THE ROLE OF AFRICAN EVANGELISTS AND TEACHERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN EDUCATION AND CHRISTIANITY IN NITHI DIVISION OF MERU DISTRICT OF KENYA 1907 - 1960

MARY CIAMBAKA MWIANDI

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DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

MARY CIAMBAKA MWIANDI

This Thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University supervisor.

Dr. David Sperling,
Dept. of History,
University of Nairobi.

DEDICATION

To our children, Kimathi, Gakii and Kendi.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the role of African evangelists and teachers in the development of western education in Nithi Division of Meru District from 1907 to 1960. With the coming of the British administration and Christianity, traditional education could not adequately prepare individuals for new social, economic and political roles in the colonial set-up. Western education became the means through which individuals were equipped with the knowledge and skills which enabled them to meet the demands and challenges of the colonial period. African evangelists and teachers played a crucial and complementary role in the dissemination of this education.

The foundation of western education in Nithi Division was laid by African evangelists while the European missionaries who came later played the role of supervisors. African evangelists and teachers were the real force in the transformation of society. They founded and managed a series of "bush" schools as well as private schools in the division. They used schools as a means of imparting new systems and values which they learnt. Africans were, therefore, active participants in their own history.

The study found that a few evangelists and teachers were appointed to leadership positions in Local Native Councils (LNC) and Church Councils, Legislative Council (Legco), while others were made chiefs and sub-chiefs. In these capacities, African teachers and evangelists gave moral and material support to the development of education. They were participants in the formulation of school curriculum and in personnel and teacher recruitment. The development of education in the division was a result of time and energy that a broad range of Africans put in the enterprise.

The evangelists and teachers depended on the support of so many people, Christians and non-Christians, in their endeavour to impart western education and Christianity. The individuals who defected from Church and started their own schools and Churches contributed much to the development of western education in the division. Those persons who abandoned schooling or were rejected, by the missionaries for various reasons became supporters of the teachers and evangelists in their task of imparting western education. The *athomi* of all levels were a great help to the spread of Christianity and western education.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	African Inland Mission
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSM	Church of Scotland Mission
DC	District Commisioner
DEB	District Education Board
DO	District Officer
EDAR	Embu District Annual Report
FMC	Foreign Mission Committee (of the CSM)
GMS	Gospel Mission Society
JKML	Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library
KNA	Kenya National Archives
LNC	Local Native Council
MEDAR	Meru District Annual Report
NAD	Native Affairs Department
OI	Oral Interview
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of east Africa
PCEA/Arc	PCEA Archives

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The study covers the administrative region which was until 1992 Nithi Division of Meru District. Nithi Division is currently part of the new Tharaka-Nithi District. In 1933, Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi were administratively transferred from Embu District to Meru District. The division was then administered together with Igoji and Miitine as Southern Division of Meru District.

The introduction of Christianity and western education in Meru District was done by white missionaries. Methodists were the first missionaries to set foot in Meru, where they founded a station at Kaaga in 1910.[1] They were closely followed by the Consolata Fathers who established their first stations at Mujwa and Igoji in 1911[2]. These two mission groups concentrated their evangelical, educational and medical work in the central and northern parts of Meru District. In Nithi Division, the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) sent African evangelists from Kikuyuland to pioneer Christianity in 1915.[3] For a period of seven years (1915-1922), the African evangelists worked with little supervision from the European missionaries. Indeed, these Africans played the role of missionaries to their own people.

This study covers a long historical period in which the term *Mwalimu* (teacher) has undergone many changes. To the local

community, anybody who taught in a school or in a catechumenate class was referred to as a teacher. There
Were many kinds of teachers, with varying backgrounds and qualifications. For example, there were lay evangelists, artisan evangelists, trained evangelists, pupil-teachers, teacher-evangelists and secular teachers who taught in various schools in Nithi Division. It is therefore imperative to clarify the terms used, which form the heart of this study.

The Church of Scotland Mission, which is the present day Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), used the term *mubunjia* (evangelist) to denote a Christian who has been entrusted with home missionary work, that is, for the local expansion of Christianity. An evangelist was a witness of the Christian message. He was primarily a preacher. He was also required to teach in a school, because the CSM believed that a school was a major evangelistic agency. To the CSM, evangelists were:

> Men who have been called to the office and by the reason of their character and proven ability in preaching the moral of God, have been granted permission to carry on the work of evangelist under a presbytery.[4]

Some Christians chosen for evangelical work were trained and sat for a practical and written examination to qualify for an evangelist's certificate. Such evangelists are referred to in this study as trained evangelists. Those evangelists who had not been trained are referred to as lay evangelists.

The pioneering evangelists in Nithi Division were trained in Thogoto in 1907. In the absence of teachers, the trained evangelists played the dual role of evangelists and teachers. By

their influence, schools became more evangelical centres than secular schools.

Trained evangelists were not enough to man the out-schools which were started in the division, particularly in the 1920s. Due to the shortage of trained personnel, the CSM employed the services of lay evangelists and senior pupils. The lay evangelists were local Christians who were hand-picked to teach their fellow Africans about Christianity as well as reading and writing. They were purposely selected on the basis of their ability to read and write, coupled with what the trained evangelists and European missionaries termed "good character for a christian model".[5] Their services as teachers fell into oblivion with the coming of more educated and trained personnel in schools. However, they continued their evangelical work, particularly among the local people not attending school. They were also instrumental in encouraging people to take their children to school.

The CSM also used senior pupils in teaching. From 1923, the senior pupils played the role of pupil-teachers. The pupil-teachers were selected from the senior class primarily because of their keen interest in Christianity and a proven ability of teaching pupils in lower classes. They taught in Sub A and Sub B classes in the morning and received extra tuition in the afternoon and in the evening. Most of the pupil-teachers were boarders in the mission station at Chogoria. Later, some of the pupil-teachers were enlisted for evangelical courses, while others were trained as classroom teachers.

The CSM also relied on the services of artisan-evangelists. They played the role of technical teachers in schools in the division. These included Christian masons and carpenters. During their training, the artisans had acquired basic education in reading and writing besides learning their respective skills. They were called upon to assist in teaching lower classes in the schools near the mission station. Their primary duty was that which they were trained to do, but they also undertook evangelical and general educational work in times of need. Some artisan-evangelists were full time instructors of practical subjects. Because of their teaching role, the local people referred to them as teachers. But suffice it to say they belonged to the group of lay evangelists.

The late 1930s witnessed the services of local teacher-evangelists in schools. They had been trained as school teachers but also worked as evangelists in and around the schools where they were teaching. Their primary duty was teaching in schools and secondarily to carry out evangelical duties. The European missionaries acted on the recommendation of the Church Kirk Session to decide who was to be sent for teacher-training. The trainees were mainly from among the trained and lay evangelists and pupil-teacher groups, who were keen Christians and academically sound. Teacher-evangelists were the most learned in the society since they had to undergo a specific course of education, hygiene and modern agriculture.

The emergence of secular teachers was most evident from the late 1940s. These were teachers whose role was to teach only in

the classrooms. They had received their training in government teachers training colleges, and were not trained in evangelism. To most of them, teaching was merely a job that earned them a salary.

The wives of evangelists and teachers also played an important role as teachers. They had not undergone any formal training as teachers, but became involved in teaching by virtue of their husbands' role. They were the most educated, in the western sense, among women of the time. Most of these women were former pupils at Thogoto or Tumutumu, and consequently they had a lot to share with Nithi people. Such women became what the writer calls informal teachers. Their role, just like that of evangelists and teachers, was crucial in the growth and development of western education.

Thus we find a whole range of persons involved in spreading western eduacation and christianity, lay evangelists including artisan-evangelists, trained evangelists, pupil-teachers, teacher evangelists, informal teachers and secular teachers. When referring to evangelists and teachers in general, all groups are included; when referring to a specific group, the specific term is used.

From the beginning, the CSM attached a lot of importance to western education. For them, education was a vehicle through which Christianity could easily be spread. Christianity was a religion of the book, the Bible, which inevitably called for its adherents to have basic education. The missionaries were convinced that,

> An African who could read the Bible for himself was easier to convert and retain than a totally illiterate one.[6]

The first Africans to learn to read became important agents of both education and Christianity. They helped in the dissemination of Christianity and education in the villages. In this respect, indigenous evangelists played a major role in converting and educating their own kith and kin to Christianity.[7]

Teaching in schools was done by Africans who had received early instruction at mission stations. Under normal circumstances, there was a school within a mission station for training some of the Christians to become trained evangelists or teacher-evangelists. For example, the CSM started schools at Thogoto and Tumutumu for Africans who would in turn take the Gospel to outlying and distant villages. This was an important move because of the limited number of European personnel in the mission schools. Some Africans went to these schools and received enough academic and Christian education to enable them to play the dual role of evangelist and teacher. Some of the evangelists and teachers founded out-schools and taught in them.

Western education in broad terms meant learning the art of reading, writing, evangelism and other activities through which Christianity could reflect its values. Education was thus:

> The means through which God's knowledge may be imparted, the awakening of those qualities of mind which enable men to take full advantage of environment in which God has called them to live and transform so that it becomes easier for all to take Christian way of life.[8]

In schools people learnt the elements of Christianity, catechism, the Lord's prayer, hymns and the 3 Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), which were taught mostly in the local vernacular. The curriculum also included hygiene, drill, gardening, carpentry, woodwork, handicraft, housecraft, agriculture, masonry and brick-making. The aim of offering industrial training was to equip the African converts with new skills which would enable them to begin an entirely new life inspired by Christian principles.[8] Industrial training became a major component of western education in CSM schools. The trained evangelists and teacher-evangelists had undergone a thorough training and could handle most of the subjects. In essence, evangelists and teacher-evangelists were jacks of all trades.

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Although white missionaries were responsible for the introduction of western education and Christianity in most parts of Meru, the situation was quite different in Nithi Division, where Christianity and western education were introduced by African evangelists. They pioneered the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) work in Meru District. Their role in the development of education was crucial and,

> It was due to their devoted teaching and sense of commitment that the village schools were able to take off from the ground.[10]

However, there was little information on the African evangelists and teachers particularly in Nithi Division. For instance, it would be interesting to know specifically who, among the Christian adherents, were chosen to be evangelists and

teachers. But the activities of African evangelists who opened up Nithi Division for Christianity and education, had not been explored. Their background needed to be explored to find out why they became Christians and what led to their appointment as evangelists or teacher-evangelists. The role of the evangelists and teachers in Nithi Division was crucial, given that the white missionaries went to build on a foundation which had already been started by the pioneering African evangelists and teachers.

The so called "bush schools" and independent schools in Nithi Division were started by the African teachers and evangelists yet little had been done to unveil their activities. Their role has been overshadowed by that of white missionaries which was at times being overemphasized. To most people, the history of Christian activities in Nithi Division may seem to begin with the arrival of the Irvines in 1922. But it should be noted that some African missionaries had pioneered Christian activities and education in the area prior to the Irvine's arrival. Therefore, the African participation in their own history has not been justly unearthed. The history of the development of western education in Nithi Division will remain incomplete until the African participation is thoroughly analysed.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the role and impact of African evangelists and teachers in the dissemination of western education in Nithi Division between 1907

and 1960. To do this, it was necessary to find out who the African evangelists and teachers were and understand their pre-christian social, economic and political backgrounds. It was also important to find out why some local Africans accepted western education and Christianity while others rejected it. Teaching in schools and evangelical work was not a duty for every Christian: it was a special duty for a select group of people. Therefore, the study sought to find out who among the educated Africans became evangelists and teachers and the criteria used to choose them.

Finally, the study aimed to find out the impact of African evangelists and teachers on the people they worked among and interacted with. The evangelists and teachers were to all intents and purposes a "light in the darkness", so to speak. Some evangelists and teachers were relieved of their official duties due to what the Church, particularly CSM, called misconduct, or for taking other social roles which the Church did not consider important. For example, women teachers could not continue teaching after they married, particularly in the early phase of Christianity.But as the saying goes, "once a teacher always a teacher". For this reason, and to no one's surprise, they continued to impart new skills and knowledge to others in the villages. It was the aim of this study to find out the impact of such informal teachers in the area of study because their role in development was also important.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of books, journals and theses have discussed the issue of western education in Kenya during and after the colonial period. In most of them, the role of white missionaries and the government in establishing western education is adequately covered. The African initiative, however, has received little attention from scholars.

Fredrick B. Welbourn, in his book East African Christians,[11] has described the coming of various missionary societies in East Africa and also the methods that were widely used by them to woo Africans to their churches. Arnold Temu, in British Protestant Mission,[12] has analysed the activities of Protestant Missions in East Africa. He says that the missionaries devoted a lot of their money and time to developing African education. Welbourn and Temu have recognized the role of African teacher-evangelists in teaching and controlling the out-schools. But they do not discuss this in any detail. These authors have only contributed general background knowledge which, however, is important to this study.

Daniel Sifuna has written several books and articles on education. In his book Short Essays on Education in Kenya,[13] Sifuna has emphasised the role of the missionaries in the introduction and eventual expansion of western education in Kenya. He has also discussed the type of education that was adopted in Kenya during the colonial and post-colonial period. But he has not examined in detail the role of the Africans in

propagating western education. He observes that some Africans assisted the early missionaries in evangelical, educational and medical work and that some educated Africans were sent to open new churches and schools, but he gives neither the names of those educated Africans nor the places where they were sent to. Sifuna has also written other books and papers. These include Vocational Education in Schools: A Historical Survey of Kenya and Tanzania[14] and "Adopting some aspects of African culture in schools".[15] In these works, there is a detailed account of the historical development of education in Kenya but almost nothing about the role of African teachers and evangelists.

Many Africans in Kenya were not satisfied with the kind of education that they received from the missionaries. As a result, they started independent schools to cater for their educational needs. This view has been clearly presented by John Anderson in his book, The Struggle for School.[16] He attributes the development of western education in Meru to Dr. Clive Irvine of the Church of Scotland Mission at Chogoria, Meru District. Though he mentions that some educated Africans assisted in the task of educational development in Kenya, he does not say what these educated Africans did or how they did it.

John N. Mburu, in his M.A thesis, "The Dissemination of Christianity in Nyeri District 1903-1963: with Reference to African teachers and catechists"[17] says that African catechists and teachers played a crucial role in spreading Christianity and education to the villages in Nyeri. These views are shared by Andrew S. Adebola in his thesis, "A History of Western Education

among the Agikuyu 1888-1952".[18] He says that the senior pupils were of great help in teaching in the so-called "bush-schools" which were started all over Kikuyuland. He asserts that were it not for these senior African pupils, education would not have gone beyond the mission stations, but has little more to tell us about these African pupils.

Florida Karani's thesis, "The History of Maseno School 1906-1963: Its Alumni and Local Society"[19] offers valuable information about African initiative in spreading Christianity and education. She traces the history of Maseno School and the impact of its former pupils on society. She found out that the African elite had contributed a lot to the welfare of society. She also notes that the history of education is incomplete without considering the role of Africans.

William Laughton's book, The Meru.[20] has valuable material on the development of education in Meru. The author says that girls' education was poorly catered for and he gives the Meru cultural attitude towards women as the reason behind this. He mentions that independent schools were started in Mwimbi (Nithi Division) but fails to give the names of those who started the schools. However, Laughton provides good background information for this study.

Fredrick Welbourn has discussed the issue of independent churches and schools in his book, East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent Churches.[21] He mentions some independent churches that were operating in Nithi Division. He says that the founders of independent churches were also responsible for the

founding of independent schools. He has given some names of the founders of the first independent churches and schools in Nithi Division. He also gives the names of some of the African associations which helped in the administration and financing of the independent schools. He is, however, limited in his area of study, as he mentions only the area around Chogoria (CSM Station). He has not tried to find out what happened in the other parts of the Division.

The mission station at Chogoria has been accorded substantial attention in the CSM jubilee book, Kenya 1898-1948.[22] Several names of pioneer African teacher-evangelists who paved way for the founding of CSM work in Meru in 1915 are mentioned. One of the shortcomings of this book is that there is no information about where the pioneering evangelists operated from, given that the mission station was not yet built, and whom they had contact with. The author states clearly that the evangelists were in charge of four to five out-stations, but fails to give the names and origin of these dedicated evangelists.

Bertha Jones in her book Kaaga Girls,[23] has given a detailed account of the history of the Kaaga Girls' School in Meru. The author named some of the African teachers who assisted in the development of western education, but does not give any details about them. From her book, one admires the cooperation that existed among the Protestant missions in Meru District in the training of teachers. Kaaga Methodist Mission, for example, trained teachers for the CSM.

Jocelyn Margaret Murray, in her thesis "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy, with special reference to the CMS's Sphere of Influence"[24] writes about the CMS crisis over female circumcision. Of importance in this study is the discussion of the emergence of independent churches and schools in Embu and the southern part of Meru. Since Nithi Division is not within the CMS's sphere of influence, she gives a summary of the events there. Her work therefore, provides good background information on the independent church and school movement in Nithi.

John Z. Nthamburi in his book The History of the Methodist Church in Kenya,[25] offers much information about how western education was established in Meru. His major concern is the activities of Methodist Church Missionaries in Kenya. He briefly mentions the establishment of the Church of Scotland Mission at Chogoria. He acknowledges some of the first African teachers who assisted in spreading Christianity and western education but pays little attention to them. The author also examines the rivalry that existed between the Catholics and the Protestants in Meru over the opening up of new churches and schools. Unfortunately, his work only covers central and northern Meru and has little to offer on other parts of the district, Nithi included.

R. Macpherson has written what could be termed as the official church history of PCEA in his book, The Prebysterian Church in Kenya.[28] He traces the establishment of the CSM in Kenya. The Missionaries, according to

Macpherson, had several duties to perform, such as spreading Christianity and western education, and providing medical services wherever they set up a mission station. He goes further to say that some African evangelists left Tumutumu to pioneer evangelism and medical care in Mwimbi and Chogoria in Nithi Division long before the white missionaries arrived. He does not however, follow up what these pioneering evangelists achieved in their endeavours in Meru District. He pays little attention to the local evangelists and teachers initiative in disseminating Christianity and western education even after he had lived and worked among them for over a decade from 1931 to 1943.

Carl Rosberg, and John Nottingham, in their book The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya,[27] examined the question of nationalism in Kenya, including the role of missionaries in Central and Eastern Kenya. The cultural conflict between the missionaries and the local communities is also discussed, especially during the female circumcision controversy. Paid agents, such as teachers of the Church of Scotland Mission at Chogoria, were required to sign a declaration of loyalty to church laws and of non-membership of Kikuyu Central Association (K.C.A.). The authors say that some of the paid agents who refused to sign the declaration helped in the establishing of and teaching in independent schools. But the authors have not given the names of the Christians who refused to sign the Church's loyalty documents, and little emphasis has been placed on the participation of local evangelists and teachers in the independent schools.

Stephen L. Micheni, in his M.A. thesis, "The Contribution of Christian Missionaries to Education in Meru 1908-1963",[28] gives the history of missionary groups in Meru. He points out that there was a school in Chuka by 1915, seven years before the first mission station was built at Chogoria. He says that the pioneer African teachers in the school came from Tumutumu. Some names of the earliest pupils in the first schools are mentioned. He mentions how independent schools in Nithi Division were established, but without offering details. This thesis is limited in that, whereas he was supposed to cover the entire Meru District, he concentrated on Meru South. However, he has provided more valuable information for the present study than any other written work on education in Meru, since Nithi Division falls in Meru South.

The African initiative in the development of western education has been dealt with by several scholars. Among them is E. Abreu in her book,

Education in Kenya 1900-1973. Abreu says that the establishment of the independent school movement was a reaction against the missionary education system, which "emphasised manual skills, agricultural training, and restricted the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools".[30] She mentions that there were three independent schools in Meru, but does not elaborate. This information was nevertheless valuable to this study because it set the stage for more investigation on where these schools were, how they were established and who managed them.

Another scholar who has contributed much to the study of the independent school and church movement in general, and Meru District in particular, is Fredrick Welbourn. His book, A Place to Feel at Home,[31] gives information on the independent movement in Kenya. Of great importance to this study is the mention of one of the founders of independent church and schools in Nithi Division. He mentions the existence of a school called Tungu, which he says drew pupils from Kenya and Uganda. The information in Welbourn's book served as an `eye-opener' to more research on the establishment of independent schools in Nithi Division and the role of the evangelists and teachers in these schools.

G. K. Muhoho, in his doctoral thesis "The Church's Role in the Educational Policy in a Pluralistic Society in Kenya"[32], writes that although the missionaries were to play a great role in the educational policy, "none of the missions forgot the need for native catechists through whom distant villages could be reached".[33] He also discusses the emergence of independent schools in Kikuyuland and the role of the teachers in them. He singles out one teacher, Musa Ndirangu, who founded the first African independent school at Githunguri in 1922.

In discussing the role of Africans in spreading Christianity and western education, M. L. Pirouet's book, Black Evangelists: The Spread of Christianity in Uganda in 1891-1914[34] and A. Shorter's book, Missionary to Yourself: African Catechist Today,[35] share the opinion that Africans have always been missionaries to themselves ever since the proclamation of the Gospel in their country. Pirouet says that the rapid increase in

the number of Christian adherents was as a result of the part played by African Christians. Although Pirouet's study is based on Uganda, the information given is crucial in trying to assess what exactly happened in Nithi Division.

B. Muindi has given a detailed account of the growth of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) around Mt. Kenya, and in Nithi Division in particular, in his thesis, "Facing the Mount of God, The Growth of the Presbyterian Church around Mt. Kenya".[36] He devotes a chapter to the missionary occupation of Chuka and Mwimbi, as well as giving names of the first African missionaries and scholars from Nithi Division. Muindi's work has contributed greatly to this study. However, he has little to say about the role of the teachers and evangelists in disseminating western education.

Clive Irvine, in his book The Church of Scotland Mission-Chogoria, 1922-1972,[37] highlights the development of the PCEA in Meru. Having been a resident missionary at Chogoria Mission, he had details on the church adherents, pupils, teachers and evangelists, who form the basis of his study. He is, however, too brief when dealing with the role of the African teachers and evangelists in the development of education.

G. Orde-Browne, in his book Vanishing Tribes of Kenya[38], whose material was collected soon after the colonization of Chuka gives details on the social, economic and political history of the pre-colonial Chuka. Having been the first Assistant District Commissioner at Chuka, he wrote the history of what he thought were vanishing tribes, (Chuka, Igoji, Miitine, Muthambi, Tharaka

and Mbeere) as he found them. Browne's book is important to this study.

From all the available material, one learns that the African evangelists and teachers were active contributors to the development of education. Unfortunately, the individual participants have been given little attention.

JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

The spread of western education in Meru involved more than the participation of the white missionaries. The pioneering African evangelists and teachers were as much involved in this endeavour, as is evident from the literature cited in the introduction and literature review sections. Most scholars mention the African teachers, catechists/evangelists or senior pupils, but pay little attention to the role they played in the dissemination of western education and Christianity. There has also not been any systematic study of the role African evangelists and teachers played in spreading western education and Christianity in Meru District let alone in Nithi Division. There was, therefore, a need to study the role of African evangelists and teachers, thus giving a truer picture of the active role played by Africans in their own history, and a deeper understanding of the interplay between Christianity and western education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was carried out under three theoretical frameworks:-

(i) Status Inversion[38] was adopted to explain how the first local Africans came to be converted to Christianity and eventually acquired western education. The first Africans to join the mission stations were the ones local people regarded as pariah, empty and worthless in society. As such they did not have anything to safeguard or lose by joining mission stations. These were the sons of sorcerers, the *ahoi* (beggars) and orphans. Those who had something to hold onto, like blacksmiths and wealthy elders, did not allow their children to go to the mission stations. Therefore, favourite children of the more privileged members of the society did not have the opportunity to acquire western education or embrace Christianity. The latter group became the *non-athomi* while the former became the *athomi*. The *athomi* were the Africans who became Christians after they were catechised, baptised and given new names and integrated in Church life and activities. The *non-athomi* were the *non-Christians*. The name *athomi* in Meru also included those persons who had gone to school.

Some of the *athomi* became well-placed in the colonial set-up. Others became evangelists and teachers and helped in spreading Christianity and western education. The *non-athomi* did not hold any influential position in the new colonial system. The status inversion came about when the less privileged prior to the coming of the missionaries became the administrators,

teachers, agriculturalists and enjoyed paid salaries. The tables turned on those who were previously important prior to the arrival of missionaries. The pioneer teachers and evangelists belong to the *athomi* group. They played a vital role in changing society in Meru, particularly through spreading western education.

(ii) The study was carried out under the modernisation theory.[40] This framework helped to explain the role of the pioneer African teachers and catechists in spreading western civilization. Education is a major agent of change. Through education, people of less developed countries acquire certain characteristics that are found in the developed countries, and through education, the poor or less privileged acquire some of the characteristics of the elite.

The missionaries who came to Meru were from the western world and wanted to introduce western values and culture to the Africans. They did this through Christianity and western education. The first Africans to embrace Christianity and western education admired and acquired western traits in religion, education, dressing and eating. Most of the first Christians, among them teachers and evangelists, became the major agents of change in the rural areas. The teachers and evangelists were influential people who were imitated, consulted and obeyed by others. They were, therefore, able to encourage the Nithi people towards educational development and modernization.

(iii) The study also adopted the cultural lag theory.[41] This theory contends that some aspects of a people's culture do

not change rapidly. For example, when western education was open to both sexes women received the same kind of education as men but their position in society remained unchanged. In African tradition, women were supposed to remain at home, performing their defined roles as wives and mothers. Even with the introduction of western education little changed in this area. There are some aspects of African culture which change very slowly or persist, even after new cultural features have been introduced. This framework has helped to explain the factors that led to the emergence and development of independent schools. The framework also explains why women's education lagged behind.

HYPOTHESES

The researcher posited the following hypotheses:

(i) Most scholars, who have written on education, have said that Africans helped in spreading western education and Christianity. Christianity and western education were part and parcel of western culture. This new culture was introduced in Nithi Division by early converts and the first African teachers and evangelists. This leads to the first hypothesis that African teacher and evangelists were a major agent of change among the Nithi people.

(ii) The second hypothesis is that African teacher-evangelists played a more significant role in spreading western education and Christianity than the white missionaries.

(iii) Women in Meru society were confined to their homes. Those women who managed to go to school were not relieved of

their traditional duties as wives and mothers. They were also actively involved in church and school activities. The third hypothesis, therefore, is that women teachers had more impact on Nithi society than their male counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

Two methods of historical research were used to carry out the study. These were: oral interviews and a study of archival and library materials. The latter were divided into two categories: primary sources and secondary sources.

The primary sources comprise first hand recording or reporting of events, the assumption being that the recorder was present during the event, experience or time. Secondary sources include records of information that were not made at the time when events referred to occurred. I spent two months in the libraries and archives and two months conducting oral interviews.

The first month was spent in the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library (JKML) at the University of Nairobi, the Kenyatta University Library, and at Kikuyu Campus Library. Books, theses, dissertations, journals and magazines on missionary activities in East Africa were consulted. The purpose of reading library material before proceeding to the archives and the field was to find out what research and writing had been done on the development of western education in Kenya in general, and on African participation in the growth and development of education in Nithi Division in particular.

During the second month, much of the time was spent in the Kenya National Archives (KNA), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) archives at St. Andrews Church in Nairobi, the Consolata archives in Westlands, Nairobi and in the archives of the History Department and JKML archives of the University of Nairobi. The archives were useful sources of primary material. Most of the important documents in these archives were in English, though a few were in Kikuyu. I had learnt Kikuyu during my lower primary education, as it was then the medium of instruction in all PCEA schools.

Most information from the KNA was obtained from the Embu and Meru District annual reports, Meru and Embu Local Native Councils' minutes, Central Province annual local native council minutes, handing over reports, native affairs reports (these were a summary of reports from various districts), and Clive Irvine's Collections. Irvine was the first European missionary at Chogoria from 1922 to 1974 when he died. The information from Embu records was vital for this study because the present day Nithi Division was part of Embu District up to 1933, when it was administratively transferred to Meru District

In the PCEA archives, documents consulted included general correspondence between teachers and evangelists in out-stations and missionaries at central stations such as Thogoto, Tumutumu and Chogoria, Church annual reports from Tumutumu Presbytery in general and from Chogoria in particular, and the PCEA magazine, called Kikuyu News, both at General Assembly offices and the Church archives. The PCEA archives has kept records of private

diaries, General Assembly minutes, letters, both out-going and in-coming between Kenya and the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) in Scotland, testimonials of teacher-evangelists in all the PCEA stations, statistical and annual reports to the FMC and the Government.

The JKML archives has private diaries and correspondences between Lambert, then District Commissioner in Meru between 1933-1942, and the Chogoria Mission Superintendent, Clive Irvine, Lambert's own notes and reports, popularly known as Lambert's Papers were also found at the archives. The History Department's archive has records of unpublished material on education and Meru history which proved useful to this study. The archival material was useful because it plugged the gaps in the secondary sources.

The third and fourth months were spent in the field, where the researcher conducted oral interviews. Oral interviews are the major primary source of information utilised in this thesis. The researcher used non-random method of sampling, a method which called for systematic, convenient and purposive sampling. The researcher had identified names of potential informants from the archival holdings. Some of the early teachers, evangelists and pupils in Meru District mentioned in archival records, are still alive. The researcher was able to approach some of the informants quite easily because she was born in the division and lived among them.

The other advantage the researcher had was that of having taught in several schools in Meru District. The title of *Mwalimu* (teacher) had earned the researcher respect and acquaintance with

most of the elderly teachers and church elders. Getting more informants was no problem for the researcher as the teachers and evangelists to be interviewed informed their other colleagues that *Mwalimu* would be going to see them for advice. Immediately the informants learnt that *Mwalimu* was out to write about teachers, they welcomed the idea gladly. This made the field work interesting, challenging and bearable. The researcher also used her former pupils as guides to the homes of the intended informants, particularly those whom the researcher did not personally know. The parents of some of the former students became important guides to more informants, and occasionally volunteered to accompany the researcher during the interviews.

Before commencing the field work, I reported to the chiefs of the areas in which the research had to be conducted. This ensured that my intentions were known to the authorities to avoid any misunderstanding. The chiefs were useful as they directed me to some of the early converts and teachers and evangelists whose names did not appear in records. Some of the early teachers and evangelists were retired or they were relieved of their duties by the European missionaries for various reasons.

During the interviews, I picked on specific persons. For example, local elders were contacted to assist identify the persons who went to school first, and local pioneer teacher and evangelists. Some early converts contacted offered useful information on who among them became teacher and evangelists. The PCEA had made it a rule that none of its adherent over three years of age could be baptised without learning to read the

Bible. Among the early converts were *athomi* who were classmates, schoolmates or agemates of the pioneering teacher and evangelists. The first teachers and evangelists and priests in their late 60's and 70's were useful source of information because most of them were eye-witnesses of the events. Some of the early teachers and evangelists had deserted the CSM church and joined the independent churches. The information about independent schools and churches was obtained from such people.

In the course of the interviews, I was able to get some private diaries and files which contained some details unavailable elsewhere. Such diaries were useful because from them, reliable and valid data was retrieved. Such records helped in counter-checking the correctness of events and dates of some of the important historical events in his study.

People living in Nithi Division use three different dialects, all mutually intelligible; Gichuka, Kimuthambi and Kimwimbi. My ability to speak and understand these dialects was a great asset.

Most interviews were conducted in the home environment or other places of choice of the respondents. I used individual interviews as opposed to group interviews. I visited the potential informants at their homes to set a cordial and comfortable stage for talking. Greetings preceded any form of general questions. At times the greetings took more than an hour. During this time, general questions were asked coupled with small

talk at times on irrelevant matters. After the stage was set, I began the oral interviews by getting straight to the sensitive and relevant matters relating to this study. The process is expensive in terms of the time spent in each interview. However, I got more comprehensive and detailed data than would otherwise have been the case, if I had spent less time.

During the oral interviews, I used an unstructured questionnaire, which served as a flexible guide to the relevant questions. The questionnaire had guiding questions which were not too restrictive and allowed room for creative responses from the respondents. The researcher administered the questionnaire in person.

To record the information from the respondents, I used two methods: note-making and tape recording. The former method was used where and when the respondents became suspicious of the use of the tape recorder. In such cases, notes were made, trying to record the responses as correctly as possible.

I used the tape recorder more widely than note-making during the research. This method was chosen because one gets more comprehensive and detailed data than in making of notes. All the words from the informants were recorded for later transcription. The use of a tape recorder also became handy when interviews were conducted at night. Some homes of the respondents did not have adequate lighting while others had no furniture. Under such circumstances note-making was

impossible. To some of the respondents, the use of the tape recorder was amusing and they were excited to hear their voices in replay.

Nevertheless the use of the tape recorder was a very expensive exercise. Many sets of batteries were consumed by the recorder as there was no electricity in the rural homes. It was also cumbersome to carry the tape recorder all over the place, given the rough terrain of Nithi Division.

Forty informants were contacted during the interviews, a majority of whom were early teachers and evangelists. Some of them had left teaching and got jobs in other sectors. For example, some became chiefs, headmen and priests, while others were removed from the mission payroll over polygamy. Some of the early women teachers had also been sacked because they had to choose between being teachers or wives, but not both. The researcher interviewed all of these people because, in whatever capacity they were, the local community referred to them as *mwalimu*, even after they became chiefs or pastors.

Oral interviews have several disadvantages. The exercise is expensive in terms of finance and time. Some of the oral interviews took most of the day, which made it impossible to interview two respondents in a day. Sometimes the respondents were not available when the researcher went to interview them. Some of the respondents were still strict Christians, who could not be found at home on
weekends because of religious commitments. This resulted in a lot of time being spent looking for them.

However, the disadvantages of oral interviews do not make the method less effective. The oral interviews enabled face-to-face contacts which helped me to evaluate the respondent as an informant. At the same time, some of the difficult questions were explained as the interview proceeded. Oral interviews formed the greatest source of information for this study because the role of the African teachers and evangelists in the development of education is not documented in much detail.

LIMITATIONS

During the research, the researcher faced several limitations. Finances provided by the University of Nairobi for the researcher were far from adequate. The research fund was not enough to cover transportation and other study related expenses. This meant that I had to limit the number of respondents, and do most of the journeys on foot. It was time wasting as well as tiring for a number of roads in Nithi Division are impassable, especially in November and December, during the rains. Some places could not be visited until January, which caused unnecessary delay. Some rivers were flooded and I found it hazardous crossing to the other side of the river to interview an informant. Howevpr, whenever I got to a home, and the rains started, the interview was done in a leisurely atmosphere as the respondents remained indoors.

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CHAPTER TWO

COLONIAL OCCUPATION AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS, 1907 - 1922

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide background information on the Meru region, its peoples and their precolonial culture. The climatic conditions determined the distribution of population, which in turn had a bearing on the colonial occupation and Christian missions. The pre-colonial social and political history of the Meru people will facilitate an understanding of their response to both Christianity and western education.

2.1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Meru District is situated between longitude 38º East and 38.4º East of Greenwich and Latitude Ø.5º South and Ø.7º North of the Equator in the Eastern Province of Kenya. It covers an area of 9,922 sq kilometres.

The district shares borders with Embu District to the south, Laikipia District to the west, Isiolo District to the north and northeast, and Nyeri, and Kirinyaga Districts to southwest. The district is divided into seven administrative divisions, namely, North Imenti, South Imenti, Nithi, Tharaka, Igembe, Tigania and Timau.

According to the 1979 census, the district population was estimated at 142,288. The population is unevenly distributed. This is determined by the climate, soil fertility, availability of water and reliability of rainfall. For instance, the zone between 1500 to 2100 metres has a low population density because

of the low soil fertility and cold temperatures. The region was not inhabited until late 19th Century becuase it was forested. The forest was a source of honey as the people of Nithi kept may beehives there. The zone between 1000 and 1500 metres has a high population density owing to the high soil fertility, moderate temperatures and adequate rainfall. The main economic activity in this zone was agriculture coupled with livestock keeping. All kinds of grains, bananas and yams were cultivated. This region became an area of almost permanent homesteads. The area below 900 metres is virtually wastelands with poor soils, inadequate rainfall and a very low population. Due to high temperatures, there was little more than bare subsistence cultivation and herding small numbers of livestock. The few people who lived in this area relied heavily on agriculturally rich zone for survival.

Some of the major physical features include Mt. Kenya which is 5,380 metres high, and the Nyambene Hills which reach a maximum attitude of 2,500 metres. Several rivers and streams flow off the mountain, cutting through deep gorges. Such areas are too hilly for human settlement, cultivation or stock keeping. The main rivers are Thuchi, Ruguti, Tungu, Nithi, South Mara and North Mara, Mutonga, Thingithu, Kathita, Thanantu and M'Nyiri.

2.1.2 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The settling of the Meru peoples was on a clan basis. A clan was large, homogeneous and mainly exogamous communities

which descend from a known or near-mythical ancestor. Members of the same clan lived close together. Whenever two or more members of the same clan lived apart, they still identified one another by tracing their common ancestry. Members of the same clan were related through kinship ties or came together ritually through what Meru people call *giciaro* (blood-brotherhood). The clan system was important in all Meru social functions and relations.[1] In practice, the clan was a ceremonial as well as a political unit.

All the activities within the clan and with reference to other clans, were controlled by the clan elders. The members of this body were in theory equal but there was a group of *Agambi* (leaders) who had more say than the others.[2] The *agambi* formed the *njuri* (Council of Elders) which was a judicial, legislative and administrative body.[3] From the *njuri* another more select group of elders was formed - the *njuri nceke* (selected committee of the *njuri*). It was composed of senior elders who would sort out all important matters of the tribe and keep tribal secrets.[4] *Njuri nceke* met every three months to discuss the very important matters of the tribe at Nchiru. It is situated between Imenti forest and the lower slopes of the Nyambene Hills in Tigania. Its membership was made up of prominent *agambi* from every locality and clan. During the colonial period, the *njuri nceke* included the local District Commissioner (DC).[5]

The Meru ascribe roles and status to each individual according to age and sex. For example, *ciana* (children), *nthaka* (warriors), *akuru ma mugongo* (elders) each had an assigned role

to play in society. Circumcision was the most important rite marking the passage from one stage to another. Circumcision marked the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. A person who was not circumcised remained a child in the eyes of the community regardless of his age. Circumcision had enormous educational, social, political and religious implications. The operation was the climax of the process of becoming an adult and formed an important part of one's life.[6] The young initiates were identified in age groups. Each age group was given a name and its members remained in it throughout their lives. Circumcision was therefore important both socially and politically.[7] After the operation, the *Nthaka* (young initiates) were kept in a *kiganda* or *gaaru* (training barracks) with the rest of their agemates where they were educated to be 'good' *nthaka*.[8] The seclusion took about three months.

The *nthaka* group formed an important body of warriors with a well-organised military system. Through circumcision, the boys were promoted from the irresponsibility of boyhood to the disciplined life of a warrior.[9] The warrior class was maintained for the purposes of defence and raiding. Within each warrior class there emerged a *nchamba* (war leader) who owed his position to his personal courage rather than appointment.[10] The warriors underwent vigorous training in the *gaaru*, where they were fed by the whole clan on a special diet in order to maintain their body strength and physique.[11] After the warriors retired from active military service, they settled down to married life.

It was taboo for an uninitiated boy or girl to engage in sexual activities. If this happened and pregnancy resulted, those concerned were severely punished. The Chuka, unlike other sub-tribes, were very strict about this offence. A child resulting from such a union was destroyed and the parents killed.[12] In most other sub-tribes of Meru, such parents were permanently forced out of the family and clan to seek refuge far away to save the family from curses and misfortune from their misdeed. They were banished forever.[13]

It was a curse for a Meru girl to lose her virginity before marriage. This was ensured by the way a girl's cliteridectomy rite was executed. After completing the period of seclusion, girls were not allowed to go back to their parents' home again. They were ready for marriage so they left for their husband's homes. Arrangement for marriage were finalised before the girls left *gicee* (a hut specially built for the newly initiated girls which served as a school and a hospital for recuperation). Clitoridectomy among the Meru was therefore, a pre-marital rite.[14] A girl's role as a wife and mother would be made clear to her during the period of seclusion in the *gicee*. This made eradication of clitoridectomy in Meru more difficult and its survival greater, not because of the nature of the operation but because of its importance as a social custom. It was a gateway to marriage and the perpetuation of the family line and of society at large. A girl was not ready for marriage until she had undergone the clitoridectomy rite.

The choice of whom and when to marry was a societal affair. It involved more people in the clan than just the family members. Marriage took place between two unrelated families and clans. There was no inter-marriage between *giciaro* because in practice they were treated as actual relations.[15] Polygamy, although fully authorised in the society, was limited in practice to rich and influential persons because of the numerous dowry payments.

The Meru believed in a Supreme Being (Ngai or Murungu). The Meru associated this Supreme Power with rain, hail, thunder, lightening and rainbows. Whenever God was angered, he could only be placated with sacrifices.[16] This God was the giver of all things, life, food, and children. It is for this reason that the Meru people gave little of what they reaped to God. The society also had a *Mugwe* (prophet) who acted as an intermediary between the people and *Ngai*. His office was religious and hereditary too.[17] The elders consulted him on behalf of the society, during times of misfortune, famine and epidemics. He also officiated in circumcision, *ntwiko* (handing over ceremony), marriages, and other ceremonies such as the ones preceding raids, planting, harvesting, and the breaking of virgin land for cultivation. The *Mugwe's* powers were beyond the powers of the elders, and he had to be consulted before they made any major decisions that directly or indirectly affected the whole society.[18] Each sub-tribe of Meru had its *Mugwe*.

It was taboo for the Meru to touch a corpse. Burying the dead is a foreign and a recent phenomenon among the Meru people. When a person died, he was thrown away in the bush to be eaten by hyenas. The first Assistant District Commissioner in Chuka between 1913 and 1916, Orde Browne, noted that death was the least regarded of all incidents of life.[18] The main feature was the uncleanliness caused by the dead body and the consequent complications.[20] The hut in which the person died was destroyed and the person who dragged the corpse to the bush had to go through purification before resuming normal social duties. The purification ceremony (*Kwenja rukuu*) was done by a *muntu mugo* (medicineman). It took many months before the person with *rukuu* (uncleanliness) could be allowed to mix with his family, let alone other clan members.

2.1.3 TRADITIONAL EDUCATION AMONG THE MERU

Meru traditional education was aimed at moulding the members to fit into society and be able to take up their respective roles. Through education, society's culture was transmitted from one generation to another. Education was therefore a process of socialising members of the society. Education among the Meru was designed to fit all ages, for it began early in childhood and as the child grew up he was helped to acquire and internalise important values that the adults considered potentially valuable to the individual when he became an adult.[21] It was a lifetime process which started from birth and ended with death.[22]

Traditional education was also aimed at inculcating a sense of belonging to all members of the society. For instance, a child was made to feel that he belonged to a home, then to a clan, then to an extended family, and finally that he was a member of a wider community. All members of a family and clan were taught the virtues of cooperation.[23] The strength of the family, warrior group, the clan and the entire society depended on the contribution of every member.

Traditional education was also aimed at moulding the character of the child. Desirable qualities such as sensibility, courage, honesty, endurance, a sense of responsibility, ethics and obedience were emphasised. The Meru were concerned primarily about moulding a moral man; the development of an intelligent man came second. Eliphelet Njiru puts it correctly when he writes that education moulded the person to be *Mwano muntu* or *mwana wene* (an upright person worthy of every respect).[24]

Traditional education also aimed at preparing an individual for his respective role and status in society.[25] A boy from his early age was taught to be a 'man'. After circumcision, he qualified to own property. A *Kaiji* or *Kabici* (uncircumcised boy) had no right of possession.[26] It was after circumcision that a boy was prepared for the special and well designed responsibilities hitherto unattained. A man was taught his role as a father, husband and elder, when he attained the requisite age and experience. Women were taught the virtues of a good wife and mother. Summarising the importance of circumcision,

Bogonko likens it to a factory where materials are fashioned and worked into finished goods that could be put into use by the community.[27]

The content of traditional education was modified and changed by the prevailing environment and circumstances. The educational curriculum of any indigenous society developed naturally out of the physical and social situation, real or imaginary.[28] For instance, in those societies which practised cultivation of crops, the girls and boys learned how to weed and plant. A home that had animals dictated the kind of education that was to be offered. Thus, a boy who went out looking after cattle was taught about herbs of medicinal value and plants which were poisonous to humans and animals. Girls at home were taught how to be mothers by learning how to feed and cook for the younger ones. The warrior class was taught about great warriors, how to defend their territory, the boundaries, patriotism, how, when and who to raid. It was important for the warriors to know the people whom they were virtually related with, because they were not allowed to raid them.

A few persons were taught special skills important for the perpetuation of society. These skills were often imparted through apprenticeship. Skills such as *uturi* (blacksmithing), *ugo* (medicine), *ugwe* (prophesying), circumcision and ritual sacrifice to God, were restricted to a number of certain families and remained a family secret. Some skills and trades were passed on from father to son. The values,

knowledge and skills of the society were transmitted and renewed by example and word.[28]

To impart these values, knowledge and skills, the Meru used oral methods of instruction, which included myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles and folksongs. Social ceremonies gave children an opportunity to learn social organisations, family and clan members, religion, customs and taboos. The dances were in essence didactic and recreational.

Another method of imparting education was through practical training in fields such as crafts, agriculture, stock keeping, the art of war, defence and building. Members of the family, especially mothers, fathers and grandparents, peer groups, elders and the community at large, became efficient teachers. It was everybody's responsibility to ensure that the learner achieved all the required aims of Meru traditional education.

2.2 COLONIAL OCCUPATION OF NITHI DIVISION

Until 1933, the present day Nithi Division was known as Chuka Division of Embu District. It stretched from Mutonga river in the north and east to Thuci River in the south and to the forest line in the west. The division covers an area of 640 square kilometres. The division has seven locations: namely, Magumoni, Kajuki, Mwonge, Karingani, Muthambi, Kiera and Chogoria. In 1979 census, Nithi Division recorded a population of 30,179. (See Map II).

Several factors contributed to their quick submission to colonial rule. The Embu and Mbeere people had been great raiders of the Chuka. The Chuka regarded them as people whom it was almost impossible to beat in war. For instance, in 1870 and 1890, the Embu attacked Chuka and made away with many cattle, women and children. With the defeat of Embu in 1906, the Chuka, like the Mwimbi, realised the futility of armed resistance against the British. For the Chuka and Mwimbi, a peaceful surrender to such a power appeared the most logical and practical approach.[34] Moreover, the Chuka and Mwimbi people had heard stories from a Chuka warrior who had witnessed the defeat of the Kikuyu by the whiteman at Fort Hall (Muranga). [35] This made the Chuka and Mwimbi fear the whiteman.

The fear of whitemen was further added to by the elders who told the warriors of an old prophecy that from the direction of Embu there would come a people whose skin would be like dry banana leaves, and that when they came they would have to be beseeched or bribed not to fight or kill.[36] The warriors, who were always ready to strike in the event of any invasion, were made to feel that the whiteman was not to be challenged. It was part of warrior discipline to respect every word that came from the elders (*akuru ma mugongo*).

The Chuka may have had another different reason for peacefully accepting the whiteman. They viewed this acceptance as a way of getting protection and security from their hostile neighbours. The Chuka had experienced devastating raids from the Mwimbi and Meru in c.1840 and c.1860.[37] Ten years later the

Embu raided them and again in c.1890, leaving the Chuka a weak nation. The Embu and Mbeere used to combine forces to raid and capture Chuka's wealth. The Chuka had been made to feel like they did not belong for everyone seemed to oppose them.[38] These periodic raids caused a lot of suffering to the Chuka. Able bodied men, and productive women and children were carried away as captives.

The Kikuyu were also raiding the Chuka, as were the Kamba. The Chuka were sort of tongue between the jaws, and friendship with the already proved 'mighty European' was seen as a way to save themselves from further attacks and maybe put an end to these perpetual raids.

The Mwimbi had in the past traded ivory with the Kamba. They knew the benefit of trade with a foreigner. The European was seen as a potentially good partner in trade.[38] Some Mwimbi warriors had visited Nairobi and had seen the great things the whiteman could do. Besides, the Mwimbi people were used to having visitors (foreigners) in their land who came and went. Their openness contributed greatly to their friendly acceptance of the whiteman and later to the welcome they gave to the Kikuyu Evangelists and European missionaries. The Chuka, on the other hand, were suspicious of any foreigner in their land, for it was not easy to tell a well meaning visitor from a spy. Having been prey to all their neighbours, except the Tharaka people who are closely related to them, the Chuka had reason to be suspicious.

Although the Chuka and Mwimbi people did not put up any initial resistance, there were later protests against

government officials on safari. This was in the form of attacks conducted by a few individuals who did not like the Europeans or the paying of taxes. The attacks were never on a large scale and seldom went beyond a few poisoned arrows shot from the bush.[40] For instance, in 1909, the District Commissioner (DC) for Embu, Mr Piggott, nicknamed Karatha Mbungu, that is, Hawk shooter, was attacked while on safari by people of lower Mwimbi. A punitive expedition was launched against the Mwimbi people. After the expedition the Meru DC camped in the area, being the first government official to do so. The Tharaka people, isolated in their hills, attacked Hemmant, Assistant District Commissioner for Meru, but were quickly subdued.[41]

In 1910, another attack on the DC was staged by some Chuka warriors with bows and arrows. The reason for the attack was that the Chuka did not like to be forced to work as porters or to pay taxes. The officers opened fire, one warrior was killed and their leader arrested and jailed.[42] In Kithangani Location of Chuka, the chief reported to the DC that his people had refused to pay taxes and to obey him. A punitive expedition was sent, and the Chuka people were swiftly subdued. Fearing another attack, many of the Chuka people disappeared and hid in the forest. Chiefs Mutua and Kabandango, both of Chuka, asked the DC for Embu to issue a decree for the immediate evacuation of the forest. The decree was granted and force was used to push the Chuka out of the forest.

The Chuka were confused by this turn of events. The protection they so much wanted from the British was not

forthcoming and instead they had been subjected to attacks. The men who were appointed as chiefs were equally oppressive.

To have effective administration, the colonial authority divided the country into administrative divisions, each under a chief. A chief, a new title and position among the Nithi people, was the overall ruler within his area of jurisdiction. These chiefs were by no means the representatives of the people, because no elections or consultations were carried out with the elders prior to the appointments.[43] To the Chuka and Mwimbi peoples, this was a new form of oppression. In Chuka, for example, Magumoni Division was under Chief Mutua, Rubati under M'Rugendo, Gitareni under Kibau Njagi, Kithangani under M'Gikutha and Muiru under M'Njuki, who had replaced Kabandago in 1909.[44]

The chiefs were required to collect taxes from their people, as well as provide forced labour to work in public works, especially the construction of roads throughout the division.[45] The roads were made to enable the collection of the taxes and to open up the inaccessible parts of the division. The institution of taxation and labour was new, and to succeed, the chief and their *nchama* (tribal retainers) used force, which earned them hatred from the people they ruled. For a long time to come, the chiefs were seen as tools of oppression. They in turn received little cooperation from the people, as they were seen as traditional misfits. The people did not take instructions from such chiefs, except when force was used.

The administration of the country between the Meru station and the Embu station was not an easy task. To make the distance shorter, a new road from Embu, via Chuka and Mwimbi country, to Meru was constructed in 1912. Even after the road was completed, the area between the two colonial posts - Embu and Meru - was too large for effective European control. It became necessary therefore, to have a mid-way station. The Chuka station (also called Fort Naka) was started in 1913 and Orde-Browne, locally named Bwana Mirauni (which was an easy way of pronouncing the name Browne) was posted there as the first Assistant District Commisioner in the division.[48]

Other factors prompted the building of the Fort at Gatumbi. Chuka-Mwimbi clashes had not ended despite colonial rule. In 1910, a Chuka woman, Cianjuri was killed by enemies at Naka river, and the Chuka people blamed Mwimbi for it. The Chuka vowed to kill any Mwimbi person who happened to cross their country. Many unsuspecting Mwimbi and Muthambi people were killed, and the matter was reported to the District Commissioner at Embu. This was followed by a meeting at Kambandi in the heart of Chuka to sort out the problem. Fearing another brutal expedition, a warrior named Iburuti, volunteered and declared that he was responsible for the killing. He was arrested never to be seen again.[47] The mid-way station was designed, therefore, partly to put an end to these tribal clashes.

Another reason for establishing the new station was to improve security for European. It had become too risky for government officials to trek between Meru and Embu posts in view

of attacks from Africans. Although there were chiefs who mediated between the European administrator and the Africans, it was still too early to entrust them with the security of government officials passing through their land.[48] Warriors attacked these government officers on sight to create a poor impression of the chiefs because the warriors knew the chiefs would be blamed for laxity leading to the attacks. A station near these newly appointed chiefs would help in overseeing the work done, and also enable them to learn their duties while under closer European supervision.[49]

Finally, the Chuka people did not feel secure to work and pass through the Embu country to the station at Embu. The Embu people had been clashing with the Chuka for a long time. The insecurity was felt even more by the newly appointed chiefs, who had to keep going to the Embu station to report on tax collection and the general welfare of the people. Some of them expressed the wish that they needed offices near their land.[50] They did not want to keep crossing through enemy territory (Embu).

Considering all these factors, the British found it more convenient, cheaper and less time consuming to have a station at Chuka. This was done with a government grant of 250 pounds.[51] What started as a camp turned out to be an important government post, serving the Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi effectively.[52] The arrival of an Assistant DC brought government officers, police, messengers, cooks, and sweepers from without Nithi Division. Chuka people were thus exposed to

outside influence, and many people from the villages moved to the station to look for employment. Others came to the station out of curiosity. To the Chuka-Mwimbi people, it was like magic to see one's name written down and later read out, especially when enrolling as workers.[53] When the *askaris* (police/guards) or other government officers went on transfer, they took some of their cooks or houseboys with them. Such people, who had more exposure to the new way of life, formed the majority of the Nithi people going to school and church in the early 1920s. One of the former houseboys, Ezra M'Njau, said, "I learnt the importance of education in Kikuyu. I went with my askari employer when he was transferred there. It is while there that I learnt to write my name"[54]

2.3 ARRIVAL OF THE AFRICAN MISSIONARIES

The Church of Scotland mission (CSM) work in Kenya began in 1891 at Kibwezi. Due to the uninhabitable condition of the place, little was achieved. In 1898, the CSM moved to Kikuyuland, settling first at Mbaraniki before transferring to its present site at Thogoto. From Thogoto, an out-station was started at Tumutumu in Nyeri in 1908, by one African evangelist, Petro Mugo, who was later assisted by Daniel Wachira in 1909. Petro Mugo and Daniel Wachira were both from Kikuyu. They were among the first pupils of the first CSM boys boarding school at Thogoto which was started in 1907. They were baptised on 25th December, 1909 and sent to Tumutumu as the first CSM African missionaries to begin educational and church work in Nyeri

District. During the same year, a boarding school was started at Tumutumu by Marion Stevenson.[55]

The earliest mission station under European missionaries in Nithi Division was built by the CSM at Chogoria in 1922. Prior to this, some African evangelists had been Christianising the Nithi people since 1915. The earliest evangelical, educational and medical work in Nithi Division was carried out by these early African missionaries from Kikuyuland. When the European missionaries arrived, they only built on the foundation which had already been laid down over the previous eight years.

CSM plans to start a mission station in Meru began as early as 1902 when Bishop Peel of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Rev. Clement Scott of CSM agreed to divide into spheres of influence the territory lying east of a line running from Ngong to Mt.Kenya and onwards to Abyssinia. The CMS had started a series of one-man stations in most parts of their sphere. The CSM plans to extend mission stations to Abyssinia did not succeed because of the unavailability of funds from either the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) or from Clement Scott's potato scheme at Kikuyu.[56]

The different mission groups in Kenya were required to start mission stations away from each other to avoid overlapping, confusion and rivalry between them.[57] By 1907, there was no Christian mission occupying the area east and northeast of Mt. Kenya. Clement Scott had arranged before his death in 1907 to send Dr. John Arthur and Ruffell Barlow to Meru to open the first mission, in the direction of Abyssinia.[58]

Although this did not take place immediately, Meru remained the next area CSM hoped to occupy.

On his return from leave in 1909, John Arthur accused the CMS and the African Inland Mission (AIM) of occupying many parts of Kenya without having enough missionaries to the stations. The CSM had more qualified staff in the field than the CMS complement, and yet they were restricted to the two stations - Thogoto and Tumutumu. To succeed in establishing an extra station, Arthur was out to change the CSM policy of an ideal station of having a solid well staffed stations each with its religious educational, medical and industrial department,[58] if need be, by starting one-man stations just as the CMS had done.

The urgency of starting a CSM mission station in Meru was further accelerated by the presence of the Methodist Mission. In 1910, the Methodist Church established a mission station at Kaaga, in central Meru, after the governor had allowed them to settle there.[60] On the strength of the Methodists' move into Meru, Arthur requested the CMS operating in Embu to allow him on behalf of the CSM to start a mission station in the region between Thuci and Mutonga Rivers. This area had not been occupied by any mission society. The CMS responded positively by offering CSM a site among the Chuka and Mwimbi peoples on condition that it was occupied without further delay.[61] The element of urgency arose because the Consolata Fathers, who had established a station at Igoji in 1911, were now applying to the colonial government for more sites in the Chuka and Mwimbi regions.

The CSM mission station was not immediately started because the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) did not give financial or moral support. The argument against starting a new station in Meru was that the CSM had only managed to convert 1% of the population living around Thogoto and Tumutumu.[82] To the FMC, the CSM had not done enough work to warrant an additional station. In desperation, Arthur proposed to the CMS that they should take back the Chuka-Mwimbi area and in exchange handover Mutira station which lay next to CSM's Tumutumu station. This arrangement did not work. The CMS officially transferred the Chuka - Mwimbi region to the CSM in 1913, but the area remained unoccupied for two years.[83]

After the transfer, Arthur and Mr. Tait, a carpenter at Tumutumu, went to survey the area. Having passed through the CMS' sphere of operation, they reached River Naka where they held prayers. And silently the land they were now entering was proclaimed for Christ by faith.[84] On reaching the newly established Fort at Chuka, they were warmly received by the Assistant DC, Orde-Browne. Arthur's safari took him to many places looking for favourable sites. He reached Kambandi, which was earmarked for a station, and also crossed to Mwimbi and met with chief Gaitungi. The chief welcomed them gladly, because he wanted protection from constant raids and also feared that he might lose his position if he did not welcome them. He gave them food and was given a big knife and a blanket as a gesture of appreciation.[85] Arthur and his team were encouraged by what they found.

The people living in Chuka and Mwimbi country spoke a language that was closer to Kikuyu than Kiimenti, a northern Meru dialect.[86] Arthur himself was able to communicate fairly well with the Chuka and Mwimbi people since he knew the Kikuyu language. The population was also dense and the climate favourable. So encouraged was the ambitious Arthur, that he pursued the case for the region's CSM occupation with the FMC, and with the CSM missionaries in Kikuyu and Tumutumu.

Arthur campaigned for funds and personnel from Europe through the CSM magazine, Kikuyu News. The FMC was not willing to give any more money for further extension, and the committee gave strict instructions that no money should be obtained from either the Thogoto or Tumutumu vote for that purpose. This problem was aggravated by lack of personnel for field work. The European staff were barely about enough for the two stations, and the African converts were only in the making to be evangelists. The few Africans that were qualified as evangelists were busy in the stations and the surrounding areas, trying to convert their "heathen" brethren.

While the First World War went on, Arthur left for his furlough in Britain, where he pursued the Chuka-Mwimbi case with the FMC. Armed with letters and maps, he was able to convince the FMC that the occupation of Meru was long overdue. On 15th March, 1915 he won the day and immediately cabled his colleagues in both Kikuyu and Thogoto who received the news with great joy.[87]

The Christian settlement in Nithi Division by the CSM was only possible after a long struggle between CSM and CMS on the one hand and the CSM and the FMC on the other. A compromise had to be reached, either by sticking to the CSM rules and losing the area or by bending the rules and gaining a new sphere of operation. The rules of the CSM for establishing an ideal station could not work in Kenya and certainly not when different mission societies were more interested in the scramble for land, rather than the conversion of the people. The Consolata Fathers had also opened a station at Igoji, north of Mwimbi, in 1911. The CSM had to adopt the policy of one-man stations like the CMS or the Roman Catholic version of being less rigid in matters of moral code, to win people to the Church.

2.4 THE FIRST CSM CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN NITHI DIVISION

The sites for the first CSM missions in Meru were chosen in 1913 by Arthur during his visit first to Chuka and Mwimbi. One of the sites was to be at Sub-chief Kangangi's, Kambandi (Chuka) and the other at Chief Gaitungi's (Mwimbi).[88] Both sites were located in a region of high population and at an altitude of between 1500 to 1200 metres. This region enjoyed moderate temperatures with an ample supply of water. It also had no mosquitoes, making it a healthy area for human settlement.

Chuka country had a population of about 18,000 and, according to Arthur, required only one station. Mwimbi country had an estimated population of 25,000 people, and required at least two stations for effective evangelical, educational and

medical work.[69] However, lower Mwimbi, like lower Chuka, did not have a very hospitable climate as there were lots of mosquitoes and water was scarce. Arthur abandoned the Kambandi site in Chuka because there was no suitable water supply except for a dirty swamp which was about two kilometres away. He found an alternative site at Chuka near the station.[70] For climatic reasons, the concentration of churches and schools remained in the higher area of Chuka and Mwimbi up to the late 1950s.

Apart from geographical considerations, the sites were purposely chosen to keep the Roman Catholics from spreading into the CSM's newly acquired sphere. The Mwimbi CSM station was only 10 miles walk from the Roman Catholics at Mutonga (today Igoji).[71] The Chuka station would also keep the Roman Catholics in Embu from entering Chuka country. The CSM were promised help by the Provincial Commissioner (PC) for Nyeri to enable them to settle in the Chuka and Mwimbi country.[72] They therefore had official backing which made their settling easier.

The first Christian mission at Chuka was informally started in 1913 by individual Christians who came to work as clerks, messengers, cooks, policemen and labourers at the administrative station. Some of those who came to work at Chuka station could read and write as they had received formal education at the older mission stations of Thogoto and Tumutumu. The Assistant District Commissioner at Chuka donated a tent which served as a prayer house for such Christians at the station.[73] Apart from the resident Christians at the station, more Christians

frequented Chuka from Kikuyuland with an aim of meeting their fellow Christians and spreading the Gospel. The two groups of Christians introduced Christianity to the Nithi people. There was no church or school built for evangelization purposes. The Christians at the station were not formally sent to Chuka by any mission body to undertake evangelical work, hence the start of an informal station. The third group of people at the station were non-Christian Chuka who came to work at Chuka station as domestic servants and retainers of chiefs and the administration. This group provided an audience for Christians who voluntarilly wished to preach the Gospel. Ezra M'Njau learnt to write his name through the policeman who employed him as a domestic servant in his house. He says, ".. he taught me to write my name and to speak a few words in Kiswahili".[74]

This informal kind of education continued until March 1915, when Daudi Makumi and Wilson Waweru from Thogoto as teacher-evangelists and Samsoni Maingi from Tumutumu as a dispenser were sent by Arthur to Chuka and Mwimbi area to pioneer CSM work. Makumi and Waweru had been trained as teachers at Thogoto between 1906 - 1907 and later worked at Tumutumu station as trained teacher- evangelists.[75] They had undergone vigorous religious training and had six years of formal education at Thogoto. By the standard of the day, Makumi and Waweru were some of the best educated Africans. They combined the roles of both preacher and teacher in the out-stations, first at Tumutumu and later at Chuka-Mwimbi, which was an out-station of Tumutumu station.[76] The timing of their posting was good, because had

the CSM not sent these African missionaries, the Chuka-Mwimbi area would have been occupied by one of the other mission society.[77] The Methodists were in the North, the CMS in the South (in Embu), and the Roman Catholics at Igoji.[78]

The CSM Christian and educational work began with the existing Christian community at the Chuka station. The Assistant DC at Chuka, Orde-Browne, gave them a lot of assistance. For instance, he gave them temporary accommodation, food, security, guards and guides. In the same year, Makumi, Waweru and Maingi built a hut at Mugui, near the station with the assistance of the chief who mobilised labour for them. The hut served as a church and school for the first *athomi*, the Christians and those wishing to join the school. Maingi treated the sick under a tree near this first CSM station at Mugui in Chuka. Teaching was done in the morning and the afternoon hours were spent on evangelical and medical work. Makumi, Waweru and Maingi walked from their new station to the villages, visiting the sick and preaching the Good News to the people. Many people visited the station not to hear the Gospel, but to get their wounds bandaged and illnesses treated, after which they disappeared.

By the end of 1915, the only people coming to the Mugui school were from Mwimbi and Muthambi. No Chuka person had registered as a pupil or in the catechumen class. The Chuka people were not open and receptive to Christianity and education which led to abandoning Chuka station and opening of a new station among a much open and receptive people of Mwimbi.[79] In

March 1916, a new station was moved to Gaitungi's to a place called Kanyue.[80] This was a calculated move to take the mission closer to the people of Mwimbi who had shown interest in education and Christianity. The Assistant DC provided them with porters and guides to the new site. A hut was built with help from Chief Gaitungi whom Arthur had met in 1913. Men and women were mobilised to cut poles and grass for the new hut at Kanyue. The hut served as a church and school for the Mwimbi people. Daudi Makumi and Wilson Waweru used the Bible and other religious literature to teach Christianity. A book nicknamed *nondo* (so nicknamed because its covers resembled red ochre) was the major text for secular education.[81] School and church attendance were poor. This was because some Mwimbi and Muthambi people chose to go to the Roman Catholic station at Igoji.[82] There were some pupils who remained at the Kanyue station such as Robinson M'Nkiria from Mwiria who later became one of the earliest trained evangelists in Nithi Division.[83]

The arrival of the evangelists coincided with the very demanding months for agricultural Chuka and Mwimbi people. The month of March is the start of the long rains, and so most people were busy planting and weeding. This factor, together with the fact that the young men were involved in the defence and security of society, may account for the poor response. After the long rains, the month of August was for harvesting and circumcision ceremonies which took part over three months.

The epidemic, famine and drought that broke out in 1918 and 1919 commonly known by the local people as *yura ria*

kithioro made people despise the evangelists more.[84] They were blamed for the misfortune. The local people believed that it was because their Ngai (God) was angered that He caused the famine. They turned to sacrificing to their God and paid more attention to *Mugwe*. It is also important to note that many people left for "Kiambu", to work for money to buy food, and pay taxes while others went to Kikuyu in search of food.[85] The population was therefore, disrupted as people kept moving in and out of Chuka and Mwimbi country. Many more died such that by 1919 the population was greatly reduced. The effect of the famine and epidemics did not spare the evangelists. They spent most of their time going to and from Kikuyuland to see their relatives and collecting food and money from the mother mission stations in Kikuyuland.

The attitude of the local people towards education and Christianity changed from being negative to positive after 1919. More people registered in the church and school. Several factors could have been responsible for this change.

There were more evangelists and qualified teachers in the field. By 1922, twelve evangelists were working in Chuka-Mwimbi area as opposed to the two who worked between 1916 and 1918.[86] This increase in the number of evangelists made the work of evangelism and contacts with people more frequent and effective.

Another factor is that most of the people who had been out to Kikuyu country had been influenced by what they found there. For instance, they discovered that those who had some formal

education were employed and earned money more easily to pay taxes and acquire things like clothes and also be able to buy food for themselves and their families. Those who had such an exposure realised the importance of education. By 1922, there were about 110 registered pupils in the two stations.[87] These pupils included all the people who came to the two stations as scholars and catechumens.

The positive change of attitude towards education may also be attributed to improved relations between the evangelists and the people of Chuka and Mwimbi. This time they seemed to understand and appreciate the people's culture. Some of them started visiting the local people in the villages, and were seen watching traditional dances, although they did not participate in them. The evangelists had realised the futility of remaining "holy" unto themselves, which had resulted in winning too few people to the church and school. One of the renowned evangelist was Willie Kanini. a CSM trained evangelist from Kirinyaga District. He was trained in Thogoto before being posted to Chuka to assist Daudi Makumi in his evangelical and education work. He later married from Chogoria, a fact that made him most acceptable to the Nithi people; as he was one of their own - a *muthoni* (in-law). Kanini, was also not so strict in adhering to the church laws this time. It is perhaps because of this factor that Kanini and Makumi are remembered as the only active evangelists in Chuka and Mwimbi. Because of being sympathetic to Chuka and Mwimbi culture, Makumi was seen by Arthur as "awkward but a real good lad".[88]

Kanyue station continued to function without direct missionary supervision until 1919 when Arthur made his next visit to Chuka and Mwimbi. Makumi, Waweru and Maingi would go to Tumutumu for fresh supplies of preaching and teaching material, food , money and further instructions from Ruffell Barlow, the missionary in charge of the Tumutumu station. Dr. Arthur was not able to revisit the Chuka-Mwimbi area for over five years because of his involvement in the First World War. He was involved in starting the programme for the Protestant Missionaries Carrier Corps in Kikuyu, which later came to be called the Kikuyu Missions Volunteer Carrier Corps. Another reason that kept Arthur's attention away from Chuka and Mwimbi was the problem caused by the existing rivalry between the CMS and the CSM over spheres and the location of stations. For instance in 1916, rumours were in circulation that the CMS wanted to build a training institute for boys near the CSM station at Kikuyu. According to Arthur, the CMS was out to exclude the CSM from operating in Kikuyu.

With the war over, Arthur was able to visit Chuka and Mwimbi. When he arrived in 1919, he was warmly welcomed by Maingi and his wife Naomi Njeri, Willie Kanini and Makumi at Kanyue. Kanini was a trained evangelist who had been posted to Chuka-Mwimbi area to assist Makumi in the educational and evangelical work in 1918.[88] Kanini was considered an excellent teacher. The boys he taught said that they were learning to read and write very well under his instructions.[89] "Boy" was a derogatory term used by the Europeans to refer to both young and

old males. Arthur himself acknowledged the good work done by the evangelists, both at the school and in their evangelical duties, but "there can be little progress until a white missionary arrives".[81] This was an unfortunate remark considering that he found Africans doing excellent work unaided all along. It was common practice for Europeans to dismiss adult Africans as "boys", incapable of doing anything unsupervised. It was an unfair attitude typical of the European mentality at the time. From what Makumi and Maingi had already accomplished, Arthur should have had a better remark about Africans.

The years that followed Arthur's 1919 visit saw an increase in the number of trained evangelists posted to Chuka and Mwimbi. Harrison Kariuki and his wife Njeri came in to reopen and teach at Chuka in 1920;[82] Joshua Matenjwa went to work at Kanyue (Mwimbi) in 1921[83], Jonathan Kinuthia was posted to join Kariuki at Chuka in late 1920[84]; Ismael Wango went to join other evangelists in Kanyue in 1921[85]; Jackson Muriama was posted in 1922 to teach at Chuka;[86] and Paul Mugo went to Kanyue in 1922.[87]

The influence of these trained evangelists was limited to very few people of both Chuka and Mwimbi. In Chuka, they were not able to win the people to the church or school until 1921 when they registered the only *nthaka* (circumcised young man) by the name of Ayub Mugo.[88] This young man was forced to go to the school at Chuka by Chief Njue Mutune of Chuka because his father was a sorcerer. The school according to the Chuka people

was *Kauriro* (a place where one would get bad influence).[98] The school was seen as a place for the children who were regarded as social misfits in the community. The children of *murogi* (sorcerer), *imaramari* (naughty and mischievous), children of *antu ago* (medicinemen) could go to school as the society did not have any high regard for them. *Kauriro* (school) was the ideal place for them. In Mwimbi, Makumi and Kanini occasionally visited the home of Senior Chief Mbogori of Chogoria and taught his children. The chief provided them with porters to carry the slates, chalk and books to and from Kanyue. One of the daughters of Mbogori had this to say:

> "Makumi used to come to my father's home and requested us to learn to read and write. He taught us to read and write on the pieces of slate he had brought. My father did not allow us to go to Kanyue for the teaching. For many days, the teacher came, and by the time *Gitari* came to Chogoria, I could read and write my name, and read the books he brought.[100]

Apart from the home of Mbogori, the evangelists also taught at the home of Chief Kiambati in lower Mwimbi and Gaitungi's of Mwiria. The Chiefs brought to their homes orphans, and children of poor families, as well as the hardcores of the society. They were all given instruction as chief's children. No parent allowed any of their good children to go to school. The missionaries referred to such children as chiefs' offsprings. All this teaching was done in the afternoons as the mornings were exclusively for class work at Kanyue school. In 1919, Ernest Irambu, who was nicknamed Giatungi by Irvine because he came from Chief Giatungi's, area became a Christian and enrolled at Kanyue school.[101] Robinson M'Nkiria of Kanyue

who later became a trained evangelist went to school because he was an orphan.[102] Chief Gaitungi took him to school to win favours from the misssionaries.

The work of these evangelists had borne fruit by the time the Chogoria station was built in 1922. For instance in 1921, there were 20 pupils at Chuka and 58 at Kanyue. The number increased to 30 in Chuka and 80 in Kanyue 1922.[103] The only person from Chuka attending the Chuka School at the time was Ayub Mugo. The rest of the pupils came from Muthambi and Mwimbi.

2.5 IMPACT OF THE EARLY AFRICAN EVANGELISTS

The work of the first African evangelists has not featured clearly in the written history of the CSM before 1922 when the first European missionaries settled at Chogoria. In evaluating the work done by these dedicated evangelists, we must rely on oral evidence.

These evangelists were the first to initiate change in the society. For instance, the local people imitated them in dress and cleanliness. The evangelists were the first to be seen wearing European clothes, which included a pair of shorts and a shirt. The local people called these clothes *matonyero*.[104]

It was not easy to wear such clothes which were very foreign to the people. Traditionally, they dressed in simple goat skin attire and sometimes wore nothing at all. The shaving of the head was another new phenomenon to the Mwimbi and Chuka people. Young men who had not reached the elders' class had their hair left to grow, while the elders had their

heads clean shaven. Trimming the hair short and washing it encouraged general body hygiene. The Mwimbi and Chuka people were reluctant to change from wearing their skins to European clothes because they thought that the new clothes were not 'beautiful'. In school, the teachers taught the local people general rules of hygiene, but the people took time to change.

The evangelists also introduced people to literacy (reading and writing). This was new to the local people because the Roman Catholics at Igoji did not offer such facilities. They were accused by the local people of *kurega na ugi* (refusing to offer the new knowledge). Many people went to school and church to learn this new skill. Those who first learnt how to read were regarded as special people in the society.

The evangelists also taught how to build better and more spacious houses instead of the huts that used to accommodate humans, sheep and goats. They constructed the first rectangular- shaped house at Kanyue which was bigger and better than the huts found at the chief's home. Those exposed to this influence constructed similar houses in their own homesteads. One Mwimbi elder recounted.

> The house of M'Nkiria was so well built that even the tallest man did not have to bend his head when entering. It was big enough to hold in the chief's children with all his wives.[105]

These pioneering evangelists were seen as "black Europeans", because they spoke the whiteman's language, wore his clothes and ate his food. They also ate chicken, a habit hitherto alien to the local people.[106]

Available evidence shows that the African evangelists laid a strong foundation for the future development of Christianity, western education and medical services in Chuka and Mwimbi. By the time Irvine arrived at Chogoria in 1922, he found before him people who had already been influenced by the evangelists. A group of people was found among the Mwimbi who could read and write, and indeed a people who had tasted western civilization. It was this group that the European missionaries at CSM station of Chogoria relied on. Irvine summarised the work done by the pioneering evangelists in the following words;

> Chogoria owes a lot of gratitude to these men and their wives and most of all to the selfless few who started the work and held on from 1913, always in loneliness and sometimes in some danger.[107]

In short, the European missionaries did not start from scratch, as the mission began with well experienced personnel and a group of *athomi* drawn from the older station.

2.6 LOCAL PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO CHRISTIAN SETTLEMENT AND TEACHING

The "African missionaries" who started evangelical and educational work in Nithi Division had gone through thorough CSM training.[108] They were converts and educated people with a responsibility of shedding `light' in the darkness.[108] European missionaries believed that such people were the best to be sent out to spread the Gospel by virtue of their training. By their acceptance of Christianity and education, they had proved that they were not "absolutely incapable of any intellectual effort".[110]

Response to Christianity and education was different for each of the peoples of Nithi Division. The Chuka people had a negative attitude towards the Christian settlement and Christian teaching. This was because of several factors. First, there was general suspicion towards any foreigner in Chuka country. For many years, the people of Chuka had been the prey of all their neighbours. They had suffered many devastating raids. Many able bodied men were killed, women and children taken captives. In c.1890, the Embu raided the Chuka, and it is believed by many Chuka people that some of the raiders joined the Embu from Kikuyuland. This raid was still fresh in people's minds, making the Chuka believe that the Kikuyu in the Boma, as well as the evangelists, were spies. For this reason, the Chuka people chose to keep away from the church and school. No wonder then that by 1921, there was only one *nthaka*, (young circumcised man) in school.[111]

Another reason why young Chuka men did not wish to become *athomi* was that they owed a special duty to society. All the young men were warriors and had to remain ready all the time for the defence and security of the Chuka society. To most parents the school and the church at the Chuka station would distract the young men from their important obligation to society. The Chuka had used spears, swords and shields to defend their country. The teaching of the evangelists that *Karamu ni itumo na mbuku ni ngo* (a pen is the spear, and a book is the shield) did not mean a thing to the locals.[112] The Chuka people did

not see how they could use books to defend themselves from enemy raids. To them, the analogy was simply presposterous.

The church and school at Chuka were seen as culturally destructive elements in society. Evangelists talked ill of anything African. They ridiculed virtually all the customs, beliefs and ceremonial rites that were cherished by the Chuka. The evangelists supported the paying of colonial tax by preaching that people should obey their rulers. They seemed also to give their blessings to the institution of forced labour.[113] They used human porters to carry their luggage, and approached the chiefs to get men and women to help in the construction of the school and church, as well as their living houses. This explains the reasons behind the apathy Chuka people had towards evangelism and education.

In contrast, the Mwimbi had a more positive response to the evangelists than the Chuka. A number of factors contributed towards this. One, the Mwimbi were not an isolated people like the Chuka. They had conducted trade with the Kamba in the past, and with the rest of the Meru sub-tribes. They did not have much reason for being suspicious of foreigners. They seemed ready to learn whatever new things the evangelists provided.[114]

They also had earlier contacts with whitemen, especially the Consolata Fathers who started a station at Igoji in 1911. The benefits of contact with missionaries were clear to them because those who joined the Catholic station were given free clothes, sugar and salt. When Makumi and Maingi started

the station at Kanyue some Mwimbi people gladly joined them. It is not surprising therefore, to find that almost everybody at the first two stations was from Muthambi and Mwimbi.

However, Mwimbi, like the Chuka, did not like the teaching of the evangelists. This was because of their demand that everyone had to be converted and denounce "heathen" ways before joining the church or school.

The evangelists emphasised that:

> Maundu maitu ma Ugikuyu ni twatigire twatwika Akristiano. Na inyui no muhaka mugaruruke, mutigane na maundu ma bururi muciarwo ringi.
>
> We abandoned our Kikuyu customs when we became Christians. We beseech you to do the same. You should leave all the worldly things, and be born again.[115]

One church elder said that the first African evangelists were more strict in matters concerning church rules than the Europeans who came later.[118] The majority of the Chuka and Mwimbi refused to abandon their culture for the new one. It was still too early for Nithi people to appreciate the benefits of education. They wished to observe and preserve their own culture. Those who accepted the new culture- Christianity and education - did not have much to lose, as most of them were orphans, poor and social misfits.

The pioneering African evangelists were convinced that they were superior to the Chuka and Mwimbi people. They were heard to say that they had come to "*bururi wa nduma nyingi muno*" (the country full of darkness). Some of the evangelists did express their superiority in their own writing. For instance, one evangelist, Joshua Matenjwa, wrote, "..the overall

progress was poor because the Chuka-Mwimbi are foolish".[117] The approach of these first evangelists was characterised by pride borne of the feeling that they were more civilised than the Chuka and Mwimbi. They were not willing to mix with the so called 'heathens'. They required them to have a complete change in their lives.

The CSM evangelists had realised that they had to relax some of the church rules if they were to win people to their church before they joined the Roman Catholic stations. In 1920, the Roman Catholics had built a station at Kiereni only two kilometres from the CSM station at Chuka.[118] The presence of the Roman Catholic in the CSM sphere was a main catalyst for the CSM change of tactics towards Christian and education development. The Roman Catholic presence speeded up the sending of the first European missionary to the CSM Meru sphere. In 1920, Carr and Clive Irvine left Tumutumu and went to Meru to spy on the Chuka.[118] Two years later, a permanent structure was built at Chogoria which became the central station for CSM in Meru.

2.7 CONCLUSION

From the available evidence, it is clear that the educational and evangelical work of the CSM in Nithi Division was started by Africans themselves. They were the ones who laid the firm foundation on which the CSM work in Meru was to be built. As a result, the work of European missionaries turned out to be that of developing existing missionary work, rather

than actually founding it. Therefore, African evangelists were the real pioneer missionaries in Nithi Division. The evangelists worked under difficult conditions and did not give in despite the discouraging response from the people of Chuka and Mwimbi and the problems caused by the First World War and the great famine. Their efforts were rewarded by an increase in number of Christian adherents and pupils on whom the growth and development of CSM work in Nithi Division later relied.

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CHAPTER THREE

EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES, 1922-29

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the period between the building of the first European mission station at Chogoria and the time that the CSM was faced with the female circumcision controversy of 1929-30. The new mission station at Chogoria provided an ideal environment for the emergence of Meru mission boys who later trained as evangelists and teachers. They worked together with the pioneering group of evangelists sent from Kikuyu and Tumutumu and with the European missionaries. Cooperation between the Nithi mission boys, evangelists from Kikuyu and Tumutumu and the European missionaries facilitated the expansion of Christianity and western education in the division.

3.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF CHOGORIA MISSION

Although evangelical, medical and educational work began at Chuka in 1913, no proper mission station was built until 1922. The problems which caused the delay, such as lack of staff and funds, were almost solved by 1922. The financial problem was solved in 1922 by Irvine's father-in-law, Mr Ernest Carr's offer of 1000 pounds per year for a period of five years.[1] This money was to be used in the building of the mission station at Chogoria and meeting other expenses.

The problem of personnel was also solved when Dr. Clive Irvine was appointed to the CSM mission after his war service in German East Africa came to an end in 1919.[2] Dr. Irvine was determined to work among the Chuka and Mwimbi people, whom he pitied for being "heathens in chains of wickedness and disease".[3] He was a missionary medical doctor and was ordained a church minister in 1932.

The site for the new mission station had not been identified by 1922, although there were three possible sites, where such a station could be established. These were Chuka, among the Chuka people, Kanyue, located on the lower part of Mwimbi, and Chogoria on the upper part of Mwimbi or what was then called Mbogori's.[4] In February 1922, Carr, Dr. John Arthur and Dr. Irvine drove from Kikuyu to Chuka-Mwimbi country to re-examine the sites. Prior to 1922, probable sites had been identified. In 1913, Dr Arthur and Mr Tait visited Chuka-Mwimbi area and identified two sites, namely Kabandango's near Chuka Boma and Mbogori's (Chogoria). In October 1915, Dr. Jones of Kikuyu and Mr Tait went again to select one of the two sites as a base of operation. Instead, they identified a third site at Gaitungi's (Mwiria), in the middle of Mwimbi.[5] Finally, they settled for the Chogoria site.[6] Here a magnificent mission station was built, with all expenses being met by Dr. Irvine's father-in-law, Carr.

Several factors prompted the choice of Chogoria as a mission site. It was the home area of Senior Chief Mbogori,

from whom European missionaries could expect to get support and security. The chief had cultivated good relations with European administratators, both in Embu and Meru. For instance, he was one of the elders who had gone to meet the District Commissioner of Meru, Mr. Horne (nicknamed Kangangi, because of moving from place to place) at River Thuci.[7] For Mbogori, to welcome a European missionary in his village was an honour to him and a way of safeguarding his position. Mbogori gave the missionaries leave to start the mission in order to offer education to the children of his people.[8]

Another factor is that the missionaries did not like the Chuka site because the local community there had previously shown a negative response towards Christianity and education. The ten or so years' work at Chuka had yielded little results, save for one lad Ayub Mugo, who had come forward for education. Coupled with this general failure was the missionaries' attitude towards the people of Chuka. Dr Irvine had a negative view of the Chuka people, whom he described as `shy and somewhat treacherous'.[8] Such a description of Chuka was a clear indication of the missionaries' ignorance of the Chuka way of life. This contributed to the missionaries' rejection of the Chuka site for the proposed mission station.

The missionaries, after careful consideration, found the Chuka site unviable for CSM work. They wanted to start a station which would be as central as possible so

that the Gospel could reach most people of Nithi. Chuka was not a suitable site because, not being central, it did not allow evangelism to reach most people. Chuka-Mwimbi area did not have any mission station from where evangelisation could be carried out.[10] A better possible location of a station was to be somewhere between the CMS sphere in the south and that of the Methodists in the north.

It should also be noted that the Chogoria site had more physical facilities than the other two sites. It was situated on the upper Mwimbi which was blessed with a healthy climate and plenty of water from the rivers which abound around and near the site. The place had some mosquitoes, but a healthy climate and good soils which could support different crops.[11] This was almost a temperate climate, not unlike that of their homeland. Europeans were also attracted to this particular site because they had a full view of Mt. Kenya.[12] In contrast, lower Mwimbi, where Kanyue is located, was dry, infested with mosquitoes and lacked the facilities found at Chogoria.[13]

The missionaries did not chose Kanyue, an old station, which was founded in 1916, because of the strained relationship between Chief Kiambati, on one hand and the Christians and pupils on the other. For example, Ismael Wango, a teacher-evangelist , had accused Chief Kiambati of not providing labour and food towards the construction of classroom extension at Kanyue. The DC found Chief Kiambati guilty of failing to mobilise labour and the Chief was duly

fined.[14] Chief Kiambati, angered by the turn of events started molesting, and even arresting, the Kanyue pupils over trivial matters. This greatly affected school attendance to the extent that by 1922, only twenty pupils out of fifty eight of 1921 were still attending the school.[15]

Finally, the missionaries found a waterfall on the river Kamara which later became an asset for the proposed mission station because Carr wanted to install a hydro-electric generator. A 20-horse power generator was installed at the waterfall.[16] However, the waterfall was considered by the local people to be the abode of evil spirits.[17] Thieves and sorcerers were punished by being thrown over the cliff.[18] But for the missionaries, the cliff was a boon.

Having identified a mission station, the missionaries started land negotiations with the clan elders who were the Mwimbi land custodians. The elders eventually agreed that the mission could be built at Chogoria. Forty acres of land were set aside for this purpose with the government's approval.[19] Since the land was occupied by the previous users, Dr. John Arthur divided the 40 acres into two plots, carefully carried out so as to avoid disrupting the existing native cultivation and homesteads.[20] This was done in the presence of a Senior District Commissioner.[21]

The bungalow for Irvine and his family was built on the upper plot, which was smaller than the lower plot. Later, a

hospital was built on this plot, in which Dr. Irvine worked. The building of the bungalow was started in March, 1922, when seventy bullock-carts loaded with prefabricated wood and iron sheets arrived at Chogoria from Nairobi.[22] The wood was imported from Scotland.

By October 1922, the bungalow and a motor-car house were ready. Everything was planned and provided before hand, ready for the work to go ahead.[23] Dr. Irvine, his wife, Joyce, and their young son Anthony, arrived at Chogoria on 12th October, 1922 to settle and work from a bungalow which became their home for the next fifty-two years.[24] Their arrival commenced the third mission station for the CSM work in Kenya.[25] Dr. Irvine was assisted by the evangelist Daudi Makumi from Kikuyu who had been in the field since 1915. He was further assisted by local carpenters and masons,[26] such as Ayub Mugo and Kobia Gaitungi, trained at Thogoto.[27]

The construction of the bungalow and other structures which came up in the new mission station was done by the local community, especially the Christians and pupils from Kanyue. The Mwimbi chiefs sometimes forced their people to work.[28] The evangelists' and hospital boys' houses were constructed by the pupils, under the supervision of their teacher Paul Mugo, and the carpenters and masons at Chogoria.[29] They used local materials to build these houses. Poles were cut from the forest by men, while their wives brought in grass for the roof and dry ferns for the

walls.[30] Chief Mbogori allowed his non-Christian wives and daughters to go to assist in carrying the thatch.[31] Houses for the teachers, evangelist and hospital boys were ready by 1923.

A church was constructed in 1923. It initially served as a church on Sundays and as a school during week days. It was a small cross-shaped mud and wattle building, with a grass roof.[32] While waiting for the completion of their houses, African evangelists resided in the motor-car house, which at the same time served as a prayer house for mission workers.[33]

By the end of 1923, the first school building at Chogoria was started. The first pupils to enroll in the school came from the two older stations of Chuka and Kanyue who expected to find something new and more fascinating than from their previous schools. M'Muga, one of the pupils at Kanyue, helped in the construction of this school to save himself the agony of walking five miles to and from Kanyue every school day.[34] The school was thatched with grass, while its walls were made of poles and dry ferns. The local community referred to it as *kanyomba ka ruthiru*[35] (house of ferns). It was here that the first mission boys were educated, and indigenous teachers and evangelists from Nithi were trained.

In 1924, the construction of a hospital began. This was made easier by the discovery by an African Christian of a clay bed in the river bank.[36] As a result of the

discovery, they did not need to go far to get building stones because the baked clay did an ideal job. In 1926, the hospital was opened complete with an operating theatre, dispensary, offices and two wards.[37]

To complete the structures at the mission, a saw-mill circular saw,[38] to chop wood and split timber, was installed. A kind settler donated a posho mill[38] for grinding maize and millet. It was hoped that the local community would start growing maize which they could sell to earn some money. The mission station started to expand and develop in all fields and was able to admit more pupils, workers and hospital trainees. To reach more people, the CSM opened more out-schools. There were 9 out-schools serving Nithi Dvision by 1929, an increase from 2 in 1922. The increase in number of schools did not correspond to the increase in the number of pupils. By 1929, there were 280 pupils at Chogoria and her 9 out-schools compared to 110 at Kanyue and Chuka in 1922.[40] In the same areas, the out-schools were hurriedly started before the people were converted to Christianity. In these areas, the people were not willing and ready to send their children to school.

3.3 CHOGORIA MISSION SCHOOL

The first mission boys at Chogoria mission school in 1923 were the former pupils of the older stations of Kanyue and Chuka. Some of them joined the school because they believed that Chogoria had something new to offer because it

was led by a European.[41] Chogoria mission school was offering a more advanced curriculum than Chuka and Kanyue. Chogoria had better facilities in terms of building structures, personnel and reading and teaching material. It was designed to serve as a central mission station to the other out-stations. The pioneer pupils in Chogoria were Samson Kinegene, Musa M'Ibere, Shadrack Kaugi, Suleiman Nancu, Petero Ruita, William M'Njau, Nathaniel M'Mundi, Ernest M'Irambu and Silas Karugi.[42] These were keen pupils who wanted to learn. Dr. Clive Irvine took away some of the pupils, such as Suleiman Nancu, to assist in the medical work while others, such as Ernest M'Irambu, assisted in the building of houses.

Some old pupils, who had deserted their school to look for employment on settler farms and as domestic servants in European houses in Nairobi, also joined the Chogoria Mission School. These included Musa M'Muga who had left Kanyue school and worked in Dagoretti,[43] Naaman Mugwika and Ezekiel Ngentu who both worked in Nairobi as domestic servants.[44]

Later in the year, young boys who had not been in school before also enrolled in the school. Justo Kanampiu, whom Dr. Irvine described as "a complete shenzi (raw native)" was among them.[45] Daudi M'Raria and Joseph Karayia also joined the school, after initially trying to avoid it.[46] Samuel Kanampiu and Jeremiah Chabari came to school during the last term of the year.[47] By the end of 1923, the number of pupils at Chogoria was fluctuating as some pupils

left and new ones came. Some pupils left school because of social pressure from relatives and peer groups. The society required these men to perform some duties, which could not be done while they remained at school. Those who remained at school did so by defying their social obligations. The local community referred to such people as *mbura matu* (hardcores). Young boys were expected to look after domestic animals and help their parents on the farms. They were also expected to undergo traditional education which prepared them for their future active role in the society. These could not be done while the young boys stayed at school.

The teaching of the first mission boys was done by African evangelists. Dr. Irvine, although busy organising the building of the hospital, gave the necessary supervision for evangelical, educational and medical work at Chogoria.[48] The actual evangelical and educational work was, however, under African staff. Daudi Makumi was the head teacher-evangelist.[49] He was joined later by Paulo Mugo, who had taught at Kanyue since 1922.[50] Makumi and Mugo started off the school and church work at Chogoria. Makumi combined his teaching role at Chogoria with that of coordinating the work of all the evangelist-teachers in Chuka and Kanyue.[51]

Education and Christianity continued to expand at Chogoria mission station faster than at Chuka and Kanyue. It was Dr. Irvine's design to have Chogoria mission grow

quickly. He made Chogoria a CSM central station for Chuka-Mwimbi area. As a central station it provided supervision for the village schools and also provided a standard or two more of education for pupils assembled from the out-schools. Dr. Irvine had a provision for boarders; pupils received instruction in both European language and vernacular. Chogoria offered instruction in agriculture and related elementary sciences as well as simple industry. Chogoria also offered methods and practice of teaching. This way, the station was expected to be a source of supply of teachers for the out-schools. He made use of the older experienced evangelists from the older stations, while posting new evangelists to those stations. Essau Mwangi,[52] a teacher-evangelist, was transferred from Kikuyu to Kanyue to replace Mugo, and Harrison Kariuki went to reopen the school at Chuka in 1923.[53] Apart from removing teachers from the older stations, pupils from schools in such stations, especially those who could read and write, were transferred from their schools to Chogoria.[54] Chogoria therefore, came to have the cream of the most senior and keenest pupils. Being senior pupils in a school and in possession of writing and reading skills, were some of the criteria for selecting boys who came to learn at Chogoria. The most important consideration was for the pupils to have shown serious interest in Christianity. In short, Chogoria was deliberately favoured by the missionaries.

3.4 INDIGENOUS TEACHER-EVANGELISTS

The increase in the number of teacher-evangelists was dictated by several developments within the Church. The first public baptism in Chogoria in September 1924 contributed to the eagerness of many people to go to school.[55] Twelve men[56] and two women[57] made public confession that they had become true Christians and were baptised by Dr. John Arthur. They were the first local people to be admitted into the CSM Chogoria church. Those who confessed took a difficult decision because this meant severing relations with their families and Meru culture. Nevertheless it was out of this first group that Dr. Irvine chose his first group of teacher-evangelist trainees. For instance, Daudi M'Raria who became a renowned teacher-evangelist, was Chogoria's number one member in the church register.[58] The baptised Christians were: Musa M'Muga, Gideon Thura, Philipo Thura, Johana M'Ntiba, Jeremiah Chabari, Zakayo Kirika, Ayub Mugo,(from Chuka), M'Kanyua, Joshua M'Ikambi, Erastus Muuru (Chuka), and the two women were Marion Musa and Mariamu Zakayo.[59] This group became committed Christians, evangelists, evangelist-teachers, teacher-evangelists and artisan-evangelists. However, most of them, except M'Muga, his wife, M'Raria, Mukangu and Mugo left the CSM during the 1929 circumcision crisis.[60]

The first Nithi people to be trained as teacher-evangelists were chosen from among the first mission boys. Some of the senior pupils who could read and write began to

assist the teachers in the teaching of the new pupils. These were pupil-teachers who were later trained as teacher-evangelists. For instance, Musa M'Muga taught sub A and sub B classes at Chogoria school in 1923.[81] Sub A and Sub B were the beginners' classes, equivalent to present day pre-primary classes. The local community referred to Sub A and Sub B as *kandurumo*, a term which was used to denote the noise emanating from a beginners classroom, equivalent of waterfall sound. In 1924, Justo Kanampiu taught Sub A and Sub B while he was in Standard Two.[82] The use of pupil-teachers was adopted during these early years because there was an acute shortage of qualified teaching staff.

By 1924, Chogoria mission station had begun to train its own teachers as well as training local pupils for other professions, such as medical dressing, masons, agriculture and carpentry.[83] Makumi was in charge of the teaching of the few who were chosen from among pupil-teachers by Irvine to be trained as teachers. The curriculum included both Christian and secular education with more emphasis on the former. This policy arose from the missionary perception which saw a school as a means of evangelisation. After training, teachers were expected to go to serve the church as teachers. To the European missionaries, the Christian witness of a teacher was a prime factor in deciding whether the pupils were to find it easy or otherwise to decide for Christ.[84] Teachers were therefore, expected to be active Christians. Indeed, the indigenous teachers and evangelists

were required to assist in raising the social standards of the local people.[85] Towards this end, they were taught the rudiments of hygiene and ethics. For example, lessons included the various ways of maintaining high standards of cleanliness in both food and habitation, as well as good manners like knocking on doors, and politeness like saying "thank you, sir" and "sorry". Since they were to be agents of the CSM, they were expected to know and live by the native church laws.[86] A teacher was, therefore, trained to be the representative and agent of the church in the village.

Those who qualified to be trained as teacher-evangelists had also to learn to obey and live in accordance with the Native Church laws. Teachers, according to the CSM, were church evangelists and hence they were governed by the Native Church laws. For instance, a teacher-evangelist trainee was expected to attend both the hearers and catechumenate class for a period of eight and sixteen months, respectively.[87] The official mission view was that a teacher must primarily be a Christian and only secondly a classroom teacher. It was not possible to separate the two roles of the teacher. It is not surprising, therefore, that after 1929, baptism became a prerequisite for both teaching and evangelical positions within the CSM.[88] To be a teacher-evangelist one had to discard some aspects of Meru culture which were considered anti-Christian and take up the western culture.[89]

The trainee teachers were also expected to learn various trades. They were expected to know masonry, carpentry, and agriculture mother craft and health care.[70] These skills were important because when a teacher was sent out to open an out-station, he was not only required to teach and spread the Gospel, but also help in the construction of the church, school and a teacher's house. He was also expected to use his agricultural knowledge to teach his pupils. The pupils were consequently introduced to new types of crops and farming methods. A teacher was, therefore, a propagator of the new religion and a new education system as well as of a new technology, at least for the period up to late 1930s due to scarcity of personnel.

Due to lack of teaching staff, mission workers, such as carpenters and masons, were occasionally required to teach the pupils and trainee teachers under the guidance of a trained teacher.[71] For instance, Ayub Nguiai, Ayub Mugo and Ernest M'Irambu, who were artisan-evangelists, assisted in giving masonry and carpentry lessons at Chogoria school. In effect, this meant that in the early 1920s anybody who was a Christian and had any form of knowledge and skill, which could be shared with those eager to acquire it, was called upon to play the role of a teacher. The combined advantage of this system is that the effort of the artisan-evangelists and trained teachers in the training of teachers

helped to produce an all-round teacher, who was able to handle nearly all the subjects in the curriculum.

In 1926, the most promising teacher-trainees did their first practical teachers training at Chogoria. These were the brighter ambitious pupils in Chogoria school who, from the missionaries' point of view, were also up and coming and promising Christians. For their practical exercise, they taught the lower classes (Sub A and Sub B) as monitors. After their training and practical experience, they were sent out to open new out-schools around the central station at Chogoria. The procedure was that they taught in the out-schools in the morning and attended their own classes at Chogoria in the afternoon. Since most of them were at *mambere* (those who came first) which was a local nickname for Chogoria boarding school, they received extra tuition in the evenings. They were also taught English by Irvine whenever he was not busy in the hospital.

The brightest of the Chogoria trainee teachers had the prospect of going for advanced training at Thogoto or Tumutumu. Five of them were sent to Kikuyu (Thogoto) for teacher training at the time.[72] These were Daudi M'Raria, Gerison Mukangu, Philipo M'Thura, Musa M'Muga and Jonathan Kiambati.[73] The less gifted trainee-teachers such as Justo Kanampiu and Samuel Kanampiu continued with their training at Chogoria as evangelist-teachers.[74]

In 1926, the CSM ordained its first six Kikuyu priests at Thogoto, namely, Musa Gitau, Benjamin Githieya, Joshua

Matenjwa, Jeremiah Waita and Solomon Ndambi. These priests took charge of most of the church duties hitherto performed by the teacher-evangelists in CSM spheres. For instance, Reverend Jeremiah Waita went to work in Chuka-Mwimbi area in 1926.[75] This meant that even if some African teachers gave all their time to secular education, evangelical work would not suffer much. The priest worked closely with the evangelist-teachers, while the teacher-evangelists spent more time teaching in schools. In 1928, Rev. Waita was replaced by another African priest, Reverend Solomon Ndambi. The two priests brought their wives with them. They were, by women's educational standards of the time, the most educated. They embarked on informal classes for women at Chogoria mission as well as taking light to the surrounding villages through periodic visits.

African priests not only relieved the African teacher-evangelists of church duties, but also became a source of encouragement to those willing to learn.[78] They made careful selection of those that they deemed fit to be teachers, always with the aim of getting future priests from the best of them. It became routine for the CSM to pick some of the brightest and most religious teachers to be trained as priests.[77]

The posting to Chogoria of a well trained female missionary and dedicated teacher, Marion Stevenson, in 1927 also facilitated the training of more indigenous teacher-evangelist. Marion taught at Tumutumu for several years

during which time she taught a number of people from around Chogoria. She had also trained teachers, some of whom went to teach in Chuka-Mwimbi area. To many of the local people who had contact with some of Marion's former pupils and teachers from Tumutumu, Stevenson was a wonderful teacher who loved Africans. She encouraged those in school, particularly women, to continue learning. She became an inspiration to many women around Chogoria.[78] Her influence among women was felt when more women joined the school. It was indeed amazing to see a woman teaching in a school, a job that was exclusively for men. Marion's influence ushered in a new phenomenon in women's education in Nithi Division.

These developments within the CSM in Nithi Division increased the number of pupils in the Chogoria mission school and its out-schools from 160 in 1925 to 260 in 1926.[78] Those pupils who went to Chogoria mission school received what was, by the standards of the day, advanced education in terms of quality and level. It was in Chogoria that the missionary had direct involvement in African education through teaching and supervision. The mission was also lucky to have other European missionaries who could handle unfamiliar and difficult subjects for African teachers, like the English language. For instance, Miss Harrel taught English at Chogoria at a time when the subject was not offered in the out-schools because there was no African teacher competent to do so.[80] At Chogoria,

English language was taught only to the favourite pupils and the very keen pupil-teachers whom the missionary hoped to use as evangelists to propagate Christianity.[81]

Those pupils that were earmarked for the teaching profession were the brilliant and keen pupils as well as dedicated Christians. As indicated earlier this was done because the missionaries were interested in individuals who could, in the process of teaching in the class, win more church converts. It is for this reason that the first indigenous teacher-evangelists were expected to be Christians in the first instance. Those who ran short of this requirement were disqualified and offered alternative professions in the mission station, such as being trained as hospital dressers, carpenters and masons.

3.5 TEACHER-EVANGELISTS AND THE EXPANSION OF SCHOOLS

African evangelists and teachers were instrumental in the expansion of education in the division. Several out-schools were opened, with some of the older out-schools graduating into central village schools, to absorb most of those who wanted to join schools. Out-schools were also referred to as "bush-schools", which were started in the villages. They offered Sub A and Sub B classes, and sometimes standard one and two. Central village schools offered a standard or two more education for pupils assembled from the out-schools. They were usually the first few schools to be started and were also lucky to have more

and better facilities than the newly started out-schools. Chogoria, Kanyue and Chuka schools could not meet the African demand for education.[82] The Nithi people started to appeal to the European missionaries at Chogoria to send men to start the teaching and spreading of the Gospel in surrounding areas.[83] It is also evident that the CSM felt threatened by the Roman Catholic Church in Nithi Division operating from their station at Igoji since 1910.[84] To stop the spread of the Roman Catholics into the CSM sphere of influence, Dr. Irvine sent teachers and evangelists to open out-schools in several places, sometimes not even considering the availability of both funds and personnel. It was not uncommon to find one teacher manning two out-schools.

The out-schools were opened and run by African teacher-evangelists who were not always adequately trained. They did their best to look after the start of the schools and churches in their villages. However, they needed supervision to discharge the duties that were entrusted to them adequately.[85] Since there was a lack of teaching personnel in the out-schools, the CSM used senior pupils from the older schools to teach the lower classes a little of what they had learnt. The arrangement was that the senior pupils in the older schools went to help in the teaching in the newly established schools after their morning classes. As pupil-teachers, these senior pupils acquired teaching skills. Those who impressed the

missionary as good teachers were recommended for teacher training. They became "blind leaders of the blind".[86] In some cases, the unpreparedness of some teacher-evangelists and the senior pupils was compensated for by their age. Some of them were old men who commanded respect in the society, especially in Meru where old age was associated with wisdom. For example, a married man among the Chuka and Mwimbi was considered a responsible man worth of every respect. His advice was always taken seriously.

Prior to the opening of any out-school, the missionary and the teacher-evangelists on the spot went to visit and talk to the local chiefs. It was important to meet the chiefs because they would be used in mobilising the labour needed. It was also only after winning the chief's consent that any advance towards education and Christian work could begin. Since the missionary at Chogoria was tied down by his medical work at the mission station, get-to-know people visits were done by the teacher-evangelists and evangelists. Before the construction of a church and a school, there was initial preaching of the Gospel with the aim of winning souls before embarking on education. Only in areas where the Gospel was positively received were a school and church built.

In 1923, Dr. Irvine, accompanied by Mwalimu Harrison Kariuki, the evangelist-teacher at Chuka school, went to see Chief M'Rugendo of Nkuthika, in Chuka with the intention of establishing a church and a school in the area.[87]

Kariuki was posted to Chuka from Thogoto station. He had previously been visiting Chuka on evangelical visits. M'Rugendo promised to donate land for the building of the church-cum-school and also to take his children to learn at the school.[88] Unfortunately, this did not materialise because the elders of the area refused to give away any plot of land for the proposed church and school. The local people did not wish to have anything to do with the *Muthungu* (European). Probably scared of the European and afraid of being forced to build the school by the Chief, the people disappeared into the bush on seeing Dr. Irvine.[88] Consequently, the hope of starting a school in lower Chuka was shattered.

By the end of 1924, the earliest school at Chuka station was closed down due to lack of pupils. The few who attended were from Muthambi.[80] From the beginning the Chuka did not welcome the idea of a school, and the parents were not keen to let their children go there. Pupils at Chuka school in 1924 - such as Joel M'Ikingi, Daniel Kagondu and Petero Njeru - did not remain there for long. Their services were needed by their parents at home. M'Ikingi was forced to go home and look after his parent's goats.[81] Threats and beatings by their parents became a stumbling block to their education. They were also scorned by their agemates that they had gone to eat chicken at the school.[82] With no due consideration for the hardship the pupils had to put up with, Dr. Irvine moved Harrison Kariuki, the teacher

at Chuka to open a school in Muthambi where he hoped he would get more committed pupils.[83] This was perhaps due to Dr Irvine's general attitude towards the Chuka, whom he regarded as "lagging behind the Mwimbi in general intelligence".[84]

However, in 1925, CSM's work was threatened by the presence of the Roman Catholics from Embu in the south and Igoji in the north. The Roman Catholics had started to entrench into the CSM spheres in Nithi. Dr. Irvine was aware all along that the Catholics were advancing into his sphere of influence from the two directions by opening prayer houses at Muthambi and Kithituni near Chuka station. To keep the Catholics at bay, an out-school was opened at Ndiruni (Chief Magiti's)[85] after heeding Dr. John Arthur's advice that he could "place a boy, however inferior, in Chuka to check the Roman Catholics".[86] The idea was that the school could operate at any time, in the morning or the afternoon, just so long as it got started. Willie Kanini, an already experienced teacher, was posted to start the school which began with twenty-five pupils, seven of whom were already able to read.[87] Those seven were former pupils at Chuka namely, Joel M'Ikingi, Haruni Ndegwa, Nyaga Gakuri, Daniel Kagondu, Abednego Muchiri, and Mwiricia Gitantu. M'Ikingi and Muchiri played the role of pupil-teachers in the new school. They taught in the beginners' classes, that is, Sub A and Sub B.

Ndiruni school did not last for long, for by 1926 it was also closed down and moved to Kiereni.[98] This was because the local people were not taking their children to school. The majority of the pupils came from Kirege and the neighbourhood of Chuka station. It was for this reason that Dr. Irvine decided to start a school at Kiereni, a more convenient place for these pupils so that they could continue with their learning.[98]

Willie Kanini moved to a new out-station to begin another out-school. The site for the school was Kiereni, on a piece of land donated by M'Muga Kabaru, who became one of the founder pupils of the school.[100] The transfer of the school from Ndiruni to Kiereni was prompted by the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries who had settled at Kithituni near Kiereni. It was this Roman Catholic threat that led to the unsettled state of education in Chuka. When the CSM school at Kiereni was built in 1927 and proper teaching started the following year, the Roman Catholics felt threatened by CSM and moved to the lower Chuka at Cheera. Kiereni school was built by the pupils themselves, assisted by their teacher, Kanini. They were also supervised by African masons and carpenters from the Chogoria mission.[101] Kiereni remained the only school in Chuka after the closure of Ndiruni and Chuka station schools. In early 1929, Joseph Gathoga replaced Willie Kanini, who had been moved to Chogoria. Joseph Gathoga, a Kikuyu, had been

trained at Tumutumu as a teacher-evangelist and later became an ordained PCEA priest.

The next out-school to be built in Chuka was Kambandi in 1928.[102] The school was built by twelve pupils, some of whom had previously attended Chuka Boma and Ndiruni schools.[103] There was no resident teacher at the new school. Willie Kanini began by teaching in the school as an afternoon job. Some pupil-teachers were in charge of the school in the morning, teaching the new pupils elementary reading and writing. Later in the year, Haruni Ndegwa and Abednego Muchiri, who had received their teacher training at Chogoria, came to teach there.[104] Dr. Irvine was happy to have these two local teacher-evangelists, because "they made a break through in the dark Chuka."[105] Muchiri and Ndegwa were the first Chuka persons to become teacher-evangelists.

Muchiri was a married man by the time he became a teacher-evangelist which earned him a lot of respect from the local community. He became a Christian model whom people could copy. He went round in the villages talking to people and pleading with them to take their children to school. Some did, others did not. The arrangements for teaching were that, while Kanini taught at Kambandi in the afternoon, Petero Njeru, a senior pupil, was left in charge of Kiereni, and played the role of pupil-teacher for the lower classes.[106] Generally, the pupils at Kambandi and Kiereni consisted of both old and young men. For instance, when Ezra M'Njau went to Kiereni school in 1928, he was

already a married man and much older than Abednego Muchiri. Since the old men were eager to learn, they did not mind being taught by the younger men.

3.6 ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOLS IN MUTHAMBI AND MWIMBI

The area between rivers Tungu in the south and Mara in the north has two Locations - Muthambi and Mwimbi. It is inhabited by Muthambi and Mwimbi people. The mission station at Chogoria was located in Upper Mwimbi. The Mwimbi people, unlike the Muthambi, had close and direct contact with the missionaries who lived and worked at Chogoria. The African teachers and evangelists opened new out-schools and the old ones developed into village central schools. By 1923, two out-schools had been started in lower Mwimbi by two African teacher-evangelists sent from Kikuyu - Justin Macharia and Justus Kuria.[107] These were Magutuni and Igakiramba, but they later lost most of their pupils because some disappeared to Nairobi to look for employment, while others fearing persecution in the village, especially the beatings and threats from parents and agemates, gave up schooling.[108] One of the schools was left with sixteen small boys being taught in a tiny thatched hut.[109] Before the arrival of Catholics, the two schools remained the only evidence of CSM effort in lower Mwimbi, a well populated area with plenty of water and food.[110] School attendance in the two out-schools was poor, as people did not wish to be

associated with Europeans, or Christianity and western education. The CSM impact was mininmal.

In 1924, a school was erected at Muthambi which later became Kajiunduthi school. It was started by Jonathan Maara, a evangelist-teacher from Limuru.[111] He was assisted by Ian Mugo, a evangelist-teacher from Kikuyu.[112] Ayub Nguiai, a carpenter at Chogoria mission, assisted in building the school and also taught in it. Maara had to fight a hard battle against disappointment and discouragement, for at first nobody came to his school. By the end of the year, he had managed to bring ten young men to school.[113] In 1925, Maara left for a teacher training course at Kikuyu and was replaced by Jonathan Kiambati, a Mwimbi teacher-evangelist who had just completed his training at Tumutumu.[114]

In 1926 the Local Native Council (LNC) of Embu passed a resolution that the two schools in lower Mwimbi should be reinstituted and amalgamated into one after moving to a new site.[115] The amalgamation of the two schools was the most practical thing to do to solve the problem of lack of pupils. It was uneconomical to retain the two schools as teachers were also not enough. The new site (Muunga) was under a local teacher-evangelist, Jonathan Kiambati, who had been trained at Tumutumu.[116] He combined his teaching role with dispensary work. Kiambati was able to attract regular pupils into his school.[117] The pupils respected him because he was already a married man and also had the advantage of being a local man who possessed modern knowledge as he could

read, write and used European medicine on people.[118] He was able to attract many local people to the school, especially those who came for treatment at the adjoining dispensary. Most of those who became keen pupils were initially his patients.[118] Hospital assistants played the role of teachers during the early years of evangelisation because of the scarcity of teachers. They became important supporting staff of the missionaries in spreading Christianity and western ideas.

Ngeru was another out-school which was started in Mwimbi in 1925. It was hurriedly started without any teacher being available. Mukobwa Rwito, a senior pupil at Kanyue, was employed as a pupil-teacher to teach, while waiting for a qualified teacher.[120] A dispensary was also started which was manned by Nahason Mwangi, a hospital assistant from Kikuyu.[121] As a hospital evangelist, Mwangi also took up teaching at Ngeru school, being the most educated person at Ngeru out-station. He taught what the local people called *kithomo kia mwiri* (hygiene and elementary biology).[122] Mwangi's dispensary acted as a magnet which attracted more people to the newly established out-station. The hospital-evangelists exploited this opportunity to woo people to school.

In 1926, an out-school was established at Kiamucumbi in Muthambi location. It was later named Tungu school. It was started by a local teacher-evangelist, Gerrison Mukangu.[123] He had completed his teacher training at Chogoria in early

1926 and later left for advanced training at Thogoto in 1928. He was replaced by Justo Kanampiu assisted by a pupil-teacher called Shadrack Kaugi.[124] Kiamucumbi was about sixteen miles from Chogoria mission.[125]

The increase in the number of pupils, teachers and out-schools is attributed to the hard work of the African teachers and evangelists. The number of pupils in CSM schools in Nithi Division increased from 110 in 1922 to 280 in 1929. They sometimes did their work without supervision for months, especially in the out-schools situated far from Chogoria mission. Some of them had little training but they made it up with their enthusiasm, willingness and devotion to duty which soon won them the confidence of their people.[126] The African local teachers and evangelists also encouraged the local people to go to school, sometimes by paying school fees for the bright but poor children.

3.7 THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Education for the Nithi women lagged behind that of their male counterparts. Few women volunteered to go to school before 1923. In 1919, there were fifteen girls as against sixty boys at Kanyue. The number rose to twenty girls against fifty-eight boys in the same school. However, the missionaries realised that in order to have a Christian community, there was a great need to have educated women. To begin with, girls should be given education which would correspond with village life, by learning simple hygienic

principles. The missionaries believed that such women would eventually make capable and sensible wives and mothers in a new Christian setting. It was also important to create a group of educated women who would facilitate the creation of a desired Christian community. In other words, education for women was aimed at exposing the girls to the same kind of education as that of boys, "so that they could be intelligent helpmates of men *athomi* as well as live truly Christian lives on the highest possible plane".[127]

At Chogoria, the wives of the Christian staff, with appropriate encouragement, became enthusiastic members of a small adult knitting class which was started in 1923 by Hannah Mugo.[128] The first women pupils in the school were wives of some of the men *athomi*.[128] As more men joined Chogoria school, the number of women pupils increased proportionately. Some of the women who came to school brought their babies with them and attended school three times a week. Mrs. Joyce Irvine, who had joined in teaching the knitting class, complained that the noise made by the babies of the local African women students was not conducive to classroom activities.[130] Mrs. Irvine confessed that it was only a native teacher who could withstand the noise from both the babies and the goat skins worn by women students.[131]

Other than knitting, the women's class was also taught catechism, reading, hymn singing, sewing and improved methods of cookery and laundry.[132] They were thus being

prepared to play a dual role - spread the Gospel and modern mother-wifery. Although they did not go through any teacher training, the first women pupils became informal teachers as well as evangelists. They contributed a lot to the development and spread of education in the villages. They were the most educated among the women at that time. The local community referred to these women as *athomi*.[133] As a result of this, they took light to the villages, particularly among women.

The number of women pupils at Chogoria continued to increase steadily. By 1927, the number of regular women pupils rose from five to seventeen, with only one unmarried girl.[134] In 1927, Miss Marion Stevenson revolutionalised women's education when she started a separate class called the grannies class, specifically for elderly women, who were conservative and did their best to keep the young girls away from school.[135] It was only after separating the old women from the young girls that more girls started to come to school.[136] This arrangement was in harmony with the Meru traditional education method where the old people could not receive the same instructions at the same venue with the young. The CSM had realised that the future of women's work in the church and school depended more on young girls than on old women. After training, these young girls would become wives of the young Christian men and teachers, after which they would provide a Christian model.

Young girls were grouped together with the young boys in the same classes. Among the first young girls to go to school was Julia Mukwamugo. She was a close relative of the Senior Chief Mbogori's family. She was influenced by the chief's daughters who had had earlier contact with the first African evangelists in Mwimbi in 1916. Mukwamugo's parents, like most people, did not approve of her going to school, but she was determined to learn and be like Priscilla Makumi. She recalled,

> "I followed Mbogori's children to school. My parents beat me on several occasions after I went to stay with Mbogori's daughters while attending school at Chogoria". [137]

Later in 1929, she was joined by six young girls from around Chogoria. They were brought to Chogoria school by Josiah Kangethe, a teacher-evangelist. The girls had applied through him and particularly sought his protection from the beatings they had from their parents when they expressed their desire to go to school to learn. A Christian woman, Marion Musa, volunteered to take care of them while they remained at school. This was, in a way, the beginning of a boarding school for girls at Chogoria.[138]

Women's education continued to lag behind that of their male counterparts. However, there were a few women who went to school. For example, in 1928, there were six women at Kiereni school in Chuka.[139] The women pupils were the wives of some of the men pupils at the school. There was no unmarried woman at the school by this time.[140] They were

taught house-wifery, such as laundry, cookery, sewing, child-welfare and home-nursing by Hannah Kanini, the wife of Willie Kanini and later by Rael Gathoga, wife of Mwalimu Joseph Gathoga, at Kiereni (1928-1930).[141] Hannah and Raeli were not trained teachers, but were the most educated women in the area. They taught the women at the school rudiments of hygiene and house-wifery. During school holidays, they went to Chogoria to receive new instruction from Mrs Irvine. They then shared whatever they learnt with the women pupils at Kiereni.

At Kajiunduthi women's education was more advanced than at Chuka. A small group of married women and girls gathered at the school to learn. Married women came to school because their Christian husbands allowed them to do so, but this was not the case with girls. The girls, although willing to go to school, were refused permission to do so by their parents because it was believed that any girl going to school would never be married.[142] A brother of one of the girls built a house in his garden which served as a girls' house, where they could stay while attending school. This saved them from being molested and from what was considered to be the pagan life of the village.[143] A Christian woman, Esther Mwiandi, volunteered and stayed with them.[144]

However, the few women who managed to see the light had a lot of influence in their villages. They married evangelists, teachers and medical men. They encouraged other women, hitherto unconcerned, to go to school and

church.[145] The women who were connected with the church or school were referred to as *athomi* or *aka ma arimu* (readers, or teachers' wives). Those who had not been to school were referred to by the Christians adherents as *aka ma bururi* (women of the world). There was a marked distinction between *athomi* and *non-athomi* women. Irvine noted the difference and had this to say:

> Those who have joined Christianity have a great difference; they are cleaner, use a comfortable house with big doors and windows, while the heathen wife next door wears goat's skins till they drop off her, and when her hands are clean is when they are washed in the millet she grinds for gruel.[146]

It was from among the families of *athomi* that girls started going to school freely and were encouraged to do so. The low enrolment of women in schools could be attributed to the traditional role of a woman at home. As a mother, she had children to look after, as well as *shamba* work to do. She literally had her hands occupied, especially when she had to brew beer for the husband and cut grass for thatching the huts among other duties.[147] Equally, western education did not have a meaning and purpose for the women.[148] Women's education seemed purposeless to the local community because there were no other job opportunities for them except teaching. The local people kept asking, "Have you ever heard or seen a woman clerk or chief?".[149] This attitude among the majority of people created the impression that it was a waste of time to educate women. Besides, they also said that any educated woman would become a harlot or

be stolen away by the Europeans.[150] No parent was willing to let his daughters get lost that way. Girls were also regarded as a source of wealth, hence the need to keep them at home, educating them on the traditional virtues of a good wife.

There seemed to be no problem with some Christian husbands allowing their wives to attend classes because they stood to lose nothing by their learning something new. Besides, the missionary, who in all ways was their master, encouraged such arrangements. It was not an agreed rule that all Christian husbands should take their wives to school. There were some cases where the husbands did not allow their wives to go to school because they feared that the wives would become big-headed and stop being a submissive wife as required by the custom. Although Christians, men still remained traditional Meru men, who could not allow women to sit with them in the same class receiving similar instructions. Allowing women to share a common discussion with men was viewed as total disrespect to the Meru social norm. Christianity did not make man a less a Meru.

3.8 EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

Education in the Chogoria mission school and the out-schools was uniform except for minor variations. The CSM educational curricula for all its schools were stipulated in

Article No.6 of the Church's fundamental principles. The article states:

> This Church, in the discharge of its mission in the world cannot confine itself solely to the preaching of the word and the administration of purely religious ordinances. Believing that it is entrusted with a ministry not only to the souls of men, but also to their bodies and minds, and following the example of its Master (Christ), who went about doing good, it claims the right, as it shall see it fit, to undertake educational, medical or charitable work for the benefit of all who desire its help; and declares its willingness to cooperate with the governmental and other agencies in promoting the mental, physical and moral welfare of the whole community.[151]

Thus, mental, physical and moral well-being were taken care of in the 3Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), P.E and vocational training and religious instruction provided in the schools.

Vocational and literacy education went hand in hand.[152] In Chogoria half of the day was devoted to learning all sorts of trades such as masonry, carpentry and crafts for boys, sewing, general hygiene, cookery, child-care, home-nursing and laundry for women. Agriculture was taught to both male and female pupils. The other half of the day was spent in school learning the 3Rs. The few who were to be groomed for teaching as a profession devoted more time to learning the 3Rs.

In the out-schools, as well as at Chogoria, the pupils learnt the 3Rs. In the reading, the book which was commonly used was Tuthomo Twa Ugikuyu and the Bible.[154] The language of instruction was Kikuyu, and a little Swahili which was

only taught at Chogoria.[155] The out-schools used Kikuyu. English language was taught at Chogoria by the European missionaries because there was no African proficient enough to handle the language. Mrs. Irvine taught the language, or Dr. Irvine (*Gitari* which was a Meru word for doctor) when he was not too busy at the hospital. When the Irvines went on furlough English was never taught, until a European teacher was sought.[156]

Agriculture as a subject was emphasised in all schools. Irvine believed that the future of an African lay in agriculture.[157] One and a half acres of land at Chogoria was set aside for this purpose.[158] The Embu LNC also saw agriculture as a subject which could not be ignored. It was agreed at the Embu LNC meeting of 12th December 1926, that practical agriculture should be taught for one hour every day where land was available.[158] Most of the African teachers and evangelists, who manned the out-schools had some basic training in agriculture. They were in turn required to pass on their knowledge to their pupils. In most out-schools, there was a school garden for agricultural practice.[160]

The curriculum could not be complete in a CSM school without the inclusion of Christian education. In Christian education, pupils were taught Church history, catechism and the Bible. The purpose of Christian education was to make Christian citizens. Schools were centres of evangelisation and hence the importance of the teacher-evangelist.[161]

Wherever a teacher was, there was the Church and it was not easy to divorce one from the other.[182] In Christian education, character development, through moral and Christian instruction and practice, was taught.[183] It was believed that the only way to have a sound character was to follow the Bible teachings to the letter, although a lot of western culture which did not necessarily have anything to do with the Bible, was intertwined.[184] For example, most people did not see what was Biblical in monogamous marriage when the Bible had stories of polygamous marriages.

3.9 METHODS USED TO ATTRACT PUPILS INTO SCHOOLS

It was not an easy task to get the Chuka and Mwimbi people to accept Christianity and education. It required a lot of tactics, devotion and patience on the part of teachers and evangelists to win the people. Several methods were used, with some proving to be more effective than others.

The evangelists started by preaching the Gospel to the people.[188] It was not possible to start a school where initial preaching had not been previously carried out. Once the people were convinced that there was something new, worthwhile and exciting that the teachers and evangelists had to offer, there was a great probability of them accepting both Christianity and education. For instance, in 1924 at Kajiunduthi, Jonathan Maara, a teacher-evangelist from Limuru, and some Christians such as Stephen Mwiandi,

Ian Mugo, Karaya and Esther Mwiandi moved around near-by villages, preaching and talking to the people in Muthambi. They managed to draw a few to the church at Kajiunduthi and it was from this first group that they obtained the pioneering pupils at Kajiunduthi school. The key preaching words were put into songs such as this-:

> Itikia Ngai utigane na thina, niarikwonagia maundu mega----(Trust in God, who will shield you from any dangers and will show you good things--)[187]

They did not mind where and in what state they found the person they had to preach to. For instance, one of the first girls at Kajiunduthi, Rahab Munyua, was found preparing traditional beer for her father. She did not heed to the preaching, but after persistent preaching and visits by these Christians, she left to go to school without her father's approval.[188] There were many similar cases in all the stations. It proved an effective method of getting people to the school.

The teacher-evangelists tried to attract people by their songs and the musical instruments that they used. Africans by nature love dance and music.[189] For instance, Willie Kanini, a teacher at Kiereni, attracted people to the school by using music. He used an accordion, which he played to the joy of those who listened to him.[170] Hymns were sang at the school, as well as the church by the Christians, and out of curiosity both old and young joined

school. Some became keen scholars out of this experience.[171]

Football and bicycles owned by some teacher-evangelists were used towards the same end. Kanini was seen riding his bicycle, and he rewarded some of his good pupils by teaching them how to ride. Once some pupils had this experience, they were convinced that the teacher had something new to impart to them.[172] The ball had a similar effect on the minds of the pupils. Kanini was also reported to have owned some medicine, which he used to poison wild animals and pests such as wild pigs and hyenas. The teacher was therefore seen as a protector of the people's interests and property.[173]

Some teacher-evangelists were able to combine the role of teaching and medical work. Many local people went to school with the aim of getting drugs to cure various ailments.[174] Those who were trained at Tumutumu had the basics of medical knowledge and skill. These are the people who became pioneer evangelists in remote villages.

The indigenous pioneer teacher-evangelists were able to integrate the old and new with a view to winning people. For instance, while they were being groomed as Christians, they still held to some of the old cultural practices, which were not condemned by the white missionary. For example, they did not outrightly discourage people from piercing their ears, or participating in dances. They went to watch them dance, but later asked people to come and listen to

their hymns at the church.[175] At Kajiunduthi, the Christians used a *choro* (horn) for a bell. To create a distinction between the Christians and non-Christians, the CSM forbid the use of traditional tools in the church and school. When Dr. Irvine visited the school, he was shocked to find the Christian using a horn, which the CSM considered a "heathen" tool. Dr. Irvine brought a metal bell to them in 1927. In such an atmosphere, the local people did not feel like strangers in church and school.[176]

The personality of the teachers and evangelists was in itself an effective weapon for attracting people to school. Teachers and evangelists were in a class of their own, quite different from the rest of the population. They were envied, admired , copied and obeyed. They had the most decent habitation, and were the best dressed persons in the village. They were smart in their khaki uniforms and caps.[177] They rode on bicycles, ate the best foods such as tea, fried maize and beans, hitherto unknown by the majority of the local people. The wives of the teachers were equally smartly dressed and behaved differently. It was for this reason, that everybody, especially girls, wanted to be teachers.[178] The teacher earned a salary, making him economically more powerful than most other people in the village. He was also closest to the missionary, the white man, commonly called *Bwana*; and since the missionary was as powerful as the District Commissioner in the African eye, the teacher was also politically powerful. Many aspired to

become teachers, and this could only be achieved by attending school and becoming a member of the church.

However, teachers and pupils in the mission schools were not always liked by the local community, particularly by the non-Christians. For instance, in 1921, a pupil at Kanyue lost his twins after the death of his wife because "nobody could sell him milk to feed the twins because he did not own a cow".[178] Another teacher, Musa M'Muga was almost killed with a poisoned arrow by a person hiding in a thick bush. Luckily or by God's grace, the arrow hit the carpenter's rule at his waist belt, splitting the hard wood but he was not hurt.[180] The negative attitude the early Christian teachers and pupils got from the local people came about because they were regarded as having sold out the Meru people to the Europeans.

The attitude towards teacher-evangelists changed in the late 1920s. This was because the people realised that the Christians, teachers and evangelists included, were not sellouts but were out to uplift the general living standards of the people. For instance, the early Christians had learnt new farming technology, among other things, and had been introduced to new crops which earned them money. Some of the fruits produced found a ready market at Chuka town. In short, the people's change of attitude came about after they realised the material benefits that went with the acceptance of Christianity. The result was that more people started going to school.

3.10 RESPONSE TO FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

The reaction of the local people to missionary activities in Nithi Division became obvious during and after the female circumcision controversy. The female circumcision issue had been dealt with at various venues since 1906, but there had never been so loud an outcry as was the case in 1929. The centre of the controversy was in Kikuyuland, but it also affected the Chogoria mission and all its out-schools. This was largely because Chogoria which was administered from Tumutumu mission station was under the Presbytery of British East Africa (Kenya) which was established in 1920.[181] All the Church laws and decisions passed at either Kikuyu or Tumutumu affected the CSM affairs in Nithi Division.

Systematic teaching against female circumcision began in 1906 when Dr. John Arthur assumed control of the Kikuyu hospital where he had a personal experience on the effects of what the missionary termed as "female mutilation".[182] At first Arthur complained about the manner in which the female circumcision was done from a medical point of view. The operation was considered as dangerous for women at childbirth. Later, the whole issue was treated as though it was a sin. It was termed as an evil which, therefore, had to be abolished. Arthur, with the full support of the Protestant missionaries, which included the African Inland Mission (AIM), the Church Mission Society (CMS), Gospel Mission Society (GMS) and Church of Scotland Mission (CSM)

and some African Church adherents, particularly the teacher and evangelist, embarked on a ceaseless campaign against the custom. This was done in schools, churches and hospitals. The CSM began by discouraging its members from participating in female circumcision. Prohibition was later included in the CSM Native Laws which had to be followed by all Church adherents.

Missionaries did not embark on the immediate abolition of the custom, but instead decided that gradual preaching and education against it would end it. In 1914, for example, the CSM Kikuyu Church decided that girls in *Mambere* (dormitory) whose parents were still pagans, could undergo the operation, with Christian women "supporters" but without the accompanying "heathen" dances. They also agreed that a Kikuyu circumciser could be used for that purpose.[183] Two years later, at a meeting between Tumutumu and Kikuyu African staff, it was recommended by a majority that there should be no female circumcision within the CSM church.[184]

By 1918, the missionaries had decided not to confine their campaign within church limits. They now wanted the custom to be abolished throughout the Protectorate. The Protestant missionaries met in September, 1918 and agreed that the custom of circumcising girls among certain tribes of the protectorate was purposeless, while in some districts it was highly dangerous and barbarous and that the custom ought to be abolished.[185] Africans thought differently. They saw the custom as an important traditional rite and

certainly not dangerous as it was alleged by the missionaries.

Some African Christians, among them teachers and evangelists, who were ordained as the first African Church elders on 26th September, 1920 at Tumutumu, superficially joined the war against female circumcision. The African Church elders were Solom Ndambi, Gideon Gatere, Jonathan Ng'ang'a, Joshua Riunga, Musa Matu, Daudi Makumi (a teacher-evangelist in Chuka-Mwimbi area), Zakayo wa Kagotho, Luka Mucaria, William Mwema, Samasoni Maingi (a hospital assistant and evangelist in Mwimbi), Jeremia Waita, Lazaro Theuri, Paulo Kahuho and Simeon Kareu. This also constituted the first African Kirk-session at Tumutumu. At a meeting held in Tumutumu in October, 1920, the Kirk session demanded an absolute abolition of the custom within the church and supported the imposition of sanctions against their members who might break Church laws.[186] The following year, at the Council of Alliance attended by representatives from CSM, CMS, GMS, it was resolved that female circumcision should be discouraged among all Christians and church adherents.[187] The council also approached the government to discourage the payment of dowry, but the government decided not to get involved in the issue.[188] The missionaries, however, vowed to use all the influence and power within their means to have the custom abolished.[188]

All along, the missionaries and the Kirk session seemed determined to fight a lone battle in their efforts to

do away with female circumcision, while the government and the Embu LNC held a different view, especially on female circumcision. The government, for instance, observed that the practice was of so ancient an origin and so intimately bound up with the social structure of the tribe which practised it, that its disappearance could only occur through a gradual process of education.[180] The implication was that the missionaries and the African teachers and evangelists had to embark on teaching the people about the dangers of clitoridectomy. But some of the teachers and evangelists were not quite convinced that there was anything wrong with clitoridectomy. In the eyes of the government, the only other way of killing the custom was to patiently wait for the gradual passing away of the older generation of conservative elders which would naturally bring an end to the custom.[181] The government expressed its desire that people should go back to the less drastic form of circumcision which was also more ancient.[182] The government seemed quite sure of the customs' final end, but did not understand that some of the African customs were passed from generation to the next so that it did not stop or die with the passing away of one generation. For example, even after almost a century of education, the custom is still alive in Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi to date. The only difference between the old days and today is perhaps the absence of dances and sacrifices. It is also no longer a premarital rite as it used to be.

The Native Affairs Department (NAD) in a letter to all Senior Commissioners made its stand clear - that only those girls who wished to undergo the operation could do so, while at the same time protecting the girls who did not want to be circumcised. The letter said,

> Natives will be told that if they did not wish their daughters to undergo circumcision, there is no need for them to do so. And if it was forced the girl or parent can bring an action of assault or compensation against all who took part in it.[183]

The government view on clitoridectomy by 1925 was that there should be no coercion.

The LNC's position on the matter was similar to the government. In 1926, the LNC of Embu passed a resolution that only skilled women, who were authorised by the council could perform the operation and that no operator may remove more than the clitoris. The LNC did not share the missionaries' sentiments that the custom must be abolished. On the contrary, it said that the custom was necessary.[184] Since the deliberations of the council were recorded and circulated, the *athomi* could read them, and use those ideas to fight the missionaries' stand on African culture.

The 1929-1930 crisis that faced the CSM over female circumcision could be attributed to hasty decisions by the missionaries and some African church elders. The female circumcision issue was not a new phenomenon in church history, and it could have been resolved if the missionaries

had taken more time to learn and understand the African culture.

In Chogoria where land politics was not an issue as it was in Kikuyu country, the crisis seemed to have arisen abruptly. But the division which emerged after 1929 indicates that some deep cleavages were already there before the crisis.[185] Welbourn saw female circumcision as "no more than an emotional peg onto which a far wider area of social discontent could readily be hung".[186] In Nithi Division, female circumcision was more of an excuse for the people to express their displeasure with the European presence.

Some of the social discontent found among the Nithi non-Christians and Christians alike arose from the missionaries' cultural arrogance which made them adopt negative views towards all unfamiliar African ways of life.[187] Towards this end, the CSM wrote down its laws which were aimed at governing the lives of African Christians. These laws came to be called Native Church Laws. The earliest of these laws date back to 1915.[188] The Native Church Laws were formulated without consulting the Africans but the African dared not criticise or disobey them. Certainly, these CSM laws were meant to make some of the African customs look anti-Christian. They included regulations for catechumen instructions, baptism, Christian marriage, polygamy, drunkenness, sexual offences, circumcision, confession of offences, and the restoration of a disciplined person to the fellowship.[189] African

Christians were expected to adhere to these laws without criticising them. These church laws became a tool of oppression, especially when their execution had to be done by the Scot missionaries who were severe and uncompromising in all matters concerning African beliefs and the implementation of Christians regulations.[200] What they forgot was that African Christians at Chogoria, and in all its out-stations, were still deeply rooted in their traditions and they found these laws too demanding and against their customs. It was too early in their Christian faith to understand why polygamy, drinking of beer and circumcision were being severely condemned. In the initial years of Christianity in Nithi Division, the Christians had not removed themselves from the African way of life. The missionaries expected the teachers and evangelists, to be the "torch" in the villages, by denouncing some of the customs which were not acceptable in Christianity. Teachers and evangelists found that they could not divorce themselves from what the society held so dearly. They found themselves at a crossroads as they strove to please the missionary, their employer, while at the same time they did not abandon some of the African culture which they believed was vital in their lives. It was only during the 1929 crisis that they were forced by circumstances to take sides openly.

The condemnation of circumcision by the missionaries was a sensitive issue because neither Meru men or women could understand how else one was expected to graduate from

childhood and become mature to assume adult status without going through circumcision. Adult status in Meru society included passing from an asexual to the sexual world, a prerequisite to marriage as well as membership to an age-set.[201] The term "female mutilation" as was adopted by the missionaries was abusive because neither the missionaries nor the teachers tried to understand the political, psychological, social, religious and economic implications that the rite had on the girl, family and the community at large.

Hospital attendants, especially Johnstone Kiambati at Chogoria, dismissed the missionaries' allegation of problems encountered by circumcised women at child birth as baseless. He himself claimed to have witnessed their successful child deliveries on many occasions.[202] He argued that if female circumcision was that dangerous, there could not have been any woman surviving the child birth because over the years all mothers were circumcised. The *athomi* could easily see that the missionary condemned the custom, not out of sympathy for the African problem, but rather out of a desire to destabilise the culture of the people. Some teachers and evangelists encouraged people to continue with female circumcision by playing tricks on the missionaries. There were cases where a girl was circumcised with full knowledge of the Christian parents; and when the matter came to the Kirk-session, the teachers and evangelists, most of whom were members of the Kirk-session

argued that the girl was forcefully circumcised by her non-Christian grandmother or relatives. It was due to this non-committal attitude towards female circumcision that most teachers and evangelists left the Church and school in the 1929-30 female circumcision controversy.

In short, an African Christian was being required to "uproot himself from his culture, shatter his traditions and trample on his institutions so that he would be acceptable in the church, school and hospital".[203] The missionaries had assumed the role of the pupil's parents, their elders and clan in this respect.

The cultural difference was one of the most sensitive issues that disturbed the early Christians as well as pupils in the division. But in the initial stages, this was not publicly spoken about because of fear and a general lack of one major problem to hang on to. In 1929, the female circumcision crisis provided the peg on which the people of Nithi could hang their discontent with the missionaries.

3.11 REACTION TO WESTERN EDUCATION

Some Nithi Christians were unhappy with the kind of education missionaries offered. There was disagreement between missionaries and Africans, particularly the *athomi*, over the education policy adopted at Chogoria. Africans had witnessed the closure of the school in lower Mwimbi, which to them was a deliberate attempt by the missionaries to limit the number of schools. They began to demand more

and better equipped schools without condemning female circumcision.[204] At last Nithi people were demanding schools which would accommodate both western and African values. The people of Nithi wanted to be left free to attend school while at the same time observing and preserving some of the Meru culture which they thought was vital. For example, the *athomi* did not understand why the missionary had to choose a marriage partner for them. This was an institution well left for the families and clan concerned. The *athomi* did not see how polygamy, traditional dances, initiation such as female circumcision, paying of dowry, to mention a few, interfered with schooling. The *athomi*, and indeed the local community, wanted a synthesis of western values and traditional values. The missionaries could not hear of this because to them, the school was expected to be the place where Africans would systematically be alienated from the so called 'heathen' way of life.

Nithi Christians also viewed the grouping together of adults and children in a class as a way of undermining their Meru culture. Traditionally, initiated persons could not sit together to receive similar instruction with the uncircumcised.[205] This could partly explain the reason for the poor pupil enrollment in schools especially by *nthaka* in the 1920s. What was considered even worse was the grouping together of men and women in the same class.[206] On only very few occasions could a Meru woman sit in the company of

men for any discussion. The men could not understand why the missionaries wanted to create "*Cianjoka Karume*" (women with men characteristics) out of their humble women. Education seemed to disrupt the old social set up, and so women were not given equal opportunity with men to go to school, until later.

The education curriculum did not seem to fulfil the Nithi people's expectations and needs. From their travels in Kikuyu country and Nairobi, they had concluded that only those who could read and write got employment as clerks or teachers. But the curriculum that emphasised manual skills and agricultural training and only a limited amount of reading and writing, as was found in Nithi Division, was seen as a deliberate attempt by the missionaries to retard the development of African education and to deny them job opportunities.[207] Africans were not required to know English; it was never taught in the out-schools; and even at Chogoria, it was only taught to a select number of pupils. To most people of Nithi, this was an indication that the missionaries were not seriously interested in the development of African education. This was indicated by the fact that the number of those literate in English Africans was kept low.

At the same time, Christians were getting more involved in the politics of the colony in the 1920s than ever before. This was because of the improved communication network. The 1920s witnessed angry nationalist emotions throughout

the Kikuyu country rising up against land, labour and taxation. Political associations such as the Kikuyu Central Association were formed to air African grievances. The *athomi*, especially in Kikuyu and Meru countries, could read on their own the first Kikuyu Journal *Muigwithania* (The Reconciliator) which inevitably aroused general awareness of what was going on in their country.[208]

Some of the teachers and evangelists boycotted the evangelical duties of preaching in the evening and during the school holidays and got involved in KCA affairs. For instance, Johana M'Ntiba, a brother of Kiambati, and Erasto M'Mukira - both teacher-evangelists at Kajiunduthi school- openly started organising KCA meetings in 1927 which were termed as 'anti-mission' by Dr. Irvine of Chogoria mission.[209] They consequently lost their jobs for disobeying Dr. Irvine and engaging in politics and working together with Kikuyu elements who according to Irvine were out to destabilise the Church.[210] From then on, there was an anti-mission campaign, against Christians and the Church.

Stories started spreading from Kikuyuland to Chogoria that Europeans wanted circumcision abolished so that they could marry African girls and thereby acquire local land. The signing of the Church Loyalty documents that the CSM demanded was also seen as a signing away of land. It was alleged that the signatures could also be used to petition the government to prevent the return of Kenyatta.[211] There were more rumours aimed at descrediting the missionary at

Chogoria. For example, it was said that Dr. Irvine was using human blood to prepare the medicine that was used at the hospital, and that even those who died in hospital died because their heads were chopped off to obtain blood.[212] This spate of rumours was an indication of the Christians change of attitude towards the missionaries. Education suffered because nobody wanted to be associated with *muragani* (murderer).

3.12 THE *ATHOMI* GRIEVANCES

The people who were most affected by the missionaries', teaching and presence were the *athomi*, particularly the evangelists, teachers, medical evangelists and the artisan evangelists. They were with the missionaries most of the time, in schools, in church services and meetings and even at the missionaries' residence. Some of the teachers and evangelists lived within the missionaries' residential areas, so that their movements were closely monitored. In the course of their staying and working together, the teacher and evangelists discovered that what the missionary preached was quite different from what he did in practice. For example, the missionaries preached equality before God, but treated the African as subordinates. The *athomi* were thus becoming critical of some of the things they saw happening in the Church and at school.

As a result of this awareness the *athomi* started to question the authority of the missionary. The local people

referred to Dr. Irvine as *Bwana*, a term which was used in reference to all the other Europeans in the colony to mean 'master'. Like the other Europeans the missionaries had assumed the attitude of power and authority.[213] Teachers, lay-evangelists and the mission workers were all referred to as 'boys' by the missionary, regardless of their age or status in the society.[214] This was seen as discrediting the age and status of the adult Meru men. Mission boys, as they were called, did not speak out against it because of fear of losing their jobs. But certainly, silence did not mean approval of the same. It was painful for a circumcised man to be referred to as a boy, and what was worse, being treated as such.[215]

While the missionary preached equality before God, his actions towards his fellow African Christians was to the contrary. Any African was inferior to the missionary and to any European for that matter. For instance, a popular story was told of how a Chief was once slapped by a missionary near one of the out-schools and asked whether he thought the missionary had smeared himself with white chalk .[216] This was supposed to show that the missionary, as a European, was superior and required total obedience from Africans, irrespective of their status. No wonder Africans resented the missionaries and in particular, the subordinate position that they were put into by their master.[217] In Chogoria, no teacher or evangelist could enter Dr. Irvine's house. All the discussions with Africans were conducted on the

verandah. Only the houseboy was allowed into the house.[218] For a long time, no African dared come on to the verandah with his shoes on (if he had any) because that was seen as disrespectful to the missionary.[218]

The lives of teachers and evangelists were closely monitored even after official duties were over. For example, it was an unwritten rule that a teacher should not be walking about at night and, in any case, must be in bed by 9.00 p.m.[220] Furthermore, he was also not supposed to give a woman, except his wife, a lift on his bicycle; if he did so, he was disciplined.[221] A teacher was more of a slave. He was neither free at work, nor in his own house. He could also be called to assist in the missionary's house to cook whenever the missionary had visitors.[222] The teacher was paid a very low salary, which was irregular both in amount and the times of payment.[223] Despite the long hours of working in a school, and sometimes in two schools, and the evening preaching and Sunday church services, the salaries of the teachers and evangelists was paid at the whim of the missionary.[224] Consequently, teachers and evangelists, although close to the missionaries, seemed to bear all the problems of the new church and its work. This partly explains why some teachers and evangelists were the first to support female circumcision rite and custom during the crisis late in 1929.

The local *athomi* resented the institution of forced labour which was common within Chogoria mission and

at the out-schools. The CSM in Kenya, unlike in Scotland, fully recognized and utilised the institution of forced labour in their mission.[225] This had been endorsed by the Council of Alliance in 1920.[226] At Chogoria, for example, scholars and teachers provided all the labour required in the mission and sometimes outside it. All the garden work, fetching firewood, masonry and carpentry were done by the pupils. Women pupils cooked, washed clothes, cleaned the hospital and ground cereals for making porridge for the patients.[227] This work was done during school days, and disrupted the normal school activities.[228] The institution of compulsory labour was foreign and unpopular with Africans.[229] Chiefs also came into the schools and got young men to work for them. For example, in 1925, chiefs pulled out almost all pupils in the lower classes at Chogoria to provide labour in the public works.[230]

The missionary at Chogoria did not protect the pupils against this labour recruitment, despite the fact that he had the power to do so. After this incident, most of the able-bodied men left the school, never to return because they felt that they would avoid being forced to do manual work, if they hid at home.[231]

The *athomi* had many grievances, on social, economic and political issues. But no opportunity had presented itself at which they could air their grievances without danger of individual victimisation. The 1929-30 female circumcision crisis provided a forum for airing grievances.

By this time, the *athomi* were able to distinguish what was God's teaching and what was from western civilisation as presented by the missionary. Paradoxically, some of the *athomi* were the first people to welcome the white missionaries and now they were in the forefront of criticising western values.[232]

3.13 THE 1929 TUMUTUMU CONFERENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON CHURCH AND SCHOOLS IN NITHI DIVISION

The March 1929 Tumutumu conference set the stage for the most difficult year in the CSM history. The meeting was a predominantly African Conference with delegates from all the CSM churches. Daudi Makumi, a senior teacher-evangelist at Chogoria, a church elder and a member of Tumutumu Kirk Session represented the CSM church in Nithi Division. They passed a resolution that female circumcision was evil and must be abandoned by all Christians.[233] With a majority vote of 30 to 9, it was also resolved that those Christians who submitted to female circumcision should be disciplined and suspended from their churches.[234] African Christians became involved in the female circumcision because they wanted it to look like it was they (Africans) who had originated and passed the law against the custom, rather than the law being thought of as having been initiated by Europeans.

The resolutions of the Tumutumu meeting were published in both the KCA paper *Muigwithania* and the *East African*

Standard. Africans who were for the old custom were not happy with the resolutions of the 1929 March meeting. In mid-1929, the *East African Standard* published a story of an incident whereby a Gospel Mission Society (GMS) girl was seized and circumcised by force. The women involved were found guilty and fined only shs.30.[235] This fine was viewed as being too small by the churches because it could not deter Christian girls from being forcefully circumcised. The Kikuyu Central Association found the fine uncalled for, because to them the women had done nothing wrong in circumcising a girl.[236]

As for Nithi Division, it was as if the Christians had been waiting for such a moment to react. Johnstone Kiambati started to organise secret meetings around Chogoria to discuss the issue. The female circumcision issue spread into most of the out-schools, where the teacher-evangelists were safe from Dr. Irvine's wrath. In the event of being discovered, the teachers would have lost their jobs and their Church membership.

It was a wrong time for Dr. Arthur to decide to go to Chogoria in his bid to explain the new Church law on female circumcision to the local Christians. This was because *athomi* and *non-athomi* alike, had prior knowledge of the crisis already evident in their mother churches in Thogoto and Tumutumu. Letters and individual visits from Kikuyu and Tumutumu to Chogoria were frequent, so that Arthur's visit was only a confirmation of what the local people were aware

of. Dr. Arthur arrived at Chogoria on 27th September, 1929 accompanied by three Kikuyu church elders and one married woman, armed with the Church regulations on how to obtain signatures of serious and committed church adherents.[237] The following day, the matter was taken to an open air church service and people were told of the new Church laws, and how members of the KCA were totally against them. He impressed upon them that it was the duty of the Church adherents to chose between the Church and KCA and the clan. To do this, the Church adherents were required to sign the Church loyalty documents by putting a thumb print (*kirore*).[238] There were very many people present for this session. Most of the people were not Christians, but had come to hear what Dr. Arthur had to say. The crowd which included Christians, non-Christians and the KCA members, became unruly, prompted by intimidation and threats against those who opted to sign.[239]

The situation in Chogoria was getting out of hand. The consequences of Arthur's visit were experienced in the churches, schools and the hospital. Before inviting Dr. Arthur to Chogoria, Dr. Irvine should have considered the fact that the church was new in the area and that elders and Christians were young; either in age, spirit or both. They could therefore not survive threats from either within the church or the surrounding community.[240] On 28th September 1929, the Church of Scotland Mission in Nithi Division broke into two, with only 14 of the 120 members

signing the loyalty declaration.[241] Those who signed on this day included Amos Muchara, Musa M'Muga, Mrs. Marion Muga, Gideon M'Thura, Filipo M'Thura, Robinson M'Nkiria, Daudi M'Raria, Gerrison Mukangu, Jonathan Murithi, Naftari M'Muga, Stephano M'Rucha, Phares Mutunga, Arthur Muga and Silas Kathuri and Jackson Nkuri from Chuka. One of them, Jonathan Murithi, a teacher-evangelist, stood up in front of the congregation and said "I am with the Church, you can stone me if you like".[242] Several women also signed, especially the wives of those who stood by the church.[243] Those who signed made a public declaration not only that they were for the Church but also that they had broken away from the custom and all the other traditions of the Meru tribe.[244] Most of the people who signed were teacher-evangelists. Some of them were already Church deacons, for example, Filipo M'Thura, Gerrison Mukangu, Musa Muga and Willie Kanini.[245]

There were several reasons why the few people who chose to side with the Church did so. They were strongly convinced that their customs were wrong and stood by all that the Church believed in. They had decided to leave what they considered to be old and evil customs for Christ's sake.[248]

Nevertheless, there were teachers and evangelists who feared losing their jobs, if they disobeyed the church, their employer.[247] They realised that they stood to gain while they worked for the Church. They knew perfectly well

that they would lose their privileges if they turned against the Church. They were able to buy good clothes, shoes and food and maintain their families better than those who did not earn a salary. Teachers were exempted from paying taxes, and this meant that if they disobeyed their masters, they would lose their privilege. They also did not need to pay for labour because students assisted them.

Another reason is that some teachers and evangelists had severed their relationship with their people. They had either disobeyed their parents to go to school or they were from the poorest section of the society who regarded the mission as a "home". Such people did not stand to lose anything by siding with the missionaries. On the contrary, they had nothing to go back to in the village, and even if they did not sign, they would not be accepted back by their people. The only logical thing for them to do was to remain with the church, where they were accepted.[248]

Moreover, some teachers and evangelists had no desire to be kicked out of the church because they wanted to retain their assumed status in the society. As indicated earlier, the *athomi* were not only regarded as superior, but were also feared and admired by the local people because they read the white man's books, could speak his language and dressed like the European.[248] Their homes were modern, compared with others in the village. Such advantages made them to stick to the missionary, the source and the power behind their success.

While the exercise of obtaining signatures was still going on, a new form of dance emerged, the *muthirigu*, (a song with derogatory words against those who supported the church) in Nithi Division, as in most of Kikuyuland. The purpose of the dance and song was to challenge the church, individual Christians and weaken their faith and moral standards through usage of abusive language in the songs.[250] One of the songs of the *muthirigu* dance stated that,

> Nikwigurira giakwa
> Kirigu ta kiria gia Gathoga
> kwendwo, kwendwo ni nkwendo
> Gitanda nkaruta ku?
> Ruracio rwa irigu niruru
> Mbeca icio mugiatuhe
> Tugatwarira Kenyatta.
> (I will also marry
> an uninitiated girl like Gathoga's wife
> You claim that you love me
> But I don't own a bed
> Dowry paid for the uninitiated is bad
> You should have given us that money
> To take it to Kenyatta)[251]

The *muthirigu* dance was sung in the villages and in all the out-schools. Pupils and teachers alike stopped going to school. Church attendance was also minimised. The CSM soon realised that the use of force to obtain signatures would eventually bring church activities to an end. This led to a meeting of the Kirk Session at Kikuyu which succeeded in modifying the Church law. It passed a resolution that the expression of loyalty could be done without obtaining signatures.[252]

The resultant crisis affected mission schools, which lost most of their pupils. For example, the Chogoria

mission school was left with only thirty out of one hundred and twenty students.[253] Most of the out-schools closed down following a boycott of the schools by the pupils and their teachers. Muunga[254] and Tungu[255] were worst hit; they were left without any pupils. The same state befell Kiereni and Kambandi, two out-schools in Chuka.

It should be noted that those who signed the loyalty pledge became strong supporters of the Church and this earned them many favours from Dr Irvine.[256] For example, Daudi M'Raria was sent to Jeanes school for further training with full sponsorship from the Church.[257] Others were later sent to either Kikuyu or Tumutumu to train as elementary teachers.

The *athomi* who did not sign the loyalty pledge lost their jobs. They, in turn, founded independent churches and schools in 1931.[258] These founders of the independent schools were former mission teachers and pupils and medical assistants. They included: Johnstone Kiambati, a senior hospital assistant at Chogoria, Johana M'Ntiba and Jonathan Kiambati, both teachers in out-schools.

Another factor that must have contributed to the apathy Africans had towards missionaries is that those who signed were subjected to violence and abuse by fellow tribesmen because they were accused of selling tribal land to Europeans. Some were deserted by their wives. For example, Filipo M'Thura's wife ran away.[259] Some fathers threatened to take their daughters away, if their Christian

husbands did not return to the traditional custom.[260] However, most of the *kirore* men and women remained steadfast to their oath and pledge of remaining in the Church.

In summary, the African teachers and evangelists were instrumental in the establishment and growth of CSM work in Nithi Division. Not only did they assist the first European missionaries in setting up a mission station at Chogoria, they also started a number of out-schools in their villages. More people were therefore exposed to western education and Chriastinity . Those who received western edcducation interacted with the missionaries in schools, church and hospitals as well as in the field during evangelical visits. The *athomi* worked closely with the missionaries which gave them an opportunity to understand the missionaries better. Some of the *athomi* began to question the missionaries' teaching and conduct, as well as the education curriculum. The dissatisfaction of some of the *athomi* culminated in their involvement in the female circumcision crisis of 1929-30 which resulted in the beginning of independent church and school movement. The events of 1929/30 almost brought to an abrupt and brutal end that which had taken about three decades to build. But, the year also accelerated the spirit of independence among Africans in the running of their own church and schools. The missionary also learnt a big lesson, not to take Africans for granted as they (Africans) were capable of managing their own affairs too. Indeed, it was on the *Kirore* men and women that the missionary relied

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CHAPTER FOUR

INDEPENDENT CHURCH AND SCHOOLS 1930-1952

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the emergence of independent churches and schools in Nithi Division. The first independent Church sect was called *Arathi* (prophets) from Kikuyu land in 1930. The origin of *Arathi* was an attempt by some Christians to form a religion which, while retaining some of the rituals of the Christian mission, would not be hampered by the discipline, particularly in regard to African custom, that the missionaries required.[1] Between 1930 and 1952, *Arathi* established a series of independent schools and churches in Nithi Division which colonial authorities burnt down after the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952.

Arathi started their independent churches and schools because the Nithi people wanted education and religion that was not European or missionary controlled. Some of the former Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) adherents, such as church elders, students and the paid agents such as teachers, evangelists and hospital assistants, were the first to embrace the independent churches and schools. Among those who joined the *Arathi* independent churches and schools were some of the CSM adherents who had been rejected by the CSM because they were considered bad elements within the Church. In 1930, 121 people were denied the right to education by the Mission on the grounds that "their presence

would be prejudicial to the discipline in the school".[2] Others, out of their own choice, broke away from the Mission to join *Arathi*. Such people included those who wanted to acquire a second wife and those who wanted to acquire jobs after they were dismissed from the mission schools. The *Arathi* sect and its schools offered a good alternative to those who wished to remain Christians while at the same time practising some aspects of Meru culture, such as female circumcision and polygamy.

4.2 THE *ARATHI* CHURCH

The CSM lost most of its members as a result of the 1929-30 female circumcision controversy. Pupils in CSM out-schools who wished to continue with what the European missionaries termed "immoral practices" were expelled from CSM schools or Church. Some of the CSM rejects joined the Roman Catholic Church at Muthambi and Chuka, but others did not join because they felt that the Roman Catholic Church was also controlled by Europeans and as such might not be different from the CSM. The Nithi people could not tell the difference between *Gitari* and *Mubeya*.[3] This was the situation that *the Arathi* found in Nithi Division when they arrived from Kikuyu country in 1930.

Arathi leaders were brought into Nithi Division by Johnstone M'Kiambati, a former senior hospital assistant at the Chogoria mission hospital.[4] He had attended the CSM school at Chuka Boma between 1920 and 1923, and subsequently

trained as a hospital dresser at Tumutumu.[5] After his training in 1926, he first worked at Chuka Native Council hospital and in 1928 went to Chogoria hospital.[6] At Chogoria, he disagreed with the missionaries over female circumcision and was dismissed from both the Church and hospital because he refused to sign the Church's loyalty document.

Prior to his dismissal, he had been an evangelist who went out preaching in the villages as well as to the patients who frequented the hospital. He told his patients that he preached so that *Gitari* and himself could treat physical illnesses while Christ healed the "ailing" hearts.[7] This made him popular among the hospital attendants and local people. When he left the hospital, he was joined by almost all African hospital dressers and other people who saw him as a hero to have disobeyed *Gitari*, who was a power to reckon with in Nithi.[8] *Gitari* was not only a religious leader, but also a representative of the DC in government matters.

After leaving the hospital, Kiambati went back home to Muthambi, but did not join the Kibere, Macembe and Muthirigu dances and songs.[9] Instead he joined his brother, Johana M'Ntiba, in Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) politics in Meru District.[10] He became the president of Mwimbi branch of K.C.A. in 1930.[11] He and his brother started travelling in Kikuyu country to seek advice and funds to enable them to build independent churches and schools in their division.

They came into close contact with Johana Kunyiha, a KCA leader in Nyeri, and also, with some *Arathi* leaders, such as Paulo Kamau, a former CSM trained teacher.[12] With Kamau, and Kamwocere wa Nthiga, who was the president of KCA Embu branch[13], and some *Arathi* leaders from Gatundu and Kabati, Kiambati came to Muthambi location and built the first *Arathi* thatched hut which served as a church at Kiamucumbi, in Muthambi Location in 1930.[14] This marked the beginning of the *Arathi*, an independent church in Nithi Division.

Kiambati did not like some convictions held by other *Arathi*. Being a *muthomi* he discovered that the *Arathi* were anti-progress. This was because the *Arathi* rejected almost everything which was western. They rejected the wearing of modern clothes, the use of *sufurias*, plates, cups and even going to school.[15]

The *Arathi* preached a return to African culture. For instance, they started wearing blankets, using earthen pots and calabashes, and advocated the practice of female circumcision alongside that of males and polygamy. They also believed in witchcraft and the practice of sacrifice.

Kiambati admired some aspects of western culture which he thought were good and that he could live with while rejecting others. As a hospital dresser, he had taken to wearing modern clothes and keeping himself hygienically clean as a virtue. He did not see anything wrong in using modern utensils. At the same time he wanted to maintain the practice of female circumcision and polygamy which were

condemned by the CSM European missionaries.[16] He therefore wanted a religion in which he could acquire most of what he considered good from European missionaries while keeping those aspects of Meru culture which he found desirable.

Kiambati became the leader of the *Arathi* in Nithi Division after going through all the *Arathi* rituals of being made a fully fledged member of the sect. He was baptised into the sect in 1931 and was given the name Ephantus.[17] He went into the forest for forty days where he received the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit to lead his people.[18] He was appointed head of the *Arathi* church in Nithi and given the title of Reverend.[19] He led the *Arathi* in Nithi Division, Igoji and the northern part of Embu until 1952.

Reverend Kiambati retained his CSM baptism name of Johnstone. His full name thus became Reverend Ephantus Johnstone Kiambati. He incorporated some of what he had learnt from his former Church into the *Arathi*. He introduced the use of CSM hymn books in *Arathi* churches. He also used the Bible extensively in religious teaching and put a lot of emphasis on the Old Testament.[20] This was because he wanted to have a special justification for circumcision and polygamy which is found in the Old Testament.

Reverend Kiambati continued to campaign for mass support for his own *Arathi* movement in Nithi Division as far as Central Meru (Imenti) and Embu District. Because of his

preaching and his desire to combine the two worlds, that is, western and African, he encouraged his people to drop some of the negative attitudes they had towards western culture. As a result he developed a less radical brand of *Arathi*. This new type of *Arathi* came to accept some values held by missionaries, such as the taking of modern medicine and attending school.[21] At Tungu, Kiambati started a dispensary and a school for the people who had joined *Arathi*.

CSM adherents who remained in *Gitari's* schools and churches referred to the *Arathi* as *Aregi* (rejecters). *Aregi* was a word derived from the Chuka saying that `*murega a watho endaga kwiumba baye* (he who refuses to adhere to the set norms/laws prefers staying alone). The *Arathi* were termed *Aregi* by CSM adherents because they totally rejected the Church laws imposed on Christians. For example, the CSM referred to polygamy, circumcision, paying of dowry, drinking beer and traditional dances as sinful and also attempted to control the lives of the church adherents both in the church and outside.[22]

Arathi churches were built in some of the CSM out-schools which were boycotted by the CSM adherents after the 1929-30 crisis. As we have seen, Kiambati built the first *Arathi* church at Kiamucumbi, at the same place where the first CSM station in Muthambi had been. *Arathi* headquarters in Muthambi later moved to Tungu (later Kiini). Earlier, Dr. Irvine had gone to Tungu and carried away the school bell, telling the people that he had carried away his light

so that they could remain in their darkness.[23] A similar incident also occured at Kajiunduthi school.[24] CSM adherents at both out-schools joined the *Arathi*.

By 1952, there were several *Arathi* churches spread all over Muthambi location, Kiera Location, Igoji location south of Nithi Division and Embu District, with Kiambati being overall leader. In Muthambi, *Arathi* churches were established at Kimuri, Iriga, Karimba, Kirigini, Mweria and Kagongo.[25] Other churches were built at Muthakwene, Kirigara and Miutine in Igoji and Gaturi, Kathangari and Nemburi in Embu District.[26] All these churches were administered by Rev. Kiambati from Tungu Central Station.

These churches were built by some of the CSM and Methodist adherents who were dismissed from their churches for various reasons. For example, Johana M'Ntiba, a leading *Murathi* was a CSM teacher and evangelist at Kajiunduthi school before he was dismissed because he refused to do his evangelical duties in the evenings and weekends as was required of a teacher and evangelist working for CSM.[27] Joshua Mugwika, Leornas M'Riba and Amos M'Ragwa were scholars at Tungu before running away after the 1929-30 crisis[28], and Elieza and Joeli Mwithiga were evangelists in the lower Mwimbi.[29] These became *Arathi* evangelists and teachers in the new *Arathi* stations in Nithi and beyond. They were responsible for the beginning and expansion of independent schools and churches. The *Arathi* in Meru were greatly influenced by independent church movement of

Kikuyuland. For example, in 1935 there were about 135 *Arathi* followers and ten out of the fifteen leaders in Nithi came from Kikuyu.[30] The missionaries accused *Arathi* of encouraging the young men to disobey the government.

One of the interesting features of *Arathi* was that it was confined to Muthambi and Kiera Locations and had little influence in other locations. It was Kiambati's arrangement to concentrate on Muthambi and Kiera Locations which were less influenced by other Roman Catholics or the CSM. Mwimbi had a long standing connection with the CSM and most of the people there had been so influenced that soon after the 1929-30 crisis, many people who had refused *kirore* started going back to the Church.[31]

In Chuka, the situation was different. The Chuka people had shown a very poor response over the years towards CSM teaching. But a Roman Catholic priest, known locally as *Batiri Komorio* (local pronounciation of the name Father Cogmolio), who arrived there in 1933, seemed to have influenced the people in Chuka. For example, he did not condemn the drinking of local beer, taking of tobacco snuff, circumcision and polygamy. To win the people, he was ritually born into the Thwagira clan where he participated in beer drinking and also donated goats to be eaten by clan elders.[32] He attended all clan meetings like any other member. This approach attracted many Chuka people to the Roman Catholic Church because the priest, though white, was seen as one of them. Few people from Chuka became *Arathi*,

and no *Arathi* church was established in Chuka.

In 1941, another form of *Arathi* from Kikuyuland appeared in Nithi Division which affected Kiambati's work. It found a lot of sympathisers among the people who had not joined the *Arathi* church of 1930's or the Roman Catholic or the CSM churches. The government saw this new brand of *Arathi* as a nuisance to the local community because they (the new *Arathi*) even claimed that they could "smell a wizzard".[33] For this reason they were named *iroria* (foretellers). These new *Arathi* advocated an immediate return to the old Meru customs. For example, they reverted to offering sacrifices of goats to God and diagonising illnesses by claiming to have powers to chase away evil spirits that were said to bring illnesses and death. They refused to wear shoes and to cut their hair or shave their beards.[34] Kiambati prohibited them from using any of his churches or school buildings because he considered them to be anti-progress. Although he refused to have anything to do with this new *Arathi*, Kiambati was wrongly thought to be its leader. As a result, in 1942, he was refused permission to start *Arathi* churches and schools in Imenti by the Meru Local Native Council.[35]

The emergence of the *Arathi* sect, as an independent church in Nithi Division, acted as a catalyst for the expansion of both CSM and Roman Catholic schools and churches on the one hand, and a source of cleavage between

European missionary institutions and African Christian institutions on the other. The CSM saw the *Arathi* as a political wing of KCA that had come to revive the old scare that Europeans were murderers,[38] which would have terrible consequences for the CSM activities in Nithi Division. To the Roman Catholics the *Arathi* presence was a threat to their existence because they all appealed to the same local people.[37] *The Arathi* Church continued until 1952 when the colonial authorities banned it.

The success of the *Arathi* Church in Nithi Division was as a result of a combination of factors. People had come to accept Kiambati as having been chosen by God to lead them and as such he was crucial in the development of the *Arathi* sect. He was an intelligent man, who was able to negotiate his way with the key figures of independent churches elsewhere in the colony. He was in regular contact with Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA) officials and teachers of Githunguri School which was under KISA. He, however, objected to any dealings with the Kikuyu Karinga Association for they called for absolute rejection of Christianity. Being a *muthomi*, he was able, and with some success, to manage church and school activities with ease. He understood his people's immediate needs; that is, independence from missionary control in so far as schools and churches were concerned. Kiambati also got a lot of support from other *Arathi* leaders, who gave much of their time and material for the development of the *Arathi* church.

Without such support, particularly from his immediate family members who formed the top cadre of Arathi leadership, Kiambati would not have gone that far.

The *Arathi* Church was also established when the people of Nithi wanted independence from all forms of European control. The young supported the independent church movement because they found in it a place they were able to air their grievances. The *Arathi* Church became an opposition group to the mission and the government.

Most elders also, due to their desire to preserve and observe some of the traditions which the missionaries condemned, gave support to the *Arathi* Church. With the elders' support, the *Arathi* Church was able to withstand pressure from the mission.

There were other factors playing against the *Arathi* Church, which served to instigate the *Arathi* Church to greater activity. For example, the LNC, whose membership was mainly of *athomi* opposed the *Arathi* as they saw them as anti-progress. Some of the *Njuri Nceke* members were *athomi*, hence they too supported the missionaries in their war against *Arathi*. The Majority of the *athomi* members of the LNC and *Njuri Nceke* were educated in CSM or Methodist Church. They were greatly influenced by the European missionaries and advised never to allow any *Arathi* to take hold of the area they hailed from. Interestingly, the *athomi* members of LNC and *Njuri Nceke* came from Chuka and Mwimbi. With the knowledge that the LNC and some *Njuri*

Nceke members were against *Arathi*, the *Arathi* put up a more spirited campaign with the aim of attracting a large following. In their campaigns, the *Arathi* did not confine themselves to the question of Church and schools, but also spoke out about the issue of land which was by then becoming a sensitive issue among the Africans. It was *Arathi's* demand for independence from all that was European and the people's desire to control their own destiny that made the *Arathi* Church succeed.

4.3 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Soon after the female circumcision crisis of 1929-1930, it became rather difficult for the children of *Aregi* (people who had refused to sign the Church's loyalty document) to attend CSM schools. There was thus an urgent need to start schools which could accommodate the *Aregi* and their children. This was realised in 1930, when the first independent school in Nithi Division was started by Reverend Ephantus Johnstone Kiambati, the leader of *Arathi* in the division. By 1952, Kiambati led an independent association for schools called the South Meru African Community Schools (SMACS) which established and controlled all the independent schools in Nithi Division.

The refusal by Nithi people to put their thumb print on the loyalty declaration document as an indication that they would go by all the laws of the Church, particularly with regard to female circumcision, did not mean that they were

disinterested in western education. On the contrary, most of the *athomi* (pupils, Christians and the paid agents of the missionaries) desired to have western education, which to most people meant learning the skills of reading and writing, but at the same time wanted to practise their traditional customs. The people wanted to be left alone to chose what to follow.[38] The only way to have education with no European cultural strings attached was to have independent schools. Independent schools were controlled and fully manned by Africans, and the attendance was also fully African with pupils coming from Nithi and the surrounding areas. These were mainly people who had severed their relationship with European missionaries.[38]

The attempt to start independent schools began late in 1930 when it became apparent that *Gitari* would only allow back into the CSM schools those pupils and teachers who had put their thumb print (*kirore*) on the Church loyalty document. The Embu Local Native Council (LNC) refused to allow any school to be started in Nithi Division without the blessing of Dr. Irvine.[40] He could not agree to such suggestions as it would mean his own undoing in so far as Church and school are concerned. Dr. Irvine, naturally, did not wish to create competition by providing the "right kind of education" for Africans, worse still if such competition was to come from the Africans. Unfortunately, for the CSM, the Education Ordinances of 1924 and 1931 provided for the creation of private schools. Reverend Kiambati was allowed

by the Director of Education to start a temporary school near the place where the *Arathi* had first started their church while awaiting for further communication from his office.[41]

The first independent school was started in 1931 at Kiamucumbi. The *Arathi* church building was used as a classroom on weekdays and as a church house on Sundays. The first teachers at the school were Kiambati, who also acted as a Headmaster, Johana M'Ntiba, a brother of Kiambati and a former CSM teacher-evangelist at Kajiunduthi school[42], and Paulo Kamau, a founder member of *Arathi* as well as a former CSM teacher-evangelist in Kikuyuland.

Reverend Kiambati, who had proved himself a man of no mean intelligence[43], made use of the political climate in the colony to win support and sympathy from the members of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). Some of the KCA leaders who gave him support in his endeavours to obtain a permit to continue with the independent school were Joeli M'Ikingi (secretary of KCA, Nithi Branch), Johana Kunyiha (leader of KCA, Nyeri) and Paulo Kamau of Kiambu.[44] In November 1931, Kiambati was finally granted a permit by the Director of Education to formally establish an independent school the following year.[45]

Interference by the missionaries in the cultural life of the Nithi people triggered the emergence of independent schools. But there were other factors that contributed to the call for independent schools. Nithi people had realised

that the missionaries were reluctant to give Africans academic education.[46] Instead they put greater emphasis on practical or vocational education than literacy education, which the African saw as a deliberate education policy aimed at preparing them for a servitude position in the colony. To the Nithi people and indeed to most Africans elsewhere in the colony, vocational education was viewed as a lower type of education specially designed for African children.

It was for this reason that the Nithi people started to demand higher education. Higher education to the Nithi did not only mean higher in standard or class but also meant higher in quality and most important, education which was biased towards academic, as opposed to vocational skills.[47] The Nithi people wanted academic education because they had seen that it was only those who could read, write and communicate effectively in English and Kiswahili who could proceed to higher institutions of learning or join any profession.[48] It was this kind of education that the Nithi people wanted, and since the missionaries were unwilling to provide it to all the willing pupils, independent schools strove to fill the gap. The missionaries at Chogoria chose a few pupils who continued to take literacy education, a factor which angered Nithi people. They wanted literacy education to be made available to all children, not to a select group.

The Nithi people also wanted western education without discrimination. But this was not the case in mission

schools where bias was quite visible. The missionaries had refused to allow married people to attend mission schools under the pretext that they were too old to learn.[48] Nor did mission schools admit pupils whose parents did not adhere to the so called Native Church Laws. The CSM also refused to admit pupils whose religious background was not Protestant. For example, they allowed pupils to register at Chogoria from other Protestant churches like the Methodist Church, but could not admit pupils from the Roman Catholic Church.[50] Catholics were not as rigid as the Protestants on matters relating to African culture. Independent schools became the only avenue through which religious rejects could pursue education.

Another factor that contributed to the need for independent schools was that the government had not built any school for Africans in Nithi Division. This meant that those dismissed from mission schools, or who did not wish to register in such schools, had no alternative institutions.[51] Since the CSM had refused to allow pupils and teachers who had not signed the loyalty document into their schools, and the government did not offer an alternative, the question of access to education became quite critical in 1930s.

The Meru LNC accused Roman Catholics of giving low education with more emphasis on *kirira* (catechism). This was not considered to be the right kind of education.[52] Nithi people had realised the importance of literacy education, which offered better jobs like teaching, and

office duties. Roman Catholics' emphasis on religion at the expense of literacy education encouraged pupils interested in pursuing further literacy education to look around for alternatives. It was due to this background that the independent school movement met with positive response from Nithi people.

In 1932, the number of independent schools in Nithi Division increased to two with the establishment of a school at Muunga.[53] The school was started by Ismael M'Thara in a compound previously used by the CSM but which was boycotted by the local people in 1929. The school admitted the pupils who had boycotted learning there two years before. The school at Kiamucumbi was moved to Tungu, at a place locally referred to as *Itirini*[54], to allow for expansion of the school's physical facilities. Tungu was also more centrally situated than Kiamucumbi. The school was known as Tungu independent school, named after the River Tungu which flowed near the school. M'Thara and Philipo Mukobwa taught at Muunga while Paulo Kamau and Johana M'Ntiba taught at Tungu school, while Kiambati acted as the director of these schools.[55]

By 1933, due to educational demand and community enthusiasm, five more independent schools had been established.[56] They were all started to cater for the children who could not be admitted in mission schools. Dr. Irvine described these schools as anti-mission which supported old and immoral practices[57]. He had cause to be

alarmed by the emergence of independent schools because they drained CSM schools of their pupils and teachers. To suppress the spread of independent schools, Dr. Irvine started a war against them. He began by posting CSM teachers to the independent schools with the aim of winning people back to the mission church and schools.[58] But the plot failed when the SMACS committee refused to employ Irvine's agents or anyone they thought would influence the pupils and teachers to desert the independent schools.

Dr. Irvine then sought support from the members of *Njuri Nceke* and the LNC, especially those who were Christians, "to help him cripple the independent schools posing a threat to the CSM schools".[59] It was therefore not surprising when the LNC refused to give any financial aid to independent schools. In 1941, Kiambati applied for funds from the Meru LNC but was refused. The effect of refusing to fund independent schools tended to strengthen the determination of the people of Nithi to go on, now even more forcibly with the development of the African schools, for African children, run by African masters.[60] The leaders of independent schools were referred to as "plausible rogues".[61]

Dr. Irvine managed to lure some of the trained teachers from the independent schools. Due to the lack of qualified teachers, independent schools engaged former CSM hospital dressers, such as Suleiman Nancu, and lay evangelists who had not been trained as teachers such as Zakayo Kiririka and

Damaris Mugambi, as their teachers.[61] Nancu joined *Arathi* after it was revealed to him by the *Arathi* leaders who had caused the death of his two children. He was told that he had blindly followed instructions from the *Wazungu* to cut thatching rushes from a cursed swamp[63]. To stop further misfortune from befalling him, he joined *Arathi* who provided an answer to his mystery. It is difficult to tell who started which school because almost all the documents regarding the schools were destroyed in 1952. However, Kiririka, Nancu and Mugambi were assigned to teach in such schools as Tungu, Muunga, Gantariki, Karimba, Kariani, Kagongo and Karigini.[64]

Independent schools attracted many African pupils and teachers from far and wide. These schools were nicknamed *gioca* (collector or saviour) because they admitted pupils and employed teachers regardless of their religious, social and economic background, and did not discriminate on the basis of age or sex of either teachers or pupils.[65] Most of the qualified teachers came from CSM, Methodist and Catholic churches. Most of the pupils in independent schools were former mission boys and girls, who were dismissed by Dr. Irvine for various reasons. For example, many lost their place at Chogoria on the grounds that they had married pagans or were seen participating in traditional dances or came from a family of *Arathi* or from non-Christian homes. Such religious rejects were acceptable at any *gioca* school.

In 1941, there emerged even an greater outburst of

Arathi, whose members were young men and women. They repudiated everything foreign, such as clothes, aluminium cooking pots, modern medicine and payment of taxes as well as schools. They claimed that they could smell wizard. This group of *Arathi* came to be referred to as *Iroria* (foretellers).[66] The lower classes of some of the independent schools lost most of their pupils as the new *Iroria* groups took root. For instance, at Kirumi and Karimba most pupils left the school to join *Iroria*.[67] Consequently, in 1946, Karimba was taken over by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA)[68] while Kirumi went to the Roman Catholic Church in 1947.[69] The remaining pupils who did not wish to go to either to PCEA school at Karimba or the Roman Catholic school at Kirumi moved to Kagongo independent school which was run by SMACS.[70]

Despite the problems encountered, independent schools continued to expand; both in the number of out-schools opened and the number of pupils enrolling in them. The out-schools were started to serve as "feeder schools" for Tungu school, which offered the highest level of education among all independent schools. Pupils in out-schools who wished to further their learning went to Tungu school.

Out-schools were also called *Cukuru cia Johnstone* (Johnstone's schools) by the local community. The out-schools included Kagongo, Kirigini, Karimba, Kariani,[71] Kirigara, Muthambi, Gantariki, Mweria and Iriga.[72] Some independent schools were also started in Embu and Igoji and

managed by SMACS.[73] SMACS opened at least one school in every place where *Arathi* had started a church to serve the people around the area. The schools were all of elementary level, barely going beyond standard three.

In 1942, the independent school at Tungu registered its first standard six pupils in the primary school classes, becoming the second largest school in Nithi Division after Chogoria PCEA school. Tungu school was expanded because Kiambati intended to make it the central school, using Chogoria school as the model. All other independent schools served as out-schools of Tungu and so they had less support than the main school. Sub A and B classes were taught by Suleiman Nancu while Standard one to three classes were headed by Peter Mbungu, a former teacher in Kiambu.[74] The primary section was headed by George Mworia Mwithimbu, a T.2 trained teacher.[75] Mworia got his early education at Kaaga Methodist School where he taught before he was dismissed because of his involvement with the KCA and the independent school movement. The Methodist Church also accused him of being an agitator for demanding higher salaries and better working conditions for teachers working in mission schools.[78]

Although the independent schools were not all effective educational instruments[77], their existence provided an alternative for willing pupils who had been dismissed by the missionaries or had voluntarily decided to leave mission schools. Some of the independent schools,

especially Tungu, provided good education, and sometimes better than most mission out-schools. Tungu school, for instance, had well trained teachers, offered subjects such as English and Kiswahili at all levels, had adequate school facilities, classrooms, equipment and had adequate revenue to run it. Most of these facilities did not exist in most mission out- schools. Independent schools had devoted teachers who devoted all their time and energy to the schools' welfare. For example, Kiambati gave up most of his *Arathi* Church activities to concentrate on the development of secular education in the independent schools.[78] He was no longer a full-time preacher of the *Arathi* Church but rather assumed the role of a director of independent schools. The pupils were also keen to learn.

Other than providing an alternative for those pupils who had been dismissed from mission schools, the independent schools had given a challenge to the missionaries of the PCEA and the Roman Catholics in the education endeavour. There was a marked improvement in the standard of education in most of the mission schools as the missionaries tried to please their pupils and in this way retain most of them. It was due to the competition between the missionaries and independent schools that the Roman Catholics picked up the idea of not only teaching people *Kirira* (catechism) but also gave them academic education.[79]

Independent schools in Nithi Division were also accused by the missionaries at Chogoria of being anti-progress,

anti-Christian and anti-government. But discipline was maintained in independent schools and the parents, as well as the pupils, were law abiding.[80] The accusations were based on the independent schools' involvement with the KCA, KAU and Kikuyu Independent School Association (KISA) which opposed colonial rule. As a result, the government and indeed the missionaries did all that they could to discourage the spread of these schools. In its effort to frustrate the independent schools even more, the government refused to register independent schools for government examinations. The independent school movement in Nithi Division was connected with the KCA and KISA, although Reverend Kiambati denied this.[81]

The SMACS had almost similar objectives (for the Meru people) to KISA: "to further the interests of the Kikuyu and its members and to safeguard the homogeneity of such interests relating to their spiritual, economic, social and educational upliftment".[82] It was because of similarity of the objectives that the independent schools in Nithi Division were sometimes referred to as KISA schools.[83] Independent schools provided the means through which educational standards could be raised, and hence, social and economic betterment could be achieved especially by those who had been dismissed from the mission schools.

In 1946, the development of independent schools was almost halted by a huge fire that destroyed a section of Tungu school, which was by then the 'heart' of the

independent schools in Nithi Division.[84] It was at Tungu school that all teaching materials and official documents were kept.

It is not clear what caused the fire, but there are two explanations for it. The local community around the school say the fire was accidental.[85] It is generally believed that the fire came from nearby farms where some farmers were burning bushes to clear their farms and were unable to control the fire which then spread to the grass-thatched classrooms and a section of the offices cum store.[86] Pupils and the local community successfully battled with the fire before it razed the entire school.

But there are those who feel that the fire was deliberately started as an act of sabotage. Dr. Irvine of Chogoria mission and some Christian members of *Njuri Nceke* were not pleased with the presence of the independent schools and they therefore could have planned, through agents, to set the school on fire.[87] Such a conspiracy between the missionaries and the *Njuri ya Mauku* (Njuri of books or Christian/*athomi* members of *Njuri Nceke*) was possible, perhaps because these independent schools had become a real threat to mission schools as they became a 'home' for mission school rejects.[88] The missionaries were not happy to have the independent schools continue robbing them of their pupils. *Gitari* argued that, if these independent schools were destroyed, pupils who had been dismissed from mission school would eventually come back to

the schools due to lack of somewhere to go.

Independent schools had also been accused by African Christians and missionaries of harbouring *Arathi* elements who were forcibly circumcising girls in Nithi Division. For instance, in 1946, some female CSM adherents at Chogoria were seized and circumcised by force in Chief Ngentu's location.[88] Independent schools and *Arathi* members were blamed for the incident, and this fuelled the already existing conflict between the missionaries and African Christians on one hand and the *Arathi* (commonly called *Aregi* by the mission Christians) on the other.

The missionaries at Chogoria were also worried about the independent schools' involvement with the KAU. This worry unfolded in 1946, during Kenyatta's visit to Meru. On arrival at Mweria in Nithi Division, Kenyatta was presented with gifts of a sword, spear, club and shield by Johnstone Kiambati.[89] This was an indication that independent schools movement in Nithi was from the beginning directly or indirectly involved in the struggle for independence. The leaders of independent schools worked hand in hand with KCA officials both in Kikuyu land and in Meru. Consequently, the independent schools movement gained a lot of popularity with the people of Meru because it was seen as another forum for airing their grievances against missionary and colonial domination.

Taking all the above into consideration, it is possible to get a probable motive behind the burning of the Tungu

independent school. Some of the *Njuri ya Mauku* members who were alleged to have conspired in the planning of how Tungu school was to be wiped out included Assistant Chief Johana M'Rewa of Karingani, Chief Wallace M'Mwuoga of Muthambi, Chief Petero M'Nkiria of Magumoni and Chief Josiah Mantu of Chogoria.[81] They were all, except M'Mwuoga, former evangelists in 1930s before they were appointed chiefs. It was argued at the September 1946 meeting of *Njuri Nceke* members that independent schools were offering "bad" education. Independent school education was viewed as "bad" because it accommodated some customs of the people into its system. Independent schools were also accused of disrupting the smooth running of mission schools as they caused the mass exodus of both pupils and teachers from mission centres.[82]

Kiambati is said to have found out the truth of the matter. According to him, *Gitari* and *Njuri Nceke* were behind the fire that destroyed Tungu school. The matter was taken to court; the case lasted throughout 1947 and ultimately *Njuri Nceke* was found guilty.[83] *Njuri Nceke* was ordered to pay the damages.[84] But in a strange twist of justice at work, the money to pay for the damages was forcibly collected from the people of Nithi. Chiefs, their assistants and headman went round demanding one shilling from every male adult in the area. The money collected was handed over to the District Commissioner and was later given to Kiambati to rebuild Tungu school. This was the only money

he ever got from the government.[86]

One of the greatest marks of expansion was the opening of the first independent secondary school in 1948 at Tungu. It registered the first group of Form One pupils the same year.[86] By 1949, Tungu school had become a complex consisting of a day elementary school section (sub A and B, Standard one to three), a boarding primary section (Standard four-six) and a boarding secondary section (Form I-II). It also had an agricultural plot and a workshop for practical subjects such as carpentry, masonry, and agriculture respectively.[87] These subjects were offered to willing pupils.

Independent schools were referred to as KISA, African Private Schools (APS), African Independent Schools (AIS), and South Meru African Community School (SMACS).[88] However, Kiambati officially used the terms African Private Community (APC) and SMACS.[88] Tungu secondary school was officially called the Meru African Secondary School.[100] Kiambati used the word "African" in the school's title to denote the absence of European influence in the management of independent schools. The Meru African Secondary School was the only independent secondary school in Meru District. Teachers who taught at Tungu came from various parts of Meru and beyond. For example, in 1951, among the teachers at Tungu were Fredrick Fadhili from Moshi, Lucas Wose from Bungoma, Livingstone Momanyi from Kisii and Philip Andlive from Uganda.[101]

Although independent schools in Nithi were accused of being "rotten in every respect and staffed with untrained teachers,"[102] some of them had some of the most qualified teachers of the time. For example, in 1951, Tungu school had such teachers as Solomon Magambo who held a diploma in education from Makerere College, George Mworia a teacher (T. II), Philip Andlive (T. II), Lucas J. Wose (T. II), Robert M'Ibutu (T. III), John Abore (T. IV), John M'Nairobi (T. IV), Livingstone Amboi (T. IV) and Fredrick M. Fadhili (T. III).[103] These were all teaching at Tungu school and also at the independent out-schools. Fadhili had trained at Moshi Teachers' College,[104] while Wose trained in Bungoma and acted as the Principal of Tungu school between 1950 and 1952.[105]

In most of the independent out-schools, the teachers were untrained and had little education. Such teachers included Filipo Mukobwa, Junius Muchomba, Ernest Gaitungi and Joeli Mwithiga who had standard three level of education.[106] Apart from their teaching duties, all the teachers acted as evangelists and helped to spread *Arathi* doctrine. They were, therefore, both teachers and evangelists in the independent church and school movement.

Independent schools offered co-education taught mainly by male teachers. There were only a few female teachers at out-schools and Tungu school. Among them were Igoki from Itara and Mumo Muceke from Muthambi[107], who ...ed in the teaching of domestic science to the girls.

The wives of the teachers in the out-schools were useful for teaching domestic science to the girls. For example, Agnes Ntiba taught at Karimba school. Each out-station had at least one woman teacher, but none of them were trained.

Independent school attendance was low compared to mission schools. For instance, at Tungu school in 1950, there were 60 boys and 48 girls in the elementary classes, and 40 boys and 5 girls were in the primary classes,[108] while Chogoria had a total of 55 boys and 40 girls in primary classes. The secondary school had 18 pupils in Form I and 20 in Form II, with no female pupil.[109] In 1952, Tungu school had an enrolment of 63 in elementary and 90 in the primary section.[110] Most of the pupils who failed to proceed to primary classes in the mission schools enrolled at Tungu School, which caused the doubling of primary enrolment between 1950 and 1952. The figures shown above reflect the school attendance in the Tungu independent school alone. School attendance in the out-schools was disappointingly low. This was brought about by some parents who removed their children from the independent schools and returned them to the CSM or Roman Catholic schools after they realised that education offered at some of the independent schools was low.[111] Some pupils disappeared from school when they married, or joined other *Arathi* sects which did not advocate education or anything western. Another reason was that some pupils did not go beyond elementary classes because their parents did not encourage

them and at times there was no money for the fees. Most of the *Arathi* did not engage in any growing of cash crops and as such they were generally poor.

The most difficult year in the history of independent schools in Nithi Division was 1952. This is the year Kiambati was arrested and imprisoned after he was accused by the local Chief, Wallace M'Mwuoga, of participating in the circumcision of under-age children in Muthambi location. He was also accused of involvement with the Kenya African Union (KAU). He was released in August of the same year after a successful appeal through an Indian advocate from Nairobi.[112] During the period that Kiambati remained in police custody, the SMACS committee managed the independent schools quite well. The committee had people like Joshua Mugwika from Karaa, Amos Ragwa from Tungu, Leornas Njagi from Kirigini, Johana M'Ntiba from Karimba and Philipo Mukobwa from Muthambi.[113]

In February 1952 *Njuri Nceke* openly showed its dislike for independent schools. The *Njuri Nceke* condemned all the activities of independent schools, and churches, the Mau Mau and the KAU in Meru District.[114] This condemnation was followed by the indiscriminate arrest of all persons who had any connection with the Mau Mau, KAU and the independent school movement.[115] It had become apparent that the missionaries, the government, and the local authorities (LNC, *Njuri Nceke*) were first and foremost worried about political issues but ill-directed their persecutions to the

independent school and church movement in Meru District. Independent schools were viewed with great suspicion by the government and missionaries alike.[116] Similarly, independent schools were viewed as training grounds for rebellion. Some of the independent school teachers became administrators of the Mau Mau oath.[117] This state of affairs disrupted the running of the independent schools with some pupils and teachers going to the forest to fight the Europeans, while others naturally left school altogether to evade possible victimisation by the authorities.

The worst fate to befall the independent school movement was the burning of all independent school buildings in Nithi by the colonial authorities in 1952 in what the authorities thought was a measure of weakening the Mau Mau activities.[118] Soon after the burning of schools, Kiambati disappeared and remained hidden in the forest for fear of being arrested again. He was later found in 1954 and shot dead by the security men as he attempted to run away. His body was brought to the chief's camp for public viewing,[118] which had a big negative impact on the advocates of the independent school movement. The death of Kiambati, and the arrest of most independent school teachers weakened the growth and the very existence of independent schools. With all independent schools burnt, teachers who escaped arrest continued to teach some of the pupils who wished to learn despite the growing uncertainity. In the absence of school buildings, *Arathi* Church buildings served as classrooms

during weekdays. By 1954, most pupils from independent schools had moved to the temporary village schools ran by mission teachers, where security was guranteed.

4.4 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS' CURRICULUM

The educational curriculum which was adopted in the independent schools in Nithi Division was what Nithi people saw as ideal, that is, greater emphasis on academic education rather than voccational education. Tungu school offered the highest level of education among all independent schools. The curriculum of the independent schools was as Welbourn puts it, "based on a conscious attempt to rebuild an education which, while borrowing heavily from the west, should belong essentially to the new Africa which existed in the minds of its leaders".[120] The leaders had the desire to be independent from missionary control and knew very well that there was a difference between good education and independence. The independent schools in Nithi attempted to accommodate what was good from the missions and some aspects of Meru culture. They borrowed a lot of ideas from the CSM education curriculum but refused direct missionary control of their schools. They also refused to follow the government syllabus and examinations. SMACS planned the school curriculum and the teachers executed it with little regard for the government educational policies.

The pupils in independent schools were taught the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) from elementary to primary

classes.[121] In the initial period, the elementary classes enrolled many pupils, mainly due to excitement caused by the female circumcision crisis. Since it was difficult to get qualified teachers in 1930s, former mission boys and girls were recruited as teachers in the out-schools while qualified teachers were stationed at Tungu school.[122] This changed in the 1940s when more teachers in the mission schools in Nithi Division and other mission stations in the colony were dismissed from mission services for whatever reason and were able to secure jobs in the independent schools.[123] Independent schools employed most of the qualified teachers who applied to teach there. To attract people to their schools, independent school teachers taught the 3Rs throughout the day. In late 1940s, they realised that there was need to offer vocational training to supplement the 3Rs. Time given to each subject depended on how much pupils understood it. Some subjects could be taught the whole day or have three subjects on the time table. This depended on the discretion of the teacher and stamina of the pupils.

Vocational training included subjects such as agriculture, masonry and carpentry. But there was little emphasis on them because Nithi people saw vocational subjects as meant to keep the African in a servile position all his life, with no chance of ever getting a better paying job.[124] Missionaries' insistence on training the African in the practical subjects was a calculated move to retain the

African in the low status of a labourer and a servant. The teaching of practical subjects was discussed in various SMACS meetings and it was agreed that more emphasis should be placed on academic subjects and little, if any, on vocational training.[125] The introduction of vocational subjects was due to the fact that the pupils did not get any jobs after finishing their schooling at the independent schools since they did not take any government examination. For this reason, SMACS opted to follow the CSM Educational Curriculum.

In 1942, when Tungu school opened its first primary section, it was decided by SMACS that vocational training should be taught together with academic subjects in the elementary classes. Only academic education was to be taught at the primary level.[126] This decision was well received because at Tungu there were qualified teachers who could handle academic subjects. Besides, independent schools wanted to compete academically with Chogoria mission school and the only way to do this was to put more emphasis on academic subjects.

Kiswahili and English were taught to pupils at the lowest level possible in independent schools, especially at Tungu. The two languages became the medium of instruction at Tungu school while the teachers in the independent out-schools used the vernacular especially when dealing with the beginners.[127] The adoption of the Swahili and English languages at Tungu school and later at the secondary school

was understandable since some of the teachers came from outside Central and Eastern provinces and did not know the Kikuyu or Meru languages.[128] The other reason for adopting English and Swahili in the independent schools was that Swahili was associated with the settlers and English with the missionaries both of whom were their masters. To the initiators of independent schools, learning the two languages was a great achievement. Some pupils also came from outside Meru District and this favoured the use of Swahili and English at Tungu school. The pupils from other ethnic groups were able to communicate with each other in either of the languages.

The out-schools attracted pupils from neighbouring areas and this made the use of vernacular acceptable. Interestingly, the language which pupils learned to read and write in schools was Kikuyu. This anomaly was brought about by the fact that most of the teachers were from Nithi Division but trained in Kikuyuland.[128] The other factor which explains the use of Kikuyu language as the vernacular for the independent schools in Nithi Division was that the literature used was in Kikuyu. For instance, the most extensively used book was the Tuthomo Twa Ugikuyu, which was also used in CSM schools.

Domestic science for girls was also taught, but like practical subjects for men, received less attention. Female pupils in independent schools were taught sewing, cookery and child care by female teachers.[130] There were a few

qualified female teachers who had left mission teaching to teach girls and women in the independent schools. They were assisted by former dormitory girls at Chogoria who were dismissed by *Gitari* for their involvement with *mauntu ma bururi* (worldly affairs which were considered anti-missionary).[131] Kiambati spent some time teaching the female pupils some aspects of hygiene whenever he was not engaged in the management of the schools.[132] In 1949, blacksmithing was included in the independent school curriculum.[133] This happened accidentally when a pupil at Meru African Secondary School by the name of Kariuki Muraya started to make knives and pangas from scrap metal. He was later paid by Kiambati to teach the skill to some of the interested pupils in the school.[134] It was one thing to say vocational training was unimportant and another in practice. People themselves had realised the futility of going through academic education without certificates because no government recognised examinations were offered.

The question of demanding academic training existed in the minds of the people while in practice most parents and pupils alike knew what was best for them. Over the years, few people who had gone through independent school education, with all its academic inclination, got employed in either government or mission sector. The truth dawned on many pupils that the 3Rs were not important if there was no job guarantee. This alone caused a big dropout of pupils at the elementary level. For the two years that Kariuki

remained a teacher at the school, the school benefited greatly as it was able to make its own tools and to repair or improvise some tools to be used in agriculture or carpentry.

Religious education had a special place in the educational curriculum in the independent schools.[135] Every school day opened with prayers conducted by the teachers. The teachers played the role of evangelists as they were required to instil the *Arathi* teaching and beliefs to their pupils. There was, therefore, extensive use of the Old Testament in the schools during prayer meetings and also in the class. The excessive use of the Old Testament was aimed at legitimizing some of the *Arathi* practices. For example, *Arathi* recognised such African practices and rites as circumcision, polygamy, offering animal sacrifices and the power of prophesying, all of which were found in the Old Testament.[136] For the independent school movement to be independent meant perpetuating all the ideas which made the *Arathi* move away from missionary influence and control.

The main aim of adopting the above curriculum was to create an *Arathi* personality out of the pupils who had joined the independent schools. They were determined to sharpen their pupils and make them equal to the Europeans. It was for this reason that more emphasis was put on academic education than on practical and vocational training. To achieve this, some of the African teachers and SMACS members gave all their time and energy, sometimes

going without pay, to make sure that their pupils got what they could not get in the mission schools.

4.5 MATERIAL RESOURCES

Most of the material resources for the independent schools were acquired through the effort of the local community, the teachers and the SMACS. The material resources included land, money, building material and teaching equipment. The independent schools in Nithi Division did not receive any assistance from the government or the Meru Local Native Council or the missionaries, and it is therefore important to understand how they were able to survive on their own.

Arathi leaders donated land on which a church and school could be built. The free donation of land for the construction of independent schools shows clearly that, while the people of Nithi were interested in learning, they were not ready to abandon their established custom in order to acquire western education and were willing to sacrifice property to retain their cultural independence. Funds used to run the independent schools were raised from various sources. The SMACS relied on voluntary donations from friends and individual donations from church members for the maintenance of the schools.[137] For example, KISA gave some money to pay teachers in 1947 when the school at Tungu was being reconstructed. There were instances when some teachers within the CSM school at Chogoria collected money to give to

the independent schools. Two of them were discovered and dismissed from the school at Chogoria[138] because they were accused of having funded an all African organisation that taught pseudo-Christianity.[138] The cooperation between African teachers at the mission schools and those in independent schools shows that the division between the two was not as sharp as it was usually portrayed. Some of those who joined *Arathi* had relatives in the mission, which led to such assistance.

To keep the pupils at the boarding schools, the pupils were required to pay school fees. For instance in 1950, boarders at Tungu secondary school were required to pay 121 shillings per year.[140] Day pupils paid 78 shillings per year in the primary school.[141] This money was used to buy food and pay teachers' salaries.

Arathi adherents also contributed to the maintenance of the schools. Half of whatever was contributed during Sunday service was given to the SMACS committee.[142] Apart from church contributions, *Arathi* adherents also organised a 'common pool', where each member was required to bring foodstuff such as beans and maize to be used in the school.[143] Food contribution brought down expenditure substantially. When money was required, the foodstuff collected was sold to the Asian trader at Chuka town.[144] Some money was also raised from the sale of tobacco grown in the lower parts of Muthambi. *Arathi* did not regard the use and growing of tobacco sinful, as did the CSM adherents.

During the construction of Ruguti Coffee factory in 1948, SMACS Committee encouraged independent school pupils and their parents to seek wage employment there.[145] They were able to earn a substantial amount of money, part of which was used to rebuild the school and finance the starting of the boarding secondary school.

Since there were limited sources of money, the construction of all the independent schools relied on locally available building materials. Grass and marsh-reeds were used for thatching, and dry ferns were used for the walls. At Tungu school, the walls were made of dry ferns and mud. Where there were banana plantations, dry banana leaves were used for the walls while the roofing was of dry banana stems.[146] Desks and sitting benches were made from split wood, firmly placed on two or four poles planted on the floor of the classrooms.

Teaching materials such as books, slates, chalk and boards were donated from Githunguri school and other KISA schools.[147] Githunguri, one of the oldest independent schools, was more established and had direct support from KCA and later KAU. Some teachers were sent from Githunguri to teach at Tungu school. The success of Githunguri was a great inspiration to independent schools in Nithi Division. The SMACS used part of their money to purchase their own teaching equipment from Nairobi. Teachers from independent schools gave contributions towards the development of education. They bought books, slates, chalk and pencils for

the schools where they were teaching.[148]

4.6 IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Although independent schools in Nithi Division were mainly in Muthambi and Kiera Location, their impact was felt in the whole of Nithi Division. The local community and European missionaries in Nithi Division were in one way or the other, affected by the emergence of these schools.

For one, independent schools served as a catalyst to the development of education in Nithi Division. Up to 1931, education was in the hands of European missionaries. The missionaries, although competing amongst themselves (that is, Romam Catholic versus CSM), were content to offer what they considered good education to the Africans without any competition from the African run schools. The kind of education given to the Africans of Nithi Division was designed to keep Africans at the bottom of the social, economic and political ladder. The emergence of independent schools was a threat to the existing mission schools.[148] This competition or struggle for education between the missionaries and the independent school movement created a healthy situation for the improvement of education because the missionaries were forced to address themselves more seriously to the question of African education to meet the challenge posed by independent schools.

The missionaries also deliberately kept the number of those proceeding to the higher classes low by giving

Africans a series of difficult examinations. For example, one had to pass the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) to move from standard three to four and Kenya African Preliminary Examination (KAPE) to move from Standard Six to secondary school.[150] These examinations were meant to cut down the number of those going for higher education.[151] After a number of years repeating in the same class, one naturally gave up. Independent schools admitted such pupils in order to give them a chance of proceeding to higher classes. Pupils in independent schools did class tests and moved to the next class without much ado. Without necessarily having to pass examinations independent schools did not strictly adhere to the government system of examination.[152] Going to the next class depended on an individual pupil's wish and ability. So long as the pupil remained in school, the parents were satisfied. It was the parents' wish that their children should have, as far as they could judge, the best education available.

Independent schools greatly helped to enhance the level of literacy in Nithi Division. There were many people who realised the importance of education but had no way of getting it especially when education was monopolised by mission schools. Parents whose children were denied a chance of learning in a mission school took their children to independent schools where they could learn "European knowledge" while keeping to their established customs.[153] The independent schools may have provided a kind of

education which fell short of the government's syllabus, but it was still better than no education at all. Those who could not go to mission schools went to the independent schools. Therefore education was never again to be limited to a small clique that was acceptable to European missionaries.

Independent schools also became a "factory", so to speak, from where teachers were obtained to teach in the same schools and in mission schools too.[154] Old boys and girls who had deserted mission schools for various reasons were some of the most educated people at the time. Some pupils and teachers from independent schools went to *Gitari* and presented themselves before the Kirk Session for readmission into both the Church and school. Some of them, after fulfilling the Church's disciplinary requirements, were readmitted, a clear sign that the division between mission and *Arathi* was not so sharp. With the establishment of more mission schools, there was need for more teachers and neither *Gitari* nor the church elders hesitated to take the pupils back to the mission at Chogoria. For example, Ephanto Marangu and Pharis Mutunga[155] left Tungu school for Chogoria, where they were employed as pupil-teachers. Renald Kamuru was also taken from Tungu school to teach at Nkuthika school in Chuka with a promise that he would be taken to college to train as a teacher.[156]

Independent schools also provided employment for the teachers who were dismissed from mission schools. Most of

the teachers who taught at Tungu school or at any of the independent out-schools were mission rejects or rejected the mission themselves. These teachers were termed "difficult and agitators" by the missionaries but proved to be an asset in the development of education in Nithi Division.[157] These teachers put all their energy and time into the expansion of education without waiting for guidance and assistance from European missionaries.

Nithi people directly benefited from the emergence of independent schools because these schools provided a market for their foodstuff.[158] Tungu School bought maize and beans from the local farmers who in turn were able to pay taxes and buy essential commodities. As a result people preferred growing food crops which fetched quick money as opposed to coffee.

Independent schools also stirred nationalistic feelings among the people of Nithi Division.[158] This increased African awareness of the prevailing social, economic and political problems. Independent schools became the meeting places of KAU members and fostered the sharing of ideas between people from different cultural groups. Key members of KAU had a lot to do with the independent school movement because it was in the independent school movement that one got support from the people.

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155 Idib.

156 O.I., R. Kamuru

157 O.I., Silas Njoka, Chuka, 18th December, 1990

158 O.I., Jediel Micheni

159 O.I., Maxwell Rwigi, Kiang'ondu, 13th April, 1991

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, 1931-1960

5.1 RESTRUCTURING OF CSM EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES 1930-39

The exodus of teachers, evangelists and pupils from mission to independent schools was a big worry to European missionaries. Something had to be done to arrest the situation. The so-called backsliders had to be won back to the church and schools and ways of attracting more people had to be found. To do this, the CSM introduced a number of changes throughout the first decade after the female circumcision crisis of 1929-30.

The first thing the CSM did was to give special responsibilities and status to the educated young men, especially those who had signed the Church's loyalty document. For instance, on 14th February,1931 several teachers and evangelists, who had stood faithful throughout the storms of 1929-30 crisis, were made members of the first ever Church Kirk Session of Chogoria. A Kirk Sesssion is a Law Making body and a court within the CSM. They were Philipo M'Thura, Musa M'Muga, Jonathan Murithi, Willie Kanini and Ayub Wangai, the headmaster of Chogoria Central School.[1] Such preferential treatment accorded to the teachers and evangelists enhanced their trust and confidence in the missionaries .

The first Kirk Session of Chogoria had a total membership of 6, all of them Africans. As members of the Kirk Session, the teachers took part in the making of decisions that affected the CSM educational, religious and medical work in Nithi Division. They supervised Church finances and dealt with the discipline

of Church adherents and employees, such as the teachers.[2] African teachers and evangelists were beginning to take an active role in the decision-making in matters that affected them and their community.

At the same time, some teachers and evangelists were appointed church elders. Since the church and education were inseparable, church elders took a keen interest in religious matters as well as educational development. The church elders were Willie Kanini, Musa M'Muga, Daudi M'Rewa, Jason Karanja, Phares Mutunga, Joseph Gathoga and Paulo Mwenda.[3] Dr. Irvine described Musa M'Muga, one of the earliest teachers, as a "tower of strength" because of his involvement in church and school development.[4]

One of the responsibilities of church elders was to assist the missionary in choosing senior pupils at Chogoria who could make good teachers and evangelists and recommend them for training.[5] Previously, the choice of who became teachers and evangelists was made only by European missionaries at the Central Station.

The European missionaries had began to realise that the teacher and evangelist was indispensable in so far as development of Church and educational matters were concerned. The missionaries had at the same time to be careful of their approach because they did not want to sacrifice missionary work by entertaining indiscipline among the church adherents. For this reason, they promoted the most religious people to higher positions within the establishment.[6] The church and school

hierarchy were given to those whom missionaries considered serious Christians.

In the mid-1930s, the teachers and evangelists were among the first people to be allowed by the misssionaries on behalf of the Government to grow cash crops were the teacher-evangelists. They grew coffee, wheat and various types of fruits. It was easy to tell the home of a *muthomi* by the existence of new crops in his farm.

This approach served as an inducement to the people as they realised it was rewarding to be associated with the mission. The first person to grow coffee in Chogoria in 1935 were Irvine's houseboy, a former evangelist at Chogoria Mission. Later, teachers and evangelists begun to grow cash crops. From coffee, teachers and evangelists got some income to add on to their salaries. There were thus economic benefits attached to religious and educational ones.

In 1931, the first young man to be sponsored by the church to Jeanes School, Daudi M'Raria, was appointed an assistant supervisor of schools in Nithi Division. He was the first African in Nithi to hold such a position. He had taught at various schools before his appointment. He continued being a faithful employee, combining church and educational duties. He remained a supervisor until 1936 when he took to full time teaching and evangelising.[6] As a supervisor, M'Raria travelled far and wide on his bicycle to supervise all the out-schools. African teachers in these out-schools liked him because he understood their problems better than the European.[7] Europeans were feared

because they had the power to sack teachers on the spot if there was something they did not like about a teacher or his teaching. In contrast, M'Raria was easily accessible and encouraged the teachers in their heavy responsibility as teachers and evangelists. He acted as the intermediary between the European missionaries and the Africans.[8] In 1937, the post of Assistant Supervisor of schools was taken by a European missionary, Ina Hood. Macpherson continued to be schools supervisor until 1937 when he left for his farlough.[9]

Teachers and evangelists were the most educated people during these years. Their services were not only needed in the classroom and church, but also in the District Education Boards (DEB). The first DEB in Meru was started in 1938 to advice and deal with elementary education.[10] Among those nominated to the board were Isaiah Imanene, Solomon Magambo and Philipo M'Inoti. By 1939, the Meru DEB was controlling 2 Roman Catholic schools and 19 CSM schools which included 1 school at Chogoria, 9 elementary and 9 sub-elementary schools in Nithi Division.[11] The presence of teachers and evangelists in the DEB meetings was crucial in that they were the experts in the field of education and their views were sought and given due consideration. They had first-hand information on which school needed funds and which one needed additional teachers under the DEB grants.

Some of the earliest *athomi* were appointed chiefs and headmen. The chiefs were able to mobilise people to build schools, and also to encourage parents to take their children to school. One of the earliest educated chiefs was Ngentu of

Chogoria. He supported the development of education after changing his attitude towards the missionaries.[12] He officially laid the foundation stone of Itiri school (the present day Chogoria Boys' High School) in December 1934 as a gesture of his support for education.[13] Chiefs were nominate by the missionary on the spot. There was a great advantage in having chiefs who understood the importance of education.[14]

In 1935, the missionaries at Chogoria gave the Africans a chance to manage their education affairs by forming the first ever African School Committee. The committee was made up of teachers, evangelists and church elders.15 This committee was responsible for educational affairs of all CSM schools in Nithi Division. This is what Irvine said about the committee: "they had managed the schools with increasing efficiency".[16] The school committee was composed of all the Chogoria Kirk Session members.

Some teachers and evangelists from Nithi Division were also appointed to the Meru Local Native Council (LNC) from 1934.[17] The LNC was empowered after 1920s to levy taxes and collect land fees which could be used for the development of education and any other social development.[18] Abednego Muchiri, Daudi M'Raria and Jonathan Murianki were nominated members of the Meru LNC. The role of the teachers and evangelists in the LNC was to give professional views on matters concerning education. For instance, they were in a position to give names of the needy and promising pupils who required bursaries because they knew the pupils better than the missionaries. Abednego Mwenda and Erasto

Mwirichia benefited from these LNC bursaries in 1936 and 1937 respectively on the strength of teachers' recomendation.[19]

Other than the awarding of such scholarships, the teachers pressed for the extension of existing schools and the opening of new ones during LNC meetings. For example, in 1934, Abednego Muchiri told the LNC that there was not a single school in Magumoni location, his home area, and there was need for one. This led to the establishment of Kibubwa (today Njuri School).[20] The extension of Kiereni was also approved the same year after the owner of the land agreed to donate more land for the school.[21] Other stations approved were Kiacheu in Muthambi, Nkumbo, Kiraro, Kiriani and Kiangua.[22]

Since there was no member in the LNC from the Consolata Catholic Mission (CCM), no school was approved for them in the early 1930s. However, in 1933, the LNC granted a 33 year land lease to the CCM at Chuka town on which they could build a church.[3] The views of teachers and evangelists in LNC meetings were always taken seriously. There seemed to be fewer favours towards the Catholics perhaps because they were not represented in the LNC. The CSM had an upper hand in LNC proceedings because of their concern for social development, particularly in education unlike the CCM.

The *Njuri Nceke* did not wish to recruit any Christian into their council because the Christians were in no way for the presevartion and observation of the Meru culture. Dr. Clive Irvine did not initially approve of Christian or his teachers and evangelists joining the *Njuri Nceke*. To him, *Njuri Nceke*

was "a secret society which was essentially pagan and which possessed traditions of cruelty, murder and intrigue".[24] Such an unflattering description was unfortunate because Dr. Irvine did not understand the role of the *Njuri Nceke*. *Athomi* were, according to Irvine, people who had "seen the light" and therefore, should have nothing to do with the Meru traditions. Dr. Irvine argued that educated men could not afford to spend their valuable time in "tortuous and prolonged deliberations of the *Njuri Nceke* [25] What he and other missionaries did not understand was that the *Njuri Nceke* kept law and order in the society. Although he did not approve of it, Dr. Irvine did not outrightly discipline *athomi* who were members before they became Christians. For example, some of the *athomi* such as Johana M'Rewa, Petero M'Nkiria, Wallace M'Mwoga and Josiah Mauti, remained *Njuri Nceke* members and still maintained their *athomi* status.[26] Dr. Irvine chose not to openly interfere with some Meru cultural values because he did not want a repeat of the 1929-30 crisis, which he must have realised would have completely crippled the CSM work in Nithi Division.

In June 1933, Chuka Division was administratively moved from Embu to Meru District. It became apparent that the whole district should adopt a common vernacular in all its schools, that is, Kiimenti. Prior to 1933, the school in Nithi Division used Kikuyu as the vernacular in schools. To Irvine, the demand for the use of Kiimenti was another way of the people's expression of independence. This was seen as a direct attack on CSM schools because they were the only ones which used Kikuyu as

a medium of instruction. Methodists and the CCM schools used Kiimenti. The language demand sparked an argument in the September 1933 *Njuri Nceke* meeting at Nchiru regarding what language should be appropriate in schools.

Among those present in the *Njuri Nceke* meeting were Johana M'Rewa, Josiah Mauti, Isaiah Imanene and Petero Nkiria, CSM teacher and evangelist, and Wallace M'Mwoga, a dedicated CSM Christian who strongly put their case that Kikuyu language should remain the medium of instruction in CSM schools.[27] Their reasons were that the entire CSM personnel knew and understood Kikuyu. European missionaries understood Kikuyu, most teachers and evangelists in the CSM schools were mainly from Kikuyu country. If Kiimenti had to be adopted in CSM schools, such teachers would have to go for in-service or simply go away and take employment elsewhere. Such an eventuality would be a big blow to the schools as they would lose essential personnel, especially at a time when Meru teachers were so few. The Meru teachers in CSM schools in Nithi received their training in Kikuyu country and had adopted the Kikuyu language. Such teachers were more suited to teach in Kikuyu than in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, the books used in the CSM schools were written in Kikuyu. The Bible, hymn books and class text books were in the Kikuyu language. If Meru was to be adopted, new Meru books would have to be bought or the Kikuyu ones translated into Kiimenti. Both alternatives would be expensive and time consuming. The change would also disrupt the entire learning

process. Having realised that he could not succeed without the support of *the Njuri Nceke*, Dr. Irvine expressed his wish through the CSM *Njuri Nceke* members that Kikuyu remain the vernacular in the CSM schools.[29]

Another reason against the change to Meru was that pupils, especially the senior ones, found it difficult to change into the new language and this was bound to adversely affect their academic performance. It was then agreed that the CSM should continue to use the Kikuyu language in its schools, while the Methodists and the Catholics would use the Meru language in their schools. This could not have been possible were it not for the presence in the *Njuri Nceke* meeting of the CSM *athomi*, who were able to argue in favour of Kikuyu. The Kikuyu language thus became the accepted vernacular in all the PCEA schools, and it is currently in use.

The *Njuri ya Mauku* (members of the Njuri who were *athomi*) also assisted the missionaries in their attempt to discourage the practice of female circumcision among Church adherents. The idea of incorporating the *athomi* into *Njuri Nceke* was "to enable them to contribute to the increased number of cases in which their special knowledge would be useful".[30] Christians were also admitted into *Njuri Nceke* so that "instead of disintegration of the tribe through Christianity, there would, on the contrary, be a gradual Christianising of the tribe's institutions, while the tribe remained intact".[31] This was a way of transforming *Njuri Nceke* to Christian principles. *Athomi* in the *Njuri Nceke* became the link between the *athomi* and *non-athomi* among the Meru people.

In 1931, the missionaries introduced a boarding school at Chogoria School to cater for young boys and girls. The purpose of introducing boarding facilities was to alienate the youth from the Meru traditions which, from the missionaries' point of view, were disrupting good learning. The missionaries had realised the futility of teaching the youth what they termed Christian values, only to let them go home to join their peers in the village life. The boarding school, it was believed, would create a conducive atmosphere for building up among the youth attitudes which would enable them to maintain Christian standards.[32] The school was nicknamed *mambere* (those who came first), which was a borrowed name from the boys dormitory at Kikuyu-Mambere.[33]

The girls boarding facilities initially accommodated all girls regardless of whether they were initiated or not. But, by the mid 1930s, the missionaries started to show more interest in the young uninitiated girls. For example, in 1930, there were 19 uninitiated girls at *mambere*.[34] The emphasis on uninitiated girls was not without a purpose. It was hoped that these young girls, who had not been corrupted by the traditions, would make keen Christian women, who would be the 'light' to the rest of women folk, after school.[35] Most of the girls were daughters of Christian parents. The non-Christian parents refused to allow their daughters to go to the boarding school, fearing they would be contaminated with European ideas. Some of the girls at *mambere* came from out-schools. These girls were hand -picked on

the recommendation of the teachers in the schools, having shown interest in church and school activities.

In 1939, all the girls at *mambere* came from Mwimbi and Muthambi, save for one girl from Chuka. She was Jane Cianthuni M'Muga, a daughter of M'Muga Kabaru.[36] Her father was a renowned Christian, and founder pupil of Kiereni, who donated the piece of land on which the school was built and still stands today.

There were other changes after 1930 in the field of education. More than at any other time before, there was more emphasis on academic education in all the CSM schools. Previously, there had been more emphasis on vocational and practical training, which was one of the causes of the break-away. In 1930, for example, the CSM agreed to give academic education to all those who wanted it regardless of their sex and age.[37] Dr. Irvine also directed that teachers in the school should not mention female circumcision around the school.[38] This move attracted a good number of people to school with the number of pupils at Chogoria and its 6 out-schools increasing from 128 in 1931 to 408 in 1932.[39]

The schools also started admitting more youth in schools than was the case prior to the 1929-1930 crisis. Missionaries believed that the future of Christianity and education lay with the youth. In 1937, over 1000 of the 1500 pupils in the CSM schools were young children aged below 15 years.[40] The young men and women who had previously made up the majority of pupils left school to get married or look for jobs which terminated their studies. The young pupils were sons and daughters of some of

the first Christians. For example, Wallace M'Mwoga, Musa M'Muga and Arthur M'Muga were among the first persons to allow their daughters to go to a boarding school and stay in the dormitory.[41] From such homes Chogoria Mission got young, trained and dedicated teachers and evangelists.

There was also a marked rise of literacy level in education. For example, in 1933, 16 pupils sat for their Common Entrance Examination (CEE) which was the highest number since the starting of the mission eleven years before.[42] In 1935, the mission registered the first 2 boys to sit for the Kenya African Primary Examination (KAPE) at standard six. One Erasto Mwirichia passed to go to Alliance High School.[43] After serving as a teacher, Mwirichia became an assistant supervisor of schools. The following year, Abednego Mwenda also passed and went to Alliance High School from Nithi Division. By this time, no girl from Nithi had reached standard six. The few boys who academically made it to this level were groomed to become leaders, particularly teachers.[44]

At the out-break of the Second World War in 1939, there were 3 boys in standard six and only two girls managed to reach standard five. However, more pupils -26 boys and 3 girls-passed CEE in 1939 than in the previous year.[45] The changed attitude towards education by the local people contributed to this educational achievement.

Responding to people resentment to clustering of adults and children in the same class in CSM schools, the misssionaries reorganised the school system by having separate classes and

times for adults and children. For example, in 1934, the CSM agreed to have separate classes for adults and children. In all the sub-elementary and elementary schools, children started to attend school in the morning and the adults in the afternoon.[46] Teachers and evangelists in such schools were expected to teach in all these sessions, sometimes single handedly. For instance, at Ndagani, Justo Kanampiu taught children in the morning, and adults in the afternoon. That was not the end of the day's work for Kanampiu because he had to go out on evangelical visits in the evenings, and still spare some time to plead with the local people to allow their children to go to school. This new method had a positive effect on the school attendance because it did not conflict with Meru traditional values and adults received instruction in the absence of children and vice versa.

The emphasis on academic education was not at the total expense of vocational and practical education. The missionaries realised the importance of industrial training, which also came in handy in the maintainence of the schools and the Mission station in general. In 1931, male pupils received elementary instruction in brick-making, carpentry and masonry, while the girls continued to learn domestic science and health care.[47] This kind of learning was meant to enable the girls to assist in the hospital, while the male pupils helped in the physical expansion of the mission station and out-stations. Agriculture remained an important subject in the mission station and in all its out-stations. For agricultural practical learning, each pupil was required to have an agricultural plot at

home, which was inspected by the agriculture master. Marks in this subject were awarded and would count in the end of the year examination.[48]

The years after the circumcision crisis saw an increase in the number of CSM schools. Most of the schools had been deserted during the crisis. In 1931, there were only 2 CSM out-station schools out of the original 7,[48] and Chogoria mission was only a skeleton of its former strength.[50] By 1936, the schools had increased to 12 with a pupil population of 1693. In 1937, more schools were started and pupils had similarly increased to 1790.[51] By 1939 schools in Nithi comprised Kanyue, Kambandi, Mukuuni, Ndagani, Kiereni, Nkuthika, Itiri, Kimucia, Chogoria, Githangari, Katharaka, Gantariki, Gikurune, Kanyakine, Kirindine, Kionyo, Kajiunduthi, Miutine, Kibubwa, Ngeru, Kiraro and Kariani.

To cater for the schools, there was hurried training of teachers. To begin with, in 1932, several teachers were trained on the job, such as Justo Kanampiu, Nahaman Gajogi, Jonathan Murithi, Arthur M'Muga and Robinson M'Nkiria.[52] Out of these, 3 sat for the Elementary Teachers Examination in 1933 and passed.[53] There were another 10 young men at *mambere*, undergoing intensive training as teachers.[54] By 1934, attention was diverted to the young boys of between 16 and 20 years, who were being trained as teachers and evangelists. These boys would take three years of intensive instruction at Chogoria, after which they would be sent to teach in out-station schools, having been trained in the Bible, Church history and general education.[55] Some of the schools had enrolled more pupils than one teacher could

effectively handle. For example, at Kajiunduthi, the school had 60 pupils, distributed in all the three classes - Sub A and B and class one and were under one teacher-evangelist - Jonathan Murithi.[58]

Teaching as a profession was not everybody's job. Only the most academically promising young men in the schools made it as teachers.57 For evangelical duties, teacher trainees were chosen for their spiritual keenness, because they were required to do direct evangelical work, in schools, villages, and churches. The selection of such people was done by Macpherson, who was in charge of education between 1930-37, Dr. Irvine and church elders.[58]

Apart from those trained at Chogoria, some of the young men who had been in school for a minimum of six years were given a chance to train as Teacher 4 (T4) in Thogoto or Tumutumu. After their training, they were required to teach all subjects in sub-standard A up to standard II in any school. By 1939, several teachers had received their T4 Teachers' Certificate. These included Erasto Kiambati, who had also done a course in school management, Isaiah Imanene, Nathaniel Ragwa, Ezekiel Kanampiu, Bedan Muchiri and Samson Kiambati.[58] By 1939, CSM Chogoria had 38 trained teachers, eleven of whom had Elementary Teachers' Certificate.[60]

These teachers taught in various schools in the Division. Dr. Irvine described their work in the following words:

> The African masters and mistresses in the schools, some of them in depressing circumstances carried their duties efficiently and cheerfully throughout the year. On them - finally depends the success

or future of our Mission. ----[81]

These teachers were posted to out-schools away from their families and had very little supervision from European teachers. For example, in 1937, there were 28 African trained teachers in 14 out-schools, with only two European teachers who were stationed at Chogoria mission station.[82] European teachers taught the higher classes at the Mission Central School which left them with very little time to supervise "bush schools". This shows that the entire educational system in Nithi lay heavily on African teachers.

The increased number of pupils in schools made it difficult to rely on trained teachers alone. Some of the schools had one teacher who had to do the actual teaching and administrative duties and play the role of a coordinator between his school and the Central Mission School. Such a teacher badly needed an assistant. Some of the boys and girls who had been in school for a minimum of four years were recruited as monitors (pupils chosen to assist the teacher in various ways) and sent to such schools. The monitors taught in sub A and B. Their role was as important as that of teachers.

5.2 GIRLS' EDUCATION

Education for Nithi girls began to improve after 1930 when girls were given better opportunities for academic education. Previously, the missionaries' emphasis for higher education was on the males, whom they hoped would become teachers. Women were given simple instruction in domestic science, which was expected

to help them become better wives for the male *athomi*. For this reason, girls' education lagged behind that of men. However, after 1930, this trend changed, when the missionaries devoted more time, energy and effort to uplifting girls' education. They started offering a higher level of academic education which was equivalent to that offered to boys.[63]

It was not easy to get girls to schools, especially from non-Christian families. For a start, the missionaries decided that the mission should get girls who had become Christians to go to school and daughters of the Church adherents.[64] It was hoped that these girls would become an example to the rest of the population and would change the negative attitude towards Christianity and girls' education.

The Missionary attitude towards girls' education was responsible for the poor standard of girls' education over the years. Girls received a little academic education which was subordinate to domestic science and simple professional training, such as nursing. Since there was little academic education offered to girls, none of the girls had trained as teachers by the late 1920s. This meant therefore, that there was no African woman teacher to take charge of girls' education.

After 1930; it became important to train women to be teachers. Robert Macpherson began the training of the first women teachers in 1934. The first girl teacher-trainee was Julia Mukwamugo, who received teachers' instruction at Chogoria and sat for a T4 Examination at Kaaga Methodist Schoolin 1936. She became the first trained woman teacher in Nithi Division.[65] As

such she became an inspiration to other girls. Mukwamugo became a real asset to the CSM in Nithi and to the general expansion of girls education. She had broken the tradition and proved that not only men could become teachers. Following her example, other girls went to *mambere*. In 1937 there were 12 girls taking academic education at *mambere* which was the highest number of girls even in the school.[88]

Although the number of girls attending school was slowly beginning to pick-up, non-Christian parents were still unwilling to take their daughters to school. Some of the girls who stole their way to school, defying their parents' wish, were thoroughly punished. A girl called Kaimuri from Chogoria was beaten and denied food for several days by her parents because she had gone to school. Kaimuri wanted to become a teacher and also avoid being circumcised.[87] Her parents did not want to become the laughing stock in the village for having a "coward" and an uninitiated girl in the family. In a bid to beat the parents in the game, a teacher from Kaimuri's village had hidden her in his house and took her to Mambere where she was supposed to continue learning.[88] However, she was not able to proceed with her schooling because she was soon seized, returned home, forcibly circumcised and then married off.

The girls were kept at *mambere* to keep them from being influenced by cultural life in the villages. Those who stayed in the boarding school learnt without much disruption, but most of the girls who went home for holidays never returned to school. For example, in 1931, Ciebiti from Chuka went home never to

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return.[69] The reason of her failure to return to *mambere* was that she had become a "disgrace" to her parents. Her parents were only too happy to see her come to her right senses when she agreed to be circumcised.

As classroom teachers, female teachers taught very well, and all their pupils passed.[70] Rael Kagigi was the principal Christian teacher at *mambere*, assisting Margaret Malcolm and Ina Hood, the European lady teachers.[71] The first lady teachers, Mukwamugo and Rael Kagigi, did more than teach in the classroom. Kagigi was responsible for the well being of girls in the dormitory. She understood the girls better than the European teachers. She was the girls' counsellor. Through the examples set by such African teachers, the local society was able to discard the belief that girls who went to school were destined to become prostitutes.

The girls' dormitory (*mambere*) was exclusively meant for young girls, who were hand-picked from Christian families. It also housed some of the girls who had defied their parents and decided to attend school. Such young girls were easy to teach new ideas and it was hoped that they would be instrumental in changing peoples' attitude towards women education in Meru. By 1936, Chogoria had admitted 19 uninitiated girls from Christian families.[72]

The presence of Nithi female teachers acted as a magnet to pull more girls to school. In 1937, there were 20 boarding girls at Chogoria, a substantial increase from 15 in 1936.[73] Chogoria boarding had admitted a total of 25 Christian girls and 28 non-

Christian girls by 1938. The girls' school at Chogoria also had day scholars. In 1939, there were 40 day scholars.[74] There was also an adult class for women, who were taught domestic science by Mrs Macpherson.[75]

The local female teachers were able to manage a school even in the absence of a European teacher. In 1939, Ina Hood and B. Malcolm went on furlough, and for the whole of that year, the school was under Esther Mbae. She was a niece to Musa M'Muga, one of the earliest evangelist-teachers. She combined the roles of girls' school head teacher, teacher-in-charge of the welfare of boarding girls and taught all subjects save for domestic science, which she was not competent enough to handle.[76]

By 1939, there were several female teachers teaching girls in out-station schools. For example, Mukwamugo was sent to teach at Kanyakine, Grace Nau at Ngeru and Elizabeth Gatumu at Kimucia. Other female teachers were Jemima Karimi and Esther Mbae, who remained at the Chogoria School.[77] Other than earning a salary, female teachers taught because they believed that teaching their girls was serving God.[78]

The education of women was not limited to the classroom. Female teachers were also charged with the responsibility of taking education to women in the villages.[79] They visited people at their homes. They taught adult women some rudiments of hygiene, while at the same time pleading with them to allow their sons and daughters to go to school. Such activities required dedicated teachers.

Since the church was not ready to sacrifice the mission work by entertaining indiscipline among its adherents, it required the female teachers to live a strict moral life. They were supposed to be an example of what missionaries termed a "true Christian life". Female teachers had to wait until they were mature for marriage, and what was even more important was to marry a person whom *Gitari* and church elders approved as the "right man". Female teachers were expected to marry Christians, preferably teachers, evangelists or a hospital dresser.

All did not go smoothly in the mission, however, as there were reported cases of early marriages, adultery and fornication which led to the dismissal of several female teachers. In 1939, Kagigi and Kangai were summarily dismissed because they had affairs with Jason Karanja and Phares Mutunga respectively, who were both teacher-evangelists at Chogoria mission station.[80] The men did not marry these girls because they could not marry second wives. Non-Christian men could also not marry them because they were not initiated. This was a big scandal to the Mission. Dr. Irvine attempted to formulate a theory to explain why Christian men and women were not living in accordance with the accepted Christian principles. He said, "...education enhanced all sensibilities, emotional and physical, including the response to sexual appeal".[81]

Through education, girls became more attractive to mission boys. Their beauty and cleanliness were a great temptation to Christian men. Church elders recommended heavy fines for those found guilty in order to deter married men from committing

adultery.[82] While Dr. Irvine's theory may have been true, the Church's abolition of some Meru cultural practices, such as the strict rules and regulations which governed African sex life was partly responsible for sex related problems he was now facing at the mission.[83] Circumcision checked immorality and none of the Christian principles could be said to have replaced it as a check against immorality.

The girls who remained in the teaching profession and married the "right men" became agents of change in their villages. As a result, other girls who went to school did so with a set goal in mind, to become a teacher and to get married to a teacher.

A home where the wife was a teacher ideally became a 'school' for other women in the village. She had a lot to share with the village women who had hitherto refused to associate themselves with Europeans. The woman teacher was a nurse and medical consultant in the village. Many women came to her home to seek advice whenever they had a sick person at their homes. The lady teacher was also an evangelist, as she tried to explain to the non-Christian women the virtues of Christianity in their lives. She also played the role of an Agricultural Officer by introducing to the people new crops and new farming techniques. The lady teacher combined all the above roles with teaching at the school as well as church activities, where she was a member of church groups, such as the Women's Guild. A Women's Guild was an association exclusively for Christian women aimed at improving their general welfare.

5.3 THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON EDUCATION

Kenya joined the Second World War when Italian forces attacked Moyale in northern Kenya in July 1940. Soon after the attack, the British colonial government started a campaign for volunteers to join the Kings African Rifles (KAR). This move was necessary because of the need to expand the KAR and thereby boost the badly out-numbered British forces in East Africa. Many able-bodied men volunteered to join the KAR because some wanted to get a steady cash income, while others hoped to get free education. To most of the young people, the war provided an opportunity for adventure, which they hoped to exploit.[84]

The war had an adverse effect on the development of education in Meru District in general and Nithi Division in particular. The European missionary staff in CSM and CCM, the only two missionary societies working in Nithi, was reduced as a result of the war. For instance, in 1939, Miss Ina Hood and Butter Malcolm, the two young teachers at Chogoria, left for Britain. They left the mission station school at Chogoria with 20 girls in the boarding section, and 40 day scholars under a senior girl pupil-teacher, Esther Mbae. The girls did not sit for examinations in 1939 which meant that they had to repeat the year.[85] This was because the Europeans held the view that in their absence, nothing substantial had been taught to the girls to enable them to sit for an examination.

The CCM were the hardest hit in so far as reduction of European staff was concerned. Soon after Italy joined World War

II, all the Italian missionaries were forced to leave the country. Seven of the CCM stations and numerous out- stations in Meru were closed in 1940.[86] As a result, educational work was adversely affected. The CCM station at Chuka and several other out-stations did not close because of the presence of two Dutch Fathers residing there.[87] They were in charge of both church and educational work.

Some African teaching staff also left their teaching to join war services. This movement of teachers caused a scarcity of trained and experienced teachers. The Second World War required literate recruits who could be trained to handle guns as they were taking part in a mechanised war. Most of the teachers who joined the KAR hoped to get better-paying jobs.[88] In Chogoria alone, five teachers resigned in 1944 and joined the KAR which was a big blow to the schools.[88] Army recruitment deprived the educational enterprise the badly needed teachers and evangelists.

Some young men in school joined the army to earn a living. Some of the pupils were young men, who were required to pay poll tax. War service provided an opportunity to get the much needed cash, instead of doing the odd jobs at the mission. The immediate consequence of this movement was a marked reduction of the number of pupils in the schools. The number of pupils dropped from the 1826 in 1938 to 1205 by the end of 1940.[89] In effect, the schools were deprived of future leaders, such as teachers who would have assisted in the spread of education and Christianity.

The post-war period witnessed a lot of financial strain in all spheres of life. Lack of finance led to the CSM refusal to enrol a new group of Elementary Teachers (T4) at Thogoto and Tumutumu in 1946 as there was no more grants from the colonial Government. The mission was not able to maintain the teacher trainees at the colleges. It was demoralising on the part of the young men and women who had completed their primary education and had nowhere to go.[81] Teachers' training centres were much fewer compared to primary school institutions especially at the primary level. With the closure of teachers' training colleges there was a problem of getting more qualified teachers to man the increasing number of schools. The CSM Missionaries, forced by the financial state of the mission schools and the scarcity of teachers, attempted to limit the number of pupils. First, they insisted that they would only enroll children of Christian parents in their schools. This meant that only children of renowned Christians would be allowed to PCEA schools. Any parent who got involved in any of the "sinful" customs and ceremonies had their children expelled from school. Secondly, they revived the old female circumcision issue, by making it clear that no circumcised girl would be accepted in any of the CSM schools.[82] Furthermore, the parents who knowingly or otherwise allowed their daughters to be circumcised had all their other children expelled from school. This led to a reduction of pupils in schools. For example, in 1947, the number of pupils in CSM schools in Nithi Division had dropped to 2828 from 2990 in 1946.. The missionaries

had, more than at any other time before, become extremely strict on admission and attendance.[83]

The pupils were also required to pay for their own education at Chogoria school. Boys paid 180 shillings and girls 90 shillings per year for primary education, and 240 and 120 shillings for boys and girls in the junior secondary school, respectively.[84] This essentially meant that education was for the few who could afford. A few of the keen Christians had their fees paid by the mission or by some generous teachers. To get this fees paid, the pupils worked for the mission or in the generous teachers during the school holidays. In short, they earned their school fees.

The war period became a eye-opener for those *athomi* who had taken part in it. The young men realised that recruitment into the armed forces, as well as material well being and social status, were determined by acquisition of modern education.[85] There was, therefore, a greater desire for more education both at the primary and secondary levels. The teachers and evangelists, some of whom were church elders pressed for more and better educational opportunities for the children of both Christian and non-Christian families. The Nithi teachers and evangelists allowed into their schools willing pupils regardless of whether or not they met the missionaries' requirements.

Despite the problems facing schools in the division, there was a considerable increase in the number of pupils and teachers during the war period. For instance, the number of pupils in CSM schools increased from 1205 in 1939 to 1344 in 1940.[86] These

service to their Master. It is the religious conviction that kept most teachers and evangelists in schools, otherwise they would have left their jobs to get better pay elsewhere. Those who joined the war were in essence seen as not committed to the service of man and God.

Teachers and evangelists were further encouraged to take their "calling" more seriously by the mission motto:

> *O uria gwoko gwaku gugwika, ika na inya waku wothe* (whatever you are able to do, do it with all your will and strength).[102]

Even with the strained financial situation, the CSM strove to see that the teachers who were already in training completed their courses so that they could replace those who left teaching to join the war. By 1945, some young men were training in Tumutumu and Thogoto. These included Simon Rugendo, Ephanto Marangu, Dan M Kenya, James Ngaragari, Eliseus Mukobwa, Maxwel Rwigi and Gerald Meeru. Other teachers, such as Jediel Micheu trained at Kahuhia Normal School, as a primary school teacher (T3), while another 2 boys were trained at Kigari in Embu, and Eliphas Mburia was trained at Kagumo as a T3.[103] The availability of well trained teachers was an added advantage to the CSM schools. They helped to raise the educational standards.

The teachers and evangelists devoted most of their time to educational and Christian work. During the war, no CSM school was closed for lack of teachers. Some of the schools did not have resident teachers, but they never missed a teacher to teach. The arrangement was that a teacher taught in the morning at school A and taught at school B in the afternoon. The teacher

walked a few miles to the next school which was normally close to the other school. For example, a female teacher at Chuka taught domestic science in four schools once a week with ease.[104]

5.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS' EDUCATION 1939-1945

Girls' education continued to show remarkable progress throughout the war period. By 1945, the number of girls in *mambere* alone had increased from 40 to 84. The female teachers taught at *mambere* and at out-schools. They became the torch bearers in their rural areas. Referring to them, Ina Hood, a missionary teacher at Chogoria, reported that;

> For the Christian girl teacher, there is no fairer opportunity to serve the Master than teaching either the children or girls of her own race, as it is work which appeals to her.[105]

The progress in girls' education was due to the systematic training of young African teachers. The young girls were mainly daughters of the first teachers and evangelists. In 1940 Chogoria took the first 2 girls to sit for KAPE to train as T4 teachers at Tumutumu. At Chogoria during the same period, 3 girls were taking extra instruction as teachers while other girls went to learn the art of dyeing and spinning wool at Tumutumu.[106] With the increase of trained teachers, the standard of girls' education was greatly improved.

By 1945, there were 10 women teachers, teaching at *mambere* and "bush schools". Some of the trained teachers included Martha Musa, Salome Kithinji, Edith Gatakaa and Trizah Kanyua. They were incharge of the lower classes and domestic science in

the schools they were assigned to.[107] Their impact went beyond the walls of the classrooms. They were themselves role models for the young girls in the village.

Financial strains caused by the war disrupted the teaching of domestic science at Chogoria Girls' School. Throughout the war period, domestic science was not taught. This was because the prices of domestic science materials had doubled and were even difficult to get.[108]

The lack of domestic science materials provided an opportunity for female teachers to reach the village women who had not accepted Christianity as yet. Time and energy hitherto directed to school work were diverted to community life education.[109] The female teachers became important instruments for trying to attain the CSM objective of educating women to make them "good" wives, citizens and Christians. Female teachers taught village women the virtues of maintaining high standards of hygiene and how to promote good relations between wife and husband in what was considered to be the Christian way of life. It was never an easy task to break through the Meru culture, where traditionally women had no say in decision making. A Meru wife was required by tradition to be obedient and submissive to her husband. The question of equal partners in marriage was viewed as women's attempt to rule men.

The female teachers began to take charge of girls' education with a lot of success and with little European supervision. In 1944 Trizah Kanyua was left in charge of *mambere* when Miss Brownlie went on leave. She was able to maintain

school discipline and general cleanliness but her teaching efficiency declined.[110] She was unable to devote enough time and energy to teaching because of the administrative duties. Her work as an administrator was a clear indication that women, hitherto thought to be only useful as wives and mothers, were capable in previously male-dominated areas, like school administration. Female teachers taught in many schools with minimal supervision. In the absence of men who were in the war front, women were left incharge of duties hitherto regarded as men's responsibilities, which included teaching.

There is a saying that once a teacher always a teacher, and this saying was true even for female teachers. Women teachers who were for whatever reason removed from the payroll, continued to be the "light" in their villages. They were regarded as *athomi* and rightly so because of their earlier exposure to a western way of life which they informally taught their women counterparts. Their impact was felt by both Christians and non-Christians alike.[111] From *athomi* homes, women got new seeds and plants to grow at their homes, as well as learning new and better methods of cooking, laundry and dressing.

5.5 TEACHERS AND EVANGELISTS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The leadership role of African teachers and evangelists in Nithi Division began early, with the establishment of schools. Teachers and evangelists were the pioneers and leaders of out-schools which they started in the villages. The situation was, however, different in the Chogoria School where leadership

remained in the hands of European missionaries. The highest position that was ever held by an African at Chogoria was that of an assistant. For example, the supervisor of schools was always a European assisted by an African. At the school, African teachers were under the direct supervision of European missionaries at the station.

Soon after World War II, leadership at Chogoria School was transferred to the then most educated young man from Chuka, Bernard Mate. Before becoming the principal, Mate had received his early education at Kiereni in 1931, the school which was near his birth place. Mate was an orphan, having lost his father at age five. His uncle, Ezekiel Murungi, a church elder at Kiereni Church took Mate to school. He moved to Chogoria Mission School for his primary education - before going to Alliance High School for his secondary education in 1938. Mate thus became the third boy to go to Alliance from Nithi Division. After passing his Cambridge School Certificate Examination, Mate went to Makerere College where he studied for a Diploma in Education and also took a headmaster's course until 1945.[112] He was the first person to go to Makerere College from Nithi Division. Upon his return, he was appointed the first African Principal of Chogoria School in 1946 at the age of twenty three. Mate was the type of person the missionaries at Chogoria sought for the job of principal because he was "keen and a very religious boy". *Gitari* hoped that through him, many young men would want to pursue further studies and remain a model Christian.[113]

Mate became a source of inspiration to the youth, who saw him as equal to the Europeans. Songs of praise were composed about him. The local community used to sing: "----*Mate ni Muthungu, ni gikonde kiiru*" (Mate is an European except for his dark skin).[114] Most of those who went to school wanted to gain European knowledge and Mate had acquired just that.

Mate combined his roles as a classroom teacher, school administrator as well as a DEB and LNC member. He held these positions until 1951 when he proceeded for further studies at Bangor University, Wales, where he did a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. He was replaced by Ariel Njeru, his brother, who had just completed his secondary education at Alliance. In late 1951, Ariel was replaced by Eustace Mutegi, who had also completed his secondary education that same year at Alliance.[115]

The presence of educated people of Mate's calibre in the Meru LNC was a bright idea because they were advisers to the rest of the council members in matters concerning education. In 1947, the LNC passed a rule that the distance between schools and prayer houses be three miles to separate the two and avoid confusion.[116] This resolution was passed after it was noticed that people who attended prayer-house meetings did not go to school because to them the prayer house and school were basically the same.

In 1948, Chogoria School was upgraded to a junior secondary school. The classes which were former standard seven and eight became form I and II. Mate became the teacher in charge of the one hundred boys and girls at the secondary school as well as the

entire primary school. The principal's duty did not end with the day's work because it was part of his duty to watch over the 55 boys in the dormitory at night.[117] The 45 girls in the boarding school were under Martha Musa, a daughter of one of the first evangelist-teachers, Musa M'Muga. She remained the headteacher of the girls' school at Chogoria until 1951 when she was replaced by Phyllis Zakayo, a daughter of one of the church elders at Chogoria Arthur M'Muga.[118]

Other than the teaching role, African teachers were taking over school supervision too. In 1948, Erasto Mwirichia, a teacher-evangelist, was appointed the supervisor of 100 teachers in all the 40 PCEA schools in Nithi Division. Mwirichia got the promotion because of his dedication to duty and above all he was a committed Christian. Through him, it was expected that Christian values that each teacher was expected to have would be upheld and enforced.[118]

Teachers and evangelists were the most learned and respected people in the society. Some of them were appointed chiefs, in which capacity they could encourage and sometimes use force to get children to school. In 1946, Naftali M'Muga was appointed chief of Mwimbi.[120] He was very energetic in seeing that as many young people as possible went to school. He is remembered as having been "too ruthless to the people who married away their daughters at a tender age before they completed their studies, and for punishing parents who prevented their children from going to school"[121]: Naftali loved education and he was impatient with parents who did not take their children to school.

Women teachers were beginning to take up other roles beside teaching. In 1951 Martha Musa was appointed a member of the Meru African District Council. She was the first African Meru woman to hold such a position.[122] She became a counsellor in matters concerning women's welfare, especially education. One of the things she campaigned against was female circumcision. In her view, no girl should be circumcised without the consent of her father: Martha also brought to the attention of the council the fact that women teachers were not receiving equal treatment with their male counterparts, especially in matters concerning salaries. It was the practice of the day that a qualified woman teacher could only be paid 4/5 of the male's salary of the same grade. Nothing was done to rectify this anomaly because it were overtaken by the events of 1952-57, that is, the emergency period.[123]

Pastoral duties were also left to the teachers and evangelists. By 1952 the PCEA in Nithi had managed to ordain one of the teacher-evangelists, Jediel Micheu, as the first African PCEA ordained priest from Meru.[124] He was ordained on 13th January 1952, after a spell of teaching during which he also became a head teacher at Kiereni. He trained for the priesthood at St.Pauls Theological College, Limuru, between 1950 and 1951.[125] As a priest, he had a lot of say in educational matters, having been exposed to the job of teaching especially during and after the emergency.

5.6 EMERGENCE OF SECULAR TEACHERS.

By the mid 1940's, most of the pioneering evangelist-teachers due to their little education and their advanced ages were relieved of their teaching duties and simply remained church elders and educational counsellors within their villages. They were however, recognised as *arimo* (Chuka word for teachers) and became advisers whenever a major decision on church and educational matters had to be made. It was the wish of many of these first evangelist-teachers that education and Christianity remain inseparable but completely divorced from *mauntu ma bururi* (worldly affairs).[128]

The young teachers of the 1940s did not take teaching as a "divine calling". To most of them, teaching was just a job that earned them a steady income. They were reluctant to take on evangelical duties as was required of the earlier teachers.[127] They were in essence classroom teachers and not evangelists.

Such teachers were trained in mission colleges and also at the government teachers' colleges. Those who trained at mission-controlled teachers' colleges were becoming more and more aware of their individual rights as Africans. They were actively involved in the politics of colonial Kenya. They were, to use Irvine's words, "drunk with politics".[128] These young teachers wanted to be left alone after a day's work at school "to do our things without *Gitari* bothering us".[128] They avoided evangelical work not because they were not properly trained, but because they were less religious than the early teachers.

The other group of teachers who did not qualify to be called evangelists had their training in government teachers' colleges. The first government college in Meru opened its doors to the first trainees in 1947.[130] The establishment of the college eased the problem of training teachers. In 1947 Chogoria sent four young men and eight girls to Meru Teachers' Training college. During the same year, seven girls went to Government African Girls Teachers Training College-Kabete and two to Machakos School.[131] From the missionary point of view, the teachers who trained at government colleges were not committed Christians and had not received adequate religious instruction in the course of their training to impart to the pupils. The mission argued that during their training, these teachers did not gain any spiritual guidance. The secular education that they had received was of little religious benefit to their pupils.[132] Those who came to teach at the PCEA managed schools were accused by Dr. Irvine of not taking their work seriously.

In 1948 some of the teachers trained at government colleges and posted to Chogoria refused to carry out the duties of classmasters or to work over the weekends. To Irvine, this behaviour came about because "they had less sense of responsibility towards duty and Christianity".[133] The missionaries felt that these teachers did not benefit the pupils they were expected to teach. To Dr. Irvine, there was need to have Christian teachers who would "give proper guidance to children of pagan and backslider parents".[134]

A few of these teachers, who were employed in PCEA schools, found themselves in an awkward situation because they were closely monitored. For example, in 1947 Jane Cianthuni, a T3 teacher, was posted to Kimucia school, a school near Chogoria Mission station, but was forced by *Gitari* to reside at the girls' dormitory. According to Cianthuni, this arrangement was favoured by *Gitari* so that: "I could be taught Christian values which were found lacking in me, and also not to be exposed too much to the outside world because I risked being married by the wrong type of man".[135] Cianthuni remained in the dormitories, and taught for nine years before she married in 1956. All the time that Cianthuni was at Kimucia, she played the role of teacher, evangelist, and pupil cansellor in and around Chogoria area.

This pattern was not followed by most of the teachers. Some did not comply. Some missionary and Government trained teachers who refused to adhere to Christian values were sacked by their employer (the missionaries). The missionaries demanded that all the teachers in missionary maintained schools should not join Mau Mau or engage in any activity that was seen as anti-government. The sacked teachers were employed in the independent schools, from where they aired their disatisfaction with the whole colonial set-up.

5.7 TEACHERS, EVANGELISTS AND MAU MAU 1952-1960

The State of Emergency was declared on 20th October, 1952 and ended in January 1960. The entire period of the emergency is what the author takes as the Mau Mau period. The term Mau Mau is

identified with militant nationalism and the violence that characterized the politics of central Kenya before and during the early years of Emergency. Mau Mau was therefore a military and violent confrontation between the colonial establishment and the colonized Africans. The Mau Mau period can be divided into two phases: the militant phase, 1952-1954, and the rehabilitation phase, 1955-57. The militant phase was characterised by violence and many schools were burnt down in Nithi by either the colonial authorities or the local community itself.

The rehabilitation phase is when people of Nithi were put into Emergency villages, which were designed to separate them and ensure they were not contaminated by the Mau Mau or terrorists from the forests.

During the militant period, 1952-1954, there was total disarray in so far as educational development was concerned in Nithi Division. Several schools were burnt down, and some teachers and evangelists left for the forest from where they fought the colonial establishment. As it will be seen later, other teachers and evangelists chose to remain loyal to their church and joined the missionaries and the colonial authorities in condemning the Mau Mau movement. There were certain individuals in Nithi Division who chose to remain "on the fence" - by condemning the Mau Mau movement publicly while at the same time they assisted the same mau mau by secretly supplying them with food, clothes and important information. Although there was a lot of inferrruption in all matters concerning education, learning did not come to a complete halt.

Soon after the declaration of the State of Emergency, Chogoria mission was heavily guarded by government forces, led by a local church elder and a former teacher-evangelist, Jotham Mwaniki.[135] Since security was guaranteed at the mission, learning continued. There was even an increase in the number of pupils enrolling in the upper classes. In 1953 Chogoria Girls School enrolled 29 girls in form II, which was the highest number since the school started.[136] In the same year the first girl from Chuka, Beatrice Ciambamba, went to Alliance Girls' High School, having passed her Kenya African Primary Examination (KAPE) at Chogoria School. This shows that the Chogoria School continued uninterrupted during the military phase.

Schools in Mwimbi were not burnt down as was the case in Chuka. This was because the people of Mwimbi were more loyal to the government than the Chuka and Muthambi people.[137] Colonialists and missionaries suspected Chuka people of being disloyal because some of the Mau Mau leaders were from Chuka. There were General Simba and Brigadier Mwamba from Muiru sub-location, and General Kibindo of Njuri in Magumoni Location. Their activities in Mau Mau earned Chuka people a bad reputation from the missionaries and government. To punish the people, the government through its agents burnt all the schools in Muiru sub-location. These were Nkuthika, burnt on 17th September 1953, Kambandi, burnt on 24th April 1954, Ikuu Intermediate school, Kiereni, Ndagani, Rubati, Kathigiririni, all razed in 1954.[138] These schools were suspected of harbouring Mau Mau terrorists.

Kibubwa school in Magumoni location was also burnt in 1954 because General Kibindo hailed from there.[138]

However, security, was tight only in areas around the Chogoria mission. Due to insecurity, people moved from the interior to live near the mission, where they could be protected. The influx of people to the mission and its neighbourhood caused a strain on the existing facilities at Chogoria School. The result of this was the starting of another intermediate school at Igwanjau in 1953 to cater for the number of pupils entering primary school.[140] The school was also guarded. Some teachers who taught at Chogoria and Igwanjau were armed to assist the guards in maintaining security, especially at night when Mau Mau were likely to strike. During this period, teachers and evangelists were working almost round the clock. They taught during the day and became mission school guards at night. Security work was done by the teachers who remained loyal to the church and condemned all Mau Mau activities.[141]

In Muthambi Location, the situation was different from Mwimbi Location. Mwimbi was regarded as loyal while Muthambi , a stronghold of independents was anti-colonial establishment. The independents in Muthambi Location lost all their schools in 1952 at the hands of the Colonial government. They blamed the *miceni* (mission) for the burning of their schools. To the independents, *guti Gitari na muthungu* (there is no difference between Dr. Irvine and the colonial master).142 On this account, several PCEA schools were burnt by people who were believed to be former members of the independent schools. PCEA loyalists were accused

of being "wives of Europeans".143 One of the PCEA schools burnt in 1953 was Kamachuku.144 Some of the pupils moved to Chogoria mission where they continued with their education. Nevertheless, few Roman Catholic Schools were burnt by the Mau Mau. This was because the Catholic Church was less strict on nationalism and did not prevent its church members, pupils and teachers from associating with the Mau Mau.

The Chuka people suffered more than either the Mwimbi or the Muthambi. It was in Chuka that the Mau Mau was believed to have had a large following. This allegation was not without grounds because several young men, most of them school pupils, were picked up from their houses and killed under mysterious circumstances. It was suspected that the Mau Mau was responsible for the killings. Some of the young men killed before the end of 1953 included Njoka Ciakirema, Mugo Kagiri and Muuru from Kanwa.[145] To stop more killings, the government authorities burnt most of the schools, especially those that had any connection with people fighting the colonialists.

Loyal teachers and evangelists saw Mau Mau as yet another test of their faith and commitment to Christ and their "divine duty" of taking the "light" to the people. Such teachers did not abandon the pupils in the schools or expect them to organise their own security. When Rubati school was burnt down in 1953, the head teacher, Silas Njoka a loyal mission teacher, took some pupils with him to Ikuu school where they continued learning. Ikuu school was away from the insecure areas of lower Chuka. It was much safer there for both teachers and pupils. A temporary

school was constructed with dry banana leaves. The two combined schools were under Eustace Mutegi and Silas Njoka. Ikuu school was also burnt down later by the Mau Mau in 1954. The teachers moved to Kiereni school with their pupils. The pupil population at Kiereni became too large for the existing classrooms. To create more room, the nearby church building was divided into smaller rooms which served as classrooms.[146] Earlier, Kiereni school had harboured pupils from Nkuthika, after their school was burnt down in 1953. Renald Kamuru, a teacher at Nkuthika, had taken the pupils to Kiereni from where he continued to teach.[147]

Teachers were required to be armed to protect themselves and the pupils in their schools. However, some teachers refused to take arms to fight the Mau Mau. The reason for such refusal was because they did not want to kill their own people. Kamuru, a teacher at Kiereni, refused to take arms because,

> the Mau Mau were not people from Ruraya (Britain)---- they are our own people, our brothers. We could not kill our own people.[148]

Others refused to take up arms to fight the Mau Mau because they belonged to the group of Christians called *Abonoku* (saved people) and believed in the philosophy of non-violence or pacificism.[149]

Teachers and evangelists, especially those who remained loyal to the Church and at the same time refused to fight the Mau Mau, suffered a lot. To their fellow Christians, the refusal to take up arms to fight the Mau Mau meant that they were siding with the movement, and they were suspected of having taken the

Mau Mau oath. The local community, especially those who sympathised and materially supported the Mau Mau, accused the loyal teachers and evangelists of selling their own people and *bururi* (country) to the white men.[150] Such people were regarded as traitors and their homes and property were destroyed. At times the destruction affected their family members. The Mau Mau burnt their property and sometimes killed relatives of loyalists. In all the areas, loyalty to the Christian Church was costly and many Church adherents backslided. And so did teachers and evangelists.

On 11th April, 1954, Mariamu Ndago Samweli was massacred because she refused to "mix the blood of Christ with that of goats". Mariamu was an informal teacher and leader of the Women's Guild at the Chogoria PCEA. Her husband, Samweli Namu, who was an evangelist in Mukuni had openly spoken against the Mau Mau and the killing of his wife was meant to silence him and other Church loyalists. Mission teachers were accused of being anti-*wiathi* (anti-freedom) and not being concerned with their people's welfare.

The government in turn suspected some loyalists of being sympathisers of the Mau Mau. It was for such reasons that some teachers and evangelists found themselves in prison or detention camps. Kamuru, a 'saved' teacher and evangelist-teacher at Nkuthika, who had refused to take up arms to fight the Mau Mau, was consequently arrested and detained.[151]

A lot of teachers found themselves torn between two opposing forces- the Mau Mau and the Church. They found themselves having

to sit 'on the fence'. Some secretly took the Mau Mau oath, but publicly condemned the movement. Such individuals were instrumental in sustaining independent and mission schools during the militant period. Several schools, whose teachers were known to be Mau Mau supporters, were not burnt by the Mau Mau. Kiamugi school in Chuka was spared from burning because its headteacher, Antonio Chabari Mwikia, had taken the Mau Mau oath and had supported the movement materially.[152] Mukuuni was also not burnt, because some of its teachers and leaders had taken the Mau Mau oath. But the chief's camp was burnt down and some government soldiers and a sub-chief named Kathage were killed.

However, the majority of the teachers and evangelists remained 'on the fence'. They remained loyal to the Church and government because of the guaranteed safety they got. They were given ammunition to guard the schools and themselves. They also benefited materially from adopting that position. But secretly some were Mau Mau sympathisers. When detected by the government they were imprisoned. Those who were detected by their church as having taken *muma* (oath) were also excommunicated from the church.

But it should be noted that some took to the forest to fight the white man. They chose to join the Mau Mau. Japhet Kinyua, a teacher at Chogoria, went to the forest and was nicknamed General Ruku. He was later joined by Eliud Njagi, nicknamed General Kamata in Mau Mau circles.[153] The number of male teachers and evangelists who joined the Mau Mau whole-heartedly continued to increase with time.

In 1955, the State of Emergency took another turn. The government was not able to keep law and order in Nithi Division as more people took the Mau Mau oath.

The government then fored people of Nithi into Emergency villages in 1955, a year after the same was done in Kikuyuland.[154] In these villages, schools were established and they continued being the most effective vehicle for Christianisation. It was thought that once people became Christians, their hearts would change, which would in turn make them more obedient to the government and their church. During this period, teacher-evangelists were quite handy because it was believed that they would be more committed than the ordinary teachers. Those of them who remained loyal to the church taught in the Emergency village schools.

The Emergency villages were composed of 50 to 500 huts of the hitherto scattered homesteads.[155] The villages were established in areas where there was insecurity. In this respect, Chuka had more Emergency villages than Mwimbi and Muthambi. In Chuka, Emergency villages were established at Kiereni, Ndagani, Mbwiru, Weru, Cheera, Kiruire (present day Kiang'ondu), Kirege, Kambandi, Kibugwa, Makuuni and Itugururu.

In Mwimbi, most people moved to live near Chogoria Mission Station where they were sure of security. The area around the mission therefore had many homesteads. Muthambi sub-location had only one village called Kanyakini at Ruguta.[156]

Villagization caused much upheaval and disorganised people socially, economically and politically. The Church and

educational institutions were not spared. But by 1956 villagization turned out to be a great advantage to the development of Church and schools.[157] It was much easier to gather the people together for prayers and for learning as they were no longer miles apart. Village prayer houses-cum-schools were erected for this purpose. Pupils gathered in these hastily constructed classrooms as teachers and evangelists once again took up their dual role of disseminating Christianity and education.

The dissemination of Christianity and education was limited to day time. It was only during the day that the teachers could teach and preach to the people. There was little activity in the evening due to insecurity posed by the Mau Mau. Most of the teachers, evangelists and pupils who were considered loyal by the missionaries remained so during the day, but "in the evening you could not tell a Mau Mau from a *miceni* (missionary). Some of the Mau Mau were in fact, *miceni* during the day".[158] By 1956, there were 5,000 pupils in PCEA run schools with 130 teachers.[159] Educational development which took place during this period was due to the work and sacrifice by teachers and evangelists during the hard times. During the Mau Mau period, missionary activities were limited to mission centres and nearby Emergency village schools which were under heavy guard.

Educational work was further disrupted by the emergence of a group of Christians, popularly known as *kuthama* (deserters) *group*. It was a breakaway group from the PCEA which claimed that education and civilization which were being emphasised by the

mission were "useless as what matters is God and saved men."[180] These "saved" people, as they called themselves, were determined to have a pure Church divorced from education and other secular affairs. The *kuthama* group was led by Jason Mucara and Judith Mukwamugo, who were teachers, and Jediel Ngara, an evangelist from Chuka.[181] Their preaching affected several teachers and pupils. Kamuru, a former teacher, now of *Kuthama* group, became a full time evangelist at Kiereni after he was released from detention in 1956. To the *kuthama* group, God needed "pure" hearts, not educated men.[182] Some pupils left school and joined the group. This group was not considered progressive, and PCEA members discouraged people, with some success, from joining it. The group survived but without gaining a large following.

Schools which were started in the emergency villages also faced financial and personnel problems. A school was started at Kambandi village in 1955, but could not get teachers because qualified teachers at Kiereni refused to go and teach there. Their reason for refusing was that Kambandi was in the same village where notorious Mau Mau leaders hailed from.[183] Johana M'Rewa, an evangelist, persuaded Juliet Ciakathia and Joseck Nyamu, both senior pupils at Kiereni, to go and teach at the school. Johana provided security for these teachers because he was armed.[184] He combined the role of an evangelist with that of Acting Assistant Chief. Dr. Irvine relied on him for information on the progress of Church and educational activities in Chuka.

But the Church was not able to pay the two teachers at Kambandi. The State of Emergency had caused a lot of financial strain on the Church and its members. As such Johana pleaded with Dr. Irvine to ask the Meru District Commissioner to give permission for the collection of money to meet the teachers' wages. Permission was granted, and enough money was collected to pay the two teachers for three years.[185] Following this example, many more schools were encouraged to collect funds to pay teachers, where and when the mission was not able to assist.

By 1957, Nithi people had started leaving the villages, and returning to their homes. This marked the beginning of resettling and rebuilding of churches, schools and homes. Some of the schools which were not burnt down in 1952-1953 had collapsed due to ants, neglect and weather. In such places, new school buildings were built. The burnt school buildings were also replaced with new ones. Most of the schools had semi-permanent structures. It is during this period that some schools began using iron-sheet for the roofing.[186]

Teacher-evangelists continued with their dual role: as teachers in the classrooms during weekdays and as preachers on weekends and in the evenings. This was done in an attempt to win people back to the Church and schools. However, some teachers had assumed new roles. For example, when Bernard Mate came back from overseas studies in 1956, he was appointed the first African Principal of Meru School and also taught at Meru Government Teachers' College. In 1957, Mate was elected to the Legislative Council (Legco) representing Central Province, which

then included Meru, Murang'a, Nanyuki, Nyeri, Embu, Thika and Kiambu districts.[187] Mate, then the most educated man in Nithi, was almost worshipped. He was envied and imitated as a man who had attained a high position because of his education. In conclusion, the African evangelists and teachers played the most important role in maintaining and sustaining educational activities in Nithi Division during the most difficult period in colonial Kenya. The missionaries would have found it extremely difficult to continue discharging their educational and Church duties without the support they got from the current and former teachers and evangelists. Educational activities would have been halted throughout the division, save for Chogoria mission, were it not for the dedicated and sometimes despised teachers and evangelists who carried the torch to the villages. They, in fact, laid a firm educational foundation on which independent Kenya built.

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This chapter is an assessment of the initiative and contribution of the African teachers and evangelists in the foundation and eventual development of western education in Nithi Division. Lay-evangelists, trained-evangelists, artisan-evangelists, evangelists-teachers, pupil-teachers, teacher-evangelists and secular teachers contributed greatly to the development of western education in the division throughout the colonial period. Through education and Christianity, Nithi people were also introduced to western culture and civilization. This chapter summarizes the nature and extent of their contribution.

The introduction of Christianity and western education in the division was largely carried out by African evangelists and teachers from Kikuyuland. These were some of the first mission boys and girls educated at Thogoto or Tumutumu CSM stations. The Mission stations were centres or oases of Christianity and western civilisation, where western education was imparted. The evangelists and teachers were products of this wester education, and they imparted the same to their own people.

In the course of their mission of Christianising and imparting western education, the Africans evangelists and teachers were confronted with the traditional beliefs and practices of the people of Nithi Division. They wanted to introduce a new religion, and a system of education, while the people, especially the elders, who were the custodians of social, political and economic life, insisted on preserving and observing

what they had for so many years believed in.' This led to conflicts, which became explicit during the 1929-30 female circumcision controversy. Nevertheless, the evangelists and teachers managed to start the first ever mission schools and churches in the division. Moreover, they maintained them without any direct supervision from the missionary for almost a decade.

Even after the arrival of European missionaries, and the establishment of a mission station at Chogoria in 1922, the African evangelists continued with their role of being classroom teachers and propagators of Christianity. All the "bush schools" which were started in the division were managed by African evangelists and teachers, who directed all their energies to education and Christianisation. The schools were seen as the main instrument of spreading the Gospel, which gave the African trained teachers the duties of evangelists. Due to the dual role they played, these trained teachers came to be called teacher-evangelists. Their work was concentrated in areas with high population where they were sure of getting large following. Areas with low population and harsh climate received little evangelisation and education until recently.

Apart from teaching and preaching, the evangelists and teachers gave their own land or negotiated with land-owners to donate land for the construction of schools. Those who had some knowledge of carpentry supervised the building and maintenance of these schools. Some of them became head teachers and conducted the administration and worship in these schools. They also collected money and property from their fellow Christians to support school activities in the villages.

Furthermore, their devotion was proverbial. For example, sometimes they offered their services with little pay. They sometimes paid fees for the bright and needy pupils. The initial years of educational activities in the division were difficult, for there was a scarcity of manpower. Consequently, they taught in more than one school a day, and yet had the time and energy to preach in the evening and also prepare Sunday sermons. It is certainly true to argue that it was the early African Christian evangelists who successfully laid the educational foundation on which European missionaries later built. Later, the missionaries sent them in the villages to open new and expand old out-schools.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the evangelists and teachers were always used as instruments. They sometimes took independent initiatives, which were not directed or planned by the missionary. For instance, they went around soliciting building materials for schools in their villages. They recruited new personnel to teach in these schools. In most cases, they also went to the mission station at Chogoria to ask for funds or other assistance for the newly built schools. And except for the occasional visit by the missionary, they remained in full control of educational activities in their schools.

From 1930s, African evangelists and teachers became involved in local committees and Boards. They were nominated to the local Native Councils, District Education Boards, Church Committees, and particularly to School Committees. Others were appointed to Meru political institutions, such as *Njuri Nceke*, while others were made Chiefs and Sub-chiefs as well as assistant schools' supervisors. They were truly living in accordance with the

saying "once a teacher always a teacher". In these capacities, the evangelists and teachers facilitated the opening of new schools as well as helping improve on the old ones. Having realised the importance of education, the evangelists and teachers encouraged and sometimes forced the people of Nithi to take their children to school.

As far as Nithi Division was concerned, the evangelists and teachers enhanced the development of education. They made rules that governed the general discipline of teachers and pupils, made funds available for the needy pupils, and argued for the provision of maintenance grants from the Local Native Councils. The missionaries sat with them to make policies that affected the whole education system in Nithi Division. Equally, it was the evangelists and teachers who finally excuted these policies. We can conclude that the progress and development of western education in the division was in large part the result of the work of African evangelists and teachers.

The study also looked at the independent churches and school movement. The schools which were started and managed by Africans are a living testimony of their determination and initiative in the development of education. The emergence of independent schools was an indication of the people's desire for independence and self-determination, which in the long run became a serious challenge to the European missionaries. Schools were established and maintained without assistance from the missionaries, government or Local Native Council. Refusal to offer any assistance acted as a positive challenge to the independent schools as it gave their leaders more determination to collect

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funds and recruit personnel from within and without Nithi Division. The building of the institutions was done through *mwingi* (communal) work, where some people gave either land or money or supplied building materials such as wood and thatching grass. Others undertook the actual construction of the buildings. It was due to the determination, particularly of the former CSM evangelists and teachers, that independent schools were able to withstand the opposition from LNC, *Njuri Nceke*, the government and the missionaries who were determined to 'kill' the movement.

The impact of the African Christians, particularly the evangelists and teachers, is seen in the changes that occurred in the division. The *arimo* (evangelists and teachers) were the first group in the division to learn new agricultural and building technology which they spread to their kith and kin in the villages. The local community borrowed new ideas from the *arimo* who became a role model. The evangelists and teachers who became Chiefs became wealthy and wielded a lot of power. It is not surprising, therefore, that they had a lot of influence on the people.

Christian homes became the centres of western culture and learning. It was in these homes that one found all sorts of new tools, utensils and modern methods of cooking and laundry. With time, children of the pioneering evangelists and teachers went to school early, and they in turn eventually became young *arimo* in the schools. Daughters of pioneering evangelists, like Musa M'Muga and Arthur M'Muga, became the first female head teachers at Chogoria Girls' School. Initially, the pioneering evangelists

and teachers came from poor and less influential families, but after they were educated, they became wealthier and more influential in the changing society. Their children became prominent *arimo* in Nithi Division.

The study has also shown that education went beyond the four walls of the classrooms. *Arimo* were educators not only in the school but also in all spheres of human life. Teachers remained teachers even after they were removed from the mission payroll. The local people turned to them for advice. The "informal" evangelists and teachers, particularly the wives of *arimo* had a lot of influence on the lives of the people around them. The local people referred to the wives of *arimo* as *arimo*, because *muka wa mwarimo ni mwarimo* (the wife of a teacher is herself a teacher).

Their role became even more critical during the emergency period, when they selflessly offered themselves, more than at any time before to serve the people in the division. They moved with the pupils from the burnt down schools to the temporary schools in the villages and thereby ensured the continuity of education in Nithi Division.

When the colonial government moved people from their homes and herded them in the Emergency villages which were specially designed to keep the loyal people from being used by Mau Mau terrorists, the evangelists and teachers started schools and churches in these villages. They also did more than teaching. Since they were the only people whom the missionaries could trust and rely on, they were given clothes, foodstuff and medicine to distribute to their fellow Africans. At the same time a few were

given guns to protect the people in the Emergency villages. Because of their multiple roles, they were liked by the people. The concentration of people in these villages provided a good opportunity of spreading Christianity and enhancing educational activities. For example, school and church attendance increased tremendously.

The evangelists and teachers acted as a "bridge" between the 'pagans' and the missionaries on one hand, and the people and government on the other. They escorted the missionaries to the emergency villages, introduced them to the people, and generally convinced the people to accept them. This enabled the missionaries to treat the sick as well as preach in confidence. In these troubled times, the evangelists and teachers became very helpful tools. They enabled the missionaries to reach the people in the Emegency villages. Without them, missionaries would not have managed to penetrate the wall built by the Mau Mau between the Africans and the white man.

In summary, it was the combination of the African artisan evangelists, lay evangelists, pupil-teachers, evangelist-teachers, teachers evangelists, secular teachers and the "informal" teachers that propagated, established and developed western education in Nithi Division. African initiative, particularly that of evangelists and teachers, was crucial in the dissemination of Christianity and education. Western education would not have developed as fast and effectively as it did, were it not for the dedication to duty of these individuals. The village schools, so called "bush schools", could not have been

started in the absence of African evangelists and teachers, owing to the scarcity of European personnel. They were also as determined as the missionaries-sometimes even more to take 'light' to their fellow Africans in the division. On this score, they saw eye to eye with the missionary. When all is said and done, this study has shown that the African evangelists and teachers, to a large extent, were missionaries to their fellow Africans. The Evangelists and teachers played a major role in the growth and development of western education and Christianity in Meru District and in Nithi Division in particular.

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24. Livingstone Ikianya Rugera (66), December 17, 1990, Kibubua, Magumoni.

25. Lydiah Kanampiu (85), December 15, 1990, Chogoria, Chogoria.

26. Moses Mbiuki (80), January 17, 1991, Chuka Town, Karingani.

27. Maxwell Rwigi (75), January 18, 1991, Kiang'ondu, Karingani.

28. Ronald Kamuru (65), December 19, 1990, Kambandi, Karingani.

29. Ruth Igoki (100), November 16, 1990, Kenyatta University, Nairobi.

30. Rahab Munyua (91), January 14, 1991, Kajiunduthi, Muthambi.

31. Samuel Namu (90), December 17, 1990, Kibugua, Magumoni.

32. Silas Njoka (70), December 21, 1990, Kiang'ondu, Karingani.

33. Stanley Ruthiri (91), January 1990, Kajiunduthi, Muthambi.

34. Sabastiano Njuki (66), January 15, 1991, Chuka Town, Karingani.

35. Tirzah Cianjoka (64), January 15, 1991, Chuka Town, Karingani.

36. Zablon J. Nthamburi (50), May 23, 1991, Nairobi.

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A/A2/1 -Letters
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1/G2/1 Memorandum prepared by the Kikuyu Council on Female Circumcision.

1/D/8 Mission Spheres, 1902-1918

E/B/5 -African Advisory Committee on African Education 1931-1938

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11/BF/7 Roman Catholic Church (1965).

11/CA/19 PCEA Annual Statistical Returns, 1927-1957.

Boxes C3-CH/1-4-Chogoria Papers, Minutes 1953-1965.

Box E29: The following files have information on **Girls Education** in the Presbyterian Spheres of Influence. I.e Tumutumu,Thogoto and Chogoria.

(i) 11/EL/1

(ii) 11/EL/2

(iii) 11/EL/3

(iv) 11/EL/4

(v) 11/EL/5

(vi) 11/EL/6

(vii) 11/EL/7

11/EM/1 Girls' Boarding School-Chogoria, 1953-1967

11/FB/6 Chogoria Land, 1928-66

11/9/2 African Independent Churches.

E/4 Establishment of Teachers-Training at Kikuyu 1919.

Box B/2 Chuka-Mwimbi;General Correspondence.

Box B/3 Mission Policy.

Box B/9 Papers on Kikuyu Catechism.

Box C/9 Presbytery of Chogoria Minutes, 1954-1955

Box C/1 P.C.E.A. Minute Book, 1936-1948.

Box C/5 Tumutumu-Minutes, 1945-1955.
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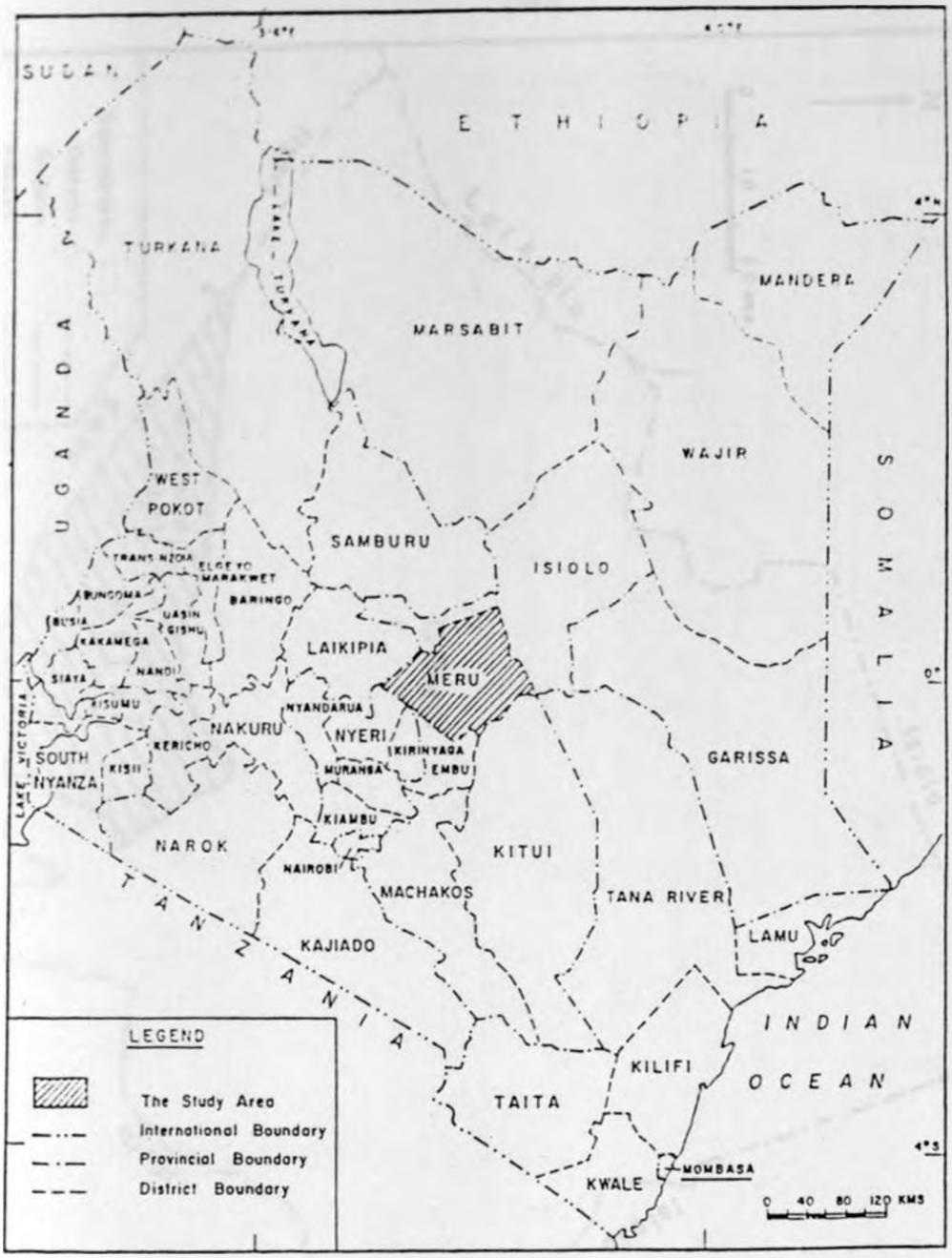
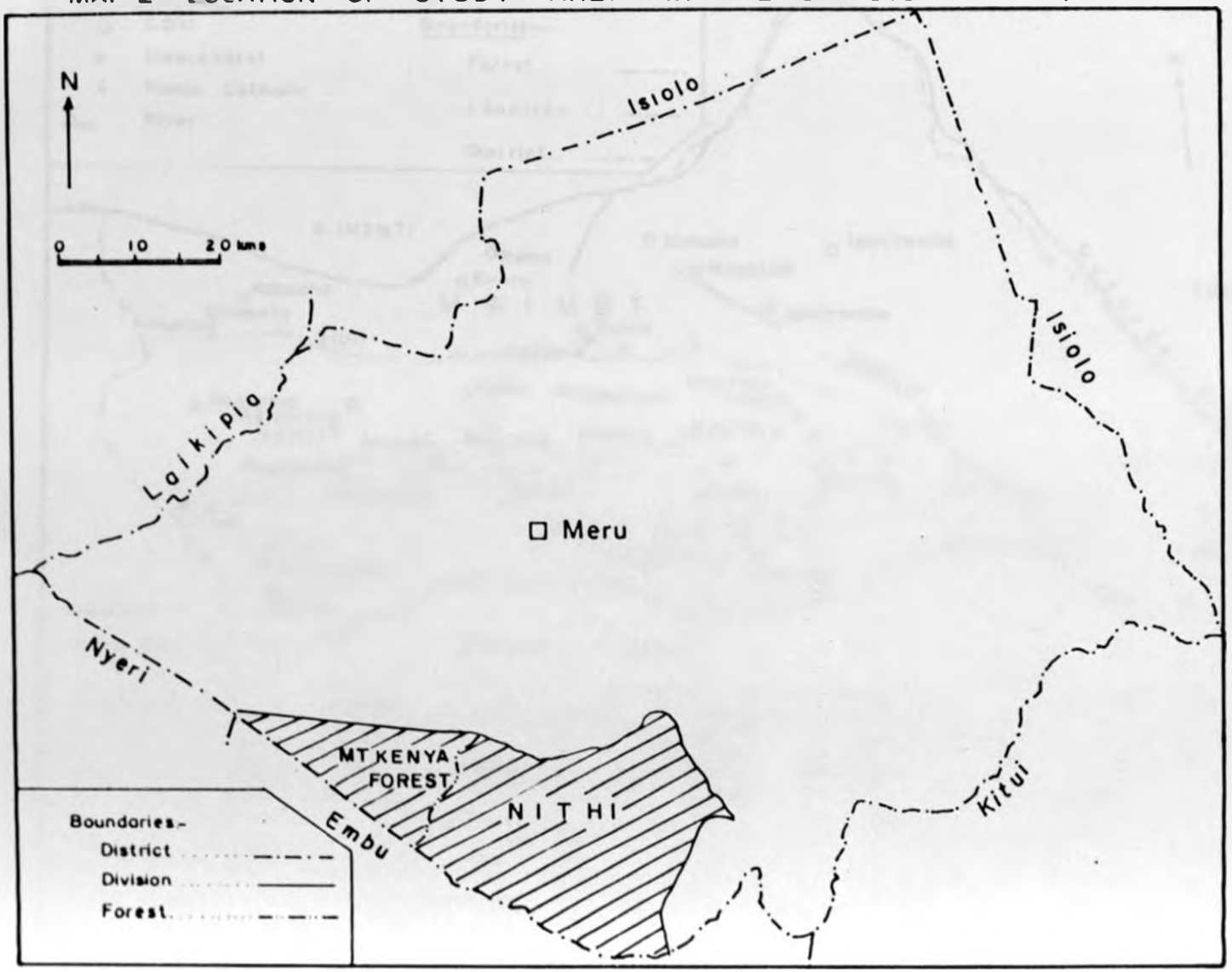
MAP 1 MERU DISTRICT IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT (1990)



MAP 2: LOCATION OF STUDY AREA IN MERU DISTRICT (1990)



MAP 3: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS IN NITHI DIVISION OF MERU DISTRICT 1915-1960