review in this work. While it was possible to interview many of those who were the first to attend mission schools, it proved almost impossible to interview those who came later to these schools and who occupy the key positions in the country today. Despite repeated attempts, it was also not possible to interview those who attended either the independent schools or Githunguri College. One would have liked to compare the type of jobs which people in each category took up after their education and the impact each set made on the society. This, in turn, would have enabled us to assess more precisely to what extent the Kikuyu were able to realise the ultimate objectives which drew them into so hard a struggle along the path of educational development as has been shown in this work.

In spite of these shortcomings, it is hoped that it has been shown that the Kikuyu did not leave the missionaries and the colonial administration alone to design whatever educational programme they liked for them. Although they did not always realise their objectives, they were however able to demonstrate that their educational aspirations could not be taken for granted by either the missionaries or the government.

Education, according to A. B. Fair, is 'the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives'. This definition, which did not limit education to the more elaborate process of schooling, is also echoed by John Stuart Mill when he said:

1. A. B. Fair, *History of Education in Nigeria*.
(London, 1964), p. 10.

CHAPTER I

KIKUYU INDIGENOUS EDUCATION: ITS NATURE, OBJECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR WESTERN EDUCATION

Introduction

To put the history of Western education among the Kikuyu into proper perspective, it is necessary first to discuss the nature and objectives of their indigenous system of education, as well as the implications of that education for Western education.

Education, according to A. B. Fafunwa, is 'the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives'.¹ This definition, which did not limit education to the more deliberate process of schooling, is also echoed by John Stuart Mill when he said:

1 A. Babs Fafunwa, History of Education in Nigeria.
(London, 1974, p.16.

2 Education, The Kikuyu, Their Systems, Traditions and Folklore (Nyeri, 1959), p. 73.

education is the culture which each generation purposely gives to those who are to be its successors in order to qualify them for at least keeping up and, if possible, for raising, the level of improvement which has been attained.²

The special field of Comparative Education has moreover shown that every society, whether simple or complex, has its own system of education, although its goal and method of approach may differ from place to place. It is therefore not correct for Rev. Father C. Cagnolo, a missionary in Kikuyu during the colonial period, to say that

Although every Kikuyu is anxious to have children, he takes very little trouble to educate such children.³

He probably had in mind the Western-oriented system of education when he made this assertion.

As will shortly be discussed in this chapter, the purpose of education in Kikuyu, as in other parts of Africa, was functional. Whether vocational or character training, education was designed to integrate the individual with

2 John S. Mill, Inaugural Address as Rector of St. Andrew's University, 1867 in N. A. Nwagwu (ed.) UPE: Issues, Prospects and Problems, (Benin, 1976). p.8

3 C. Cagnolo, The Akikuyu, Their Customs, Traditions and Folklores, (Nyeri, 1933), p. 73.

the various aspects of the life of the society. Since this education was intimately related to the needs of the society, it was easy for the people to judge whether or not the education was serving the purpose for which it was intended. This attitude was also to be applied to Western education and the struggle which characterised the history of that education in Kikuyu, and which will be examined in subsequent chapters of this work, arose largely out of the attempt by the people to make that education meet their needs.

Kikuyu indigenous education can be divided into three broad categories although each was an aspect of a continuing process which went on throughout life. Education started with the homestead or muoi where the child was born and grew up. At about eighteen, he was allowed to take part in the circumcision rite and become an adult member of the community. He could, however, not exercise the duties and privileges that accompanied this status unless he had first undergone the necessary training. Later in life, he could become an elder or muthuri. It was the elders who were responsible for the smooth running of the society and nobody could become an elder unless he had also been trained to discharge the duties connected with this status. Thus in

addition to ascribing roles, efforts were made to train the individual in his or her duties. Education was therefore not a new thing to the Kikuyu when the missionaries attempted to introduce Western education. The negative attitude of the Kikuyu to Western education when it was first introduced was, as we shall see in the next chapter, partly due to the fact that the people felt that they had their own system of education which met their needs and aspirations and saw no reason why they should be asked to abandon this for another.

The Educational Functions of the Home:

Although various members of the extended family had a hand in the education of their young ones, it was the parents who were held responsible for any sign of improper education in their children. It was therefore their duty to ensure that their children were educated. One reason why their education could not be delayed unnecessarily was the need to integrate these children into the economic system of the family. The home was the basic economic unit of the community and every member of the family assisted in the quest for economic self-sufficiency.⁴

4 B.M. Gecaga, Home Life in Kikuyu-land or Kariuki and Nuthoni, (Nairobi, 1949), p.3. See also J. Fisher, The Anatomy of Kikuyu Domesticity and Husbandry, (London, 1964), p.6.

The husband, as head of the home, must ensure that each of his wives had a piece of land where she should plant her crops. It was also the man who cleared the bush and dug the land in readiness for his wives to plant their crops. Thereafter, each of the wives took care of her separate store. In addition to providing each of his wives with a piece of land - a situation which made land highly valued among the Kikuyu and which was partly responsible for their violent reaction against both the white settlers and the missionaries who resorted to taking away their land⁵ - it was also the responsibility of the man to ensure that the family had abundant livestock as they were the determinant of wealth among the Kikuyu. They were also used to perform sacrifices to the ancestors, and in the form of dowry, to marry more wives.⁶

Through the system of 'relay' herding known as

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- 5 Chapter II, pp. 44-48 below. See also M. L. Kilson, 'Land the Kikuyu; A study of the Relationships Between Land and Kikuyu Political Movements' Journal of Negro History, (hereafter JNH) Vol. XL, (April 1955), pp. 103-53 and M.P.K. Sorrenson, Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country, (Nairobi, 1967), pp. 3 - 72.
- 6 L. S. B. Leakey, 'Some Problems Arising From the Part Played By Goats and Sheep in the Social Life of the Kikuyu', Journal of the African Society, (hereafter JAS), No. 33, (1934), pp. 70 - 79.

gutuithia ruru, stock belonging to homesteads within a locality were put under the care of a group of boys for a specified period. They then handed over to another set of boys who relieved them for the same number of days. While everybody who had stock could benefit from this system, it was only on the condition that such people had children who knew how to herd and who could take their turn to herd.⁷ Furthermore, through the system of mutual aid called ngwatio a woman could expect and did obtain assistance from the other women in the community to carry out her farming activities. It was however also expected of her to have children whom she had trained to assist her on the farm.⁸ It was in an effort to bring these children up to recognise their duties in the home that their education started quite early. In addition to this immediate objective, the training was also expected to prepare them for adulthood. A man who could not boast of a number of sheep or goats was a disgrace to himself and would find it difficult to occupy any position of importance in the society. Similarly a woman

7 Paul Mathenge, interview, Cathathi (Nyeri) 11/9/75. See also E. N. Wanjoike, An African Pastor: The Life and work of the Rev. Wanjoike Kanawe, 1888-1970, (Nairobi, 1974), p. 12.

8 J. Fisher, op. cit., p. 20.

who could not farm would not be able to attract the attention of her husband, if at all she got someone to marry her. By training the young ones in these duties at such an early stage, parents were trying to introduce them to their future roles as husbands and wives.⁹

From birth until a male child was about four years old, he was known as kana and he lived with his mother in her nyumba or hut. The mother could take him to the farm or send him on errands, but his education was not yet taken seriously. It was not until he passed to the next stage called kihii that serious efforts were made to start his training. As kana, he was believed to be still too young to learn and that he needed his mother's affection. When he became kihii, however, he was taken away from his mother to live with either his brothers or his father, and a father would frown at any of his male children who was a kihii but who still preferred to remain with his mother. His mother would henceforth have no hand in the training of the boy, but was expected to concentrate attention on the training of her daughters who continued to live

9 B.N. Gecaga, op. cit., p. 22.

with her in her hut.¹⁰ It was therefore not take kindly when some of the mission societies expected their female staff to teach the boys and girls together in the same classroom. Not only were Kikuyu boys and girls taught different things because they were expected to perform different roles in the community; it was the men who were responsible for the training of the boys while the women concerned themselves with the education of the girls. Some of the Kikuyu boys who considered it humiliating to be taught by these female missionaries did not stay long in school before they ran back to their homes.¹¹

Herding was the first vocational training which a boy received and this was the responsibility of his senior brothers. At the end of the day, however, a father would call his boy to his hut to find out what he had been taught during the day. This was essential because there were many games which engaged the attention of the senior boys while they were out herding and which could prevent them from paying any serious attention to the training of their

10 Philip Ndubiu, interviewed at Tetu on 24/7/75.

11 H.E. Scott (Mrs), A Saint in Kenya: The Life of Marion Scott Stevenson, (London 1932), p. 31. This story was also confirmed by many of my informants who attended mission schools.

junior brothers. It was therefore not unusual from time to time for a father to pay unscheduled visits to the grazing field to make sure that the senior boys did not spend all their time playing games.¹²

As livestock belonging to different families were herded together on a common grazing field, the senior boys would usually take their turn to play games while those who were not so engaged at a particular time were asked to take charge of the training of the junior boys. The immediate objective of the training was that a boy should be able to take part in the 'relay' herding or gutuihia ruru. This involved being able to direct the stock to the field from the different homesteads, being able to differentiate the stock belonging to the various homesteads without counting them, and being able to protect them from wild animals and stock thieves. Stock from different homes were given different names which denoted colour, how they were obtained, as well as other distinctive characteristics. As it was taboo to count possessions among the Kikuyu, a person who was learning to herd would have to spend hours trying to

¹² Francis Gigbohi, interviewed at Tetu on 11/7/75. See also Paul Kahuho, interviewed at Tumutunu on 28/7/75.

Identify the different characteristics of the stock from his homestead, as well as those from the other homesteads that were involved in gututhia ruru. From time to time, those who were in charge of his training would hide some of the stock when he was sent on an errand to test his power of observation. When he returned from the errand, he would be asked to examine the herd carefully and report his findings. If he could point out those that were missing, he could also be asked when he last saw them and whether or not he reported this to his brothers. Initially he might fail to identify all the missing ones and when this was the case, he was told the missing ones and asked to pay more attention to them in future.¹³ It was not until he could prove that he could identify all the stock, could prevent them from being killed or stolen and would take proper care of them, that he was allowed to take part in the 'relay' herding system.

This introduction of Western education and the attempt by the missionaries to encourage young Kikuyu to abandon

13 J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, (London, 1938), pp. 102 - 3.

measure on the way she had been prepared by her mother to play this role. The training of a girl could therefore not be taken lightly by her mother. Planting, weeding and

herding and come to their schools was to pose a problem to parents. Since only those who had children who were able to take part in gututhia ruru could benefit from that system, those who could not prevent their children from following the missionaries would have to devise their own means of looking after their herds. The initial opposition of most Kikuyu to Western education, as we shall see in the next chapter, was due in part to this dilemma which could not easily be resolved.

While a boy was being taught to herd, a girl remained with her mother to learn how to farm and how to perform other household duties. In a polygamous society such as that of the Kikuyu, a woman had to compete with the other wives to attract the attention of her husband. Each wife had her own hut where she lived with her daughters. She also had her separate farm, and a store where she kept her products. There was no room for laziness as the other wives also had to look after their own huts and work on their farms. Every wife was therefore in constant competition with the other wives and her success depended in no small measure on the way she had been prepared by her mother to play this role. The training of a girl could therefore not be taken lightly by her mother. Planting, weeding and

harvesting were areas of farming that were reserved for women, although there was nothing to prevent a man from assisting in any of these, especially harvesting.¹⁴

One thing that was emphasised to a girl as she started her training as a farmer was the climatic and soil factors which influenced farming activities. She was told when different crops were planted. Crops such as peas (njogo) and beans (njahe) were very slow growing and required plenty of water. Such crops must therefore be planted at the beginning of the long rains - mbura ya njahe - which commenced in March. On the other hand, millet (nwere) required more sun-shine and less rain and was best planted during the short rains or mbura ya nwere. Sugar cane and banana required plenty of water and would do well along ridges. All this had to be explained to a girl if she was to be a successful farmer and this was usually done during discussions at home and during the planting seasons.¹⁵ In addition to knowing the different

14 C. Waciama, Daughter of Mumbi (Nairobi, 1969), p.5.

15 J. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 35 - 7.

seasons and soil types suitable for planting, a girl was also taught to differentiate between weeds and crops and how to harvest crops and store them. She learned largely by watching her mother perform these different duties, although from time to time, the mother would stop her work to explain one thing or the other to her daughter.¹⁶

When the mother considered that the girl had learnt most of what she was trying to teach her, the girl was allowed to own a plot of her own, which was enlarged as she grew older and more experienced. On such a plot of land, she was allowed to plant whatever she liked and to put into practice, what she had earlier been taught by her mother. The mother would pay frequent visits to this farm to encourage her, if she was doing well, and to correct whatever was wrong. This farm the girl continued to look after until she married. Then the land reverted to the mother, although the girl was still allowed to harvest her crops.¹⁷

When they were not working on the farm, the mother would teach her daughter how to do the other duties in

16 ibid. See also C. Waciuna, op. cit., pp. 20 - 1.

17 B. M. Gecaga, op cit. p. 23. (London, 1916)

the home. She was taught to take care of children, how to bath them and prevent them from crying too long. She was also taught to prepare food and here efforts were made not only to teach the girl to cook, but to prepare the type of food that would be enjoyed by all who tasted it. The ngatha wa mucii or favourite wife was not necessarily the first wife nor the one with the largest number of children; while such qualifications were also taken into consideration the favourite wife was often she who knew how to prepare the best food for her husband. The wives took it in turn to provide their husband with food and it was very easy to know the wife whose food was not palatable. Such a woman was considered a disgrace to herself and her mother who had brought her up. If she was also so unlucky as to be barren, she was hardly tolerated at all, and could be returned to her parents and repayment of the dowry demanded.¹⁸

The introduction of colonial rule, as we shall see in the next chapter, abolished some of the roles assigned to a man in Kikuyu society. It however could not remove

18 W. S. and K. Routledge, With a Prehistoric People: The Kikuyu of British East Africa, (London, 1910) p. 154.

the basic duty of a woman, which was that of being the wife to a man. Since the Kikuyu had their own way of preparing their girls to perform this duty, most of them did not see why these girls should waste their time by going to mission schools. For a long time, therefore, most parents who did not object to their male children attending mission schools, refused point-blank to allow their female children to attend these schools.¹⁹

In order to encourage youth to take their duties seriously and to introduce them to the world view of the Kikuyu, folktales were employed to supplement whatever admonitions parents might give to their children. The concept of an individualist approach to life, the idea that a person's affairs were his exclusive concern was quite strange to the Kikuyu before their contact with the Europeans. The individual was not only related to members of his immediate family, he was also a member of the extended family. To assist him to recognise this, each child in a family bore the name of another member of the

19 The various Annual Reports of the three Kikuyu districts continued to repeat this allegation during most of the period covered by this work. Many of my male informants also mentioned how their parents reluctantly allowed them to go to mission schools but would not agree that their sisters should also go there.

See also C. F. Schreyer, "Mata Bellina's and her Sisters" (London, 1942), p. 22.

extended family. Thus if the first born was a boy he took the name of his paternal grandfather; if a girl, that of her paternal grandmother. The second child, if a boy, took the name of his maternal grandmother and that of her maternal grandmother if a girl.²⁰ Moreover, after circumcision, a young man became a member of an age-grade. All the members of the same age-grade regarded each other as if born by the same parents and did everything in their power to defend the interests of one another.²¹ Above all, the individual also recognised that he was related to the ancestors who, although no longer present physically, could still influence his well-being. He was therefore expected to order his life in such a way that he did not incur their displeasure.²² Thus although there were roles assigned to the individual as he moved from one rung on the social 'ladder' to the next and though such roles were assumed only after exhibiting the necessary qualities considered relevant to such a position, it was also expected

20 J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 1 - 2.

21 On Kikuyu age-grade system, see A.H.J. Prins, East African Age-Class Systems, (Djakarta, 1953), pp. 40-57. See also K. R. Dundas, 'Kikuyu Rika', Man, No. 8, 1908, pp. 180 - 2.

22 T.F.C. Bewes, 'Kikuyu Religion - Old and New', African Affairs, hereafter (AA) No. 52, (July, 1953), pp. 202-10. See also C. W. Hobley, Bantu Beliefs and Magic, with particular reference to Kikuyu and Kanba, (London, 1922), p. 22.

that everybody would discharge his or her duties without endangering the well being of the other members of the community. All this found expression in the tales which were told in the evening, at the end of the day's work. This method was not confined to the Kikuyu, but the tales were designed to meet the specific needs of the people, which were not necessarily the same elsewhere.

The tales provided a source of entertainment, in a place where there were no cinemas or television sets. To ensure that no lesson was lost, the one telling the tales would, at the end of each tale, call on the young ones present, to tell the audience, what they had learnt from the tale. Moreover, the tales which usually provoked laughter among other reactions, were intended to deter the listeners from playing, in actual life, the part of the characters that were ridiculed in those tales.²³

On other occasions, members of the extended family would meet to discuss affairs of interest to all of them. On such occasions, the young members of the family were brought along and introduced to one another. They were

23 R. N. Gecau, Kikuyu Folklores: The Nature and Value, (Nairobi, 1970). See also L. J. Beecher, 'The Stories of the Kikuyu', African, Vol. XI, 1938, pp. 80-87 and C. Cagnolo, op. cit., pp. 300-30.

told to strive to keep the family united and not to do anything that could destroy the name of the family. The young ones were also allowed to listen to the discussions that were going on and efforts were made through this means to familiarise them with affairs of the family so that they would not be ignorant about them in the future.²⁴

At other times men would visit each other to exchange views on matters of common interest to the men. The visits usually took place in the man's hut or thingira when the women were busy preparing the evening meal with their daughters. That the boys were allowed to be present on such occasions while the girls were assisting their mothers unconsciously reminded the boys that they were the heads of the home. It was even the girls and their mothers who brought drinks for the men to drink during their discussions. On such an occasion the boys were present and listened to what was going on. It was in such a gathering that the young ones learned the heroic achievements of the community in the past. They were also taught to cherish these achievements and to endeavour to contribute their own quota to the well-being of the community.

24 J. Kenyatta, op. cit., p. 2.

27 Discussed in Chapter IV, pp. 172 - 3 below.

Virtually all matters affecting the community came up for discussion from time to time and on each occasion, efforts were made to admonish the youths that were present to strive to emulate the achievements of the past.²⁵ It was no wonder then that Mugo Gatheru who was always present when the male visitors were with his father in his thingira observed that there in the thingira, 'we learned how to be men when we grew up'.²⁶ This urge 'to be men' was partly responsible for the sudden disappearance from school of many among those who first went to mission schools in Kikuyu, each time there were ceremonies in the community, such as the circumcision rite, which prepared the young ones 'to be men'.²⁷

While the different aspects of Kikuyu indigenous education mentioned above were open to all boys and girls, there were others which were limited to members of particular families. Such members had been called into their professions by Ngai or the deity and without this call they could not take part in the training which prepared them for these professions. One of such professions was that of a mundo mugo or 'medicine-man'.

²⁵ Paul Kahuhu and Paul Mathenge, interview, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Mugo Gatheru, Child of Two Worlds, London, 1970, p. 18.

²⁷ Discussed in Chapter IV, pp. 172 - 3 below.

The mundo nugo was a man of many parts. He could ascertain the cause of any misfortune and prescribe remedies. He could also identify the cause of any disease and prescribe treatment which was either psychological or medicinal. He also made charms which were carried about to ward off all sorts of danger. He could do all these because he was believed to be able to communicate with the supernatural. He was therefore the one who was invited to perform sacrifices to the ancestors. No one could therefore suddenly declare himself to be a mundo nugo, unless he had first received a definite call. This usually took the form of misfortunes and when these misfortunes persisted, an experienced 'medicine-man' was invited who interpreted them to be a call from Ngai for that person to become a mundo nugo. Only after such a call could the person be apprenticed to another 'medicine man' who taught him how to put to use the powers which he was believed to have acquired as a result of this call.²⁸

The training varied from person to person as it was

28 C. W. Hobley, 'Kikuyu Medicines', Man, Vol. 6, No. 54 (1906), pp. 81 - 82. See also J.W.W. Crawford, 'Kikuyu Medicine-man', Man, Vol. 9, No. 30 (1909), pp. 53-56.

not usually the case that one person was able to perform all the various functions of a 'medicine-man' that were listed above. What usually happened was that a person would specialise in one or two areas of the profession and the training for any of these he received from those who were already qualified in his chosen fields. Whichever field he chose to specialise in would depend very largely on the speciality of the particular family. If a person came from a family whose previous 'medicine-men' were famous as soothsayers, he would choose to train in that field. He would however receive such a training from other 'medicine-men' who were not members of his family. This training largely took the form of going about with the 'medicine-man' to wherever he was invited to perform his art, and watching him, although when he was not out practising, he would set time aside to instruct the novice in the different aspects of his profession.²⁸

Education During and Immediately After Circumcision

In addition to being a member of a particular family, a Kikuyu who had been circumcised also belonged to an age-grade or marika. The initiation or irua ceremony

29 ibid., p. 55.

during which circumcision took place was held annually in the case of girls, but after the muhingo or 'rest period' in the case of boys. It was necessary to carry out the circumcision rite for girls annually because a girl must be circumcised before she started to menstruate. On the other hand a boy must wait until he was at least eighteen years old, before he could take part in the circumcision ceremony. This was because after circumcision, he was expected to join his mates to defend his people against external threats and maintain law and order within the community. The emphasis that was placed on bravery during the training that was given during and immediately after circumcision as we shall soon examine, was designed to remind the individual of his obligation to the community. It was an obligation in which personal considerations had to give way in the interest of the community.³⁰ The muhingo during which no circumcision could take place, lasted for 'four and a half years' in Muranga and Kiambu

30 L. S. B. Leakey, 'The Kikuyu Problem of Initiation of Girls, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, (hereafter JRAI) Vol. 61, 1931, p. 278. See also J. Kenyatta, op. cit., p. 116.

33 A. Barton, Paper on Circumcision, in Barton Papers, University of Nairobi Library.

34 E. J. Dunche, 'The Irua Ceremony Among the Kikuyu of Kiambu', Journal of Negro History, Vol. 26 (1941) p. 53. See also L. S. B. Leakey, 'The Kikuyu Problem of Initiation', op. cit., p. 278.

districts but nine years in Nyeri district.³¹ The longer period in Nyeri district was as a result of Maasai influence where the muhingo lasted for about the same period.³²

By the time a boy or girl was ready to be circumcised, he or she was expected to have been taught how to earn a living and how to behave especially within his or her immediate environment. In spite of this, however, a person who had not yet been circumcised was not considered to be a full member of the society. He could only function within his family circle and even here, he could not raise his voice in the presence of his circumcised brothers. No matter his age 'his name is but a child and all his doings are called the doings of childhood'.³³ He could not be called upon to take part in any public duty and when he was present where those who were circumcised were assembled, he must keep quiet and speak only when invited to do so.³⁴ Furthermore, although emphasis had earlier

31 G. Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu, (London, 1974), pp. 119-20.

32 ibid. See also T. W. Muturi, 'Maasai/Kikuyu Relations in Mathira Division of Nyeri, 1800-1900', (B.A. Dissertation, University of Nairobi), pp. 20-21.

33 A Barlow, Paper on Circumcision, in Barlow Papers, University of Nairobi Library.

34 R. J. Bunche, 'The Irua Ceremony Among the Kikuyu of Kiambu', Journal of Negro History, Vol. 26 (1914) p. 53. See also L.S.B. Leakey, 'The Kikuyu Problem of Initiation', op. cit., p. 278.

been placed on training a child to recognise the norms of the society, until he was circumcised, his activities could not incur the displeasure of the ancestors as he was only but a child.³⁵ It was circumcision which made the individual a full member of the wider community with duties and privileges commensurate with this new status.³⁶

The initiation ceremony during which circumcision took place was held between the end of harvest and the beginning of the next planting season. This coincided with the period when there was not much work to be done on the farm by either men or women and the time when many people could afford to be present at the ceremony. No one could be considered as a candidate for the initiation ceremony unless he had undergone the njiarano or guciara mwana rite. The observance of this rite did not confer any special privilege on the person but without it no one would be allowed to be circumcised. In this rite, the boy or girl who was involved was 'reborn' by his or her

35 A. Barlow, Paper on Circumcision, op. cit. See also C. W. Hobley, 'Kikuyu Customs and Beliefs - Thahu and Its Connection with Circumcision Rites', JRAI Vol. 40 (1910), p. 442.

36 G. Muriuki, op. cit., p. 117.

mother. There was no rule as to when the ceremony should take place other than that it must precede the initiation ceremony.³⁷

The irua or initiation rite consisted of three parts - nambura or the songs and dances which started off the ceremony; Kuumithio or the instructions that were given to all the candidates and Ndemengo or the actual circumcision which was the visible sign that one had undergone the various stages of the initiation rite. None of these was more important than the other, and failure to participate in one disqualified one from being considered as circumcised. As Arthur Barlow, a missionary for many years in Kikuyu, observed, 'the actual operation is but a minor though essential feature of the whole'.³⁸ It was therefore not surprising that when the missionaries later insisted that their adherents should only perform the actual operation and ignore the other aspects of the rite which they considered to be against the christian teachings, it did not receive much support from these adherents. The failure of

37 For a vivid description of this rite, see Mugo Gatheru, op. cit., pp. 21 - 23.

38 A. Barlow, Paper on Circumcision, op. cit.

the missionaries to see the rite of circumcision within the wider context of the initiation ceremony, was partly responsible for the widespread demands for 'independent' schools in Kikuyu in the 1930s as we shall see in chapter four.

The initiation ceremony began with the songs and dances which were called *nambura*. All the initiates would dance round the locality announcing their intention to take part in the initiation ceremony that would take place during that year. They also announced through the songs that they were prepared to discard their previous childish behaviour and become responsible adults. They were also prepared to work towards the progress of the community and not be selfish. These songs and dances went on for many weeks before the actual ceremony started.³⁹

The instructions or kuumithio which were given during the eight days that the actual initiation ceremony lasted, took place in special huts which were also used for most of the other aspects of the ceremony. A group of elders known as *atonyi* were responsible for giving these instructions. The initiates were told their duties and

39 Mugo Gatheru, op. cit., p. 60.

privileges as full members of the community. They must put the interest of the community first and defend the rights of all members of their age-grade. Such members were to be regarded as brothers and sisters since they would belong to the same age-grade throughout life. The elders were also to be respected as it was they who were entrusted with the well-being of the community.⁴⁰

The ndemengo or the operation, was intended to test the power of endurance of those who were being considered for adulthood. On the morning of circumcision, all the candidates were lined up and marched to a stream to bath. This was to remind the candidates that just as they did not refuse to bath in the cold water, so also would they be expected to serve the community without any personal considerations.⁴¹ After washing in the cold water, the initiates advanced towards the iteri which was the public field where the circumcision would take place. The anxious moment was almost at hand. Meanwhile, as the initiates were lined up in readiness for the operation, members of

40 Daniel Ngoci, interviewed at Thaita (Kihumbuini) 15/9/75. See also J. Kenyatta, op. cit., p. 109.

41 R. J. Bunche, op. cit., p. 60

their families were busy singing and dancing, consoling, advising and encouraging those who were about to be circumcised. In spite of the pain of circumcision, no one could be considered circumcised who had not submitted himself to this operation.⁴²

As the singing and dancing were going on, the murithia who would perform the operation, dashed out from among the people in such a way as to frighten the initiates. This too was another part of the training for whoever ran away or showed any sign of fear would not be operated upon, as such a person had shown that he was still a child. This was why although each male initiate had a 'supporter' called muturi and whose duty it was to assist him at all stages of the initiation ceremony, he could not come to his aid during the actual operation. The initiate was expected to demonstrate whether or not he was prepared to face the hard tasks of adult life single handedly, if the need should arise.⁴³

The murithia held the penis and cut off its foreskin.

42 According to Daniel Ngoci, such a person's circumcision would be termed kurua githweri, an incomplete circumcision. Interview, op. cit.

43 Paul Mathenge, interview, op. cit.

It was the tip of the clitoris that was removed in the case of a girl. Kikuyu believed that this would make it easier for a woman to give birth to a child,⁴⁴ while A. Barlow also claimed that the Kikuyu regarded it as 'an act of sacrifice and sanctification of the reproductive faculties'.⁴⁵ Once the foreskin had been removed, the 'supporter' of each candidate would come forward to cover the initiate with a cloak while members of the families of the initiates would go wild for joy because their children had not disgraced them by expressing fear when the foreskin or the tip of the clitoris was removed.⁴⁶

As has already been observed, after circumcision, a boy was qualified to join the warrior grade to defend his people while a girl started to look forward to marriage. Although he had been instructed during the initiation ceremony to look forward to a period of hardship after his circumcision, he was still to be taught how to defend his people against foreign enemies. Part of his training

44 R. J. Bunche, op. cit., p. 61.

45 A. Barlow, Paper on Circumcision, op. cit.

46 Mugo Gatheru, op. cit., p. 60.

J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 208 - 9. See also G. Murikwi, op. cit., p. 84.

was through watching how the senior warriors conducted their 'wars' and partly through 'mock' 'wars' that were organised from time to time when there were no actual wars going on.

The motive behind Kikuyu 'wars' was economic rather than political. They were not waged with the objective of bringing more territories under their control. They took the form of 'armed raids' with the aim of acquiring more herds to add to what they had. This was why the Kikuyu did not only organise 'raids' against the Maasai but also against other sections of the Kikuyu.⁴⁷ For these 'raids', the army was divided into four groups - the athigani or Scouts who were drawn from the experienced warriors and whose duty it was to find out when and how a 'raid' was to be carried out; the ngerewani which formed the 'advance guard' that raided for herds and resisted any attempt to prevent the herds from being taken away; the gitungati was the 'reserve - rank' which stood in readiness to assist the ngerewani should they be attacked by their opponents; and lastly the murima or 'rear guard' made up

47 J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 208 - 9. See also G. Muriuki, op. cit., p. 84.

Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, London, (1965), Chapter 8.

largely of those who had just been circumcised and who had no experience in raiding. From the rear, they were expected to watch what was going on and to take back home whatever had been captured by the experienced warriors. A council of war called njama ya ita co-ordinated the activities of these warriors and it was the ambition of every warrior to be a member of the council before he retired from the warrior grade. Only those who demonstrated exceptional bravery during raids and who could command the respect of the other warriors could ever become members. As each member of the murima showed by his prowess that he had acquired sufficient skill to qualify him to move to the next rank, he was allowed to do so until he qualified to become a member of the ngerewani, the group which did the actual fighting.⁴⁸

To put the warriors constantly in a state of military preparedness and to afford those who were recently circumcised an opportunity of seeing how 'raids' were conducted, ndorothi and Kibata ceremonies were organised. The ndorothi, of which we have more information, lasted

48 ibid., pp. 124 - 26, A. Barlow, Notes on Warfare, Barlow Papers, op. cit. See also H. E. Lambert, Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, London, (1965), Chapter 8.

for about two weeks and during this time, temporary huts were erected to accommodate those who were present. Each participant came with a goat or a sheep and these were slaughtered and taken during the ceremony. Two days - the third and the sixth days - were set aside for military display. As the feasting was going on, a senior warrior suddenly dashed out, shrieking and crying that a 'Maasai' raiding party had been spotted coming towards the village. He then left the scene to allow the people to comment on the news. Shortly after this, another warrior appeared, very exhausted, to report that he too had spotted the 'Maasai'. As soon as the second warrior had disappeared from the scene, a war cry followed and all the warriors came out in a row to where the people were staying. Those who had just been circumcised were not allowed to take part in the display, but they stayed in one place to watch what was going on.⁴⁹

Members of the njama ya ita next went round to the audience to inform them that there was no cause for alarm as the situation was firmly under their control. After this, the warriors organised themselves as they would do

49 W. S. and K. Routledge, op. cit., p. 179. See also J. Kenyatta, op. cit., p. 207.

during a 'raid' and they went into action to prevent the 'Maasai' from taking away the stock. During the dry season when there was not much to do on the field, the ndorithi was a regular feature among the warriors and it acted as a training ground for those who were not yet experienced in the art of warfare.⁵⁰ The Kibata usually took the form of military exercises and they were designed to ensure that the warriors were always ready to deal with any crisis.⁵¹

Training As An Elder

Having served for a while as a warrior, a circumcised person was allowed to retire and set up his homestead with the hope of eventually becoming a nuthuri or an elder. Collectively it was the elders or athuri who performed all judicial, religious and administrative functions in the society. Kikuyu territory was divided into ridges and valleys and these militated against large political groupings. Political activities therefore usually extended over a collection of homesteads called itura or at most a ridge called rugongo. Whatever other political groupings that

50 W. S. and K. Routledge, op. cit., pp. 180 - 1. See also Philip Nduhiu, interviewed at Tetu on 24/7/75.

51 W. S. and K. Routledge, op. cit., p. 181.

went beyond these two were on an ad hoc basis which terminated as soon as the purpose for which they were set up had been realised.⁵² It was the athuri who controlled political activities in each itura or rugongo, although from among them were chosen athamaki or spokesman.⁵³

Before a man could become an elder or nuthuri, he must have served as a warrior, be married and have a child who was old enough to be circumcised. This was to ensure that whoever became an elder had the necessary experience which would enable him to look after the interests of other people. For this reason, the way he conducted the affairs of his homestead counted very much when he applied to become an elder. It was also taken into consideration in deciding who could become a nuthamaki.⁵⁴ But even when a person had satisfied all these conditions, he was not automatically accepted into the grade of elders. He was only allowed into the Kiana Kia Kamatimu or Council of the First Grade of Elders. As a member of this council,

52 M. L. Kilson, op. cit., p. 103. See also G. Dundas, 'The Organisation and Laws of Some Bantu Tribes in East Africa', JRAI, Vol. 51, (1921), p. 240.

53 G. Muriuki, op. cit., p. 132.

54 ibid.

he could still be called upon to take part in raids, although he did so in an advisory capacity.⁵⁵

The Kamatimu or 'apprentice elders' also spent some time understudying the senior elders in their various roles. They acted as messengers to the elders when they were presiding over cases and it was they who summoned the other party to appear before the elders. They slaughtered the animals that were killed and eaten by all the parties in a dispute as a testimony of good faith. Should it become necessary for any party in the dispute to pay any compensation to the other party, it was also the Kamatimu who collected this on behalf of the elders. No 'apprentice elder' was expected to express an opinion when a case was going on. They were all expected to sit near the elders and listen to how each elder sought to convince the others that his own point of view was more acceptable. As time went on, the Kamatimu were allowed, from time to time, to take part in resolving disputes and it was from the comments which each of them made that the elders determined who was qualified to join them in arbitrating. The one who became a nuthanaki or spokesman

55 J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 200 - 1. Mugumo or Sacred Fig Tree of the Kikuyu of East Africa, MAN, Vol. 13, (1913), pp. 86 - 89.

whose opinion could not be ignored, had first served his period of apprenticeship under the elders as one of the Kamatinu who dared not express any opinion when the elders were in session.⁵⁶

Members of the Kamatinu were also allowed to accompany the elders to the nugumo or fig tree where sacrifices on behalf of the community were performed. They also accompanied the elders to the kihara or public square where the affairs of the community were discussed. Here they watched how the elders performed their different functions and they usually acted as messengers who slaughtered the animals that were used for the sacrifices or carried messages to the war council and other bodies.⁵⁷ As they understudied the elders in their various functions, the Kamatinu were gradually allowed to participate much more actively in these functions. They did not all become senior elders en masse and the role which each of them eventually performed depended on the area where he had shown excellence. Thus while some elders specialised in

56 ibid. See also H. R. Tate, 'Further Notes on the Southern Gikuyu, JAS, Vol. 10, (1911), pp. 294 - 5.

57 M. W. H. Beach, 'A Ceremony At The Mugumo or Sacred Fig Tree of the Akikuyu of East Africa', Man, Vol. 13, (1913), pp. 86 - 89.

judicial matters, others excelled in political affairs. All the Kamatimu had however started their training by understudying the senior elders in their various functions.⁵⁸

From what has been said about the indigenous system of education of the Kikuyu, it could be seen that it was rooted in the social, economic and political systems of the people and was therefore relevant to their needs and aspirations. For any other system of education to displace the indigenous system, it must be able to serve the interests of the people rather than those of the people who introduced that new system. The history of Western education, as we shall see in subsequent chapters of this work, revolved around this quest for relevance. This railway of the missionaries to start work among the Kikuyu was not until after British rule had been proclaimed over Kikuyu that it was possible for the missionaries to extend their activities to the area. This railway of the missionaries to start work among

1. Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East (referred to hereafter as Proceedings), (1928-1931) p. 114.

58. C. Dundas, The Organisation and Laws, op. cit., p. 240. Also interview with Paul Kahuho, op. cit.

3. R. W. Strayer, 'The Church Missionary Society in Eastern and Central Kenya, 1825-1955', (Ph.D. Thesis University of Wisconsin 1971) p. 94.

CHAPTER II

THE INITIAL STAGES OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN KIKUYU, 1898-1913

Establishing Mission Presence in Kikuyu

As in many parts of Africa, Western education was introduced to Kikuyu by the christian missionaries who started to arrive in the area from 1898. Before this time, however, some missionaries had expressed interest in the area¹ and the East African Scottish Mission (EASM) which was founded in 1889 by Sir William Mackinnon of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), received instructions to open its first mission station in East Africa in Kikuyu.² In 1893, another missionary, Rev. Stuart Watt of no particular mission, also attempted unsuccessfully to start work among the Kikuyu.³ It was not until after British rule had been proclaimed over Kikuyu that it was possible for the missionaries to extend their activities to the area.

This failure of the missionaries to start work among

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- 1 Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East (referred to hereafter as Proceedings), (1900-1901) p. 116.
 - 2 B. G. McIntosh, 'Scottish Mission in Kenya, 1891-1913, (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1969), pp.49-61.
 - 3 R. W. Strayer, 'The Church Missionary Society in Eastern and Central Kenya, 1825-1935, (Ph.D. Thesis University of Wisconsin 1971) p. 94.

the Kikuyu before 1898 was due largely to the frequent clashes between the people and successive European caravans passing through Kikuyu. These in turn made the Kikuyu suspicious of the intentions of almost every whiteman. The area initially attracted the attention of travellers to the interior of East Africa because of the abundant food supplies that were available in this place.⁴ While most travellers were very anxious to buy food from the Kikuyu, not all of them were prepared to follow the regulations that were laid down by the people as a condition for buying the food, and this was the source of the frequent clashes that were reported by many writers.⁵ Fredrick Jackson who passed through Southern Kikuyu in 1889 observed that although the Kikuyu were 'quite friendly and brought in plenty of food' they were 'obviously nervous on account of the hammering' which they had received from

4 F. D. Lugard, The Rise of our East African Empire, Vol. 1, (Edinburgh, 1893), p. 328. See also L. von Hohnel, The Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie, Vol. 1, (London, 1894), p. 302.

5 On the false stories spread by Arab and Swahili traders who feared that they would lose their trade with the Kikuyu, see G. Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 141-2. See also L. von Hohnel, op. cit., pp. 320-1.

8 B. G. Haimonah, op. cit., p. 11. See also B. Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, (Nairobi, 1970), p. 22.

9 Quoted from H. O. Waller, Kenya Without Prejudice, (London, 1951), p. 11. See also J. R. Schott, The European Community of Kenya, (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1964) Vol. I, p. 50.

previous travellers.⁶ By the time Professor Gregory visited the area in 1893, he was informed that many travellers through Kikuyu had in the past 'stormed villages, seized food and burnt the rest' and that this made the Kikuyu hostile to them and considered them to have 'faces that smiled like the sky' but who were 'bad inside'.⁷ By the time the EASM was contemplating opening a station in Kikuyu, the people had just stormed the IBEAC fort at Dagoretti and forced the company's officials to abandon it.⁸ When Rev. Stuart Watt insisted on starting a mission among the Kikuyu, Francis Hall, the officer in charge of the fort had to warn him in an official letter, as follows:

I shall be most happy at all times to render you every assistance in my power should you persist in your present scheme, but at the same time must respectfully decline to be in any way responsible for the lives or property of your party once out of rifle range of this fort.⁹

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- 6 F. Jackson, Early Days in East Africa (London, 1969) pp. 169-70.
- 7 J. W. Gregory, The Great Rift Valley, (London, 1896), pp. 278.
- 8 B. G. McIntosh, op. cit., p. 64. See also R. Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, (Nairobi, 1970), p. 22.
- 9 Quoted from H. O. Weller, Kenya Without Prejudice, (London, 1931), p. 11. See also J. R. Schott, The European Community of Kenya, (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1964) Vol. I, p. 50.

In spite of this Rev. Stuart Watt went on to attempt to establish a station in Kikuyu and it was only when the Kikuyu stoutly prevented him from carrying out his scheme that he had to leave for Ngelani in Kamba territory.¹⁰ The EASM which was forced to operate in Kibwezi, in Kamba as a result of Kikuyu hostility, was however still anxious to go back to Kikuyu as soon as the situation improved. Thus in September, 1895, barely three months after British rule had been proclaimed over Kikuyu, Thomas Watson, leader of the mission at Kibwezi, visited Kikuyu with another missionary, John Patterson, to explore the possibility of getting a plot of land for the mission. Although he got the piece of land from a landowner, Munyua Waiyaki, at Baraniki near Dagoretti, it was not until February 1898 that he was able to establish the mission station.¹¹

Following closely after the EASM which changed its name to the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) in 1901, was the Holy Ghost Fathers Mission (HGFM) which arrived in Kikuyu in 1899. Brother Solanus Zipper of the HGFM was

10 J. R. Schott, op. cit. (London, 1966), p. 61.

11 J. Patterson, Kenya Land Commission, Vol. 1, Evidence, (Nairobi, 1933) (hereafter referred to as Evidence) p. 744.

able to negotiate for a piece of land with Chief Kinyanjui at Kabete, and it was on this land that St. Austin's Mission was established.¹² The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was also interested in Kikuyu and Bishop Peel was sent there twice in January and June, 1900 to make preliminary arrangements for the mission to establish in Kikuyu. Mr. A. W. McGregor who was transferred from Taveta at the Coast to establish the new station, arrived in Kikuyu in October 1900 and settled first with government officials at Fort Smith before moving to Mayombo, near the HGFM station in July, 1901. Mayombo which had only recently suffered from a Maasai raid in which almost all its inhabitants were massacred, was renamed Kihuruko (a place of rest and quietness) by the missionary.¹³

Next to the CMS in Kikuyu was the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS). Although Rev. T. N. Krieger, who was sent to East Africa by the mission, had settled on the southern bank of the Ruiru River since 1897, it was not until 1901,

12 S. Zipper, Evidence, op. cit. pp. 919-20. See also J.A.P. Kieran, 'The Holy Ghost Fathers in East Africa', (Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1966), p. 61.

13 H. Leakey, Evidence, op. cit., p. 847. Proceedings, op. cit., p. 116.

14 Proceedings of the African Studies Society, (Nairobi, 1974), p. 16 - 21.

after Rev. W. P. Knapp, also of the same mission, was able to secure a piece of land at Kambui, that the mission started its work in Kikuyu. Rev. Knapp was given this piece of land because it was used as a cemetery and no Kikuyu would dare use such a land for any other purpose. For this reason the Kikuyu landowners who gave him the land did not ask for money.¹⁴

The Africa Inland mission (AIM) which was the last to set up in Kikuyu during this early stage, was an American 'Faith Mission' with no association with any established church. It drew its membership and support from Presbyterians, Baptists, Adventists, and societies such as the Glasgow Bible Society and the Pennsylvania Bible Institute. In 1894 the mission decided to start work in East Africa and P. C. Scott who headed the mission intended to establish in Kikuyu when he arrived in Mombasa in October, 1895. He however had to stay in Kamba instead for fear of Kikuyu hostility. The mission was set up at Kangundo without relinquishing Scott's original aspiration

14 E. N. Wanyoike, An African Pastor, (Nairobi, 1974), pp. 18 - 21.

and in 1903 the mission found it possible to transfer to Kijabe on the border between the Kikuyu and the Maasai,¹⁵

Within five years, Kikuyu which had previously been closed to the missionaries, was occupied by five different missions, working in close proximity to one another and seeking to win adherents to their different brands of Christianity. There was nothing to show that the Kikuyu had abandoned their previously hostile attitude to the missionaries and the whitemen. In fact, the method adopted by Francis Hall, the IBEAC representative in Kikuyu who was retained by the new Administration, to pacify Kikuyu, made the people yet more determined not to associate with the whitemen. Francis Hall, who said in 1894 that 'There is only one way of improving the Wakikuyu, (and) that is wipe them out',¹⁶ mounted a series of expeditions against the Kikuyu between then and 1898. During this time, villages were burnt, large herds of cattle, sheep and goats

15 C. S. Millar, The Life of P. C. Scott; The Unlocked Door (Chicago, 1936), p. 137.

16 G. Muriuki, op. cit., p. 155.

18 Proceedings, op. cit., p. 116.

19 Ibid., (1903/4), p. 51.

were captured and some people were killed.¹⁷ The missionaries did not fail to realise quite early that the Kikuyu would not readily listen to what they had to tell them and that they only allowed them in their territory because of the new colonial Administration. After only one year in Kikuyu, A. W. McGregor had come to the conclusion that

The work will no doubt require plenty of faith, courage and perseverance for many years ... For years, I feel, we must not be discouraged if we do not see much fruit from them.¹⁸

Giving reasons later for this pessimistic view of missionary work in Kikuyu, McGregor was of the opinion that 'Their (i.e. the Kikuyu) previous experience of Europeans did not create a very good feeling towards the same'.¹⁹

Kikuyu relationship with the missionaries further deteriorated from 1902 onward when some of the missionaries

17 Kenya National Archives (hereafter KNA): DC/KBU/3/7, Dagoretti Political Book, History of the early days of British Rule, p. 1. For the series of raids that were carried out in Southern Kikuyu see H. Moyses-Bartlett, The King's African Rifles, (Aldershot, 1956), p. 105, pp. 204-5, and J.R.L. Macdonald, Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa, 1891-1894, (London, 1897), pp. 113-26.

18 Proceedings, op. cit., p. 116.

19 ibid., (1903/4), p. 91.

abandoned the previous practice of negotiating for land with Kikuyu elders and resorted to arbitrary seizures with the covering approval of the colonial administration, as was being done by the white settlers. Karanja wa Mariti, a Kikuyu landowner, refused Rev. McGregor land in 1901. Chege Muthemba, another landowner, gave a portion of his land to the CMS only on the payment of goods worth forty five goats.²⁰ Rev. Watson of the BASH sought land at Dagoretti but was refused by the landowner Munyua Waiyaki who directed him to another piece of land at Baraniki further down the Dagoretti valley which he allowed Rev. Watson to rent.²¹ Before 1902 therefore, the Kikuyu not only required payment for land from the missionaries but determined which portion of their land the missionaries would be allowed to use. All this changed from 1902 when the government enacted the Crown Lands Ordinance to make land available for the whitemen who had been invited to the Protectorate to develop it agriculturally. and just a month later,

The Ordinance denied that the Africans had any idea about individual ownership of land prior to the arrival of

20 H. Leakey, Evidence, op. cit., p. 848.

21 R. Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, (Nairobi, 1971).

Europeans in the Protectorate and went on to declare that all land which was not 'in actual occupation' by the Africans could be occupied by any whiteman after the payment of compensation at the rate of two rupees per acre. No whiteman was permitted to negotiate directly with the Africans; each negotiation had to be carried out with the government through officials of the Survey Department. As the government was understaffed and could not make available the required staff to ensure that justice was done to the Kikuyu, many white settlers took possession of land which was already being used by the Kikuyu, without paying the statutory compensation. Yet many of these settlers later sold part of this land to other prospective settlers at exorbitant prices.²² Thus W. McAlister, a white settler who arrived in Kikuyu in 1901 got 1,225 acres of Kikuyu land without paying any compensation. In 1911 he sold 1,000 acres of it to another settler Mr. Tweedie for £2,000 and just a month later, this same land was sold to another settler for £3,000 by

22 On white settlement and African land see M.P.K. Sorrenson, Origins of European settlement in Kenya, (Nairobi, 1968) and J. R. Schott, op. cit., p. 56.

23 A. R. Barlow, Memorandum on the Mission Estate in Kikuyu, op. cit., pp. 816-31.

Mr. Tweedie.²³ Between Kiambu and Limuru, about 60,000 acres of Kikuyu land were alienated between 1903 and 1905, despite the fact that about 11,000 Kikuyu were 'in actual occupation' of the land.²⁴

Before the Ordinance, the CSM had only about one hundred acres of land which was purchased from a Kikuyu landowner. After 1902, however, the mission, under Rev. Dr. D. C. Scott, acquired from the government 3,000 acres which it hoped to develop agriculturally. There were about one hundred and thirty Kikuyu families who also had ahoi or tenants living with them. Both the landowners and their tenants suddenly found themselves as tenants of the CSM, with regulations which required them to work for the mission during certain months of the year, as part of the condition for their being allowed to continue to live on the land.²⁵

Rev. Knapp who was given a piece of land at Kambui in 1901 on the condition that he would continue to regard

23 W. McAlister, Evidence, op. cit., pp. 751-2.

24 M.P.K. Sorrenson, Land Reform in Kikuyu Country, (London, 1967), p. 18.

25 A. R. Barlow, 'Memorandum on the Mission Estate in Kikuyu, Evidence, op. cit., pp. 816-31.

himself as the tenant of the landowners, decided after 1902 to register the one hundred acres of land with the Government in the name of the mission.²⁶ Elsewhere in Kikuyu, the White Sisters also obtained 5,150 acres of land to start a farm at Mangu while further to the north in Nyeri district, the Consolata Mission, the first to establish in northern Kikuyu, acquired 3,000 acres of land at Mathari. Many Kikuyu who already had farms there were forced to leave them and although the mission paid them the two rupees per acre compensation, the landowners asserted that 'they had been forced to sell' and that the surveyor who went to see the place, 'merely accepted the statements of the missionaries and surveyed land pointed out to him'.²⁸

The Kikuyu who had previously been suspicious of the whitemen became even more hostile to them and considered it not in their best interest to associate too closely with them. Many of those who became landless left for the Rift Valley and Maasailand in search of alternative land, and

26 H. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 23.

27 The White Sisters, Evidence, op. cit., p. 909.

28 Land Office File (hereafter L0): 3766, Consolata Mission, Nyeri, Acting PC to the Land Officer, Nov. 27, 1908. (College, 1958), p. 20.

those of them who had been dispossessed by the missionaries swore never to have anything to do with them.²⁹ Those whose land was not taken became equally suspicious of the missionaries and as we shall discuss later in the chapter, did everything in their power to prevent their starting work close to them. It was during this early period that the Kikuyu started to say: gutiri muthungu na mubea - all whitemen are alike.³⁰ Since all of them were believed to be out to take as much of their land as possible, the best thing was for them to avoid them altogether.

As has earlier been pointed out, the missionaries were aware right from the outset that the Kikuyu would not readily listen to them. Each mission therefore devised its own method of attracting the attention of the people. The missionaries could not have come to Kikuyu at a better time than when they did. This was because of the natural disasters which occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, and which rendered many people helpless

29. James Beuttah, interviewed at Maragwe, on 27/8/75.

30 F. B. Welbourn, 'Elephants Have Tusks; A Study of Some Independent Churches in East Africa', (Occasional Paper, Makerere College, 1958), p. 20.

and in need of support. Between 1894 and 1899, the area was invaded by locusts which virtually destroyed all crops. In 1897 and again in 1898, there was a severe drought and cattle plague and many people lost their livestock.

During the same time, smallpox and other diseases broke out and killed many people. According to Dr. Boedeker, a white settler who was already in Kikuyu during this time, 'thousands of natives died throughout Kikuyu... and the remaining few hundreds had a hard to mouth struggle to keep their souls alive.'³¹ John Boyes, another whiteman who also witnessed the effects of these on the people, described Kikuyu as 'a country of dying natives'.³²

The custom among the Kikuyu was not to allow a person to die inside a house, as this might affect the fortunes of those who lived in the house. It was therefore usual for very sick people to be taken outside their homes to very distant places. There, efforts were made to secure their recovery, but in case of death the bodies were left

31 Dr. Boedeker, Evidence, op. cit., p. 696.

32 J. Boyes, Evidence, op. cit., p. 726. See also C.W.L. Bulpett, John Boyes, King of Wakikuyu, (London, 1911), pp. 297-8. See also V. Harlow, D. H. Chilver and A. S. Little, (ed) History of East Africa, Vol. IX (Oxford, 1963), p. 19, for a treatment of the disease.

there and those who accompanied them to the place had to purify themselves before they were allowed back to their homes.³³ In view of this prevailing custom among the Kikuyu and since there were few healthy people to take care of the sick, most of those who were found to be helpless were left in the bush to perish. Others who found that they could no longer get the food with which to feed their children also abandoned such children in the bush to die.³⁴

To rescue such people, both the GSM and the GMS set up relief camps where the sick were treated and those who needed food were catered for. By February 1900, the GSM was treating eighty one people and feeding about three hundred others at their Baraniki and Thogoto camps. In spite of this large number of people who were being fed by the mission, it was still found necessary to employ Maasai guides to watch over the store-house where the

33 Samuel Gitau, interviewed at Thogoto on 17/10/75.

34 The disasters were called 'Ngaragu ya Ruraya' by the people because food had to be brought from abroad by the missionaries and the government. E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 19. See also V. Harlow, E. M. Chilver and A. Smith, (ed) History of East Africa, Vol. II (Oxford, 1965), p. 14, for a treatment of the disasters.

mission kept its food.³⁵ The CMS camp at Thimbigua was flooded by people who were in need of food and this helped to advertise the presence of the mission in Kikuyu. Those who had either been treated or fed went back home to inform others who had not heard about the mission.³⁶ The CMS started a famine relief scheme on the Coast in October 1898 to cater for victims of the disasters which had already spread beyond Kikuyu. By 1903 at least two Kikuyu, Kamau and Karanja, were already being taken care of by the mission at Freretown.³⁷

Just as the disasters had helped to advertise the presence of the missionaries in Kikuyu, so also had the missionaries sought to use this misfortune to promote their work. Mrs. Watson started the first mission school in Kikuyu in May, 1900 for the children who were being catered for by the CMS, while Rev. Watson, her husband also started an evening school for those who were forced

35 J. Paterson, Evidence, op. cit., p. 946.

36 E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 20. See also R. Macpherson, op. cit., p. 85.

37 KNA: CMS/1/635, Executive Committee of the CMS, Freretown, p. 161.

41 E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 24.

forced to work for the mission as a result of the disasters.³⁸ Mr. Samuel Gitau, father of Kenya's present Minister of Defence, Mr. James Gichuru, was one of the refugees who attended Mrs. Watson's school. Asked to comment about this school he said:

Although I later came to appreciate what Mrs. Watson was doing for us by starting the School, initially I agreed to go to the school because I had no choice. I wanted food and -the mission was prepared to give the food provided we also went to school. So I attended the school to get the food.³⁹

All those who were sent by Rev. McGregor to the relief camp at Freretown were made to go to school,⁴⁰ while Dr. Henderson who treated the sick at the GMS camp, also asked such people to wait behind to attend the 'reading class' which he had started.⁴¹ Mrs. Wanjau Kamawe, wife of Rev. Wanyoike Kamawe, the first African to be ordained a priest by the GMS, was one of the first pupils in the school. She had been abandoned by her mother when she could no longer feed her and was picked up by Mrs. Knapp, also of the GMS.

38 B. G. McIntosh, op. cit., p. 151.

39 Samuel Gitau, interview, op. cit.

40 KNA: CMS/1/635, op. cit.

41 E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 24.

Giving her impression of the 'reading class' she said:

I very much enjoyed 'talking to paper', but I did not know why we were asked to learn to read. I am sure that had my mother not abandoned me in the bush, I would not have come to the place on my own.⁴²

While some people found their way to the missionaries simply to keep body and soul together, others came under mission influence because they wanted money to buy the sheep and goats which they had lost as a result of the disasters. Such money could only come by working for either the missionaries or the settlers and since it was possible to leave the missions whenever one felt like doing so, many people preferred to go to them instead of the settlers. Furthermore, the missionaries, who were anxious to exploit every opportunity that would bring people under their influence, also formed the habit of going round the villages to invite the people to come and work at their stations. Mr. Harry Thuku, the future Kikuyu politician, spoke of how he started schooling at the GMS school in Kambui after he had responded to Dr. Henderson's appeal to work for him. Harry Thuku pulled up sweet-potato

42 Wanjau Kanawe (Mrs), interviewed at Komothai on 6/10/75.

tops to feed the mission calves until he was persuaded to add schooling to this duty.⁴³ Asked whether he originally went to work for the mission out of a desire to start schooling, Mr. Samson Wandaka, the first Kikuyu to agree to be trained as a hospital attendant, replied:

Although the few people who went before me to the mission station at Thogoto came back to tell us that they were being taught to 'talk to the paper', I went there principally because I needed money to buy my own goats. It was only when I got to the station that I was told that I would also have to join the 'reading class' in addition to my job and since I needed this money, I agreed to be taught by the mission.⁴⁴

Apart from these methods employed by the missionaries to attract people to their fold, they also organised regular visits to the people aimed at persuading them to come to school. Ernest Kibororo from Karia in Nyeri district was among those who became interested in the Consolata Mission as a result of such visits. He had accompanied his parents to the farm one day before 'the war of the whiteman' (i.e. the First World War) and it was

43 H. Thuku, Harry Thuku, An Autobiography (with assistance from Kenneth King), (Nairobi, 1970), p. 7.

44 Samson Njoroge Wandaka, interviewed at Dagoretti on 16/10/75

while they were working that some white missionaries came to them, accompanied by an interpreter. Without the help of the interpreter, the missionaries greeted the people the Kikuyu way and were asked to be given some food to eat. They cleverly changed the conversation to tell him and his parents about the existence of one called God who sent his son Jesus to die for the sins of mankind. They said that if the people wished to know more about what they were saying, they should come to the mission station at Tetu where they would also be taught to read and write. No one took the missionaries seriously at first but as they continued to visit them on their farm, Ernest decided to go with them one day, without taking permission from his parents.⁴⁵ Asked why he decided to go against the wishes of his parents, Ernest had this to say:

It was not that I understood what they had to say about God and Jesus; but the fact that it was possible for me to read and write like the missionaries, made me decide to follow them to Tetu. I did not tell my parents before going there because I knew that they would not allow me to go with the missionaries.⁴⁶

While some missionaries visited the people during

45 Ernest Kibororo, interviewed at Nyeri on 11/7/75.

46 ibid.

the day-time, others decided to go round the villages in the evening after the day's work. This usually was the time when most Kikuyu would gather round a central fire to listen to stories and riddles. During such visits, the missionaries would take with them lantern slides, hymn books and alphabet cards and sheets. These were used to attract the attention of the people who would otherwise not have listened to the missionaries. The usual thing was to start singing once they got to a village, while a few of them would go round to appeal to the people to come and listen to what they had to offer. Rev. Leakey at Kabete would show the few people who bothered to come to the place the slides he took with him, while on other occasions he would write down what the people said and then at a later stage told them word for word what they had previously said in conversation.⁴⁷

Both Arthur Barlow, Miss Stevenson and Mrs. Watson of the CSM Thogoto would start singing from their hymn books with music supplied by Arthur Barlow from his violin. At other times hymns were taught to those who were around.⁴⁸

47 H. Leakey, Evidence, op. cit., p. 851.

48 H. E. Scott (Mrs), A Saint in Kenya; The Life of Marion Scott Stevenson, (London, 1932), pp. 94-101.

Stanley Kiama from Ngaini in Nyeri district spoke of how some of the missionaries went round the villages with 'alphabet cards' and sheets and promised to teach those who came to them. It was this possibility of reading from the sheets rather than the Christian message of the missionaries which attracted Stanley Kiama to the mission school at Tumutumu in 1908.⁴⁹ At the end of 1901, A. W. McGregor could boast of twenty pupils already learning to read in the school which he had been able to start through such visits round Kabete.⁵⁰

Initially all the missionaries who came to Kikuyu started their activities from Kiambu district to the south where most European travellers had purchased their food on their way to the interior of East Africa. The first mission to venture into northern Kikuyu was the Consolata Mission. The first place where the mission had its station was at Tuthu, the town of Chief Karuri Gakure who had earlier invited A. W. McGregor of the CMS to start work

49 Stanley Kiama, interviewed at Ngaini, 14/7/75.

50 Proceedings, op. cit., (1900-1901), p. 107.

54 AMS.

55 M. Richardson, Garden of Miracles: A History of the African Inland Mission, (London, 1900), p. 100.

56 MS. 707, CMS, Tumutumu, DC, Nyeri to HQ, July 17, 1908.

in his area.⁵¹ From Tuthu the mission expanded to Fort Hall (Muranga) In 1902, Gekondi, Tetu and Gaichanjiro in 1903, Nyeri, Karema and Mogoiri in 1904, Gaturi in 1907, Kaheti and Ichagaki in 1908, Gatanga and Rocho in 1910.⁵² Rev. McGregor who could not establish a mission in Tuthu because of his trip to Britain in 1902, was able to start one at Kahoti in 1903.⁵³ In January 1904, work started at Weithaga which was soon to become the headquarters of the mission in northern Kikuyu and in December 1906, Rev. Crawford started work at Kahuhia.⁵⁴ The AIM also opened a station in northern Kikuyu at Kinyona in 1907,⁵⁵ while in 1908 the CSM opened a station at Tumutumu in Nyeri district.⁵⁶

51 Chief Karuri not only invited A. W. McGregor to Tuthu, he also left two boys with him to be taught. For this and other 'enlightened' policies of the Chief see C. Mucuna, 'Karuri wa Gakure' (B.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1968), see also W. R. Ochieng' 'Colonial African Chiefs - Were They Primarily Self-seeking Scoundrels?' Hadith, Vol. 4, (1971), pp. 54-7.

52 Consolata Mission, Conquest for Christ in Kenya, 1902-1952, (Nyeri, no date) pp. 90-3.

53 KNA: CMS/1/625, Weithaga Mission Log Book, p. 1. See also Proceedings, op. cit., (1902/3), p. 98.

54 ibid.

55 K. Richardson, Garden of Miracles: A History of the Africa Inland Mission, (London, 1968), p. ix.

56 LO: 707, CSM, Tumutumu, DC. Nyeri to PC, July 17, 1908.

Whereas the missionaries had largely exploited the natural disasters to entice the Kikuyu from the south to their fold, in northern Kikuyu they had to rely on the Kikuyu who had been with them in the south to speak to the people about their activities. The famine relief strategy could not be so effective here because famine was less severe in northern Kikuyu than in the south. Northern Kikuyu had however been subjected to a series of raids, first by the British adventurer John Boyes, and later by Col. R. Meinertzhagen, acting on behalf of the Colonial Administration. John Boyes entered northern Kikuyu in June 1898 to trade in food and later in ivory which he obtained at a very low price. Ivory which he bought at 8/- a tusk was later sold by him for £10 or more.⁵⁷ Together with Karuri Gakure and Wangombe, who later became chiefs, Boyes raided the people of northern Kikuyu, in an effort to expand this trade. In one of such raids, their army of warriors swept through Chinga country from one end to the other, destroying villages, and wiping

57 J. Boyes, King of Wa - Kikuyu, (London, 1911), pp. 248-9.

58 R. Meinertzhagen, Kenya Diary, 1902-1906, (Munich, 1977), p. vi.

61 Ibid., p. 50.

out of existence all who opposed them'.⁵⁸ These raids did not come to an end until Boyes was arrested by Francis Hall on October 31, 1900.⁵⁹

This however did not mean an end to such raids. Boyes' activities created suspicion of the white men in many districts and it was found that the Kikuyu here would not readily submit to British rule unless by a further show of force. Col. Meinertzhagen was the man appointed for the job. In the opinion of Col. Meinertzhagen:

A soldier enters a fight to come out on top in the shortest possible time and lose the fewest possible casualties ... In the long run, inflicting heavy casualties on an enemy will shorten the duration of a conflict, it will teach a lesson and will result in a more enduring peace than less violent measures.⁶⁰

He therefore did not hesitate to use this force to the maximum against the people. In one of such raids against the people of Kihumbuini in 1902, one hundred and seventy head of cattle and 1,000 sheep and goats were captured after three hours of 'intense activity'.⁶¹ At Nyeri, 184

58 ibid., pp. 231-2.

59 KNA: DC/FH6/1, History of Fort Hall, 1888-1944, p. 2.

60 R. Meinertzhagen, Kenya Diary, 1902-1906, (Edinburgh, 1957), p. VI.

61 ibid., p. 50.

head of cattle and over 1,200 sheep and goats were captured, while to the east of Tana River, 'a great haul' of sixty two head of cattle and over 6,000 sheep and goats were again captured from the people, after another raid in 1903.⁶² In one of his last raids against the people of Iriaini in Nyeri district, 4,382 head of cattle and 12,650 sheep and goats were taken away from the people.⁶³ All these were in addition to the indiscriminate burning of villages and occasional loss of life. Although the number of people killed could not have been much since the Kikuyu preferred to hide themselves in the bush rather than risk an open confrontation, the large scale seizure of stock among these people who were just recovering from the natural disasters, left much bitterness against the white-men.⁶⁴

When therefore the missionaries arrived in northern Kikuyu, they found that the people were in no mood at all to listen to them. Many parts of the area still had to be closed to the missionaries as the government could not

62 ibid., pp. 66-7.

63 ibid., p. 146.

64 ibid.

guarantee their safety in these places and when they were eventually allowed to open regular stations in the area, the missionaries had to rely on their Kikuyu converts from the south to confront their people. Thus Rev. McGregor had to rely on Petro Njoroge Kigundu, his cook at Kabete since 1900, together with Joshua Karuri and Johana Muturi, the two boys whom Chief Karuri left with him in 1902, to win adherents in Weithaga region.⁶⁵ In Tumutumu, it was Petro Mugo and Daniel Wachira, two Kikuyu who were already attending the mission school at Thogoto in the south, who were sent by the CSM to speak to their people about Christianity and the need to attend the mission school which Petro Mugo put up on his arrival in Tumutumu on September 30, 1908. Paul Kahuhu defied all opposition from his people to attend the school because he also wanted to 'talk to the paper' like Mugo.⁶⁶ The situation was the same in Kahuhia where it was Muhia and Josiah Gathu, Rev. Crawford's cook and water carrier respectively at Kabete, whom Rev. Crawford relied upon to invite their

65 K. Cole, The Cross Over Mount Kenya: A Short History of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Mount Kenya, 1900-1970, (Nairobi, 1970), p. 38.

66 Paul Kahuhu, op. cit.

people to the mission. Both Samuel Ngoce and Gideon Mugo in Kahuhia agreed to go with the mission because of the efforts of Muhia and Gathu.⁶⁷

Mission Education Programme

It is not known how many people the missions succeeded in persuading to come to its schools during the first few years of their activities in Kikuyu. Once they had succeeded in starting these schools however attempts were made to use them to introduce the people to Christianity and to ensure that the initial enthusiasm generated among these Kikuyu did not die down with time. The missionary Arthur Barlow recognised that those who were coming forward to them were 'no ready saints' but were 'a sort of new boys in God's school, who still live in the twilight between two opposite shades of light'.⁶⁸ The mission schools must be able to assist such people to understand what Christianity stood for and that it demanded of them complete allegiance especially to a person, i.e. Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ In a circular

⁶⁷ Samuel Ngoci, interviewed at Kahuhia on 6/8/75 and Gideon Mugo, also at Kahuhia on 7/8/75.

⁶⁸ A. Barlow, 'Missionary work in Kikuyu', in Barlow's Papers, op. cit.

⁶⁹ ibid.

letter to its missionaries who were engaged in the educational work in the Protectorate in 1902, the CMS Parent Committee reminded them of the need to ensure that their schools were 'primarily and dominantly evangelistic'.⁷⁰ This was also emphasised in 1904 when the Committee warned that 'no missionary institution has the right to exist that is not distinctly and openly evangelistic'.⁷¹ The Consolata mission also recognised the role which the school could play in introducing the people to Christianity and at its meeting in Fort Hall (Muranga) in March 1904, it called for the opening of schools in all areas of its operation. Such schools should teach the people to 'memorise the rudiments of Christian Doctrine and the more important facts of the Holy Bible, so as to be able to explain to the people the teachings of the missionaries'.⁷² Although reading, writing and arithmetic were to be taught in such schools, it was stated that 'there is no need for a detailed syllabus'.⁷³ Thus right from the beginning

70 Quoted in R. W. Strayer, op. cit., p. 91.

71 Quoted in A. J. Temu, British Protestant Missions, (London, 1972), p. 143.

72 Conquest For Christ, op. cit., p. 51

73 ibid.

74 Matthew Kwangi, interviewed at Nairobi on 21/8/75.

education and christianity were to mean the same thing to the missionaries and the Kikuyu, who did not fail to recognise this, used the word Muthomi to describe one who was either educated or who was a christian convert.

The usual practice, once a person had either been employed to work for the mission or when he came to learn to 'talk to the paper', was to ask such a person to take off his leather apron and wash off the paint and grease which every Kikuyu used to adorn the body. After this, he was given the taana or mission uniform to put on. He was not allowed to leave his hair tall, as every young circumcised Kikuyu would do, but had to cut it as low as possible. Those things were a novelty among the Kikuyu and it was not long before people started to call those who went to the missions 'children of the White missionaries'. Thus at Weithaga where Rev. McGregor was in charge, those who followed him to 'read' were called 'Ihii Cia Buana McGregor' - Children of McGregor - instead of referring to them by their Kikuyu names. By putting on new attire and cutting their hair the githweri or foreign way, those who had gone to the mission stations were considered no longer to be Kikuyu.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the missionaries

74 Matthew Mwangi, interviewed at Koimbi on 21/8/75.

considered such people as those who had 'come from the bad and (were) seeking the good'.⁷⁵

During the morning worship which usually preceded the day's activities and whenever they had the opportunity, the missionaries would also speak against Kikuyu religion. The Kikuyu according to Mrs. Watson who was a missionary at Thogoto, did not have any idea of being answerable to God for sins committed. Murder, theft, adultery were condemned only on social grounds, and not as offences against God. The missionaries therefore considered it to be their duty to show the people the true religion which could point the people to God and to Jesus His son.⁷⁶ Ezekiel Kamau, another informant, also recounted that the missionaries told them that as christians, they were no longer to take part in sacrifices to either Ngai or to the ancestors. This was because the blood of Jesus Christ made it unnecessary for any other sacrifices to be made. It was partly because of this that the missionaries opposed

75 T. Watson (Mrs), 'History of Work Amongst Women and Girls at Kikuyu', Education Department Annual Report (hereafter EDAR), 1928, Appendix ix, p. 68.

76 T. Watson (Mrs) 'History of Work Amongst Women', op. cit., p. 67.

78 See Chapter I, p. 36.

their participation in the initiation ceremony, although nothing was done during this early period to prevent those who wished to take part in that ceremony from doing so.⁷⁷ As was shown in the last chapter, sacrifice formed an essential aspect of Kikuyu religion as it was through it that the Kikuyu maintained contact with Ngai and the ancestors.⁷⁸ For people who believed that their wellbeing depended very much on this contact, this teaching of the missionaries was not only an attack on the essence of their religion but also a threat to their very survival.

Apart from teaching directed against aspects of Kikuyu culture, the missions also emphasised reading and writing as a means of training people to be able to read the Bible on their own. In view of the significance which the various missions attached to the people being able to read the Bible in their own language, most of the missionaries started to embark on translation work almost as soon as they arrived in Kikuyu. By the end of 1902, Rev. McGregor who arrived in Kikuyu in 1900 had been able to translate St. John's Gospel, parts of the Anglican morning and evening

77 Ezekiel Kamau, op. cit.

78 See Chapter I, p. 36.

prayer book as well as some hymns into Kikuyu.⁷⁹

Rev. Father Hemery of the HGFM had also produced a Kikuyu grammar by 1902 while Father Le Roy of the same mission was able to translate the catechism into Kikuyu by 1903.⁸⁰

In addition to working on the Bible, the missionaries also produced a Kikuyu 'primer' which contained Bible stories and narratives about day-to-day activities of the Kikuyu. Before the end of the period under review in this chapter, the GMS had produced its own 'primer' called Bubi, that of the CMS was called Muthomere wa Gikuyu, and that of the AIM was called Ibukuria mbere Gikuyu. The reading class normally started with reading sheets on which the alphabet was written. There was no specific time within which the sheets were to be mastered, but those who were found to be able to read the alphabet from memory were 'promoted' to the next class, where the pupils were taught to join vowels with consonants to form syllables. This stage was called 'Kuhikithania ndemwa' or 'marrying of letters' by the Kikuyu and only after this stage were

79 KNA: CMS/1/635, op. cit., p. 147.

80 J. A. P. Kieran, op. cit., p. 65.

such as arithmetic, history and geography were also taught. 69. 31

pupils able to start on the 'primer' and portions of the Bible. I did not consider it necessary to teach English

to . Throughout the period under review, no classrooms as we know them today existed. Instead of these, the four corners of a big building, which in most cases also served as the place of worship on Sunday, were used as the classrooms. As a pupil graduated from one stage to the next, he also went from one corner of the building to the next. In most schools, there was only one qualified teacher who taught pupils in the top class and ensured that everything was in good order in the 'school'. The lower classes were taught by pupils who had left those classes. As schools were opened by the missionaries outside their stations, some of these senior pupils were also used to teach in these schools. They would go to the out-station schools to teach in the morning and come back to be taught by the qualified teacher in the afternoon. It was while they were away that the remaining senior pupils taught the junior pupils at the headquarters. Side by side with teaching the pupils to read and write so as to be able to read the Bible on their own, other subjects

such as arithmetic, history and geography were also taught.⁸¹ Throughout the period under review in this chapter, most missions did not consider it necessary to teach English to their pupils. Except for the private teaching of the language to some of their favourite pupils whom they were hoping to use as agents in the propagation of Christianity to their people, the missionaries taught their pupils in Kikuyu and Swahili. The Consolata mission particularly emphasised during its 1904 meeting at Fort Hall that all teaching was to be done in Kikuyu and that English should not be taught as yet.⁸² Ex-Senior Chief Njonjo also pointed out that Canon Leakey at Kabete was completely opposed to the teaching of the language and that he refused to allow Alfred Nkoka, his African agent, to teach the language each time he attempted to do so.⁸³ Asked why the missionaries were opposed to the teaching of English in their schools, Chief Njonjo remarked:

81 Charles M. Kareri, interviewed at Tumutumu on 17/7/75. This was confirmed by Ex-Senior Chief Njonjo, interviewed at Kabete on 15/10/75.

82 Conquest for Christ, op. cit., p. 51

83 Chief Josiah Njonjo, op. cit.,

84 Charles Kareri, op. cit.

85 My interview with many of them confirmed this.

The missionaries came to Africa principally to convert people to Christianity. They saw that they could best do this by learning the language of the people so that they could speak to them directly. For this reason they spent several hours studying Kikuyu and translating Bible portions and hymn books into the language. Having done these, they did not see why they should also teach their pupils a language which had little or nothing to do with evangelism. In fact most of the missionaries believed like Canon Leakey that the teaching of English would make their pupils want to work in Government offices, rather than assisting the missionaries to take the Gospel to their own people.⁸⁴

Charles Muhoro who was one of the few Kikuyu who was taught English during this early stages of Western education in Kikuyu and who eventually rose to become the first African Moderator of the Presbyterian Churches in East Africa, also gave reasons for the reluctance of the missionaries to teach English:

They considered this to be inimical to their work of evangelism and were as such reluctant to teach the language, except to such of their pupils whom they were sure would not desert them after their education.⁸⁵

For this reason, virtually all the Kikuyu who were educated during this early period, could not speak English.⁸⁶

84 ibid.

85 Charles Kareri, op. cit.

86 My interview with many of them confirmed this.

The Origin of 'Industrial' Education in Mission Schools

As has earlier been pointed out, with the exception of the CMS and the GMS, all the missions had acquired extensive land for agriculture on a large scale and had also encouraged both former landowners and landless Kikuyu to settle on their estates to provide labour for their farms.⁸⁷ In 1903, for example a correspondent of the newspaper East Africa and Uganda Mail described the HGFM farm in Kikuyu as 'a little paradise' with 2,000 fine coffee plants laid out and another 10,000 in nursery.⁸⁸ In addition to their agricultural enterprise, all the missionaries had to rely on the Kikuyu to do most of their jobs at their stations. Some people were employed in the various building projects, others worked within the homes of the missionaries as cooks and stewards, while girls were employed to take care of their babies. Some missions such as the Consolata mission and the HGFM also set up their own printing press and employed some Kikuyu to work there. Mrs. Watson of the CSM Thogoto also started a laundry service

87 See pp. 46-47 above.

88 East Africa and Uganda Mail (hereafter EAUM), April 11, 1903.

country on government land 73. In order to develop plantation and employed some Kikuyu girls to assist her. In order to ensure that these jobs were done satisfactorily, most missions found that they had to organise training sessions for their workers in addition to the 'general' education which they received in the evening after completing their duties.⁸⁹ This was the beginning of what later became known as 'industrial' education and it originated out of the desire of the missionaries to relieve their labour shortage.

Although the missionaries were anxious to train these Kikuyu to work for them, they were also hoping that after training, some of them would go back to their people to put into practice the new skill they had acquired. This, they expected, would 'promote an emulation which, it is hoped, will be far reaching'.⁹⁰ It was not part of the original intention of the missionaries to train artisans for the government or commercial firms, as it later turned out to be.

As has also been pointed out, from 1902 onward, a large number of settlers had started to arrive in the

89 M. Murtie (Rev), 'Mission Industrial Enterprise', East African Standard (hereafter EAS), August 27, 1904.

90 KNA: CMS/1/635, op. cit., p. 215.

91 KNA: DO/KYL/1/9, Annual Report, Nyasi District, Appendix I. C. Dundas, Memorandum on Native Cultivation in Nyasi District, p. 1.

country on government invitation to develop plantation agriculture. Southern Kikuyu with its cool climate, attracted the attention of these whitemen and it was here that European settlement first started in the Protectorate.⁹¹ Most of the settlers eventually settled in the Rift Valley, but it was the Kikuyu who, largely because they were agriculturists, were expected to supply labour on their farms. Officials of the government who confessed that they had to spend over half of their time giving 'admonitory cautions' or 'stern injunctions' to Kikuyu Chiefs to supply labour for the settlers, were already fearing by 1908 that 'the Chiefs' name should begin to stink in the nostrils of the Kikuyu' as a result of this incessant demands for labourers.⁹² By 1911, over 9,000 Kikuyu from Muranga district alone were out of their district working for the white settlers.⁹³ As a result of this role which both the government and the settlers expected the Kikuyu to play, the government deliberately refused to encourage 'more extensive and improved cultivation because labour supply may thereby be damaged',⁹⁴ while the settlers frowned at

91 See pp.39-40 above.

92 KNA: DC/KBU/1/1, Handing Over Report, Kianbu district, 1908, p.5.

93 KNA: DC/FH6/1, op. cit., p. 11.

94 KNA: DC/NYI/1/2, Annual Report, Nyeri District, Appendix I. C. Dundas, Memorandum on Native Cultivation in Nyeri District, p. 1.

missions which stressed 'literary education' in their schools.

The settlers were particularly against those Africans who had finished their education at the mission schools and who, instead of staying with their people or working on settlers' estates, had come to Nairobi in search of clerical jobs in government and other departments. Among such people were some Kikuyu who had attended mission schools. Harry Thuku who entered the mission school at Kambiu in 1907 and left there in 1911, got employment with the Standard Bank of South Africa.⁹⁵ In that same year Josiah Njonjo, Thomas Mainbi, Gideon Kubai, and Timothy Mwaura also came to Nairobi and were employed as compositors by the newspaper Leader.⁹⁶ Both Thuku and Njonjo mentioned that they were not the first Kikuyu to be so employed in Nairobi.⁹⁷ Harry Thuku was on a salary of only thirty shillings a month, while Njonjo earned eighty shillings. What the settlers resented was not their salary, according to Njonjo, nor was it the position which they occupied in

95 Harry Thuku, op. cit., p. 12.

96 J. Njonjo, interview, op. cit.

97 H. Thuku, op. cit., p. 11 and J. Njonjo, op. cit.

these places, since Harry Thuku was only a messenger whose duty was to sweep and dust tables.⁹⁸ What the settlers resented was that these Africans did not remain in the Reserves where their labour could easily be made available to them for only eight shillings a month.⁹⁹

From time to time, the settlers had expressed the opinion that since they would have to rely on the Africans to do the manual labour on their farms and since they would continue to play this role for some time to come 'the nearest road to their (i.e. the Africans') happiness would be a practical education.¹⁰⁰ Any other form of education would only turn out 'pampered idlers, with wants beyond their means'¹⁰¹ and that was why 'to compel the nigger to do manlike proper work is the best education in his own interest'.¹⁰²

With the exception of the AIM whose Director, C. E. Hurlburt, expressed the desire to start an Industrial

98 H. Thuku, op. cit., p. 12.

99 J. Njonjo, interview, op. cit.

100 For example, see EAUM, October 24, 1903, and EAS, January 13, 1905.

101 Editorial, EAUM, October 24, 1903.

102 ibid.

Training School in the Protectorate for the Africans in 1904,¹⁰³ no other mission before 1909, supported the view of the settlers that the best type of education for the Africans was vocational training. But at the United Missionary Conference which was held from 7 to 9 June 1909 to 'gain a consensus of opinion as to what principal aim should underlie all mission work in the light of accumulated experience,'¹⁰⁴ many of the delegates made it known for the first time that they agreed with the settlers that 'the native must learn the value of real work before being offered the endowment of literary education',¹⁰⁵ It is not known what led to this change of heart but as some of the missionaries were members of associations intended to promote the welfare of the white community and since some missions also had farms and employed Kikuyu labourers like the white settlers, it could not

103 LO: 6517, Africa Inland Mission, Kijabe, Charles Hurlburt to the Land Officer, March 29, 1904. On Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes in America, see A. C. Fraser, 'Impressions of Hampton Institute' International Review of Mission, hereafter (IRM) No. 1, (1912), pp. 704-13, and H. B. Frissell, 'The Value of Industrial Education', IRM No. 4, (1915), pp. 420-30.

104 Leader of British East Africa (hereafter referred to as Leader), May 15, 1909.

105 ibid.

have been too long before the missionaries were won over to their side.¹⁰⁶ The Conference was therefore able to work out a new scheme which would ensure that 'industrial' education received its right emphasis in all mission schools.

According to the scheme that was worked out by the conference, with the exception of pupils who were too young to be taught any trade, all those who wished to be educated would be required to be on probation for a period of about three months, during which an attempt would be made to determine in which trade they could best be trained. After this period, the pupils would be taken before the District Commissioner in each district where they would be made to pledge that they would remain constantly at their trade for a period of not less than three years. Should any of them decide to leave the school before the end of this period without the consent of the missionary in charge, such a pupil would be declared wanted by the police and when found, would be punished severely. 'General' education would not be ignored but

106 B. G. McIntosh, op. cit. pp. 168-170 for the associations and the role of the missionaries in these associations.

would receive less attention than hitherto and be given in the evening, after the end of the day's work. Through this, it was hoped that the mission schools would no longer turn out 'intellectual imposters (who) aspired beyond what they are able to do'.¹⁰⁷ By emphasising that no pupil could leave his studies before the end of the three year period, the scheme was also intended to solve the current problem of pupils leaving their studies in search of jobs in Nairobi and elsewhere, once they were able to read and write in Swahili. This practice was frowned at by the missionaries because they felt that the pupils had not sufficiently internalised the christian teachings which they intended to impart to them.¹⁰⁸

The scheme came into operation on July 22, 1909 at Kijabe. On that day the District Commissioner for Kiambu was invited by the AIM Director, Mr. Hurlburt, to explain it to the pupils who were reported to be mostly Kikuyu. The number of pupils involved was not given, but it was reported that most of them were not enthusiastic

107 ibid. See also B. G. McIntosh, op. cit., pp. 262-5.

108 UCN/HD-RPA, C/3/3, Report of the United Missionary Conference, Nairobi, June, 1909, p. 26.

111 Stanley Kizungu, Interview, op. cit.

about the new emphasis which was to be placed on industrial training.¹⁰⁹ The same complaint was made at Thogoto when the DC was also invited to the CSM school on October 18, 1909 to witness another of such an agreement.¹¹⁰ There was no report to show that the Kikuyu became enthusiastic about 'industrial' education before the end of the period under review. According to Stanley Kiama who during this time was attending the CSM school at Tumutumu but who was not indentured because he was still too young to learn a trade, most pupils all over Kikuyu resented this new system partly because the original intention of most of them in coming to the mission school was to learn to read and write. It was also resented because the system was reminiscent of the type of agreement which a labourer was forced to conclude with the settler not to leave his estate until he had completed his assignment with him.¹¹¹

The Colonial Administration and African Education in Kikuyu

Before 1909 when the government became directly

109 KNA: DC/KBU/3/8, Annual Report, Kiambu District, 1909, p. 8.

110 ibid.

111 Stanley Kiama, interview, op. cit.

involved in African education, it had limited itself largely to the granting of land to the missions where they could carry on their work. The government also asked the chiefs from time to time to ensure that people sent their children to mission schools. Six of the ten boys with whom Rev. McGregor started a school at Weithaga in 1904 were sent to him by chiefs who were acting on government instruction.¹¹² Musa Gitau, the first Kikuyu priest ordained by the CSM, started his education at the CSM school, Thogoto, because he was sent there by his father after being told to do so by Chief Kioi.¹¹³ There was however no financial contribution by the government to the missions before 1909 and when the government decided to be directly involved in African education, it was largely as a result of pressure from the settlers.

The settlers who consistently claimed that they had been invited to the Protectorate, had persistently called on the government to make adequate provision for the education

112 Proceedings, op. cit., (1903/4), p. 91.

113 W. B. Anderson, 'The Touch in Darkness; An Account of the Presbyterian Churches of East Africa,' (Occasional Research Paper, Makerere University), Vol. 10 (February, 1973), p. 3.

of their children. They claimed that this was one way to encourage them to stay in the Protectorate and that it would act as an incentive for prospective settlers to come into the country.¹¹⁴ Until 1909 however, only the Railway school which was built to cater for the children of the employees of the Uganda Railway together with boarding school which was opened in Kikuyu by the HGFM, were available for the children of the settlers. Rev. Dr. Scott had also formulated a scheme, which was under consideration by the Colonial Office at the end of 1908, for a boarding school to be built also in Kikuyu to cater for between twelve and fourteen children of the settlers.¹¹⁵ There was no direct government involvement in the education of the settlers, in spite of their agitation, until Professor F. N. Fraser from Bombay was sent to the Protectorate by the Colonial Office in 1909 to investigate how best to assist the settlers in the education of their children.

Although Professor Fraser was sent principally to investigate the educational needs of the settlers, he was

114 See the report of the meeting of the Colonists' Association of British East Africa, EAS, January 13, 1905.

115 Leader, January 30, 1909.

also asked not to neglect the education of the other races in the Protectorate. He however made it known that he had instructions 'not to forward plans for the literary education of the negroes, but to consider the possibility of developing industries amongst them.'¹¹⁶

Efforts were made by Professor Fraser to visit the settlers and the missionaries to find out their views about white and African education but no attempt was made by him to find out what the Africans had to say about their education.

Fraser's Report was submitted to the government in October 1909 and among other things it recommended 'a system of sound primary education' for the settlers and called on the government to do everything in its power to effect this.¹¹⁷ On African education, it recommended that this should continue to remain under the control of the mission societies, but that the government should play a more active part by giving grants-in-aid to the schools. Only schools which were considered competent to embark on 'industrial' education were to be assisted by the government. On the teaching of

116 F. N. Fraser, 'Report on Native Education', Leader, October 30, 1909.

117 ibid., 'Report on white education'

English in African schools, Professor Fraser recommended that this should not be encouraged as yet as it might lead to 'self conceit' on the part of the Africans and 'upset the existing system'.¹¹⁸ Both recommendations were no doubt a reflection of the thinking among the settlers and the missionaries on African education.

In September 1910, the newly constituted Board of Education drew up a scheme which was intended to implement some of the recommendations of Professor Fraser. It classified all the schools in the Protectorate according to race. Schools in Group A would be those for the Whites while those in Group B would be for the Asians. Schools in Group C would be sub-divided into two sections - the first section would be for the Arabs and 'Coast Swahilis' while the other one would be for the Africans and would be under the auspices of the missions.¹¹⁹ This arrangement was to persist until the 1960s and it was through this that the government was able to improve facilities in white schools at the expense of those of the Africans, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

118 F. N. Fraser, 'Native Education', op. cit.

119 'Scheme of Education for British East Africa', Leader, September 3, 1910.

To ensure that 'industrial' education was firmly entrenched in African schools every mission school which qualified for government grants receive £5 per indentured pupil for the purchase of tools. Further grants however depended on the number of pupils who passed the examination set each year by selected government departments.¹²⁰ This was to ensure that the missions devoted greater attention to 'industrial' education at the expense of 'literary' or 'general' education. Of the five African schools which qualified for government grants in 1911, three were from Kikuyu. The CSM school, Thogoto got £180 for twenty four pupils, St. Austin's school in Kabete got £202 for twenty-seven pupils and AIM school at Kijabe received £75 for ten pupils.¹²¹ In the following year, the Catholic school, Mangu, the CSM school, Tumutumu and Consolata school, Nyeri were added to the list from Kikuyu¹²² but it is not stated how much these or the three earlier schools received either in 1912 or 1913. Thus before the end of the period under review in this chapter, the mission societies, the settlers

120 J. R. Orr (Director of Education), Education Commission, (Nairobi 1919), Evidence, p. 180

121 ibid.

122 ibid.

and the government had come to the conclusion that the best education for the Africans was that which laid emphasis on the 'practical'. Yet during the same period, a settler Mr. Stevens recognised that 'technical education is very well for a farmer, but would handicap any youth who desires to enter another profession later'.¹²³ Another settler, Mr. A. Davis also expressed the same feeling when he said that

It seems to me that any standard of education which regards the settler in this Protectorate as merely ambitious to train his children as agricultural labourers, will miss the real requirements of the situation. What is wanted is a stamp of good middle-class education where a child can be grounded in all subjects to equip him to take his place, if so determined in the higher standard schools in England.¹²⁴

Kikuyu Response to Western Education, 1898-1913

By exploiting the natural disasters, offering jobs to people, and going out to meet the people in their homes, the missionaries were able to attract some Kikuyu to their schools. At the end of 1913, the CMS school Kabete had

¹²³ Leader, January 23, 1909.

¹²⁴ ibid. January 30, 1909.

¹²⁷ H. B. Scott, op. cit., p. 165.

an average attendance of thirty five boys and seven girls, HGFM school near Nairobi, forty five boys, AIM school, Kijabe fifteen boys and CSM school, Tumutume one hundred and five boys and seventeen girls.¹²⁵ Considering the various methods adopted by the missions to attract pupils to their schools, these figures, with the exception of that of the CSM school, Tumutumu, are not impressive. They show that Western education had not taken a firm root in Kikuyu during this early period. As a matter of fact all the schools complained that they still had to give their pupils and their parents gifts to encourage them to remain in school for any appreciable length of time. At the end of 1913 the Consolata Mission reported that 'progress was slow' in all their schools and 'there were a good many disappointments.'¹²⁶ During the same year the CSM reported that their educational work in Kikuyu appeared to be 'all ploughing and turning up the sod' with most Kikuyu continuing to show 'stolid indifference'.¹²⁷

125 British East Africa Protectorate: Blue Book, year ending March 31, 1913.

126 Conquest for Christ, op. cit., p. 83.

127 H. E. Scott, op. cit., p. 165.

Several factors were responsible for this general lukewarm attitude of the Kikuyu to Western education during this early period.

In the first place, Kikuyu opposition to Western education was an aspect of their reaction to the impact of colonial rule. It has been shown how, prior to the establishment of that rule, the Kikuyu had already come to the conclusion that the whitemen could not be trusted and how both the settlers and the missionaries had taken up Kikuyu land without the consent of the people. As late as 1911, the All Saints' Mission at Kiambu with only sixty acres of land continued to expand its cultivation outside its boundary without permission from the people. The mission also encouraged its landless converts to occupy land which did not belong to them.¹²⁸ The same was the case with the Catholic Mission at Riruta which owned only one acre of land but extended its land by another two acres and seized goats from persons who grazed on this land. Such goats were returned only after the payment of a fine imposed by the mission.¹²⁹ The people in turn decided not

128 KNA; PC/CP.1/4/1, Political Record Book, Kenya Province, Settlement of Native Rights, p. 146.

129 *ibid.*

130 KNA; PC/CP.4/3/1, Annual Reports, Ukamba Province, 1906-1915, p. 20.

to support the missions in their efforts to increase the number of schools in Kikuyu. In 1912 when the HGFM requested for land to put up new schools at Tinganga and Riruta in Kiambu Districts, the request was turned down by the people who publicly declared that they were not interested in mission education.¹³⁰ In the same year, the Consolata mission was also told by the people of Nyeri District that they did not want their schools. According to the DC for the district, 'the people unanimously and emphatically said that they did not wish to have any mission in their midst because they always wanted to take their land'.¹³¹ The Provincial Commissioner (PC) for Kikuyu Province also remarked in 1913 that 'It seems that the missions are not popular with the Kikuyu ... and the native had not yet settled it in his mind that the missions are there purely for the good of the Kikuyus'.¹³² He attributed this to the frequent encroachments that were made on their land by the missions which in turn led to 'an unconciliatory attitude' and 'a lack of confidence amounting to a distrust' on the part of the Kikuyu. They

130 ibid.

131 LO: 3766, op.cit., Acting PC, Nyeri to the Land Officer, Nov. 23, 1912.

132 KNA: PC/CP.4/2/1, Annual Reports, Ukamba Province, 1906-1915, p. 20.

even urged that the missions 'should have been excluded from the reserves',¹³³

The negative response of most Kikuyu to Western education was not only a reaction to the impact of colonialism; it was also because it was felt that it attacked their indigenous socio-economic set up on many grounds. At a very early stage in life, a child was expected to play a role in the economic set up of the family. A boy was trained quite early in life to assist his father in taking care of livestock and it was because he could perform this task that his father was able to attend to the judicial, religious and political affairs of the community. A girl was also brought up to assist her mother on the farm and at home.¹³⁴ By going round the villages and encouraging the young ones to come with them in order to be taught to read and write, the missionaries were undermining the economy of the people, especially as it was during the same time that the chiefs were being called upon to supply labourers to the white settlers.¹³⁵

Furthermore, the ambition of every parent was that

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³⁴ Chapter 1, pp. 11-14 above

¹³⁵ Chapter III, p. 1 below.

his child would grow up to be a worthy member of the community and uphold the good name of the family long after his death. It was for this reason that every parent strove to see that his child was circumcised, that he got a plot of land on which to settle with his wives and children, and that the child grew up to be one whose opinion was highly respected in the society. It was also the responsibility of every parent to ensure that his child did nothing which would disrupt the harmony between the living and the ancestors and it was in an attempt to ensure this that every child was brought up to know the norms of the society and adhere strictly to them. To deviate from them would be to invite the wrath of the ancestors, with calamitous consequences.¹³⁵ Although colonial rule had been established over Kikuyu and its impact was gradually being felt by the people, it was their belief that British rule would not last long and that the white settlers would soon go back to where they had come, as we shall examine more closely in the next chapter.¹³⁶ With this belief, the people became more determined not to allow their society to be polluted by Western influences and to consider

135 ibid., pp.15-19 above.

136 Chapter III, p. 1 below.

Western education irrelevant and undesirable, as will be seen from the incidents that are described presently all over Kikuyu.

In Muranga district, the father of one Mbatia heard on March 18, 1906 that his son had gone to the mission school at Weithaga and he decided to remove the boy from the school. He went to Rev. McGregor with a request that the boy should be allowed to go home to work for him for ten days and this permission was granted.¹³⁷ On getting home, however, the father asked Mbatia not to go back to the school but to sacrifice a sheep to the ancestors for having polluted himself by going to the mission, should also take off the uniform that he had been given by the mission and 'become like other Kikuyu'. The father threatened to beat him up, to curse him and eventually cast him away, if he should disobey him.¹³⁸ None of these threats moved Mbatia as he ran back secretly to the mission when he found that he did not succeed in persuading his father not to oppose his going to school. Seeing what had happened, the father tried to commit suicide by cutting his throat

¹³⁷ KNA: CMS/1/625, op. cit., p. 10.

¹³⁸ ibid

because 'he was about to be disgraced by his son's not consenting to follow the customs of his tribe',¹³⁹ The mother also 'attempted self-destruction, by tying a strap round her neck' because she believed that 'every evil under the sun was going to happen to them on account of the lad's disobedience',¹⁴⁰

This incident was not an isolated one during this early period of Western education in Kikuyu. Mrs Watson at Thogoto found that many of the parent* who came to her to request that their children should be allowed to go home with them to do one type of work or the other never kept their promises to bring them back later. The children were never sent back to the mission at the promised time and it was always necessary for her to go round the villages to try to persuade the parents to return their children to the school. Miss Stevenson at the GSM, Tumutumu found that 'Shauris (discussions) with parents were endless and ruse after ruse were tried to get the pupils away. Individual talks with parents and the pupils made constant

139 Ibid.

140 Proceedings, op. cit., (1906/7), p. 72.

claims on time and energy'.¹⁴¹ Narrating some of her experiences with parents at Tumutumu, Miss Stevenson spoke of a mother who went to the river to drown herself because her daughter Mweru would not leave the mission school when she was asked to do so.¹⁴² On another occasion, one Ngonina who refused to stop his association with the mission was told by his father:

I refuse you for ever and ever, my body is not your body, my blood is not your blood, my flesh is not your flesh. You are not mine, you are dead, we are parted for ever and ever.¹⁴³

The missionaries always found it necessary to assure the pupils that their parents' threat was 'nonsense' and that they should hold out and 'above all to trust in and wait for the mercy of God'.¹⁴⁴ Virtually all my informants who attended school before 1914 spoke of the ordeal which they had to undergo in their desire to be educated. For more than ten years Elijah Mbatia, who now lives in Githumu, dared not go to visit his father because he had disobeyed

141 H. E. Scott, op. cit., p. 161.

142 ibid., p. 163.

143 ibid., p. 165.

144 ibid.,

him by running away to be educated.¹⁴⁵ Paul Kahuho who was going round with Arthur Barlow in Tumutumu in 1909 to persuade people to come to the school also spoke of how no woman would plait hair for his mother or have anything to do with her because she was accused of not discouraging her son from going about with Mr. Barlow'.¹⁴⁶

It has been pointed out that it was the chiefs who were asked by the government to recruit pupils for the mission schools. Such chiefs as Kinyanjui, Karuri and Rukanga, also assisted the missions in getting land in their areas to start their work.¹⁴⁷ It was not long, however, before the chiefs discovered that the missionaries would challenge their authority. As a result of understaffing and the fact that the few district officers spent most of their time in assisting the settlers to get labourers, these officers relied heavily on the missionaries for information about the chiefs and the people in the areas where they were operating. There was hardly any chief that was not either fined or reprimanded because

145 Elijah Mbatia, op. cit.

146 Paul Kahuho, op. cit.

147 See p. 81 above.

of reports that were received from the missionaries.¹⁴⁸

Apart from the intelligence service which they performed for the Administration, the missionaries were hostile to any chief who wanted to recruit some of those who were attending school as labourers for the government and settlers. Their usual claim was that this would disrupt their educational activities.¹⁴⁹ Yet it was the duty of the chiefs to make labourers available. The missionaries even went further to demand that district administrative units should be set up for their converts as they would not want 'pagan' chiefs to exercise any authority over them. By 1912 Governor Girouard had to set up a Native Converts' Committee to consider the position of the converts in Kikuyu territory.¹⁵⁰

In response to these attacks on their authority, the chiefs became progressively hostile to the missionaries and tried to disrupt their educational work. Chief Kazuri in 1906 ordered all those who were attending school in his area to go back to their parents and went to the DC

148 KNA: PC/CP.1/4/1, op. cit., Kikuyu chiefs, pp. 2-3.

149 ibid. See also KNA. DC/KBU/3/37, Political Record Book, Kiambu District, European Settlement.

150 KNA: DC/KBU/3/4, Dagoretti Political Record Book, 1908-1912, pp. 83-88. See also A. J. Temu, op. cit. pp. 111-13.

at Fort Hall to press for this. He also ordered all the chiefs and headmen not to render any form of assistance to the missionaries.¹⁵¹ The Provincial Commissioner had to intervene in the matter before Chief Karuri stopped threatening the missions, especially the CMS.¹⁵² In 1907 Chief Kinyanjui who had earlier assisted the NGFM to start work in Kikuyu, ordered that the mission school in his area should be pulled down.¹⁵³ Elsewhere in Muranga District, the PC who called the chiefs and headmen in 1908 to find out whether or not they wanted the missionaries in their area was told that they did not want them because 'they spoil everything, they prevent the people from going to work and they undermine our authority'.¹⁵⁴ As a result of the general opposition of the chiefs to the missionaries the Governor had to appeal to the chiefs, during his tour of Kikuyu districts in March 1910, to be friendly with the missionaries who 'although not in government service, are

151 Proceedings, op. cit., (1906/7), pp. 72-3.

152 ibid.

153 J. A. P. Kieran, op. cit., p. 202.

154 LO: 3766, PC, Nyeri to Land Officer, op. cit.

good people and the friends of the natives'.¹⁵⁵ In spite of this appeal, sub-chief Muchendu still complained to the DC for Kiambu on June 11, 1910 that his son went to the CMS school at Kabuku without his permission and that he would want him returned to him.¹⁵⁶ The Buganda experience in which Western education spread to the people through the chiefs¹⁵⁷ was not repeated in Kikuyu during the initial stages of Western education in the area. On the contrary, with the exception of the few Kikuyu who defied their parents by going to the mission schools, the general opinion of the people was that Western education had little or nothing to offer them. This was still the time when most people believed that colonial rule would soon come to an end. It was not until the period of the First World War that the people realised that they were mistaken and that they needed to take Western education much more seriously.

155 KNA: DC/KBU/3/8, op. cit., p. 9.

156 ibid.

157 For a discuss of this issue see C. W. Furley, 'Education and the Chiefs in East Africa in the inter-war period', (University of East Africa Social Sciences Council Conference, History Papers, 1968/69), pp. 66-82.

CHAPTER III

KIKUYU EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS DEFINED 1914 - 1928

The First World War and Its Effects on Kikuyu Attitude to Western Education

Cege wa Kibiru, a famous Kikuyu seer, had predicted at the beginning of this century, when more whites were coming into the country to settle, that they would one day go back the way they had come.¹ The Kikuyu had therefore submitted themselves to the various demands of the Administration but however refused to accept enthusiastically the new ideas which came with colonialism, in the belief that before long, the whitemen would disappear and colonial rule would come to an end.² When the First World War broke out in August 1914, most Kikuyu believed that Cege wa Kibiru's prediction was about to be fulfilled. There was much rejoicing to the extent that a white district official could not help but lament:

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- 1 G. Mucuha 'Cege wa Kibiru', (B.A. dissertation 1968 University of Nairobi) File Reference UCN/HD-RPA B/2/2(2), see also Muriuki, G., op. cit., p. 137.
 - 2 ibid. See also KNA; DC/KBU/1/7, Annual Report, Kiambu District, 1914/15, p. 1.

The Kikuyu do not love us; they will prefer our absence. They bear with our presence perforce and with but a passive subjection³

Efforts were made immediately to explain to the people that war had broken out between the Government and the Germans and that 'the lot of the natives in this country would be a hard one' if the Germans were to win the war.⁴ Meetings were arranged in the districts where government officials tried to explain to the people what the government expected from them. At one of such meetings which took place at Nyeri between the Acting PC, Mr. H. R. Tate and the chiefs, the people were informed that they would be expected to contribute substantially towards the success of the war. The chiefs would be relied upon to provide the men who would carry the weapons and luggages of soldiers to the war front. They would also be relied upon to encourage the people to sell their food and livestock to the Army at lower prices.⁵

Through their kapiteni whom they had used in the past

³ ibid.

⁴ KNA, PC/CP. 1/1/1/1, op. cit., p. 228.

⁵ ibid.

to recruit labourers for the administration and the settlers,⁶ the chiefs started immediately to meet the demands of the administration. The kapiteni went from house to house forcing people to report at the office of the chief for medical examination. Those who did not cooperate with these men were tortured and the kapiteni did not hesitate to carry out raids on villages to secure the required number of men for the carrier corps.⁷

After medical examination, those who were brought forward were arranged into three groups - those who were certified to be medically fit were taken to Nairobi to await their departure to the various war fronts. The next group was made up of those who although not medically fit, were strong enough to work on settler estates. The war therefore afforded the settlers an opportunity of securing labourers with ease. Those who were sent back to their homes were those who were neither fit for the war nor

6 On the role of the kapiteni who were also called njama, see Rev. A. W. McGregor's account in Proceedings, 1906/7, p. 73.

7 Philip, H.R.A., 'The labour Problem in the Kenya Province', KNA: PC/PC.4/1/1, op. cit. 1916/17, Appendix 1. See also Rosberg, C. G. and J. Nottingham, The Myth of 'mau mau'; Nationalism in Kenya (Nairobi, 1966), pp. 26-32 for a general description of the first world war and the Africans in the Protectorate.

suitable for the settlers.⁸ Altogether between March 1915 when recruitment started and August 1917 when carriers were no longer needed, a total of 14,293 people from Nyeri District, 8,711 from Muranga and 4,958 from Kiambu District were taken away to serve as porters.⁹ The number of those who went to work for the settlers is not known but according to an official report, 'never in the history of this Province (i.e. Kikuyu Province) has (sic) so many males been absent from the Reserve as is the case at present'.¹⁰ So many were those who were forced to leave their homes that it was 'possible to walk for miles in the heart of the Reserve without seeing a young able-bodied native anywhere'.¹¹ As a result of the large number of men who were away from their homes, those agricultural jobs that were done by men, such as the breaking up of virgin land in readiness for planting, had to be done by women or

8 Between March 23 and July 31, 1917, a total of 21,575 Kikuyu from Nyeri and Muranga Districts were brought forward for examination. Out of this number 7,839 were declared to be totally unfit and 5,217 were fit to work on settlers' farms. The rest were sent to the Corps Depot. No records exist for an earlier period. KNA: PG/PG.1/1/1, op. cit. p. 244.

9 ibid., p. 245.

10 ibid.

11 ibid., p. 62.

abandoned altogether.¹² The famine which occurred in 1918, and which will be mentioned later in the chapter, was caused partly by this absence of the men from their homes.

Although the government was anxious to recruit carriers to assist the soldiers during the war, not much was done to cater for these people while they were outside their homes. According to Dr. H. R. Philp, the missionary doctor in charge of Kikuyu territory throughout the period of the war, as many as four hundred Kikuyu died in one month alone either because of poor feeding or because of the diseases which many of them contracted while out on the field.¹³ The PC also reported that about 30,000 Kikuyu lost their lives between 1914 and 1918 as a result of the war.¹⁴

As the Kapiteni raided the villages for carriers and as those who were so recruited later came back to narrate their sad experiences, some of those who were still awaiting their turn to go to the front decided to look for a way of escaping this conscription. Some of them escaped to

12 ibid.

13 H. R. Philp, op. cit., p. 71.

14 KNA: PC/CP.1/1/2, op. cit. p. 32.

the Rift Valley and Maasailand where they knew they would not easily be detected.¹⁵ Others voluntarily went to work for the settlers, a thing that no kikuyu would have dreamt of doing before the war.¹⁶ There was yet another group who took to schooling, also as a way of escaping the carrier corps. As was explained in the last chapter, the missionaries were in the habit of seeking exemptions for their adherents whenever the chiefs were asked to recruit labourers for the administration or the settlers. Their argument was always that this would disrupt their work.¹⁷ With the outbreak of war, the missions were equally opposed to their pupils being enlisted as carriers. The District Commissioners allowed those who attended mission schools regularly to wear distinctive badges which would prevent

15 From Kiambu District, 1,600 families were reported to have left for other parts of the Protectorate in 1916 alone. KNA: DC/KBU/1/10, Annual Report, 1916/17, p. 14. On the movement of people from the other Kikuyu districts during and after the war years see F. Furedi, 'The Kikuyu Squatters in the Rift Valley, 1918-1929' Hadith vol. 5, 1922, pp.177.

16 In Muranga District alone, 18,000 people were reported to have 'signed on' between 1914 and 1916 KNA: DC/FH6/1, 'op. cit.', p. 15. Annual Report

17 Chapter II, p.96.

the kapiteni from molesting them.¹⁸ It was this which enabled those who attended mission schools not only to escape the war, but also to escape the harsh treatment that the kapiteni meted out to the other people.

Such a preferential treatment to the 'mission boys' did not escape the attention of the people. Some people began to realise that while the government was prepared to accord those who had gone to mission school some degree of self-respect, it would continue to treat others as if they did not need this self-respect. From 1915 onwards reports from all over Kikuyu spoke of the fact that 'education is eagerly sought after and all the schools are full'.¹⁹ Both Rev. Knapp and Rev. Henderson of the GMS observed in 1916 that the 'Kikuyu attitude to education is undergoing a remarkable development ... the bitter opposition of the past is modifying very perceptively'.²⁰ The two of them, however, realised that 'the desire to escape being sent to the front' was the motive behind this

¹⁸ KNA: PC/CP.6/5/1, 'Native Affairs: Education of Natives'.

¹⁹ KNA: PC/CP.4/2/2, op. cit.

²⁰ KNA: DC/KBU/1/7, Kiambu District Annual Report 1915/16, p. 29.

²¹ KNA: GMS/1/625, Weithaga Mission Log Book, Annual Report, 1917, p. 2.

sudden change of attitude.²¹ In 1917, an official report mentioned that 'the desire for learning becomes more general each year among the Akikuyu ... (with) more pupils enrolled at central and village schools'.²² So concerned was the PC about the effect of this trend on the recruitment of carriers that he was forced in 1917 to complain to the missions about 'the considerable part of the potential labour supply which has been absorbed in the apparently unproductive occupation of attending school'.²³

A critical stage was reached in 1917 when it appeared as if the Germans were going to win the war in East Africa. All those who had hitherto been exempted from participation in the war were therefore called upon to enlist. The missionaries found that their pupils could no longer be left out and they took steps to minimise the hardship which this order would bring upon them. Rev. Leakey of the CMS and Rev. Arthur of the CSM acting on behalf of the other missionaries approached the government with the request that the missionaries should be allowed

²¹ KNA: PC/CP.4/2/2, op. cit. 1916/17, p. 45.

²² KNA: PC/CP.4/2/2, op. cit., 1916/17, p. 2.

²³ KNA: CMS/1/625, Weithaga Mission Log Book, Annual Report, 1917, p. 2.

to organise the recruitment of their pupils instead of allowing the Kapiteni to do so as had been the case hitherto.²⁴ The two of them toured the different mission stations to explain the situation to the other missionaries and their pupils and to request the missionaries to organise their own recruitment.²⁵ A total of 1,800 Kikuyu mission adherents were recruited through this means and became members of the Kikuyu Mission Volunteer Carrier Corps (KMVC). Those who for one reason or the other could not join the corps were treated as 'conscientious objectors' and allowed to continue with their studies, a provision which was not made for those who were recruited through the kapiteni.²⁶

Members of the KMVC were camped at Thogoto CSM station and not with those who were conscripted by the government and camped at Nairobi, with little or no attention to their welfare. At Thogoto the mission adherents

24 ibid.

25 ibid. See also E. N. Wanyoike, The African Pastor: The Life and Work of the Rev. Wanyoike Kamawa, 1888-1970 (Nairobi, 1974), p. 38.

26 Kikuyu 1918 - Report of the United Conference of Missionary Societies in British East Africa, UCN/HD - RPA, C/3/4, p. 5.

were taught how to take care of themselves while out on the field and were well taken care of throughout their stay at Thogoto. While out on the field, the 'mission boys' were not camped in the same place as members of the carrier corps. Apart from their food that was better prepared, efforts were made by the missionaries who accompanied them to the front, to ensure that their adherents did not substantially feel the difference between life at home and life at the front. Regular church services were organised on Sundays and during week days Bible studies, prayer meetings and other religious activities were organised for them when they were not at work. They were also given prompt medical attention. At the end of the war, Dr. Arthur, the leader of the corps, could boast that 'casualties (among members of the KMVC) compared to the ordinary carrier corps were light'.²⁷ Harry Thuku, the Kikuyu politician, also noted how unlike those in the KMVC,

The ones in the carrier corps had the hardest time, and after the war they did not like to discuss what they had seen because so many of their friends had died.²⁸

27 ibid.

28 H. Thuku, op. cit. pp. 18 - 19.

From the way these Kikuyu were treated many more became even more desirous of joining the mission schools after the war. Both Paul Kahuho from the GSM Tumutumu and Samuel Ngoci from the GMS, Kahuhia mentioned how many people, including their brothers whom they had persuaded in vain to attend mission schools in the past, went to enrol at the mission schools after the war because of the harsh treatment which they had received as members of the carrier corps.²⁹ Asked why he had to wait until 1918 before attending the GMS school at Kihumbuini, Daniel Ngoci said:

I had thought that it was better to continue to herd stock than going to the mission school but when I saw how those who went to school were treated during the war and how much I suffered during the same time, I realised that it was better to go to school than continue to herd cattle.³⁰

Francis Gichohi, another Kikuyu who started to attend the mission school at Tetu after the war also remarked how

29 Paul Kahuho, interviewed at Tumutumu on 28/7/75 while Samuel Ngoci was interviewed at Kahuhia on 7/8/75.

30 Daniel Ngoci, interviewed at Thiuta, on 15/9/75.

'the war had taught me that there was no hope for the one who was not educated in the way of the whiteman'.³¹

Although those who were educated found that they were treated better than those people who were not educated, at all, their contact with Africans from other parts of the continent showed them how limited their education was and how much they still had to go if they were to catch up with the whitemen. The war brought to East Africa conscripts from both West and Central Africa. Hitherto the Kikuyu had only come across educated Baganda and liberated slaves who were trained at Freretown and Rabai on the Coast. Although these people were the first government African clerks in Nairobi, their education usually did not go beyond the equivalent of present day primary school standard.³² The Kikuyu learned for the first time that many West Africans had not only finished their secondary education but some had even gone to Britain and elsewhere for further studies. There and then, many of the educated Kikuyu who took part in the war vowed to go back to their people to urge them to educate their

31 Francis Gichohi, interviewed at Tetu on 12/7/75.

32 H. Thuku, op. cit., p. 15.

children. They also vowed to put pressure on the government and the missions to improve educational facilities in Kikuyu.³³ At the end of 1918, the DC for Kianbu could report that 'A Central College for Gikuyu is greatly desired by the more educated natives'.³⁴

It was not only the educated Kikuyu who were affected by such a contact. Largely as a result of the efforts of Max Yergan, a Black American from Shaw University in the United States of America, some Kikuyu among other members of the carrier corps, were able to start schooling before they left their various camps. Max Yergan had been sent to East Africa, at his own request, by the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) to work among the porters. He was able to convince them of the need to be educated and together with six other Black Americans, he was able to start night schools at six of the camps belonging to members of the carrier corps.³⁵ Luca Kabui and Teresio

33 Stanley Kiama, interviewed at Ngaini, 14/7/75.

34 KNA: DC/KBU/1/11, 1917, Annual Report, Kianbu District, 1917-18, p. 36. In that same year, the DC also observed that 'The yeast of civilisation is stirring the Gikuyu strongly'. Ibid. p. 12.

35 K. J. King, 'The American Negro at Missionary to East Africa: A critical aspect of African Evangelism', (University of East Africa, Social Science Council Conference, 1968/69), pp. 96-108.

Mucheru who were among the Kikuyu who benefitted from this night school, spoke of how the Black Americans encouraged them to take Western Education seriously as this was the only way by which they could compete on an equal footing with the whites in the country. This stimulated them to want to continue with their schooling after the war even though they had refused to go to school in the past when asked to do so by the missionaries.³⁶ This widespread desire to go to school could be seen from the fact that whereas there were seven hundred and nine pupils in the CSM schools in Kikuyu in 1914, by 1917 this number had increased to eight hundred and ninety-three and by 1920 to 2,983.³⁷ In Kahuhia where the CMS had a school with a number of out-schools' attached, there were altogether two hundred pupils in 1914; but by 1919, six hundred and fifteen pupil were attending these schools.³⁸

As more people became willing to go to school, so also was pressure put on the missions to allow more schools

36 Luca Kabui was interviewed at Kagongo (Nyeri) on 16/7/75, and Teresio Mucheru at Nogriri on 13/8/75.

37 R. Macpherson op. cit., table on p. 66.

38 Proceedings, 1919, p. 40. In that year, Rev. Canon Leakey at Kabete observed that 'soon the problem will be how to deal with the multitudes asking to be taught'. Ibid.

to be put up. Hitherto and because the Kikuyu had not been interested in Western education, it was largely through the efforts of the missionaries that the few schools in Kikuyu were opened. The missions made use of their senior pupils to teach the pupils in the 'out-schools' without whose support the missions could not have been able to expand beyond their stations. Any effort to extend beyond the stations was however generated through the initiative of the individual missions concerned.³⁹

After the war and as a result of the new attitude towards western education, this trend was reversed. Instead of the missionaries persuading the people with gifts to come to their schools, it was the people who were pleading with the missions to assist them in starting schools in their midst. They promised to donate land for this purpose, to collect materials for the building of the schools and to pay the salaries of the teachers whom the missions were asked to send to them.⁴⁰ In most cases, it was the educated

39 Chapter II, pp. 48-52.

40 This question of whole communities turning toward Western education after the war as opposed to a few individuals before this time was not limited to Kikuyu. For examples from West Africa, see IRM, post-war issues.

Kikuyu who took part in the war who encouraged their people to invite the missions.

In Muthiria, Kiragu Nwithigia, Lazaro Giceru and Hoseah Karanja who were members of the KMVC came back from the war to appeal to Rev. McGregor at Weithaga to assist them in starting a school in their home. So anxious were they to start the school that they did not wait for Rev. McGregor to obtain approval from the government for this scheme before they started to conduct a school at Muthiria.⁴¹ Rev. McGregor subsequently ordered the building to be pulled down but the people in the area would not allow this order to be carried out.⁴²

Samuel Wanjihia was another Kikuyu who started a school in his area. He had earlier on run away from home to start his education with the AIM at Kinyona due to opposition from his parents. He also took part in the war as a member of the KMVC and as a result of his experience during the war, he too was determined to see that his people at Kiiri were

41 Cole, K. The Cross Over Mount Kenya History of mount Kenya Church in the Diocese of mount Kenya, 1900-1930 (Nairobi, 1900), p. 44.

42 ibid. Rev. McGregor also reported that ten 'village' schools were started in Kathukeni area alone in 1918. with an average attendance of over nine hundred. Proceedings, 1917/18, p. 34.

educated. He therefore made an appeal to the AIM to assist him in realising this objective. The mission however turned down the request on the ground that the mission was poor.⁴³ Wanjihia had to direct his appeal to his people who although they had initially been hostile to Western education, came round to put up the school building and to pay the salary of Samuel Wanjihia who stayed behind for a while to teach in the school.⁴⁴ Other Kikuyu who spear-headed the movement to spread western education to all parts of Kikuyu included Samson Njoroge from Gatheru, Philip Kamere from Mukangu, James Kaborogo from Gituto, Job Gacanja from Githunguri and Moses Mariithi from Kihumbuini.⁴⁵ It was the Kikuyu church elders who directed the affairs of each school, with the missionary in charge paying only occasional visits to the schools.⁴⁶

43 Samuel Wanjihia, interviewed at Githumu on 1/9/75.

44 ibid.

45 For the activities of these and other Kikuyu see Proceedings, 1916/17 - 1919/20, K. Cole, op. cit., pp. 43-51 and W.B. Anderson, 'A History of the Church in Kenya, 1844 to Now' (Occasional Research Papers, Makerere University, February 1973, pp. 33-34.

46 ibid. p. 40 op.cit. 'the motive which brings the Kikuyu in many instances to seek instruction is the desire for secular education rather than a genuine interest in religion'.

In most cases the missions did not turn down the request of the people for schools to be opened in their midst. Rev. Arthur had anticipated in 1917 that with the new spirit among the Kikuyu, it would be possible to evangelise the whole of Kikuyu within ten years. The DC was however less optimistic for he realised that 'the motive which brings the Kikuyu in many instances to seek instruction is the desire for secular education rather than a genuine interest in religion'.⁴⁷ Nevertheless the Consolata Mission which had planned to build a seminary after the war had to abandon this project in order to be able to compete with the other missions which, because of their desire to use the school for evangelical purposes, were ready to listen to Kikuyu demands for schools.⁴⁸ By the end of 1918, the PC for Kikuyu Province had to alert both the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) and the Director of Education about the rivalry which was going on among the various missions in Kikuyu. Each mission, in an effort to play out the other missions from a given area, did not

47 KNA: PC/CP.4/2/2, op. cit., p. 15

48 Conquest For Christ In Kenya, 1902-1952, (a Consolata Mission publication) pp. 115-6.

hesitate to give in to Kikuyu demands for schools even when they were not sure of being able to provide qualified teachers to run such schools. He warned both the CNC and the Director to do something about this "go-as-you-please method" of educating the natives by the different missions',⁴⁹ as he was sure that such a trend would sooner or later prove 'inimical to the interests both of the natives and the country at large'.⁵⁰ Mr. Northcote, the DC for Kiambu had to warn the missionaries who were out to see that as many of the new schools as were springing up in Kikuyu came under the control of their particular missions as follows:

Christianity is bound to advance rapidly in the near future among the Kikuyu, but the main desire is to obtain education rather than a new religion.⁵¹

Rev. Canon Leakey of the CMS also admitted in 1922 that what the Kikuyu were asking for was education rather than christianity. According to him:

49 PC, Nyeri, to the Chief Native Commissioner, September 14, 1918, KNA: PC/CP.6/5/1, op. cit.

50 ibid.

51 KNA: DC/KBU/1/11, op. cit., p. 36.

You cannot realise what it is like now; the young Kikuyu are just crying for education, education, education. And if we can't give it to them along with christianity to satisfy their demands, they mean to get it otherwise.⁵²

The desire of the missions to use the new schools that were springing up all over Kikuyu for evangelical purposes, made it difficult for them to desist from sending untrained teachers to the schools. So long as a person was able to teach the catechism and prepare people for baptism, he was sent to teach in one of the new schools. The DC for Nyeri who visited some of these schools in his district in 1920 observed that most of the teachers 'are not themselves sufficiently educated to undertake teaching'⁵³ and predicted that their pupils 'will never be able to earn their living in literary vocations'.⁵⁴ The Provincial Commissioner who also inspected some of the schools in the three Kikuyu districts, in 1920 also remarked that 'mission zeal does not meet with their method of teaching' and recommended that efforts should be made to ensure that more

52 Harry Leakey to Mrs. Leakey, cited in Temu, A. J. op. cit., p. 148.

53 KNA: DC/NYI/1/2, Annual Report, Nyeri, District, 1920, p. 15.

54 ibid.

trained teachers were recruited for the schools.⁵⁵

In fairness to the missions, it should be noted that the Kikuyu had hitherto not been interested in western education and that it was not possible to produce overnight the required number of trained teachers. In 1920 for instance, a total of thirty six new schools were opened in Kiambu district and forty six were opened in Muranga district.⁵⁶ In that year the missions had to confess that 'the path of education is opening more widely than missionary forces are able to use it'.⁵⁷ The mistake of the missions was to have allowed the Kikuyu to build schools all over the place when they knew that they did not have enough trained teachers; but since the people were prepared to pay for the building and upkeep of these schools, and since the missions saw the possibility of spreading christianity through them, they found that they

55 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2 op. cit., 1920, p. 163.

56 KNA: DC/KBU/1/13, Annual Report, 1919/20, p. 26. Rev. Arthur was also reported to have urged the settlers in that year to 'set up schools on their estates so as to solve their labour problems' ibid. district, see KNA: DC/FHM/1, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1920/21, p. 2. Report from Muranga District in 1920 also spoke of 'applications are constantly being received for fresh schools' ibid.

57 KNA: DC/FH.6/1 op. cit., p. 23.

had little or no option but to give in to the demand for more schools.

In addition to the inability of the missions to provide trained teachers for the new schools, the missions could not respond to Kikuyu demands for provision to be made for the higher education of their children. At the end of 1924, there were a total of one hundred and four schools in Nyeri. Of this number ninety seven were 'out-schools' and 'intermediate' schools where education did not go beyond standard four. Of the 5,419 pupils that were in school in the same year, less than one thousand were in the 'central' schools at Tumutumu and Mathari where full primary education was given.⁵⁸ Elsewhere in Kikuyu, only at the mission headquarters were there facilities for the full primary education, while most of those who started schooling at the 'out-schools' did not go beyond this stage.⁵⁹ One Petro Kigundu who had been with the CMS since 1900 was said to have complained in 1924 to Rev. Handley Hooper of the mission that they

58 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 21.

59 Only 18% of the pupils attending school in 1924 were able to read and write 'reasonable well'. ibid.

'had not given the Africans the training and education which would fit them to carry out any responsibility'.⁶⁰

In 1925 the CMS claimed that it was 'too poor to undertake the training of teachers'⁶¹ and the CSM also complained about their financial position as 'our biggest embarrassment'.⁶²

Whatever reasons might have prevented the missions from being able to expand educational facilities in Kikuyu, the people started to feel that the missions were deliberately refusing to listen to their demands for improved education and that this was partly because the missions were only interested in Christianity and not the education of the people. According to Moses Muriithi who started the first school at Kikumbuini shortly after the First World War:

The missionaries only wanted us to become Christians but not educated, even though the white settlers and the Asians were, during the same period anxious that their children should be educated to the highest level.⁶³

⁶⁰ A. J. Temu, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 148.

⁶² *ibid.* p. 149.

⁶³ Moses Muriithi, interviewed at Kihumbuini on 13/9/75.

In addition to the accusation that the missionaries only wanted to produce uneducated christians, the Kikuyu also opposed the increasing emphasis that was being placed on 'industrial' training in African schools and accused the missions, through whom African education was conducted, of being responsible for this trend.

Government Post-War Educational Reforms and Their Implications On Educational Development in Kikuyu

On July, 8, 1918, the government appointed a Commission, to consider the separate educational requirements of the whites, the Asians and the Africans. As was the case with the Fraser Commission of 1909,⁶⁴ this Commission was set up in response to agitations from the settlers who accused the Government of not going far enough in educating their children. As a result of the Fraser Commission, a government boarding school had been built in Nairobi to cater for the children of the whites, but most settlers considered that this was not adequate. Those settlers who were outside Nairobi complained that they had been neglected by the Government while those who were in Nairobi wanted the

64 Chapter II, pp. 82-84.

...local education' should be ...
 ...with a view to
 increasing the efficiency of labour and for the
 general improvement of the intelligence of the
 natives' *ibid.*, November, 29, 1913.

government to open Kindergarten schools in addition to the Central School. This agitation had started before the war but was suspended to allow all energy to be directed towards the successful prosecution of the war. As soon as the war came to an end, the agitation was resumed.⁶⁵

In addition to this, the settlers had also started to complain before the war that not many Africans were coming forward to work on their estates. Their pressure on the government had led to the appointment of a Labour Commission in November 1912 to investigate 'reasons for the shortage of Native Labour'.⁶⁶ The war had forced many Africans to go and work on settler estates but as soon as the war came to an end, people became once more reluctant to work for the settlers. It was in an effort to combat this reluctance of the Africans to work on the estates that the settlers started to agitate for compulsory

65 The settlers' newspaper, Leader carry reports of the different meetings of settlers Associations where such complaints were made.

66 The Report recommended, among other things, that 'agricultural and technical education' should be encouraged among the Africans 'with a view to increasing the efficiency of labour and for the general improvement of the intelligence of the natives' ibid., November, 29, 1913.

industrial education in mission schools as this would 'eventually tend to bring the natives out of the reserve' and 'make labour supply more regular in good seasons',⁶⁷ Some Government officials were also alarmed at the trend in African education, as a result of the willingness of the missionaries to give in to the demands of the people for schools to be opened in their areas, even when the missions had not got the resources for making these schools efficient. Many of them therefore called on the government to work out a policy which would make it difficult for the missions to give in readily to the demand of the people.⁶⁸

The Commission was headed by Mr. J. W. Barth, the Acting Chief Secretary and it was made up of eleven members, ten of whom were whites. There were three missionaries on the Commission - Rev. J. W. Arthur of the CSM, Thogoto, Rev. J. Britton of the CMS and Rev. Father J. Cayzac of the HGFM. Members of the Commission visited the settlers in their various places and allowed the various missions

67 See for example the resolutions adopted at the Convention of Associations meeting on July 18, 1917 in ibid., July 1917.

68 KNA: PC/CP.6/5/5/1 1, op. cit.

71 The Times, December 30, 1918.

to express their views on African education. Except for Mr. Ezekiel Apinde, an African teacher at Maseno CMS school who submitted a 'memorandum' of four lines to the Commission, no African opinion was consulted.⁶⁹

While arguing forcefully that their children should be given the best education possible in the country, the settlers generally opposed literary education for the Africans on the ground that such an education would make the Africans look forward to 'clerkships and similar occupations rather than entry into the labour field'.⁷⁰ In the December 1918 session of the Legislative Council Mr. W. C. Hunter, claiming to speak on behalf of the other settlers, claimed that

The education of the native can only be very gradual and cannot hope to begin at a point to which it had taken western civilisation hundred^s of years to attain. Gradually the native must be taught the value and the benefit of work ... manual labour is what he must first be taught, and that, with exceptions ... only by long and painful stages can he appreciate and make use of a literary education.⁷¹

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- 69 KNA: K. 370 Education Report of the Education Commission of the East African Protectorate, 1919 p.2.
- 70 KNA: 370 Education Evidence of the Education Commission, 1919, p. 144.
- 71 The Leader, December 30, 1918.

The missionaries, on the other hand, were more concerned about preserving their hold on African education. According to Rev. Bergmans who presented a memorandum to the Commission, 'education does tend to make the natives swollen headed unless they are grounded in religion'.⁷² Even government officials such as G. W. Hobley, a Provincial Commissioner, spoke in favour of 'industrial' education for the Africans. According to him,

no teaching should cause the natives to look down on manual labour. The bed-rock of what the great majority of natives should learn is agriculture; it must be agriculture; the African must not be divorced from the soil.⁷³

In 1919, the Commission submitted its report. It recommended the establishment of kindergarten schools for the whites at Nairobi, Nakuru and Eldoret, two more primary schools with boarding facilities at Nakuru and Eldoret, and one 'Central' school for the Protectorate and Nairobi where 'education should definitely attain the matriculation standard'.⁷⁴ Teachers to be recruited for these schools

72 KNA: K. 370 Education, Evidence, op. cit. p. 130.

73 ibid., p. 150.

74 ibid., Report, p. 3.

were to be of 'the highest class available',⁷⁵ while 'money should be liberally spent in obtaining the right staff'.⁷⁶

On African education, the Commission was of the opinion that the missions should still be the recognised agency for the control of African education. This was because Christianity was 'one great element for the civilisation of the natives'; and since 'civilisation' would in time 'remove the natives from their own woes and restraints', it was essential that 'Christian morals and restraints' should replace what was going to be destroyed in the Africans by this 'civilisation'.⁷⁷

Furthermore, the Commission agreed with the settlers that the African was 'a person who has to earn his living by manual labour'.⁷⁸ It was however obvious that 'a native who has had some education and has had his intellect developed on proper lines must be a better labourer than

75 ibid. p. 4.

76 ibid.

77 ibid. p. 7.

78 ibid.

a totally uneducated labourer'.⁷⁹ For this reason 'Industrial' education alone would not be given to the Africans. 'Literary' education was therefore recommended as 'an essential preliminary to effective technical education'. Up to eleven years of age, the education in the mission schools was to be literary but this was to include 'hand and eye training gradually verging to the purely technical'.⁸⁰

Lastly, the Commission recommended that the system whereby grants to the mission schools were based on results should be discontinued as the various missions had complained that this system did not make for proper planning in their schools. Instead of this, government grants should be given to all the schools with the provision that those schools that failed to meet the required government standard should forfeit their grants. To ensure that schools were run on a proper basis, inspectors should be recruited by the government who would go round the various schools to see what was going on there.⁸¹

79 ibid.

80 ibid.

81 ibid. p. 8.

The view of the government on the Report of the Commission is not known but the Director of Education was quoted in 1920 as saying that it would soon be easy for Africans who passed through mission schools to 'come out of the Reserve and give considerable help in the present labour difficulty'⁸² as a result of the recommendations of the Commission. The 'Departmental Instructions' issued to all the mission schools receiving government grants in 1922 also stated that

Every boy and girl for whom grant is received shall according to his or her ability or inclination, be selected for some form of vocational training.⁸³

Agriculture would also be 'a leading branch of vocational training in all schools'.⁸⁴

At a time when the settlers were urging the government to train the Africans to be useful on their farms, the Asians were also complaining that they were not given adequate representation in the Legislative Council as the

82 The Leader, July 8, 1920

83 Education Department: Departmental Instructions Governing Native Education Department, 1920, p. 10.

84 ibid.

85 H. D. Wolff, Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930, (Nairobi, 1973), p. 107.

whites. From this controversy arose another demand by the settlers for the government to train African artisans to replace the Asians.

Some Asians had settled along the Coast even before the arrival in the 1820s of Sultan Sayyid Said on the East African Coast, and the encouragement which he gave to the Asian financiers had enabled the Arabs to penetrate into the interior of East Africa to trade with the people.⁸⁵ It was, however, not until the building of the Uganda Railway between 1895 and 1901 that many Asians started to settle in the interior of modern Kenya as traders and artisans.⁸⁶ By 1920 there were over 25,000 Asians already living in the country.⁸⁷

On the other hand, the white settlers started to come into the country in large numbers from 1902 when the government decided to encourage Europeans to settle in the country and develop it agriculturally. In 1906, both the Executive and Legislative councils were created. There

85 N. R. Bennett, Mirambo of Tanzania, 1840-1884, (New York, 1971), pp. 16 - 23.

86 J. S. Mangat, A History of the Asians in East Africa, (Oxford, 1969), Chapter I.

87 R. D. Wolff, Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930, (Nairobi, 1974), p. 107.

were eight members in the legislative council and although there were only 1,814 whites living in the country, they had two representatives on the council. It was not until 1909 that the first Asian, A. M. Jeevanjee, was appointed to the Council 'as an experiment', and when his appointment expired in 1911, no Asian was appointed to the council again for the next decade.⁸⁸

In spite of this disparity in the Legislative Council, the settlers wanted to have their representatives elected rather than nominated by the Governor. In response to this demand, a committee of the legislative council recommended in 1917 that ten Europeans be elected to the council but that two Asians be nominated. African interests were to be represented by the CNC.⁸⁹ In 1920 eleven members were elected to represent the 8,000 whites in a Council of thirty-one.⁹⁰ The Asians considered that their economic importance in the country coupled with the fact that they numbered about 30,000, demanded that they should be allowed to elect, at least, an equal number of members

88 C. G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 33.

89 ibid. resolutions of the various settlers' associations can be found in Kaura Obaxeyex.

90 ibid.

to the council and they started to agitate for this. The controversy which this demand sparked off was felt in Kenya, India and in Britain and was not resolved until 1923 with the publication of the Devonshire White Paper declaring the paramountcy of African interests in the country.⁹¹

As the controversy went on, the settlers openly criticised the missions for their failure to train sufficient African artisans who would have been able to drive the Asian artisans out of business by their lower wages. They also demanded that instead of the government paying huge sums of money as grants to the missions, the government should put up a number of schools on its own where, within a short time, many African artisans would be produced.⁹²

In response to this settlers' criticism Rev. J. W. Arthur of the CSM wrote a paper entitled 'Native Education: What the Missions of British East Africa Are Doing' in which he defended the role of the missions in African

⁹¹ The full text of the paper is reproduced in C. G. Rosberg, and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 69.

⁹² The resolutions of the various settlers' Associations could be found in Kenya Observer.

education. Contrary to the accusation of the settlers that the missions had not trained sufficient artisans to replace the Asian artisans, Rev. Arthur pointed out that it was not the duty of the missions to 'produce men skilled in various branches of trade for the purpose of supplying with educated and trained men the various posts open to them in the country'.⁹³ Mission interest in 'industrial' education was out of the conviction that 'every native ought to work, and that work is a necessary part of christian character'.⁹⁴

The missions also brought in J. H. Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council in London, to influence the colonial office not to give in to the settlers' demand that African education should be taken out of mission control. Oldham's memorandum entitled 'Education Policy in Africa' in which he argued for mission and Government co-operation in the education of the people under British rule, culminated in the 'Derby Day Meeting' of June 6, 1923 which also favoured co-operation between the missions and

93 J. Arthur, 'Native Education; What The Missions of British East Africa Are Doing', The Leader, May 29, 1920.

94 ibid.

the various governments in African education.⁹⁵

These developments notwithstanding, the Governor in Kenya promised the settlers in the Legislative Council in November 1923 that a committee would be set up to review 'industrial' education in those mission schools on government grants. The committee was made up of C. W. Stubbs, the Chief Technical Instructor and E. E. Biss, the Inspector of Schools. The two of them visited the six schools that were authorised to teach 'industrial' education and among these, three - CMS school, Kahuhia, CSM school, Tumutumu, and CSM school, Thogoto - were from Kikuyu.⁹⁶

The committee considered as 'misinformed criticism' the settlers' complaint that the mission schools had not turned out 'finished artisans' and felt that the government should be grateful to the missions for what they had done in the field of 'industrial' education. It however felt that since the primary objective of the missions was to 'develop the character of Christ in the uncivilised African'

95 S. H. D'Souza, 'The Derby Day Meeting and its Influence on African Education in Kenya', 1923-1939, (M.A. (Edu), University of London, 1971).

96 Education Department; Report on the Technical Departments of Mission Schools Receiving Grants-in-Aid, 1925.

they could not be relied upon completely to train the type of artisans that the settlers were asking for. It therefore suggested a more direct government involvement in this direction.⁹⁷ Henceforth, industrial training should be given in two stages. The early part of the course should be in the mission schools and should last for three years. During this period, efforts should be made to 'develop the general intelligence of the pupils'. The course should thereafter become 'more definitely specialised towards artisanship' and should cover a period of two years at a special industrial school run by the government. This would ensure that the settlers got the required artisans without forcing the missionaries to place less emphasis on religious teaching in their schools.⁹⁸

As a result of these proposals, a new policy on 'industrial' education for the Africans was designed by the Government. The mission schools would no longer be expected to turn out 'fully qualified artisans' although emphasis in their schools should still be on 'industrial' training and government grants to schools would still be

97 ibid., p. 4.

98 ibid., p. 5.

for that purpose. Pupils who completed their education from the mission schools would from 1924 have the 'opportunity' of proceeding to the Native Industrial Training Depot (NITD) which was built in Kabete within Kikuyu territory, for 'advanced training' in industrial subjects. From this arrangement the mission schools would merely introduce their pupils to 'industrial' education while the NITD would serve as a 'finishing off school for natives who had already had some technical training at the missions'.⁹⁹

When the NITD opened in 1924, it was found that those who completed their education at the mission schools did not wish to proceed to Kabete. The pioneer students of the Depot therefore had to be selected from among those who had not been to any mission schools.¹⁰⁰ Those from the mission schools were said to have complained that the 'apprenticeship system' therein which required them to concentrate on 'industrial' training with a minimum of literary education for a period of three years, was nothing

⁹⁹ (EDAR) 1924, p. 57. See also EDAR, 1928 for more information on the Depot.

¹⁰⁰ EDAR, 1924, p. 20.

but 'a flat catching design (sic) of the Government to obtain cheap labour for long periods'.¹⁰¹

One other institution which was started at about the same time as the NITD was the Jeanes School also at Kabete. The school which admitted its pioneer students of fifteen in July 1925, was introduced to the country largely through the Phelps-Stokes Commission which visited Kenya from February 18 to March 9, 1924. The commission was paying its second visit to Africa in 1924, having visited parts of West and South Africa between 1920 and 1921. It was sponsored by the Trustees of the Phelps-Stokes Fund in America to investigate African education at a time when the missions were under severe criticisms from the white settlers in Kenya and when racial tension between the Africans and the white community had led to the Harry Thuku incident of March 1922.¹⁰² The commission's assignment in Kenya was to reconcile the divergent opinions of the settlers and the missions on African education and to

101 Native Affairs Department Annual Report (NADAR), 1924, p. 20.

102 T. J. Jones, Education in East Africa, (London, 1925), p. 27. See also B. G. McIntosh, op. cit. pp. 394-404.

104 T. J. Jones, op. cit. p. 5.

105 J. H. G. Douglass, Jeanes School, Kabete, Annual Report, 1926, p. 11.

106 1914.

recommend the trend along which African education should go.¹⁰³ Its solution to these problems was the Jeanes school.

The Commission was of the opinion that African education should be 'adapted to the conditions under which the majority of the African people live today' and was convinced that 'the African Natives are relatively far more dependent on agriculture than any people in the world'.¹⁰⁴ The Jeanes school would therefore be expected to train teachers who were already working for the missions and who were men of 'high character and tactful disposition' rather than of 'high intellectual attainments'.¹⁰⁵ as visiting teachers. After two years at Kabete, the teachers were expected to go back to their missions to supervise the various schools under the missions, and to urge the pupils not to allow their education to 'divorce them from interest in village life and cause them to seek employment in the towns'.¹⁰⁶ Of the fifteen teachers who were admitted to

103 K. J. King, Pan-Africanism and Education: A study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa (Oxford, 1971) p. 111. See also B. G. McIntosh 'Kenya 1923: The Political Crisis and the Missionary Dilemma' (University of East Africa, Social Sciences Council Conference, 1968/69) p. 142.

104 T. J. Jones, op. cit. p. 5.

105 J.W.C. Dougall, Jeanes School, Kabete, Annual Report, 1926, p. 1.

106 ibid.

the Jeanes school in 1925, nine were Kikuyu.¹⁰⁷

Another school that was started by the government during this time was Alliance High School which was started in 1926. It was the first African secondary school in the country and it was sited at Thogoto in Kikuyu territory. Its establishment did not, however, mean that either the government or the settlers had modified their view that 'industrial' training was the best type of education for the Africans. The school grew out of the original medical school which was built in 1924 from the balance of the money donated by the Africans who took part in the war.¹⁰⁸ The medical school was to train 'sub-assistant surgeons' but because of the difficulty that was encountered in finding sufficient Africans with the required entry qualification, Rev. Arthur of the CSM, Thogoto, suggested that the school be converted into an institution to take African education beyond what was available in the mission schools.¹⁰⁹ When

107 Jeanes School, Kabete, 1925-29, Appendix V, EDAR, 1929, p. 200.

108 J. S. Smith, The History of the Alliance High School, (Nairobi, 1973), Chapter 3. See also B. E. Kipkorir, 'The Alliance High School and the Origins of the Kenya African Elite, 1926-1962, (Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1969) pp. 71-2.

109 KNA: CCEA/1/11, Alliance High School, 1925-26, CSM Kikuyu to J. Oldham, August 6, 1925.

the issue was raised at the meeting of the Advisory Committee on African education in 1925, the Director of Education opposed the plan because he felt that the Africans 'are very remote from that stage of education which the Government recognises as appropriate to a high school or a college'.¹¹⁰

Mr. J. H. Oldham, Secretary of the International Missionary Council who played a great part in the visit of the Phelps-Stokes Commission to Kenya,¹¹¹ also did not think that it was time as yet to encourage the Africans to undergo the full, secondary education. Citing the 'evil effects' of literary education in India and Egypt, he recommended that the proposed school should not go beyond the junior secondary standard.¹¹² This was the proposal that was put forward later to the Advisory Committee on African Education. Lord Delamere the white settler leader who seconded the motion, did so only after

110 Education Department to the Secretary of Representative Council, Alliance of Missions, 11 May 1925.

111 See his article 'The Christian opportunity in Africa: Some Reflections on the Report of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions', IRM Vol. 14, pp. 173-187.

112 B. E. Kipkorir, op. cit. pp. 77-78.

he had been assured by Rev. Arthur that literary education would be regarded in the proposed school only as 'a means to the building up of character and not an end in itself' and that the settlers would be given adequate representation in the Board of Governors of the school to enable them express their opinion forcefully about the school.¹¹³ The Kikuyu did not allow these ideas to go unchallenged, but in making their feeling known, they only accused the missions initially of deliberately refusing to give their children relevant education and called on the government to provide them with what the missions were reluctant to give.

Kikuyu Resentment Against the Existing Educational Facilities

From the available materials, organised Kikuyu opposition to the existing educational facilities started with the emergence of political associations among the people. This is not surprising since those who formed the associations were among the first educated Kikuyu. Some of these people had left the mission schools to work

¹¹³ KNA: CCEA/1/1, op. cit. Meeting of the Advisory Native Education Committee, June 10, 1925.

in Nairobi, either in government departments or in commercial houses. Although such people escaped the humiliation of being forced by their chiefs to work as labourers on settlers' estates, they found that their education only qualified them for subservient jobs. Harry Thuku, whom we shall consider shortly, was employed by the Standard Bank of South Africa as a messenger.¹¹⁴ Josiah Njonjo who was employed by the Leader as a compositor remarked that 'the job is not a very honourable one'. According to him, it was a job which could easily be done by someone who did not go to school.¹¹⁵ Only those who were trained at Freretown, Rabai and Buganda before Western education came to Kikuyu were employed as government clerks, and even these were treated with contempt by their white and Asian superiors.¹¹⁶ The East African Association (EAA) which was formed by a group of educated Africans in 1921 with Harry Thuku as president, was the first African association known to have criticised the inadequate educational facilities for the Africans in the colony.

114 H. Thuku, op. cit. p. 12.

115 Josiah Njonjo, interviewed at Kabete on 15/10/75.

116 ibid.

Despite the name of the Association and in spite of the attempts that were made to involve non-Kikuyu in its activities, it was predominantly a Kikuyu affair both in its leadership and area of operation.¹¹⁷ What the Association had to say on African education could therefore be said to have been influenced by developments in Kikuyu.

The Association sent a petition to the Colonial Office on July 10, 1921 in which it suggested, among other things, that the Kenyan Government should be made to use part of the money it collected from the people in the form of taxes to build more schools for the people.¹¹⁸ On September 8 of the same year, Thuku decided to direct his appeal for improved education to the Black Americans in the U.S.A. It is not known why he decided to by-pass the Colonial Office but in a letter which he wrote to the secretary of the Tuskegee Institute, Thuku requested that some Black Americans should be sent to Kenya to help the Africans who

117 The best account of the Association's leadership and activities is given in H. Thuku, op. cit., Chapters II to IV.

118 'Resolutions of the East African Association, 10 July', Document V in H. Thuku, op. cit. pp. 82-3.

the white community were trying to deny access to higher education. He went on to say that despite what the Africans were paying as taxes to the government, 'only some petty efforts are made ostensibly to impart technical and elementary education to the natives'.¹¹⁹ This, he believed, was 'totally inadequate and insufficient to dispel our present illiteracy and ignorance ... and to safeguard our present position as human beings'.¹²⁰ There is no evidence to show that the Tuskegee Institute sent the men Thuku asked for, but this request showed that some Africans were already losing confidence in the ability of the government and the missions to satisfy their educational aspirations. On the other hand, Harry Thuku and his men could not have known much about the educational programmes of the Institute as they were designed to ensure that the Black Americans would not be able to compete with the White Americans for job opportunities.¹²¹

While the views of the E.A.A. on education was dismissed

119 Letter of Thuku to Tuskegee, Appendix II, King, K. Pan-Africanism and Education, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

120 ibid.

121 On Tuskegee Institute, see N. Hans, Comparative Education, A Study of Educational Factors and Traditions, (London, 1964) pp. 34-39.

by the Administration as coming from 'a loose organisation of perhaps several hundred discontented young men who have a very small smattering of education and who do not quite know what they want',¹²² the stand taken by the Kikuyu Association on education and which was almost identical with that of the EAA, showed that there was a widespread dissatisfaction in Kikuyu with the existing educational facilities. The Kikuyu Association was founded in 1919, before the EAA, by Kikuyu Church elders and chiefs from Kiambu district who were afraid that with more white settlers coming into the country under the Settlement Scheme, they might lose all or most of their land.¹²³ Although the Association was principally interested in land matters, it did not hesitate to make its views known on other issues such as education. Such views were, however, expressed in a moderate tone and the Association did not hesitate to invite government officials and missionaries

122 KNA: DC/KBU/1/15, Annual Report, 1922, p. 5.

123 On the origins of Kikuyu Association, see KNA: PC/CP.8/5/1 Kikuyu Association, 1921-31. See also E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit. pp. 94-97.

124 The names of some of the chiefs who sent their sons to school for the first time, is contained in KNA:PC/CP.4/1/2, Kikuyu Vol. III, 1919.

127 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, ib. cit., 1921, p. 74.

to its meetings.¹²⁴ In spite of its conservative outlook, it did not fail to speak out against the poor quality of education in Kikuyu.

The chiefs, as explained in chapter two, had failed to co-operate with the missionaries in the spread of Western education in their areas.¹²⁵ After the war, however, this attitude had disappeared and many of the chiefs actually sent their sons to the mission schools to be educated.¹²⁶ Thus the PC was able to report in 1921 that

the elders have entirely thrown off their old opposition to the mission and are quite eager that their children should have the benefit of the advantages which they themselves had lacked.²⁷

The view of the chiefs and the Association on education was best expressed in a memorandum presented to the East African Commission which was led by G.G.A. Ormsby-Gore in

124 The first letter of the Association to the Governor on October 28, 1919 was drafted with the help of Arthur Barlow and Harry Leakey, two white missionaries in Kikuyu. KNA: PC/CP.8/5/1, op. cit.

125 Chapter II, pp. 96-98.

126 The names of some of the chiefs who sent their sons to school for the first time is contained in KNA:PC/CP.1/4/3, Kikuyu Vol. III, 1919.

127 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1921, p. 74.

1924. In it, the Association called on the Government, as the EAA had done in 1921, to use part of the taxes it collected from the people on projects 'which we can appreciate'.¹²⁸ One of these was 'a Central High School' where their children could continue with their education after the mission primary school.¹²⁹

When members of the Association were presented to the Commission at Dagoretti on November 10, 1924, Chief Josiah Njonjo of Kabete stood up to explain why a High School could no longer be delayed in Kikuyu. Apart from the fact that the people would want to see part of their taxes spent on projects that would be beneficial to the people, Chief Njonjo added that only through such a school would the people be able to compete on an equal basis with the other races. Each time they asked the government for African representation in the Legislative Council, the government, he said, rejected the request on the ground that there were no Africans sufficiently educated to understand what was going on in the Council. He then expressed interest in knowing how this obstacle could be

128 KNA: DC/KBU/3/19, 1924 East African Commission, p.7.

129 ibid.

removed when nothing was being done to educate the Africans to a level where they would be able to understand what was going on in the council.¹³⁰

At Nyeri where members of the Commission met representatives of the Chiefs on November 15, the chiefs also expressed the desire to see their people given an opportunity for higher education. In their address to the commission, the chiefs pointed out that 'we now fully realise the importance of education' although they were too old to benefit from it.¹³¹ They would however like the commission to urge the government to put up 'a really big school' where those who had finished from the mission schools could have the advantage of 'a thorough education'.¹³² It is possible that the willingness of the government to allow the medical school at Thogoto to be converted into a High school¹³³ was partly in response to this unanimous demand of Kikuyu chiefs and elders for 'a really big school' although there is no evidence to support this.

130 KNA: DC/KBU/3/19, op. cit. Meeting of the East African Commission with Kikuyu chiefs and elders, November 10, 1924.

131 ibid.

132 ibid.

133 p. 139 above.

When the people did not see anything concrete coming out of these appeals, they decided to raise money on their own to put up the type of schools which they had demanded from the government. The opportunity came in 1925 when the government allowed each district to have what was called a Local Native Council (LNC) which would, among other things, raise money from local sources to finance projects of public importance. The councils were set up to check the political awareness that was taking place among the Africans because of the activities of such associations as the EAA in Kikuyu and the Young Kavirondo Association (YKA) among the Luo and the Abaluyia.¹³⁴ The EAA had been driven underground with the arrest and subsequent deportation of its leaders in March 1922,¹³⁵ while through Archdeacon Owen of Maseno, the YKA had been turned into a social welfare club known as the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (KTWA), to avoid being proscribed by the government.¹³⁶ Neither of these actions was able to

134 KNA: PC/CP. 4/2/2, op. cit., p. 14.

135 Harry Thuku, George Mugekenyi and Waiganjo Ndotono were arrested and deported to the Coast in March 1922, KNA: DC/KBU/1/15, Annual Report, 1922, p. 5.

136 For a discussion of both Associations, see Okaro-Kojwang, K. M., 'Origins and Establishments of the Kavirondo Taxpayers' Association', Ngano, (Nairobi, 1969).

to kill the political consciousness which had already been aroused in the people through the activities of both the EAA and the YKA and the district officials increasingly found that they could not control the baraza which they called from time to time to explain government's policies to the people. It was in recognition of the fact that 'political progression through the medium of education has come to stay for good and evil' that the LNC was established in order to 'guide that progress sanely through a singularly pliant people'.¹³⁷

The council consisted of twenty-five members, with more than half of them nominated by the government. The DC was chairman and whatever decisions were taken by the council must still await approval from the Governor-in-Council.¹³⁸ Its power to raise money was, however, subsequently to be used effectively to show the government that the people were dissatisfied with the existing educational facilities for the Africans.

The Local council system was formally launched in the three Kikuyu districts in July 1925 by the Acting Governor,

137 NADAR, 1924, pp. 2 - 3.

138 NADAR, op. cit. p. 20.

Mr. E. B. Denham. By November of the same year, the Kianbu LNC had resolved to vote £500 for an 'undenominational central school' in the district.¹³⁹ In September 1927, the council farther resolved to raise a total of £10,000 to build a High School that would not be controlled by the missions.¹⁴⁰ This was in spite of the fact that the only secondary school for the Africans in the country was in Kianbu district and most of the students in that school came from the district.¹⁴¹ Although statistics are lacking, the fact that Kianbu district was the first place where mission schools were built in Kikuyu put that district ahead of the others and made it more urgent for Kianbu to find a solution to the problem of what to do with the pupils who were leaving the mission schools but could not go further in their education. The proposed high school was to be built at Githunguri because of its central location within the district. Each student admitted to the school would be expected to pay forty-five shillings

139 KNA: PC/CP. 1/1/2, op. cit., p. 38.

140 KNA: PC/CP. 4/1/2, op. cit., 1927, p. 245.

141 All except two of the twenty-seven students in the high school in 1926 were Kikuyu from Kianbu district. J. S. Smith, op. cit., pp. 26-29.

per term and unlike the existing mission schools, the new one would place greater emphasis on the teaching of literary subjects as opposed to 'industrial' subjects which were believed to prepare people only for work on settlers estates.¹⁴²

This development was not confined to Kiambu district alone. Muranga LNC had also voted £2,000 for a high school by September 29, 1927 while Nyeri LNC had £3,000 by October, 21, 1927 for the same purpose.¹⁴³ Commenting in 1927 on this willingness of the Kikuyu to tax themselves to put up schools that would teach those subjects that were deliberately ignored in mission schools, the PC had this to say:

A well marked tendency which has been growing for the past few years among the Kikuyu has been to depart from missionary influence in the matter of education and to establish non-sectarian schools. The provision of money by the Local Native Councils in an expression of this feeling.¹⁴⁴

142 KNA: DC/KBU/1/20, Annual Report, 1927, p. 6.

143 KNA: PC/CP. 4/1/2, op. cit., 1927, p. 245.

144 ibid. It should however be noted that this development was not confined to Kikuyu as the Luo and the Abaluyia especially were also busy raising money for interdenominational schools. NADAR, 1927, p. 50.

The DC for Muranga also observed in the same year that

The demand for education is insistent and urgent and it has now got beyond the resources of the missions to meet it ... the mental awakening of the Kikuyu is a force which cannot be repressed or withstood.¹⁴⁵

At the end of 1928, Kianbu Council had already collected £6,000 out of the £10,000 estimated for the high school while Nyeri and Muranga Councils each had £3,000 and £2,000 respectively.¹⁴⁶ With this money in hand, the councils approached the Department of Education for permission to start the building of the schools.

This decision of the people to raise money to challenge the existing policy on African education came as a surprise to the Government. A committee appointed by the government in 1925 to look into the question of grants on education had recommended that the different races should be urged to raise additional revenue to support their education.¹⁴⁷ This would, according to the committee 'have the desirable effect of reducing irresponsible requests for schools ...

145 KNA: DC/FH 1/6, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1927, p. 35.

146 EDAR, 1928 Report of the Inspector of Schools, Nyeri, p. 57.

147 Report of the committee on grants-in-aid for education in Kenya, Nairobi, 1925, p. 2.

and will test and make real the demand for education'.¹⁴⁸ But while the committee felt that this principle should be applied immediately to the white and Asian communities, it felt that 'for the Africans, the time is not yet fully ripe for the levy of a cess'.¹⁴⁹ Yet before the end of the year, various local councils were coming forward, on their own with money for education.

While the government claimed to appreciate the efforts of the people in raising such money, it made it known to the Kikuyu and the other ethnic groups that were also raising such money, that it was not prepared to allow the money to be used to erect schools that would rival those of the missions. As was pointed out in 1926 by the Director of Education in the Legislative Council, the existing policy on African education was to co-operate with the missions. This policy was in danger of being destroyed by the present demand of some LNCs for 'non-denominational' schools. The various councils were to be told that while the government did not oppose the raising of money for education, such money should be used

148 ibid.

149 ibid.

151 1926 PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1928, p. 500.

to improve the existing facilities in mission schools rather than building new schools that would rival those of the missions.¹⁵⁰ This information was accordingly passed to all the LNCs through their chairmen.

When the LNCs in Kikuyu were told of this decision, the members unanimously decided not to give in to this demand but to keep on adding to the money until the Director was prepared to change his mind and allow the building of 'non-denominational' schools.¹⁵¹ Thus at the end of 1928 a deadlock had been reached between the LNCs and the government as to the direction which African education was to take. While the people believed that they could not hope to advance educationally as long as their education was under the control of the missions, the government was insisting that only mission schools would be allowed to function. But as we shall see in the next chapter, the government had before 1928 compromised its stand on this issue by allowing some schools in Kikuyu to be run outside mission control. When therefore trouble broke out in 1929 between some Protestant missions and their Kikuyu adherents and the government went back to

150 EDAR, 1926, p. 17.

151 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1928, p. 308.

insist that it would not allow any school to operate outside mission influence, the aggrieved Kikuyu went ahead to start their own schools in imitation of those who had succeeded in starting 'non-mission' schools before 1929. This should not be left under the control of the missions was still going on, some Kikuyu took steps to make alternative arrangements for the education of their children. This took place before the more widespread demands for 'independent' schools after the controversy over female circumcision. However, while it is not possible to deny the influence of 'cultural nationalism' in the demand for these schools, their history, as will be shown in this and the next chapter, was a reflection of the general dissatisfaction of the people with mission education which, as has been shown in the last chapter, had been evident before this time.¹

The first school to be started by the Kikuyu outside both mission and government control, was built in Giathaini near Eldoret in Kiambu district in 1925. The immediate

¹ Chapter XII, pp. 116 - 121.

CHAPTER IV

KIKUYU ALTERNATIVES TO THE DOMINANT MISSION SCHOOL SYSTEM, 1923 - 1932

'Non-Mission' Schools Before 1929

While the attempt to convince the government that African education should not be left under the control of the missions was still going on, some Kikuyu took steps to make alternative arrangements for the education of their children. This took place before the more widespread demands for 'independent' schools after the controversy over female circumcision. Moreover, while it is not possible to deny the influence of 'cultural nationalism' in the demand for these schools, their history, as will be shown in this and the next chapter, was a reflection of the general dissatisfaction of the people with mission education which, as has been shown in the last chapter, had been evident before this time.¹

The first school to be started by the Kikuyu outside both missions and government control, was built in Giathaini near Githunguri in Kiambu district in 1923. The immediate

1 Chapter III, pp. 116 - 121.

reason for the establishment of this school was the decision of the GMS to remove the existing school from that village to another one at Kanjai, which was about three miles away. The mission took this decision because Mwai wa Nyingi who owned the plot on which the school was built, had given part of it to another person, without the prior knowledge of the mission.² It was however out of the enthusiasm of the people of Giathaini for education after the First World War that wa Nyingi donated a portion of the land to the GMS. Materials for the building of the school were donated by the people while those who could not afford these were made to build the house. Furthermore, the mission only agreed to send them a teacher, Kariuki Ndaawa, in 1917, after the people had agreed to pay his salary.³ The Giathaini case was no exception, as has been pointed out in the last chapter. All over Kikuyu after the World War, people were putting up buildings and calling on the missions to supply them with teachers. The intention was that their children would not have to go far in search

2 Wanyoike Kamawe, interviewed at Komothai on 6/10/75. This was confirmed by Wilson Gathuru who was present when Wa Nyingi gave the portion of land to the GMS. Interviewed at Giathaini on 24/9/75.

3 Wanyoike Kamawe, op. cit.

of schools.⁴ The people of Giathaini therefore saw no reason why the GMS should order the closure of the school without their consent. They were even more apprehensive when they learned that Wanyoike Kanawe, the GMS supervisor of schools, who reported wa Nyingi's land sale to the mission, had gone further to make available a portion of his father's land at Kanjai to the mission to erect another school to replace the one at Giathaini. As far as they were concerned, Wanyoike did this because he wanted a school in his place while denying it to another village.⁵ It was therefore decided not to transfer their children to the new school, but to continue at Giathaini, even though the teacher had been sent away because he did not report wa Nyingi's action to the mission.⁶

A committee headed by one Musa Ndiragu was set up to run the affairs of the school and as the people were not sure what the government's reaction would be it was also decided not to use the existing school building but hold

4 Chapter III, pp. 113-115.

5 Wilson Gathuru, *op. cit.* This same view was also expressed by Stephen M. Njugura, interviewed at Githunguri on 23/9/75 and Amon Ruthi, interviewed at Matimbili (Gatamaiyu Location) on 25/9/75.

6 ibid.

classes in the houses of the church members. Furthermore these classes would be conducted in the evenings.⁷ Classes were held in this manner until 1925 when, as a result of an increase in the number of pupils, it was decided to approach the government with a request to start a day school, making use of the former school building.⁸

The delegation which met the DC at Kianbu was led by Musa Ndiragu. There at Kianbu, the DC was told how the decision of the GMS to transfer the Giathaini school to Kanjai had led to some members of the church deciding to start an evening school. Originally, the intention was to cater only for the children of the affected parents, but apart from the inconveniences caused by having to go from one house to the other, the number of children in the school was so large that one house could hardly contain all of them. Since the GMS had no intention of reopening a school at Giathaini and since such a decision could retard the education of their children, members of the

7 ibid.

8 Amon Ruthi, op. cit.

delegation requested that they be allowed to take over control of the school at Giathaini. After all, they argued, when the school at Giathaini was handed over to the mission, apart from the teacher that was sent by the mission and the very irregular visits made by representatives of the mission to the school, it was the church elders who directed what went on in the school.⁹

The DC took up the case with Rev. Knapp of the GMS who made it clear to the DC that his mission would not reopen the school at Giathaini. He argued that by taking away a portion of the land previously given to the mission, the people had shown that they were not interested in education. As the mission would not reopen the school and since a section of the church elders' had refused to send their children to Kanjai, the DC felt that, to avoid any conflict, those who wanted a school at Giathaini should be allowed to have one. This however was to depend on their having qualified teachers to run the school. Fortunately for those who wanted the school, Anon Ruthi from Matimbi, a village near Giathaini and who had qualified

9 ibid. Also Wilson Gathuru, op. cit. but both Wilson Gathuru and Anon Ruthi gave little information.

as a teacher from the CSM school at Thogoto, agreed, when approached, to teach in the school. Together with Wilson Gathuru who had been there since 1923, the school started to function outside mission control.¹⁰ Thus at a time when the government was refusing to use the money that had been collected by the people through their LNCs to put up central 'undenominational' schools, the same government had allowed Giathaini school to operate outside mission control.

Further to the north, in Muranga district, some adherents of the AIM also attempted to take over some schools that were under the mission because of its poor educational programme. The AIM was one of the 'faith' missions that believed that they were in Africa to advance Christianity and that nothing should be allowed to slow down this effort as it was a prelude to the second coming of Christ. Schools were to be put up as was done by the other missions, but they were to be used to foster this aim. Although every mission had this aim at the back of its mind, the AIM was more rigid than the other missions

¹⁰ There is no record of this meeting but both Wilson Gathuru and Amon Ruthi gave this information.

¹² Elizabeth Nwangi Wabicho, interviewed at Nairobi on 7/10/75.

in enforcing it.¹¹ This was why, as we shall soon see they came into conflict with the Kikuyu.

It was not until 1926 that some church elders of the mission appealed to Rev. R. V. Reynolds, the missionary in charge at Githumu where the mission had its headquarters, to do something to improve the quality of education in his schools. They complained that those teachers sent to the 'out-schools' were of low intelligence and that unlike those who went to other mission schools and who secured jobs easily in Nairobi and elsewhere after their education, those who left the AIM schools could hardly secure such jobs.¹²

Rev. Reynolds was surprised that his adherents could make such a request. He accused them of attempting to introduce politics into church work and of being worldly. He told the people to go back and think over the question of their association with the mission. If they felt that they could not abide by the mission's rules, they were

11 For a summary of the doctrine of the AIM see K. Ward, 'Evangelism or Education?: Mission Priorities and Educational Policy in the African Inland Mission 1900-1950', Kenya Historical Review (hereafter KHR) Vol. 3 No. 2, 1975, pp. 243-260.

12 Elizaphanson Nwangi Wambicho, interviewed at Nairobi on 7/10/75.

free to leave as the mission would not deviate its objective of rapid exangelisation. He told them that the missionaries came all the way from America to exangelise and not to introduce Western education and that those who were not satisfied with what the mission was doing in the field of education could leave the mission and join another one. He then ordered the affected 'out-schools' to be closed down until the people were prepared to accept the rules and regulations of the AIM.¹³ By the end of the year, an unspecified number of communities had apologised to the mission and had been allowed to reopen their schools. According to Elizaphanson Wambicho who was to become the Secretary of the Mikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA) and who was a pupil at Gaitegi AIM 'out-school' in 1926, those schools that agreed to reopen under the mission terms did so because they felt that it was better to have some education, though of a poor quality, than nothing at all.¹⁴

The 'out-schools' at Gakarara, Gaitegi, Gitoboro,

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- 13 Ezekiel Kamau, interviewed at Kahuthia (Kaudara) on 10/9/75. Ezekiel was a teacher at the AIM 'out-school' at Chomo during this time.
- 14 Mwangi Wambicho, op. cit.

Muruka, Irera, Ngoo, Githunguri (in Muranga district) and Ihigaini, all refused to go back to the mission unless they were sure that there was going to be an improvement in the schools.¹⁵ Some parents sent their pupils to the CMS and CSM schools where they believed their children could be better taught. Wambicho, for instance, was sent to the CMS school at Kabete to continue with his education and he remembered that although he had reached standard III at Gaitigi, he had to be sent to standard I at Kabete because he could not compete with pupils in either standard III or II.¹⁶ A School Committee was also set up with James Kariru as chairman while Daudi Maina and Ezra Kamau were employed to teach in the new school. All this was done without the knowledge of the government.¹⁷

In December 1926, the DC for Muranga was informed of the action taken by some schools in the district and he called Kariru, Maina and Kamau who were leaders of the schools, to his office at Muranga to warn them of the consequences of their action. He added that if the people

15 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1927, p. 253.

16 Mwangi Wambicho, op. cit.

17 Ezekiel Kamau, op. cit.

had any complaint against the mission, it was not for them to take the law into their hands and that he expected them to report the case to him.¹⁸ This led the people to send a delegation to the DC, early in 1927. After hearing from members of the delegation the background leading to the decision to start the new school at Gakarara, the DC agreed to discuss the matter with Rev. Reynolds at Githumu.¹⁹ When the matter was taken up with Rev. Reynolds, he declared categorically that there was little his mission could do to help the people, since the mission did not come to Africa to promote Western education but to preach Christianity.²⁰ Both the DC and the Education Department recognised the need to adhere to the principle of cooperation with the missions in African education but they also recognised that in a situation where the AIM was not prepared to improve on the quality of education in the affected schools, the people could not be simply asked to send their children back to the mission schools.²¹ Commenting on this issue,

18 ibid.

19 KNA: Education Deposit/1/14, List of Village schools: Fort Hall District - Teachers at the Government schools in Fort Hall.

20 KNA: DC/FH1/6, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1927, p. 29.

21 ibid.

the Provincial Commissioner (PC) who was informed about it had this to say:

while the mission societies deserve every credit for all they have done in the education of the Native, it would seem that the time has come when the Government must take a greater and more distinct part in it as the demand for education ... has now got beyond the resources of the missions to meet it.²²

As a way out of the problem, it was decided not to allow either the school committee or the teachers that had been employed by the people to continue to operate in the school as this would be tantamount to encouraging the people to break way from the mission. The Education Department would supply teachers to this and other affected schools while efforts would continue to be made to persuade the mission to change its hitherto negative attitude to the education of the people under it. On September 1, 1927, one Paul Mbiu was sent by the Department to teach at Gakarara and in the following year, the Department also sent trained teachers to two other AIM schools at Githunguri and Ihigaini which had also refused to continue their association with the mission. The Department however made

22 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit. p. 258.

it clear that this action did not represent a departure from the government policy of running African schools through the mission societies.²³

Although the government sent qualified teachers to th three schools, the people considered this as a first step in their desire to improve the education of their children. All the teachers that were sent to the schools were Kikuyu who, no doubt, shared the aspirations of their people for relevant education. When the Inspector of Schools visited the schools in July 1928, he found that the teachers had modified the government syllabus for African schools substantially despite previous warnings not to do so. Whereas the syllabus expected each African school to have a school garden and to devote six hours to farming per week, none of the schools had a garden and this was despite the fact that each school had plenty of land for this purpose. English language which was not supposed to be taught until the last year of primary education was taught in the schools even in Standard I. The government-produced newsletter, Habari, which was expected to be read

23 KNA; Education Deposit/1/14, List of Village schools; Fort Hall District - Teachers at the Government schools in Fort Hall.

to the pupils from time to time to enlighten them about what the government was doing for the people, were kept in the office of the head teachers and were not used at all.²⁴ Although the schools did not adhere rigidly to the government syllabus for African schools, they were well attended, thus showing the people's rejection of that syllabus. There were one hundred and fifty pupils at Gakarara when the official visited the school and the DC had previously applied to the Education Department for another teacher to be sent to assist Mbiu who found that he alone could not cope with the increasing number of children who were coming to the school. On June 6, 1928, Shadrach Ngugi was sent to the school by the Education Department.²⁵ There were also reports that the other schools were 'very well attended'.²⁶

In spite of the popularity which these schools enjoyed among the people because of what they taught, the Inspector of Schools, recommended they should not be allowed to operate

24 KNA: Edu/1/4, op. cit. Inspector's Report on Government Schools in Fort Hall District.

25 ibid. List of village schools, op. cit.

26 ibid.

because they were 'not adequately fulfilling the functions for which they were set up'.²⁷ What he meant by this of course was that these schools were placing more emphasis on literary education at the expense of vocational training which was considered in official circles to be the best for the Africans. The schools were therefore closed down in May 1929 after the Muranga Area School Committee, made up largely of white officials and missionaries, had approved the recommendation of the Inspector of Schools.²⁸ This then was the situation before the emergence of the more widespread Independent schools all over Kikuyu after 1929.

Female Circumcision and the Emergence of Independent Schools

In 1929 when the issue of female circumcision resulted in an open conflict between some Protestant missions and their adherents, the Kikuyu had clearly demonstrated that they could no longer rely on the mission societies to control their education. It has been shown in the previous

27 ibid., Inspector's Report, op. cit.

28 KNA: DC/FH1/8, Annual Report, 1929, pp. 23-24: The closure was carried out in spite of appeals from the Kikuyu Central Association, which sent a delegation to meet the DC. KNA: PG/CP.8/5/3, Kikuyu Central Association, 1928-1930, DC's meeting with KCA, April 8, 1929.

chapter how people had called on the government to assist them in putting up non-sectarian schools where literary education would be given prominence and the earlier part of this chapter has shown how some mission adherents unilaterally decided to take their schools away from mission control in order to ensure that they were not denied the education of their choice. It has also been shown that the attitude of the government was to continue to regard the mission societies as the only recognised agency that could control African education. While not denying the cultural significance of the female circumcision controversy, - and that is one reason why the controversy is given full treatment in this chapter - its significance in the overall history of Western education in Kikuyu was that it afforded some Kikuyu the opportunity to realise how mistaken they were to have expected that the government would replace the mission societies as the agency to organise African education. It was this realisation which, as shall be seen later in the chapter, prompted these people to attempt to organise their own schools free from government and mission control.

Female circumcision, which could not be separated from circumcision among men was, as was shown in chapter

one, the Kikuyu method of admitting mature girls into the world of the adults. Only after the rite could girls be recognised as eligible for marriage and could expect to bring forth issues.²⁹ It was unheard of among the Kikuyu for a person to marry without being circumcised and that was why those girls who were offered jobs by the missionaries when they first came to Kikuyu for evangelical work, had to abandon their work to go back home to be circumcised.³⁰ Wanjau wa Hato whom Mrs. Knapp picked up at Kambui during the famine of the late nineteenth century and who had remained under mission influence since then, decided, when she was old enough, to apply to be circumcised so as not to be 'the black sheep of the family'.³¹ Thus even those Kikuyu whom the missions had used in their campaign against female circumcision often took permission, when it was their turn to be circumcised, to take part in the initiation ceremony. Wanyoike Kamawe and Samson Njoroge who were most vocal against female circumcision, claimed that they

29 Chapter I, pp. 21-29. See also I.S.B. Leakey, 'Kikuyu Problem Initiation', JRAI, Vol. LXI, 1930, pp. 277-8.

30 H. E. Scott, op. cit., p. 64, and p. 74.

31 E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., pp. 54-5

had to submit themselves for circumcision because they could not face the ridicule of not being circumcised.³²

Initially the missionaries had no choice but to tolerate circumcision even when they considered the ceremonies which accompanied it to be against the teachings of Christianity. At a time when they still had to persuade most people to come under their influence and presents were given to those who came regularly to the mission station, the missionaries thought it wise not to oppose the custom outright but to limit themselves to telling the people that as Christians, it was not expected of them to take part in the dances and sacrifices which went side by side with circumcision.³³

In January 1908, the CSM opened the Hunter Memorial Hospital at Thogoto. This was expected to be used as 'a centre for practical presentation of the Christian message' to the Kikuyu.³⁴ In order to prevent their adherents from going home to take part in the circumcision ceremony as had been the case hitherto, the CSM in 1909

32 Wanyoike Kamawe, op. cit., Sanson Njoroge Wandaka, interviewed at Dagoretti on 16/10/75.

33 ibid.

34 H. E. Scott, op. cit. p. 87.

asked its pupils at Thogoto who were anxious to be circumcised to do so at the new hospital. Each candidate would still be circumcised by the traditional murithia or circumciser so that no one could accuse them of not being properly circumcised, but only christians would be allowed to serve as aturi or supporters. Furthermore, contrary to the practice among the Kikuyu whereby circumcision took place in the open where everybody could testify to the eligibility of each candidate for admission into adulthood, that of the mission would only take place in the mission station and in the presence of Christians alone.³⁵ Samson Njoroge who was soon to replace the traditional murithia as the circumciser, observed that this decision of the mission did not please most christians as nobody outside the christian circle would recognise this type of circumcision which took place in secret.³⁶ By 1913 when Jomo Kenyatta was circumcised with the other Kikuyu christians, Samson Njoroge had replaced the

35 Kikuyu Mission Council, 'Memorandum on Female Circumcision' (hereafter referred to as Memorandum), 1931, p. 4.

36 Samson Njoroge, op. cit. p. Interview with Rev. William Njoroge on 16/10/15.

39 And.

traditional circumciser, thus making the new procedure even less acceptable to the non-christian Kikuyu.³⁷

So far the CSM had been prepared to tolerate the circumcision of their adherents. In June 1914 when some Kikuyu girls were about to be circumcised, Rev. Arthur sought to prevent this on the ground that after all, female circumcision was not essential to child bearing. The Kikuyu elders who included Sanson Njoroge, Samuel Gitau, William Njoroge and Musa Gitau however felt that Rev. Arthur was going too far in his demand that the girls should not undergo the modified circumcision at the mission hospital. The missionaries at Thogoto were prevailed upon to drop this plan, but not until after the elders had promised to raise the issue at the forthcoming meeting of Kikuyu CSM workers at Thogoto in January 1915.³⁸

The meeting took place, as expected, on January 16, 1915, but no decision could be taken on the issue.³⁹ Delegates were asked to discuss further with the other christians with a view to taking a final decision at their

37 J. Murray-Brown, Kenya, (Suffolk, 1974), pp. 51-2.

38 Memorandum, op. cit., p. 9. Interview with Rev. William Njoroge at Dagoretti on 16/10/75.

39 ibid.

next meeting which was to take place on September 15, 1915. This meeting also failed to make a pronouncement on the issue of circumcision and it was again decided to shelve it until the next meeting which was fixed for March 29, 1916. When it became obvious at this meeting that members were not prepared to come out openly in condemnation of female circumcision, it was decided that the matter should be referred to a joint meeting of the church elders of Thogoto and Tumutumu. Already the white missionaries were becoming impatient about this delay in taking a decision on the matter and they made it known that they would like to see a final decision at the coming meeting.⁴⁰

This joint meeting took place at Thika on July 21, 1916 when it was resolved that 'a christian girl may not be circumcised' and that every effort should be made to inform every Kikuyu christian that circumcision 'is unnecessary and it is contrary to the principles of the

40 ibid. Also interview with Samson Njoroge, op. cit.

41 ibid. op. cit., p. 11. Samson Njoroge who was secretary of the meeting pointed out that as a result of the opposition brought up by the missionaries, there was a limit to which they could go in opposing them on the issue of female circumcision. Samson Njoroge, for instance, lived with Rev. Arthur throughout the time he was attending school and it was through the influence of Rev. Arthur that he agreed to be trained as a hospital assistant. Interview, op. cit.

42 Memorandum, op. cit., p. 13.

Christianity'.⁴¹ While it was easy to pressurise the church elders into passing such a resolution, it was not going to be so easy to convince the other church members that female circumcision was unnecessary and should therefore be abolished.

Meanwhile efforts were being made in the other missions to put an end to female circumcision. The campaign was spearheaded in the AIM by Dr. and Mrs. Davis in the mission hospital at Kijabe and Dr. Blakeslee who was in charge of the Girls Boarding School at Kijabe. By 1920, the mission Kikuyu headquarters at Githumu was finalising arrangements for the abolition of the custom and at a meeting which took place there on May 29, 1921, it was announced by the missionaries that the mission would support the ban on female circumcision.⁴² The Church Council of the GMS also decided on November 13, 1920 to suspend for a period of two years any church member who allowed his daughter to be circumcised and that no church

41 Memorandum, op. cit., p. 11. Samson Njoroge who was the Secretary of the meeting pointed out that as people who had been brought up by the missionaries, there was a limit to which they could go in opposing them on the issue of female circumcision. Samson Njoroge, for instance, lived with Rev. Arthur throughout the time he was attending school and it was through the influence of Rev. Arthur that he agreed to be trained as a hospital assistant. Interview, op. cit.

42 Memorandum, op. cit., p. 13.

member would be allowed to marry such a girl.⁴³ Neither the CMS nor any of the Roman Catholic missions allowed themselves to be dragged into the controversy. Kenneth W. Allen, a missionary doctor with the CMS cautioned against the wholesale abolition of the custom,⁴⁴ and the Roman Catholic missions felt that circumcision was 'primarily a social event' which did not involve 'any question of faith or morals'.⁴⁵ Only the CSM, the AIM and the GMS were therefore involved in the controversy although when, as we shall see, the Kikuyu decided to boycott mission schools, there was hardly any school that was not affected.

When the local councils started to function in 1925, one of the first issues to be raised by some Kikuyu members was the question of the abolition of female circumcision. The missionaries had hoped to use the church elders among

43 E. N. Wanyolke, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

44 K. W. Allen, Letter to the Editor EAS, October 21, 1929.

45 Quoted from F. B. Welbourn, 'Elephants Have Tusks: A study of some Independent Churches in East Africa', (Occasional paper, Makerere College, 1958), p. 22.

the councillors to convince the government that the decision to abolish the custom had come from the Kikuyu christians themselves and that they were merely supporting the christians in their effort. Before 1925, the government had taken action to restrict the ceremony accompanying the rite to certain days in each location in order to ensure that the settlers did not experience any labour shortage during the period of circumcision, as the ceremony which accompanied it was a protracted affair.⁴⁶ But this move was condemned by the people who felt that the government was trying to destroy the custom. Their general condemnation of this government move led the DC for Kianbu to remark that

clitoridectomy of girls is still almost universal among the Kikuyu and the parents will apparently not be moved by any argument to modify this practice.⁴⁷

The CNC was also of the opinion that 'through the spread of education and with the gradual passing away of the present generation of conservative and unteacheable elders'

46 KNA: DC/KBU/3/19, Annual Report, 1924, p. 2.

47 ibid.

48 KNA: DC/KBU/3, Annual Report, 1925, p. 31.

circumcision would eventually be abolished among the Kikuyu.⁴⁸ Even those church elders who thought that they would persuade the other councillors to urge the government to legislate against the custom found that they were in the minority. Most councillors spoke against any attempt to legislate against it and the DC for Muranga concluded from their debate that 'there seemed no likelihood of its (i.e. female circumcision) being abandoned for a considerable number of years.'⁴⁹

As part of their efforts to involve the government in their campaign against female circumcision, the missions succeeded in getting the Governors of East Africa to discuss the issue at their meeting which took place in Nairobi from January 26 to February 11, 1926. Contrary to the expectation of the missions, the Governors considered that such a custom, which was prevalent among many tribes in East Africa and which was of ancient origin, could not be abolished overnight. They therefore advised that 'the practice of female circumcision ... should not be interfered

48 NADAR, 1924, p. 4.

49 KNA: DC/FH6/1, op. cit., 1925, p. 31.

52 KNA: DC/K20/1/3, Circumcision of Female, DC to Gov. N. Lobley, Dec. 6, 1926.

with⁵⁰ They however recognised that the custom could be subject to much abuse especially as more people were leaving their homes in search of jobs in the cities. In view of this, they urged the local councils to pass a by-law limiting female circumcision to the 'minor operation' which was considered to be 'the more ancient and less brutal form'.⁵¹ That the government was satisfied that some progress was being made in this direction could be seen from the comment of the DC for Kiambu, and thereafter

Personally I think that considerable progress is being made in our efforts against female circumcision but we realise very fully that we must go slowly and cautiously ... The more the people abandon it of their own volition the better (as) the Kikuyu is ever suspicious and direct opposition is most apt to arouse his stubborn spirit. Much of course has been written by the medical world upon the subject (of female circumcision) but investigation seems to have established that the removal of the clitoris is a simple operation unlikely to be followed by serious effects.⁵²

Had the missionaries adopted the same attitude to female circumcision, the crisis which came into the open in 1929

50 'Conference of Governors of the East African Dependencies Summary of Proceedings, 1926' (Government Printer, Nairobi, 1926), p. 20.

51 ibid. Report, 1929, p. 2.

52 KNA: DC/KBU/7/3, Circumcision of Female, DC to Rev. H. Leakey, Dec. 6, 1926.

would not have occurred. But the missionaries were bent on forcing the people to abolish the custom immediately and it was this refusal by the Kikuyu to be told by the missionaries what was best for them which led to the ensuing crisis.

In April 1929, two women were brought before the Kiambu 2nd class magistrate court charged with performing the 'major operation' which had been condemned by the Governors of East Africa in 1926 and which had thereafter been made an offence.⁵³ The case was brought before the court by Rev. Knapp of the GMS and it was alleged that the two women had performed the operation on Wanjiru wa Kubai, a pupil at the GMS school, Kamui. By taking the case to court, Rev. Knapp had expected that the punishment that would be meted out to the women would be so severe as to act as a deterrent to the other parents who might like to insist on their daughters being circumcised the Kikuyu way.⁵⁴

Contrary to Rev. Knapp's expectation, the women were

53 ibid., CNC's Circular No. 28/26 of August, 1926.

54 EAS, April 28, 1929: See also KNA: DC/KBU/1/22, Annual Report, 1929, p. 2.

57 Kenya Yearbook of Law, 1961, p. 27

fined thirty shillings each because there was no evidence to show that the operation was carried out against the wishes of Wanjiru. Rev. Knapp was not happy that the fine was small but Kikuyu parents were even more indignant that the women were punished at all for carrying out a traditional custom.⁵⁵ From the reaction of the people to the punishment, the DC for Kiambu concluded that the LNCs 'did not have the people behind them' when they succumbed to Government pressure to pass a by-law making the 'major operation' a punishable offence.⁵⁶

Rev. Arthur of Thogoto ignored this general dissatisfaction of the people and although he was nominated by the Governor to represent African interests in the Legislative Council, he went on to discuss the court's ruling with Mr. Dobbs, the Acting CNC in the presence of Canon Leakey and Rev. Knapp. After further consultation with the Attorney General, it was decided to appeal to the Supreme Court.⁵⁷ The court, however, upheld the verdict of the Lower Court and ruled out the charge of 'grievous hurt'

55 ibid.

56 ibid.

57 Memorandum, op. cit. p. 37

which could have qualified the two women for the type of punishment which was demanded by the missionaries.⁵⁸

Rev. Arthur was still not satisfied with this ruling and he claimed that the Supreme Court had erred in not imposing the maximum punishment on the two women who had operated on a school girl without her consent. He then sought the support of the Kenya Missionary Council, the East African Women's League and the Convention of Settlers Association to challenge the action of the two courts. Petitions were sent to the government accusing it of encouraging a custom that had been shown not to be beneficial to the people and of doing nothing to protect those who did not want to be circumcised.⁵⁹ Rev. Arthur also sought to win the support of Kikuyu christians in this latest campaign against female circumcision but here he came in conflict with the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) which also claimed to speak on behalf of the people for the retention of the custom. In addition to the fact that most

The KCA was the next association that was formed in

58 ibid.

59 Their letters were published in EAS, October 31, 1929.

Kikuyu after the arrest and detention in 1922 of leaders of EAA. In 1924 Joseph Kangethe was appointed to carry on from where the leaders of the EAA had left off but it was not until 1926 when the name of EAA was changed to KCA at the instance of the government. The government was anxious to destroy the name of EAA because of its claim to represent the interests of all the ethnic groups in Kenya.⁶⁰ Joseph Kangethe still continued as secretary until 1928 when the first officials were elected in preparation for the Hilton Young Commission's visit to Kenya in that year. Joseph Kangethe then became the President, Johnstone (now Jomo) Kenyatta was elected Secretary and Job Muchuchu became the Treasurer.⁶¹ The KCA which was anxious to present itself as the authentic voice of the Kikuyu, did not hesitate to involve itself in issues which would enable it to achieve this objective. Its involvement in the female circumcision controversy has to be seen against this background, in addition to the fact that most

60 UCN/HD - RPA D/3/4, Uria Kenyaatta Atwarirwo Ruraya ni KCA Kuma 1928 Nginya 1930 (A Translation and Summary in English), p. 5.

61 ibid. PO/CP.4/1/2, pp. 213; p. 281.

of its leaders were those who had been educated in mission schools but who had refused to come under mission influence after their education.

Already in 1927 the government considered the KCA a force to reckon with and the DC for Muranga where the Association had its base attended two of its meetings in July and August, 1927 and appealed to the Association to cooperate with the government in its activities. He did not fail to comment on these meetings in his Annual Report for 1928. According to him:

There is no doubt that the Association however irresponsible a body it may be, and however unmethodical its methods, nevertheless includes in its ranks some of the most progressive and educated young men in the district.⁶²

The PC who also attended a meeting of the Association on March 16, 1928 came back with the impression that

It can no longer be said that the KCA is unrepresentative of the Kikuyu people. It includes in its ranks a vast proportion of the more enlightened and progressive youth and wields in increasing influence in the counsels of the elders.⁶³

62 KNA: DC/FH.1/6, Fort Hall Annual Report, 1927, pp. 7-8.

63 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 281.

65 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 281.

All these comments were made before the 1929 attempt by Rev. Arthur to win support from Kikuyu Christians for the abolition of female circumcision and it could not have been expected that an Association so described could allow the missionaries to carry on their campaign against female circumcision unchallenged.

During the March 1928 meeting with the PC, the KCA made it known for the first time that it intended to contest the forthcoming election to the local councils on the platform of retention of Kikuyu customs, especially female circumcision.⁶⁴ In response to this challenge from the KCA, the missionaries in Tumutumu spearheaded the formation of the Progressive Kikuyu Party (PKP) which was described in an official report as not being a genuine native product.⁶⁵ The GSM also asked those who were members of the KCA from within the church to declare their stand publicly on the issue of female circumcision. Those who said that they would not support the ban on female circumcision were suspended and immediately a sudden drop was noticed in the number of those who came forward for

64 C. G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 114.

65 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 281.

69 KNA: August 10, 1929.

70 KNA: PC/CP.8/7/1, Political Situation in the Province, 1929-1931, Letter of KCA to all the chiefs.

Holy communion and for baptism.⁶⁶

A meeting of the church elders in Kikuyu took place in Tumutumu in March 1929 and it endorsed the stand of the CSM in suspending those who were not ready to oppose female circumcision.⁶⁷ The KCA did not hesitate to publish this resolution in its newspaper, Muigwithania, thus making it possible for non-christian Kikuyu to know about the Tumutumu meeting.⁶⁸

As Rev. Arthur intensified his campaign against female circumcision, the KCA became more assertive in its claim to represent the Kikuyu and it wrote a letter to Rev. Arthur with copies to Rev. Knapp and the Press, asking 'whether circumcision being the custom of the Kikuyu christian, he is to be a heathen simply because he is a Kikuyu'.⁶⁹ The Association also wrote to seventy-four Kikuyu chiefs and headmen, asking them to meet to decide what should be done to stop the campaign of the missions against female circumcision.⁷⁰ There is no evidence to

66 C. G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 114. See also Memorandum, p. 34.

67 Memorandum, p. 34.

68 C. G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 116.

69 EAS, August 10, 1929.

70 KNA: PC/CP.8/7/1, Political Situation in the Province, 1929-1931, Letter of KCA to all the chiefs.

show that this meeting actually took place but in one location alone, 1,043 shillings was seized as money collected by some chiefs to assist the KCA in its fight against the missions on the question of female circumcision.⁷¹

As part of Rev. Arthur's strategy in his campaign against circumcision, the Kikuyu church elders from Kiambu district met on September 6, 1929 to draft a petition to be forwarded to the government to show that the Kikuyu christians were solidly behind the missionaries in their campaign against circumcision. Before the petition was sent to the government, it was decided to pass it round the various churches in Kikuyu for the signatures of church members.⁷²

At the CSM church in Thogoto, two men rose up to disown the petition and accused the elders of attempting to abolish Kikuyu customs single-handedly. The two men were loudly cheered by most of the christians who were present and the

71 KNA: DC/FH1/8, op. cit., 1929, p. 4.

72 Memorandum, op. cit., p. 43. In agreeing to be party to the petition Ex-Senior Chief Josiah Njonjo felt that it was necessary to protect those girls who, possibly as a result of mission teaching against the custom, might not want to take part in female circumcision. Interview, 15/10/75.

meeting had to be called off to avoid further incidents. THE CMS church at Kabete criticised the petition as being too wordy, but when it was rewritten and presented to the church, nobody signed it. At the AIM church in Kijabe, only six people signed the petition.⁷³

Just as the campaign to get signatures was going on a new song known as Muthirigu was beginning to be heard all over Kikuyu. The song was an adaptation of a Swahili song that was imported to Kikuyu by students of the NITD who learned the song during their stay in Mombasa.⁷⁴ The song, which had many stanzas, was varied to suit local conditions in the different parts of Kikuyu and its objective was to ridicule the missionaries and those who supported them in their effort to abolish female circumcision. The expression Kirore which was a Kikuyu variant of the Swahili word Kidole (finger), was also used during the same time to describe those who signed the petition, as opposed to the Kikuyu Karinga or the 'pure' Kikuyu who wished to see

73 Memorandum, p. 44. Confirmed by Samuel Gitau, interviewed at Thogoto on 17/10/75.

74 Waruiru, C., 'Female Initiation Controversy and GSM Tumutumu, 1912-1937' (BA Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1971), pp. 12 - 14.

Kikuyu customs preserved.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, Rev. Arthur had travelled to Chogoria in Embu, at the invitation of Dr. Irvine, the missionary in charge of the station, who was finding it increasingly difficult to control his church because of his stand on circumcision. On his way to Chogoria, Rev. Arthur decided to call on the CMS churches at Kahuhia and Weithaga. The church members refused to listen to him when they learned that he had come to speak on the abolition of female circumcision. At the CMS church in Embu, where Rev. Arthur also tried to address the church members on the same issue the missionary in charge refused to grant him this permission.⁷⁶ In spite of his experience in these churches, Rev. Arthur went ahead to Chogoria and informed the church members there that the church had decided to oppose female circumcision and could not go back on this decision. The KCA had decided to oppose the church because of this and the church members must choose between the church and KCA.

75 Dedan Nugo, interviewed at Wangigi on 25/10/75. He claimed to have been largely responsible for teaching those who later spread the songs all over Kikuyu.

76 KNA: CMS/1/625, Weithaga Mission Log Book, entry for 1929.

Only fourteen of the one hundred and twenty members declared their support for the church.⁷⁷ Yet Rev. Arthur decided to go on with his campaign against circumcision.

Back in Thogoto on October 2, 1929, Rev. Arthur called a meeting of the European staff of the mission to brief them on the outcome of his trip to Chogoria and to seek their advice on the next line of action. The meeting resolved to call on all the Kikuyu working for the mission to make their stand clear on female circumcision and the KCA.⁷⁸ On October 14 1929, just as the schools were about to go on holiday, Rev. Arthur called all the teachers and informed them of the decision taken at the meeting of October 2. The teachers were to go home during the holiday and come back a day to resumption to make known their stand on female circumcision and the KCA.⁷⁹

On October 30, Rev. Arthur expected the teachers to report to him whether or not they had made up their minds to repudiate female circumcision and the KCA, but the mood

77 KNA: PC/CP.8/1/1, Female circumcision 1928-1930, DC, Embu to the Senior Commissioner, Nyeri, 15/10/29.

78 Memorandum, p. 47.

79 ibid. Letter of Director of Education to the Secretary of State, 13/11/29.

in which he met the teachers convinced him that they were not prepared to make any written undertaking as expected by him. He therefore asked them to give a simple 'Yes' or 'No' answer to the question. It is not known how many teachers were involved, but seventeen of them decided to say 'Yes' to both female circumcision and the KCA. Immediately Rev. Arthur asked them to produce their Kipande or job card which he signed off and asked them to leave the mission station at once.⁸⁰ Having sent these teachers away, Rev. Arthur then attempted to share their work among those who had opposed circumcision and the KCA, but the people would not allow him to do this. As far as they were concerned, those who were being sent away were the true Kikuyu. Anybody who openly declared that he would not have anything to do with circumcision had thereby declared himself not to be Kikuyu. They wanted Western education, but not at the expense of doing away with their customs. Parents immediately went to the various schools belonging to the GSM to withdraw their children.⁸¹

80 ibid.

81 KNA: PC/CP.8/1/1, op. cit., Letter of Director of Education to the Secretary of State, 13/11/29.

The same development was going on in the other missions. At Kikumbuini where the GMS was also asking people to declare their stand about female circumcision and the KCA, trouble broke out and was not resolved until after some church members had been imprisoned. Both Rev. Knapp and Wanyoike Kamawe had gone to Kihumbuini on September 15, 1929 to see whether or not the church members were on the side of the missionaries with regard to female circumcision. After the normal morning service on Sunday, people were asked to wait for the Holy Communion but those who waited behind were told by Rev. Knapp that only those who had signed against female circumcision and the KCA would be allowed to partake of the Holy Communion.⁸² Only about thirty out of over two hundred people who waited behind for the Holy Communion declared that they were behind the church in its campaign against female circumcision. Rev. Knapp insisted on allowing only those who were 'loyal' to the church to partake of the Holy Communion, but the other people who waited behind for the service refused to go away on the ground that 'we are still members of our

82 A detailed account of the incident is to be found in EAS, October 26, 1929. See also E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 100.

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church'. They would however not 'renounce a good tribal custom going back many generations and (which) is practised not only by our tribe but by very many tribes in Africa'.⁸³ Trouble then broke out between those who supported circumcision and those who opposed it and the service came to an abrupt end.⁸⁴

Rev. Knapp took four of the church members who were considered to be the ring leaders to court for 'causing a disturbance during a church service'.⁸⁵ The presiding judge found the four of them guilty of the offence and sentenced Hezekiah Gachui, 'who took the lead throughout' to three months 'rigorous imprisonment'. The other three people - Petro Ngoci, William Wainana Githithu and John Mukundi - were each sentenced to six weeks' 'rigorous' imprisonment.⁸⁶ From what had taken place at Thogoto and Kihunbuini many people started to wonder how they could remain with the mission that would not tolerate Kikuyu customs. They therefore sent to the Director of Education and the DCs to send them teachers who would not oppose

83 ibid.

84 ibid. 78/07-8/1/1, op. cit., DC's Office, Kisumu, to Commissioner, Special, Dec. 24, 1929.

85 EAS, November 9, 1929, E. N. Wanyoike, op. cit., pp. 101-2.

86 ibid.

their customs. ⁷⁶ The fact that the people succeeded in

In addition to this appeal many of the church members tried to remove items of furniture and other materials from both the schools and churches. According to them, these had previously been given to the missions on the understanding that they would promote the education of their children. Since they had shown by their latest attack on female circumcision that they were more interested in Christianity than education - a situation which made them send away teachers on religious rather than educational ground - there was no reason why the missions should be allowed to continue to use those materials.⁸⁷ In an effort to ensure that these materials were not taken away, some missions instituted court actions against their former adherents. In one of such actions, Zacharia Muriuki, Wanjui Munana and Charles Kamuria were taken to court by the GSM at Kahuho for removing chairs, tables and beds belonging to the mission. The presiding magistrate decided to allow the accused persons to take over possession of the items since they had 'acted under a colour of right'.⁸⁸

87 KNA: PC/CP.8/7/1, op. cit. DC's office, Kiambu, to Snr. Commissioner, Nyeri, Dec. 24, 1929.

88 ibid.

It was not always the case that the people succeeded in getting back their land and furniture from the missions, but whenever they did, it usually led to bitterness and a determination to break permanently with the mission concerned.⁸⁹

In keeping with the previous tradition of seeing the Government as an alternative to mission control of African schools, those who were affected by the decision of the missions to send away teachers who would not oppose female circumcision, sent delegations to the Education Department and the DCS. Those from Muranga district told the DC that 'no power on earth will persuade them to return to the fold of the mission' and demanded that government teachers who would promote the education of their children rather than using the school to spread Christianity, should be sent to them.⁹⁰ In Kiambu district, a letter was sent to the Director of Education by parents of the children in seven of the schools that were closed down, calling on him, as 'the head of all the schools' to send to them teachers

89 ibid. and KNA: PC/CP.8/1/1, op. cit. contain numerous instances of court actions against the missions.

90 KNA: DC/FH1/9, op. cit., p. 12.

who would be interested in the education of their children.⁹¹ Soon after the letter, a delegation from these schools was sent to meet the Director with a plea for these teachers to be sent and a promise to pay their salaries as they had done in the past in mission schools.⁹² Similar delegations from affected AIM schools in Kiambu district were sent to the Director of Education, with the same request for teachers.⁹³ The Director promised to look into the situation and communicate his decision to them later.⁹⁴

When he heard that people were going to the Director to request for government teachers, Rev. Arthur wrote to warn the Director of the consequences of his giving in to the demand of the people. He complained that the Director should have asked those who came to him to direct their grievances to their DC who would have brought these to the attention of the Area School Committee. It was this Committee, which was made up largely of white government

91 KNA: PC/CP.8/1/1, op.cit., Director of Education to the Secretary of State.

92 ibid.

93 ibid.

94 ibid.

95 ibid.

96 KNA: PC/CP.8/1/1, op.cit., Director of Education to the Secretary of State.

officials, white settlers and the missionaries, that should have advised the Director on what steps to take to deal with the situation. By listening to the people, the Director was not only 'playing off one authority against the other', but was also belittling the DCS and the Area School Committee in the eyes of the 'natives'.⁹⁵ Finally Rev. Arthur reminded the Director that

The policy of cooperation between the Government and the missions is the policy of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. That policy is in grave danger of being upset by a very small disgruntled, disloyal and in some cases, actively evil, section of the people ... It will be disastrous to Africa if this policy is weakened by its failure in this case.⁹⁶

The meeting that was called on November 20, 1929 by the Director and which was attended by the Chief Native Commissioner and the DC for Kianbu decided to ignore the request of the people for government teachers but agreed to make Rev. Arthur and the other missionaries give a written pledge that no teacher would be asked to teach against female circumcision or send away pupils whose parents believed in female circumcision.⁹⁷ This decision,

95 ibid. CSM; Kikuyu to the Director of Education, January 16, 1930.

96 ibid. DC's Office, Kianbu to the Sur. Commissioner,

97 KNA: PC/CP.8/1/1, op. cit. Director of Education to the Secretary of State.

which favoured the continued control of African education by the missionaries ignored the threat made by some Kikuyu that they would never go back to the mission.

After announcing to the people at a baraza in Dagoretti on December 3, that the government expected parents to send their children back to the mission schools, as the Government was going to ensure that no mission society campaigned against female circumcision, the DC for Kianbu also met Rev. Arthur to discuss the situation with him. The DC suggested that as a way of restoring the people's confidence, the mission should make sure that it employed a teacher in each school who was not necessarily from the mission and whose duty it would be to teach non-religious subjects. His appointment should be based 'solely on his ability to teach these subjects'. This would convince the people that the mission was interested in the education of their children as opposed to using the school as an avenue for attracting adherents to their church.⁹⁸ While promising to ensure that mission teachers did not campaign against female circumcision in the school, Rev. Arthur was completely opposed to employing teachers who were not

98 ibid., DC's Office, Kianbu to the Snr. Commissioner, Nyeri, Dec. 24, 1929.

necessarily from the CSM. According to him, he would 'not take the risk of having a Roman Catholic in his school even as a teacher of Arithmetic'.⁹⁹ To this the DC remarked that

while we are thinking about education, the missions are concerned with religious doctrine. The future is obscure, but I believe that the attitude will be fatal to their chance of preserving what is at present a monopoly of education in the Reserves. Its natural result will be a demand for non-denominational schools, which I believe, can no longer be resisted.¹⁰⁰

The Director of Education was not so pessimistic. According to him, it was essential that nothing should be done to weaken mission control over African schools. This was because, although the Kikuyu were prepared to pay the salaries of the teachers, government spending on African education would increase three times were the government to take over control of the mission schools. He went on to say that it was 'a historical fact that education cannot be separated from the church' and this was one other reason why the mission must still be allowed to run their schools.¹⁰¹

99 ibid.

100 ibid. 10 Dagoretti to DJ Kiambu, December 22, 1930.

101 KNA: PG/CP.9/29/1, Tenure of church and school plots, 1930-1933, Minute of the last PGs meeting, August 11, 1930.

Meanwhile, a large number of children continued to remain without any education as a result of this stalemate. Of the five CSM 'out-schools' in Dagoretti division, three had to close down completely because parents would not send their children to the schools. In the other two Rungiri 'out-school' with one hundred and twenty pupils before the controversy, was left with only seventeen pupils. The Divisional Officer who paid a visit to the school described the atmosphere there as 'dismal and lifeless'.¹⁰² At Kamandura 'out-school', there were only three boys instead of the one hundred and forty five pupils that were in the school in August 1929.¹⁰³ Elsewhere in Kiambu district, Ruthimitu school with nearly two hundred pupils in the past was left with only five pupils. The AIM schools at Natathia and Mukue, both on the Escarpment were closed down for lack of pupils.¹⁰⁴ In Muranga district where so many children were roaming about without going to school the DC feared that the people might turn into 'a discontented and aggrieved community' who might easily turn 'its thoughts

102 ibid. DO Dagoretti to DC Kiambu, December 22, 1930.

103 ibid. DC/200/1/23, Annual Report 1929, p. 4.

104 ibid. DO/200/1/23, p. 4.

105 ibid. DC/200/1/23, p. 4.

to political agitation'.¹⁰⁵ It was these people who had earlier vowed that nothing would make them go back to the mission.

In spite of this deteriorating situation, the Education Department continued to urge the DGs not to entertain any demand from the people for Government teachers. It claimed that such an action on the part of the government would force the people to go back to their respective missions after tension had cooled down. Both the Giathaini school that was ordered to be closed down for harbouring those pupils who had left the mission schools¹⁰⁶ and the 'government' schools at Gakarara, Githunguri and Ihigaini which were closed down in May 1929 on the recommendation of the Inspector of schools,¹⁰⁷ were allowed to reopen early in 1930 under the auspices of the LNCS because they were not closed on account of the controversy over female circumcision.¹⁰⁸ In reopening these schools, the Education Department made it clear that this should not be taken as a precedent and that no other permission would be given to any other school

105 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 467.

106 KNA: DC/KBU/1/23, Annual Report 1930, p. 4.

107 See p. 19 above.

108 KNA: DC/KBU/1/23, op. cit.

to operate outside mission control.¹⁰⁹

Nyeri, unlike Kiambu and Muranga districts, had hitherto not been involved in the dispute over the control of schools. This was because the issue of the abolition of female circumcision was here at first confined to the church and teachers were not called upon to sign against circumcision or lose their jobs. Trouble broke out on October 8, 1931 after a girl from Githakwa near Tetu, who was a pupil at the CSM school in Tumutumu was circumcised during the holiday without permission from the mission. When she got back to school, it was discovered that she had been circumcised and Dr. Philips, the missionary in charge, reported the case to the police. The mother and the person who carried out the circumcision were taken to court and sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour each, while five other women and a man who were alleged to have been involved in the circumcision of the girl were each sentenced to six weeks imprisonment.¹¹⁰

As in Kiambu and Muranga districts, this incident

109 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 467, these schools were allowed to be reopened because of the series of delegations that were sent by the leaders of the schools to the Director of Education. Interviewed, Chief Peter Gatabaki and Ezekiel Kamau, op. cit.

110 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., p. 498.

aroused great indignation among the people and the chiefs sought the permission of the DC to forward a petition on behalf of the convicted persons to the Governor. Some parents went to the mission station at Tumutumu to demand to be shown where it was written in the Bible that girls should not be circumcised. Other parents simply withdrew their children from mission schools for fear of further prosecutions.¹¹¹

With so many pupils out of school and given the uncompromising stand of the government, parents of children in the affected schools started to work out alternative means of ensuring the education of their children. Already before 1929, some schools had broken relation with the mission societies as has earlier been pointed out in this chapter. It was therefore decided to follow their example, but this time, without waiting for government permission as it was certain that this would not be given. Before the end of 1930, five 'independent' schools had been established in Mukinyi, Kibathi's, and Gachango's all in Kijabe area

111 *Ibid.* Also interview with Johanna Kunyihia who later became President of Kikuyu Independent schools Association (KISA). He was actively involved in this agitation for 'independent' schools. Interviewed at Ngangarithi (Nyeri) on 19/7/75.

115 KISA: DC/FM/10, Annual Report, 1931, p. 26.

of Kiambu district.¹¹² This was where AIM schools were concentrated in the district. Although no other 'independent' schools were reported to have been opened that year, attendance in many mission 'out-schools' all over Kikuyu was reported to have dwindled to such an extent that the government was saying that it would be uneconomical to give grants to these schools in future.¹¹³ But the DC for Kiambu remained convinced that the 'independent' schools did not represent the true aspiration of the people but were an artificial creation of KCA. According to him:

There is considerable evidence to show that the separatist movement in this district is artificial; originated and fostered by the KCA ... 'Kikuyu for the Kikuyu' is the slogan of that body which it desires to apply to education as well as to every other Government activity.¹¹⁴

Even the suggestion of members of the LNC in Muranga district that the government should put up some schools to be staffed by teachers provided by the government in 1931, was rejected by the Education Department on the ground that this would offend the missions.¹¹⁵

112 KNA: DC/KBU/1/23, op. cit., p. 2.

113 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1930, p. 427.

114 KNA: PC/CP.9/29/1, op. cit., DC, Kiambu to PC, Nyeri, Dec. 24, 1930.

115 KNA: DC/FH1/10, Annual Report, 1931, p. 26.

In the final analysis, it was the failure of the government to understand the prevailing mood of the Kikuyu on education and the mission societies, which was largely responsible for the widespread demands for 'independent' schools. Had the dispute been limited to female circumcision and tension was allowed to cool down, the Kikuyu might have returned to the missions, given the promise that female circumcision would no longer be condemned in mission schools. But so many people were now dissatisfied with mission education and so much experience of community funding of 'non-mission' schools had been accumulated that this latest demonstration of government solidarity with the missions convinced those concerned that they should 'go it alone'.¹¹⁶ At the end of 1932, nine more 'independent' schools were started in Kiambu district, seven in Muranga district and four 'big out-schools with eight smaller ones' in Nyeri district.¹¹⁷ The establishment of more of these schools henceforth became simply a matter of time, as we

116 T. Ranger, 'African Attempts to Control Education in East and Central Africa 1900-1939,' Past and Present, No. 32, Dec. 1965, pp. 65-67, p. 79.

117 NADAR, 1932, p. 67.

shall see in the next chapter. 1930-39

Government Attempts To Check Demands For Independent Schools in the Government Kikuyu Schools, 1930-39

The government had not expected that the Kikuyu would go on to start their own schools when it refused to supply them with teachers who would not oppose the discussion. When the demand for independent schools went on unabated, the government decided to arrest this trend. Its first step was to grant permission to the LNCs in Kikuyu to use the money which they had collected in the past to put up 'non-mission' schools. This decision was announced by the Director of Education at a meeting of the District Commissioners which was held in Nyeri on February 16, 1931. Contrary to the wishes of the councils, however, the money was not going to be available for the erection of high schools because, according to the Director, less than one hundred of the 100,000 Kikuyu from all over the colony were qualified for entry into a high school.¹ The schools would therefore confine themselves to primary education, from Standard IV

¹ Director of Education, 'District Commissioners' Meetings, 1930-32'.

CHAPTER V

KIKUYU ALTERNATIVES TO THE DOMINANT MISSION SCHOOL SYSTEM, 1932-39

Government Attempts To Check Demands For Independent Schools - The Government Kikuyu School, Kagumo

The government had not expected that the Kikuyu would go on to start their own schools when it refused to supply them with teachers who would not oppose female circumcision. When the demand for 'independent' schools went on unabated, the government decided to act to arrest this trend. Its first step was to grant permission to the LNCs in Kikuyu to use the money which they had collected in the past to put up 'non-mission' schools. This decision was announced by the Director of Education at a meeting of the District Commissioners which was held in Nyeri on February 16, 1931. Contrary to the wishes of the councils, however, the money was not going to be available for the erection of high schools because, according to the Director, less than one hundred Africans from all over the colony were qualified for entry into a high school.¹ The schools would therefore confine themselves to primary education, from Standard IV

1 KNA: PC/CP. 8/4B/7, 'District Commissioners' Meetings, 1930-32'.

to Standard VII. The first school under the new scheme was to start immediately at Nyeri, while those for Muranga and Kiambu districts were to open within two years.²

The building of the school for Nyeri district was started at Kagumo, six miles south of Nyeri town, towards the end of 1931 and was declared open on January 21, 1933.³ Although the promise of these schools did not meet the demand of the people for a high school, it was a triumph for the Kikuyu who had been agitating for government schools which to them were "the magic door to knowledge, efficiency, and well paid positions in government services or business".⁴ In an effort to arrest the widespread demand for 'independent' schools, the government found itself in a situation where it was forced to modify its existing policy on African education. The school at Kagumo did not come under mission control and although it was not to go beyond Standard VII as yet, no limit was placed on its future development.

The total cost of the Nyeri school was £8,500 and

2 ibid.

3 KNA: DC/NYL/1/3, Annual Report, Nyeri District, 1933 p. 34.

4 ibid.

5 ibid. See also KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit.

it was provided entirely by Nyeri Local Council. Since it was expected that the other two councils would also be allowed to start their own schools before long, only those pupils who had completed their elementary education in Nyeri district were allowed to sit for the entrance examination to the school. Such was the large number of those who wished to improve their education that 'many hundreds of applications' for admission were received from all over the district. Of this number, only two hundred and sixty pupils were called for the entrance examination, and a mere ninety given admission owing to limited facilities.⁶

Having been allowed to use its money to build a school independent of mission control, the Kikuyu members of Nyeri Council next demanded that the name of the school should reflect the fact that the money for it was provided by the people and not the government.⁷ This request was forwarded by the Director of Education to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on February 13, 1932. The Secretary of State in turn referred the issue to the Advisory Committee on Education in London. The Committee

⁶ ibid.

⁷ KNA: Edu/1/2033, Government Kikuyu School, Kagumo.

insisted that 'schools of such obvious importance should rest entirely and unequivocally with the Government through the Education Department', and rejected the name 'Native Council School', which was suggested by the Director in his letter.⁸ As the motive behind granting permission for this school to be built was to arrest the demand for 'independent' schools, the rejection of this name by Nyeri Council was considered to be potentially dangerous. This was why in the end, the Advisory Committee allowed the school at Kagumo to be called 'The Government Kikuyu School' even though a similar school in Kakamega continued to bear the name 'Government African School'.⁹

Still not satisfied with this name, the issue was raised at a combined meeting of the Local Councils of Nyeri, Muranga and Kiambu which was held in Nyeri town from September 7 to 8, 1938. At the meeting members expressed opposition to the continued retention of the word 'Government' in the name of the school at Kagumo and called for the removal of 'the offending word' so as to read 'Kikuyu School Kagumo'.¹⁰ The Director of Education however insisted that

8 ibid. Education Department to the Secretary of State, February 13, 1932.

9 ibid.

10 ibid. Acting Director of Education to PC, Central Province, Nyeri, October 17, 1938.

the name should be retained, the more so as there was a possibility that the school might one day be converted to a secondary school, with students coming from all over the country. He was however prepared to allow an inscription written somewhere in the school stating that

These buildings were erected out of contributions made by the LNCs of South Nyeri, Embu, FortHall and Kiambu to further the education of the Kikuyu people.¹¹

Meanwhile, the decision to allow Nyeri Council to start a school of its own and a promise that other districts would soon start their own, did not arrest the demand for 'independent' schools. By 1933, there were over thirty such schools and there was no sign that more would not be started.¹² The government therefore reversed its decision to allow the other two councils to put up their own schools. At a combined meeting of Kiambu and Muranga Councils in August 1933, the Director of Education announced that the two councils would have to team up with Nyeri Council to run the school at Kagumo instead of asking for

11 ibid.

12 KNA: DC/KBU/1/26, Annual Report, 1933 p.17. See also DC/FH6/1, op. cit. 1933 p. 65.

13 KNA: DC/EMB/1/25, Annual Report, 1932, p. 7.

separate schools for their districts. His reason for this was that the financial burden would be too much for Nyeri Council alone to bear and that the conversion of the school at Kagumo into a Provincial school would be 'more efficient and less expensive than separate schools for each district'.¹³

Already at the end of 1930, Kiambu Council had collected £6,000 for its high school while Muranga Council had £4,750.¹⁴ By 1932 both Kiambu and Muranga Councils were becoming impatient at the delay of the government in sanctioning the building of their schools and Kiambu Council had to warn that in the following year it might refuse to vote money for the ordinary working expenses of the council should the government continue to delay the building of the school.¹⁵ It therefore came as a surprise to the councils when they were asked to team up with Nyeri because it was feared that they would not be able to finance separate schools in their districts.

When Kiambu Council realised that it would not be

13 ibid.

14 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1930, p. 465.

15 KNA: DC/KBU/1/25, Annual Report, 1932, p. 7.

allowed to put up its own school, it requested that the school at Kagumo be upgraded to a high school but with students coming from the three districts. The government rejected this proposal and agreed with Rev. Arthur who had earlier urged the government to ignore this request from Kiambu council because 'there is already a high school for the colony for which there are insufficient pupils of the necessary standard at the present time'.¹⁶ Yet, while agreeing with Rev. Arthur that 'there are insufficient pupils of the necessary standard', Kiambu Council was, however, of the opinion that the present condition had been brought about by the missions which had deliberately refused to improve on the quality of education that the Africans received and had instead stressed 'industrial' training at the expense of 'literary' education. The council went on to argue that only as opportunities were made available for the higher education of the Africans would the quality of education improve at the lower level.¹⁷

16 KNA: Edu/1/572, 'RCM, High School, - Proposed, 1929-31, Minutes of Kiambu school Area Committee meeting held September 5, 1929.

17 *ibid.*

19 KNA: Edu/1/2033, pp. 312.

20 KNA: Edu/1/2033, pp. 312. Government Kikuyu School, Kagumo Annual Report, 1935.

The Director of Education ignored all appeals and instead put forward a scheme for the conversion of the school at Kagumo into a Provincial School for Nyeri, Muranga and Kiambu districts.¹⁸ This did not please Muranga and Kiambu districts and the sum of £2,850 which each of them was expected to contribute to the school was not paid until after persistent reminders from the school authorities.¹⁹ Of the one hundred and eighty pupils in Kagumo in 1935, only twenty each came from Kiambu and Muranga districts, and this was meant to express their disapproval of the government decision not to allow them to put up their own schools. During the same year, there were one hundred and ten pupils from Nyeri district alone.²⁰ Instead of arresting the demand for 'independent' schools, this government decision led to more dissatisfaction in Kiambu and Muranga districts and subsequently increased the popularity of 'independent' schools.

Side by side with this opposition from Kiambu and

18 The school would increase its present annual intake from ninety to one hundred and twenty while an additional £5,700 would be needed as a result of the new scheme. KNA: Edu/1/2033, op. cit.

19 KNA: DC/KBU/1/27, Annual Report, 1934, p. 12.

20 KNA: Edu/1/2033, op. cit. Government Kikuyu School, Kagumo Annual Report, 1935.

Muranga districts, was the dissatisfaction of the pupils of Kagumo School at the continued emphasis on 'industrial' education in the school. The pupils staged a demonstration on June 5, 1935 to back up their demand for changes in the school curriculum. Eleven pupils were expelled from the school as a result of this incident, but the demonstration coupled with opposition to the school from Kianbu and Muranga districts, forced the school authorities to review its educational programme²¹

A new syllabus was drawn up for the school in 1936. From the beginning of that year, the seventy-four pupils to be promoted to Standard V were divided into two classes. Standard VA consisted of the thirty best pupils who were considered likely to benefit from higher education in the future or who could take up clerical posts in government departments. The remaining forty-four pupils were to be in Standard VB. Their mornings would be spent on either the school farm or in a workshop, while classwork instruction was to be given in the afternoon. After their course, these pupils would either go back to their people to start their own farms, or proceed to NITD and other

21 ibid.

post-primary institutions where agriculture and 'technical' subjects were taught.²² Thus while 'industrial' training was still to be given in the school, literary education would not be ignored, as had been the case hitherto. In 1937 eleven of the thirty boys in Standard VA gained admission into the secondary school.²³

This modification in the school curriculum also led to a change in attitude to the school especially in Kianbu district. Whereas two hundred and thirty candidates took the entrance examination to the school in 1936 and one hundred and fifty five pupils were in attendance during the same period, in 1937, five hundred and one candidates took the examination and one hundred and eighty-two pupils were in the school.²⁴ Kianbu district which only had nineteen pupils in the school in 1936, had one hundred and thirteen pupils in 1937.²⁵ To sustain the sudden change in attitude by the Kikuyu of Kianbu district, the PC went further to suggest to the Director of Education that the government should allow another secondary school

22 ibid.

23 NADAR, 1937, p. 92.

24 EDAR, 1937, p. 45.

25 ibid.

to be opened in Kikuyu to satisfy the demand of the people.²⁶ This request was turned down by the Director of Education because the only secondary school for the Africans in the colony had already been sited in Kikuyu.²⁷ Despite the new attitude which Kiambu district adopted to Kagumo school after 1936, it did not completely abandon its desire for a high school, and its involvement in the 'Githunguri High School Scheme', as we shall see in the next chapter, was not unconnected with its failure to get the government approval for a high school of its own within the district.

Government Attempts to Check Demands for Independent Schools - The Establishment of the District Education Board

The establishment of the District Education Board (DEB) in 1934 was also part of government's efforts to check the activities of the 'independent' schools. Its failure to prevent the establishment of these schools led it to look for other means of ensuring that the schools were run in accordance with its regulations for African schools.

Before the setting up of the Board in 1934, each district had a School Area Committee whose duty it was to

26 KNA: Edu/1/2033, op. cit., PC, Nyeri to the Director of Education, September 23, 1936.

28 Kenya Annual Report, (hereafter KAR) 1925-1932.

29 KAR, 1934 p. 84.

advise the Director of Education on educational matters in the district. In Kikuyu where there was a large number of settlers and missionaries, the committee was dominated by whites. In Kiambu district for instance, Chiefs Josiah Njonjo and Waweru wa Mahiu were the only Kikuyu out of a committee of ten.²⁷

The establishment of local councils in 1925 and their willingness to expand educational facilities, made them a force to reckon with in educational matters in each district. In 1925 when they started to function, they earmarked £502 for education but this had been increased to £3,379 by 1927. At the end of 1932, the councils were already spending £17,000 on education apart from what they had on deposit for the building of high schools.²⁸ Their contribution towards education therefore made it difficult to curtail African representation on any board which advised the Director of Education on educational matters. The establishment of the DEB in 1934 to replace the Area Committee was intended partly to give Africans more say in their education.²⁹

27 KNA: DC/KBU/1/19, Annual Report, 1926, p. 20. For Muranga District membership, see KNA: DC/FH1/5, Annual Report, 1925, p. 37.

28 Kenya Annual Report, (hereafter KAR) 1925-1932.

29 EDAR, 1934 p. 84.

Under the Grant-in-Aid of African Education Rules, 1934, all sub-elementary schools (i.e. schools up to Standard I) and elementary schools (i.e. schools with classes up to Standard III) would henceforth be financed by the local councils. The Central Government would only assist schools providing full primary education, and these were to be found only at the mission headquarters. The government would also continue to assist the only two African secondary schools in the whole of the colony.³⁰ Side by side with the new Rules was the creation of the District Education Board (DEB). Under the Education Ordinance No. 38 of 1934, each district would have its DEB which would, subject to the approval of the Director of Education, be responsible for allocating grants to elementary schools. It would also be responsible, on behalf of the Director, for all matters pertaining to education.³¹ The Department of Education stated clearly that it expected the Board to ensure that the 'independent' schools, which were springing up all over Kikuyu without permission from the government, observed the regulations of the Department,

30 On the details of the Grant-in-Aid Rules, see ibid., 1935, p. 64 and NADAR, 1935, p. 77.

31 ibid.

especially with regard to syllabus and the siting of schools. As much as possible, no 'independent' school was to be allowed to open very close to an existing mission school.³²

The DC was the chairman of the Board in each district, but the Local Council would nominate six of the members of the Board.³³ The fact that the African members of the Board came from the local council meant that the DC could use his position as chairman of the local council to ensure that only those he could control were nominated. Nevertheless for the first time since Western education was introduced into the colony, the Africans were considered to be sufficiently 'mature' to form the majority in a committee which deliberated on African education.

Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement: Nature, Objectives and Problems

The idea of Africans starting schools on their own did not start with the Kikuyu. In present day Nyanza Province of Kenya, John Owalo had formed the Nomia Luo

32 KNA: PC/CP.4/1/2, op. cit., 1935, p. 572.

33 EDAR, 1935, p. 64.

36 EDAR, 1936, p. 19. EDAR, 1938, p. 56.

Mission in 1910 with churches and schools³⁴ while in modern Malawi, John Chilembwe had also started the Province Industrial Mission in the first decade of this century, with a chain of independent schools to his credit.³⁵ But whereas the two movements were largely the creation of Owalo and Chilembwe respectively, the 'independent' schools which started to emerge from the early 1920s, represented an aspect of the ardent desire of an ethnic group to benefit from Western education without the rigid control of the white missionaries. At the end of 1932 there were twenty eight 'independent' schools all over Kikuyu, with a few others in Meru and Embu outside Kikuyu territory. By 1935, however, there were forty four schools with 3,984 pupils and in 1938, the number had increased to fifty nine with 7,223 pupils.³⁶

Initially, wherever an 'independent' school was started, a school committee was immediately set up to direct affairs. This practice was not new to the

34 B. A. Ogot, 'Kenya Under the British, 1895-1963' in B. A. Ogot (ed), Zamani, (Nairobi, 1963), pp. 262-3.

35 J. McCracken, 'African, Politics in Twentieth-Century Malawi, in T. O. Ranger (ed), Aspects of Central African History, (London, 1973), p. 197.

36 EDAR, 1936, p. 19, NADAR, 1938, p. 56.

Kikuyu as most of the mission 'out-schools' had committees made up largely of Kikuyu church elders and it was they who ensured that all was well in the schools.³⁷ Furthermore, both the school at Giathaini and Gakarara had committees of their own, although that of Gakarara was forced by the DC to fold up.³⁸ It was these committees which were responsible for seeking teachers, organising fund raising activities, and ensuring that there were no problems in the schools. By 1934, however, all the existing 'independent' schools had come under the Kikuyu Karinga Education Association (KKEA) or the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA).

According to John Anderson, and he was supported by Peter Gatabaki, a leading member of KISA,³⁸ KKEA was formed in September 1933 after a meeting at Rironi that was attended by representatives of most of the independent schools in southern Kiambu.⁴⁰ It is not surprising that these schools could see the need to come together to form the Association.

37 Chapter III, p. 113.

38 Chapter IV, p. 165.

39 Peter Gatabaki, interviewed

40 J. Anderson, The Struggle for the School (Nairobi, 1970) p. 119.

It was from among them that a delegation was sent to the Director of Education at the end of 1929 to demand government teachers who would not insist on the abolition of female circumcision.⁴¹ Their name Karinga which means unadulterated and which was used during the circumcision controversy to indicate those who would not renounce female circumcision, had been used by some writers to show that they were against Christianity and that they intended to go back to the 'good old days'.⁴² As was pointed out in the Education Department Annual Report of 1937, however, the KKEA was quite as anxious as KISA to promote Western education.⁴³ Its more radical approach to the missions and the government, was due to the fact that the people in this area were the first to come in contact with the whitemen and they experienced colonial rule before the other parts of Kikuyu.⁴⁴ Their bitter experience with the white settlers and the administration

41 Chapter IV, pp. 197-8.

42 M. H. Koyar, 'The Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement: Interaction of Politics and Education', (Ed.D Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), pp.171-2; F. B. Welbourn, *op. cit.*, p. 35; F. D. Corfield, 'The Origins and Growth of Mau Mau', (Sessional Paper No. 5, 1959/60), p. 171.

43 EDAR, 1937, p. 45.

44 G. Muriuki, 'Kikuyu Reaction to Traders and British Administration 1850-1904' in Hadith 1, pp. 101-17.

made them less willing to compromise with the missions and the government on any issue.⁴⁵

The KISA on the other hand started in 1934 with the nucleus of those schools in Muranga district which had broken away from the AIM in 1926.⁴⁶ Their previous tradition of co-operation with the government, coupled with the fact that the leader of the Association, Johanna Kunyiha, was also a member of the North Tetu Native Tribunal since 1929 and its president in 1933, made the Association more willing to co-operate with the government.⁴⁷ It however did not compromise on the question of what should be taught in African schools.⁴⁸ Whereas KKEA was confined largely to the southern section of Kianbu district, KISA had branches all over Kikuyu and beyond.

Apart from the 'cultural' factor in the establishment of the 'independent' schools, the organisers of these schools also hoped to use them to show the government and the missions the type of education the Kikuyu had been

45 ibid. p. 115.

46 Elizabeth Wambicho, op. cit. See also F. B. Welbourn, op. cit., p. 30.

47 Johanna Kunyiha, interview, 2/7/75.

48 ibid.

asking for since after the First World War. One area of attack by the 'independent' schools was the language policy in African schools. In mission schools, the practice was for a pupil to spend the first three years of his education learning to read and write in Kikuyu. All instructions were also undertaken in that language. After the third year, the pupil continued to receive his education in Kikuyu but he also started to learn Kiswahili. Not until his last year in the primary school, was a pupil allowed to learn English, and such missions as the AIM and the Consolata, did not teach English at all in their schools.⁴⁹ Not satisfied with this policy, the KCA had in a memorandum to the Samuel Wilson Commission which visited Kenya in 1929, criticised the emphasis which was laid on Kiswahili in mission schools to the virtual neglect of English. According to the Association, "There is no justification in keeping the Natives ignorant by making Swahili compulsory for Native Education", especially as it was not the official language in the colony.⁵⁰ It therefore called on the

49 Interview with Stanley Kiama, *op. cit.* See also L.S.B. Leakey, 'Language Question and Administration', Chapter IV, *Kenya*, (London, 1936).

50 KNA: PC/CP.8/5/ *op. cit.*, Memorandum of KCA, May 30, 1929.

Commission to compel the government to 'educate us properly purely in the English language, because it is the political language'.⁵¹ Later when the 'independent' schools were started, their organisers also held the view that English was the language which qualified the individuals for positions of responsibility in government departments and commercial firms, instead of working on settler estates as labourers or in government departments as messengers and sweepers.⁵²

The policy in the 'independent' schools was not to follow the mission schools in starting the teaching of English in Standard IV but to give everybody the opportunity of learning the language as early as possible. Pupils were allowed to start to learn the language from Standard II and it was not uncommon to find some schools teaching the subject in Standard I. While the teaching of Kikuyu was still allowed because it was felt that every Kikuyu should be able to read and write in his own language, the 'independent' schools spent only the first two years on the language. Their argument for doing so was that being the language

51 ibid.

52 Executive Committee of KISA, Kikuyu Independent Schools Association, Report and Constitution, 1938
p. 3.

being reminded by parents that they expected their children to be taught English. Crispin James, interviewed at Nairobi (Nairobi) on 26/8/75.

of the pupils, it should not take too long for them to master it.⁵³ The remaining period that should have been spent learning Kikuyu was devoted to the teaching of English. Those schools which sought to attract government grants to supplement local efforts would usually not indicate this on their time table. They would leave Kikuyu on the time table but teach English when it was time to teach the language.⁵⁴ On the other hand, schools that did not expect any government grants showed it clearly on their time-table that English was taught at a much earlier stage than was the case in mission schools.⁵⁵ Parents of children in such schools would pay regular visits to these schools to make sure that their children were in fact being taught the English language.⁵⁶

In addition to the teaching of English, the schools also placed less emphasis on vocational training. Most schools refused to have school gardens, as expected by the

53 Interview with Johanna Kuniha, op. cit.

54 Interview with Elizaphanson Wambicho, op. cit. He was headmaster of the independent school at Gakarara from 1934-1940.

55 ibid.

56 ibid. Crispin Kamau, another independent school teacher, also complained that he was incessantly being reminded by parents that they expected their children to be taught English. Crispin Kamau, interviewed at Kiahuhu (Weithaga) on 26/8/75.

government, while the few that had then did not bother to take proper care of them.⁵⁷ According to the Inspector of Schools for the Central Province who visited some of these schools in 1937, members of the school committee whom he interviewed told him that they saw no prospect in training their children to be farmers when the government would not allow the Kikuyu to plant such crops as coffee which the white settlers were free to plant. Furthermore since the Kikuyu were essentially agriculturists, the committee members saw no reason why their children should go to school to learn how to farm when this could easily be taught at home.⁵⁸

One of the problems which confronted the independent schools was how to attract qualified teachers. This was not peculiar to the independent movement, as even the mission schools were similarly affected. The CSM schools were reputed to be the best staffed in Kikuyu, but in 1930 they had over fifty untrained teachers in their schools all over Kikuyu.⁵⁹ In 1933, thirteen of their elementary

57 EDAR, 1935, p. 39. See also K. J. King, 'The Politics of Agricultural Education for Africans in Kenya' Hadith, vol. 3, 1971, pp. 142-155.

58 KNA: Edu/1/2314, op. cit. Inspection Report, 1937.

59 ibid. Crispin Kamau, interviewed at Kiahuhu (Weithaga) on 26/8/75.

schools had seventy 'teacher apprentices' together with 'a large number of untrained monitors' who were taught in the afternoon but who were used in the morning to teach in the schools.⁶⁰ When the Consolata mission was told by the Inspector of Schools for Central Province in 1933 that they had 'the worst trained teachers in the Province', they did not dispute this but remarked that this was 'a problem which we cannot afford to remedy at present'.⁶¹ In recognition of the acute shortage of trained teachers in African schools, the Education Department had to order that the Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate course be added to the Jeanes School at Kabete as from 1935.⁶² If the missions which had facilities for training teachers for its schools could still complain of lack of sufficient qualified teachers, the independent movement found it more difficult to recruit such teachers and this in turn affected the quality of education in these schools as we shall see shortly.

Initially, those who taught in independent schools

60 KNA: Edu/1/1205, CSM Tumutunu, 1933-7, Inspection Report, April 12, 1934.

61 KNA: Edu/1/2314, op. cit., Inspection Report, 1933.

62 EDAR, p. 39.

were those who were sent away by the missions because they did not denounce female circumcision. As more of these schools sprung up all over Kikuyu, it became necessary to look around for more teachers and this was not always easy. Some teachers came to these schools because they sympathised with the aspirations of the schools and wanted to raise their standard of education. One of such teachers was Justus Kangethe, who later became the first secretary of KISA. He had to leave his teaching appointment at the Government School, Malindi on a salary of one hundred and ten shillings a month to teach at Githunguri Independent school on a salary of fifty shillings a month.⁶³ In spite of this low wage, he still gave thirty shillings to the school to pay the first salary of Wilson Waithaka who was employed in 1931 to assist him.⁶⁴ Another of such teachers was Elizaphanson Wambicho, who later took over from Kangethe as secretary of KISA. His ambition was to be a clerk in Nairobi after his secondary education at Alliance High School, but he had to abandon this to take up a teaching appointment at Gakarara independent school, although he

63 F. B. Welbourn, op. cit., p. 38.

64 Wilson Waithaka, interview, Githunguri on 24/9/75.

know that he was going to be paid less in the school.⁶⁵

Such teachers were not always easy to come by; many of those trained teachers who came to the independent schools did so either because they were suspended in mission schools usually on moral grounds or were promised higher salaries in independent schools. They hardly sympathised with the aspirations of these schools and they did not hesitate to leave once their salaries were no longer regular.⁶⁶

Trained teachers were usually overworked in independent schools compared to their counterparts in mission schools. This was largely because of short staffing. As head teachers, they saw to the day-to-day affairs of the schools, in addition to teaching in the senior classes. Furthermore, it was the practice in independent schools to make use of the senior pupils to teach the junior ones. It was also the trained teachers who prepared these pupils for their work during the week-ends.⁶⁷

Despite all that they did, the teachers were never

65 Elizaphanson Wambicho, op. cit.

66 Mathew Mwangi who was interviewed at Koimbi on 25/8/75 and Crispin Mamau, op. cit., were some of the teachers in this category.

67 ibid.

sure of their salary in any given month. While it is true that salaries were paid to teachers in advance especially during the harvest season when more money was available to the people, it was more often the case that many teachers went for months without their salaries. This situation was largely due to the fact that salaries to the teachers were realised through fund-raising activities which did not always yield sufficient money.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the independent schools were in the habit of leaving their teachers unpaid during the holidays.⁶⁹ This was to save money, but it added to the frustration of their teachers. At the end of 1937, only twenty-four out of the fifty-nine independent schools all over Kikuyu had qualified teachers as head teachers. Only four of these schools had adequate teaching staff.⁷⁰

In spite of the poor quality of teachers in these schools, the DC for Kiambu who visited some of the schools in 1933 spoke of the enthusiasm of the teachers he met there and their desire to do their best to further the

68 ibid. See also Johana Kunyihia, op. cit.

69 EDAR, 1937, p. 66.

70 ibid. 1933, p. 62.

cause of the education of the children under their charge.⁷¹ In 1935, he could still credit the school managers and committees for their 'earnestness and tenacity'. Buildings in these schools, he observed, were frequently better than those of 'their old established rivals'. Pupils at the schools, he also noted, were 'as well disciplined and looked after as they are elsewhere'.⁷² In 1935, eleven independent candidates gained admission to Kagumo school, although in 1936 when an entrance examination was introduced to Kagumo, only three pupils out of the twenty who sat for the examination from independent schools were offered admission.⁷³ In the following year however the number had risen to thirteen, while in 1938, one third of all the pupils admitted to Kagumo came from the independent schools.⁷⁴

Full primary education had in the past been largely confined to the central mission stations. This meant that of the many thousands of pupils who started elementary education at the various mission 'out-schools', only a few

71 KNA: DC/KBU/1/26, Annual Report, 1933, p. 16.

72 KNA: DC/KBU/1/28, Annual Report, 1935, p. 22.

73 KNA: Edu/1/2033, *op. cit.*, Annual Reports, 1935 and 1936.

74 EDAR, 1938, p. 62.

could ever hope to reach the primary school level. Conscious of this, some independent schools attempted, before the end of the period under review to provide this type of education in their schools. By 1937, Gakarara, Kahunguini and Ruthinitu schools had started to offer primary education, while Rironi KKEA schools was proposing to engage an Indian teacher to start full primary education in 1938.⁷⁵

The independent movement also made some progress in the field of higher education. In 1934, two pupils, George Mugambi and Njeru Gitteriah, both from Gakarara school, were able to gain admission to Alliance High School at Catholic College, Kabaa respectively.⁷⁶ By 1938, ten out of the sixty-three Kikuyu students at Alliance High School were from independent schools.⁷⁷

Notwithstanding this limited success of the 'independent' schools the leaders of the movement were not unmindful of what still needed to be done. According to Kunyiha and Wambicho, both the central committee of KISA and the District

75 ibid. 1937, p. 66.

76 Information received from Elizaphanson Wambicho, op.cit. He was the head teacher of the school from 1934 to 1940.

77 KNA: CCEA/1/304, Alliance of Protestant Missions, 1929-43, Alliance High School, Annual Report, 1938.

committees were not satisfied that many of those who finished their education at the independent schools could not go further in their education because of limited facilities for higher education. The committees were equally concerned about the unsatisfactory method of recruiting teachers for the schools.⁷⁸ Already those school committees which were experiencing difficulties in raising sufficient money for their schools and which were forced to appeal to the government for assistance had consistently been told that they could not expect government assistance until they had a specified number of qualified teachers. Others that wished to add more classes to the existing ones found that they could not do so without either overworking the few teachers that were there or going in search of further teachers. In most cases these teachers were nowhere to be found.⁷⁹ To provide an opportunity for further education for some of those who finished their education from the 'independent' schools and to train teachers for the 'independent' schools which hitherto had been forced to rely on the missions for their

78 J. Kuniha and E. Wanbicho, interview, op. cit.

79 ibid.

teachers, the Independent schools movement started from 1937 to plan for the building of a college of its own. The proposed school would be located at Mariira in Muranga district and each school committee was to pay an annual levy of one thousand shillings towards the project.⁸⁰ The only problem which the movement anticipated was that of finding a qualified person to head the school. The way this problem was solved will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Jeanes School Meeting of August 11, 1936: The Search for Compromise with the Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement

The government had expected that it could arrest the rapid expansion of 'independent' schools by allowing the school at Kagumo to be built with the money collected by the LNCs. When it found that this did not stop the demand for independent schools, it went on to lay down conditions under which such schools would be allowed to operate. Each school must be headed by a trained teacher and no school would be allowed to be built close to an existing mission school. Furthermore, the government syllabus for African

80 ibid.

81 KMA, DU/713/12, Annual Report, 1933, pp. 25-26.

schools with its emphasis on 'industrial' training, must be strictly adhered to.⁸¹ As has already been pointed out most independent schools found it difficult to obtain trained teachers while most of these schools refused to follow the government syllabus in detail.⁸² To keep government inspectors out of their schools, most school committees refused to apply for government grants and went ahead to build their schools wherever they liked, without considering whether or not there were mission schools nearby.⁸³ The government on its part, did not hesitate to order the DEB to pull down those schools that did not conform with government regulations. No sooner were these schools pulled down, especially those under the KKEA than they were rebuilt by their organisers.⁸⁴

In an effort to arrest the growing popularity of independent schools, a meeting of the Protestant missions

81 KNA: Edu/1/3284, Independent schools, contain these regulations.

82 ibid. for such instances.

83 ibid., Johanna Kunyiha also mentioned the difficulties he encountered in persuading the people to obtain Government approval before putting up their schools. Interview, op. cit.

84 KNA: DC/FH1/12, Annual Report, 1933, pp. 25-26.

was held in October 1933 at Kahuhia. During the meeting, the CMS delegates agreed to take over the AIM schools at Mariaini, Kahumba and Kahuro in order to prevent them from becoming independent schools.⁸⁵ The AIM which hitherto had not taken any positive step to improve its education programme was prevailed upon to do so, in order to prevent more of its schools from falling into the hands of the independent movement. Towards this end, K. L. Downing was sent to Githumu from the AIM headquarters at Kijabe to re-organise the schools under the mission in Kikuyu and to ensure that the schools were adequately staffed. It was Rev. Downing who, for the first time since the AIM started to operate in Kikuyu, applied for and got the LNC grant of 1,070 shillings in 1934.⁸⁶ The hope that the Kahuhia meeting would succeed in curbing the expansion of 'independent' schools was however not realised. The DC for Muranga reported in 1934 that the movement 'continued to grow from strength to strength'.⁸⁷

Still in an attempt to control the activities of the

85 KNA: DC/FH1/12, Annual Report, 1933, pp. 25-26.

86 KNA: DC/FH1/13, Annual Report, 1934, p. 27.

87 ibid.

87 KNA: DC/FH1/13, pp. 213.

'independent' schools, the Muranga LNC gave a total of 2,570 shillings to six schools in 1934 and promised to give additional grants to those schools that would allow some measure of government control.⁸⁸ The Inspector of schools followed this up with a visit to many of the 'independent' schools all over Kikuyu territory informing them of Government willingness to provide financial assistance in return for conformity with Government regulations on English and avoidance of close competition with existing mission schools.⁸⁹ It however became clear from the discussions the Inspector of schools had with members of the school committees that they would rather not have Government assistance than abandon their existing policy of giving their pupils an early opportunity of learning English.⁹⁰ Kihiti 'independent' school in Muranga district which should have received three hundred shillings as grants from the LNC, decided to forgo the money to be able to retain its syllabus.⁹¹

88 ibid.

89 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op. cit., Report in the Independent Schools, 1934.

90 ibid.

91 KNA: DC/FH1/13, op. cit.

With the failure of both the missions and the government to control activities in independent schools, many pupils left the mission schools for the independent schools where they knew they would be allowed to learn English as early as possible. By 1935, the missionaries were forced to complain to the government that their pupils were in the habit of leaving schools after Standard I to continue in independent schools.⁹² They also complained that those Kikuyu who were still loyal to them were disappointed that they were not as anxious as the independent movement to teach English to their children.⁹³ In 1936 when there were fifty independent schools all over Kikuyu with 5,111 pupils, the CSM was compelled to appeal to the Education Department to allow the mission schools to start to teach English much earlier, as was done in 'independent' schools or compel those schools not to teach the language at such an early stage. This, according to the mission, was because 'we have suffered irreparable damage by the policy adopted of forcing us to stop English

92 M. H. Kovar, *op.cit.* p. 188. See also KNA: DC/FH1/15, Annual Report, 1936, p. 5.

93 *ibid.*

and allowing the independents to do it'.⁹⁴ While the missionaries were concerned that they were losing their pupils to the independent schools, some government officials were equally concerned that they were powerless to control the activities of these schools. According to D. O. Brunage, the DC for Muranga in 1936, the schools were nothing short of 'a manifestation of nationalism in a somewhat acute form'. He went on:

In a dream, caused by a sort of mental indigestion and an exaggerated sense of tribal importance, these people (i.e. the Kikuyu) can see themselves on at least the same footing as Europeans in the course of the next generation. In their ignorant impatience, they completely overlook the many important things, not easily or quickly acquired, which are so necessary for the conversion of the primitive individual into a competent citizen of a civilised state. They have got it into their heads that Government and missionary societies have it in their easy power to establish innumerable schools for the Africans but that we are jealous of our racial supremacy.⁹⁵

The government however recognised that the independent schools had already 'reached the stage at which any attempt to suppress or ignore them should be politically harmful'.

94 Quoted in M. H. Kovar, op. cit., p. 189.

95 KNA: DC/FH1/15, Annual Report, 1936, pp. 3-4.

96 The best account of this meeting is found in KNA: DC/FH1/16, Handing Over Report, 1936, pp. 5-6.

and that it was necessary to establish some form of control over the schools 'without friction or disturbance'.⁹⁶ It was in an effort to realise this objective that the Advisory Council on African Education suggested that the Director should arrange a meeting with representatives of the Independent schools movement.⁹⁷

The meeting took place at the Jeanes School, Kabete on August 11, 1936, under the chairmanship of the Director of Education. Also present were the CNC, the PC for Kikuyu Province, all the DCS in Kikuyu, all the leading chiefs in Kikuyu, the Chief Inspector of Schools for the Colony, the Inspector of Schools for Central Province, representatives of all the mission societies operating in Kikuyu, and all the members of the central committee of KISA.⁹⁸ There were no representatives from KKEA but after the meeting, an effort was made to inform them of the decisions taken at the meeting. As the CNC told the President of KISA during the meeting, the presence of such a large number of people from the government and the mission

96 EDAR, 1936, p. 55.

97 ibid. 1936, p. 75.

98 The best account of this meeting is found in KNA: DC/FHL/16. Handing Over Report, 1936, pp. 5-6.

societies highlighted the significance which the government attached to the activities of the 'independent' schools.⁹⁹

It was the Director of Education who first spoke, underlining the efforts of the government in the past to ensure that the independent schools observed Government regulations for African schools and how on each occasion, not all the schools were prepared to listen to the Government. The meeting had been called to try again to see how the schools could be made to co-operate with the government.¹⁰⁰ Johanna Kunyiha was then called upon to say why most of his schools had been unco-operative with the government. Kunyiha refused to speak through the missionary interpreter provided and instead took permission to ask Elizaphanson Wambicho to interpret for him. His reason for doing so, according to him, was to emphasise to the whitemen present that the blackman would rather speak English than hear it only from the whitemen.¹⁰¹ Wambicho, who did not start to speak English until he was taught the language at Alliance High School, was the secretary of KISA at this time.

99 Johanna Kunyiha, interview, op. cit.

100 NADAR, 1936, p. 75.

101 Johanna, Kunyiha, op. cit.

For about three hours Kunyiha and some of the members of the central committee of KISA were subjected to searching questioning by the Director of Education and the CMC. The letter asked whether the 'independent' schools would desist from their existing policy of teaching English earlier than allowed by the Education Department's rules and whether they would stop their practice of building schools close to those of the missions.¹⁰² Replying to these questions, Johanna Kunyiha wondered why the government did not want to see Africans, who were also citizens of the British Empire, proficient in the English language. Their desire to teach English in their schools was to be able to speak the language of their rulers. As for their building schools close to those of the missions, Kunyiha said that since their schools were prepared to take the teaching of English more seriously than the mission schools, people had continued to request that 'independent', schools should be built in their midst irrespective of whether or not mission schools existed in the area.¹⁰³ After this

102 KNA: DC/FH1/16, op.cit., p. 5.

103 Johanna Kunyiha, op. cit.

explanation, Kuniha and the other members of the central committee were asked to leave the room so that the other people present could deliberate further on the two issues.

Contributing to the debate after the leaders of KISA had left the room, Chief Koinange from Kianbu district warned against taking any measure against the Independent schools movement as 'in the long run people would go to whichever schools gave the most education, irrespective of whether they are mission or independent schools'.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, the Director of Education was of the opinion that something should be done to check the activities of the movement and advised that 'every effort must be made to avoid adopting the view expressed by Chief Koinange', as this would adversely affect the educational work of the missions in Kikuyu.¹⁰⁵ In the end it was resolved to invite the LNCs to pass resolutions refusing applications for new schools to be put up by the Independent movement 'until such time as the existing independent schools have been passed as efficient by the Education Department'. An Inspector of schools should be appointed solely for the

104 EDAR, 1936, p. 54.

105 ibid.

106 EDAR, 1936, p. 75.

independent schools to make sure that these schools conformed with the requirements of the Education Department. Any grant which the government intended to give to the 'independent' schools should be in the form of paying the salaries of 'itinerant teachers' who would be employed to assist the Inspector of schools in carrying out his work among the 'independent' schools.¹⁰⁶ On the question of the teaching of English, it was decided that all schools should be allowed to start teaching the language as from Standard III but that it was too early to start teaching it from Standard II as was the case in most 'independent' schools. The new Inspector of Schools was to ensure that these instructions were carried out.¹⁰⁷ Later that day the leaders of KISA were called into the office of the Director of Education in Nairobi and told of the decisions that were taken after they had been asked to withdraw from the meeting. The officials of KISA promised to abide by these decisions and thanked the Director for calling the meeting.¹⁰⁸

For reasons that were not given, no representatives from KKEA attended the Jeanes School meeting, but in

106 ibid., p. 55.

107 ibid.

108 NADAR, 1936, p. 75.

March 1937, Stephen Karanja, President of the Association, was invited to the meeting of the Kiambu LNC and told of the decisions that were taken at the Jeanes School meeting. Karanja promised that in future, his association would not open schools where there were mission schools and that as far as possible, he would co-operate with the special Inspector of Schools and his men.¹⁰⁹ When he was, however, asked to put this down in writing, he refused to do so and was not heard again until August 1937.¹¹⁰

Towards the end of 1937, C. H. Hutchinson was appointed as an Inspector of schools to work exclusively among the 'independent' schools. Together with three 'itinerant teachers', he set about putting into effect the decisions reached at the Jeanes school meeting. He carried the government syllabus with him which drew attention to the fact that English should not be taught until Standard III and that agriculture should occupy a place of importance on the school time table. At whichever school he visited, he also met the members of the school committee to explain to them the need to co-operate with the government and not

¹⁰⁹ KNA, DC/KBU/1/23, Annual Report, 1937, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 65.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 59.

to do anything that could lead to the closure of such a school.¹¹¹ While a few schools were prepared to co-operate with the Inspector, most were 'largely obstructive' and did everything to frustrate the efforts of the Inspector and his men. Schools were opened without prior approval of the DEB and when these were ordered to be closed down, the leaders of such schools refused to do so. At Rironi KKEA school, the government time-table left by the Inspector with the head-teacher was rewritten and English was still taught in Standard II.¹¹² Kahuhu KKEA school also refused to follow the government syllabus and the 'itinerant teacher' who was sent back to see if the school was following the government syllabus 'met the door shut and bolted in his face'.¹¹³ Kiameriga, Ruthinitu, and Mukui schools which were ordered to close down because they were opened without permission from the DEB refused to do so.¹¹⁴ All these schools belonged to KKEA.

According to the Inspector, the organisers of these and other independent schools were 'intensely proud of starting over fifty schools entirely on their own initiative

111 EDAR, 1937, p. 56.

112 ibid. p. 63.

113 ibid.

114 ibid. p. 59.

and with their own funds'. They therefore had 'very strong proprietary interest' in their schools and regarded Government supervision, through the appointment of an officer as 'an intrusion'.¹¹⁵ They were prepared to welcome the appointment of Kikuyu 'itinerant teachers' 'as being of themselves' but not of 'an alien European' who they believed was sent by the government to 'gradually take these schools away from us'.¹¹⁶ This was why these schools refused to entertain any form of government control and why in the end, court action had to be taken against them.

Kahuho, Ruthinitu and Mukui schools were opened before the Jeanes school meeting, without government permission. With the latest attempt by the government to ensure some measure of control over the 'independent' schools, the three schools were also found to have refused to follow either the government syllabus or co-operate generally with the Inspector of 'independent' schools. The Kiambu DEB therefore ordered the schools to close down. The schools defied this order and remained open until November 22, 1937 when both the head-teachers and the school committees of

115 ibid. p. 57

116 ibid.

the schools were given one week within which to comply with the order of the DEB.¹¹⁷

When after the expiration of the time given to the schools to close down the schools still continued to operate, the head-teachers were charged to the Second Class Magistrate Court in Kiambu on November 30, 1937. The teachers were each sentenced to a fine of five hundred shillings or the alternative of six months in detention, but they all appealed to the Supreme Court and continued to operate the schools without regard to the government order.¹¹⁸ The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Magistrate Court but on further appeal to the Court of Appeal for Eastern Africa, the sentence was reduced to a fine of one hundred shillings or one month in detention. The schools were also ordered to be closed down as they had not complied with the regulations of the DEB.¹¹⁹ The schools however remained opened in defiance of this court order and it became necessary to institute another court action against the head-teachers and some of the teachers of the schools who obeyed. The head-teachers were each

117 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op. cit., Governor to the Secretary of State, October 19, 1938.

118 ibid. Murray-Brown, op. cit., Chapter 12.

119 ibid. Edu/1/3284, op. cit., Secretary of State to

fined one thousand shillings and each of the other teachers was fined five hundred shillings.¹²⁰ As was the case with the previous judgement, both the head-teachers and their teachers appealed to the Supreme Court against the sentence.¹²¹

Not satisfied with the turn of events in Kenya on this issue, the KCA decided to send a telegram to the Colonial Secretary in London in July 1938, urging him to prevent the schools from being closed down.¹²² Jomo Kenyatta had returned to Britain in 1931 and had since maintained close contact with some of the radical politicians there.¹²³ It was through such politicians that Jomo Kenyatta succeeded in getting the issue of the closure of schools debated in the British Parliament. The first question on the issue was asked by Mr. Riley, a Member of Parliament who on July 20, 1938, asked to know whether or not the Colonial Secretary was aware of the closure of some 'independent' schools in Kenya and what steps he had taken on the issue.¹²⁴ On July 29, 1938 another Member of

120 ibid. These schools to re-open provided the leaders

121 ibid.

122 ibid. Secretary of State to the Governor September 8, 1938.

123 Jeremy Murray-Brown, op. cit., Chapter 12.

124 KNA; Edu/1/3284, op. cit., Secretary of State to Governor.

Parliament, Mr. Adams, raised the same question and at the next sitting of Parliament Mr. J. A. de Rothschild rose to demand why the Colonial Secretary had not given any satisfactory reply to the question that had been asked on the closure of 'independent' schools in Kenya and the fine that was imposed on some of the teachers of the schools.¹²⁵

The Colonial Secretary had to send an urgent telegram to Kenya asking for 'a full report' on the closure of the three independent schools in order to be able to give a reply to the question that was being asked in Parliament about the schools.¹²⁶ As a result of pressure by the three MPs mentioned above, the Colonial Secretary had to write to Kenya to instruct the Governor to 'grant the necessary authority to the Kikuyu Karinga School Association to re-open the schools at Kahoho, Ruthinitu and Mukui'.¹²⁷ Only after this instruction were the leaders of IKEA invited by the Director of Education to his office on May 4, 1939 and informed of the decision of the Government to allow the three schools to re-open provided the leaders

125 ibid.

126 ibid., Telegraph from secretary of State to Governor, July 26, 1938.

127 ibid., Colonial Secretary to the Governor, October 26, 1938.

would assure the Director that the schools would follow all the regulations that were laid down by the government for African schools. The government had no intention of closing down any school belonging to the Independent schools movement, he went on to say, but it had the right to insist that its regulations were complied with by all schools, be they for the mission societies, the white communities or the Independent movements.¹²⁸ The leaders of KKBA, as usual, promised not to do anything that would in future force the government to close down its schools and thanked the Director for reconsidering his earlier decision to close down the schools.¹²⁹ They were in no doubt however that but for the intervention of the Colonial Secretary the schools would have remained closed.

Expressing satisfaction at the re-opening of the three schools, the Colonial Secretary, in a letter to the Governor of Kenya on October 17, 1939, informed him that the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies had considered the question of the role of the 'independent' schools in Kenya at its meeting in June 1939 and felt that

128 ibid., Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary, May 6, 1939.

129 ibid.

in a situation in which the Africans were calling for an expansion of the existing facilities on education, it would not be wise to do anything which could be interpreted by the people as an attempt to deny the educational opportunities. The Committee would therefore like the Colonial Secretary to convey to the Governor its hope that the policy of government towards the 'independent schools would continue to be encouraging' and that the government would not hesitate to give grants to the 'independent' schools as it was giving to the mission schools.¹³⁰ The Colonial Secretary would therefore want the Governor to regard these resolutions of the Committee as 'a definition of policy' and that the new accord that had been reached between the government and the 'independent' schools would be 'maintained and fortified by a tactful administrative action'.¹³¹

In the end, it was neither the Jeanes School meeting of 1936 nor the willingness of the independent schools to observe the government regulations which enabled the independent schools to continue their activities in Kenya. The determination of the independent schools to continue

130 ibid., Colonial Office to the Governor of Kenya, October 17, 1930.

131 ibid.

KIKUYU VENTURES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

to emphasise the teaching of English at a much earlier stage than was done in mission schools had brought them the popularity which they enjoyed with the people and it was this determination to continue to teach that language irrespective of government regulation which made them resist government encroachment on their schools. To have co-operated with the Inspector that was appointed for the independent schools would have meant the systematic loss of control over the schools and their inability to say what should be taught in the schools. This intervention by the Colonial Office in London meant that the independent schools would be able to continue to operate even though the government in Kenya was dissatisfied with their activities. It was not until the period of the Emergency in 1952 that the government was able to close those schools which belonged to the Independent schools movements.¹³²

The location of the school was chosen so that the people would benefit from the school more than any of the other ethnic groups. All the twenty-seven boys who started the school were Kikuyu from either the F.S.S. or C.S.S. schools.¹³³

¹³² Chapter V above, pp. 205-10.

¹³³ The origin of the school has already been discussed in Chapter III, pp. 130-43.

¹³⁴ J.S. Smith, op. cit., pp. 25-27.

CHAPTER VI

KIKUYU VENTURES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION: KENYA TEACHERS' COLLEGE, GITHUNGURI, 1939-1952

No sooner had the issue of the closure of some independent schools been resolved in favour of the Kikuyu than the government had to contend with another move by the Kikuyu to venture into higher education. The ambition of the Kikuyu to expand educational facilities had led, by 1939, to a situation in which many of those who attended the elementary and primary schools were not able to go further because of inadequate facilities for higher education. Already the various local councils had tried to raise money to put up high schools as a way of reducing this problem, but they were only allowed to put up Kagumo school, which was nothing more than a glorified primary school.¹

The government had allowed the balance of the money donated by the Africans during the First World War to be used to put up what later became Alliance High School in 1926.² Its location within Kikuyu territory ensured that the people would benefit more from the school than any of the other ethnic groups. All the twenty-seven boys who started the school were Kikuyu from either the C.S.M. or C.M.S. schools.³

1. . . . Chapter V above, pp. 209-10.

2 The origin of the school has already been discussed in Chapter III, pp. 139-40.

3 J. S. Smith, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

7 KNA: Mu/1936, op. cit., Inspection Report, March, 25-26 1936.

After 1926, pupils from outside Kikuyu were admitted to the schools, but the Kikuyu continued to form the majority.

Thus in 1938, there were sixty-three Kikuyu out of a student population of one hundred and six.⁴

In 1930 a secondary section was added to the primary school at Kabaa to cater for Roman Catholic pupil who were being discriminated against at Alliance High School.⁵ Already when the school was a primary school and under the H.C.F. most of its pupils were drawn from Catholic schools in Kikuyu because it was here that the mission had its best schools.⁶ This trend did not change when a secondary section was added to the school. By 1936, there were a total of one hundred and fifty-six Kikuyu in the school, thirty-one of whom were in the secondary section. The Kanba, who were the next largest group in the school, were seventy-eight, with only sixteen of them in the secondary section.⁷ No figures could be found beyond 1936 but it is almost certain that the Kikuyu were still in the majority in the school.

Such a lead could however obscure the fact that a very large number of those who finished from either the mission or 'independent' schools were not able to go further because

4. KNA: CCEA/1/304, *op. cit.*, Annual Report, 1938.

5. KNA: Edu/1/1360, *op. cit.*, contain the debate over this issue.

6. J.N. Osogo, 'The History of Kbaa-Mangu High School'. M.A. Dissertation (University of East Africa, 1970), Appendix VIII, p. 336.

7. KNA: Edu/1936, *op. cit.*, Inspection Report, March, 25-26 1936.

of limited facilities. In 1936 when there were forty-eight Kikuyu students at Alliance High School and thirty-one at the Catholic College, there were 9,389 pupils in the C.S.M. schools in Kikuyu, 1,573 pupils in the G.M.S. schools, 4,811 pupils in the Consolata Mission Schools and 5,111 pupils in the 'Independent' schools.⁸ Figures from the C.M.S., A.I.M. and H.G.F. schools are not readily available but they must have run into many thousands. At the beginning of 1939 there were a total of two hundred and eleven African students at both Alliance and the Catholic College and majority of these were Kikuyu.⁹ During the same year there were 34,613 Kikuyu attending the C.S.M., G.M.S. and the 'Independent' schools alone.¹⁰ By way of comparison, although there were only 22,808 whites in the Colony as against about one million Kikuyu and 3,413,241 Africans, there were over three hundred white children receiving secondary education in the Colony.¹¹

As has already been pointed out, the leaders of the independent movement were quite as anxious as the local councils to start high schools of their own. According to Elizabeth Wambicho who was the secretary of KISA until 1940, this decision was made when it was

8 EDAR, 1936, p. 102.

9 ibid., 1939, Appendix B, Table I.

10 ibid.

11 ibid.

found that the government became reluctant after 1936 to take pupils from independent schools directly into secondary schools. This was despite the fact that there were pupils from independent schools who passed the entrance examination to Alliance High School and Kabaa High School. From that year onward, the government expected pupils from independent schools who passed the entrance examination to secondary schools to go first to Kagumo school to spend another two years before being allowed to go to a secondary school. According to Wambicho, the government took this step because it claimed that the standard of education in independent schools was generally poor and that although some of their pupils had passed the entrance examination to secondary schools, there was no guarantee that such pupils would do well if they were allowed to go directly to these schools.¹²

In addition to this, pupils from the independent schools who were sent to the C.M.S. school Kaahuhia to be trained as teachers, were dismissed in 1937 because 'their influence was subversive... and they were guilty of indiscipline which was further evidence of their un-

12 Elizaphanson Wambicho, op.cit. This was confirmed in separate interviews with Johanna Kunyiba and Peter Gatabaki, interview, op.cit.

suitability.¹³ In his effort to win the confidence of leaders of the independent schools after the Jeanes school meeting of 1936, the Director of Education had arranged with the G.M.S. school, Kahuhia for some of the pupils from the independent schools to be trained as teachers so as to improve education in their schools.¹⁴ This arrangement was accepted by the leaders of the independent school because of the difficulty in obtaining trained teachers.¹⁵ When however these pupils were sent away from the training school, the leaders of the independent schools came to the conclusion that it was better for them to start a high school of their own where their pupils would receive the benefit of higher education and be trained as teachers. It was in an effort to realise these objectives that each school committee was asked to contribute one thousand shillings each year from 1937.¹⁶

Side by side with raising money for the college, the search for a qualified person to head the institution was started. It was not until towards the end of 1938 when Mbiu Koinange, who had been in the United States of America and Britain since 1927 came back to Kenya to become the first

13 KNA; CCEA/1/304(A8), Alliance of Protestant Missions, 1929-43.

14 EDAR, 1937, p.28.

15 Johanna Kunyiha. Women In Africa, (London, 1949), p.14.

16 ibid.

African with a Master's degree¹⁷ that the hope of obtaining such a person brightened. A delegation was immediately sent to him in his home town, Kiambaa, by the central committee of KISA, to discuss with him the possibility of his becoming principal of the proposed college.¹⁸ From the discussion which ensued, it became obvious that while Koinange would not object to his becoming the principal of a college outside both mission and government control, he also had his own idea of advancing the education of the Africans in the Colony which was not completely similar to what the independent movement was contemplating.

Contrary to the view of Negley Farson that Koinange subsequently headed an 'independent' college because he was offered an inferior job by the Kenyan Government,¹⁹ it was while Koinange was still abroad that he made up his mind to assist in the educational advancement of his fellow Africans whenever he returned to Kenya. He had decided to study in America instead of Kenya because he was not satisfied with the standard of education that was given to the Africans, even at Alliance High School

17 On Mbiu Koinange, see K.J. King, Pan Africanism and Education, *op.cit.*, p.233. See also Jeremy Murray-Brown, *op.cit.*, pp. 195-6.

18 The delegation was led by Johanna Kunyiha and included Elizaphanson Wambicho and Peter Gatabaki Johanna Kunyiha, interview, *op.cit.*

19 N. Farson, Last Chance In Africa, (London, 1949), p.14.

which was then the only secondary school for the Africans and where he was offered an admission in 1926.²⁰ Right from his first year in America, he implored his mates in Kenya to 'pull yourselves together with the help of your teachers and you will be surprised to all the Lord will do with your strength to raise dear old Kenya.'²¹ In another letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1931 on behalf of his father whose land had been given to the white settlers in Kenya, Koinange asked, among other things, that the African should be given proper and equal education before his ability was estimated.²² He also promised in an interview in 1934 with Dr. Jones of the Carnegie Trust to devote the rest of his life to 'satisfy the educational hunger of the three million natives of Kenya.'²³

Koinange left America in 1936 and spent another year at St. John's College, Cambridge, studying anthropology and African religions for a diploma. His teachers at Cambridge testified to 'his loyalty and desire to serve his people.'²⁴ Officials at the Colonial Office recognised that Koinange's 'mission in life is clearly very different from that of the Government of Kenya'

20 K.J. King, op.cit., p.233.

21 ibid., pp. 246-7.

22 ibid., p. 247.

23 ibid., p. 248

24 J. Murray-Brown, op.cit., p.206.

and were in no doubt that 'these aspirations will be viewed with a considerable measure of frigidity in Kenya'.²⁵ He was himself sure that he would not receive the co-operation of either the missionaries or the government officials in his desire to help his people to improve their education. He had however made up his mind before leaving Britain to 'avoid these people (that is, the missionaries and government officials) as much as possible and with my father's influence set out to create a school outside their influence'.²⁶ It was because of this decision that he declined to head the proposed college at Mariira but instead put forward to members of the delegation sent by the central committee of KISA, the idea of starting a college which would not only cater for pupils from the independent schools, but also for Africans from any part of the colony who could not gain admission to any of the existing colleges.²⁷ Members of the delegation promised to discuss the proposal with the other members of the central committee and to report back at a later date.²⁸

It is not known precisely when this meeting took place, but both Johanna Kunyika and Wambicho who took part in the meeting were sure that it took place some time

25 ibid.

26 Ras Makonnen, Pan-Africanism From Within (as recorded and edited by Kenneth King), (Oxford, 1973), p.201.

27 Interviews with Johanna Kunyika, Peter Gatabaki and Elizaphanson Wambicho, op.cit.

28 ibid.

in December, 1938.²⁹ The meeting agreed to site the proposed college at Githunguri instead of Mariira which was originally proposed by KISA. Githunguri was chosen because it was here that the first 'independent' school in Kikuyu was started in 1923.³⁰ The meeting also decided to appoint Andrew Gatheo as the secretary of the college. Gatheo was the headteacher of the G.M.S. central school, Kabete, and his choice as secretary was 'intended to show that the proposed college would not only cater for pupils from 'independent' school. Gatheo agreed to become secretary to the college because of 'the attitude of all sections of the European community to the Africans', namely, to educate their own children while denying the Africans this opportunity. 'A thoroughly African effort such as is proposed at Githunguri', he believed, 'would establish confidence amongst the Africans'.³¹

Once the decision had been taken to build the College at Githunguri, arrangements were made to inform the people about it. Koinange visited the 'independent' school at Githunguri and had a meeting with the teachers

30 Chapter IV, pp. 4-5.

31 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op.cit., Cecil Smith to the Acting Chief Native Commissioner, February 14, 1939.

32 Wilson Gatheo, interviewed at Nairobi, Gathuru was a teacher at the school during this time.

33 Herbert Koinange, interviewed at Nairobi, on 16/12/75, and Paul Koinange at Nairobi on 8/12/75.

in the school. He informed them of the decision to convert the school into a College and the need for them to co-operate with him to make the scheme a success. The existing school would still continue to function side by side with the new College, while the new institution would also endeavour to train teachers for the 'independent' schools, in addition to the normal secondary education.³² Koinange also visited some of the people who he believed could be useful in the college, to persuade them to come over 'in the name of the people.' Borth Herbert Wanyoike and Paul Wanyoike who were contacted by Koinange in this manner observed that although they had never come in contact with Koinange and were therefore surprised that he knew of their existence, his fame as the first African to go to 'the land of the whiteman to study' was enough to make anybody agree to do whatever he asked them to.³³

Meanwhile, Andrew Gatheu, as secretary of the proposed college, was also busy compiling a list of those to be invited to the opening ceremony of the college. As if he was reconvening the Jeanes school meeting of 1936, the list included the Governor, the CNC, the PC for Kikuyu Province, the Director of Education,

32 Wilson Gatheru, interview, *op.cit.*, Gatheru was a teacher at the school during this time.

33 Herbert Wanyoike, interviewed at Kanjai, on 10/10/75, and Paul Wanyoike at Kimathi on 8/10/75.

government district officials as well as the missionaries. They were however invited to the annual sports' meeting of Githunguri 'independent' school and not to the opening ceremony of an 'independent' college. Efforts were also made to inform as many people as possible of the intention to start a college at Githunguri, but they were asked not to make this known to any government official or missionaries.³⁴

The ceremony took place on January 7, 1939 at Githunguri 'independent' school with the Acting Chief Native Commissioner, the Acting Director of Education and the DC for Kiambu present. Everything at first looked like a sports' meeting as the ceremony started with athletics, traditional games and dances. At a stage however, Mbiu Koinange stood up to speak. He thanked all those who were present for finding time to attend the ceremony. As that was his first public appearance since his return from Britain, he also seized the opportunity to tell them of his experience abroad. He concluded by saying that he was not going to be the only one to address the gathering and then called on Peter Gatabaki from Githunguri to speak.³⁵

34 Andrew Gathea, opcit.

35 ibid.

Peter Gatabaki told the gathering that there was more to the ceremony than games and dances. He would, however, call on a Kikuyu elder, Muiruri Gatii, to make known the real purpose for which they were gathered. When Gatii stood up to speak, it surprised everybody as nobody expected that such an elderly man could be called upon to speak at such an important gathering. He could not speak English and Peter Gatabaki had to act as his interpreter to enable the government officials that were present to understand what he was saying.³⁶

Muiruri Gatii thanked everybody present for allowing him to address them. He had not got much more to say than to inform them that they had not only come to watch games and dances but much more to these, they had come to witness the opening of a college. This college would be headed by Mbiu Koinange and as no financial assistance was expected from the government, the people must be prepared to assist it morally and financially. Peter Gatabaki then displayed the board on which the name of the institution was written and

36 Peter Gatabaki, op. cit.

everybody except the government officials, roared for joy.³⁷

Explaining why an elder had to be called to perform the opening ceremony, Peter Gatabaki, a member of the planning committee of the opening ceremony, said that this was in conformity with Kikuyu custom whereby elders were the spokesmen of the people. Although the planning had been done by a handful of people, it was essential to make the people aware that the college was theirs and that they would be expected to finance it. It was in an attempt to remove the impression that it was 'Koinange's College' that an uneducated elder had to be called upon to perform the ceremony.³⁸ Furthermore, this step was taken to conform with the emphasis which the school would lay on respect for the culture of the people. In mission schools pupils had been taught to despise their culture and this was one reason why the 'independent' schools had come into being. The new school was going to emphasise that it was possible to be educated according to the Western tradition without looking down on one's culture.³⁹

37 ibid.

38 ibid.

39 ibid.

When the Director of Education found that he had not been invited to a sports meeting but to the opening ceremony of an 'independent' college, he left the scene and was followed by the acting CNC and other government officials who were also present. As he considered it undesirable that 'an independent and uncontrolled African body should undertake the important work of teacher training',⁴⁰ the CNC immediately set about trying to prevent the school from taking off. His first target was Mbiu Koinange, the Principal of the college.

Soon after Koinange's arrival from Britain in 1938, the Director of Education had discussed his future with the DC for Kiambu, as it was expected that Koinange would seek employment with the government. Both officials recognised that Koinange's qualification entitled him to work in either the Administration, the Education or the Agriculture Departments, but they also realised that under the existing Government policy 'the entry of an African into the Administration of this colony is premature as yet'.⁴¹ As they were certain that Koinange would not accept any job under the department of Agriculture, it was decided to offer him a job at Kagumo school, which

40 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op.cit., Acting Chief Native Commissioner to the Chief Secretary, January 17, 1939.

41 ibid., D.C. Kiambu to the Chief Native Commissioner, January 20, 1939.

was a primary school, with a view to his becoming the first headmaster of a Government African school 'should his work prove satisfactory'.⁴² There is no evidence to show that Koinange actually applied for a government job.

When the Governor heard that Koinange had taken up a job as the Principal of an 'independent' college, he discussed this with the Director of Education and instructed him to meet Koinange to discuss with him the possibility, of his accepting a government job. Koinange was invited to the office of the Director on January 27, 1939 and offered the post of an Assistant Master at the Alliance High School on a salary of £20 per month.⁴³ This offer was turned down by Koinange and the Director reported back to the CNC who in turn, arranged another meeting with Koinange in his office, in the presence of the Director and the DC for Kiambu. At the meeting Koinange was asked whether he would accept a post under the government but he said that he had already agreed to be principal of Githunguri College which was being established under the auspices of 'the various African political and educational bodies'.⁴⁴ To accept a

42 ibid.

43 ibid., Acting CNC, to the Governor, February 2, 1939

44 ibid.

Government job would therefore 'lay him open to the charge of a breach of faith'.⁴⁵ When however he was asked if he would consider taking up a government job in the event of government refusing permission for the college at Githunguri to open, Koinange said that he might consider such an offer. Various government posts including Vice-Principal at Kagumo and that of another African school at Machakos, were then offered to him but Koinange refused to commit himself except to say that £20 a month 'would not tempt him' and even £30 a month 'was not acceptable'.⁴⁶ When it became obvious that Koinange would not leave Githunguri college to take up a Government appointment, it was decided to call off the meeting. From that time onward it was believed in official circles that 'There is no doubt that there is a big and serious movement a foot which if not properly handled might have most dangerous repercussions'.⁴⁷ It was even alleged that Isher Dass, an Asian politician in Kenya, was trying to use the college for political ends and had offered to help finance it from communist sources'.⁴⁸ While both the CNC and the Director of Education were of the opinion that the movement to

45 ibid.

46 ibid.

47 ibid.

48 ibid.

start the school at Githunguri arose out of 'the tremendous desire of the Kikuyu people for the improvement of educational facilities',⁴⁹ they still felt that urgent steps should be taken to make sure that the school was not allowed to operate outside government control. If this was not done, they believed, 'the situation may become difficult to control'.⁵⁰ The CNC next planned to meet the leaders of the college and to inform them of government appreciation of the enthusiasm of the Kikuyu for education and their attempt to improve the teacher training facilities, but also to let them know that government was ready to support the college financially on the condition that government assumed full control of the college.⁵¹ Before meeting the leaders the CNC decided to enlist the support of the mission societies and the Education Department for this proposal.

At a meeting he held with representatives of the missions in his office on February 6, 1939, the CNC announced his plan to involve the government in the running of the new college at Githunguri. The principal would be appointed by the government and there would be

49 ibid.

50 ibid.

51 ibid. Meeting of Acting CNC with representatives of the Protestant Missions, February 6, 1939.

a Committee of Management, with government, mission and Kikuyu representatives, to run the affairs of the college. The CMS school at Kahuhia would devote itself to the training of teachers from northern Kikuyu, while the new college at Githunguri would cater for Kiambu district.⁵²

The mission representatives did not see why the government should give the new college its blessing. This was because all the missions had facilities for the training of teachers, in addition to the Jeanes school. All of these schools could still admit additional students from the 'independent' schools and it was therefore unnecessary to start another school for the purpose of training teachers.⁵³ After the meeting the Protestant missions went ahead to present a Memorandum entitled 'Independent Schools: Proposal for Teacher-Training at Githunguri' in which they argued forcefully that the government should not assist the school at Githunguri because the existing institutions 'are not yet full and could be filled twice over'.⁵⁴

52 ibid.

53 ibid.

54 ibid. Memorandum of Protestant Missions, op.cit.

The Department of Education was also opposed to the idea of a government involvement in the college at Githunguri on the ground that 'a larger amount per head from Central Funds is already being spent in the Kikuyu districts than in any other area and it would be difficult to justify preference being given to the Githunguri scheme...'⁵⁵ The Department was only prepared to allow the 'independent' school at Githunguri to add a section in its school for training 'Elementary' teachers for 'independent' schools. This would be allowed on the condition that the cost of the scheme would be borne by the local councils, private contributions and fees collected from the school and provided the Department was given sufficient power to inspect and generally control the school. The department should also examine and award certificates to those who passed its examination at the end of their course.⁵⁶ By the time the CNC first met leaders of the Githunguri college on February 28, 1939, neither the Protestant missions nor the Department of Education was prepared to give the CNC the support which he needed to bring the college under government control and this in turn weakened his

55 ibid., Education Department to the Acting CNC, *Minutes and* February 21, 1939.

56 ibid.

bargaining position with the leaders of the college.

The first meeting took place in his office and was attended by Chief Koinange, Mbiu Koinange and the DC for Kiambu. The CNC expressed his delight at the enthusiasm of the people for education but said that the government was anxious that the financial responsibility for Githunguri college should not be borne alone by the people. He then proposed that instead of the people running the project alone, the government and the missions should also be allowed to participate in it.⁵⁷

Replying, Mbiu Koinange corrected the impression which had been expressed several times by government officials that the college was an exclusively Kikuyu affair. He said that Africans from Nyanza and the Coast Provinces were equally involved in the scheme and that he was merely an employee of these people and as such could not conclude any arrangement with the government on their behalf. Andrew Gatheo of the CMS school, Kabete, was the secretary of the college and it was necessary to 'get into touch with others through him'.⁵⁸ It is however not known from available materials,

57 ibid. Meeting held between the Acting CNC, DC, Kiambu and Chief Koinange, February, 8, 1939.

58 ibid. Committee of the African Teachers' College at Kiambu, February 28, 1939.

when people outside Kikuyu became involved in the schemes. Chief Koinange who also spoke recalled the history of Kiambu LNC contribution to Kagumo school and pointed out that it had always been the desire of the Kiambu people to have a school of their own. Although the scheme would also involve non-Kiambu Kikuyu, it would go a long way toward satisfying the demand of the people of the district for a high school which they could call their own.⁵⁹ When it became certain that neither chief Koinange nor Mbiu Koinange was in support of government participation in the project, the CNC terminated the meeting and promised to get in touch with the other leaders of the college.⁶⁰

At the second meeting which also took place in the office of the CNC, the acting PC for Kikuyu Province, the DC for Kiambu, Senior Chief Koinange, Divisional Chief Waruhiu and members of the committee of Githunguri college were present. Members of the committee included Mbiu Koinange, Jephitha Ngigi from Embu, Zachayo Muigai, an Anglican Church member, Hezekiah Gachuhi of KISA and Jesse Kariuki of KCA. Also in attendance were three unnamed Kamba.⁶¹ Their inclusion on the delegation was

59. ibid.

60 ibid.

61 ibid., Meeting held between the Acting CNC, and the Committee of the African Teachers' College at Kiambu, February 28, 1959.

no doubt aimed at refuting the charge that the college was an exclusively Kikuyu affair.

The CNC, as he had done in the past, expressed government appreciation at the enthusiasm of the people in the field of education and said that government understood that the desire underlying the opening of the college was to 'set aside all differences between the various educational bodies'. He reminded the delegation that he was the DC for Kiambu when the district was demanding a High school of its own and he remembered that when the government asked the district to team up with the other districts to finance Kagumo school, Kiambu district did not co-operate. Nevertheless, he wanted to point out that in all countries government had always controlled education. If the people would like to contribute towards the cost of the new college, the government would only be too pleased to allow it, so long as government retained control over the college.⁶² While thanking the government for its interest in the new college, members of the committee wondered why government had to wait until

62 ibid.

... syllabus for African schools, this would be done 'with modifications'.⁶³

that time before expressing interest in the education of the Africans. The people would not have decided to build the college at Githunguri had the government shown in the past that it was equally anxious to educate the Africans as it had done for the whites. Although the committee would like to work with the government, it would nevertheless ask that the financial aspect of the scheme and the recruitment of teachers for the school be left to the committee. The committee would like to be responsible for these two for the next six years and if it found that it could not continue to manage then after that period, it would not hesitate to call on either the government or the local councils to take over.⁶³ Mbiu Koinange also informed the CNC that about five hundred pupils were already studying in the college and these were divided into elementary, primary, secondary and teachers' training sections. The college would cater for boys and girls who 'had no opportunity of going on elsewhere' and also give an opportunity to pupils who had failed once to try again.⁶⁴ Moreover, although the college would be prepared to follow the government syllabus for African schools, this would be done 'with modifications'.⁶⁵

63 ibid.
 64 ibid.
 65 ibid.

When the CNC found that there was nothing he could do to persuade the committee members to allow the government full control of the college, he called off the meeting, saying that he would discuss their views with the government. He also claimed to have realised that theirs was 'a friendly movement' although he felt that it was a mistake not to have asked the government for help from the beginning.⁶⁶

In his last attempt to prevent the college from taking off outside government control, the CNC ordered an inspection of the college by both the Department of Education and the DC for Kiambu. It is probable that he expected that the inspection would reveal certain irregularities which could be used by the government as an excuse for not allowing the college to operate.

The first inspection was carried out by officials of the Education Department on March 9, 1939. After spending most of the morning of that day in the college, the officials 'found nothing there which did not accord with the statements made by the African members during

66 ibid.

67 ibid., Education Department to the Chief Secretary, March 18, 1939.

68 ibid.

69 ibid.

70 ibid.

their last meeting with the CNC'.⁶⁷ There were a number of temporary buildings 'hastily erected' and a total of five hundred boys and 'a few girls'. These buildings were over-crowded and were 'likely to prove uncomfortable when rains set in'.⁶⁸ Fees in the college were heavier than in any other African school and these had to be paid in advance to enable the authorities purchase certain items that the school urgently needed. Although further temporary buildings were being put up when the officials visited the college, all classes up to standard II were forced to operate in the afternoon only and classes from standard III onwards in the morning to reduce accommodation problem in the school.⁶⁹ When the officials visited the college, there was already a class designated as Form I although arrangement for starting the college had been made hastily and Koinange was hoping to introduce the various courses in the college in stages. For this reason the teachers' training section did not start immediately.⁷⁰

There were a total of twenty-one students in Form I and the subjects that they were being taught included

67 ibid., Education Department to the Chief Secretary, March 10, 1939.

68 ibid.

69 ibid.

70 ibid.

English, Arithmetic, Geography and History. The students were under the care of Mbiu Koinange. Only eight of the boys came from the 'independent' schools while the other students came from Kagumo school, C.S.M. school, Thogoto C.M.S. school, Kabete C.M.S. school, Kambui, and Catholic school, Kabaa. Applications had also been received from Nyanza province but because of the haste with which the college was started, it was not possible to give admission to pupils from outside Kikuyu in 1939. Mbiu Koinange, however, told the officials that efforts were being made to admit non-Kikuyu pupils to the top classes of the college where they could be taught in English, from 1940.⁷¹ Rather than being 'a Karinga school of inferior standard to which only children of KCA members could gain admission',⁷² the college at Githunguri was set up to cater for those who would not otherwise have gained admission to the few secondary schools that were available for the Africans. This was why in addition to pupils from the 'independent' schools, the officials who visited the college also noticed that 'several different Protestant sects are represented and a few Roman Catholic pupils'.⁷³ This convinced the

71 ibid.

72 F.D. Corfield, op.cit., p.182

73 KNA: Edu/1/3284, Education Department to the Chief secretary, op.ct.

officials that 'Koinange is activated by good motives and there is no reason to mistrust him'.⁷⁴

The DC for Kiambu also visited the school on April 6, 1939 and was much impressed by 'the general state of Keeness, orderliness and cleanliness' in the school.⁷⁵ From the discussion he had with Koinange the DC also believed that 'he (i.e. Koinange) was animated solely by a fervour to do the very best he could... for the general uplift of the Kikuyu' and that 'for the first time we have a directing force that knows the Africans from within and it may be that we can pick up some useful hints from his methods'.⁷⁶ Koinange had told the CNC at the meeting which he and his father had with him that the new college would 'make experiments outside the present syllabuses',⁷⁷ and sure enough when the DC paid his visit to the college he found a lorry with a group of Kikuyu musicians in traditional dresses whom Koinange had invited to the school to teach his pupils Kikuyu music.⁷⁸

74 ibid.

75 ibid., DC, Kiambu to PC, Nyeri, April 8, 1939.

76 ibid.

77 ibid., Meeting between Acting CNC and the committee,
op.cit.

78 ibid., DC, Kiambu, op.cit.

This was a new thing in African schools and it was part of Koinange's effort to ensure that his college did not train people who would be strangers to their own culture. Later when there were pupils from the other ethnic groups, attempts were also made to teach them aspects of their culture.

Not being able to persuade the leaders of the college to allow the government to control the College and faced with the reports of the Education Department and the DC for Kiambu, the CNC found that he had no choice but to allow the college to continue to function outside government control.

After succeeding in preventing the government from either taking over control of the college or refusing to allow it to operate, Koinange set about putting the college on a sound financial footing. Having rejected government financial support along with the government control that went with it, the college had to make heavier demands upon the people. The College Committee decided that fund raising should be organised through the age grade system.⁷⁹ Kihiu Mwere and Kimiri age-

79 On Kikuyu age-grade system, see chapter 1, p.12.

Wanjau, 1979-80, B.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1981, p. 17.

81 Andrew Githa, interview, 2003.

grades purchased the extra land that was needed for expansion in the college. Nuthu age-grade was responsible for the pipe-borne water in the school and Nyakinyua age-grade decided to put up a building as part of its contribution to the school. Altogether, £2,200 was raised by the other age-grades in 1939,⁸⁰ while those who could not donate money sent in food-stuffs and building materials to Andrew Gatheg, the secretary, who took these from Kabete to Githunguri every Saturday on his bicycle.⁸¹

While all this was going on, the Second World War broke out in September, 1939 and almost paralysed activities in the young college before it came to an end in 1945. As will be shown more clearly in the next chapter, the War affected educational development in the colony in two ways. In the first place people who previously had been unemployed found that they were needed for various services in the Army while those who were already employed found that they could get better paying jobs also in the Army. Furthermore, almost all available foodstuffs were sold to the Army while other

80 P.N. Muraya, 'Kenya African Teachers' College, Githunguri, 1939-52,' (B.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1972), p. 67.

81 Andrews Gatheg, Interview, op.cit.

farm products such as wattle barks were sold at prices much higher than pre-war levels. A situation was thereby created in which people preferred to sell their products to the Army while those who were able to get food to buy had to pay far more than they would have paid for them under normal circumstances.⁸²

Koinange had had to go round to people who were qualified as teachers to plead with them to come to the new college to teach, when he started the college at the beginning of 1939. One of such teachers was M.P. Gitonga, a product of Makerere college, who was employed to teach standard VI on a salary of sixty shillings a month. Others were Gitonga Murima, also from Makerere college, Gitau Kanyua, Richard Mbiu, Paul Wanyoike and Herbert Njoroge.⁸³ While it was true that many people donated foodstuffs and money to the college, it soon became evident that the money would not be sufficient to pay the salaries of the teachers regularly and still buy other items such as chalk and books needed by the college. Each pupil paid fifty shillings per term for board and tuition and seven shillings for school uniform.

82 KNA: DC/FH6/1, Annual Report 1940, p.2, and KNA: DC/KBU/1/31, Annual Report, 1940, p.4.

83 Herbert Njoroge, interview, op.cit.

There were over five hundred pupils in the school and half of these were boarders. While the government had bought large quantities of foodstuffs which it sold to institutions and departments at controlled prices, it refused to extend this facility to Githunguri college as it did not recognise the college. The college had to resort to the 'black market' where it had to pay much more for the food it needed.⁸⁴ Having spent most of its money on the boarders, the college was not able to pay its teachers regularly during the war.

Under normal conditions most teachers might have stayed on, in the hope that things would improve but during the war, Africans were being urged to take up employment in the Army on salaries far beyond what they would have been paid before the war. Gitonga who was paid sixty shillings a month by the college found that he was paid over three hundred shillings a month when he resigned from the college to become a clerk under the Army.⁸⁵ Many students also left the college

84 KNA: DC/KBU/1/34, Annual Report, 1943, p.3.

85 Paul Wanyoike, interview, op.cit.

to work for the Army. Among them were John Mirie and Waira Kanau who later became a prominent businessman and politician in Kiambu district. John was paid one hundred and fifty shillings a month as a clerk in the Base Censor and, according to him, he could not receive half of that salary under normal condition, even if he had waited to complete his education at Githunguri.⁸⁶ By 1944 only four hundred students were left in the college, while more than two hundred of them had gone to join the Army.⁸⁷ Furthermore, by 1945, Paul Wanyoike, who was employed in 1939 to take charge of the college dispensary and who prior to that time could not pass his final examination at Alliance High School, was the headmaster of the college.⁸⁸

Apart from refusing to sell food to the college at the controlled price, the government also refused to grant permission to members of the age-grades to organise fund raising activities on the ground that these would divert attention away from the war.⁸⁹ With the exception

86 John Mirie, interviewed at Upper Kabete, on 28/10/75.

87 KNA: DC/KBU/1/35, Annual Report, 1944, p.5.

88 Paul Wanyoike, interview, op.cit., See also N. Farson Last Chance in Africa (London, 1949), p.121.

89 Dedan Mugo, interview, op.cit.

of a Sports Meeting which the college was allowed to organise on December 5, 1942 at the Nairobi Stadium and which brought in £250 to the college, no other fund raising activities were allowed by the Government.⁹⁰

The end of the war in 1945 brought with it hopes of a recovery. In September of the following year Jomo Kenyatta returned from Britain after about fifteen years abroad and immediately settled down to face the work of reconstruction in the college. While it is possible that Kenyatta used the college as base for political power,⁹¹ his previous association with both the 'independent' schools and the Githunguri college were such as would have made it difficult for him to be indifferent to the progress of the college after his return from Britain. During the dispute over female circumcision Kenyatta had tried to mediate between the missions and their dissident converts when he came back from Britain in 1930.⁹² It was also through him that the closure of the three

90 KNA, DC/KBU/1/33, Annual Report, 1942, p. 13.

91 M. H. Kovar, op. cit., p. 271. See also F. D. Corfield, op. cit., p. 183.

92 PC/CP.9/9/1, op. cit., DC Kiambu to PC, Nyeri, Dec. 24, 1930. See also J. Murray-Brown, op. cit., pp. 139-144.

'independent' schools were brought to the attention of the British Parliament and the Advisory Council on Education in the Colonies.⁹³ Kenyatta was in Britain when Koinange was there in 1938 and it was not unlikely that they discussed the idea of Koinange setting up an 'independent' college when he returned to Kenya. Together with Ras Makonnen, the Guyanese turned Ethiopian politician, Jomo Kenyatta had also bought 2,000 volumes of works on Africa from the Royal African Society for use in the 'people's college' that was being planned for the Africans in Kenya.⁹⁴ When Kenyatta was made the Vice-President of Githunguri college shortly after his return from Britain, it was in recognition of his contribution to the 'independent' schools and Githunguri college.

Soon after his appointment as Vice-President of the college, Kenyatta made an appeal through the KCA newspaper Mumenyereri to the Kikuyu for contribution for the construction of permanent buildings in the college as 'a gift or a memorial to our father and our mother. Mumbi'.⁹⁵ In May 1947, Kenyatta became President

93 Chapter V above, pp. 253-255.

94 Ras Makonnen, op.cit., p.220.

95 J. Murray-Brown, op.cit., p.230.

President of the college, when Koinange left for Britain. This position gave Kenyatta full control. He then planned to re-organise the age-grade system, which had been used by Koinange in the past, to raise money. By November 1947 a Central Committee of the age-grades had been formed to co-ordinate the fund raising activities of the various age-grades and to ensure that the money being realised was used to put up the much needed buildings in the college. Dedan Mugo from the Ndege age-grade, leader of the ex-servicemen in Kiambu district and a member of Kiambu LNC, was elected Chairman of the Central Committee. Waira Kamau from the Njano Kanini age-grade and one of the students admitted to the college in 1939 but who left to join the Army after only one year, became the secretary. The treasurer was Geoffrey Kehiu who was a member of the Central Committee of KISA.⁹⁶ In addition to the Central Committee each Kikuyu district had its District Committee to co-ordinate the activities of the district and there were also Divisional and Locational Committees of the age-grades. Committees were also formed in the Rift Valley and elsewhere where there were Kikuyu 'colonies'. There is no evidence to

96 Waira Kamau, interviewed at Ruiru on 1/10/75.

show that the other ethnic groups were involved in this re-organisation by Kenyatta although Peter Gatabaki stated in an interview that since most of these people did not operate the age-grade system, they were given a free hand to organise how best money could be raised for the college.⁹⁷ At the end of 1947, £3,000 had been collected by the various age-grades for the college.⁹⁸

In 1948, George Waiyaki a Kijuyu civil engineer trained at Makerere college, was employed by the Central Committee to supervise the construction of more buildings for the college.⁹⁹ Apart from this, nothing more was done by the committee throughout that year and this led to much grumbling and the writing of letters in the numenyere, to know how the money that was collected had been spent.¹⁰⁰ Although the money was expected to be spent on putting up more buildings, the central committee realised that the money could not be used for that purpose as yet. On two occasions, teachers in the college threatened to go on strike if their salary already three months in the arrears was not paid.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, with nine

⁹⁷ Peter Gatabaki, interview, op.cit.

⁹⁸ P.N. Muraya, op.cit., p.67, M.H. Kovar, op.cit., p.256.

⁹⁹ Waira Kamau, op.cit.

¹⁰⁰ KNA: DC/KBU/1/39, Annual Report, 1948, p.14. This was also confirmed by Dedan Mugo, interview, op.cit.

¹⁰¹ KNA: DC/KBU/1/39, op.cit., p.14.

hundred pupils to feed, the committee concluded that the money which had been collected by the people should be used in paying the teachers' salary and feeding the pupils. That the people were satisfied when they were told how the money was spent is seen from the fact that another £10,700 had been raised for the college by June 1950.¹⁰²

An inspection carried out by officials of the Education Department in 1951 not only gave an insight into what was going on after the war, but it also showed clearly what the Central Committee had been doing with the money entrusted to it by the age-grades. The officials found that contrary to the pre-war temporary buildings, there were now four new blocks of houses made of permanent materials for the boys and each block had thirty-two 'double decker' beds. There was also another 'big block' of six bedrooms with a central common room for girls. This was built of stone with a cement floor. Two residential buildings made of bricks which can still be seen at Githunguri today, had been put up, for two senior

102 F. D. Corfield, op. cit. Confirmed by Dedan Muge and Waira Kamau, interviewed, op. cit.

104 W. F. ...

members of staff. Mbiu Koinange lived in one and Jomo Kenyatta lived in the other. In addition to all these buildings, another one described as 'an imposing stone building for a secondary school' by the officials, was half completed when they visited the college in 1951.¹⁰³

The officials also reported 'satisfactory progress' in the academic sphere. There were four hundred pupils in the college in 1944, but when Negley Farson visited the college in 1948, he found that there were over nine hundred pupils. Among them were Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, Nandi, Kipsigi, Lumbwa, Luhya and there were some from the Coast. So impressed was Farson that so many ethnic groups could be represented in an African-controlled school that he remarked that 'they (i.e. the pupils) make you think that some day there really can be such a thing as a unity of Kenya Africans'.¹⁰⁴ The college used the government syllabus for African primary schools for pupils in Standards I to V, while pupils from standard VI to Form V made use of the schemes of work currently in use at Alliance High School, Catholic College, Mangu,

103 KNA: Edu/1/3284, Inspection Report by R.A. Lake and A.V. Hartfield, July 20, 1951.

104 N. Farson, op.cit., p. 117.

and the C.S.M. School, Thogoto. Biology, Physics and Chemistry for example, were taught in Forms IV and V, although being too poor to equip a laboratory, most of the science instruction was theoretical.¹⁰⁵ The college differed from others not in the scope of the syllabus but in the emphasis given to certain parts of it. The college also injected some subjects of its own that did not figure in the programme of comparable schools and colleges.

Agriculture, for example, received an even greater emphasis than in mission schools, so that when the officials visited the college in 1951, they found that it had the best farm in Kianbu district and that each student had his own farm which he looked after during his spare time.¹⁰⁶ Considering the negative attitude of most Kikuyu to the teaching of agriculture in mission schools and the attempt that was made in independent schools to do away with the subject, one might be tempted to see the success of agriculture in the college as an indication of a change in attitude to agricultural

105 KNA: Edu/1/3284, Inspection Report, op.cit.

106 ibid.

education by the Kikuyu. This does not appear to be the case as in no other school in Kikuyu was farming embarked upon wholeheartedly throughout the period under consideration in this work. The general trend was still towards literary education. The success of agriculture in Githunguri college must therefore be attributed largely to the realisation by both the students and their parents that some alternative arrangements had to be worked out to support the efforts of members of the age-grades if the college was to continue to function outside government control.

The college also made 'experiments' outside the government syllabus as Koinange had told the CNC in 1939. Economics was taught right from Form I unlike the other schools and book-keeping, business management and banking were taught in the senior classes. These subjects were introduced, according to Koinange, to make the students aware that education did not consist only in studying the literary subjects. While it was desirable to learn to speak English, it was not likely that all those who finished from the college would be employed as clerks by the government and the commercial houses. This was especially the case as the college did not award certificates that were issued by the Education

Department. It was therefore essential that students should be taught such subjects as banking and book-keeping which would enable them to set up on their own after their education at Githunguri instead of looking forward to government jobs.¹⁰⁷

'Social anthropology' also formed an important subject on the time-table. Outside speakers were invited to speak on current events and on the different peoples of Africa. Physical training in the college took the form of learning the dances and games of the different ethnic groups in the Colony. Cultural displays were also organised fortnightly during which cultural groups from outside the college were invited to entertain the students. On other occasions, the students themselves organised the displays.¹⁰⁸

Commenting on the emphasis that was laid on African culture in the college, Jomo Kenyatta had this to say:

I tell my pupils that they have to teach among their own people. They therefore have to be one of them... I am sending them out with something that I hope is going to work. I want them to be proud of being Africans! I don't want to make a lot of Black Englishmen! 109

107 ibid.

108 Peter Gatabaki, interview, op.cit.

109 N. Farson, op.cit., p.127.

One other area where the college sought to make 'experiments' outside the Government syllabus was in spinning and weaving. Women were invited from outside the college to teach the female students how to weave and spin. Nine looms and sixteen spinning wheels were found in the college by the officials of the Education Department who visited the college in 1951. This was part of the attempt by the college to teach its students that education was not only reading and writing.¹¹⁰

It does not appear as if the college succeeded in starting a teachers' training section up till 1951, despite the name of the college and in spite of the emphasis which the organisers placed on training teachers especially for the 'independent' schools. Nevertheless, the college organised frequent refresher courses aimed at improving the quality of the teachers in the 'independent' schools. For two weeks during each holiday, teachers from the 'independent' schools were sent to Githunguri to be taught the right method of teaching. The courses were organised according to zones and schools from each zone sent two teachers each to the course. It was expected

110 KNA: Edu/1/3284, Inspection Report, op.cit., see also M. H. Kovar, op.cit., p.257.

that these teachers, who were usually the head-teachers and their assistants, would teach those teachers in their schools who did not have the opportunity of attending the course, what they had learnt from the course. Mbiu Koinange also went round the 'independent' schools from time to time to see how much of what was learned at Githunguri was being put into use in the schools.¹¹¹

At the end of 1951 and despite financial constraints, Githunguri college still continued to exist. We shall examine in the next chapter whether or not it was able to exist outside government control after that year. Meanwhile, the Kikuyu had once again been able to demonstrate their insistence for change in the colonial policy on African education. In a situation in which so many pupils were finishing their elementary and primary education without any hope of forwarding their education, the Kikuyu did not see why the government should refuse to grant permission for the building of more high schools. Githunguri college did not only represent Kikuyu demand for more schools, but also their desire that education in African schools should be related to their wishes and aspirations.

¹¹¹ Waithaka Thuo, interviewed at Githunguri on 24/9/75, see also Amon W. Ruthi and Peter Gatabaki, Interview, *op.cit.*

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST KIKUYU ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, 1939-1953

In addition to the 'Githunguri Scheme', the Kikuyu, also intensified their efforts, during and after the Second World War, to improve educational facilities all over their territory. They also renewed their attack on mission education and this led to the take-over of almost all the AIM schools in Muranga district by its Kikuyu adherents in 1948. In spite of these developments however, the Beecher Commission which was set up in 1949 to review African education, recommended, among other things, the continued involvement of the missions in African education, greater government control of that education and a reduction in the number of African schools. The reaction of the Kikuyu to these recommendations was largely responsible for the closure of almost all the 'independent' schools which were still determined to remain outside government control.

The Second World War and Its Effects on Educational Development in Kikuyu

The Second World War which broke out in 1939, almost paralysed educational activities in Kikuyu and elsewhere in the colony. The government had to second many of its

staff to the Army, including some from the Education Department. Until June 1950 when Mr. A. V. Hatfield was posted to Kiambu to take charge of education in Kiambu and Muranga districts, the Inspector of Schools Mr. Ottaway, was alone responsible for the whole of Central Province, and many schools could not be visited by him.¹ Commenting on his activities in Nyeri district in 1940, the DC observed that 'supervision of education in the district receives only what time can be spared at present by the Inspector of Schools'.² The picture was the same in the other districts where the complaint was that schools were hardly inspected by officials of Education Department for most of the period of the war.³ This, enabled the Kikuyu to control their schools the way they liked, especially during the period of the war.

The mission societies were similarly understaffed during the war and could ill afford to control their schools as they had done before the war. Replacement

1 EDAR, 1940 p. 1. See also KNA: DC/KBU/1/41, Annual Report, Kiambu district, 1950, p.11.

2 KNA: DC/NY1/3, Handing Over Report, Nyeri District, 1940.

3 EDAR, 1944, p.4.

for those missionaries who went home on furlough was difficult throughout the war period, while many missions were hardly able to obtain money to maintain those who were left on the field. In Muranga district, only Rev. T. F. C. Bewes was left in charge of education by the CMS from 1940 to 1946 and he frequently complained that he alone could not supervise all the schools belonging to the mission in the district.⁴ In 1942 the CSM had to sent Rev. R. Macpherson to take charge of CMS schools which were neglected because of lack of staff.⁵

To make matters worse, many African teachers, especially those on a salary of forty shillings a month, left their jobs to take up employment with the Army, where they were paid one hundred and twenty shillings a month.⁶ This meant that all schools were grossly understaffed, and although the number of those who left Kikuyu schools is not known, the DCS in the three Kikuyu districts continued to complain throughout the war years that many

4 KNA: DC/FH1/21, Fort Hall District, Annual Reports, 1946, p. 8.

5 KNA: DC/KBV/1/33, Kiambu District, Annual Reports, 1942, p. 21.

6 EDAR, 1940, p. 22.

schools were poorly staffed.⁷

Although the war affected education in these ways, it also provided the people with money which they used to expand facilities. By 1943, 5,000 Kikuyu were already in the Army from Kiambu district, while at the end of 1946, 4,088 people were discharged from the Army from Muranga district and another 3,078 from Nyeri district.⁸ Also at the end of 1946, a total of £70,795 had been paid to those Kikuyu from Muranga district who enlisted in the Army and another £43,022 to those who enlisted from Nyeri district.⁹ There is no figure for Kiambu district, but judging by the large number of those who joined the Army from that district, the money must have been more than that of Muranga and Nyeri districts. In addition to the money that was brought into the districts by those who joined the Army, many people also got money from the sale of farm produce to the Army. Many soldiers were camped close to Kikuyu districts and the food that was used to feed them came almost exclusively from Kikuyu.¹⁰

7 See the Annual Reports of the districts throughout the war years.

8 KNA: PC/CP: 4/3/3, Annual Report, Central Province, 1940-53, pp. 20-22.

9 ibid.

10 ibid.

Large quantities of wattle bark were also purchased. Muranga district sold £69,000 worth of wattle barks to the Army¹¹ and Karatina alone in Nyeri district sold a total of 5,845 tons of the product to the Army.¹² Thus whereas both the government and the missionaries were understaffed largely because of lack of funds, the Kikuyu were able to realise huge sums of money, part of which they used to expand educational facilities in their midst. As James Beuttah, who was a member of the DEB in Muranga during this period remarked during an interview:

Our people were so determined to see that their children were educated within the shortest possible time that not even the War could prevent them from realising this goal. We felt at that time that if the government could not assist us, we should help ourselves.¹³

The Kikuyu were, however, going to help themselves at a time when there were not many trained teachers. This in turn was the genesis of one of the problems which the Beecher Commission attempted to solve.

This trend, to 'help ourselves' could be seen in

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- 11 KNA; DC/FHL/24, Fort Hall District Annual Report, 1948, p. 28.
- 12 KNA; DC/NYL/1/4, Annual Report, Nyeri District, 1946, p. 14.
- 13 James Beuttah, interview, op. cit.

the local councils where in 1939, the three councils spent but £4,200 in 1941. In 1945 however the money had amounted to £21,638. This represented one third of the total expenditure of the councils.¹⁴ So confident were the people to pay for their education that in 1943, Muranga District Council undertook to pay for primary education in the district and demanded in 1944 for the introduction of compulsory education 'at the earliest possible moment'.¹⁵ In 1947, Kiambu District Council also sought permission to raise additional revenue on education, despite the fact that more than one third of its budget was spent on education.¹⁶ By 1952, the three councils were spending £44,900 on education, whereas Works which was next to education received £10,101 during that year.¹⁷

In spite of the total commitment of the councils to education, only thirty four schools in Muranga district were on the district council grants list out of a total

14 Local Native Councils Estimates - Revenue and Expenditure, 1941-1960, (Nairobi, 1960)

15 KNA: DC/FH/18, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1943, p. 6 and KNA: DC/FH/19, Annual Report, 1944, p. 16.

16 KNA: DC/KBV/1/38, Annual Report, Kiambu District, 1947, p. 8.

17 Local Native Councils Estimates, op. cit, 1952

of one hundred and forty-five schools. The remaining one hundred and eleven schools were financed largely by the people themselves through their school committees which had been set up by the various missions. The GMS schools in Kiambu district were all financed by the Kikuyu from 1940 until 1945 when the CSM took over supervision of the schools.¹⁸ Most of the CSM schools in Nyeri district were also financed through local sources of the sixty schools belonging to the mission in the district at the end of 1945, thirty one were given the district council's grants. The Home Mission was spending £343 annually on the schools while the church members were contributing £3,113 to the schools annually.¹⁹

As part of its war retrenchment, the government decided in 1939 to introduce the 'Fazan Formula' by which no local council could spend more than twenty five percent of its budget on education.²⁰ All the local councils in Kikuyu had exceeded this limit before the

18 KNA: CCEA/1/293 (D4), District Education Board, Kiambu.

19 KNA: CCEA/1/293 (D5A), District Education Board, South Nyeri.

20 KNA: CMS/1/136, Education Department - General Circulars and Correspondence - 'Fazan Formula'

end of the war and this meant that no new school construction would be allowed for a long time in Kikuyu. In an effort to overcome the effects of this policy, the Kikuyu not only raised additional revenue for each council, but they also urged the missions to add additional classes to the existing ones. Through this, more people were able to go to school without having to ask the government for more schools. Since the people were prepared to pay for the cost of these additional classes, the missions did not hesitate to give in to their demand. In many cases, the people did not bother to take the necessary permission before adding the extra classes, especially as the missions and the government were short of staff that could go round the schools to know what was happening there.²¹ While it was easy to add extra classes, it was not that easy to produce the additional teachers that could ensure efficiency in these schools.

All the developments noted above were limited to the sub-elementary and elementary schools. These were schools with classes up to standard four and they were by far in the majority. Primary education was confined in most

21 ibid.

cases to the schools found in the mission headquarters. To solve this problem, Muranga District Council decided in 1944 to start the building of a primary school of its own. The school, consisting of three classrooms, a common room, an office, a store, two three-roomed teachers houses and a workshop, was opened in January. Apart from paying £3,274 for the building of the school, the council also employed John Gege, a Makerere-trained Kikuyu to head the school, and paid a hostel grant of forty-five shillings per boarder.²² In 1946, Kiambu council also made a levy on all adult males in order to start such a school in the district.²³ The DC for Muranga district expressed the mind of the Kikuyu when he observed in 1946 that

The people are fully prepared to contribute towards the cost of improved educational facilities and the demand for education is such that the numbers and size of schools will continue to increase irrespective of financial assistance (from the government)²⁴

The DC for Kiambu also reported during the same year that

22 KNA: DC/FHI/25, op. cit., p. 31

23 KNA: DC/KBU/1/37, Annual Report, Kiambu District, 1946, p. 5.

24 KNA: DC/FHI/25, op. cit., p. 29.

The district is probably better provided with schools of all categories than any other in the Colony, yet there is still an enormous demand for more and yet more.²⁵

While intensifying efforts to increase the number of elementary and primary schools, the people also endeavoured to increase facilities for secondary and higher education. In October, 1945, 'The African Parents' Education Association' was inaugurated at Maragwa in Muranga district. The association aimed at improving facilities for higher education in Kikuyu and one Matthew Njoroge from Kiambu district was elected as its Chairman, while James Beauttah from Maragwa was elected Vice-Chairman.

Its first meeting which took place in the house of James Beauttah was attended by such prominent people as Eluid Mathu, the African nominated representative in the Legislative Council, James Gichuru, later to be the Kenyan Defence Minister, Mbiu Koinange and Tom Mbotela. All of them expressed delight that the people had seen the need to secure the best education possible for their children, as only those Africans who were well educated could

25 KNA: DC/KBU/1/37, op. cit., p. 12

challenge the inferior position which was being reserved for them by members of the white community.²⁶ The next meeting of the Association which took place in May 1946 was attended by a large number of teachers from all over Kikuyu and they all agreed to contribute generously to promote the cause of the Association. The Association also organised a tea party in December 1946 at Ndunyu in Muthithi location, at which Jomo Kenyatta was guest of honour and during this party, an unspecified amount of money was collected.²⁷ Unfortunately nothing further was recorded about the activities of the Association, although James Beauttah stated in an interview that the Association was able to send an undisclosed number of Kikuyu to India and elsewhere to further their education.²⁸

It was also during the war years that the Kikuyu started to embark on the building of junior secondary schools. These were intended to cater for those who had completed their primary education but who could not go

26 KNA: DC/FHL/25, op.cit., p. 13

27 ibid.

28 James Beauttah, interview, op. cit.

further because of inadequate facilities. The first of such schools was started at Iyego in Muranga district in 1943. While the school was still under construction, two people were sent abroad to be trained as teachers for the new school. One of them, S.K. Kimani, was sent to Fort Hare University in South Africa, while the other person, whose name is unknown, was sent to America for the same purpose. The people of Iyego bore the expenses of the two by constantly organising fund raising activities.²⁹ By 1946,

practically every location (in Muranga district) has started a fund from which to build a junior secondary school ... speed in their motto and everyone must be put through what so far is a very inadequate educational machine as soon as possible.³⁰

Elsewhere in Kikuyu, Nyeri District Council started a secondary school of its own in June 1948 at south Tetu, while Mathira Education Committee, also from the same district started another secondary school at Kagati before the end of the year.³¹ Reports from other parts

29 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op. cit. see also KNA: DC/FHL/27, op. cit., p. 14

30 ibid.

31 KNA: DC/NYL/1/4, Annual Report, South Nyeri, 1948, p. 4.

of the district also indicated that 'the demand for education in all its forms was as great as ever'.³²

Although the Kikuyu were prepared to pay for their education, they had also begun to demand that the influence which the mission had over African education should be reduced, the more so as it was the people who were paying the bulk of the money on education. This demand did not start suddenly. It started when the Kikuyu realised that the missions were mainly interested in using their schools for evangelical purposes and would not be able to provide them with the type of education which would enable them to catch up especially with the white community.³³

Furthermore, although many of the members of the DEB were drawn from the local council, they were usually hand picked by the DC who was both the chairman of the Board and of the local council. They were usually drawn from the moderate members of the council so that most of them were either chiefs or church elders. Thus although the missionaries did not form the majority they were able to wield a lot of influence in the board.

32 ibid.

33 Chapter III above.

Since 1934, the local councils had been giving their money for education to the DEB and it was through the board that money was allocated to the different schools. As a result of the influence wielded by the missionaries, they usually turned the estimates meetings of the board into 'an acrimonious discussion ... as to who can get most money out of the local council'.³⁴ From what he saw that was going on during such meetings among the missionaries, the DC for Nyeri was of the opinion that they were 'concerned primarily in proselitization and secondly in education'.³⁵ Some of the Kikuyu members of the board confessed that they were being made to dance to the tune of the missionaries while the more radical members of the local councils, who invariably were the politicians, complained that the missionaries were using their position to prevent money from being given to the independent schools.³⁶ The war years therefore saw the attempts by members of the local councils to dissolve

34 KNA, DC/NYL/1/4, op.cit., 1939, p. 8.

35 Ibid., 1947, p. 6.

36 Stanley Kiama, a member of the Nyeri DEB made this confession, interview, op. cit. Also James Beauttah from Muranga DEB, interview, op. cit.

the DEB and have its functions absorbed by the councils.

This call was first made in 1942 by Nyeri local council. It demanded that the DEB should be abolished as from 1943 when new members were to be elected to the board. In 1944 when the council realised that no effort was being made to abolish the DEB, it threatened to share the sum of £6,000 which it had set aside for education, on its own, among the various schools in the district. This would ensure that the money did not go to a few mission schools.³⁷ Kiambu Local Council which in 1945 also expressed dissatisfaction that the missions were still allowed to have a say in the education of the Africans, was reported to be 'very anxious to encourage schools run by the Kikuyu themselves'.³⁸ The council also suggested in 1947 that it be allowed to assume control of all schools in the district 'with the mission acting only in a supervisory capacity'.³⁹ The greatest threat to mission involvement in African education did

37 KNA: DC/NYL/4, op. cit., p. 8.

38 KNA: DC/KBU/1/36, op. cit., p. 10.

39 KNA: DC/KBU/1/38, Annual Report, Kiambu District, 1947, p. 8.

not come from the two districts but from Muranga district, where Kikuyu adherents of the AIM broke away to start their own separate educational body - the African Christian Church and Schools (ACCS).

The Emergence of the African Christian Church and Schools.

The first time that the AIM had trouble with its Kikuyu adherents was in 1926 and this was due to the poor standard of education in the mission's out-schools.⁴⁰ Also during the controversy over the abolition of female circumcision, many schools in the southern half of Muranga district broke away to join the independent movement.⁴¹ The 1948 split was more widespread because it involved all the schools belonging to the mission in Muranga district.

As has earlier been pointed out, the AIM was a 'faith' mission which did not have a ready source of income for its staff unlike other missions. It also did not consider it necessary to obtain DEB grants because this would force the mission to pay more attention

40 Chapter IV, pp. 162-70 above.

41 ibid., pp. 46-50.

to education than it was prepared to afford.⁴² Moreover, the policy of the mission which permitted christians from all denominations that were considered 'evangelical' to become members, also made it difficult for the mission to arrive at a consistent policy either on education or on any other issue,⁴³ and this, as we shall see later in this chapter, endangered the work of the mission in Kikuyu.

In an effort to prevent more schools from joining the independent movement, the meeting of the Protestant missions which was held in October 1953 at Kahuhia prevailed on the AIM to 'put its house in order in the matter of education'. It particularly urged the mission to obtain the DEB grants to improve its schools and to appoint someone who would take charge of education in the mission. Towards this end, the mission sent Rev. K. L. Downing to Githunu from Kijabe to re-organise the schools that were under the mission, but such was the poor state of affairs in these schools that out of the twelve schools belonging to the mission in Muranga

42 Kevin Ward, op. cit., pp. 254.

43 ibid.

district, only two could qualify for DEB grants.⁴⁴ By 1935 when Rev. Downing was replaced by Rev. William Kendell, only five out of fourteen AIM schools qualified for grants.⁴⁵ Education had been so much neglected in these schools that it was not easy to bring them up to the standard of the other mission schools. Moreover, as most of the missionaries still believed that they were not in Africa to promote Western education, they did little or nothing to solve the problems that were confronting the schools. Teachers were still too few in these schools and many of those who were employed were sub-standard and also poorly paid. As in 'independent' schools, trained teachers did not stay long before they left in search of alternative jobs.⁴⁶

Rev. Kendell promised to be an exception among the missionaries, but in the end he was forced to resign. He believed that in addition to Christianity, education should also be encouraged by the mission as failure to do so would make their adherents inferior to their counterparts in other missions. It was he who built

44 KNA: DC/FHL/12, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1933, p. 26.

45 KNA: DC/FHL/14, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1935, p. 23.

46 ibid.

a primary school for the people in 1938. This request had been turned down by previous missionaries, even when the people promised to be responsible financially for the school.⁴⁷ In addition to the building of the school, he paid regular visits to the out-schools and listened to their complaints. Rev. Kendell was however soon accused of neglecting the Gospel by spending almost all his time on education, which was against the mission policy. He was forced to resign in 1939 and was replaced by Rev. W. W. Devitt.⁴⁸ Rev. Devitt was not as interested in education as Rev. Kendell. Although he visited the 'out-schools' from time to time, it was to see what evangelical work was going on rather than how the schools were faring educationally. Rev. Devitt was replaced in 1942 by Rev. Propst and it was he who hastened the process that finally led to the withdrawal by its Kikuyu adherents of almost all the schools that were under the mission.

By the end of the year he had ordered the closure of three 'out-schools' at Kamunyaka, Rivathe and Ndakaini

47 Kevin Ward, *op. cit.*; pp. 256-7. See also Letter of Church Elders of Githumu to the Field Director November 25, 1947. Letter found in AGCS Office at Gituru.

48. *ibid.*

because, according to him, the church members in these places were more interested in education than in christianity. ⁴⁹ The church elders reported this to the DC for Muranga who in turn urged the Education department to resolve the dispute. While in Githumu to discuss the issue with Rev. Propst, Mr. Ottaway and Mr. Greaves, who were sent there by the Education Department, discovered that Rev. Propst was already contemplating closing down the primary school at Githuru in addition to the three 'out-schools' which he had already shut.⁵⁰ The situation between the mission and its adherents had deteriorated to such an extent that when Rev. Propst requested the church members to sell food to the mission at pre-war prices, they refused. Rev. Propst then seized this opportunity to close down the primary school and sold virtually all the items of furniture in the school to show that he had no intention of reopening it. This he did without prior consultation with the church members who had contributed money for the building of the school in 1938. ⁵¹

49 KNA: DC/FH1/21, Annual Report, Fort Hall, 1942, p.9.

50 ibid.

51 ibid.

The issue was again brought to the attention of the DC and the Education Department by the church elders. They made it known that they were becoming impatient at the deliberate attempt of the mission to thwart their educational aspirations. At a time when all over Kikuyu the demand was for expanded facilities, they were not prepared to see the mission 'turn the hand of the clock backward'.⁵² The DC met representatives of the church members and mission authorities at Kandara in August 1943, while Mr. Ottaway and Mr. Donovan of the Education Department arranged another meeting with the mission authorities at Githumu on September 15, 1943. It was when those officials of the Education Department visited Githumu that they learned that apart from the primary school, Rev. Propst had also ordered the closure of nine more 'out-schools'. When he was asked to confirm this, Rev. Propst repeated his previous claim that the AIM was not in Africa to undertake education and any school that would not conform to the policy of the mission would not be allowed to continue to operate under the mission. The mission was however prepared to refund

52 KNA: DC/FH1/22, op. cit., p. 9.

the money that was given to it to start the primary school at Githumu, but this would be paid over a period of two years.⁵³

All these schools remained closed throughout 1944 despite appeals by the DC and the Education Department to reopen them. It was not until the following year that the schools were reopened but by this time, the people had become convinced that the AIM could not be relied upon to educate their children sufficiently well. The mission had repeated several times that it was more interested in Christianity than education and since the people were interested in education while at the same time they were not opposed to Christianity, they decided to seek alternative means of securing this education so as not to lag behind the other parts of Kikuyu. From 1945 onward, the church members started to organise meetings among themselves aimed at seeking alternative means of acquiring the education which the mission was not interested in promoting.⁵⁴

53 ibid. See also Letter of church Elders to the Field Director, op. cit.

54 Elijah Mbatia, interviewed at Githumu on 29/9/75. He was the first Chairman of ACCS.

56 KMA: DC/702/26, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1944, p. 11.

Having come to the conclusion that they could no longer go on with the AIM, a letter was written to the President of the Home Council of the mission in America on November 25, 1947 with copies to the DC for Muranga, the Education Department and Mr. E. W. Mathu, the nominated African representative in the Legislative Council. In the letter, the church members narrated their previous experience with the mission and how they had come to the conclusion that the mission could not be relied upon to design for their children, an education which would prepare them for life in the colony. They also accuse the mission of deliberately refusing to take the Africans into confidence in the administration of the Church. In view of these, they had come to the conclusion that they could no longer continue their association with the mission.⁵⁵

Commenting on this letter, the DC, who had always been kept informed of all these developments, admitted that the mission had 'done nothing very much to assist the education of the Africans in their charge! ⁵⁶ He however feared the consequences of another educational

55 Letter of Church Elders to the Field Director, op. cit.

56 KNA: DC/FHL/26, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1947, p. 11.

body operating outside mission control and he considered it essential to 'forestall the possibility of the left-wingers claiming an anti-European victory' in this dispute between the mission and its adherents.⁵⁷ He therefore sent Rev. W. Scott Dickson, the Education Secretary of the Christian Council of Kenya, to the church members to persuade them to give the mission another chance. The members were, however, determined not to continue their association with the mission and while Rev. Dickson was making this effort, the AIM accused him of trying to persuade the church members to join the CSM, which had seconded Rev. Dickson to the Christian Council. Rev. Dickson had to give up this assignment and it was left for the PC to arrange another meeting with representatives of both the mission and the church members.⁵⁸

The meeting which took place at Muranga on June 29, 1948 was attended by representatives of the church members, the mission authorities and the Education department. Dr. Farrer, the President of the Home Council

57 ibid.

58 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op. cit. 'Civil Case No. 1051 of 1950'. See also KNA: DC/FH1/27, op. cit., p. 16.

of the mission, travelled all the way from America to attend this meeting. At the meeting the PC expressed the hope that it would still be possible for the dispute between the mission and its adherents to be settled without the Kikuyu members having to break up their association with the mission. In spite of efforts to reconcile the two sides, it became obvious that their views on education were so divergent as to make reconciliation impossible. Moreover, the Church members had formed a new body called the 'African Christian Church and Schools' to take over from the AIM. The word 'christian' was deliberately added to show that their demand for education did not mean a rejection of Christianity. They had nothing against Christianity, but they also realised that education was essential if they were to be treated as equals in the colonial society.⁵⁹ The mission agreed to hand over all the 'out-schools' under its control to the new body but it was not prepared to hand over the primary school at Githumu to the body as well. This was because, although the money for the building of the school was contributed by the people, the land was obtained from the government. In the end,

59 ibid.

the ACCS agreed to take over the seventeen 'out-schools' but to contest the mission's claim to the primary school at Githumu in the Supreme Court. Mr. J. E. Morgan, a British lawyer resident in Nairobi, was then engaged to take the case to court.⁶⁰

On June 30, 1948, the day following the meeting at which the church members publicly announced their intention to break away from the mission, the mission authorities called all the pupils and teachers who were at the primary school, as well as all the other Kikuyu workers in the mission, and asked them to declare their stand in the dispute. The mission would only allow those who were on its side to continue in the school. Out of about five hundred pupils in the school, only twenty girls and two boys agreed to continue with the mission. Of about fifteen teachers in the school, only two remained with the mission.⁶¹ Mr. Rufus Karaka, who

60 ibid. Also interview with Elijah Mbatia, op. cit.

61 Rufus Karaka, interviewed at Gacharage on 5/9/75. He was a teacher in the school during this time and the first Secretary of ACCS. The story was also confirmed by Priscilla Wahu (Miss) one of the two teachers who remained in the school. Interviewed at Githumu on 6/9/75.

was one of the teachers that left the school, was eventually elected the first secretary of ACCS.

The mission had not expected that such a large number of its pupils and teachers would go away to join the ACCS. For many months after the pupils and teachers had been asked to declare their stand by the mission, the few pupils and teachers that were left could not go outside the mission station for fear of being molested. As no Kikuyu was anxious to go to the school the mission had to bring teachers and pupils from its other stations outside Kikuyu to prevent the school from total collapse.⁶²

When the pupils and their teachers left the primary school at Githumu, the ACCS had to make immediate plans to ensure that the education of those who were forced out of the primary school did not suffer unduly. The ACCS had not anticipated that the mission would take this step in view of the court case. A mud building was hurriedly put up at Gichangaini to accommodate those who were in the junior classes at Githumu, while

62 Priscilla Wahu, op. cit.

arrangements were made with Kiangare independent school for pupils in the intermediate classes to continue their education in the school. Those who were in the senior classes were taken to Mariira independent Junior Secondary School. While the pupils continued their education in these schools, a new school building was hurriedly put up at Gituru near Githumu so that before the end of 1949, all the pupils had been moved to the school.⁶³ The DC for Muranga who paid a visit to this school in 1950 considered it 'an excellent example of self-help' and expressed delight at what he saw in the school.⁶⁴ Thus in an effort to effect a change in the quality of their education, the Kikuyu had once again started another educational body that was independent of the mission societies.

The Beecher Commission on African Education and Its Effects on Educational Development in Kikuyu, 1949-1952.

The willingness of the Kikuyu and other African groups to pay for their education had not only led to a

⁶³ Elijah Mbatia, *op. cit.* Also Joseph Muthungu, the Vice-President of ACCS, interviewed at Kinyona on 6/9/75.

⁶⁴ KNA: DC/FH1/29, Annual Report, Fort Hall, 1950, p. 18.

rapid expansion of educational facilities beyond the capability of both the government and the missions; it also created the problem of how to ensure that there were qualified teachers in these schools. In an effort to solve this problem, the Advisory Council on African Education appointed a committee on November 24, 1944 to inquire into the terms of service for African teachers, with a view to making suggestions for their improvement. This, it was hoped, would encourage trained teachers to stay in their job instead of taking up employment elsewhere. The new structure which was suggested by the committee and which included responsibility allowance, and Provident Funds, in addition to increased salaries, came into operation on January 1, 1946.⁶⁵

The new scales were introduced without prior consultation with the local councils and according to the DC for Nyeri, 'the councils had been forced to accept them.'⁶⁶ Nyeri Council had to obtain a government loan of £1,553, while Kiambu Council had to pass a supplementary estimate of over £2,000 to pay the new scales.⁶⁷ In addition to

65 EDAR, 1946, p. 42.

66 KNA: DC/NYL/1/4, op. cit., 1946, p. 14.

67 ibid.

their not being consulted before the new scales were introduced, members of the councils also complained that at a time when their whole aim was to increase the number of schools so that more children could benefit from Western education, it was not proper for the government to arrest this development by saddling them with additional responsibilities. While they recognised the need to attract qualified teachers, they nevertheless felt that the government ought to have provided the additional money from what the people were paying as taxes. What they wanted to see was more schools but by 1948 it became clear that the councils would have to continue to spend a substantial part of their revenue on salaries of teachers. This brought dissatisfaction among members of the local councils who called on the government not to leave the financial aspect of primary education on the councils alone.⁶⁸ In response to this criticism, the government set up a commission on January 25, 1949 which was headed by Sir William Ibbotson, to examine the financial relations between the local councils

68 EDAR, 1949, p. 4. See also Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, A Ten-year plan for the Development of African Education, (Nairobi, 1948,) p. 2.

and Rev. Father Rowlands, and five other Europeans, and the Central Government in the field of African education.⁶⁹

Ibbotson soon found that he could not take up the appointment as he had to leave the colony for Britain unexpectedly. Archdeacon Leonard J. Beecher, who had spent most of his time in the colony in Kikuyu and who was nominated in 1943 to represent African interests in the Legislative Council was therefore appointed to replace Sir Willian Ibbotson. No sooner had he been appointed as chairman of the commission than he requested and it was granted, that the commission should examine and report on 'the scope, content, and methods of the African education system', as the relationship between finance and policy could not be separated.⁷⁰ This wide power gave the commission the opportunity to go into virtually all aspects of African education.

As in previous government commissions, the majority of the members of the Beecher Commission were whites. They included two other missionaries - Rev. W.S. Dickson

69 African Information Service, African Education in Kenya; Summary of Beecher Report, (Nairobi, 1950) p. 3.

70 ibid.

and Rev. Father Rowlands, and five other Europeans. Lt. Col. F. E. Firminger, another white, was secretary to the commission. Only Mr. E. W. Mathu, the nominated African representative in the Legislative Council was an African.⁷¹

Members of the commission visited the three Kikuyu districts in March and endeavoured to take evidence from as many people and educational bodies as were willing to come forward. Forty-one Kikuyu representing various educational bodies testified before the commission and ten memoranda were submitted. Although members of the commission did not spend more than a day in each of the three districts, the people were assured that their views on education would be sympathetically considered when the Report was to be compiled.⁷² But whereas members of the commission did not start their work in earnest until March and whereas three hundred and twenty-six witnesses and one hundred and sixty-five memoranda were examined from all over the colony, by June, the

71 Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, African Education in Kenya: Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Scope, Content and Methods of African Education, (Nairobi, 1949), p. v.

72 Stanley Kiama, interview, op. cit. He was one of the people who testified before the commission.

commission had submitted tentative proposals to the mission societies and in September of the same year, the Report was ready. According to Rev. Dickson, a member of the commission, Rev. Beecher did not give sufficient time for a thorough study of the evidence of the witnesses and the memoranda. 'Beecher said he'd resign if we didn't finish in mid-September and rather than have that I, at least accepted some slipshod work'.⁷³

From the evidence and memoranda of the Africans, two issues stood out clearly. Their first concern was for universal literacy for the Africans as had been the case since January 1, 1942 for all European children and all Indian boys in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu Municipalities.⁷⁴ The report stated that

It is clear that the Africans aim at universal literacy through a much expanded primary school system, and can see no reason why a plan to bring this about should not be prepared and fully implemented at once. For the African witnesses indicated that they regard education as basic to all progress.⁷⁵

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- 73 KNA: CCEA/1/200 (B7), 'Beecher Commission,' W. S. Dickson to N.B. Larby, October 4, 1949.
- 74 EDAR, 1941, p. 1.
- 75 KNA: MAA/8/41, 885, Box 87 - 'Beecher Committee Report, p. 27.

Next to universal literacy was the desire to have greater say in their education than had been the case hitherto. They complained that they were increasingly being called upon to pay for education, yet they were not given a free hand to decide how the money should be spent. They therefore recommended the abolition of the DEB which was virtually dominated by the missions, and its functions should be taken over by a sub-committee of the local council.⁷⁶ This was already the case in respect of other departments such as Agriculture, Public Works, Veterinary and Forestry.⁷⁷

While these were the views of the Africans, the 'European employers' who testified before the commission, said that they would favour schemes of 'artisan and technical training' for the Africans and that 'no scheme for training them would be too large or the products too numerous'. They complained that those Africans who got to standard V or VI were of little or no value on the

76 EDAR, 1949, p. 35.

77 This practice was started in Nyeri district in 1946, KNA: DC/NYL/4, op. cit., p. 10.

labour market because they looked down on manual work. They were therefore of the opinion that 'the shorter a boy's stay in a primary school ... the more easily will he be absorbed into the agricultural and pastoral life of the country.'⁷⁸ They then suggested four year's as 'a more suitable period for real primary education instead of the existing six years which, to them, was 'too long for the achievement of bare literacy'.⁷⁹ When therefore the commission settled down to draw up its recommendations, it had before it these two opposing views on African education, in addition to the view of the missionaries which favoured their continued involvement in that education to safeguard its catechistical element.⁸⁰

The Report of the commission which was submitted to the government in September 1949, consisted of one hundred and forty-eight recommendations on virtually all aspects of African education, including administration, curriculum, staffing, government and mission involvement. On universal literacy, the commission was

78 KNA; MAA/8/41, op. cit., p. 38.

79 ibid

80 ibid., p. 40.

of the opinion that the Africans were wrong in seeking to compare their education with that of the Europeans and the Asians. This was because European and Asian education each had a much longer history, 'both races have in varying degrees achieved high standards in preliminary objectives of literacy and have already recognised standards by which they assess economically purposeful education results'. Universal literacy could therefore not be the immediate objective in African education but the need to obtain the right proportion between the number of schools and the number of available trained teachers.⁸¹ Furthermore, to meet the labour requirements of the white settlers the commission recommended the number of years spent in the primary school should be reduced from six to four so that the Africans would still be willing to engage in manual labour by the time they finished their primary education.⁸² One thousand four-year primary schools and three hundred two-year primary schools were recommended by the commission for the Africans by 1951 when its plan would have started to operate. In 1960, the

81 *ibid.*, p. 56.

82 *ibid.*

number of four-year primary schools would increase to two thousand but the two-year course would have disappeared.⁸³

On the assumption that 2,266 pupils out of every 10,000 pupils leaving the primary school annually would be able to continue their education the commission recommended the establishment of another three hundred four-year 'intermediate' schools for those finishing from the primary schools. The course provided by these 'intermediate' schools should 'complete in itself' and be oriented towards the acquisition of practical skills. Towards this end, agriculture was to feature prominently in all teacher training institutions, which it recommended should also be increased substantially, to provide more teachers for the African schools. These teachers would then be in a position to teach the subject and 'encourage in their pupils the right attitude towards the soil'.⁸⁴

To ensure that no schools were established outside the recommended figures, the commission suggested that the government should recruit more Education Officers from abroad to strengthen the existing staff. It should

83 ibid., p. 60

84 EDAR, 1949, p. 52.

also be prepared to finance all African schools so that it would no longer be necessary for the people to establish independent educational bodies or raise money on their own for educational purposes. Although independent schools should not be phased out immediately, the commission recommended that every effort should be made to ensure that such schools did not exist after 1956.⁸⁵

On the question of mission influence in African education, the commission recognised that some mission societies were yet to be convinced that 'educational activity is the proper function of a christian missionary.'⁸⁶ The involvement of such missions in education was largely as a result of 'a persistent popular demand on the part of their adherents'.⁸⁷ The commission however went ahead to recommend that the government should do nothing to weaken its present policy of co-operation with the missions in the field of education. It based its recommendation on the erroneous belief that little

85 KNA: MAA/8/41, op. cit., p. 51

86 Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, African Education in Kenya, op. cit., p. 52.

87 ibid.

or nothing was done in most African homes to inculcate moral standards in their children and it was therefore the task of the schools to implant these principles and to do so without expecting any assistance from parents. Since this was 'a specialist task', it should be left to the missions⁸⁸ which were best qualified to do so. Furthermore, the DEB was not to be abolished nor were the missions to be excluded from it. The local council should have four representatives while the four representatives of 'school managers' who were invariably the missionaries, were to be nominated by the Provincial Commissioner. There were also to be 'supervisory Teams' for each district and it would be their responsibility to supervise all the schools in each district. The missions were to be adequately represented on each team, and the salary of these mission representatives was to be paid by the government.⁸⁹ Thus the two views expressed by the Africans were ignored by the commission while the views of the white settlers and the missionaries were accepted.

88 ibid, p. 55. On the emphasis that was laid on the teaching of moral standards by the Kikuyu see chapter 1 above, pp.15-18.

89 EDAR, 1949, p. 53.

The Report of the commission was passed by the Legislative Council in October 1950 after a debate which lasted three days. The white members of the council, who were in the majority, congratulated members of the commission for producing such an excellent Report and expressed delight that agriculture was given prominence at all levels of African education.⁹⁰ This wholehearted support^t given to the Report by the white members of the council did not come as a surprise in view of the objectives of the Electors' Union which had been formed since March 1944 by the settlers. One of these objectives was to 'achieve and maintain European unity in coming situations that might well divide them'.⁹¹ In pursuance of this objective, the Union was able to persuade the Government to allow the heads of departments to attend and take part in its meetings, and it was during one of such meetings in January 1946 that the Outline of Policy - the manifesto of the Union was discussed and adopted. The Policy emphasised the need to ensure that 'leadership remains in European control' and that 'the influence of

90 Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Legislative Council Debates, 3rd Session, October, 1950, p. 12.

91 C. G. Rosberg and J. Nothingham, op. cit., pp. 196-7.

settlers at the official level should be expanded in conjunction with a gradual move toward lessening the direct influence of the British Colonial Office'.⁹²

While the Policy recognised the need to give the Africans 'reasonable representation' in the Legislative Council, it nevertheless felt that 'for very many years to come, the African community will be unfitted to exercise the privilege of election of its representatives'.⁹³ It was therefore not surprising that all the whites in the Legislative Council could unite in favour of the adoption of the Beecher Commission.

This however did not prevent the Report from being bitterly criticised by the African and Asian members of the Legislative Council. Pointing out that neither the Report nor the Government White Paper on it was influenced by 'African opinion', Mr. B. A. Ohanga, who spoke on behalf of the African members of the Council, observed that 'already the figures and recommendations which we have here are outdated before the Report itself comes into operation'.⁹⁴ He then wondered 'where we are

92 ibid., p. 197

93 ibid.

94 ibid., p. 32

going with the Report if things which are envisaged to be happening in 1956 are already here and are, practical problems.' Also commenting on the Report on behalf of the Asian members of the Council, Mr. K. S. Sagoo had this to say:

I should like to be able to congratulate the authors of this Report, but I really am forced to say that they have produced an ill-advised, indeed a dangerous document, (since) the proposals are utterly out of scale with the requirements.⁹⁵

Even Rev. Dickson who was a member of the commission was sure that 'in its detailed application, the Report will, I know, need a lot of changing'.⁹⁶ The CSM council also confessed that 'in its anxiety to provide a comprehensive water-tight system, the commission's approach at several points had become unrealistic'.⁹⁷ The point is that the Africans had been left for so long to finance their own education that neither the government nor any commission appointed by it,

95 ibid., p. 40.

96 KNA, CCEA/1/200 (B7), op. cit., W. S. Dickson to N. B. Larby, op. cit.

97 ibid., CSM Council - Beecher Commission, May 18, 1950.

especially if it carried out its assignment with the type of haste that the Beecher commission performed its task, could be in any position to say confidently what the exact number of schools and pupils in any given district might be. This was why the Beecher commission underestimated the educational requirements of the Africans, particularly those of the Kikuyu.

In Muranga district, the commission recommended eighty primary schools for 1952, rising to one hundred and twenty in 1956. Yet there were already 30,000 children in school from the district at the end of 1949. Assuming that two hundred pupils were allowed in each school, the district must then have had one hundred and fifty schools in 1949, whereas the commission recommended only eighty schools for the district by 1952. There were also eighty schools with standard V and fourteen junior secondary schools in the district at the end of 1949, but the commission gave room for only twenty 'intermediate' schools in the district in 1956.⁹⁸ This was in spite of the DC's observation in 1949 that

98 KNA: DC/FHI/29, Annual Report, Fort Hall, 1950, p. 16.

The demand for more and more education grows each year, and the ordinary Kikuyu is prepared to pay special rates to satisfy this demand, in addition to local levies for school buildings, school fees, and often an extra sum to pay the local teachers salary as well.⁹⁹

There were no figures for the other two districts but since the Central Province was made up largely of three Kikuyu districts figures and comments on the province could be used to illustrate the situation in Kikuyu. The Beecher Plan proposed that the annual rate of development would be 35,000 pupils all over the colony. Only thirty-eight percent or 13,300 pupils were expected to come from the province. At the end of 1949, however, annual growth for the province was already 18,790 pupils. This, according to the Provincial Education Officer, meant that the province was two and a half years in advance of the Beecher Plan.¹⁰⁰ The PEO also remarked that if the large number of applications for new schools were not held up, especially from Kikuyu, the difference would have been greater.¹⁰¹ Thus

99 KNA: DC/FH1/28, op. cit., p. 19

100 KNA: MAA/8/41, op. cit., PEO, Nyeri to Director of Education, February 28, 1950.

101 ibid.

102 KNA: DC/FH1/30, Annual Report, Fort Hall, 1951, p. 3.

while recognising its 'many admirable features', the PEO was convinced that the people would 'throw much of the rest of the Report right over their hands, with the politicians seizing on this and challenging us to show that at the primary level the Report really does represent development'.¹⁰²

Also expressing the disappointment of members of Kiambu District Council at the Report, Ex-Senior Chief Njonjo, who was also the Deputy Chairman of the Council when the Report was debated, said that he dared not say anything in favour of the Report because of the mood of members of that day. According to him, the members criticised the Report for its emphasis on agriculture and the small number of schools allocated to the district.¹⁰³ Muranga Council debated the Report for two days in October 1950 and expressed disappointment that the Legislative Council could accept the recommendations of the commission despite its obvious defects.¹⁰⁴

By far the greatest resentment came from the independent school movement whose schools were to be

102 ibid.

103 Josiah Njonjo, interview, op. cit.

104 KNA: DC/FHL/30, Annual Report, Fort Hall, 1951, p. 3.

gradually phased out under the new scheme that was worked out by the commission. To ensure that they could no longer operate outside government control after 1956, more Education Officers were to be recruited, all schools were to be financed from public sources and 'supervisory teams' made up largely of missionaries were to pay regular visits to all schools. Whereas there were 12,964 pupils in sixty three independent schools in 1939, the number had almost doubled that number in 1949.¹⁰⁵ With the exception of a few of them that were given 'token grants' by the DEB, all the schools were financed by the people themselves through voluntary donations. In 1949 it could be reported that

The keenness in the independent schools is tremendous. Whatever their faults in aspiring to do too much too quickly and being content with a low standard in their schools, nevertheless their vitality is extremely heartening.¹⁰⁶

There was nothing to show that this 'vitality' would not continue when they sent a joint letter on March 21, 1950 to the Member for Housing and Local Government, who was also responsible for education, urging him to reconsider the Report of the commission especially where it affected

105 EDAR, 1949, p. 40

106 KNA: DC/FHL/27, op. cit., p. 17.

109 KNA: DC/UR.4/5/1. Annual Report, Central Province, 1952, p. 1.

the independent schools. They traced the history of these schools and how the government could not even finance those schools that were under the control of the missions. They therefore wondered how the government could hope to take on itself the additional responsibility of the independent schools.¹⁰⁷ The Member replied that the government was not particularly interested in taking over these schools but that it was anxious to ensure that it knew that was going on in the schools.¹⁰⁸ Most of the leaders of the independent movement however announced in November 1951 that they were not going to allow their schools to come under government control as required by the Beecher Commission.¹⁰⁹ But it was not all the independent schools that made this pledge. This was largely as a result of the split within the KISA during this time.

Independent Schools and the Mau Mau Uprising

The arrival of Jomo Kenyatta from Britain in 1946 and his subsequent appointment as Vice-President of Githunguri College, led to attempts at reorganisation within the independent school movement. It has been shown in the

107 KNA: MAA/8/41, op. cit., letter titled 'Archdeacon Beecher's Report on African Education' March 21, 1950.

108 ibid., Reply to letter of Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement, April 6, 1950.

109 KNA: PC/CP.4/3/3, Annual Report, Central Province, 1952, p. 1.

previous chapter how he reorganised the age-grade system to raise money for the college.¹¹⁰ Efforts were also made to remove such people as Johanna Kunyha and Hezekiah Gachui, president and vice-President respectively of KISA, on the ground that they were pro-government and were therefore not able to direct the activities of the Association with the vigour they deserved. Attempts that were being made to unify KISA and KKEA, and which were spearheaded by Kenyatta, were also considered unlikely to yield any fruitful results so long as these conservative elements continued to lead KISA.¹¹¹ Kunyha was awarded a certificate on June 8, 1948 for his 'valuable services to the government which he performed with devotion to duty' for twenty years,¹¹² while Hezekiah Gachui was in Britain for six weeks in 1949 as guest of the British Government.¹¹³ All these were used as further evidence to show that they should not longer be allowed to lead KISA.

The opportunity to displace these men came in 1950 when it was discovered that Hezekiah Gachui had been 'lining his pockets to a far bigger extent than is

110 On this issue, see M.H. Kovar, op. cit., pp. 270-4.

111 ibid.

112 Johanna Kunyha showed me this certificate during my interview with him.

113 KNA; DC/FH1/28, op. cit., p. 23.

locally accepted as normal for a man in his position'.¹¹⁴ He had formed the habit of collecting money whenever he visited any independent school, without sending such money to the treasurer of the Association. Although the amount of money involved is not known, this offence 'completely cut away the ground from under the feet of the conservative element in KISA'.¹¹⁵ Immediately after this discovery, those who had been calling for the removal of Kunyiha and Gachui, arranged a meeting at Gakarara in Muranga district which lasted from the 29th to the 30th of September, 1950. A new election was held during this meeting and Peter Gatabaki from Githunguri became the new President, while Rowland Getteriah, the District Chairman of KISA in Embu, became the secretary.¹¹⁶

Both the meeting and the election were denounced by Kunyiha who still had a few schools, mostly in Nyeri district behind him. He called another meeting which took place at Gikumba in Nyeri district on October 27, 1950.

114 KNA: DC/FH1/29, op. cit.; p. 1.

115 Ibid. Confirmed in an interview with Ndegwa Metho, District Chairman of KISA in Muranga district, 1950-52. Interviewed at Kandara on 12/9/75.

116 KNA: Edu/1/3284, op. cit. Letter of Rowland Getteriah to the Director of Education, February 1, 1951.

118 Rufus Karaka, interview, op. cit.

Those who attended the meeting re-affirmed their loyalty to Kinyiha and Gachui and pledged to be guided by them on the issue of the Beecher Commission.¹¹⁷

The ACCS schools also accepted the Beecher Plan. According to Rufus Karaka, the secretary of the body, in an interview, the decision to accept the Plan was made not because there were no flaws in the recommendations of the commission. It was accepted partly because the dispute with AIM was so protracted that most people within the ACCS did not want to be involved in another controversy. Moreover as the body was still relatively young, there were no immediate plans to expand. Their immediate problem was how to improve their education which had been neglected by the AIM, and this they felt could still be achieved within the Plan.¹¹⁸

From January 1952, the government started to implement the Beecher Plan. Each district had an Education Officer and the 'supervisory teams' started to operate. Where it was considered that a place had many schools, some of them were ordered to be closed down. In most cases, it

117 *ibid*, Letter of Jeremiah Nguvin to the Director of Education, October 27, 1950. It is also significant to note the radicalisation of the Kenya African Union during the same time. Many of the 'moderates' within the Union were dropped in the 1951 election. O. Odiga, *Not yet Uhuru - An Autobiography*, (London, 1967).

118 Rufus Karaka, interview, *op. cit.*

was the independent schools that were affected. When Peter Gatabaki, the new President of KISA, saw that he could not persuade the government to change its mind on this issue, he ordered all the schools under him to organise fund raising activities. The money realised from these would be used to run the 'independent' schools, thereby convincing the government that the schools did not require its assistance to function.¹¹⁹ As the fund raising activities were going on Peter Gatabaki also decided to tour the districts to enlighten the people about the possible implications of the Beecher Plan on educational development in Kikuyu. Articles were also written in the vernacular newspaper Munenyere in which it was pointed out that the plan was meant to arrest the rapid expansion of education which had been taking place in Kikuyu because the government would not be able to finance all the schools that were in Kikuyu, in addition to the other ones in other parts of the colony.¹²⁰

119 Peter Gatabaki, interview, op. cit. Confirmed by Ndegwa Metho, interview, op. cit.

120 Memorandum on African Owned Schools, in Joseph Murumbi Personal Papers, Nairobi.

This campaign was going on at the same time as the 'mau mau' uprising was already threatening law and order in Kikuyu. It therefore becomes difficult to interpret the actions taken against the 'independent' schools as a result of their determination not to be controlled by the government. Dedan Mugo, the chairman of Githunguri College, was the first person in Kiambu district to be arrested and imprisoned for allegedly spearheading the oath-taking ceremonies which accompanied the uprising.¹²¹ As soon as an emergency was declared over Kikuyu on October 22, 1952, all the known leaders of the 'independent' schools were arrested and detained, also for taking part in 'mau mau' activities. Both KISA and KKEA were proscribed on November 14, 1952 and thirty-four independent schools, mostly those that had openly defied the government order to close down in compliance with the implementation of the Beecher Plan, were shut. The other independent schools were given till the beginning of January 1953 to declare whether they would like to come under the

121 KNA: DC/KBU/1/42, Annual Report, Kiambu, District, 1950, p. 6. The history of the 'Mau Mau' uprising still await its historian. There are however works on aspects of the uprising. See C.G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, *op. cit.*, chapters v-viii. M.P.K. Sorrenson, Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country, (Nairobi 1967), D.L. Barnett and N. Karari, Mau mau From Within, (London, 1967); See also B.A. Ogot, 'Revolt of the Elders'; An anatomy of the Loyalist Crowd in, the mau mau uprising, 1952-1956', Hadith, Vol. IV, 1971 pp. 134-148.

management of the missions or the DEB. 122

All the leaders of the independent schools who were detained and who were interviewed during my fieldwork did not deny their association with the 'nau nau' uprising. They however remarked that they would like to know who in Kikuyu, except the chiefs and some church elders, did not welcome the uprising when it broke out. To most people, the uprising was necessary to express opposition to many of the measures which had been taken by the government since the beginning of the Second World War and which were causing hardship to the people. They mentioned forced labour during the war, compulsory soil conservation, ejection of Kikuyu tenants from settlers estates and low wages.¹²³ They were convinced that the motive behind their detention and the subsequent proscription of both KISA and KKEA was to ensure that leaders of the independent schools were no longer able to campaign against the

122 EAS, November 21, 1952.

123 The Annual Reports of Muranga, Nyeri, Kiambu and Nanyuki Districts between 1940 and 1951 give instances of this hardship and occasional efforts made by the people to bring their grievances to the attention of the government.

125 Jonathan Nyirika was also arrested and was given adequate protection by the government throughout the period of emergency. Interview, pp. 51.

Beecher Plan. Having failed on many occasions in the past to bring these schools under its control,¹²⁴ the government was not going to miss the opportunity provided by the emergency to close down the schools. Only the mission schools and the ACCS schools together with Kunyiha's faction of the independent schools were not affected by this closure order because they all agreed to come under government control.¹²⁵ This was used as further evidence by the leaders of the independent schools who were interviewed to show that although the government claimed that the independent schools were involved in the 'mau mau' uprising, the real intention was to control the activities of these schools.

A survey conducted by the Education Department also supported the view of the leaders of the independent schools that their schools alone could not be closed because of involvement in 'mau mau' uprising. Out of a sample of four hundred and fifty-nine Kikuyu who were imprisoned for taking part in the uprising, one hundred and fifty of them

124 Among these leaders are Ndegwa Metho from Kandara, Peter Gatabaki from Guthunguri, Waiza Kamau from Ruiru, interview, op. cit.

125 Johanna Kunyiha was also not arrested and was given adequate protection by the government throughout the period of emergency. Interview, op. cit.

had been to school. Of this number, only thirty three had been or were in independent schools at the time of their arrest. The other prisoners were from mission schools.¹²⁶ Another sample of seventy six people suspected to be leaders of the uprising showed that only twelve had any connection with the independent movement. On the whole, the survey revealed that only nine percent of those who were educated and who were detained, belonged to the independent movement. The rest came from mission schools and yet hardly was any mission school closed down by the government. ¹²⁷

The closure of thirty-four independent schools on November 14, 1952 meant that 11,026 pupils were faced with the problem of how to continue with their education.¹²⁸ When schools reopened on January 17, 1953, only ten independent schools agreed to come under the DEB and two under mission management. This was in spite of intensive campaign by government officials and the chiefs who toured the districts to denounce both KISA and KKEA and calling them evil associations which had only exploited the desire

126 EDAR, 1953, pp. 26-27.

127 ibid.

128 EAS, November 21, 1952.

of the people for education to steal their money. 129
 The remaining eighty-four schools preferred to be closed
 than operate under the missions or the DEB. By this
 decision another 30,000 pupils were forced to discontinue
 their education. 130

When the thirty-four schools were closed in 1952,
 Mr. Mathu asked in the Legislative Council whether the
 government was going to allow such a large number of
 children to be without education. In reply, Mr. Vasey
 the 'Member' for Finance, told him that none of the students
 in independent secondary schools would be absorbed in any
 of the other schools because they were academically
 unacceptable. Of the 9,747 pupils in the independent
 primary schools, only about 4,000 would be offered places
 in the other schools and 'no guarantee can be given that
 all children now displaced can be accommodated in the
 other schools'. 131

With the closure of eighty-four additional independent
 schools, the situation became worse. The only compromise
 was to put up new school buildings for pupils in the affected
 independent schools. The £63,000 needed for these buildings

129 KNA: PC/CP.4/3/3, op. cit., p. 26.

130 ibid.

131 EAS, November 21, 1952.

would, however, have to be provided by the people themselves and the schools would have to come under DEB management. 132 The government was no longer prepared to allow any independent body to undertake education in Kikuyu. But having succeeded in expanding educational facilities beyond what the government or the missions were prepared to go, and having largely through the independent schools challenged the government syllabus for African schools, it was not likely that the Kikuyu would be enthusiastic about this latest proposal of the government. This issue we shall examine further in the epilogue but already at this point the whole independent school movement had become drawn into the maelstrom of the 'mau mau' emergency.

Before the Second World War, the Kikuyu had demonstrated the line along which they would like their education to be conducted. Although they had initially rejected Western education and did everything to preserve their indigenous culture against mission onslaught, colonial rule, which afforded the missions protection against Kikuyu opposition, coupled with the fact that a few Kikuyu had preferred to

disobey their parents by going to mission schools, ensured that Western education would make an inroad into Kikuyu society. Equally important, however, was the fact that not all those who went to mission schools during this period were prepared to accept just what the missions had to offer them. Some of them left the missions almost as soon as they came to continue their old ways, because they were not prepared to see vital aspects of their culture destroyed in the process of acquiring mission education. Others who remained were also not prepared to accept the mission emphasis on 'industrial' education, especially after 1909. Many of them openly expressed their dislike for this type of education, and although they were indentured, many of them abandoned their studies as soon as they could read and write in Swahili, in search of jobs in Nairobi and elsewhere. It was from among these people that future politicians, such as Harry Thuku, emerged to challenge not only the mission educational programme, but also other aspects of colonial rule.

It was, however, not until after the First World War that most Kikuyu came to realise the benefits that could be derived from Western education. Their decision after the war to co-operate with the missions to expand educational facilities in their midst was interpreted by the missions as

was also their belief that as 'industrial' education was not important in government white schools, and as religious

affording them an opportunity of converting to christianity those who had previously refused to associate with the missions. The emphasis on 'industrial' education, in response to settlers' and government directives, became a new grievance against the missions by the Kikuyu whose reason for seeking co-operation with the missions was to equip themselves sufficiently to be able to compete, especially with the whites, for job opportunities. As far as they were concerned, 'industrial' education was nothing more than an attempt to prepare them to be more useful to the settlers on their estates. They further queried the emphasis on farming in schools at a time when no Kikuyu was allowed to plant coffee, which was the mainstay of the settlers' economy, and when there was hardly any scheme for the improvement of agriculture in the area.

What the Kikuyu expected from the government, - to whom they turned soon after their co-operation with the missions had led to disillusionment - was that the government should offer educational services at par with what the government was providing for the whites. If the government could devote so much money to the education of white children, why could it not do the same for their own? It was also their belief that as 'industrial' education was not important in government white schools, and as religious

instructions was also optional there, the same would be the case if government agreed to put up schools on their behalf. It was because of these attitudes that even when the government refused to assign its own funds to put up these schools, the people readily raised additional revenue which they intended to hand over to the government.

Here the Kikuyu demonstrated their ignorance about the educational arrangements in the country. While it was true that African education was left under the auspices of the missions, what was taught in the schools had largely been dictated by the government, which in turn was influenced by settler opinion. The government was un-enthusiastic about replacing mission schools with government schools, since thereby the Kikuyu would have been afforded an opportunity to agitate about what was taught in the schools they were paying for, and demand an education equal to that provided for the whites. The Kagumo example is an indication of what the Kikuyu could do if they were given government schools. Their demand for government schools was therefore only another step in their quest for an education that could respond to their aspirations. It was not until the circumcision dispute that those who had hoped that the government would give in to their demand for government schools realised that they had been mistaken.

expulsion from supervision of their educational arrangements.

The rate at which the independent schools expanded all over Kikuyu was an indication of the faith which the people had in education to solve some of their problems. It was also an indication of their dissatisfaction with the existing educational provisions. The independent schools therefore symbolised Kikuyu rejection of the colonial educational programme and this was why, despite the series of attempts that were made by the government, the people refused to hand over their schools to the government or allow it any say in the running of the schools. To have allowed any form of government interference would have been to re-introduce into these schools, what had been rejected in the mission schools. Instead of the independent schools surrendering to the government, the missions found that they were losing their pupils to these schools and they found it necessary to seek government assistance to arrest this trend. That the Colonial Office could caution against any strong action, on the part of the administration, against these schools further proved that they had become a force to reckon with in the educational development that was taking place in Kikuyu. But no matter what positive contributions both the Kikuyu and the Colonial Office believed that the schools were making, the Nairobi government could not tolerate the reproach implied by its exclusion from supervision of their educational arrangements.

Both the Beecher Commission and the Emergency Regulations of 1952 were to become tools in the hands of the administration against the independent schools.

The rapid expansion of educational facilities during and after the second World War must be seen largely as an extension of the new political awareness that was taking place in Kikuyu and elsewhere as a result of the war. Many of those who left the country to fight on the side of the British were able to compare developments in Kenya with what obtained in these other places. While they came back home determined to fight the injustices which they attributed to colonial rule, they were also aware of the role which education could play in preparing their children for self-rule. It was no coincidence that among those who fought during the war and who came back to champion the cause of education were Bildad Kaggia and Dedan Mugo. Thus at a time when the Kikuyu were becoming impatient with the colonial administration and demanded radical changes in the political and economic set-up in the country, they did not forget that education had its own contributions to make to political development. This was why the demand for a reduction in mission influence over their education was intensified and why they resisted

any attempt to implement the Beecher plan. This was also why, in the end, education became another factor in the 'mau mau' uprising.

On the other hand, the settlers were also seeking to consolidate their position in the country and this was why they formed the Electors' Union. If anything, they wanted closer government and mission control of African education, as this was the most effective way of ensuring that this education did not undermine their own position in the country. It was for this reason that they readily supported the Beecher plan, which was designed more to safeguard colonial rule than to dismantle it. In the end, both the Kikuyu and the settlers recognised the significance of education to political development and that was why each of them sought to control that education to its advantage.

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EPILOGUE

The government had made up its mind that it would not allow either KKEA or KISA to function and had asked the people for £63,000 to put up new schools for those pupils who were displaced as a result of the closure of independent schools. It did not even consider the taking over of the buildings of the independent movement, possibly because it wanted to remove the memory of KKEA and KISA from the mind of the people.

The people on the other hand had not only expressed opposition against the Beecher Plan, but gave Peter Gatabaki, the new President of KISA, their support when he started his campaign against the plan.¹ Whereas there were 81,866 pupils in the mission ACCS and independent schools at the end of 1951, the number had been reduced by half by August 1952.² Some schools which had over three hundred pupils on roll in 1951, were left with only sixteen in August 1952.³ This was the time when the 'mau mau' uprising was gathering

1 Chapter VII,

2 KNA: PC/CP.4/3/3, op. cit., p. 12.

3 KNA: DC/FH1/31, Annual Report, Fort Hall District, 1952, p. 12.

momentum, and it became an offence to patronise these schools. To continue to attend the schools, it was alleged, was to be in league with the government to arrest the rapid expansion of education which was taking place in Kikuyu, largely as a result of the efforts of the people.⁴

With the subsequent closure of almost all the independent schools in January 1953, an even more determined attempt was made to paralyse activities in the other schools which were allowed to function. Letters were pasted on the doors of many mission and ACCS schools, warning parents to desist from sending their children to these schools. Teachers in the schools were either physically attacked or had their houses completely destroyed. According to an official report, twenty eight teachers lost their lives while another thirty nine sustained serious injuries. Many more had to hide in the bush for weeks for fear of being attacked.⁵ In Nyeri district fourteen schools were completely destroyed and another twenty one were looted.⁶ Under this atmosphere, many of those parents who felt that the answer to the problems created by the Beecher Plan was to send their

4 ibid

5 KNA: PC/CP.4/3/3, op. cit., p. 31

6 ibid.

children to mission and ACCS schools, were forced to withdraw their children from the schools. In Kiambu district where 15,000 pupils were attending mission primary and intermediate schools at the end of 1952, only 9,600 were left in March 1953.⁷ The situation was the same in Muranga district where twelve schools were completely deserted when schools reopened for the first term on January 17, 1953. Fourteen others had less than half their original attendance.⁸ As a last resort, 'Home Guard Posts' had to be established in all schools to discourage the activities of those who were bent on paralysing activities in mission and ACCS schools.⁹

On the other hand, many Kikuyu, mostly parents of the pupils in the affected independent schools, decided to adopt a more constitutional method to persuade the government to reverse its decision on the schools. They argued that the government would only be more determined to control the independent schools if the wanton destruction of mission and ACCS schools continued. Although they were bent on ensuring that the independent schools continued to

7 ibid., p. 26.

8 EAS, January 26, 1953.

9 KNA: PC/CP.4/3/3, op. cit., p. 31.

remain under 'a genuine African management', they were going to adopt 'a peaceful and constitutional method' to achieve this. They therefore publicly denounced the activities of those who went about destroying mission and ACCS schools, calling them 'evil, the enemy of ourselves' whose activities were 'dangerous to the progress of our children'.¹⁰

In addition to this public denunciation, they formed the 'Caretakers Association for African Closed Schools' in January 1953 with Edward N. Kabiw as Chairman and S.R. Kimani, the first University graduate from Muranga district, as secretary.¹¹ A letter was then written to the Director of Education on January 20, 1953, asking for permission to take over the former independent schools. A copy of the constitution of the Association was also included in the letter. In the constitution, the Association promised to co-operate with the government to advance the education of the Kikuyu, although it was opposed to any idea of handing over the schools which had

10 'An Appeal to the Public by Parents of children in the closed schools, in Murumbi Papers op. cit.

11 Caretakers Association For African Closed Schools, P. O. Box 2436, Nairobi, Murumbi Papers, op. cit.

been put up from money raised by the people to either the missions or the DEB.¹²

In response to this letter, the 'Member' for Education, C. H. Hartwell, arranged a meeting with a delegation of the Association on January 27, 1953. At the meeting, he repeated the government determination not to allow the opening of schools not controlled by the government and advised the Association to support the government in its effort to improve the education of the Kikuyu.¹³ Members of the delegation thanked the 'Member' but made it abundantly clear that the Kikuyu were not convinced that they could receive the best education if left under the missions or the DEB. This point they repeated in another letter to the Governor on February 23, 1953.¹⁴ In the letter, the Association maintained that it could not be correct that only the independent schools supported the 'nau nau' and therefore qualified to be closed down. It enumerated the achievements of the independent schools which

12 Letter of Association to Director of Education, January 20, 1953, Murumbi Papers, op. cit.

13 Education Department to Mr. S.K. Kimani, January 28, 1953, Murumbi Papers, op. cit.

14 Petition to the Governor - Position Regarding the Future Management of Independent schools, Murumbi Papers, op. cit.

included the provision of facilities for more children to go to school and the teaching of English at a much earlier stage than in mission schools, thus enabling more people to understand the language of 'our masters.'¹⁵ It wondered why the government should want to arrest these developments by closing the schools. As far as the Association was concerned, it was not prepared to see these schools handed over to the missions since it was in opposition to the missions that the schools were started. Furthermore it did not support the idea of the DEB taking them over because although there were Kikuyu representatives on the Board, it was nevertheless 'a government nominated body over which the Africans could never hope to have any control.'¹⁶ Instead of handing over the independent schools to either the missions or the DEB, the government should allow the Association to manage them, but making sure that it had its representatives on all the committees of the Association.¹⁷

None of the arguments advanced by the Association convinced the Governor to change or modify the government stand on the independent schools. They were to remain closed or come under the missions or the DEB.

15 ibid.

16 ibid.

17 ibid.

As a last resort the Association instituted a court action against the 'Member' for Education challenging his right to order the closure of schools which were neither built nor maintained by the government. The case was taken up on behalf of the Association by a British lawyer resident in Nairobi, Mr. Ralph Milner, and it came up for hearing for the first time on April 14, 1953.¹⁸ This was to be the last time the case would be heard in court. Just as the government had exploited the Emergency Regulations to close down those schools which refused to come under its control, so also did it arrest and detain prominent members of the Association for violating sections of the Regulations. Among these were Thomas Ngenda, Obadiah Tugua and Samuel Muthungu. They were all accused of travelling to Nairobi to see Mr. Milner without permission from their District Commissioners.¹⁹

At the same time, the government abolished the elective system of representation into the local councils and announced that as from 1953, members would be nominated by the Provincial

18 Petition by Plaintiffs of the Civil Case No. 615/53, Murunbi Papers, op. cit.

19 Ndegwa Metho, interview, op. cit.

Commissioner. Only those whose loyalty to the government was not in doubt would be nominated.²⁰ This meant that it was going to be very difficult to criticise government policy on education as had been done in the past. To criticise the government on any issue in Kikuyu after 1952 was tantamount to giving support to 'nau mau' and 1952 therefore saw the end of the vigorous demands of the Kikuyu for changes in African education.

In 1963 Kenya became independent and the opportunity was thus provided for an overhaul of the colonial educational policies in favour of the Africans. In view of the fact that Jomo Kenyatta, who had fought on the side of the Kikuyu for changes in African education, became the first President, to what extent did the post-independent educational reforms reflect the type of changes which the Kikuyu had demanded from the colonial administration in the past? The main issue throughout most of the colonial period was who should control education and for what purpose. While the Kikuyu wanted to reduce mission influence over their education and called for more direct government involvement

20 KNA; PC/CP.4/3/3, op. cit., 1953, p. 16.

in that education, the government, on the other hand, had insisted that the missions must continue to play a dominant role in that education. Furthermore, while the Kikuyu considered 'industrial' education to be inadequate to meet their needs and aspirations, the government continued to support this type of education as being the best for the Africans 'in their present stage of development.' Although the Kikuyu were occasionally able to force both the missions and the government to modify their educational programme to accommodate the wishes of the people, the emphasis in the field of African education throughout the period under review in this work was on 'industrial' education, while the missions continued to enjoy their privileged position. As a matter of fact, while most of the independent schools disappeared after 1953, the mission schools continued to exist long after that.

The first concrete attempt of the independent government of Kenya to overhaul education in the country was made in 1964 with the appointment of the Oninde Commission of Inquiry into the educational needs of the country. The mere fact that the government found it necessary to set up this commission within a year of independence was an indication that, like the Kikuyu during the colonial period, the government was not satisfied with the educational arrangements it inherited from the colonial administration. As had been demanded several times in the past by the Kikuyu

and other African groups, the commission found it necessary to recommend that 'the time had come to relieve the churches of their remaining responsibilities for the management of maintained schools'. The Education Act of 1968 formally transferred the management of schools to the local authorities and later to the central government as a way of ensuring that the schools 'served the whole community and not the adherents of one particular church'. This was the type of arrangement which the Kikuyu had asked for in the past in their belief that only as the schools were taken out of mission control would they be able to serve the needs of the people rather than catering for the interests of particular missions.

On the other hand, the Kikuyu opposition to industrial education has not been followed through and this whole matter is now seen in a different light. While it would not be true to say that the government of Kenya today has lost interest in literary education or that due emphasis is not still laid on the development of grammar schools, nevertheless, official policy now sees technical and industrial education as the nation's highest priority as far as this educational sector goes. There is the Kenya Science Teachers' College in Nairobi, the building of Colleges of Technology in almost every part of the country, as well as Village Polytechnics to cater for Primary school leavers. It should, however, be emphasised

that while it is true that government's efforts are being directed more towards 'industrial' education, the rationale for doing so is different from that of the colonial administration. The colonial administration believed that literary education was superior to 'industrial' education and should not be encouraged among the Africans who were only being brought into 'civilisation'. 'Industrial' education would also ensure that the Africans were not trained to become agitators who could in turn threaten colonial rule in the country. Through 'industrial' education therefore, the administration hoped to maintain the status quo by training people who would be satisfied with their lot.

On the other hand, the Kenyan Government, as has been the case with almost all countries that were formerly under colonial rule, saw in 'industrial' education, a means of catching up with their former colonial masters and other countries of the world that are outside the so-called Third World. 'Industrial' education is therefore, for the Kenyans, a means of throwing off their under-development. In so far as the Kikuyu had demanded literary education as a means of catching up with the whites and of becoming able to compete favourably with them for job opportunities, the present emphasis on 'industrial' education

was intended to serve the same propose. The only difference is time and circumstances. During the colonial period, the best type of education, as the Kikuyu and most of the other African groups perceived it, was literary education. After independence, the government saw in 'industrial' education a means of achieving what in substance the Kikuyu has aspired to, but at a higher level.

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Note on Sources

A combination of documents, oral evidence and secondary written materials have been used in the writing of this work. In the use of documents from government sources, it has been found necessary to rely extensively on materials emanating from the districts, the province, and Education Department. This is because other materials particularly Native Affairs Department Reports and Kenya Colony Annual Reports usually based their discussions of events in Kikuyu on these district and provincial documents. Even then, such materials had to be condensed to make room for reports from other parts of the Colony. Furthermore, although materials from the Education Department contained information from all over the Colony, they have nevertheless been found to be very useful each time they dealt with events in Kikuyu.

There is a great imbalance in the documentation of the various sections of Kikuyu, just as there is imbalance in the documentation of the various themes in each section of Kikuyu. Nyeri district suffered most in this regard, while information on education

in each district depended very much on who was the District Commissioner at a particular time. While some commissioners wrote extensively on purely political matters others were equally interested in education. On the other hand, what those who were interested in education wrote also varied from one individual to the other. This was particularly true of what they wrote on the independent schools. While in a given year, a Commissioner might pay glowing tribute to the organisers of these schools, another commissioner from another district might report that he saw no reason why they should be allowed to exist. This is one reason why it became important to supplement such information with oral material.

My method of approach in conducting interviews was to pose a question through an interpreter to an informant. It was possible to know whether or not the interpreter got the question correctly through the reply he gave me from the informant. Whenever I found that the question was not properly put to the informant, I repeated the question again until I was sure that the informant had understood. I conducted my interview during a tense period in Kikuyu as a result of the death of the prominent Kikuyu politician, Josiah Kariuki. It was largely because of this reason that I was advised not to make use of a tape

recorder to avoid suspicion. I was interviewing someone in Tumutumu who suddenly broke off the discussion when he saw that I had something that looked like a tape recorder. He did not continue with the discussion until he was absolutely sure that what I had with me was not a tape recorder but a pocket camera! Furthermore, while I did not hesitate to make use of group interviews, I found that such interviews were usually dominated by one or two people whom others considered to be in the best position to give the information that I required.

I did not always find my interviews with former leaders of the independent schools satisfactory. A few of them were not prepared to co-operate because having struggled to advance education in Kikuyu during the colonial period, their only reward was detention by the colonial administration. Since independent, such people also did not see much to be proud about. On the other hand, some of those who were prepared to speak had forgotten a lot of the events that took place. This was partly because most of them had to destroy their documents during the Emergency to avoid being detained by the government. Given this present situation it might be very difficult to supplement

what is in government documents on the independent schools with oral materials.

Many of my informants who were associated with the various missions were found to be equally ignorant about many of the educational programmes of the missionaries. Although such people could relate their personal experience, they claimed that the missionaries did not usually allow them to know much about what was going on within the missions. Unfortunately, those Kikuyu who are highly educated and who are now in government services are yet to realise the value of researches of this nature. Most of them were found to be most unco-operative and all attempts that were made to interview some of them proved abortive. In this category of educated Kikuyu are Nbiu Koinange, Minister of State in the Office of the President, Eliud Mathu, Comptroller of the State House and James Gichuru, Minister of Defence. These people, together with President Jomo Kenyatta, made important contributions to the development of education in Kikuyu during the period under review in this work, but because of alleged state duties, it was not possible to interview them. Thus oral sources which could have filled some of the gaps left uncovered as a result of inadequate or non-availability of documents, were equally found to be deficient in many

respects.

Other written sources in the form of theses, journals, newspapers and books have been used extensively in an attempt to supplement the documents and oral materials. Contemporary records include journals and newspapers. The newspapers have been found to be particularly useful as they vividly expressed the varying views of the white settlers, the missionaries and government on African and white education. The frankness with which these views were expressed cannot be found in documents or any other sources.

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

(a) PRIMARY SOURCES

(1) LIST OF INFORMANTS

- Johanna Kunyiha, (over 90 years old) Ngangarithi (Nyeri),
2/7/75, 4/7/75, 10/7/75, 19/7/75, 25/7/75, 28/7/75.
- Stanley K. Gathigira, (about 80 years old), Ngaini, 3/7/75,
7/7/75, 14/7/75.
- Francisco Gechohi, (80 years old), Tetu, 9/7/75, 12/7/75.
- Ernest Kibororo, (69), Karia (Nyeri), 11/7/75.
- Luca Kabui, (80), Kagongo (Githakua sub-location), 16/7/75.
- Charles M. Kareri, (about 80), Tunutunu, 17/7/75.
- Philip Nduhiu, (about 90), Tetu, 18/7/75.
- Wilson Ikanba, (60), Ndiaini, 21/7/75.
- Paulo Mathenge, (over 80), Gathuthi, 22/7/75.
- Paulo Kahuo, (89), Tunutunu, 28/7/75.
- Erastus N. Kigera, (63), Nginda (Muranga), 4/8/75.
- Rev. Daniel Githanji, (72), Nginda, 4/8/75.
- Gideon Mugo, (90), Kahuhia, 5/8/75.
- Samuel N. Mikiira, (85), Kahuhia, 6/8/75.
- James Beuttah, (87), Maragwa, 11/8/75, 16/8/75, 27/8/75.
- Teresio Mucheru, (90), Mogoiri, 13/8/75.
- Thomas Ndindirukia, (75), Mogoiri, 18/8/75.

James Thuo, (over 100), Njoguini (Muranga) 19/8/75.

Jonannah Waithira, (75), Njoguini (Muranga), 19/8/75.

Dominic Nukunya, (over 80), Muranga, 19/8/75).

Wanotito wa Toro, (over 80), Gacharo, 20/8/75.

Matthew Mwangi, (64), Koinbi (Weithaga), 21/8/75,

25/8/75.

Crispin Kanau, (over 50), Klahuko (Weithaga), 26/8/75.

Pastor Samuel Wanjihia, (90), Githumu, 1/9/75.

Elijah Mbatia, (76), Githumu, 2/9/75.

Rufus Karaka, (58), Gacharage, 5/9/75.

Joseph Muthungu (69), Kinyona, 6/9/75.

Samuel Kananga, (50), Githumu, 6/9/75.

Miss P. Wahu (50), Githumu, 6/9/75.

Arapahakad Wanjingiri, (75), Gakarara, 9/9/75.

Ezekiel Kanuu, (73), Kahuthia, (Kandara), 10-12/9/75.

Ndegwa Metho, (70), Kiiri (Kandara), 12/9/75.

Moses Muriithi (87), Kihumbuini, 13/9/75.

Daniel Ngoci, (75), Thuita (Kihumbuini), 15/9/75.

Stephen M. Njuguna, (63), Githunguri, 23/9/75.

Wilson Waithaka Thuo, (68), Githunguri, 24/9/75.

Wilson Gathuru, (over 80), Giathaini, 24/9/75.

Chief Peter Gatabaki, (65), Githunguri, 24/9/75, 26/9/75.

Anon R. Waweru, (69), Matinbi, 25/9/75.

Joseph Muchina Mbuti, (130), Kiriko (Githunguri), 30/9/75.

Waira Kanau, (56), Kuiru, 1/10/75, 12/10/75.

Wanyoike Kanawe, (over 95), Konothai, 6/10/75, 13/10/75.

Elizaphanson N. Wanbicho, (68), Nairobi, 7/10/75,

14/10/75, 23/10/75.

Paul Mbugua Wanyoike, (65), Kinathi, 8/10/75.

Herbert N. Wanyoike, (62), Kanjai, 10/10/75.

Ex-Senior Chief Josiah Njonjo, (80), Kabete (Kibichiku

Farm), 15/10/75, 22/10/75.

Rev. Willkams Njoroge, (90) and Samson N. Wandaka (95),

Dagorotti, 16/10/75.

Samuel Gitau, (about 100), Thogoto, 17/10/75.

Dedan Hugo Kinani, (62), Wangigi (Kabete), 25/10/75.

John Mirie, (54), Upper Kabete, 28/10/75.

Andrew Gatheo, (70), Upper Kabete, 1/11/75.

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2. Documents from Kenya National Archives (KNA)(a) Kianbu District

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DC/KBU/1/1, Handing Over Report, 1906-1909.

DC/KBU/8/3, Dagoretti Letter Book

DC/KBU/3/20, Political Record Book, Part I, Section II,
(Mission Boundaries).

DC/KBU/3/25, Political Record, Part II, Chiefs and
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1901-26.

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- PC/CP.1/4/1, Settlement of Native Rights (Relations
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1934-39.

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