

Settler-Missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya and the Land Question

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Abstract

This article sets out to demonstrate the hugger-muggers that oiled the existence of an unholy alliance between European settler-farmers and missionaries—the Anglicans and Presbyterians and/or the Protestant wing in particular—in 20th century Kenya and East Africa, and especially on land policies. With land for settlement being the key factor to both missionaries and settler-farmers, the land question undoubtedly became one of the major factors that glued them together in colonial Kenya (1895–1963). Was the settler-missionary alliance meant to hurt the same people whom the missionaries had come to convert to the God of Christendom? Most importantly, how did the missionaries relate with the African chiefs regarding the land question, especially with reference to Kirinyaga County of central Kenya? This further drives us to wonder: Was the Devonshire White Paper of 1923 and/or the Indian Question related to the land question? The article sets out on the premise that while land remained the most prized commodity in colonial Kenya (1895–1963) and the entire 20th century, the 21st century has seen the church—and especially the afro-Pentecostal wing of the church—focusing on money and wealth without necessarily focusing on land. In its methodology, the article has heavily relied on archival resources, unpublished works, and field work materials, especially with regard to Kirinyaga County of central Kenya where oral sources on missionaries and land acquisition were sought. It also reviewed existing literature regarding settler-missionary alliances, especially on land-related matters.

Keywords: land acquisition in Kenya; settler-missionary alliance; the Indian question; education and land; Kirinyaga County; Afro-Pentecostalism; from land to wealth-money



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Introduction

The modern history of Kenya does not just begin with the Berlin Conference that was convened on Saturday 15 November 1884, where colonial powers (Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Spain, French, and Britain) divided the large continent of Africa into segments, otherwise called the 54 initial states, but more importantly after the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886. In this Anglo-German Agreement, the Germans and the British positioned themselves geographically in East Africa, as Germany took Tanganyika (renamed Tanzania after the union with Zanzibar in 1964); and the British took the present-day Uganda and Kenya.

The 1886 Anglo-German Agreement also saw the emergence of Sir William Mackinnon (1823–1893), a Scottish ship-owner and businessman, and his chartered company, the Imperial British East Africa (IBEA), running the entire British East Africa (Uganda and Kenya) as the *de facto* head.¹ Having built up substantial commercial interests in India with his erstwhile company, the British Indian Steam Navigation Company (BISN), founded in 1956, Mackinnon was to run the entire British East Africa (the then provinces of Kenya and Uganda) from a vantage point.² In running the East African protectorate on behalf of the British government, Mackinnon's IBEA, like BISN before, ran short of funds and planned to halt their operations in 1890.

Curiously, it is the third Anglican Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, Alfred R. Tucker (1849–1914), widely seen as the greatest leader of the Anglican Church in its formative stages, who saved the IBEA company from collapse. Following his consecration as a bishop in 1890, Tucker returned to England to recruit youths for East African mission. It is at that time when he got the staggering news that IBEA had opted to close shop owing to financial difficulties. By then, IBEA had a deficit of about 40 000 British pounds.³ Tucker reasoned that his young Church Missionary Society (Anglican Church) would be badly affected by lack of Western systems of governance; hence, he initiated negotiations with the British government. The ripple effect was that he raised 15 000 British pounds, an amount that led IBEA to reverse her decision to quit, for at least one year. Nevertheless, IBEA finally left in 1895 and the British protectorate was proclaimed.

The Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 was followed (in 1887) by the adoption of the East Africa Land Regulations that “legalised” the British Protectorate (1885–1919), and later a British colony (1920–1963) to alienate land that traditionally belonged to the various African clans. Upon the completion of the so-called Uganda Railway in 1901,

1 Julius Gathogo, “Afro-Pentecostalism and the Kenyan Political Landscape,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 101, no. 2 (2013): 203–230.

2 Gathogo, “Afro-Pentecostalism and the Kenyan Political Landscape.”

3 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya: A Short History of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Mount Kenya (1900–1970)* (Melbourne: Ridley College,) 1970.

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European settler-farmers started arriving in the Kenya colony for large-scale farming. This went hand-in-hand with land acquisition and the creation of “White Highlands.”⁴ The railway, whose construction began in Mombasa in 1896, reached St Florence (renamed Kisumu) Port of Lake Victoria in 1901; as Kisumu was geographically part of the then province of Uganda (in the so-called British East Africa) till 1903 when boundary review was done, and the present arrangements were made. Apart from Kisumu Port, the entire Nyanza, the Rift Valley, and western region were all transferred to Kenya from the then Uganda province of British East Africa in 1903. The opening of the Uganda Railway also saw the influx of European settlers from South Africa in 1904; and Kenya was never the same again.

Other settler-farmers came from New Zealand, Australia and England.⁵ By 1906, it was not only the lands to the north of Nairobi that were alienated for the European settlers, but also lands far afield in the Rift Valley region of western Kenya. Some of the members of the Kikuyu ethnic group, who had lost their ancestral lands after it was forcefully taken by the European settler-farmers, went into their neighbours’ territories, the Maasai, to seek better opportunities there. Yet, other members of the Kikuyu nation remained on the alienated lands to become squatters; while others went to the Rift Valley and became squatters or indentured labourers.

Some of the issues that dominated African politics from 1903 to 1952, when land alienation and squatter problems dominated the social discourses, included the low level of African wages. The wages in particular were kept to a minimum by the European settlers who were eager to remain competitive agricultural producers. A revealing statement attributed to Lord Delamere, the leader of the European settler farming community, regarding African labour, reads:

We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking employment. ... To raise the rate of wages would not increase but diminish the supply of labour. A rise in wages would enable hut and poll tax of a family, or sub-tribe to be earned by fewer external workers.⁶

As a weapon geared towards making Africans work for the white settlers, taxation thus became a tool for executing their plan. Moreover, this process built up a low paid and dissatisfied labour force on the white settlers’ farms as years proceeded. This clan land seizure by both the colonial government and the European settler farmers that came after the construction of the Uganda Railway was legally backed by the Land Acquisition

4 Julius Gathogo and Cyrus Njogu, *Chui wa Mararo: The Mau-Mau General who Was Burnt into Ashes* (Kerugoya: The Kairos Book Publishers, 2019).

5 C. G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, *The Myth of Mau-Mau: Nationalism in Colonial Kenya* (Stanford, 1969), 19.

6 Soroba N. Bogonko, *Kenya 1945–1963: A Study in African National Movements* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980).

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Act of India (1894) that initially gave consent to the commissioner of the protectorate to appropriate land.

While the commissioner of the protectorate was mandated by the Acquisition Act to appropriate a mile on either side of the railway for settler-farms to attend to the seemingly idle land, and eventually pay tax, the situation got out of control when massive annexation of land became the vogue. During the stewardship of IBEA, under Mackinnon from 1887–1895, their commissioner expropriated land technically by invoking the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890. This Act promulgated the East African Lands Order which “legally” guided these land seizures that followed after the building of the railway, from 1896 to 1901. Certainly, the proclamation of the British protectorate in 1895 assumed that the protectorate government was the sole owner and custodian over all land. The new Land Acts disregarded customary tenure of clan lands, though some later legislations incorporated some elements of customary laws, even though land law was primarily designed to serve the interests of European settler-farmers. It is these pro-settlers’ laws that would later lead Africans to demand *wiyathi na ithaka* (freedom and land) and eventually form the Mau-Mau guerrilla fighters.⁷ When the influx of the European missionaries to East Africa begun with the coming of Rev. Dr Ludwig Krapf in 1844, a new slogan emerged among the Africans: “*Gutire Muthungu na Mubia*” (there are no marked differences between a European missionary, a settler-farmer or a colonial administrator—as all are the same people). In this understanding, the mission societies were equally seen as accomplices, hence the new common saying among Africans was easily seen as the gospel truth. Conversely, the above common saying among the Africans, as will be demonstrated in this article, validated some ignorance as there were commonalities and huge differences among the trio (settler-farmers, missionaries, and colonial administrators). Each had his or her unique distinctions, even with regard to the land question. In view of this, Josiah Mwangi Kariuki captures the land question in his book, *Mau-Mau Detainee*:

I speak the truth and vow before God
And before this movement.
The movement of Unity,
The Unity which is put to the test
The Unity that is mocked with the name of Mau-Mau [freedom fighters].
That I shall go forward to fight for the land,
The lands of Kirinyaga that we cultivated.
The lands which were taken by the Europeans
And if I fail to do this
May this oath kill me,
May this seven kill me,
May this meat kill me ...”⁸

7 Gathogo and Njogu, *Chui wa Mararo*.

8 J. M. Kariuki, *Mau-Mau Detainee: The Account by a Kenya African of his Experiences in Detention Camps, 1953–60* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

Land Acquisition

As missionaries settled in colonial Kenya in the early 1900s, they (like settler-farmers) needed land so as to settle down and build mission centres. Some wanted demonstration farms in their bid to advance holistic ministry and/or their three-fold ministry where literary and technical education (through schools), evangelism (through building churches), and healing (through opening up dispensaries) were the *modus operandi*. In these lands, they could make use of them as demonstration farms, as they taught “modern” and/or “civilised” agriculture to the indigenous peoples. With the East African Scottish Industrial Mission (later renamed the Church of Scotland Mission [CSM]), a British religious outfit, coming to Kikuyu-land earlier than other mission societies in 1898, land acquisition also begun in earnest. Led by Rev. Thomas Watson, the CSM set up a mission centre at Tumutumumu (in the present-day Nyeri County), in 1908, after acquiring land. First, the CSM persuaded the locals to donate, sell or relinquish land for mission settlement and expansion. Second, they used the protectorate government in their bid to acquire land. In time, they were, for instance, helped by the protectorate government to alienate 3 000 acres of land at Thogoto in the present-day Kiambu County.

Similarly, when Weithaga-Murang’a CMS missionaries (led by Arthur Wallace McGregor) crossed over River Tana (locally called Sagana, near Sagana Town of Kirinyaga county), in mid-1908, to meet Senior Chief Njega wa Gioko, they wanted land to open a mission centre at Githuguya, at the present-day Sagana Technical site. As an employee of the British protectorate government, Senior Chief wa Gioko was not expected to deny them land to do so. Nevertheless, he played tricks by redirecting them to *Gacumbirira ka Mutira* or the upper hill of Mutira (Njumbi-Mutira) which they reached in the last half of 1908. There, they met Chief Munge wa Ndaruru, one of Gioko’s assistants.⁹ Interestingly, Ndaruru was not friendly to them. Equally, youths from the local Ithimbwi lineage of the Wanjiku clan came out to stop the “foreigners” from surveying their land and disrupted the missionary team till they left the scene for some time, but returned afterwards. Under the missionary influences, Chief Munge wa Ndaruru was sacked after the missionaries appealed to the district commissioner, and Ndegwa wa Kimere replaced him in around 1913. Such gestures show the working nature of the colonial administrators and the Protestant missionaries. Further, Ndaruru’s sacking was a warning signal by the colonial government that whoever would not support the European missionary enterprise in their land acquisition bid, and in their general missionary agenda, would face the music. As a result, the CMS missionaries got 12 acres for the current Mutira primary school (though Canon Njumbi secondary school has taken a third of it after its establishment in 2010), and three acres for Emmanuel Church Mutira. Mutira Church was initially christened St Stephen Church Mutira till

9 Julius Gathogo, “The Quest for Religious Freedom in Kenya (1887–1963),” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXIV, no.1 (July 2008): 67–92.

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1925, as a measure of recalling the early resistance to its establishment, which dragged on for four years (1908–2012). In 1926, Johana Njumbi and other leading church elders renamed it Emmanuel Church. They considered the name Emmanuel more representative of their role since it means “God together with the people.”¹⁰

The policy of land acquisition before settling was first experienced as early as 1894 when Central Kenya and the rest of Kenya were governed by the Imperial British East Africa (IBEA), a chartered company (1887–1895) under Sir William Mackinnon. Through three punitive expeditions, central Kenya was conquered and land expropriation became the new trend. While the first one (1894) in Dagoretti-Kiambu expedition was led by Major Smith, in the present-day Kiambu; the second one (1901) was led by Francis Hall in the present-day Murang’a county of Kenya. The third one of 1904, of Kirinyaga-Embu counties was led by Captain Richard Henry Meinertzhagen (1878–1967).¹¹ In the third expedition, Meinertzhagen killed an estimated 797 residents from Ndia, and Gichugu peoples of Kirinyaga County. He also killed 250 inhabitants of Embu and Mbeere peoples, as he sought to start a colonial station and/or a Fort in the present-day Embu Town.¹² In all these expeditions, indigenous peoples, who were oblivious of these expeditions, were murdered in cold blood after being sprayed with bullets. Additionally, villages were burned down, livestock and other properties were destroyed, and scores became homeless. Further, brutal land alienation became the vogue, as by 1930 Africans in central Kenya were virtually reduced to tenants and squatters on their ancestral land.¹³

Nevertheless, the first European settlers arrived in 1902; and they expropriated land with abandon, even though the Crown Land Ordinance of 1915 acknowledged the right of indigenous peoples’ in land matters. The creation of “African reserves” in 1926 versus the so-called White Highlands for Europeans further complicated the land problem. This led to the expropriation of large tracts of land in Murang’a, Nyeri, Nanyuki, Kiambu, and in parts of the larger Rift Valley region.¹⁴ After acquiring land via forceful evictions, the Kenyan settlers enjoyed a higher standard of living than their fellow Kenyans. Characteristically, they had more leisure activities than missionaries. John Lonsdale noted: “There were more (settler) farmers’ associations, cricket clubs, golf clubs, women’s institutes, gardening societies, masonic lodges, dining clubs per head of the white population in Kenya than in any other community in the world”¹⁵ On the whole, the European settlement in Kenya developed on large-scale estates, and was

10 Joseph Karimi Karani, *Njega Gioko: The Ndia Pride* (Karatina: Gakara Press, 1986).

11 Gathogo, “The Quest for Religious Freedom in Kenya (1887–1963).”

12 Julius Gathogo, “Unsung Heroes and Heroines at Mutira Mission, Kenya (1907–2012),” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39, no.1 (2013): 107–127.

13 Gathogo, “The Quest for Religious Freedom in Kenya (1887–1963).”

14 David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 21.

15 J. M. Lonsdale, “Mission Christianity and Settler colonialism,” Unpublished Paper, 1982, 4.

characterised by colour-bar, as Kenyan apartheid was called. In other words, it ensured that Africans and Europeans lived or developed separately. The settler-farmers became landlords as Africans became “hewers of wood and drawers of water” (Joshua 9:23), a people who performed menial tasks.

Settler-Missionary Alliance

In supporting the settlers’ large-estate farming, the missionaries held the belief that this was the ideal opportunity to civilise the Africans, in line with the 3Cs that Dr Livingstone propounded, namely: Christianity, Commerce, and Western Civilisation.¹⁶ During the Kikuyu Ecumenical Conference of 1913, where nine Protestant missionary groups (the Gospel Missionary Society, the German Lutheran Mission, the Friends Africa Mission, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Church Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland Mission, the United Methodist Mission, and the African Inland Mission) were well represented, a constitution proposing the formation of the Federation of Missions was mooted.¹⁷ Although not all missionary groups in Kikuyu 1913 signed the proposal, the Alliance of Protestant Missions was still formed in 1918, though the outbreak of the First World War (1914–1918) had adverse effects and/or delayed these developments. In view of this, the settler-missionary alliance is not just seen in the missionary belief that “civilisation” of indigenous Africans would be mid-wifed by both missionaries and settlers, but in the general adoption of Western culture. In the nature of things, the policy document of the Alliance of Protestant Missions in the Kenya colony noted thus:

The settlers can help the missionary. As a fellow European, he can make friends with him. As one concerned in the development of the country, he can show an interest in the work of one of the greatest factors in that development, Christian education. ... He can act as a father, and not merely as a critic, of the Christian boys who have passed beyond the care of the mission and are now in his employment ... He can, by example if not by word, help a young convert to keep straight.¹⁸

Allison Smith has averred that the missionaries were compelled to stick together with the settlers by their “fewness in a strange land” and by the harsh living in the then tropical Africa.¹⁹ In this understanding, the missionary agenda wasn’t exploitation of African resources, but to seek support from whoever was available; all in their bid to improve the prevailing environment that was not conducive for their evangelistic tasks.

16 Julius Gathogo, “Some Challenges in Founding an African Faith: Sampling Mutira Mission, Kenya, 1907–2012,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38, no. 2 (December 2012): 81–99.

17 Julius Gathogo, “The Early Attempts at Ecumenical Co-operation in East Africa: The Case of Kikuyu Conference of 1913,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, XXXVI, no. 2 (October 2010): 73–93.

18 APM, “The Policy of the Alliance,” Para. 58, in *J. W. Arthur Papers, Gen. 764/3*, Edinburgh University Library.

19 Allison Smith, “The Immigrant Communities,” in *Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya* ed. B. E. Kipkorir (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980), 19f.

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It is no wonder that some viewed Europeanisation of Africa as the panacea for African woes. Such naivety rendered them impotent in assessing the brutal land acquisitions by the settler-farmers.

The settler-missionary alliance can also be understood by first understanding the missionary roles and aims. Initially, the 20th century missionaries in Kenya wanted to penetrate the African souls with the Gospel of Christ and eventually “become all things to all, so that by all means” they could save some (1 Corinthians 9:22). Unfortunately, their judgmental attitudes against African cultural heritage made them seek radical and abrupt change for the Africans, which was a tall order. Hence they primarily challenged African indigenous beliefs and customs. Their attempts to change the entire indigenous mind-set: medicine, education, language, and culture, was tantamount to a declaration of war with ones’ antagonists, hence conflict. They had a strong desire to change locals through the medium of education and evangelisation. In such situations, they were bound to seek support from the settlers who were combative in their social discourses. In turn, the settlers saw the African lifestyles as an economic liability as they looked forward to their cheap labour. At one stage, both the settlers and the missionaries got disappointed by the failure of the colonial government to legislate against African customs that they deemed inimical to “modernity” such as female circumcision, polygamy, wife inheritance, and wife-beating, among others.²⁰ By a confluence of history thus, the settler-missionary alliance had a good background that strengthened it.

At one stage, the missionaries, settlers and colonial administrators demonstrated their ability to team up and act collectively. In particular, when some missionaries shifted from evangelistic work to settler-farming life-styles, they would be assisted to cope. A case in point is one missionary by the name of MacLellan Wilson from African Inland Mission (AIM) in the early 1940s. Wilson became both a settler and a colonial administrator. His colleague, Kreiger, became a settler-farmer. Interestingly, both MacLellan and Kreiger remained respected and faithful members of African Inland Mission. They played a critical role in ensuring that AIM equally acquired land.²¹

Another specific case regarding settler-missionary alliance is that of Saville, a European man who resigned from the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Maseno, of western Kenya. Subsequently, Saville became the manager of the adjacent farm-land and/or estate that was jointly owned by a group of settlers.²² It was called East African Industries (EAI) Limited. Interestingly, the East African Industries continued to assist the Church Missionary Society (CMS) with industrial education programmes. In turn, EAI Limited was registered in 1949 and was headquartered in Nairobi. Since then, it has continued to manufacture and market food, home and personal products. Such

20 A. Hastings, *A History of African Christianity, 1950–1975* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

21 Lonsdale, “Mission Christianity and Settler Colonialism.”

22 Lonsdale, “Mission Christianity and Settler Colonialism.”

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include: washing powder, laundry bars, fabric conditioners, maize meal flour, margarine, soups, sausages, toothpastes, body lotions, baby care jelly, creams, beauty soaps, Blue band, Royco, Knorr, Omo, Geisha, Vaseline, Sunlight, and Close Up, among other products. East African Industries (EAI), one of Kenya's oldest consumer goods manufacturers, however changed its name to Unilever Kenya Limited in October 2000.²³

Another European missionary who demonstrated the settler-missionary alliance is Barlow of the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), an outfit which was renamed the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Barlow, a settler-farmer, joined the Evangelism Team of CSM after selling out his Iona Estate, where he was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Equally, Mackenrick left his father's estate and became an active member of the African Inland Mission (AIM). Mackenrick and his father had earlier left South Africa and settled in Kenya as settler-farmers.²⁴

Despite the seemingly healthy settler-missionary alliance, the missionaries avoided settlers' clubs post the 1940s, particularly as the settlers held them under suspicion, together with their converts. This suspicion was partly prompted by political activism that culminated in the formation of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), which was derogatorily called the Mau-Mau revolt, in the early 1950s.²⁵ The clarion call in the Mau-Mau movement was, "*Turenda Wiyathi na Ithaka*" ("We want Land and Freedom"). Julius Gathogo and Cyrus Njogu have explained thus:

Africans were also agitating against the forced carrying of the *Kipande*—that is, an identity card and passbook that were introduced after the First World War (hereafter, WWI), without which no African could leave his or her home to seek employment. Frequently, European settlers would punish "errant" African workers by tearing up the *Kipande*, thereby making it impossible for them to get further employment.²⁶ In addition, the European settlers punished their labourers with the *kiboko*, that is, a whip made of rhinoceros hide. They would flog their African workers from time to time and justify their cruel actions with trivial excuses. As Anderson notes, "by the early 1920s, the deaths of several African servants from beatings at the hands of their European masters earned Kenya's white settlers an unenviable reputation for brutality."²⁷

After the 1950s, no missionaries maintained land in colonial Kenya, as the settler-missionary alliance proved incompatible and/or unsustainable. As suspicion grew, and

23 Okoth Obando, "Kenya: E. A. Industries is now Unilever," *AllAfrica*, <https://allafrica.com/stories/200010270102.html> (accessed March 30, 2019).

24 Lonsdale, "Mission Christianity and Settler colonialism."

25 Gathogo and Njogu, *Chui wa Mararo*. See also Julius Gathogo and Moses Nthukah, *A Fallow Goldmine: One Hundred Years of Mbeere Mission in Kenya (1919-2019)* (Nairobi: The Kairos Book Publishers, 2019).

26 Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 9.

27 Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 78.

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as former mission pupils and students took up arms against settler-farmers and colonialism in general, particularly from 1952 to 1960, things had fallen apart and the centre could no longer hold. The marriage of convenience was now dead and buried, particularly as settlers targeted some “rogue” missionaries who had subtly caused the revolt. Archdeacon Walter Edwin Owen (1875–1945) of Kavirondo was derogatorily called “Archdemon” for his concern for the welfare of the Africans, and in teaching them new farming techniques.²⁸ Archdeacon Walter Owen compares well with the Zimbabwean (then called Southern Rhodesia) Anglican missionary-priest, Arthur Shearly Cripps (1869–1952), who openly admitted that there were fundamental differences between the missionaries and settlers. In particular, Cripps saw their diverse backgrounds and philosophies as key demarcating lines. He could also appreciate that their divergences were clear-cut, even on the golf course.²⁹

According to David B. Barrett, Walter Edwin Owen was appointed Anglican Archdeacon of Kavirondo (Western Kenya) in 1918. By then, Kavirondo Archdeaconry was in the Diocese of Uganda, though it was politically and administratively in colonial Kenya. In the 21st century, the area that used to fall under Kavirondo Archdeaconry, now comprises the larger Nyanza, western region and the Rift Valley of Kenya where Luo, Luhya, and Kalenjin ethnic groups dominate. In the 21st century Kenya, the old Kavirondo archdeaconry of the present-day western Kenya region has about 13 dioceses. That is, Bungoma, Butere, Eldoret, Kapsabet, Kericho, Kitale, Maseno East, Maseno North, Maseno South, Maseno West, Mumias, Nambale, Southern Nyanza Diocese.³⁰

After Kenya was declared a British colony in 1920, Archdeacon Owen formed the Kavirondo Taxpayers’ and Welfare Association in 1921. The aim of his religio-political movement was to empower the disenfranchised Africans, so as to enable them to be self-reliant rather than dependents of anyone. To practicalise his ideals, he taught Africans basic economics, and more importantly, the economies of scale so as to help them improve their production. Subsequently, he introduced ploughs, new crops, watermills, and bookkeeping as a measure of ensuring a skills development plan. He also taught them civic education and responsible leadership. As he organised this silent revolution, he also became a controversial cleric due to his outspokenness that irked settler-farmers. He would speak about common humanity, against forced labour, poll tax and hut tax. He spoke openly about politics as a right for humanity, including missionaries. As he armed Africans in political and agricultural matters, he finally found himself very isolated, not just by settlers but also by the radical Africans since 1935

28 Ben Knighton (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Kenya: Essays in Honour of a Meddlesome Priest* (Palgrave: Macmillan), 91.

29 Hastings, *A History of African Christianity*.

30 David B. Barrett, “Anglican Communion, Church Missionary Society, Kenya,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 80–82.

onwards. Nevertheless, he had made his socio-political point and henceforth focused on liturgical developments of the African Church, culminating into the revision of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (Luo version).³¹

In the nature of things, missionaries must have disliked the brutalities of the settler-farmers who could even kill an “errant” African labourer with daring impunity. Before the breakup of the marriage of convenience, there were pockets of cases where settlers and missionaries clashed openly after the missionaries lobbied the British public opinion in defence of the African workers. The missionaries were also blamed by the settlers for failing to produce faithful servants in their institutions of learning. In turn, the missionaries blamed some settlers for failing to maintain Christian principles.

The Indian Question and Land

The Indian Question refers to the conflict where Indians in the Kenya colony protested against harassment by the settlers on land matters, in the 1920s. In this embargo, the European settlers wanted to be the custodians of the land in Kenya, rather than the colonial administration. It was the first major test in the settler-missionary alliance. Like the settlers, the missionaries opposed the Indian claims that they were equal with Europeans.³²

The Indian Question of the 1920s gave birth to the so-called Devonshire White Paper, which was basically a pro-Indian and pro-African declaration of 23 July 1923. This came after the British Cabinet approved that it was the colonial government which was the custodian of land in Kenya and not the European settler-farmers. Further, the cabinet resolved that only the colonial government could impose limitations on immigration from India, and not the settler-farmers.³³ The cabinet also restricted Indian land ownership in the so-called White Highlands. Subsequently, the Colonial Secretary, Victor Cavendish, who was the 9th Duke of Devonshire, issued the so-called Devonshire White Paper, thus:

Primarily, Kenya is an African territory, and His Majesty’s Government think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives must be paramount and that if and when those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail. Obviously, the interests of the other communities, European Indian or Arab, must severally be safeguarded. ... But in the administration of Kenya, His Majesty’s Government regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population, and they are unable to delegate or

31 Barrett, “Anglican Communion, Church Missionary Society, Kenya,” 80–82.

32 A. Smith, “The Immigrant Communities,” in *Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya*, edited by B. E. Kipkorir (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980).

33 Robert M. Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya: The Loss and Reassertion of Imperial Initiative, 1912–1923* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993).

share this trust, the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races.³⁴

Without pressures from the missionaries that the government solved the land problem, the African masses failed to see the difference between the colonial administrators, settlers, and missionaries. In this respect, the missionaries did not only support the settlers during the Indian Question on land, but also remained largely silent against massive land alienation. Was it another way of suggesting that they were equally guilty as charged? Were they involved in land alienation as well?

Education and Land

Although the missionaries provided education, the colonial government micro-managed it. The government displayed its upper hand over the missions by providing limited bursaries and grants with strings attached. There were moments when the government threatened to withdraw funds whenever the mission societies became too critical against the dissipations of colonial administrators. While the European settler-farmers put pressure on the missionaries to provide technical, agricultural and industrial education to the African learners, the missionaries and the colonial administration preferred literary education.³⁵ This shows that unlike settler-farmers, the missionaries' primary goal wasn't land as such, but basic literacy to aid their missions.

It is noteworthy to recall that an alliance between settlers and missionaries, in 1923–1924, culminated in settlers putting pressure on funding for a technical education programme in the estimates for the fiscal year 1924.³⁶ To this end, the 13 000 British pounds grant that was earmarked as mission grant, saw 12 000 British pounds spent specifically on technical education; while 1 000 British pounds was spent on literary training for pupils in a technical programme. As Robert Strayer has noted, the missionaries were under pressure with regard to African education in the 1920s.³⁷ This was caused by the increase in the quest for education among the African society. This further caused them to collaborate strongly with the colonial government, even at the risk of losing their own autonomy. In turn, this caused the second Anglican Bishop of Mombasa Diocese, Richard S. Heywood (1867–1955), whose primacy was between 1918 to 1936, to respond as follows in 1919: “if we act now, we can have the full support of the government; if we fail them, they may take up the work themselves and we find ourselves missing a grand opportunity.”³⁸ More than 11 000 British pounds was donated to support education by the colonial government in 1926. This annual grant was referred

34 Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya*, 270–279.

35 B. E. Kipkorir, *Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980).

36 Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans, 1875–1935* (London: Heinemann, 1981).

37 Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa*.

38 Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa*, 110.

to as a “grand opportunity” and was meant for nine “cooperating” centres.³⁹ Such environments dissuaded the church from offering its prophetic role in condemning both the excesses of the state and the settler-farmers in their brutal land expropriations. Did the missionaries offer mechanical education to please the settler-farmers, as in the case of the Victorian Education System, which Charles Dickens’ novel, *Hard Times*, demonstrates?⁴⁰ In the author’s published book, *Mutira Mission* (2011), which reassessed one hundred years of Christianity in Kirinyaga County of Kenya, he argues that the European missionaries prepared three types of professionals who were all sent to the present-day Kabete Technical (formerly Native Industrial Training Depot – NITD Kabete, which opened in 1924).⁴¹ These included building and construction, teaching, and nursing/laboratory technicians. Certainly, there were agricultural-related courses such as soil and water management, basic animal husbandry, horticultural management and food business, technical agriculture, and general agriculture. These courses, where recruits were mainly primary school graduates, were not meant to build intellectuals, graduates and philosophers of any shades. Rather, it was meant to provide basic knowledge in the technical work within the institutions that were stewarded by the missionaries, on the settlers’ farms and in some limited government offices where some worked as clerks. In a nutshell, education was largely beneficial to the settler-farmers who wanted cheap labour as they managed their industries and farming activities.

Sampling Kirinyaga County

In Kirinyaga County, which is situated in central Kenya, the CMS missionary team under the leadership of Rev. Arthur Wallace McGregor found two powerful chiefs who acted as the custodians of the land. That is, Chief Njega wa Gioko (1865–1948) to the western side, and Chief Gutu wa Kibetu (1860–1927) on the eastern side. As appointees of the protectorate government, they could not easily defy assigning land to the missionaries but they did not allow them to settle in their respective areas of choice. Hence, in mid-1908, Chief Gioko was approached in his Kiamuthambi base by the so-called Weithaga missionaries to provide land, but he directed them upstream to the less developed area of *gacumbirira ka Mutira* or the hilly Njumbi-Mutira. Likewise, Chief Kibetu was approached in 1909 to provide land for CMS settlement at Rukenya, only to direct them upwards to a hilly and less developed cold and hyena-infested area (Kabare Hill).⁴² In both cases, land was allocated by default rather than by design. Reluctantly thus, Kibetu and Gioko gave out land in their jurisdiction, a situation where they did not want to annoy the appointing authority; while at the same time, they did not want to give out the best clan land and thereby annoy the indigenous people who owned the land. Nevertheless, land was allocated as in the case of an indigenous *muhoi*

39 Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa*, 110.

40 Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Wordsworth: Printing Press, 1854).

41 Julius Gathogo, *Mutira Mission: An African Church Comes of Age* (Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2011).

42 Julius Gathogo, *Beyond Mount Kenya: 40 Years of Theological and Practical Education at St. Andrew’s College, Kabare (1977–2017)* (Nairobi: Evangel Publishers, 2017).

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or *muboi*, a phenomenon where a visitor could settle in a given area but was expected, at one stage, to finally leave the land to the real owners.

As the mission work progressed and more converts were made, there were cases where indigenous people gave out land for mission expansions out of coercion.⁴³ There are also cases where locals gave out land willingly for ecclesiastical expansions, a trend that persisted right into the 21st century.⁴⁴ In the latter, the following have been cited as some of the people who gave out land despite its religio-ancestral significance in African spirituality, all in their bid to facilitate church growth in the Kirinyaga County of central Kenya; and generally in post-colonial Kenya:

Harry Mugo bought a plot of land for Kiamiciri in 1994, Mzee Evan of Kiamagunyi gave a piece of land to Karimaini parish in 1980s, Henry Kuruga Mugi gave out land in 1970s to start Kabonge Church, Reuben Kathigi Rukenya gave out land to build Kangware Church in early 1990s, Peterson Njiru Githere gave out land to build Kathiru Trinity Anglican Church, Kiura wa Karuiru gave out a piece of land to expand St. Annes' Kangware Church in mid 1990s, Ephantus Kabuthi gave out land in 1970s to build Mutuma Church, Ephantus Itemi donated land for the construction of Mung'etha-Mutuma Church in early 1990s, Haroun Kabugua Rukenya donated the plot where Muragara priests' house is built in early 1990s, Symon Njau donated land for the construction of Ithiga-Ithae-Muragara Church, Johana Rukungu donated land for the construction of Thiguku-Baricho Church, Gabriel Mucee donated Miirichi-Ngiriambu Church, while Naftali Njogu provided land to build Gikonjo-Kariru Church.⁴⁵

Gathogo explains the irony that despite rapid population increase, where land is becoming scarce for agricultural communities of central Kenya (Kikuyu, Mbeere, Embu, and Meru), more people are still donating the little pieces of land left for church growth, right into the 21st century. Gathogo says:

A case in point is the son of Rev. [Canon] Joseph Kangangi Mwanake, Francis Nyamu Kangangi. When his father sub-divided his land amongst his sons and daughters, following his retirement in 1996, Francis Kangangi, then aged 27, donated his only one acre to the Anglican Church of Kenya, St. Peter's Kamuiru Church. His argument was that having gone through university education successfully, where he had completed a Bachelor's degree in Science (BSC), secured a job, was in good health, among other great strides, he needed to thank God through donating a precious commodity, land. This gesture, that rendered him landless in a community that adulates land, was seen as a unique decision, a decision that marked him out as a great man of faith who still envisioned more of God's provisions.⁴⁶

43 Gathogo, "The Quest for Religious Freedom in Kenya (1887–1963)": 67–92.

44 Julius Gathogo, *The Truth about African Hospitality: Is there hope for Africa?* (Mombasa, Salt, 2001).

45 Gathogo, *The Truth about African Hospitality*, 120. Information gathered from the field research.

46 Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*, 123.

While it can be argued that the donation of land for church expansion is purely out of the inherent African hospitality, the willing donation of land in a society that views land from a religious dimension is indeed a great sacrifice. Clearly, the land question remains a unique demand in African indigenous society, especially among the ethnic groups living in central Kenya. As Jomo Kenyatta has noted, land is the foundation on which the economy of peoples in Kenya's central region stands,⁴⁷ for land symbolises life and continuity among the indigenous people; hence in donating land, the locals see a continuity of African religious heritage through to Christianity. With land being a sensitive area that caused the youth to retreat to the forests in the early 1950s, so as to fight for freedom as Mau-Mau guerrilla fighters in order to reclaim their expropriated land, it remains a critical concern that will always need to be handled cautiously. It caused ethnic clashes in the 1990s, and worst of all it almost caused genocide after the December 2007 disputed elections in Kenya, when various ethnic groups in the Rift Valley region of Kenya fought fiercely under the camouflage of politics, though the real problem was a land dispute. As noted in Kenyatta's words, land ownership is very important because, as agriculturists, the people of central Kenya region, as with the Rift Valley region among others, depend entirely on land. It supplies them with the material needs of life through which spiritual and mental contentment is achieved.

The 21st Century Kenya: Shift from Land to Wealth and Money?

In the 21st century, however, we experience a paradigm shift in the way churches conduct their discourses with reference to land. With the emergence of afro-Pentecostalism as the dominant ecclesiastical paradigm, the quest for wealth and money has become another critical need beyond land. This means that afro-Pentecostals of the 21st century do not appear to see land acquisition as the first stage of mission settlements, as in the case of the 20th century European mission societies in Kenya.⁴⁸ A casual observation will show that an emerging afro-Pentecostal outfit in Kenya will appear comfortable in a rented building, as it hopes to secure her own little plot of land to purchase later.

Of importance to ask is: Has land lost value in the 21st century, hence the reason why afro-Pentecostals fail to put much emphasis on it in their prosperity theologies? Or has the scarcity of land conditioned them to accept renting buildings and sometimes going for little plots of land? Further, with afro-Pentecostals targeting urban working classes in the cities and towns, does this indicate that the "thirst" for land is no longer in vogue, as was the case in the early 20th century? Such concerns drive us to consider the money-wealth phenomenon as the new norm in the Kenyan afro-Pentecostal ecclesiology, a situation that also affects the mainline churches such as Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Reformed Churches, who now invest in buildings, televangelism,

47 Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (Nairobi: EAEP, 1938).

48 Julius Gathogo, "The Challenge of Money and Wealth in some East African Pentecostal Churches," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 37, no. 2 (September 2011): 133–151.

building of church-sponsored universities and colleges, opening up of church-governed primary and secondary schools, buying company shares, and so on.

During the 14 June 2012 budget, the erstwhile Kenyan Minister for Finance, Hon. Robinson Njeru Githae, tightened taxation rules on charities and churches through the new measures that he announced as he read the annual national budget. This came out clearly when he tabled, in the national parliament, his proposals to amend the Income Tax Act, which previously exempted churches from taxation. In this Finance Bill 2012, the mandate of issuing exemptions to taxations, which was previously under the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), now shifted to the Ministry of Finance. Since then, the Kenyan Minister of Finance became the sole determinant of tax exemptions for charitable activities after realising that lots of business activities, done by the church, weren't getting taxed. In the nature of things, the minister of finance began to make decisions on exemptions only with advice from the tax czar. He thus said: "It has come to my attention that KRA is facing challenges in determining institutions that qualify for exemptions while engaging in charitable activities."⁴⁹ Since then, the situation for the church in Kenya has changed drastically; and the once concealed matters regarding church wealth and land came into the public limelight, especially as the churches and other institutions filed annual tax returns.

In Githae's proposal, that ultimately passed, he amended Paragraph 10 of the first schedule of the Income Tax Act, which makes provisions for organisations of a "public character" to be exempt from taxation. Such organisations include churches, trusts and charities. As Githae implied in his proposals that organisations had for decades abused the exemption provisions and eventually imported goods under the guise of public benefit. Others were conducting commercial activities in disguised ways without paying taxes. While churches feared that the tightening of taxation rules was an affront to them, the move was ironically endorsed by powerful individuals and financial institutions who could for instance cite the case of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who had by 2012 totalled a US\$ 1.3 billion industry, after growing from 100 in the 1990s to around 6 000 by 2012.⁵⁰ It was also feared that the objectives among churches and charities (of benefiting the public) were not achieved in some cases, as individuals were using the tax exemptions for their own profit. Certainly, this represented huge critique of the church, which has always remained a beacon of hope in the sea of chaos.

Since the tightening of taxation rules on charities and churches in the Finance Bill of 2012, a lot of information regarding church money, wealth and land (which was hitherto

49 Robinson Njeru Githae quoted in "Churches and Charities' Income on KRA's Radar in new Tax Measures," *Daily Nation*, June 15, 2012, <https://www.nation.co.ke/business/996-1428260-r43dn2/index.html> (accessed January 20, 2019).

50 "Churches and Charities' Income on KRA's Radar in new Tax Measures," *Daily Nation*, June 15, 2012, <https://www.nation.co.ke/business/996-1428260-r43dn2/index.html> (accessed January 20, 2019).

unknown) has come out in the public domain. In other words, the new rules that were set by the government that churches would be filing their annual financial returns, with audited accounts for the particular financial year, went hand-in-hand with a declaration of assets, liabilities and bank statements of all accounts. According to Fay Ngina, three churches made it to the Kenya Revenue Authority's top taxpayers' list in 2015. It was established that their respective businesses went far above annual returns of between \$1 million and \$1 000.⁵¹ Curiously, an afro-Pentecostal outfit, Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM), formerly known as Nairobi Pentecostal Church and established in 1959 as a Ministry of Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), turned out to be the wealthiest church in Kenya. Despite having only 15 branches countrywide, CITAM had more wealth in 2015 than the largest church, the Roman Catholic Church. In turn, the Roman Catholic Church had about 20 Dioceses and 4 Archdioceses (Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nyeri). While the Catholic Church, whose presence is felt in virtually all villages of Kenya, has been a missionary church that began in Kenya in the 19th century, CITAM got her current name in 2003 after it was changed from Nairobi Pentecostal Church (NPC). CITAM was registered as an autonomous independent entity under the Societies Act of Kenya in 2003.⁵²

In 2015 thus, CITAM came out as the wealthiest church in Kenya despite being seen as an urbanised religious outfit. CITAM, which also owns Hope TV and Hope FM Radio, recorded a sum of over one billion Kenya Shillings. After CITAM, another Pentecostal outfit, Nairobi Chapel, filed its returns at the tune of Ksh 440, 159, 438 (roughly \$4.4 million) in 2015. Equally, Mavuno (meaning "harvest") Church, an afro-Pentecostal outfit, came third with about \$3million (or about 300 million Kenya shillings) annual return in 2015. The fourth position was taken by All Saints Cathedral, the largest Anglican Church in Kenya, which collected Kenya Shillings 190, 850, 103 (about \$1.9 million dollars). It did not, however, make it in the list of three churches that made it to the Kenya Revenue Authority's top taxpayers' list, unlike the above afro-Pentecostal churches (CITAM, Nairobi Chapel, and Mavuno). Does this point to the fact that afro-Pentecostal is the dominant ecclesiastical paradigm in the 21st century Kenya and in tropical Africa?⁵³ The Nairobi Baptist Church came fifth with a total sum of Ksh 163 million (\$1.6 million dollars).⁵⁴ Other churches which filed high returns with the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) in 2015, and of course since the passage of the Finance Bill 2012, include: the Winners Chapel; Jubilee Christian Church (JCC) Ministries; Faith

51 Fay Ngina, "Top richest Churches in Kenya and how much they make annually," *The Standard*, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/ureport/article/2001273628/photos-top-richest-Churches-in-kenya-and-how-much-they-make-annually> (accessed January 20, 2019).

52 <http://www.valleyroad.citam.org/our-history/> (accessed January 20, 2019).

53 Julius Gathogo, "Theo-Political Dominance of Afro-Pentecostalism in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Kenyan Socio-Ecclesial Experience," *US-China Law Review* 11, no. 11 (November 2014): 1499–1515.

54 Ngina, "Top richest Churches in Kenya and how much they make annually."

Evangelistic Ministry (FEM); Jesus Celebration Centre (JCC Bamburi-Mombasa); and Neno Evangelism Centre.⁵⁵

Conclusion

From the outset, this article sought to test the premise that the land question was the glue that brought the settler-missionary alliance to reality. In its findings, however, the article has appreciated that even if the land factor remained the uniting factor, there were other reasons that brought the colonial administrators, the settler-farmers and the 20th century European missionaries together. In sharing kinship and similar forms of civilisation, they were all in agreement that the indigenous people had to meet the threshold of Western civilisation. Other factors that account for the settler-missionary alliance include the Indian Question of the 1920s, the education factor where they shared similar orientations despite some variations, and their “fewness in a strange land,” among others. While the colonial administrators, the missionaries, and the European settler-farmers acquired land “forcefully” and/or via subtle forms of arm-twisting and coercion, the article has noted that there are pockets of indigenous Africans who willingly donated land for church growth. This came about in the last half of the 20th century, especially after the church was left out of indigenous leadership in the post-colonial Kenya. Despite its religio-ancestral significance in African spirituality, the donation of pieces of the now scarce land right into the 21st century, demonstrates the total ambrosial approach of the African Church. With the emergence of afro-Pentecostalism as the dominant church model in the 21st century Kenya, the article has argued the shift from land as the most precious commodity, to money-wealth as the key power that has become in vogue; a phenomenon that is also finding its way in the mainline churches. In turn, this new development forced the Kenya government to tighten taxation rules following the government minister’s proposals to amend the Income Tax Act in 2012, which previously exempted churches from taxation. As they file annual returns to the Kenya Revenue Authorities (KRA), it is now easy to know which church controls more money and wealth.

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