

WERE THE WESTERN COLONIALISTS, SETTLERS AND MISSIONARIES BIRDS OF FEATHERS FLOCKING TOGETHER? THE KENYAN PRE- INDEPENDENCE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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The Kikuyu apophthegm, Gūtīrī Mūthūngū na Mūbīa (a white-man and a missionary are indistinct) encapsulates the general perception and conviction about the Colonialists and the Missionaries. The Saturday, 15th November, 1884 would become the watershed moment for the African continent. The seven colonial powers were in attendance for the Berlin Conference where Africa was initially segmented into 54 States. The conclusion of the Conference inaugurated the occupation of the African territory which turned out to be the greatest territorial scramble of the epoch. The explorers, merchants, settlers, colonialists and missionaries migrated and emigrated like swarms of bees into various destinations within the continent. Unbeknownst to the Conference, the indigenous people in Kenya, akin to other territories within the continent, had avowed ownership of their motherland. Only in the fool's paradise could variance remain inevitable! The Natives had a largely non hostile exposure to the Arab merchants who traversed from the coastal belt to the hinterland in search for commercial raw materials. The arrival and settlement of the "Whiteman" was quite consequential. The Colonialists flew the British flag and flaunted the rifle, the Missionaries had the Bible and arrayed the Cross coupled with give aways, the farmers had the fordson tractor and dwarfed labour wages. All of them insatiably needed the "Black man". The Kikuyu ethnic community's experience with the "invaders" was largely unpleasant. A bloody encounter would ensue shortly after the invasion. In the Mau Mau war, the Missionaries appeared to be fence sitting while Settlers were beating the drums of war, and as a ripple effect, the Kikuyu's confidence with Missionaries and Settlers was fast eroding. As the antagonism metamorphosed into a guerrilla war, the blanket mistrust over all the intruders became more conspicuous. The Colonialists and Settlers' allegiance was to the flag. However, the Missionaries were viewed as part and parcel of colonial subjugation and on espionage colonial mission. At this juncture, all the "Whitemen" appeared to have the same colour, character, chore and chase. The flag, the Bible and the fordson tractor were perceived as camouflaging implements hence the indistinctiveness. This academic corpus sets to firstly demonstrate the

antecedent factors that fuelled the consequent conviction and confusion of indistinctiveness between Settlers/Planters, Colonialists and Missionaries. It also assesses narratives for and against the apophthegm.

Keywords: Africa, Anglicans, British, Catholic, Colonialist, Kikuyu, Mau Mau war, Missionaries, Protestants, Settlers, Natives.

Introduction

The Europeanization of Africa never happened overnight, rather, it was for yonks. The Caucasian arrival in Kenya was intermittent in reference to historic epochs, purpose and mission. Between 16th-17th Centuries, Portuguese made a short stint stay of about a century and a quarter but remained influential in the coastal cities of Mombasa and Malindi. There was no singular effort to experience the hinterlands. However, they certainly encountered and mingled with long distant traders ferrying goods from the interior to the coastal Arab traders.

The Caucasians were homogeneously socialised and therefore, it was convenient for them to work shoulder to shoulder. Having arrived in a foreign strange destination that was beyond their ken, the need to stick together was never an option. After the Portuguese attempted occupation, which failed in industrial scale save for historical monuments, the late 19th century arrivals were characterised by a hybrid of Traders, Planters and Missionaries. On July 1st, 1895, a Baraza was held in Mombasa Town where Sir Arthur Henry Hardinge (1859-1933), with the consent of His Highness Seyyid Hamed bin Thwain, the Sultan, read the historic Decree¹ with an exordium stating, *I announce to you that from today, I take over, in the name of the Great Government, the administration of this country and of all the countries inland as far as kikuyu, and of the whole coast from Wanga to Kismaiye...* (Mungeam, Kenya, 1978). This proclamation brought to end the presence of Imperial British East Africa Company, (which had withdrawn from the territory on the 12th of April, 1895), and inaugurated the epoch of East Africa Protectorate. It is sensational to note that the Consular Union Jack Flag was hoisted at the government building in Mombasa as the Company's flag was lowered, 69 years later, the Union Jack would be lowered at Uhuru Garden Park in Nairobi and the Kenyan Flag hoisted atop Mt. Kenya, about 600 Miles away. The region would remain a Protectorate until 11th of June, 1920 when it became a Colony and later, in December, 1963, the Colony became The Republic of Kenya.

During the 69 years of British dominance, the Kenyan territory grew integrally by leaps and bounds. The *panya routes* became thoroughfare, cow paths became roads and

¹ The East Africa Protectorate proclaimed at Mombasa, July 1, 1895, by A. H. Hardinge, HM Agent and Consul General, Zanzibar.

distant traders' roadsteads became highways. The Education system, medical services, habitancy modes, attires, and lingual communication gradually became westernized. The Europeans and their culture were ambivalently regarded. In their interactions and encounter with the local communities, friendship and communion were established. On the flipside, and largely within the Mt. Kenya region, the rivalry was as loud as a thunder. It ranged from riots to protests, to revolts, and eventually into a bloody war. It would later turn out that the blood of the nonconformists became the seed for freedom and sovereignty. The insurgency involved and included the Settlers/Planters, the Colonialists and the Missionaries. The Natives contrastingly related with each cadre.

The Natives within Mt. Kenya region, in their wisdom, could not grasp how a Settler would not support and protect a Colonialist and vice versa. In a meeting held on Dec. 12th, 1912, at Dagoretti, the minutes recorded by M. W. H. Beech, Assistant District Commissioner, stated that, the Natives hesitated to raise all issues against the Settlers to the Colonial administrators on the ground that, *we are afraid; we think all white men must think alike* (Mungeam, Kenya, 1978). The statement solidifies the inference that, whether a Settler or a Colonial officer, or a Missionary, they all shared inseparable bonds. Sources of conflict were largely cultural, religious, social, economic and political. During the intermittent conflicts, the Natives found themselves on the receiving end. The Europeans would flock like birds of feathers.

When it comes to the historiography on labour, settler capitalism, and colonial state power in Kenya's central highlands, curiously, little attention has been paid to the roles played by the Missionaries. A special attention is deliberately given to the Gikuyuland (Kikuyuland) on its comparative qualification within Africa as known at the beginning of twentieth century. Similar horrifying experiences were reported from rubber-producing regions in Belgian Congo and mines in South Africa. The coercive government controls bred grievous labour scandals and violent encounters between the colonialists and the indigenous populace. It is consistent to conclude that the forceful occupation of Settlers within the resource-rich belts in Africa was a form of economic colonialism which occasioned the violent and bloody war. At the inception of the intense orgy of violence in 1952, the white fraternity in Kenya—some Settlers, Administrators and Missionaries alike, would not admit that Mau Mau had legitimate grievances, or that land and freedom, the axis on which the fighters had waged their war, constituted any real economic or political agenda (Gachihi, *Faith and Nationalism*, 2014). The European encroachers, without abundance of time to learn the philosophy of the people in the Mt. Kenya region, dismissed almost every aspect of the culture under the banner of savagery, primitiveness and barbarousness. Civilization was understood with cliquish univocality where the parameters applied to determine it were exclusively European. In their blissful ignorance to Utuism, the die was cast and the revolt precipitated (Mungai, *Impact*

of *Mau Mau Philosophy*, 2022). This academic corpus seeks to indulge in interrogating the attitude of the Kikuyu Community on each of the European group with an intent to unmask the reasons for bias, rivalry and the tragic war.

The Settlement of Europeans in Central Kenya Region

H. Burgman observed that the immigrants came in waves. Around the turn of the century, there were adventurers and restless spirits eager to settle for anything new. The second wave had members of the British aristocracy, intent on excitement and dignified leisure. After the great war, new wave of immigrants arrived, largely military men from demobilised army (Burgman, *The Way Catholic Church Started*, 1990). The European settlement in Kenya developed on large-scale estates, and was characterised by *colour-bar*, as Kenyan apartheid was called. Colonialism developed from imperialism, which can be referred to as the highest stage of capitalism. Capitalism, imperialism and colonialism share the following definitions: political, cultural and economic domination and exploitation (Ndege, *Colonialism and its Legacies in Kenya*, 2009).

One of the thorniest issues among the Mt. Kenya folks pertained to land. The Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 was followed by the adoption of the East Africa Land Regulations that "legalised" the British Protectorate (1885-1919), and later a British Colony (1920-1963) to alienate land that traditionally belonged to the various African clans. Upon the completion of the so-called Uganda Railway in 1901, European Settler-farmers started arriving in the Kenya colony for largescale farming. This went hand-in-hand with land acquisition and the creation of White Highlands/uplands. The railway, whose construction began in Mombasa in 1896, reached St. Florence (renamed Kisumu) Port of Lake Victoria in 1901. Kisumu was geographically part of the then province of Uganda (in the so-called British East Africa) till 1903 when boundary review was done, and the novel boundary arrangements were enacted. Apart from Kisumu Port, the entire Nyanza, the Rift Valley, and Western regions were all transferred to Kenya from the then Uganda province of British East Africa in 1903. The opening of the Uganda Railway also saw the influx of European Settlers from South Africa (Boers) in 1904 (Gathogo & Njogu, *Chui wa Mararo*, 2019).

The appropriated land was previously possessed by particular clans or individuals. It is fair to note that some of the owners of parcels of land had actually purchased from previous landlords rather not freely acquired. The age of land seizure by both the colonial government and the European Settler/Planters took place after the construction of the Uganda Railway. The sequestration was legally backed by the Land Acquisition Act of India (1894) that initially gave consent to the Commissioner of the Protectorate to appropriate land. (Gathogo, *Settler-Missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya*, 2020). Josiah M. Kariuki captures the agitation on land question in his book as follows, *That*

I shall go forward to fight for the land, The lands of Kirinyaga that we cultivated. The lands which were taken by the Europeans. And if I fail to do this, May this oath kill me, May this seven kill me, May this meat kill me ...(Kariuki, *Mau-Mau Detainee*, 1963). Given that the Kikuyu people were staunchly spiritual, an invocation to God and oathing in reference to land struggles, are sufficient attestation of a real socio-economic predicament.

The policy of land acquisition before settling was first experienced as early as 1894 when Central Kenya and the rest of Kenya were governed by the Imperial British East Africa (IBEA), a chartered company (1887-1895) under Sir William Mackinnon. Through three punitive expeditions, central Kenya was conquered and land expropriation became the new trend. While the first one (1894) in Dagoretti-Kiambu expedition was led by Major Smith, in the present-day Kiambu; the second one (1901) was led by Francis Hall in the present-day Murang'a county of Kenya. The third one of 1904, of Kirinyaga-Embu Counties was spearheaded by Captain Richard Henry Meinertzhagen (1878-1967). In the third expedition, Meinertzhagen killed an estimated 797 residents from Ndia, and Gichugu peoples of Kirinyaga County. He also killed 250 inhabitants of Embu and Mbeere peoples, as he sought to start a colonial station and/or a Fort in the present-day Embu Town (Gathogo, *Unsung Heroes and Heroines at Mutira Mission*, 2013). In all these expeditions, indigenous peoples, who were oblivious of these expeditions, were murdered in cold blood after being sprayed with bullets. Additionally, villages were burnt down, livestock and other properties destroyed, and scores were left homeless. Further, brutal land alienation became the vogue, as by 1930, Natives in Central Kenya were virtually reduced to tenants and squatters on their ancestral land. (Gathogo, *The Quest for Religious Freedom in Kenya*, 2008).

The first committed European Settlers arrived in 1902. Shortly after, they begun expropriation of land with abandon, even though the Crown Land Ordinance of 1915 acknowledged the right of Natives in land matters. The creation of "African reserves" in 1926 versus the so-called White Highlands for Europeans further complicated the land problem. The reserves would later serve as concentration camps during the Mau Mau War. At the end, the expropriation of large tracts of land in Murang'a, Nyeri, Nanyuki, Kiambu, and in parts of the larger Rift Valley region had taken place. (Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005).

After acquiring land via forceful evictions, the Kenyan Settlers enjoyed a higher standard of living than the Natives. Characteristically, they had more leisure activities than Missionaries. John Lonsdale noted: *There were more (Settler) farmers' associations, cricket clubs, golf clubs, women's institutes, gardening societies, masonic lodges, dining clubs per head of the white population in Kenya than in any other*

community in the world' (Lonsdale, *Mission Christianity and Settler Colonialism*, 1982). On the whole, the European settlement ensured that Africans and Europeans lived or developed separately. The Settler-farmers became landlords as Africans became, *Hewers of wood and drawers of water* (Joshua 9:23), a people who performed menial tasks.

The arrival of Protestant Missionaries in Mid-19th century inaugurated the epoch of successful evangelization attempts. Although the Protestant Missionaries had already reached the present-day Kenya in as early as 1844, when the Rev. Dr. Ludwig Krapf (1810-1881) arrived at Rabai, in the coastal city of Mombasa, only in around Mid-1907, the Weithaga-Fort Hall CMS Missionaries reached the heart of Mt. Kenya region. It is in 1908 when undeveloped localities were recommended for Missionary settlements (Gathogo, *Njega wa Gioko*, 2022). Previously, Missionaries preferred to remain within civilised locale. Contrastingly, the Catholic Missionaries spread both in the urban and rural areas with the same vigour. The Holy Ghost Missionaries, given their royal origin, and being the pioneer Catholic group, opted to evangelize within less desolate locales. The Consolata Missionaries, being dominantly Italian and papal, were pushed to the interior and received little colonial government support. The worst would happen during the Second World War where Great Britain was part of Axis Powers while Italy formed part of the Allies. The rivalry had a detrimental ethnic impact on the Missionary groups in Kenya.

The Encounter of The Settlers and The Kikuyu People

On the 4th of January, 1902, a meeting was held in Nairobi attended by representatives of all classes of men of European origin. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the best means of encouraging the colonization of the Protectorate with European Settlers. Among other businesses, the meeting deliberated on the Asian question and it was observed that the Natives were comparatively superior in physique and morality and more amenable to European supervision unlike the Asians (Mungeam, *Kenya*, 1978). This historic meeting did set the pace in engaging the Settlers in the colonization mission.

Besides the European Settlers/Planters, other Settler-farmers came from New Zealand and Australia (Rosberg & Nottingham, *The Myth of Mau-Mau*, 1969). By 1906, it was not only the lands to the north of Nairobi that were alienated for the European Settlers, but also lands far afield in the Rift Valley region of western Kenya. Some of the members of the Kikuyu ethnic group, who had lost their ancestral lands after it was forcefully appropriated by the European Settler-farmers, migrated into their neighbours' territories, the Maasailand, to seek abode. Yet, other members of the Kikuyu nation remained on the alienated lands to become squatters; while others went

to the Rift Valley and became squatters or indentured labourers (Gathogo, *Some Challenges in Founding an African Faith*, 2012). Forceful migrations are not only contrary to inalienable human rights, but also tend to provoke an industrial scale mutiny. The internally displaced Natives that left their ancestral land without compensation would remain malcontented and ever ready to retaliate when factors got favourable. The seed of enmity was planted and, with severe arrogance, the Settlers would keep it growing. The Colonial administrators offered no solace since the Settlers were more beneficial to them than to the Natives. Hence, in the eyes of the Natives, they were birds of feathers flocking together.

The Settlers were not only wild and weird to the Natives. The Indian Question, which refers to the conflict where Indians in the Kenya Colony protested against harassment by the Settlers on land matters in the 1920s, postulates the insatiable appetite for resources. In this embargo, the European Settlers wanted to be the sole custodians of the land in Kenya, rather than the colonial administration. It was the first major test in the Settler-Missionary alliance. Like the Settlers, the Missionaries opposed the Indian claims that they were equal with Europeans (Smith, *The Immigrant Communities*, 1980).

The three groups (Missionaries, Settlers and Colonialists) appeared to handle conflicts with similar temperance and imperiousness. As Africans uproariously agitated against the coercion to carry the *Kipande* (an identity card and passbook) which were introduced after the First World War, without which no African could leave his or her village to seek employment, neither the Missionaries nor colonial administrators stood by the Natives. Moreover, the two cadres never condemned the European Settlers' habits of thrashing "errant" African workers. In some cases, the Settlers would deliberately tear up the *Kipande*, thereby making it impossible for the victims to obtain employment elsewhere. (Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005).

Disturbingly, the European Settlers would at times punish their adult male labourers with the *kiboko*, (a whip made of rhinoceros hide). Appallingly, in order to deflate their ego, the whipping would be done publicly and even in some cases, in the presence of children and women. They would flog their Native workers from time to time and justify their cruel actions with trivial excuses. As Anderson notes, by the early 1920s, the deaths of several African servants from beatings at the hands of their European masters earned Kenya's White Settlers an unenviable reputation for brutality (Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 78).

The Settlers/Planters were the major source of employment in the new colonial economic model for the Natives. Since the Natives had little confidence on fighting for their labour rights, the Settlers tramped upon the Natives with dirty great impunity.

With the docility of Missionaries and the iron fist of the colonial masters, the Natives could not help observe the indistinguishability of the Europeans regardless of their purpose and mission in the colonial territories.

Colonialists and The Natives

The bloody conflict with the Colonialist was certainly presupposed. A. H. Hardinge, the first British East Africa Commissioner, in a letter addressed to Hill John Kenyon, expounded on the colonial philosophy of force. He stated, *in Africa, to have peace, you must first teach them obedience, and the only tutor who impresses the lesson properly is the sword*, (Hardinge Letter to Hill, April 25th, 1897 (Mungeam, *Kenya*, 1978).

It is evident that the Colonial masters knew and expected a bloody war from the Natives. In an address by Sir Frank Watkins² to Sir Alfred Lyttelton, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies dated Nov. 13th 1905, he voiced his objection on the drafting of blacks by the government as soldiers and police to deal with White Settlers. Such a move was described as absolutely fatal to the maintenance of white prestige among Natives. It was perceived as a catalyst for the “day of black rebellion”. The address continued to mention that the revolt was going to happen with absolute certainty which would be like *a human volcano set to burst forth in uncontrollable eruption* (Mungeam, *Kenya*, 1978). Most of the available literature on the Mau Mau War were authored by non-Africans and thus tend to underplay the magnitude of dissension and counter dissension. It has been christened as a rebellion, revolt or insurrection. Such descriptions are meant to conceal more than reveal the reality. All factors considered, the strife was not a mere rebellion but a full-fledged war that reached its apotheosis after the guns of the Second World War fell silent. The relations between government and members of the churches were often strained but frequently cordial. From 1920s, prominent clergymen, such as the Rev. Dr. Arthur of the Kikuyu Church of Scotland Mission (henceforth CSM), and Archdeacon (Bishop and later the Archbishop) Beecher of the Church Missionary Society (henceforth CMS) in the 1940s, had been nominated to represent the African interests on the Legislative and Executive Councils. (Githiga, *The Church as the Bulwark Against Authoritarianism*, 2001). M. Ndeda opines that, despite the nominations, they never ventured into real issues outside the LegCo given that, majority of clergy and church workers in colonial Kenya had a very restricted theology of power. Most of these workers of the CMS and CSM belonged to a conservative tradition, with its belief in individual salvation and the strict authenticity of the Bible. It means that the Natives integral needs could not be secured through the Missionaries (Ndeda, *The Struggle for Space*, 2009).

² Sir Frank Watkins was the Honorary Vice President of the Colonialists’ Association British East Africa.

Strange to say, a stranger in a strange land becomes the spokesperson invested with powers to promote and protect interests of the Natives. The colonial administration, in their wisdom, reckoned that the Missionaries were better placed to understand the Natives and their particular issues that required attention. The bias is indefensible since, by 1920's, there were Associations of Natives whose object was to air the views and concerns of the local people. The notion of the inferiority of African race was one of the reasons they were denied the opportunity of sitting in the Legislative Assembly with the Europeans. This alienated them from the policy-making institutions that discussed their affairs. Such an inclusion would have provided a platform where matters of mutual concern would be addressed and perhaps, a stronger voice to restrain the Colonialists would have emerged. It would wait until 1944 when Eliud Mathu was nominated by the Governor to represent Kenya in the Legco as the first African. The mindset occasioning the subduing of Natives vindicates the claim that the Colonialists and the Missionaries were not observably strange bedfellows.

Colonial taxation was used as a tool to compel the indigenous working population to resign to the fate and work in the settlers' farms. This was a strong indicator that the Colonial administration certainly, and as expected, favoured the Settler over the Natives. Certainly, the largely iron-willed Kikuyu community would interpret the discrimination as an attestation of deficiency of dissimilarity between the Settlers and the Colonialists.

Missionaries and The Natives

Christian missionary work in the present Kenya preceded colonial rule in time. Nevertheless by 1920s and 1930s, there was a three-way relationship; at times conflictual, between Missionaries, Settlers and Colonial authority. The disputes revolved over three cardinal issues namely, Treatment of Natives, Land and Education. From the onset, the missions exerted great influence upon the Natives since their services would resonate well with the immediate needs of the indigenous population. They were pioneers in medical services, education, social welfare and economic development. Although they could at times be criticised for undue narrowness of view, at least they did set standards, which were vitally needed. (Frost, *Race Against Time*, 1997).

When the influx of the European Missionaries to East Africa begun with the coming of Rev. Dr Ludwig Krapf in 1844, a new slogan did not delay to emerge among the Natives: *Gutire Muthungu na Mubia* (there are no marked differences between a European missionary, a settler-farmer or a colonial administrator-as all are the same people). In this understanding, the mission societies were looked at through the same

lenses as accomplices. Thus, the new common saying among Natives became a gospel truth. Conversely, the above common saying among the Natives, as sufficiently demonstrated in this article, validated some ignorance as there were commonalities and huge differences among the trio (Settler-farmers, Missionaries, and Colonial administrators). Each had his or her unique distinctions, even with regard to the land question (Gathogo, *Settler-Missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya*, 2020).

In supporting the Settlers' large-estate farming, the Missionaries held the belief that the move was an ideal opportunity to civilise the Africans, in line with the 3Cs that Dr. D. Livingstone propounded, namely: Christianity, Commerce, and Western Civilisation. Livingstone's concept of missionary enterprise differed from most of his older colleagues among London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) Missionaries. He saw mission centres not only for strictly evangelization purposes, but encompassing the whole spectrum of human activity. Christian missions were understood to be autonomous centres that provided for all the people's social, economic, political and spiritual needs. In a region such as central Africa, which was dominated by the inhumane activities of his fellow Europeans and Arab-Swahili in the form of slave trade, Livingstone believed that human suffering could only be alleviated by introducing genuine and legitimate commerce, and good government guided by Christian principles (Nkomazana, *Livingstone's Ideas of Christianity*, 1998). Livingstone's twentieth century critics, however, have attacked him for having led the way for European colonization of Africa. One such critic is Cecil Northcott, who wrote: *Livingstone was a colonialist and was not ashamed of it. He was in Africa to offer the benefits of the white man's civilization, and no latter-day beliefs in the black man's freedom, liberation and independence may be read into his actions* (Northcott, *David Livingstone*, 1974). On the flipside, Livingstone idea aimed at occasioning an integral human development in Africa and hardly did he contain any premonition on how his evangelical successors would blur the vision.

The Missionaries attempts to change the entire indigenous mind-set: medicine, education, language, and culture, was tantamount to a declaration of war with ones' antagonists, hence conflict. They had a strong desire to change locals through the medium of education and evangelisation. In such situations, they were bound to seek support from the Settlers who were combative in their social discourses. In turn, the Settlers saw the African lifestyles as an economic liability as they looked forward to their cheap labour. At one stage, both the Settlers and the Missionaries got disappointed by the failure of the colonial government to legislate against African customs that they deemed inimical to modernity such as female circumcision, polygamy, wife inheritance, and wife-beating, among others (Hastings, *A History of African Christianity*, 1979). On the cultural colonialism, the Settlers and Missionaries appeared to read from the same script. There was a notable confluence amongst them. The

Natives, who judged their culture as autonomous and serving their immediate needs, interpreted the cultural coercion as an onslaught.

After settlement of the Missionaries in various parts within Mt. Kenya region, sentiments of distrust never delayed. Harry Thuku, the then Secretary General of the Young Kikuyu Association, (later Kikuyu Central Association) had begun to agitate against the Christian Missionaries and contemptibly referred to them as being colonizers' stool-pigeons. One of the earliest yet most intriguing event pertains to the colonial wire cage erected in September, 1917 in South Nyeri District within East Africa Protectorate. It was reported by Horace Philp, under the title; *The Wire Cage*, in Kikuyu News Quarterly of Feb.–April 1918³. The event was later dubbed, *the Colonial Missionary in the Wire Cage*. During three days in mid September 1917, Dr. Horace Philp of the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) carried out medical examinations on thousands of African men. Philp related the events for Kikuyu News, the Mission's fundraising magazine, in a 1918 article titled *The Wire Cage*. It was wartime and the colonial government was intensifying its drive to recruit the colony's 'able-bodied male natives' for the Carrier Corps, the body that supplied porters for British forces in German East Africa. In a week of frenzied activity, Philp wrote on how thirteen chiefs of South Nyeri District, together with their headmen and the tribal police, plundered their locations, seizing 9,000 men. The seized were taken to a military camp composed of temporary shelters and a massive barbed-wire cage. Over the next three days, the men were corralled into the cage, 1,000 at a time, where they sat on the ground in columns under the watchful eyes of police guards. One by one, they were ushered into a large grass shed. In the shed, they met Dr Philp (Cunningham, *Missionaries*, 2022).

The work of Dr. Philp was to examine the most capable persons to be drafted as Carrier Corps. From the humongous crowd, 3,000 men were found unfit for any work while the rest were qualified as Carrier Corps and Farm workers. A certain percentage was found too sickly and ailing and thus, were taken to Tumutumu mission hospital for treatments. Objectively, it is fair to note that, in the entire deplorable exercise, the missionary face was visible in the treatment of those found too sick. More broadly, as Nancy R. Hunt puts it, it is about the complex relation between 'healing' and 'harming' in the colonial setting, examining how an ostensibly benign, 'gentle' programme of Christian 'improvement' became entangled in a colonial network of incarceration, coercion, and abuse (Nancy, *A Nervous State*, 2016). There remains something

³ Kikuyu News (KN) was a Newspaper published monthly and served as the CSM's promotional journal. A complete collection (1908 to 1958) can be consulted at Edinburgh University Library, Centre for Research Collections (EUL) which also holds the private papers of Dr John Arthur and Arthur Barlow. It can also be found at the Archive of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, St Andrews Church, Nairobi (PCEA).

intriguing, uncomfortable, and remarkable about the missionary's presence in the wire cage and, specifically, the interaction between the work of medical healing and the violence of this situation. The concern was that, of this coercive compelling Natives to work, a Missionary doctor stood at the centre of the ordeal. Sad to note, the role of European Christian Missionaries played globally in the extension of colonialism and capitalism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Cunningham, *Missionaries*, 2023). The Natives could not help group the Missionaries in the same bandwagon with the Colonialists and Settlers.

During the Kikuyu Conference of January 1922, among the matters deliberated was the subject of *Missionary Work in Relation to Government* that was proposed by Dr. John William Arthur, the then Medical Missionary of Church of Scotland. He proposed to have Missionary-representatives in the Legislative Council of the Colony in order to voice out matters related to the Natives. In the deliberations, Mr. Samuel Fredrick Deck, the Colonial Chief Labour Inspector, asked the Missionaries to consider whether the formation of the Board would negatively affect their influence and popularity among the Natives. After deliberations, a motion was passed to form the Natives Affairs Board comprising of Government Officials, Settlers and Missionaries (Mungeam, *Kenya*, 1978). This incidence characterize the laxity of Missionaries in distancing themselves with avenues that would potentially breed direct confrontation with the Natives. It is interesting to learn that, a civil servant, Mr. S. F. Deck, had a premonition of the future unpleasantness in relation to the colonial government camaraderie with Missionaries.

As Missionaries settled in colonial Kenya in the early 1900s, they (like Settler/Farmers) needed parcels of land so as to settle down and build mission centres. Some wanted demonstration farms in their bid to advance holistic ministry and/or their three-fold ministry where literary and technical education (through schools), evangelism (through building churches), and healing (through opening up health centres) were the *modus operandi*. With the East African Scottish Industrial Mission (later renamed the Church of Scotland Mission [CSM]), a British religious outfit, coming to Kikuyu-land earlier than other mission societies in 1898, land acquisition also begun in earnest. Led by Rev. Thomas Watson, the CSM set up a mission centre at Tumutumu (in the present-day Nyeri County), in 1908, after acquiring land. In the first option, the CSM persuaded the locals to donate, sell or relinquish land for mission settlement and expansion. Alternatively, they made a pitch for the land through the protectorate government. In time, they were, for instance, helped by the protectorate government to alienate 3,000 acres of land at Thogoto in the present-day Kiambu County. (Gathogo & Njogu, *Chui wa Mararo*, 2019). Since the Planters/Settlers had employed a synonymous approach into acquiring chunks of land, the Natives could hardly discern a distinction between the Missionaries and the Settlers. Moreover, given that CSM was

idiosyncratically under the Union Jack, the Natives would find it an uphill task to disaffiliate it with the colonial administration.

A case in point refers to the Weithaga-Murang'a CMS Missionaries (led by Arthur Wallace

McGregor) who crossed over R. Tana (locally called Sagana), in mid-1908, to meet Senior Chief Njega wa Gioko. The visit was purposed to negotiate for a parcel of land to establish a mission centre at Githuguya, (at the present-day Sagana Technical Institute). As an employee of the British protectorate government, Senior Chief wa Gioko was not expected to decline the request. Nevertheless, he played tricks by redirecting them to *Gacumbirira ka Mutira* or the upper hill of Mutira (Njumbi-Mutira) which they reached in the last half of 1908. They met Chief Munge wa Ndaruru, one of Gioko's Assistants. Interestingly, Ndaruru was not friendly to them. Equally, youths from the local Ithimbwi lineage of the Wanjiku clan came out to stop the "foreigners" from surveying their land and disrupted the missionary team till they left the scene for some time, but returned afterwards. Under the missionary influences, Chief Munge wa Ndaruru was sacked after the they appealed to the District Commissioner, and Ndegwa wa Kimere replaced him in around the year 1913. Such gestures show the working nature of the colonial administrators and the Protestant Missionaries. Furthermore, Ndaruru's sacking was a warning signal by the colonial government those rejectionists of the European Missionary enterprise in their land acquisition bid, and in their general missionary agenda, would face the music (Karimi, *Njega Gioko*, 1986). The message to the Natives was loud and clear; their lifeline resource (land), would be appropriated voluntarily and involuntarily. To the dismay of the Natives, neither the Missionaries nor the Settlers would protest the forceful acquisition.

Without pressure from the Missionaries, the government attempted to solve the land problem through the Devoshire Paper of July, 1923. The Natives failed to point out the contradistinction between the colonial Administrators, Settlers, and Missionaries. In this respect, not only did the Missionaries support the Settlers during the Indian Question on land, but also remained largely silent against massive land alienation. Was it another way of suggesting that they were equally guilty as charged? Were they involved in land alienation as well? (Gathogo, *Settler-Missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya*, 2020).

Despite the seemingly healthy Settler-Missionary alliance, from 1940s, the Missionaries avoided Settlers' clubs, particularly because Settlers held them under suspicion, together with their schooled converts. Already, the ground had become severely hostile to the colonialists and the Settlers. The culture of segregation and seclusion was deeply rooted during the formative years of Kenya as a Nation. The segregation was consistent in the leafy sub-urbs for Colonial Masters, Settlers'

farmhouses and, disconcertingly, in the Churches too. Indeed, they were like bobbsey triplets. Under ostracism, Europeans had an open bias to the Natives and would deliberately limit their interactions to necessity. The residential areas were clearly demarcated. Each race had to seek conurbation where fellow folks lived. The Natives could only penetrate into the Europeans suburbs when invited or else, it was a punishable trespass. Conversely, the Europeans would transverse the Natives' habitation with impunity. Ghastly, the Churches too could not evade the colour bar. In the Catholic Church within Nairobi City, the Whites worshipped at Holy Family Basilica, the Goans laudated at St. Francis Xavier Parklands while the Natives thronged at St. Peter Claver. All the three churches were within one mile radius. While there were no posters hoisted to welcome one race and dismiss another, wordless posters were too loud. In some instances where the Natives would dare to cross over to either of the Churches, they would sit at the unwelcoming benches designated for them and even proceed to receive Holy Communion after the dominant and hosting race had communed. While there was no formal announcement on neither the sitting arrangements nor procedures, everyone instinctively knew their place and time. The Catholic Missionaries got into a largescale foundering in sternly extirpating the practice and nurturing a culture of integration. Similar practice was detectable in the City Protestant Churches as well. The Natives were complacent since they had been brainwashed to take up the second-class citizenship in all spheres of life.

The divorce from the marriage of convenience between the Settlers and the Missionaries was occasioned by a number of factors. After the 1950s, none of the Missionaries maintained land in colonial Kenya, as the Settler-Missionary alliance proved incompatible and/or unsustainable. As suspicion grew, and as former mission boys and students took up arms against Settler-Farmers and colonialism in general, particularly from 1952 to 1960, things had fallen apart and the centre could no longer hold. The marriage of convenience was now dead and buried, particularly as Settlers targeted some "rogue" Missionaries who had been accused of subtly fuelling revolts. A case in point pertains to Archdeacon Walter Edwin Owen⁴ (1875-1945) of Kavirondo

⁴ After Kenya was declared a British colony in 1920, Archdeacon Owen formed the Kavirondo Taxpayers' and Welfare Association in 1921. The aim of his religio-political movement was to empower the disenfranchised Africans, so as to enable them to be selfreliant rather than dependents of anyone. To practicalise his ideals, he taught Africans basic economics, and more importantly, the economies of scale so as to help them improve their production. Subsequently, he introduced ploughs, new crops, watermills, and bookkeeping as a measure of ensuring a skills development plan. He also taught them civic education and responsible leadership. As he organised this silent revolution, he also became a controversial cleric due to his outspokenness that irked settler-farmers. He would speak about common humanity, against forced labour, poll tax and hut tax. He spoke openly about politics as a right for humanity, including missionaries. As he armed Africans in political and agricultural matters, he finally found himself very isolated, not just by settlers but also by the radical Africans since 1935 onwards. Nevertheless, he had made his socio-political point and henceforth focused on liturgical developments of the African Church, culminating into the revision of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (Luo version). [Barrett, *Anglican Communion, Church Missionary Society, Kenya*," 80-82.].

who was derogatorily nicknamed *Archdemon* for his concern for the welfare of the Africans, and in teaching them new farming techniques. (Knighton, *Religion and Politics in Kenya*, 2009).

Githiga opines that, when a church supports the government and assists in formulating governing policies, it usually defends the State and those policies. If the government then appears to serve the interest of many minorities against those of the majority, then the church becomes one of the oppressors. In view of this, many Missionaries, most of whom were Anglicans, may be seen to have assisted the colonial government in furthering the British interests in the colony. During this period, in the Anglican Church in British colonies could not easily dodge the political baggage since, *the Bishops in the British territories needed letters patent from the crown to make their consecration lawful just as English bishops did. It was assumed that their legal status was exactly that of bishops in the Church of England.* (Githiga, *The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism*, 2001). It would therefore sound illogical to expect Anglican Missionaries to lead the war against colonial excesses without severing their links with the British Royalty. Such a move would be a huge liability given that the head of the Anglican Church has always been the King or the Queen. It would thus have been unfathomable for British Missionaries to think or act in a manner that was disloyal to the crown.

In their efforts to implement colonial policies considered to liberate Kenyans from the barbarism of pre-colonial African life, the Missionaries participated in some of the oppression. Their gospel was hostile to much of the African cultural practices and favoured the western culture. As Welbourn asserts, *The missionaries did not bring to Africa a “pure milk” of the gospel but a complex culture, which can be termed “Christian Western.” Missionaries are Europeans offering a culture which is Western as well as Christian, unable to escape, whether they wish it or not from identification with men of other professions of the same race* (Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, 1965). At a particular point, it was evasive to differentiate between Christian culture and the European one. The Natives were prevailed on to acculturate. Like their colonial counterparts, it has been established that some Missionaries retained class boundaries and they segregated themselves from their converts. In some disturbing cases, Missionaries discriminated against the African Clergy causing a lot of squabbles and scandals on the neophyte Christians. The Missionaries, like their colonial counterparts, found it difficult to dislodge the paternal mantle of authority (Throup, *Render to Caesar The Things That are Caesar’s*, 1995).

As pertains to capital punishment of the Natives, the colonial era Missionaries had their chapter where the natives wrote their history, not with ink, but blood. Some Missionaries, devoid of temperance, would mete severe and appalling corporal

punishment to the Natives. The phenomenon was not restricted to the Kikuyus and within the larger Mt. Kenya region. In Kisii, a renowned hollander Catholic missionary, Fr. Nicholas Stam (later a bishop in 1936), in the establishment of Nyabururu Catholic mission, the pressure pressurized him to resort in using his firearm against the indigenous people in a protracted bloody tussle. It appeared that baptisms had to be conducted with water, fire and firearm. Stam could not appreciate that the Kisii people had a case for their deep anti-European sentiments. The Natives were waging war against the intruders, any intruder. They accused Fr. Stam of walking with troops that killed their men and therefore, he was a friend to their nemeses, and indubitably so, a friend of your enemy is your enemy! (Burgman, *The Way Catholic Church Started*, 1990).

The Anglican Church was especially highly placed. Firstly, the majority of the Settlers were members of the Anglican Church and the residence of the Archbishop in Nairobi was located within the government square, right outside the gate of the government house, perhaps for ease of communication and consultation. During the First World War, the CMS offered the government unqualified use of its personnel and property as stipulated in the work-principle that stated, *it is our first duty to render to the government any assistance in our power even though it may interfere with our work*, (Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa*, 1972). The Catholic Missionaries were not necessarily of British origin and hence refrained from any conflict with the colonial powers and indeed as one Catholic historian rightly asserted, *But how was the church to better the lot of local population if not by entering into some form of understanding with the colonial power?* However, Catholics were acutely sensitive concerning their “foreign” status and so were not anxious to press any particular political view. This hesitancy was reinforced by continental European Catholics relations with State in the 19th century (Lonsdale, *Mission Christianity and Settler Colonialism*, 1978). These subtle differences, continental politics, and ethnic biases among the Europeans did not amount to constitute any verifiable differences between them, thus, the Natives upheld their conviction of indistinctiveness.

The Missionaries attempted to resist numerous belligerent approaches in colonial Kenya. They disagreed with the Settlers’ particularly on some issues which appeared oppressive to the Africans. In the Legislative Council (LegCo.) where they represented African interests, the Missionaries seemed to represent an opposition wing of the council in some instances (Githiga, *The Church as the Bulwark Against Authoritarianism*, 2001). In some instances, the government displayed its upper hand over the missions by providing limited bursaries and grants with strings attached. There were moments when the government threatened to withdraw funds whenever the mission societies became too critical against the dissipations of colonial administrators. Such evidences can be deduced to corroborate that Missionaries and Colonial officers

had areas of corporeal contentions. While the European Settler/farmers put pressure on the Missionaries to provide technical, agricultural and industrial education to the African learners, the Missionaries and the colonial administration preferred literary education. This shows that, unlike Settler/farmers, the Missionaries' primary goal was not land as such, but basic literacy to aid their missions (Kipkorir, *Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya*, 1980). However, the docility and lack of power and steam, motivated the Natives to underestimate the Missionaries' goodwill in promoting their interests.

Conclusion

As dust settled and every cadre had its cut and share of the Kenyan resources, including human, the blame game between them ensued. The Missionaries hit hard the Settlers for failing to bring up meritorious servants in their institutions of learning. In counter accusation, the Missionaries found some Settlers culpable for ignoring the evangelical virtues. Missionaries entertained an integral stratification where Africans were at the bottom of the social stratification. Good examples were Churches, schools, hospitals and social places. Besides the Natives, the Indians too were disgruntled against the Europeans but they did not have the masses to help express their concerns. However, in the social stratifications, the Indians came second after the Europeans.

In sharing kinship and identical forms of civilisation, they were all in agreement that the indigenous people had to meet the threshold of Western civilisation. Other factors that account for the Settler Missionary alliance include the Indian Question of the 1920s, the education factor where they shared similar orientations despite some variations, and their "fewness in a strange land," among others. At one stage, the Missionaries, Settlers and colonial Administrators demonstrated their ability to team up and act collectively. Incontestably, the reasons for their uncoupling would be fewer than what bonded them.

The rivalry of the various European nationalities also permeated in the Missionaries' circles. The in-fighting among themselves, though largely guarded within their circles, made it difficult for Natives needs to be prioritized. Missionaries of British origin had more favours than other nationalities. The Catholic Missionaries of Italian origin had more financial and structural support from the Pope than other Missionaries of non-Italian origin. The Natives hardly noticed such rivalries instead, they were preoccupied with mistreatment and exploitation that was meted out on them.

It is therefore fair to conclude that, the Natives faced the blunt of it all. While the colonial Administrators, Missionaries and Settlers had their differences, the Natives' excruciating pain and the tearful eyes could not allow them to notice their disparity.

Whether a Scottish, Briton, Italian, or Irish, the Natives saw a swarm of compadres with identical mission of self-aggrandizement at the detriment of the host. Given the interests of all the European immigrants, the Missionaries stood a chance to strike the balance, but Natives experience conjectured them as more European than Missionaries. It was an opportunity that Missionaries never seized. As Martin Luther Jr. said, *In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends*. The Natives would certainly identify their experience with the Missionaries with the immortal words of Martin Luther. The distinctiveness of Missionaries was blurred hence, *Gūtīrī Mūthūngū na Mūbā*.

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