

U EUROPEAN SETTLERS IN THE TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT: A CASE  
STUDY OF RACIAL DOMINATION IN THE KENYA WHITE HIGH-  
LANDS, 1920 - 1946.

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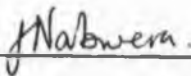
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DR. Y. A. NZIBO

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A B S T R A C T

This case study reconstructs the history of European settlers in Trans Nzoia district from 1920 to 1946. Chapter one serves as an introduction, outlining the historical problem under study and providing a survey of the literature relating to European settlement in Kenya. A summary of the methodological approach adopted during research concludes the chapter.

Chapter two traces the origins of European settlement in the highlands. The early policies adopted by colonial officials to encourage white immigration are discussed. Close co-operation between the Government and settler leaders before 1914 is stressed as one important reason for the rapid imposition of European dominance during this period. Initiatives implemented by civil servants in the East Africa Protectorate often preempted intervention from Whitehall, the 1904 and 1911 evictions of Maasai from land designated for white settlement being a case in point. Closer settlement was viewed by European colonists as a vital prerequisite for the consolidation of racial supremacy. The question of which settlers could best augment the small white population was, therefore, subjected

to close scrutiny. Following the outbreak of War in 1914, the matter was placed in abeyance, but in 1919 a settlement scheme for demobilised soldiers had been approved by the Imperial Government. Under this scheme, many surveyed farms in Trans Nzoia were occupied and, subsequently, a predominantly soldier-settler community emerged.

The settlers' political and economic interests are discussed in the third chapter, an assumption being that conditions in Trans Nzoia influenced their outlook. A controversial by-election for the Plateau North seat in 1921 underlined the fact that many local farmers were anxious about their future and wanted a Legislative Council representative who understood the problems confronting them. Moreover, the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association was dominated by postwar settlers who aggressively pursued the objective of overseas marketing. Formation of the Plateau Grain Growers' Cooperative streamlined transportation arrangements and the absorption of this body into the Kenya Farmers Association in 1927 culminated in the centralisation of producer co-operatives. Meanwhile, construction of the Uasin Gishu railway and a branch line to Kitale had been completed.

Developments within the district centred on

the expansion of agricultural production. Following the collapse of flax prices, most settlers had concentrated on growing maize, with the result that monocrop farming was prevalent by the mid-1920s. Producer prices remained high and farmers continued to bring more land under cultivation, but the abrupt onset of economic depression in 1931 introduced a period of hardship.

Chapter four is devoted to recounting major events affecting European farming in Trans Nzoia during the 1930s and early 1940s. As prices declined the acreage under crop contracted, with beleaguered farmers resorting to Land Bank loans in order to remain on the land. The weaknesses of monoculture were cruelly exposed and some preliminary attempts were made to diversify into mixed farming. Another problem, which predated the onset of the depression, was the chronic inefficiency of settler production in terms of an inability to utilise most of the land. One consequence had been a rapid increase in the population of African squatters and numbers of their livestock. Measures taken to curb squatting were hampered by the reluctance of many settlers to remove a cheap source of resident labour and agricultural produce. The outbreak of war in 1939 resulted in younger farmers

being enlisted for active service and the introduction of a group farm management system. Over the next two years the Colonial Government implemented legislation meant to boost agricultural production in the highlands. Among the measures adopted were the introduction of guaranteed prices on specific scheduled crops and conscription of African labour. During the war period, crop acreages in Trans Nzoia expanded rapidly and mobilisation of labour conscripts reduced the previous reliance on squatters.

In chapter five, the Africans living and working under European domination is described. The beginnings of the Squatter system are located in the ready availability of fertile land in a sparsely populated district. African settlement predated the Europeans' arrival, with white settlers often finding farms allocated to them occupied by African families. As conditions in neighbouring reserves changed because of social and economic dislocation, more families entered the district, finding short periods of labour a small sacrifice in return for access to abundant land. Squatters formed the backbone of the labour force in Trans Nzoia for most of the period under review. Attempts to control the population involved the imposition of livestock restric-



tions and more oppressive working requirements. Over the years, life became more difficult for many squatters and by 1946 when Trans Nzoia District Council had begun implementing measures aimed at eliminating the practice, the squatters' position had markedly deteriorated. The significance of a predominantly young male migrant wage labour force which increased over the years is also considered. The argument is that white settlers in the district were a farming community whose activities are of considerable significance in relation to the colonial period of Kenya's history. Social, political and economic implications of European predominance in Trans Nzoia, therefore, constitute an interesting subject of study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals rendered commendable assistance during archival and field research. The searchroom staff of the Kenya National Archives were very helpful, enabling me to retrieve many useful colonial records. I also received undivided attention from the staff of the periodicals section in the Macmillan Library. Members of the University of Nairobi Main Library, Africana Section, were equally helpful.

Government officers throughout Trans Nzoia district extended the utmost cooperation, for which I must express my gratitude. Various elders willingly spared some time to recall what life was like during the colonial period and I remain indebted to them. The clerk of Nzoia County Council very kindly allowed me access to colonial minutes of the Trans Nzoia District Council in his custody.

Dr. E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo supervised the research and read my early drafts. His inspiration proved invaluable. When Dr. Atieno-Odhiambo proceeded on sabbatical leave, the task of supervision was taken over by Dr. Y.A. Nzibo, whose patience and advice saw the thesis through to completion.

My parents have been a constant source of love and encouragement. I dedicate this thesis to them.

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	.....	Attorney General
AGR	.....	Agriculture
DC	.....	District Commissioner
KNA	.....	Kenya National Archives
NCC	.....	Nzoia County Council
PC	.....	Provincial Commissioner
RVP	.....	Rift Valley Province.

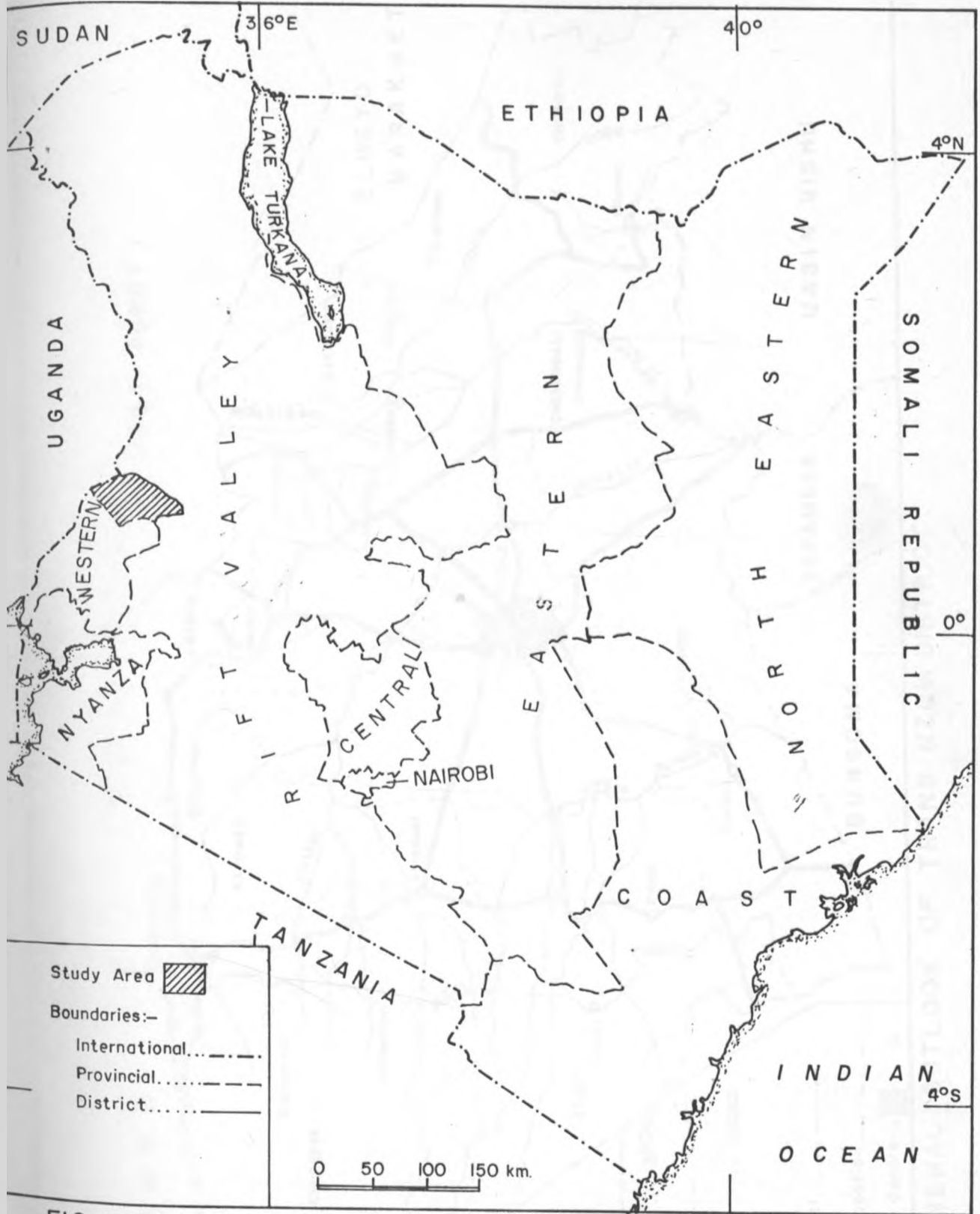


FIG. 1 : LOCATION OF TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT

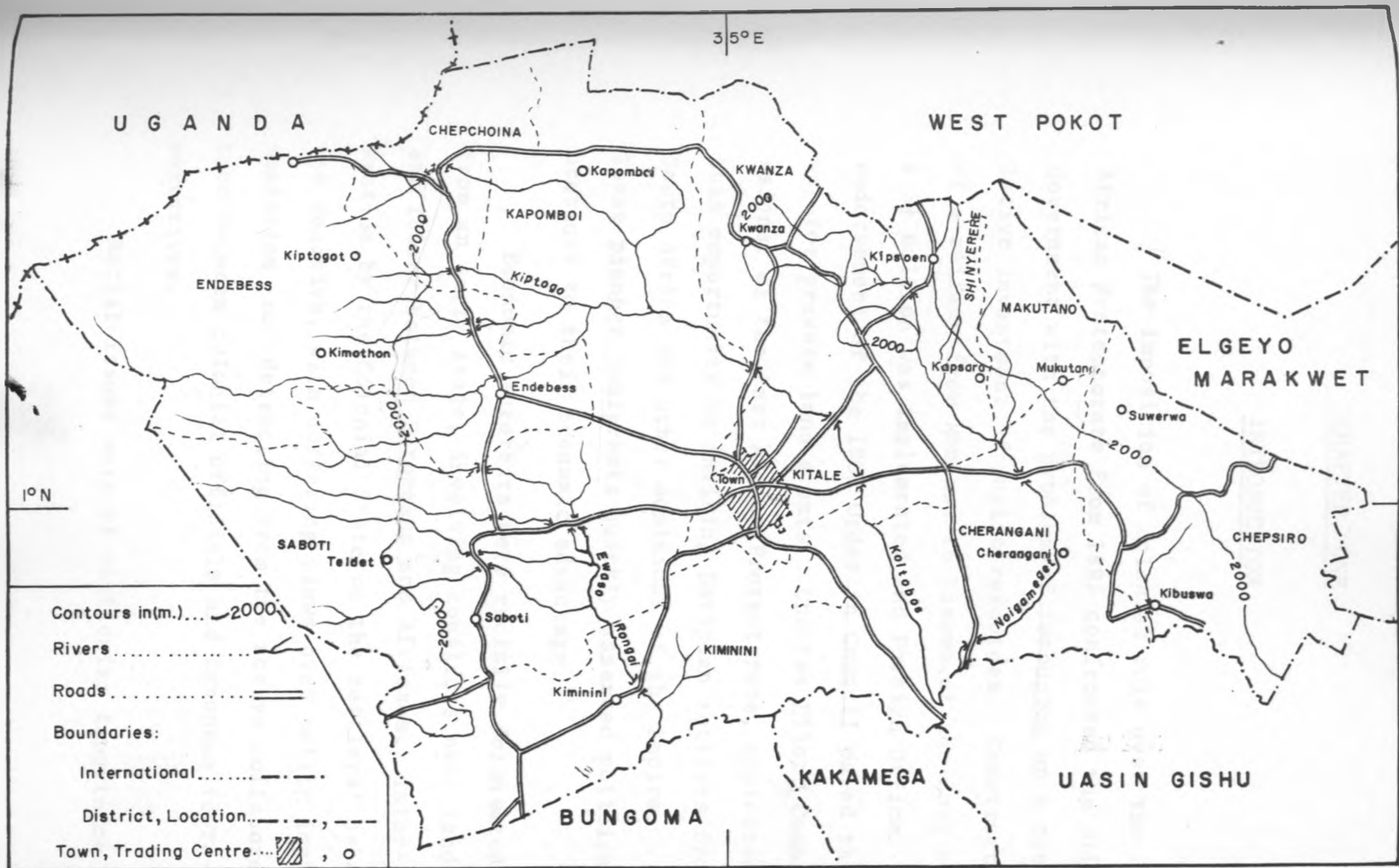


FIG. 2: GENERAL OUTLOOK OF TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The imposition of colonial rule over the East African Protectorate from 1895 confronted the British Government with the problem of recouping on a speculative investment of public resources. Construction of a railway from Mombasa to Kisumu at the cost of £ 5½ million was implemented and Foreign Office endorsement of the 1901 Order in Council paved the way for private land grants. Charles Eliot, Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, exploited this opportunity by inviting European settlers from South Africa and other dominions of the Empire. These pioneer immigrants quickly asserted political pressure to their economic advantage.

Economic interests were racially delineated from an early stage, involving conflicts over land and labour between Europeans and Africans. Intervention by the Colonial State on the settlers' behalf was decisive, with differing views over policy implementation not detracting from the active collaboration between colonial officials and European representatives.

Racial issues were of particular importance

during the period preceding 1914 because the settlers had not yet proven themselves in the sphere of export production. There was already a conflict of interests between metropolitan financiers anxious to exploit the Protectorate's export potential and the small local European farming community. The political debate over the possibility of Indian peasant immigration was symptomatic, with a sympathetic Colonial Office resolving the Indian Question in the Europeans' favour at a time when the India Office exerted enormous influence in Whitehall.

African agricultural production, however, proved a more significant challenge to European farmers. Competition between European and African maize producers for example, was only curbed by the introduction of discriminatory export grading procedures. The settlers considerable political influence was also manifested in the imposition of restrictions on African cultivation of specific cash crops by the 1920s. Legislation forestalled African coffee production on any significant scale until the mid 1950s. Lack of capital eliminated the possibility of Africans growing plantation crops like sisal and tea. In effect, de facto sanctions during a period when European and African agricultural production was increasing, created a virtual



settler monopoly of the most lucrative sectors of an expanding commodity market. Moreover, a major European objective remained the compulsion of a cheap labour force.

The long-term future of European settlement in the Highlands was, ironically, undermined by its progenitors. Large land grants to a small number of influential concessionaires had established a highly speculative land market, with land values being based on assessed potential rather than proven productivity. Implementation of closer settlement by the Colonial Government from 1919 introduced a class of settler who, in general, was interested in regulated land prices. The postwar settlers boosted the European population in Kenya Colony and Protectorate but their labour intensive farming methods and inability to utilise much of the land resulted in a rapid expansion of labour coercion and squatting in the Highlands.<sup>1</sup> These developments were a source of conflict within the European community and foiled attempts to develop the commercial viability of settler farming in marginal districts.

The European leaders in Kenya envisaged a settler state similar to those established in British territories like Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where

political devolution had been implemented. Racial supremacy alone, however, proved inadequate justification. Ultimately, sheer lack of numbers and the settlers' client relationship with the Colonial Government, a state of dependency aggravated by the 1930s Depression, rendered the establishment of a European dominion in Kenya a chimera.

Trans Nzoia was one of the main areas of post-war European settlement. The district was within the region which was transferred from Uganda in 1902, as part of the old Eastern Province, remaining undefined as an administrative unit until 1906 when it became a district within Naivasha Province. The area subsequently named Trans Nzoia was under the jurisdiction of the Uasin Gishu District Commissioner. Elgeyo was included as a sub-district of Uasin Gishu in 1913, with Marakwet being added in 1917.

Trans Nzoia was made an administrative district in 1919. Two years later Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu became extra-provincial districts. Elgeyo and Marakwet sub-districts were simultaneously transferred to the Suk-Kamasia reserve. Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu extra-provincial districts were integrated into the newly created Nzoia Province in 1929. In 1934 Nzoia Province was absorbed into Rift Valley Province. District administration of Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu sectors within the Rift Valley

was unified in 1945, reverting to separate status in 1949.<sup>2</sup>

Trans Nzoia district, the northernmost part of the former White Highlands, covers 1200 square miles. Bounded on the North-West by Mount Elgon, which forms the Uganda border, the district's northern extreme borders West Pokot district. Uasin Gishu district lies to the South and South-East, Elgeyo Marakwet district is due East and Bungoma district is in the South-West.

The major physiographic feature of Trans Nzoia is a central plateau, bounded by Mount Elgon in the West and the Cherangani Hills to the East. Major geological divisions are the tertiary volcanic rock of Mount Elgon and the basement rock of gneisses and migmatites which form the Kitale peneplain and the Cherangani Hills. The Kitale peneplain, covering most of the district, lies at an average altitude of 6200 feet. It tilts slightly southwards, with the main drainage system flowing towards Lake Victoria.

The two main watersheds are located along the Eastern slopes of Mount Elgon and the North-Western slopes of the Cherangani Hills. Major rivers include the Koitobos, Rongai, Noigameget, Losuroa and their tributaries, and the Nzoia river. The

Koitobos flows North-East from Mount Elgon, joining the Nzoia river at Mois Bridge. The Rongai flows roughly parallel to the Koitobos, joining the Nzoia further downstream. The Noigameget and Losuroa rivers drain from the Cherangani Hills, flowing North-West to join the Nzoia river a few miles upstream from Moi's Bridge. All rivers drain into the Nzoia river, which flows North-West into Western Province, eventually draining into Lake Victoria.

Loam soils in western Trans Nzoia are derived from Elgon volcanic lava and have a high natural fertility, retaining a good structure under continuous cultivation. The Elgon loams merge gradually with soils derived from basement rock, which are sandier and of decreasing fertility westwards to the Cherangani hills. Red soils of average fertility are found elsewhere in the district.<sup>3</sup>

Most mixed farming acreage in Trans Nzoia district remained under large farms following implementation of the million acre scheme after Independence. The major policy emphasis was on the transfer of farm ownership to African purchasers. When the first transfer of ownership occurred in 1960, there were 481 large farms, mostly European owned, with an average size of 1282 acres. The number of large scale farms had fallen to 380 by 1971, of which 270

were African owned and 72 were European owned, with the remainder being controlled by the Agricultural Development Corporation and Government research schemes. Average farm size had declined to 1260 acres due to the establishment of four schemes on former European farms in Cherangani, Suwerwa, Kipsoen and Sinyerere.<sup>4</sup>

Trans Nzoia district enjoys a high annual rainfall regime, and the fertile soils sustain variations of mixed farming. Maize, wheat, sunflower, coffee and tea are among the main cash crops. Dairy farming is prevalent in various parts of the district and beef ranching is important in the drier northern portion bordering West Pokot. Consequently, the district has remained a thriving centre of commercial agriculture during the post-colonial period.

#### Statement of the Problem

The history of white immigrant farming communities in Southern, Central and Eastern Africa has emphasised the significance of racial domination during the colonial period. In Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where European settlement was underway by the late 19th century, white predominance was secured by the implementation of an agricultural

policy intended to eliminate African peasant competition. A Land Bank was established in 1912 to provide cheap credit for European producers and over the years the best land was alienated from African reserves. By 1931 when the export market for maize collapsed, most African cash earnings came from wage labour and the process of impoverishment of the African peasantry was well underway.<sup>5</sup>

Settler domination in Southern Rhodesia, as in Kenya, was essentially a consequence of discriminatory economic policies adopted by the Colonial State. African modes of production in and around European farming districts were being articulated to a capitalist economy and the settlers continued to exert remarkable influence over the formulation of agricultural policy. In Kenya, however, the absence of an extractive mineral sector meant that labour movements followed a different pattern, one result being that labour reserves per se did not emerge along the South African model. Of equal significance was the fact that Europeans in Kenya did not exercise executive control over the Colonial State.

Racial domination in the Kenyan context, therefore, was a fluid process with the European

farming community striving to consolidate its position relative to the Colonial Government, the Africans and the Indians. Interpretations of settler politics have concentrated on this particular theme of racial conflict, one assumption being that racial solidarity was the overriding factor uniting the settlers. This usually proved to be the case in practice but it is easy to distort images by ignoring underlying conflicts resulting from divisions within the European community itself.

The implication is that stereotypes are of little analytical value. Concepts of undercapitalized and inefficient white farmers are often misleading generalisations. Instead, the social, political and economic anatomy of the community must be dissected in order to answer questions relating to the historical significance of European settlement in Kenya.

This case study attempts to provide an in-depth interpretation of settler history by restricting itself to a specific district of the White Highlands. Attention is focused on farming from the perspective of the farmers themselves. The premise is that European settlement in Trans Nzoia district was prompted primarily by the availability

of alienated land and hence, farming potential. The settlers' economic interests, therefore, were basically farming interests. Social, political and economic divisions within the local community and between Europeans in Trans Nzoia and those in other districts of the White Highlands were influenced by the agrarian factor.

The main influx of European settlement in Trans Nzoia came after 1918 when the Discharged Soldier Settlement Scheme was implemented. Many of the new settlers were of British origin and hailed from lower middle class backgrounds. They entered the district with high expectations, envisaging a better future for themselves as farmers. Most had no previous agricultural experience. Over the next few years as more land was brought under the plough and crop production increased, Trans Nzoia became a major European farming district. The local settler community was an increasingly significant social, political and economic factor both in relation to events within the district and in terms of European farming in the White Highlands. The boom years of high producer prices were abruptly ended by the onset of the Depression in 1931. Many settlers had been farming on very little working capital and crop sales were their sole source of income. The commu-



kinds of commercial ventures being launched are crucial to understanding European economic goals. Many of the newcomers took up Government allocated farms individually and in partnerships. The main variation from this trend were more highly capitalised syndicates and limited liability companies which wanted to establish agricultural production on a plantation scale. Diverse farming interests are, therefore, significant with regard to different forms of private land ownership and commercial production. Their performance in relation to local conditions and external markets needs to be divulged. Problems confronting farmers and the solutions they sought are considered under the assumption that such matters influenced the types of farming practised in the district over the years. Subsequently, technological rigidity or change is relevant in terms of farming methods and scales of production.

European farming in Trans Nzoia district was labour rather than capital intensive. The importance of African input evidently cannot be gainsaid. Reasons for an increasing African farm population are considered with regard to social and economic changes wrought by colonial domination. Categories of labour are important. Squatting in particular, was a phenomenon which characterised European farming

during the period under review. The origins of this practice and its role in settler agricultural production require examination. Another major working category were migrant wage labourers who increased in numbers over the years as the economic pressures of a cash economy worsened. Their role is significant because, unlike the squatters, they were dependent on European employment. It is necessary to locate the dynamics of African farm labour within the context of social differentiation and economic relations. How the squatters lived and worked is salient. Moreover, the deployment of women and children as casual labourers during peak periods like planting and harvesting cannot be overlooked. The significance of a predominantly young male migrant wage labour force is also underlined. Racial domination cannot be discussed in abstraction, consequently, relations between European and African are profiled at the level of clashing economic interests made vicious by white racism.

European predominance was a consequence of the colonial status quo and within this context settlers actively sought to consolidate and protect their economic interests. Political organization at the local level was an important means of soliciting and mobilising public opinion, with the main avenue of

expression being through local government forums and farmers associations. The role of European politics within the district is vital for purposes of identifying social and economic divisions among white farmers. How differences were resolved in the common interest and which sections of the farming community dominated political meetings or monopolised elective office has considerable bearing on the nature of the settlers' interests.

Beyond the level of district politics lay the colonial arena. Relations between local settlers and other sections of the White Highlands farming community, as reflected by inter-district cooperation or diverse interests, are an important variable. There is an evident need to locate the historical significance of white farming in Trans Nzoia within a context of European agriculture in Kenya during the interwar years.

The role of the Colonial Government as an implementing agency of economic policy which prompted and sustained European settlement cannot be overlooked. Attempts by the settlers to influence events in their favour by interceding with colonial officials at district, provincial and territorial levels are illustrative. It is, therefore, necessary to gauge

the nature and extent of conflict and collaboration between district spokesmen and the Government.

European settlement in Trans Nzoia district between 1920 and 1946 was a historical phenomenon of hitherto uncyphered dimensions which can be revealed by careful scrutiny of available evidence and judicious interpretation. The existence of a white farming community during the period is an axiom. Its form and content, however, remain nebulous. Unravelling the social, political and economic processes affecting the settlers would contribute towards reconstructing the history of one part of the rural European farming domain in the White Highlands of Kenya.

#### Literature Review

The historiography of European settlement in Kenya reflects contemporary circumstances under which the literature was written. A chronological overview of the various genres is, therefore, appropriate at this juncture.

An early account of European settlement in the East Africa Protectorate is Charles Eliot's The East Africa Protectorate.<sup>6</sup> The author was a major promoter of White Immigration during his term as Commissioner. Consequently, his narrative offers

an insider's view of collaboration between colonial civil servants and pioneer settlers during the formative years of White Highlands Policy. What emerges is a recollection of the relentless drive towards establishing European supremacy. One beneficiary of the Colonial Government's pro-settler policy was Lord Cranworth whose aristocratic background was similar to those of other early immigrants like Lord Delamare and Galbraith Cole. In his appropriately titled Profit and Sport in British East Africa,<sup>7</sup> Cranworth portrays the social, political and economic goals of the concessionaire element of the growing settler population. They wanted to establish a European domain led by representatives of their social class and bolstered by a large population of white farmers of British middle class origin.

3

Eliot and Cranworth were upper class Englishmen whose perception of colonial domination precluded any rational consideration of the interests of Africans beyond the racial notions of the era. Depicting the colonial setting as a wild and primitive frontier, they interpreted racial domination in terms of the white man's burden. Both authors had a receptive audience in the form of an eager British readership ready to imbibe further tales of heroic exploits on the ramparts of Empire. Neither book

attempts to reveal any negative consequences of European immigration, with both giving unqualified support to the principle of closer settlement.

An influx of new settlers after 1919 opened up new areas to European farming. The colonial Government strived to accommodate White demands, which were frequently at variance with African interests. Labour policy in particular began attracting considerable publicity within British humanitarian and liberal circles. Unprecedented criticism of European excesses was published in book form by two former colonial officials in Kenya. Norman Leys Kenya<sup>8</sup> and William McGregor Ross's Kenya From Within<sup>9</sup> are both indictments of discriminatory social and economic policy and provide informative accounts of contemporary efforts to promote European interests by suppressing African peasants and labourers. There is no definite attack, however, on the colonial system which formed the basis for African subordination.

Very few critics were willing to challenge the rationale of British Imperialism, rather, the British intelligentsia remained preoccupied with the implications of colonial policy in various possessions around the globe. Former administrators were considered as well informed about events in

territories where they had worked and many felt compelled to publish their experiences in the form of memoirs or monographs. Frederick Lugard was among the most prolific writers on British policy in sub-saharan Africa. In The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa<sup>10</sup> he addressed himself to the contentious issue of reconciling European interests with those of Africans in Kenya. Suggesting that racial segregation on the land would create a prosperous enclave of European smallholders in the Highlands, Lugard overlooks the point that resident African labour was integral to the European farming economy. Charles Hobley's Kenya, From Chartered Company to Crown Colony<sup>11</sup> omits the issue of European settlement altogether. Failure by authors with extensive administrative experience in African colonies to fathom the wider implications of white immigration reflects a contemporary belief that the settlers were percursors of colonial development rather than a disruptive socio-economic presence.

Opinion within the British establishment generally favoured the Kenya settlers and continued to identify them as the flagbearers of civilization and economic development. Kenya was perceived as the northerly extension of the settler frontier, a view forcefully articulated by the South African

Statesman, Jan Smuts. In Africa and Some World Problems<sup>12</sup>

he reiterates the expansive ambitions of Cecil Rhodes who envisaged a British settler dominion throughout Central and Eastern Africa. Similar sentiments are expressed by Edward Northey, one time military governor of Kenya.<sup>13</sup> European predominance in Kenya was also emphatically defended in various white papers.<sup>14</sup>

Literature written by settlers during the inter-war years was mainly based on personal experience and there was a proliferation of memoirs seeking to describe the hardship and adventure of life on the farming frontier. Notable examples from this genre include Karen Blixen's Out of Africa,<sup>15</sup> Eve Bache's The Youngest Lion,<sup>16</sup> V.M. Carnegie's A Kenyan Farm Diary<sup>17</sup> and M.A. Buxton's Kenya Days.<sup>18</sup> Images evoked by these books invariably reflect European racism, with African characters emerging as rustic tribesmen and bewildered farm hands. The impression created is that Kenya before colonialism was a seething cauldron of backwardness and savagery. This tabula rasa perspective is adopted by Elspeth Huxley in White Man's Country, a biography of Lord Delamare which describes European settlers as having achieved substantial economic progress.



Scholarly critiques published during this period are conspicuously few. Labour Policy is discussed by R.L. Buell in The Native Problem in Africa<sup>20</sup>, who draws on his research findings to outline the subordination of African interests within the political economies of settler colonies in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. This seminal work was, however, part of a general review of colonial policy in Africa as was Lord Hailey's An African Survey.<sup>21</sup> Inevitably, European settlement in Kenya is appraised in summary form. A more detailed interpretation is found in M.R. Dilley's British Policy in Kenya Colony.<sup>22</sup> All three authors however, draw similar conclusions about the fact of European social, political and economic domination. The subject of European supremacy is also pursued by Margery Perham and Elspeth Huxley in Race and Politics in Kenya.<sup>23</sup> Their published collection of letters reflecting conflicting liberal and conservative views of colonial policy offer valuable insights into contemporary European perceptions of racism and racial domination.

The rising tide of African nationalism after the Second World War and the Mau Mau insurgency of the 1950s marked <sup>the</sup> apex of colonial rule. Contemporary settler literature is characterised by frantic

condemnation of African agitation and romantic reminiscences of past years of undisputed European predominance. Christopher Wilson's Kenya's Warning: The Challenge to White Supremacy in Our British Colony<sup>24</sup> is an extreme example of this genre. White Africans<sup>25</sup> by Lipscomb adopts the same approach in less caustic language. The settlers also sought to immortalise the development of European agriculture in books like M.F. Hill's Cream Country<sup>26</sup> and E. Huxley's No Easy Way<sup>27</sup> which narrate the history of two important European farming institutions, the Kenya Cooperative Creameries and the Kenya Farmers Association. Michael Blundell's memoirs, So Rough a Wind,<sup>28</sup> published after the demise of colonialism, offers an interesting account of how the settlers sought and failed to attain their ultimate political ambition, a self governing European state.

The literature on European settlement which was produced during the colonial period reflected European prejudices and assumptions. Conflicts and contradictions arising from colonialism are not apparent. The settlers are portrayed as agents of civilisation and economic development whose racial excesses were an inevitable consequence of rapid change under Pax Britannica.

Remole's doctoral thesis, "White Settlers or the Foundations of European Agricultural Settlement In Kenya"<sup>29</sup> introduced the era of detached scholarly enquiry into colonial history. Other work in a similar Whig tradition include Bennett's Kenya: A Political History, The Colonial Period<sup>30</sup> and Sorrenson's Origins of European Settlement in Kenya.<sup>13</sup> The latter work is of particular significance, representing a reassessment of the formative years of land and labour policy favouring the settlers.

Brett's Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939<sup>32</sup> pioneered the "underdevelopment" approach to colonial economic history, relating the growth of European agriculture to impoverishment of African reserves. A similar framework is adopted by Wolff in Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930<sup>33</sup> and Van Zwanenberg's Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya 1919-1939.<sup>34</sup>

More recently labour history has come into vogue, with the intention of reconstructing the African role in the colonial economy. A general survey is found in Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963<sup>35</sup> by Clayton and Savage. The historical significance of resident labour on European farms

is analysed by Furedi in "The Kikuyu Squatters in the Rift Valley: 1918-1929"<sup>36</sup> and "The Social Composition of the Mau Mau Movement in the White Highlands".<sup>37</sup> Wambaa and King highlight the same theme in "The Political Economy of the Rift Valley: A Squatter Perspective."<sup>38</sup> Kanogo's doctoral thesis, "The historical process of Kikuyu Movement in the Nakuru District of the Kenya White Highlands"<sup>39</sup> reveals how the expansion of African Squatting was originally influenced by an abundance of land and relative freedom of life on European farms. In Stichter's Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and the African Response, 1895-1975,<sup>40</sup> the historical dynamics of wage labour in the agricultural and urban sectors of the colonial economy are analysed. What emerges is a varied African reaction to the constraints and opportunities of wage labour on European farms and in the towns.

While the literature on European agriculture and colonial policy is extensive, surprisingly little has been written about the colonial settler community per se during the postcolonial period. Groen's academic monograph, "The Afrikaners in Kenya; 1903-1969"<sup>41</sup> is a laudable case study of one section of the European community which was never really integrated into the social and political

fabric of a predominantly English-speaking society. By emphasising the cultural schism between Afrikaners and English speakers, Groen makes an important contribution towards dispelling the myth of a monolithic settler community. Political divisions arising from diverse white interests are analysed by Redley in "The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918-32".<sup>42</sup> His interpretation of how political consensus was reached by a subtle process of accommodation and compromise is an invaluable study of conflicts and contradictions within the European community.

There is a paucity of recent interpretations of European social history in Kenya. Norman Best's Happy Valley<sup>43</sup> is a nostalgic narrative of major episodes in the lives of British settlers which tends to rely on anecdote rather than serious enquiry. Errol Trzebinski revisits the earliest days of European settlement in The Kenya Pioneers<sup>44</sup> which meticulously reconstructs life as a white colonist from the perspective of an anglophile who is unabashedly sentimental. An authentic history of the social relations and cultural institutions among the settlers, however, remains unwritten.

The colonial history of Trans Nzoia district

has been barely touched on. Published sources recounting the European experience are sparse, the major exception being Lander's memoirs, My Kenya Acres: A Woman Farms in Mau Mau Country<sup>45</sup> which describes farm life in the district during the 1950s. Another postwar settler, Fleming, devotes a few pages of his book Blue is the Sky<sup>46</sup> to describing the selection and purchase of a 676 acre farm there in 1943.

Scholarly studies about Trans Nzoia include Waweru's B.A. dissertation entitled "The Basis of Politics in Trans Nzoia, 1963-1973"<sup>47</sup> which highlights the ethnic factor as a major influence during the post colonial era and Knauss's "Whites under stress: Communication and Social Change in two Closed Societies".<sup>48</sup> The latter work, a comparative study of white social values in Trans Nzoia District and Haywood County, Tennessee during the 1960s, <sup>offers</sup> useful illustrations of racism as a factor impeding adjustment to changing social and political circumstances.

European settlers and officials wrote about colonial events in which they were either participants or observers. Their views remain valuable as primary source material on the white outlook

but are confined within a narrow perspective of European predominance. The postcolonial period has offered an opportunity for scholarly enquiry into the recent past which has been well utilised. Emphasis, however, has remained on African initiatives, an area which had been previously neglected. Consequently, while the settler experience has been chronicled by the settlers themselves, comparatively little interpretation of this experience is available. The implication is that this is no longer a productive field of study, an assumption which has warped our historical understanding of the white immigrant farming community. A case study of settlers in Trans Nzoia district offers an opportunity to transcend the realm of popular generalisations.

#### Methodology

##### Archival Sources

Archival research was conducted during the latter half of 1984 and various primary sources were retrieved. Information about the process of colonial administration in Trans Nzoia district was mainly drawn from official correspondence, memoranda, minutes and reports deposited with the Kenya National Archives. Other sources included agricultural reports available in the Ministry of Agriculture library and

copies of Proceedings of the Kenya Legislative Council and The Kenya Gazette held by the University of Nairobi Main Library.

Material relating to the settler community in Trans Nzoia was retrieved from memoranda and minutes of Trans Nzoia District Council, Kitale Town Committee and Trans Nzoia District Association located in the archives of Nzoia County Council and Kitale Municipal Council. Also consulted were articles and letters published in The Leader, East African Standard, Kenya Weekly News and the Kenya Observer, available in the Macmillan Library and the Kenya National Archives. Personal papers of settlers and colonial officials deposited with the Kenya National Archives, University of Nairobi and the National Museum were another useful source. ʔ

Supplementary data on the history of European settlement in Kenya was derived from published and unpublished secondary sources in the University of Nairobi Main Library, Institute of Development Studies Library and the Institute of African Studies Library.

Oral Interviews:

Data drawn from the public record invariably reflects the views and motives of European colonial



officials. Colonial newspapers, while offering a comprehensive coverage of contemporary events, reflect the opinions of European editors and contributors. Private papers of settlers and officials alike render the same Eurocentric outlook. It was, therefore, necessary to supplement archival data by conducting oral interviews with African informants in the field. In aggregate the information collected by this method represents the African version of events in Trans Nzoia during the period under study.

The qualitative nature of historical evidence being sought invalidated the use of a structured questionnaire for a sample survey. Instead, interviews were conducted along similar lines but without repeating the same specific questions in each new setting. The aim was to solicit relevant information by allowing each informant to recall his personal experience of settler colonialism without the interviewer distorting answers by asking leading questions.

Successful interviewing requires a high degree of rapport between interviewer and informant. The majority of those interviewed were very cooperative and forthcoming once the purpose of the exercise was clearly explained. Surmounting the

problem of eliciting an informant's genuine views required that only individual interviews be conducted. Consequently, the distortion caused by an artificial consensus reached during group interviews was virtually eliminated.

Informants were selected on the criterion of having lived and worked on European farms at any juncture during the twenty six years covered by the research. Many of those interviewed were over seventy years old, with the youngest being approximately sixty years of age. Current social status or occupation was not a crucial variable, the determining factor being an informant's grasp of the subject.

Fieldwork was carried out across the Saboti, Kwanza and Cherangani divisions of Trans Nzoia, with eleven out of twelve locations being covered. It was necessary to liaise with local administrative officials in the various areas visited, for purposes of protocol and to locate potential informants. Formal introductions by Government officers enabled the researcher to acquaint himself with village elders, teachers and other community leaders who rendered invaluable assistance by identifying knowledgeable elders in the vicinity. A random sample

of informants was taken. In some locations two or more interviews were conducted, reflecting an incidental concentration of valuable evidence. Sometimes only one informant was identified in a particular location. A total of twenty five informants were interviewed in this manner.

Wherever possible, interviews were conducted at an informant's home so as to retain a relaxed and informal setting. The languages used were either Luyia, the researcher's mother tongue, or Kiswahili, the lingua franca of the country. Occasionally, an informant was unable to express himself clearly in Kiswahili, necessitating the use of a translator who would ask questions in vernacular and then translate the answers into Kiswahili or English. Each interview was recorded on <sup>57</sup>cassette tape and later transcribed in long hand.

Information was cross-checked by comparing the content of interviews conducted in different places. Often, when informants had worked in the district during the same period, the names of certain reknowned or notorious Europeans were repeated. Similarly, major events like the 1930s Depression and common experiences like registration certificates, squatters licences and the posho ration were freque-

ntly mentioned. Certain testimony also tallied with archival evidence.

The resultant sample purports to be a fairly representative profile of the African experience under settler domination in Trans Nzoia district up to 1946.

FOOT NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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2

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGINS OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN  
TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT

The Beginnings of White Highlands  
Policy, 1895 - 1914.

The nineteenth century marked the imposition of European colonial rule throughout Africa, a process which was endorsed by the 1885 Berlin Conference. In East Africa, Britain and Germany initially annexed territory through the agency of chartered trading companies. William MacKinnon's Imperial British East Africa Company established a presence in British East Africa while Karl, Peter's German East Africa Company occupied German East Africa. The ostensible purpose of these ventures was to make commercial profit but their main shareholders were keen to promote the imperial interests of their respective countries. When the Imperial British East Africa Company proved too undercapitalised to sustain the expansive ambitions of its directors, the British Government formally assumed control in 1895.<sup>1</sup>

Strategic interests had a major bearing on the

decision to impose colonial rule. Meanwhile various European travellers were venturing inland and reporting on the considerable agricultural potential of the highlands. Among these was Joseph Thomson, who crossed the Uasin Gishu plateau on route to Lake Victoria in 1883.<sup>2</sup> Charles Hopley sighted the Trans Nzoia peneplain in 1896 during an excursion along the eastern foothills of Mount Elgon.<sup>3</sup> Following completion of a tour of duty as Special Commissioner for Uganda in 1901, Harry Johnston traversed the Rift Valley. In his final report he remarked that the highlands were "admirably suited for a white man's country."<sup>4</sup>

Such sentiment won unqualified support from Charles Eliot who, while Commissioner for the East Africa Protectorate, was an outspoken advocate of European settlement. Contemporary colonial land legislation served his objectives. The 1897 Land Regulations had authorised the issue of certificates of occupancy valid for ninety-nine years.<sup>5</sup> In 1901, The East Africa (Lands) Order in Council empowered the Commissioner to grant or lease Crown Land subject to Foreign Office approval, a development which left the terms of disposal to local discretion.<sup>6</sup> This order was superceded by the 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance, which legalised the private sale of land under ninety-nine year leases.<sup>7</sup>

Administration of the Rift Valley and Western highlands was transferred from Uganda to the East Africa Protectorate in 1902, bringing the entire region crossed by the recently completed Uganda Railway under one governing authority. European settlement of this region was underway by 1903 and Eliot's instructions to his Land Officer in September 1903 stipulated that no grants besides small plots were to be made to Indians between Machakos and Fort Ternan. The principle of racial discrimination in the highlands was thus officially introduced.<sup>8</sup>

The law officers interpreted African land rights in terms of actual occupation only. De facto ownership over the land was, therefore, asserted by the Crown, which subsequently reserved the right to alienate land at will. On this basis Eliot proceeded to make generous land grants to concessionaire interests, of which one of 100,000 acres between Njoro and Molo to Lord Delamare was probably the most publicised.<sup>9</sup> Arbitrary grants expedited the process land alienation, turning Africans into squatters on their own land or involving outright eviction. The latter situation was exemplified by the 1904 Maasai Agreement and its sequel in 1911.<sup>10</sup> These agreements revealed the duplicity of colonial officials. Contemporary European opinion was expressed by the

1905 Land Committee which approved the policy of arbitrary evictions as a means of making Africans in the reserves and those working on European farms more amenable to control.<sup>11</sup> The Committee, chaired by Delamare, also suggested that "a class of sturdy yeoman farmers" be settled on 320 acre homesteads. Supporting the exclusion of "Asiatics" from land ownership in the highlands, the committee proposed that only short-term leases be granted to prospective Indian market-gardeners.<sup>12</sup>

The European population remained small, however, with wealthy and influential individuals retaining vast acreages of undeveloped farm land for speculative purposes. Subsequently, the establishment of a European farming community proved problematic and settler spokesmen continued to promote the ideal of closer settlement. In 1905 the East Africa Protectorate was transferred from Foreign to Colonial Office supervision. This measure encouraged the settlers to posture as expatriate Britons and local officials continued to cede to many of their demands. A frequent European complaint concerned the desirability of official compulsion of cheap African labour. One result of settler pressure was the 1906 Masters and Servants Ordinance, specifically promulgated to punish reluctant farm workers.<sup>13</sup>

Indians were considered potential economic rivals by Europeans. In January 1902, twenty two settlers had met in Nairobi and formed a Society to Promote European Immigration. Charging that Indian immigration was not in European interests, the Society petitioned Eliot, the Protectorate Commissioner over the issue. The latter promptly recommended to the Foreign Office that Indians be excluded from the highlands.<sup>14</sup> Eliot never bothered to conceal his disdain for Indians. According to him:

they are keenly alive to the advantage of acquiring valuable property ..... I therefore, when Commissioner of the Protectorate discouraged all acquisition of land by Indians in the Highlands, except in the immediate vicinity of towns.<sup>15</sup>

Racial prejudice aside, fear of Indian commercial competition was a fundamental reason for European insistence on racial safeguards. Construction of the Uganda Railway had encouraged Indian petty traders to venture inland. Fanning out across the highlands, they eventually established a virtual monopoly of retail trade in the countryside and became prosperous urban businessmen, rapidly purchasing most municipal plots.<sup>16</sup> An Indian agricultural settlement was founded at Kibos in 1903 but did not expand signifi-

cantly, with the result that commerce remained the main area of Indian economic activity.<sup>17</sup> Racial segregation on the land was enforced in practice, provoking bitter protests from Indian leaders who formed an Indian Association in Nairobi in 1906 to present their grievances.<sup>18</sup> Their complaints went unheeded, as was confirmed by Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State in 1906, when he agreed that farm land between Kiu and Fort Ternan be granted to European settlers only. He reiterated this stance in 1908, stressing that "as a matter of administrative convenience grants in the upland area should not be made to Indians."<sup>19</sup>

A new constitution was granted, providing for a governor with executive and legislative councils, following Churchill's tour of the Protectorate as Colonial Under Secretary in 1907. The Europeans, therefore, gained constitutional provisions normally associated with a Crown Colony, although annexation was not formally declared until 1920. The Legislative Council first met in August 1907 and was composed of three nominated settlers and six official members. Indians were not represented until 1909, when A.M. Jeevanjee was appointed to the Council.<sup>20</sup> Closer Settlement under such circumstances, as some perceptive European leaders realised, could eventually,



lead to the attainment of dominion status. While this remained a long-term objective, the paramountcy of European interests was undisputable and individual settlers flaunted their uncensored authority with impunity. When Ewart Grogan and three accomplices flogged three hapless Africans outside Nairobi Court house this impulsive act of racist arrogance drew widespread European approval and the four white offenders earned only derisory sentences.

The settlers campaigned for their interests by organizing themselves into pressure groups. The Colonists Association had been formed in Nairobi in 1902 to encourage European settlement. Delamare formed the Planters and Farmers Association during the following year. Ostensibly concerned with potatoe marketing in South Africa, it steadfastly supported further white immigration and firmly opposed Jewish settlement in the Protectorate.<sup>21</sup> In January 1905 the association was renamed the Colonists' Association, which continued to lobby local officials and the Colonial Office.<sup>22</sup> Other local associations were formed in various settled districts<sup>23</sup> and these were brought together in the Convention of Associations, which first met in February 1911.<sup>24</sup>

During the first decade of this century, successive colonial governors, Eliot, Stewart, Sadler and Girouard, promoted white settlement. "Government by Agreement" characterised relations between colonial officials and settler representatives. Government handling of land and labour problems reflected settler pressure which prompted the appointment of a Land Committee in 1905 and a Labour Commission in 1912. The establishment of Colonial administration in the Protectorate had coincided with the introduction of European settlers whose interests had raised complex issues concerning development.<sup>25</sup>

The settlers had already established the principle of an exclusive European land market in the highlands, but because they wanted easy and cheap access to African labour, racial segregation on the land was out of question. John Ainsworth, when Provincial Commissioner for Nyanza, had noted the unpopularity of underpaid employment on European farms.<sup>26</sup> As Military Commissioner for Labour during the First World War, he observed that resident African farm labour was necessary "but the contact should end there".<sup>27</sup> Ainsworth frequently disagreed with land and labour policies the settlers wanted to adopt but he did not question the idea of European

settlement.<sup>28</sup> In this regard he was like many other administrators whose official jurisdiction in African reserves did not preclude their identification with the settlers' economic interests.

African reluctance to abandon subsistence production for the vagaries of wage labour was already marked in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia. Murunga, the colonial chief of Bukusu, frequently conscripted men for farmwork in the two districts.<sup>29</sup> Corbett, the Eldoret DC, refusing to accept that local Europeans were often uncompromising employers, advocated the official adoption of whipping to reduce desertions.<sup>30</sup>

#### The Opening Up of Trans Nzoia District to European Settlement

Trans Nzoia district was initially appraised for European settlement by the Colonial Government in 1910. Following favourable reports on its agricultural potential, A.C. Macdonald, the Director of Agriculture, visited the area in 1912. Approximately one million acres was surveyed and demarcated into three hundred farms of three thousand acres each and the district was named after the major river flowing across its south-western portion.<sup>31</sup>

The first farm leases were auctioned in Nairobi on May 24, 1913. Farms ranged in size from 1300 to 4200 acres. Of the thirty leases for sale, almost one-third were withdrawn following no bidding at the upset price of fifty cents of a rupee per acre. A few successful bidders forded the Nzoia river later that year, becoming the first European settlers on "the last frontier".<sup>32</sup>

The 1913 land eviction marked the first expansion of European settlement north of the Uasin Gishu plateau, which had been occupied by Van Rensberg's Afrikaners in 1908.<sup>33</sup> Most farms at the auction were bought by English-speaking settlers, with only six being sold to Afrikaners, and of the eight Uasin Gishu farms sold at the same auction, only one was bought by an Afrikaner. Consequently, "their inability to monopolise the purchase of newly opened lands on the Uasin Gishu and in the Trans Nzoia prevented the Afrikaners from establishing a geographically distinct Afrikaner community in the Protectorate".<sup>34</sup>

European farming during this early period remained rudimentary, with the scattered pioneers being land occupiers rather than farmers. One early arrival, H.C. Kirk, had been farming on the Uasin Gishu plateau since 1908. In 1912, only twenty

acres of his land was under cultivation out of a total of two thousand acres.<sup>35</sup> Many settlers were essentially subsistence cultivators. Boers arriving on the plateau from Transvaal in 1908 were ignorant of local planting seasons and their first maize crop failed, forcing them to survive on maize, millet and beans obtained from local Africans.<sup>36</sup>

Such rustic conditions were reminiscent of pioneer European settlement in Southern Rhodesia, where white farmers in the late 19th century had cleared the land, broken the soil and sown a crop using simple hoes and maize kernels produced by Africans.<sup>37</sup> The practice of share cropping was also taking root. Derogatively referred to as "Kaffir farming" by Europeans, the practice was defined by the 1913 Native Labour Commission as "the rent of land to natives by a farmer or the compulsory sale to him of their crops grown on his land or both."<sup>38</sup> While this was officially deplored, a significant number of settlers depended on such arrangements to produce a marketable crop. Moreover, many farmers, including wealthy aristocrats like Delamare, actively encouraged squatting by recruiting resident labour.<sup>39</sup> The prevalence of such practices prompted the 1912 Labour Commission to declare itself "in favour of squatting being

encouraged in every possible way."<sup>40</sup>

The few settlers in Trans Nzoia district by 1914<sup>41</sup> were not engaged in cash-crop production on any significant scale. A number of Europeans remained absentee land owners. One of these, A.K. Macdonald, had purchased a farm there in 1913 by making a 10% down payment on the purchase price of 1900 rupees. He undertook to clear the balance by annual instalments.<sup>42</sup> In December<sup>1914,</sup> Macdonald requested a moratorium on payments for 1915, allegedly because his bankers in Paraguay had failed to remit the money.<sup>43</sup> Gower, the acting Land Officer, found this excuse unconvincing. Jacob Barth, the Attorney General, made a caustic criticism of Macdonald's failure to bring his land under crop when he remarked "there is a good market for all produce grown."<sup>44</sup>

The fertility of the district was avidly discussed in European circles, despite its remoteness. One impressed settler who had visited the area described it as "a wild beautiful land intersected with nice rivers and running streams, ample rain-all well wooded" where coffee and maize farming could be highly profitable.<sup>45</sup> Such superlatives were illustrative of contemporary views about Trans Nzoia as a prime zone for future European

settlement.<sup>46</sup> The outbreak of war in 1914 diverted attention away from the issue of further white immigration but the promulgation of the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance was a legislative landmark. Agricultural leases were extended to 999 years and the Governor was authorised to veto land transfers to Indians, thus ensuring that the highlands remained a European domain.<sup>47</sup>

In December, 1915, the War Council of the Protectorate mooted the idea of a post-war scheme for British veterans. The suggestion was approved in principle by Bonar Law, the Secretary of State. By 1917 the Colonial Government had decided to promote soldier-settlement. Governor Belfield appointed a commission chaired by the Attorney General, Barth, to draw up a provisional scheme to this effect on 13 March 1917.<sup>48</sup>

The commission report was entirely in favour of the scheme, proposing that "a system of settlement without financial assistance from the Government" was a distinct possibility, provided each settler had a minimum working capital of £500. Country wide settlement was envisaged, with land being alienated in the Rift Valley, around Nairobi and along the coast. The commissioners suggested that working capital could be obtained by a settler

"selling or mortgaging a piece of his surplus land to finance himself for future development." It was expected that in addition to one thousand surveyed farms, small holdings of 100 to 150 acres would be readily available.<sup>49</sup>

An important assumption made by the Commission was that closer settlement would be implemented by private land sales on a booming land market. Contemporary land values, however, remained virtually stagnant, to the chagrin of some land owners. Various factors were blamed for this. A.C. Hoey who farmed on the Uasin Gishu plateau felt that land should be sold on application rather than by auction. Furthermore, while Trans Nzoia was suitable for coffee, flax and sisal growing, its remoteness from the railhead at Londiani precluded the small-scale maize farmer.<sup>50</sup> Similar views were expressed by a farmer from Soy called D.A. Johnston.<sup>51</sup> Another Uasin Gishu settler, L.A. Johnston, felt that efficient maize marketing was a prerequisite for future agricultural development.<sup>52</sup>

Sentiment of this kind favoured European agricultural development under protected conditions. By 1917, 4 3/4 million acres had been alienated to Europeans, including sizeable land grants to Delamare, Flemmer, Chamberlain, Doering, Cole, the



East Africa Estates, W.A. Smith and Sons and the Scottish mission. Further "fibre" grants were made to Kibwezi Rubber Lands, Sterling and Company, British East Africa Fibre and Industrial Company, London and South Africa Agency and National Bank of India. Grogan was granted a forest concession of 200,474 acres.<sup>53</sup>

Grants of this magnitude encouraged speculation, with undeveloped land being withheld by concessionaires in anticipation of soaring land values when the best land was bought up by eager newcomers. The newly adopted Land Office policy of controlled auctioning of surveyed farm land was meant to reserve land for ordinary settlers who would form the backbone of any future closer settlement scheme.<sup>54</sup> It was this type of settler who became the subject of intense debate. Northcote, the Kiambu District Commissioner, felt that new settlers with limited working capital would be forced to borrow money from land speculators. In his opinion, financial constraints would compel them to "go in for low grade produce which grant a quick return e.g. maize, wheat etc."<sup>55</sup>

Hoey, the Member of Legislative Council for Plateau North who farmed in Uasin Gishu, felt that free land grants and a minimum of £1000 working

capital were necessary for those intending to settle in Trans Nzoia.<sup>56</sup> According to the 1919 Land Commissioners, 430,000 acres was available for occupation in Trans Nzoia, with the option of a further 120,000 acres excised from the Pokot reserve. In their view a major constraint was the absence of social and economic infrastructure.<sup>57</sup>

One proposal for surmounting the financial obstacle was forwarded by Baron Blixen Finecke representing a Scandinavian financier, P.E. Eckman. Finecke wanted a land concession for a Company registered in London, which would allocate land to demobilised British officers. Three hundred settlers would occupy 300 acre farms in Trans Nzoia. The Commissioners found this ideal although they disarmingly noted; "it would perhaps be more desirable if the capital to be used were British but the great need of this Protectorate is capital."<sup>58</sup>

The recommendations were revised following Edward Northey's appointment as Governor in 1919.<sup>59</sup> Land alienation under a Government scheme for closer settlement in Trans Nzoia and other districts was formally approved. Debate over the issue had involved two different schools of thought. Concessionaires interested in high land values and some civil

servants had championed the idea of small holder settlement.<sup>60</sup> Other Europeans perceived settlement on larger farms as a more feasible option. Northey's scheme was essentially a compromise, with land included ranging in size from homesteads to 1000 acre farms.

The revised proposals identified the outlying districts of Laikipia and Trans Nzoia as major areas for settlement, with other blocks being near Kericho and Nanyuki. A 45,000 acre salient was also abruptly alienated from the Nandi reserve near Kipkaren for inclusion in the scheme.<sup>61</sup> The nominal sale of 1053 farms in the "B" category and the allocation of 257 small "A" farms as free grants, was provided for. An area of 2.5 million acres was included.<sup>62</sup> Development conditions under the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance were very lenient. Permanent improvements included "farm buildings of all descriptions", "clearing of land for agricultural purposes" and "planting of long lived crops", besides more conventional requirements like fencing, drainage, dips and machinery. Annual rent for all farms was ten cents per acre per annum.<sup>63</sup>

These proposals were quickly endorsed by the Colonial Office which issued a press release adver-

tising the scheme. Selection boards in London and Nairobi sifted applications and draws were held to decide the order of allocating 1310 surveyed farms and additional unsurveyed land.<sup>64</sup> The London Selection Board consisted of Lord Cranworth, Northrup McMillan, Clarke, Grogan and a former governor, Belfield. There was a shortage of suitable applicants with 640 applicants being interviewed for 850 "B" farms in June and August of 1919. The scheme was publicised within the middle classes by way of personal contact and offered an opportunity of self-betterment overseas for those unable to make headway in postwar Britain. In Nairobi two thirds of the "A" farms went to Nairobi applicants and one-sixth to government officials. Subsequently, four-fifths of the 45 000 acres of free land in the "A" Scheme went to local applicants. Of the 2.5 million acres allotted under the "B" scheme or to syndicates, only 25% was allocated locally.<sup>65</sup>

The political and social significance of the Soldier-Settlement Scheme lies in the disparity between its ambitious goals and the type of men it eventually attracted. Among earlier enthusiastic justifications for such a scheme were the need to reward war heroes and enhance European security in the highlands by augmenting the population.<sup>66</sup> Sub-

sequently, it was intended for former British officers who presumably had the capital to begin farming and possessed leadership qualities deemed necessary for supervising African labour. In fact, however, men attracted by the scheme were often those facing an uncertain future after demobilisation.<sup>67</sup> Much of the interest shown by applicants was speculative, with few harbouring the mythical principles of "the public school boy and officer of the new army".<sup>68</sup> A significant majority of successful overseas applicants were, however, discharged soldiers.<sup>69</sup> In November 1919, 1500 new settlers disembarked from the chartered passenger ship, Garth Castle, at Mombasa.<sup>70</sup> Their arrival introduced a new phase of European settlement in the highlands. A sizeable proportion of them had been allotted land in Trans Nzoia district.

Arthur Champion was appointed the first District Commissioner for Trans Nzoia on 8 October, 1920. His first camp was on farm 2197, near the future southern boundary of Kitale township. On 15 December of that year, he moved to farm 1802 near the Nzoia river, where land was rented from A.C. Hoey.<sup>71</sup> Temporary offices, housing and a prison were built on this site, which became popularly known as the Old Boma.<sup>72</sup>

Soldier-settlers were beginning to occupy the district. One of them, Captain Pharazyn, arrived at Mombasa in January, 1920. His journey upcountry was made under conditions typical of this period. After travelling with his wife on the railway upto Londiani, he embarked for Eldoret by Ox-wagon, eventually crossing the Nzoia river to occupy a Cherangani farm in partnership with another European.<sup>73</sup>

Some of the newcomers had applied for land locally. Major Weller, for example, was a Land Office clerk in the Protectorate before the war. He joined the Kings African Rifles following the outbreak of hostilities, resigning his commission in 1918 to participate in the Soldier Settlement Scheme. After reconnoitering Trans Nzoia in February, 1919, he bought a 3000 acre farm with two other men.<sup>74</sup>

Prewar settlers had sometimes acquired extensive land holdings. A.C. Hoey was an influential politician who owned several farms in Cherangani. Henry Mitford-Barborton, who had grown coffee in Kiambu before the war, had purchased four farms very cheaply during the 1914 land auctions.<sup>75</sup> Most incoming settlers occupied smaller holdings ranging from 200 to 1200 acres. Poor communications were a major problem and the Government constructed a bridge over the Nzoia river besides opening various

access roads. Colonial administration was already being imposed on the African population. During 1920 the DC's court tried fifty-nine Africans under various criminal ordinances and the tax collected during the first quarter amounted to 10,900 rupees.<sup>76</sup>

Most land in the district remained undisturbed by European farming in 1920. The Konyi were still utilising the forests of the Mount Elgon foothills and the fertile soils of western Trans Nzoia as pasture and for subsistence cultivation.<sup>77</sup> Many Bukusu families had crossed the Kisawai and Kamukuywa rivers into the district and settled on alienated land.<sup>78</sup> In eastern Trans Nzoia, the Pokot and Cherangany continued to enjoy virtually unrestricted access to abundant pasture. European settlement and the administrative measures adopted on the white settlers behalf affected African modes of production by restricting access to the land. One result was that "the Suk [Pokot] who had invaded the alienated farms of Trans Nzoia with their stock were driven back in November 1919."<sup>79</sup> The Bukusu who were grazing livestock and practising subsistence cultivation in the South-Western part of the district were considered as squatters by incoming Europeans.<sup>80</sup>

The imposition of racial domination within the sphere of agricultural production began from this period. This situation was a new experience for a people whose previous contact with British rule had been via the activities of African agents in the reserves.<sup>81</sup> Now they were expected to provide cheap labour for white colonists, often remitting part of their produce in exchange for rights of occupation. This unequal racial relationship, involving the appropriation of economic resources for the settlers benefit, increasingly involved coercion.<sup>82</sup> While force was not officially authorised, white farmers exercised extra-legal authority precisely because the District Commissioner was perceived as representing European interests, not those of Africans.<sup>83</sup>

Many of the settlers were of British descent and the cultural notions they came with prevailed. They soon exposed a common outlook towards various issues, especially problems concerning agricultural production. Farmers throughout the district were clearing land for coffee, flax and maize cultivation, and labour was of growing importance. Recognizing this, the settlers formed a labour committee in 1921. Its proposals for a uniformly low wage rate were enthusiastically endorsed, prompting a



rash of farm strikes during that year.<sup>84</sup>

The predominance of British settlers was important because by 1921 Trans Nzoia remained isolated by inadequate communications and minimal administrative interference. Previous divisions of nationality, education, birth and occupation were perpetuated. One consequence was that Afrikaners within the district were often regarded with suspicion and contempt. Only two Afrikaners sat on the twenty-two member Trans Nzoia District Committee in 1921, for example.<sup>85</sup> Within the English-speaking community, imported social status exerted a considerable influence and this was reflected by the flaunting of service ranks among the sizeable retired officer element. Distinctions were also drawn between pre war and postwar settlers. The former initially dominated events. Out of an eight member provisional district committee which was formed in 1920, only Brigadier-General Baker-Carr and Major C.R.T. Thorp did not own land in Trans Nzoia by 1914.<sup>86</sup>

European life was, however, sufficiently similar for them to feel a sense of racial identity. By virtue of White predominance this encouraged a certain unity of outlook and common interest which blurred differences. Eccentric behaviour considered to

lower their esteem in African eyes was sometimes punished by social ostracism.<sup>87</sup> The aspect of social propriety became increasingly significant during the 1920s when the Kitale Club and other racially exclusive institutions became the focus of local social life.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, tough pioneering conditions and the financial constraints confronting many settlers contributed to the cohesion of a white population brought together by historical circumstances rather than natural affinity.<sup>89</sup>

Local conditions exerted a considerable influence on the settlers political and economic life. By 1921 they had formed the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association to represent their farming interests.<sup>90</sup> During this early "trial and error" period a variety of crops were being cultivated, including maize, flax, coffee and sisal. Coffee took some years to mature and flourished mainly in the volcanic soils of Mount Elgon. Sisal cultivation was restricted to a few large estates while flax prices collapsed during the 1922 depression.<sup>91</sup> Maize, therefore, became the staple crop. Unlike flax, for instance, it required no technical expertise and grew virtually anywhere at minimal capital outlay.

The removal of purchase prices on soldier - settler farms under the 1921 Crown Lands (Discharged Soldiers' Settlement) Ordinance<sup>92</sup> underlined the Government's continued commitment to keeping Europeans on the land. By 1921, depressed market conditions in Europe had disrupted white immigration to Kenya Colony.<sup>93</sup>

In Trans Nzoia, the main wave of postwar settlement had ended. There were 231 European farm owners in the district in 1922.<sup>94</sup> The majority had arrived after the War, hoping to become successful farmers. As various problems relating to commercial farming became apparent, they identified basic common interests as white agricultural producers. These interests shaped local politics to a significant degree and also influenced relations with Europeans elsewhere in the highlands.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. J.S. Galbraith, MacKinnon and East Africa, 1878-1895: A Study in the New Imperialism (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972) pp. 227-239.
2. J. Thomson, Through Masai Land 3rd. ed. (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1968), p. 274.
3. C.W. Hobley, Kenya From Chartered Company to Crown Colony (London: Witherby, 1929), pp. 95-96.
4. Report by His Majesty's Special Commissioner on the Protectorate of Uganda cited by G.H. Mungeam (Comp.), Kenya: Select Historical Documents 1884-1923 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1978), pp. 320-321.
5. The earliest known European settler to benefit from the 1897 Regulations was Stuart Watt of the Ukamba Mission. In 1898 he was given a certificate of occupancy for 99 years for fifty acres of land in the Mua Hills near Machakos. This was converted to a Freehold Title in 1905, under provisions of the 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance. See D. Kydd, Land Marks: A Review of European Settlement in British East Africa and a personal account of Land Transfer Schemes in Kenya, 1960-1976 (Kenya National Archives, Microfilm), p. 3.
6. J. Lonsdale and B. Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial

- State in Kenya, 1895-1914", Journal of African History, No. 20 (1979), pp. 495-496.
7. Y.P. Ghai and J.P.W.B. Mcauslan, Public Law and Political Change in Kenya (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 25-26.
  8. G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History, the Colonial Period (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 13.
  9. E. Huxley, White Man's Country, 2 Vols. (London: Macmillan, 1935): Vol. 2: p. 104.
  10. For copies of the 1904 and 1911 Maasai: Agreements see Report of the Kenya Land Commission (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934) p. 572, pp. 575-576.
  11. Cited by Mungeam (Comp.) Kenya: Select Historical Documents, 1884-1923, pp. 329-333.
  12. Report of the Land Committee (Nairobi: Uganda Railway Press, 1905), p. 9, p. 14.
  13. Ghai and Mcauslan, Public Law and Political Change in Kenya, p. 83.
  14. R.G. Gregory, India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire 1890-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 72.

15. C. Eliot, The East African Protectorate (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1966), p. 179.
16. R.G. Gregory, India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire 1890-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 61-62.
17. Ibid., pp. 67 - 70.
18. Ibid., p. 83.
19. Cited by Mungeam (Comp.) Kenya: Select Historical Documents, 1884-1923, pp. 333-335.
20. Gregory, India and East Africa, p. 74.
21. Popular opinion within European circles was against a proposed Colonial Office scheme to settle Jewish immigrants on 5000 square miles of choice agricultural land across the Uasin Gishu Plateau. Anti-semitism reflected perceptions of Jews as an alien race. According Marsden, Collector of Customs in the East Africa Protectorate "Personally I am strongly opposed to it [Jewish settlement] ... The land which I understand is under offer to the Jews is the pick of the Protectorate as regards climate and fertility and the best suited for white colonisation". See Report of the Land Committee, p. 51. See also Bennett, Kenya; a Political History, pp. 12-13.
22. Bennett, Ibid., pp. 19-20.

23. G. Bennett, "The Development of Political Organisations in Kenya". in Political Studies: The Journal of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom Vol. 5, 2, (June 1957), p. 113.
24. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History, p. 32.
25. G.H. Mungeam, British Rule in Kenya, 1895-1912. The Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 275.
26. East Africa Protectorate: Report of the Native Labour Commission (Nairobi: Government Printer 1913), p. 135. Contemporary rates ranged from four to eight rupees per month.
27. East Africa Protectorate Economic Commission, Evidence (Nairobi: Swift Press, 1917), p. 35.
28. R.M. Maxon, John Ainsworth and the Making of Kenya (Boston: University Press of America, 1980), p. 130.
29. Report of the Native Labour Commission, p. 149.
30. Ibid., pp. 185-186.
31. E. Huxley, No Easy Way (Nairobi: East African Standard, 1957), pp. 77-78. See also East Africa Protectorate: Report for 1912-13 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1914), p.62.

32. Huxley, No Easy Way pp. 78 and 219; See also M.P.K. Sorrenson, Origins of European Settlement in Kenya (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 133-134.
33. For a brief description of this epic Boer trek upto Uasin Gishu in 1908, see E. Trzebinski, The Kenya Pioneers (London: Heinemann, 1985) pp. 134-136.
34. G. Groen, "The Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-1969" (Ph.D. Michigan State University, 1968) pp. 93-94.
35. Report of the Native Labour Commission, pp. 192-193.
36. Stoffel Roets, Undated interview transcript, Kenya National Archives, 920 Bow, pp. 2-3.
37. L.H. Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 162-163.
38. Report of the Native Labour Commission, p. 328.
39. Gatonye Wa Nyumba, for example, left Kiambu with his parents in 1914 by train. The family became squatters on Delamare's Equator Estate near Nakuru. Interview held at Kapsara, Cherangani, 22 February, 1985.
40. Report of the Native Labour Commission, p.328.



41. KNA: PC/RVP 2/8/1, Annual Report, Uasin Gishu District, 1913-1914, p. 49.
42. KNA: Aa 4/1865, Acting Land Officer to Chief Secretary, 26 July, 1916.
43. Ibid. Attorney General to Chief Secretary, 29 July, 1916.
44. Ibid. Acting Land Officer to Chief Secretary, 26 July, 1916.
45. H.M. Barberton of Ivanhoe Estate, Kiambu to Editor of The Royal Geographical Society Journal, 17 December, 1917.
46. East Africa Protectorate: Report for 1912-13 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1914), p. 62.
47. G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History, pp. 38-39.
48. Y. Ghai and J.P.W.B. Mcauslan, Public Law and Political Change in Kenya, p. 80; and East Africa Protectorate Report of the Land Settlement Commission (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1919) p. 1.
49. Report of the Land Settlement Commission, 1919, p. 2.
50. East Africa Protectorate Economic Commission Evidence, 1917, p.2.

51. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
52. Ibid., p. 103.
53. Ibid., pp. 132 and 135.
54. Ibid., p. 132.
55. Report of the Land Settlement Commission, p. 12.
56. Economic Commission, Evidence, 1917, p. 3.
57. Report of the Land Settlement Commission, p.8.
58. Ibid., pp. 81-91.
59. L.W. Cone and J.F. Lipscomb, eds., The History of Kenya Agriculture (Nairobi: University Press of Africa, 1972), p. 56.
60. See for example B.G.F. Cranworth, Profit and Sport in British East Africa (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 244.
61. KNA: AGR 5/1/268, Secretary for Agriculture and Natural Resources to Secretary of the Treasury, 18 October, 1949.
62. East Africa Protectorate: Report for 1919 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921), p. 21.
63. East Africa Protectorate Ex-Soldier Settlement (Nairobi, 1919).

64. Cited in Cone and Lipscomb, eds., The History of Kenya Agriculture, p. 56.
65. M.G. Redley, "The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918-32", (Ph.D. Cambridge University) 1976, pp. 59-60.
66. D. Kydd, Land Marks, pp. 5-6.
67. J.R. Schott, "The European Community of Kenya" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 1964), pp. 77-78.
68. Cranworth, Profit and Sport in British East Africa, p. 244.
69. The final report of Dominions Royal Commission (Cmd. 8462) published in 1917 had suggested that British servicemen be settled in dominions. The Empire Settlement Committee, set up following publication of the report, also recommended postwar settlement overseas. In December 1918 the Government Emigration Committee was formed. It proposed the settlement of former soldiers in the Colonies. Its recommendations were approved on 8 April 1919, with a scheme of free passage for soldier-settler families being announced in the House of Commons. See G.F. Plant Overseas Settlement: Migration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 62-73.
70. M.F. Hill, Permanent Way 2nd ed.; (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1961)

p. 379.

71. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1, Annual Report, 1920, p.1 and The Official Gazette, 14 January 1920, p. 19.
72. Julius Kipsoi Ngeywo, interview held at Saboti trading centre, 13. February, 1985.
73. M. Pharazyn in Trans Nzoia Scrap Book, ed. P. le Breton ( Kitale: East African Womens League, 1969), pp. 7-8.
74. F.H. Weller, interviewed by N.W. Fedha and K. Ward, KNA: 967.6203, pp. 1-3.
75. A.M. Barberton interviewed by K. Ward, KNA: 158.3 WAR., p.2. The farms cost between £ 200 and £ 300 each.
76. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1 Annual Report, 1920 pp. 2-3. 2
77. Julius Kipsoi Ngeywo, interview. The land on which Ngeywo's family grazed their cattle near present-day Kambi Miwa, was occupied by a European called Mr. Hyslop, whom the Konyi nicknamed Bwana Langat.
78. Eliakim Mutende , interview held at Cherubai, 18 February, 1985 and Bwayo Chesikaki, interview held at Endebess, 21 February, 1985, Mutende was born near Saboti in 1918. Chesikaki was born there in 1913.

79. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1 Annual Report, 1920, p.5
80. Wellington Mukhwana, interview held at Endebess trading centre, 21 February, 1985. Mukhwana's family migrated from Bungoma to South Western Trans Nzoia, where he was born on the farm of a European called Jack in 1921.
81. Narwenyi Mauwachi Nalengi, interview held at Lukhona, Bungoma district, 3 March, 1985. Nalengi's father migrated from Kimilili onto European farmland to escape the excesses of the colonial chief, Murunga, who frequently resorted to forced labour among other things.
82. Ibid. Nalengi recalled one variation of coercion practised by settlers who seized African cattle in exchange for grazing rights; wages during this period averaged between three and five rupees per month. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1 Annual Report, 1920, p. 6.
83. Kip Keino Kaptima, interview held at Kachibora, 26 February 1985. Kaptima served as an askari for Champion, the first Trans Nzoia D.C. Champion regularly presided over farm barazas in various parts of the district to reiterate the fact of colonial rule; Collaboration between local colonial administrators and European farmers was the rule in settled districts, See Redley, "The Politics of a Predicament", p. 64.

84. The Leader, 31 December 1921, p. 5; 8 April 1922, p. 16 a.
85. Groen, "The Afrikaners in Kenya 1903-1969", p. 145.
86. E. Huxley, No Easy Way p. 219; Other members of the provisional district committee were H.C. Kirk, H. Taylor, A.B. Burt, J.C. Kruger, D.A. Johnston and C. de la Harpe. See PC/RVP 2/5/1 Annual Report, 1919-20, p. 1.
87. One social misfit was Bob Curtis, an alcoholic Scotsman who had originally settled in South Africa. After losing his family he sold out and migrated to Kenya, settling in Trans Nzoia. He died in the late 1920s. See G.T.A. Lock interviewed by K. Ward, KNA: 158. 3 WAR., p. 6.
88. Clubs played a pivotal role in promoting social harmony amongst Europeans in rural districts. See J.R. Schott, "The European Community of Kenya", p. 243.
89. Not all settlers entered Trans Nzoia with the intention of farming. The Norwegian couple of Odin and Olugine Sunde, for example, settled on the slopes of Mount Elgon in 1915 and established a saw-milling business. See Huxley, No Easy Way, p. 80 and Trzebinski, The Kenya Pioneers, pp. 63 and 197.

90. The Leader 5 November, 1921, p. 19.
91. Huxley, No Easy Way, pp. 43 and 83; The reintroduction of Russian flax on the European market made the production of this crop in Kenya unprofitable. See Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1925, p. 160.
92. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1922, p. 11.
93. Ibid., Annual Report, 1921, p. 17. The East Africa Protectorate was renamed Kenya Colony and Protectorate on 11 June 1920. See M.F. Hill Planters' Progress: The Story of Coffee in Kenya. (Nairobi: Coffee Board of Kenya, 1956), p. 51.
94. The Leader 1 April, 1922, p. 20.

CHAPTER THREE

CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS AMONG THE  
SETTLERS, 1921 - 1929.

The Trans Nzoia settlers' formation of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association in 1921 was an initial response to local farming problems.<sup>1</sup> Membership of the association was mainly drawn from Europeans with no alternative source of income who were intent on making money out of their major investment, the land. Such men dominated public meetings by sheer weight of numbers and their views often prevailed.

The political influence of these settlers was evident during the 1921 by-election in Plateau North Constituency. Europeans had voted for their first elected Legislative Council members in January 1920, following granting of the franchise.<sup>2</sup> A prewar settler, H.C. Kirk, was returned as Member for Plateau North during the general election. Following a conflict over currency change proposals,<sup>3</sup> the representatives from Rift Valley, Plateau North, Plateau South, Nairobi North, Coast, and Nyanza resigned. Six by-elections were gazetted.<sup>4</sup>



Delamare, Conway Harvey and Grogan were returned unopposed. Hoey, who had vacated his Plateau South seat for Grogan, contested the election in Plateau North constituency and was resoundingly defeated.<sup>5</sup> His abject failure was a reflection of divisions within the settler community based on different economic interests, which had prompted the Trans Nzoia electorate to reject attempts to impose a leader and, instead, elect their own man.

Hoey had defeated an Afrikaner candidate in Plateau South constituency over the language issue in 1920.<sup>6</sup> His posturing as a cosmopolitan leader had impressed the predominantly English - speaking electorate suspicious of Boer motives for promoting the use of Afrikaans. This victory, based on irreconcilable cultural values rather than substantive political issues, had encouraged him to contest the by-election in neighbouring Plateau North. Here he faced a much more formidable opponent in Captain Coney, an outspoken English Soldier-settler who portrayed Hoey as an intruder. Delamare's Reform Party, to which Hoey belonged, was described as the party representing wealthy settlers. Coney pledged to chart out an independent course if elected.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, differences in outlook between the new settlers and land barons who had

accumulated assets before the War, were the major campaign issues.

During the campaign Hoey convened a meeting at the Old Boma to boost his flagging support. In the meeting, Colonel Kirkwood suggested that the Governor be requested to postpone the election until a new voters' register including names of recent settlers was published. Hoey felt this was unnecessary since representation was an urgent priority. He obviously realised that any new voters would be inclined to vote for Coney. His views were rejected and the settlers present passed a resolution endorsing Kirkwood's proposals.<sup>8</sup>

In another meeting held in Kitale on 20 August, both candidates were present. Delamare was also in attendance, evidently to shore up his beleaguered friend Hoey. Coney expressed solidarity with ordinary settlers experiencing problems in exporting produce from outlying districts and contrasted their position with that of wealthy syndicates and rich individuals.<sup>9</sup>

Coney won the by-election convincingly, with overwhelming support from soldier-settlers and their sympathisers. Hoey had failed to persuade the electorate that he was committed to their inte-

rests, prompting one of his farmer supporters to admit that the defeat showed how Hoey had "lost the confidence of the Public here both North and South of the Nzoia; for which he only has himself to blame".<sup>10</sup> In effect, local political opinion had revealed a desire for influence beyond the mere ratification of policies formulated elsewhere.

Local conditions were an important factor. Voters in the by-election had lived in Kenya for at least one year prior to the event, most of it probably spent in Trans Nzoia.<sup>11</sup> They were, therefore, very conscious of their position as farmers beset by difficulties in producing and marketing a cash crop. The Leader, commenting on the situation, described Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia districts as "primarily the small man's area" and suggested that settlers there "may best meet competition and the demands of the market by combining".<sup>12</sup> Maize was already the major crop, following the collapse of flax prices.<sup>13</sup> Unlike higher priced coffee, costs of transporting maize in bulk were prohibitive due to the distance from railhead, one hundred miles away at Londiani. The farmers' predicament was discussed by Nakuru settlers, who decided to involve their Trans Nzoia counterparts in any future marketing venture.<sup>14</sup> The same problem was also being

appraised by British settlers in Uasin Gishu district.<sup>15</sup>  
In November, 1921, the Soy Farmers Association resolved to revive a maize growers association during a meeting also attended by delegates from Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu.<sup>16</sup>

Nakuru settlers had founded the British East Africa Farmers' Association before the War. By 1922 they were actively involved in maize marketing through their association, now renamed the Kenya Farmers Association.<sup>17</sup> Other districts adopted this approach and farmers in Trans Nzoia soon realised that inter-district cooperation would be to their advantage. A general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association was convened in Kitale during December, 1921 to consider this among other issues. The settlers present agreed: "to an amalgamation with Soy, Eldoret and Burnt Forest" and "an affiliation with Nakuru".<sup>18</sup> The Government was also aware of the position and Holm, Director of Agriculture, visited the area to offer encouragement. On 21 January 1922 he addressed a crowded meeting in Eldoret, deploring the prevalent practice of changing from one crop to another depending on prices and requesting farmers, instead, to concentrate on one crop.<sup>19</sup> The following day Holm and Colonel Tucker, representing the Nakuru Maize Growers Assoc-

iation, addressed an extraordinary meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association in Kitale.<sup>20</sup>

Tucker informed the gathering that he was involved in Uplands Bacon Factory besides sitting on the Joint Standing Committee of the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He stressed that Trans Nzoia's remoteness from railhead was the major constraint on maize exports from the district. While Nakuru farmers could act as agents, it was unlikely that Trans Nzoia maize could be marketed competitively on the London Market. Holm was more optimistic, observing that the Uasin Gishu railway would considerably alleviate freight problems. He went on to stress that markets existed, although current prices were below the settlers inflated expectations. Maize yields in the district had totalled 20,183 bags in 1921 and with cheap African labour local farmers could realize a profit.<sup>21</sup>

These remarks are revealing. Local farmers were being encouraged inter alia to take the initiative. The Colonial Government had removed purchase prices on farms under the 1921 Crown Lands (Discharged Soldiers Settlement) Ordinance.<sup>22</sup> Various extension services were being provided through the Department of Agriculture.<sup>23</sup> This underlined Government's role as prime mover of European agri-

culture. Trans Nzoia settlers regarded such assistance as inadequate, however. Coney demanded more public funding for local projects during the 1921 Legislative Council debate on recurrent expenditure.<sup>24</sup> Many farmers in the district were also heavily indebted to commercial banks, with large quantities of rotting, unsold maize lying in cribs, after imprudently borrowing against the market value of their land.<sup>25</sup>

The problem was illustrated by the plight of individual farmers. Two men who had arrived in 1920 with £ 400 capital were £ 1000 in debt, with 800 bags of maize in the cribs and 240 acres of maize under cultivation by 1922. This was not an isolated case. Another partnership, formed before the War with £ 6000 capital, had 1300 bags of maize unsold and owed the bank £1100 that same year.<sup>26</sup>

A total of 500,000 acres was under private occupation by Europeans in the district by 1922, with approximately 25,000 acres under crop.<sup>27</sup> Most farmers were growing maize and it was in their interest to politicize the marketing of this crop as a major economic issue. The Uasin Gishu railway construction camps provided a temporary market. Kirkwood, who represented Trans Nzoia during negotiations in

Eldoret over bulk sales, secured a tender to supply maize to railway contractors at the rate of twelve shillings per two hundred pound bag.<sup>28</sup> A lasting solution was required, however, and cooperation with European maize farmers in other districts seemed an obvious alternative.

The formation of a limited liability company which functioned as a farmers' cooperative was an initiative adopted by Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu farmers to improve marketing arrangements. The Colonial Government gave its wholehearted approval. In December 1922, the Director of Agriculture moved a motion in the Legislative Council for a Government guarantee on a four thousand pound loan from the Standard Bank of South Africa to the Plateau Maize Growers' Limited. The money was required for purchasing oxen and wagons to transport maize and wheat to railhead. Delamare seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.<sup>29</sup>

The first annual report of this farmers' company recorded movement of over fifty thousand bags to the railhead. Income from transportation amounted to seven hundred thousand shillings while profits realised from sales of various farm inputs and implements totalled fourteen thousand shillings. Enthusiasm soared as the benefits of cooperative

effort became apparent, with farmers in remoter parts of Trans Nzoia being particularly active. When Cherangani settlers faced a shortfall in carrying capacity, they formed a convoy by pooling wagons to transport each farmer's produce up to rail head in turn.<sup>30</sup>

Economic hardship confronting the poorer settlers who formed the majority of the highlands European community, had led to the appointment of the Economic and Financial Committee chaired by Charles Bowring, the Colonial Secretary.<sup>31</sup> Delamare, Grogan and Coney were among its large unofficial majority. The Committee had been instructed by Governor Northey in March 1922:

to examine the possibility of increasing production and exports, of decreasing the cost to the community of imports of reducing Government expenditure and to consider the amount and incidence of taxation.<sup>32</sup>

Reporting that maize was the staple crop in many districts, the Committee made various recommendations on how European producers could break into the export market. In this respect they evidently had white monocrop farmers in mind, of whom the Trans Nzoia soldier-settlers formed a sizeable proportion.<sup>33</sup> Praising the Government for



guaranteeing the bank loan to the Plateau Maize Growers Limited, the Committee members recommended the immediate remittance of purchase prices on soldier-settler farms. They also wanted the introduction of a flat railway rate of one shilling per bag of maize, and quality controls on maize bound for export.<sup>34</sup>

All of these proposals were promptly implemented and the Government convened a maize conference in Nairobi during April 1923 at which Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia districts were represented by Griffiths and Coney. In his opening speech, Bowring, then acting Governor, observed that maize offered a rapid return on a farmer's investment. Noting that the recently completed Uasin Gishu railway was opening up maize growing areas, he recalled that the Government had endorsed his committee's recommendations.<sup>35</sup> Dominating the agenda of the conference deliberations was the question of how to boost maize exports in the face of African peasant production, which exceeded European output by a significant margin. Prices being higher overseas, the settlers wanted to exploit market conditions by influencing the Government into taking regulatory measures to this effect.<sup>36</sup>

Following the Conference, compulsory maize

grading was introduced under the Agricultural Products Ordinance, from 1 November 1923.<sup>37</sup> During the 1924 growing season, European farmers in the highlands increased maize acreage by 41% in response to the low freight rates and high producer prices. Many were now growing the "flat white" variety of maize originally introduced from South Africa, which fetched the highest prices after grading. The European land market was also buoyant, with the number of occupiers increasing by 249 during 1924.<sup>38</sup> "In the Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu conditions were very favourable and good yields were obtained."<sup>39</sup>

The fourth maize conference held in July 1926 concentrated on streamlining grading procedures for export-bound produce.<sup>40</sup> By 1927, of the 970,133 bags sent for grading, only 54,000 originated from African producers.<sup>41</sup> In addition, 214,300 bags of African grown maize was shipped to East Coast parts ungraded. European farmers, therefore, continued to monopolise the lucrative European market.<sup>42</sup> Maize acreages continued to expand, making monoculture the dominant farming type in many parts of the highlands.<sup>43</sup>

The absorption of the Plateau Maize Growers' Company into the Nakuru based Kenya Farmers' Association in 1927 completed the integration of

European crop marketing in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu.<sup>44</sup> In addition, technical problems like stalk borer pests could now be tackled at an inter-district level.<sup>45</sup> The opening of a 42 mile branch line to Kitale on 1 July 1926 was a boon to maize producers in Trans Nzoia.<sup>46</sup> Within the district, construction and upkeep of feeder and main roads continued to be financed by a sizeable annual Government grant to the local road board.<sup>47</sup>

Under these circumstances, European agriculture in Trans Nzoia district was undergoing a period of expansion.<sup>48</sup> Governor Coryndon had visited Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia districts in 1924 and prophesied: "With the completion of the railway to Turbo and to Kitale I believe that these districts will show added prosperity and promise".<sup>49</sup> ʔ

The Soldier Settlement Scheme under which many postwar settlers had obtained land in Trans Nzoia, had not, however, been an overall success. An official statement made in the House of Commons on 27 July, 1925 revealed that only 545 of the 1,246 farms allocated under the scheme were occupied by the original grantees. Many prospective farmers had wilted under harsh conditions.<sup>50</sup> Some farms were abandoned in Trans Nzoia but of more significance was the fact that adverse economic conditions

were not the sole reason for failure. Sometimes ill-advised financial speculation played a role. The saga of Christopher Baker-Carr is a fascinating case in point. Baker-Carr had been demobilised from the Army in January 1919, with the rank of Brigadier-General.<sup>51</sup> On January 22 of the same year he reached an agreement with an American businessman, H.W. Rudd, who was representing other parties interested in acquiring land in the East Africa Protectorate. It was agreed that Rudd and his associates would advance up to £ 20,000 in exchange for a half interest in all assets acquired. In April 1919 Baker-Carr applied for a 28,000 acre land grant in Trans Nzoia on behalf of a syndicate of twelve soldier-settlers. The application was accepted, surveys were completed and instructions were passed to the Land Titles Division for a grant to be prepared.<sup>52</sup>

Baker-Carr occupied the vast estate, near Suam and soon became a well known personality in the district, being a member of the provisional district committee in 1920.<sup>53</sup> Most other retired soldiers in the syndicate never migrated to Kenya and no capital for meeting development conditions or paying land rent was forthcoming from them, the money being drawn from the American businessmen. The latter

eventually advanced over £45,000 to Baker-Carr.<sup>54</sup> Agricultural production on the land, registered in 1921 under the name of Suam Estates, remained negligible. Following a Government suit, the original members of the syndicate lost ownership, despite the protests of one of them, A.C. Johnston. Claiming to have been employed by Baker Carr as a farm manager without being paid a salary for five years, Johnston claimed he had been duped.<sup>55</sup>

After failing to halt the collapse of his Company, Baker-Carr returned to England in August 1924. His fortunes continued to deteriorate and on January 24 1928 he was arraigned before a Bankruptcy Court by disappointed creditors. His total liabilities were put at £ 2,667 against assets consisting of a £ 3 gold watch.<sup>56</sup>

Baker-Carr's descent into bankruptcy <sup>was an</sup> exceptional case of an ambitious venture gone awry, yet at a time when the settlers were exerting increasing influence over district, the failure of an apparently well capitalised company could scarcely have gone unnoticed by other British settlers whose operations were on a much more modest scale. Many retained an outlook which was essentially introverted.<sup>57</sup> Local leaders were often articulate men who dominated public meetings by sheer force of personality.

Indeed, Coney's election to the Plateau North seat in 1921 was largely attributable to his personal charisma. The Afrikaners, who were the only other significant white community in the vicinity were considered apart culturally and politically. Such sentiment was prevalent, with frequent allusions being made to the Boer s simple way of life and their indifference towards the more pretentious Britons. One British member of the Colony's Education Board evoked prejudices caused by the Boer War when he asserted: "There is no good blinking to the fact that a good many of the Dutch are not as loyal to the British Empire as they should be!"<sup>58</sup>

The local furor over education highlights these differences. English-speaking settlers in Trans Nzoia wanted a Government elementary school in Kitale, despite the existence of such a school in nearby Eldoret. Coney had raised the matter in the Legislative Council and as a result, £7000 was budgeted for construction of a Kitale School. In the opinion of an Education Board member, however, this was a misallocation of funds because the school in neighbouring Uasin Gishu was under-utilised.<sup>59</sup>

These views prompted a sharp rebuke from a group of settlers who gathered on Captain Aylward's farm on 5 December, 1921. Resolving that such

opinions were influenced by biased sources in Eldoret, they expressed strong resentment over this interference in "local educational matters".<sup>60</sup> Subsequently the Board of Education voted against the proposed expenditure on a new school. The Reverend Knight, who introduced the motion, argued that out of sixty European children of school-going age in Trans Nzoia, no more than twenty would board in Kitale. Such a huge outlay of money was therefore, unwarranted.<sup>61</sup> A Uasin Gishu settler called North was of the same opinion, arguing that further expenditure was unnecessary when the Government School in Eldoret was operating at only one-third capacity.<sup>62</sup>

Considerations of this kind were secondary in the minds of many Trans Nzoia settlers as the issue involved their racial aspirations. In this regard they found Afrikaner standards wanting, the latter having established various farm schools, including Broederstroom and Sergoit in Uasin Gishu and one in Trans Nzoia.<sup>63</sup> Orr, the Director of Education, accurately ganged these feelings in 1924 when he acknowledged that European education was of paramount importance because of the need for continued racial dominance.<sup>64</sup> He elaborated on this theme during the following year when he rhetorically asked: "...when we mention self-government

what of the next generation?" In his own words:  
"We have set ourselves firmly against the growth of  
a poor white class of unemployables, against the  
mixture of races..."<sup>65</sup>

Although construction of a Government School did not begin until 1929, the Trans Nzoia settlers had underlined their demands for social infrastructure on par with what was available in Nairobi. Meanwhile, many of them continued sending their children to a private school in the Bahati Section of Kitale township. The concept of racial supremacy influenced this outlook and they resented insinuations regarding their capabilities in this respect. When, for example, their suitability for appointment as Justices of the Peace was questioned, an influential Cherangani Soldier-Settler, Rear-Admiral Crampton, reacted vehemently. Alleging that such sentiment was an affront to Soldier-Settlers, he claimed that local Europeans were diligent farmers, entirely conversant with African interests.<sup>66</sup> The Trans Nzoia Farmers Association officials, Messrs. Angus, Kirkwood, Coney and Moore, also entered the fray. Castigating the criticisms, they complained that these were "such an obvious thrust in the back of the settler and so opportune for the Indians" that they wondered who had inspired such ideas.<sup>67</sup>



Notions of racial prestige sometimes differed. On the subject of a proposed European defence force, for instance, a Cherangani soldier-settler advocated conscription while a Kitale counterpart termed the idea "an insult to British prestige".<sup>68</sup>

The politics of race remained a cornerstone of colonial policy in the highlands and in Trans Nzoia district. Europeans were determined to enforce the status quo. In August 1921 an impromptu gathering had discussed the "Indian menace", and resolved that:

Trans Nzoia settlers will not, under any circumstances accept any plausible compromises which allow Indians the right to take up land in the Highlands of Kenya Colony and are determined to resist, by every means in their power, any attempt by the Colonial Office towards this end.

Those present also endorsed similar resolutions passed by their Nairobi counterparts and the Convention of Associations.<sup>69</sup> The settlers demonstrated their resolve in practical terms. Earlier in the year the Commissioner of Lands had raised the question of land sales in Kitale township, following completion of surveys there. Plots had been laid

out on a racially segregated basis with thirty four business sites, two hotel sites and thirty residential sites reserved for Europeans. Non-Europeans were allowed forty business sites and twenty-three residential ones. The Commissioner recommended the immediate gazetting and auction of the plots on this basis.<sup>70</sup> Following postponement of plot sales pending settlement of the Indian Question, the Principal Medical Officer advised Governor Northey that racial segregation in commercial areas was unwarranted because in new townships like Kitale and Nanyuki it would be impracticable to curb residence in commercial zones since commercial buildings would be the only ones erected. Moreover, applications were already being received to subdivide farm land bordering new townships into plots, a notable example being Bahati estate near Kitale. The Medical Officer argued that auctioning commercial plots on a non-racial basis would render such schemes for subdivision redundant.<sup>71</sup>

The acting Colonial Secretary notified the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner that the sale of commercial plots in Kitale "without restriction of race" was a viable option. He sought the opinion of the Trans Nzoia District Committee.<sup>72</sup> This was quickly forthcoming. On 9 December, 1921, the

Trans Nzoia District Committee passed the following resolution:

that this Committee strongly recommends that no Government Commercial or residential plots be auctioned until the Indian Question is finally decided but that the matter be referred to the Farmers' Association for decision.

This decision was unanimously endorsed by the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association on the following day.<sup>73</sup>

It represented an unequivocal expression of racial solidarity which transcended social and economic divisions.<sup>74</sup>

Racial solidarity was an axiom when issues concerned European interests versus those of Indians and Africans. Many settlers in the district, however, continued to contrast their position with the opulence of rich settlers and civil servants who dominated events on the colonial scene. One farmer, Tebbitt, was particularly forthright, comparing "the small farmers" like himself who depended on the land for an income with wealthy politicians like Delamare and Conway Harvey. In his view such people were not really concerned about issues like labour, livestock and a Land Bank which interested ordinary farmers.<sup>75</sup> His was not an isolated opinion. Discussing the

question of East African federation in December, 1927, a Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association meeting felt that this was premature and wanted more emphasis laid on economic issues.<sup>76</sup>

Representatives from the district were acutely conscious of such feelings and attempted to express this in other forums. In 1923 Coney and Angus, president of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association, had petitioned the Governor over local farming problems.<sup>77</sup> The following year, Coney had tabled a motion in the Legislative Council rejecting any form of political federation with neighbouring territories "until this [European] Colony has been consulted."<sup>78</sup> He was still very popular with his constituents, being re-elected in 1924. Delamare was now his mentor, however, the two having served on the 1923 Bowring Committee together.<sup>79</sup> Coney's increasing isolation from events in Plateau North culminated in his leaving the Colony for over a year. On returning from England in 1927 to contest a by-election, he was trounced by Kirkwood, a blunt-spoken farmer and businessman who had convinced voters of his steadfast commitment to their interests.<sup>80</sup>

Agricultural matters continued to be the overriding factor in local politics, with farmers becoming

increasingly strident in their demands. During a maize and wheat conference in August 1928, Pudsey,, representing the Kenya Farmers Association together with Tucker and Griffiths, claimed that 25% of the farmers needed low-interest short term loans.<sup>81</sup> The clamour for a Land Bank, which had died down following the implementation of the Bowring Committee's proposals, was rising again, as farmers began feeling the strain of commercial bank interest rates. Other issues, like labour, were also important. In essence, European interests were irreversibly tied to the land. Developments in European agriculture will be discussed in the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. For a description of early European farming in the Kipkarren Valley, where contemporary conditions were similar to those found in Trans Nzoia, see M. Blundell, So Rough a Wind (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964) pp. 30-34.
  
2. The principle of elective representation had initially been tested by elections to the War Council. See M.F. Hill Planters' Progress: The Story of Coffee in Kenya (Nairobi: Coffee Board of Kenya, 1956), p. 50; For a lucid summary of European political development see G. Bennett "The Development of Political Organizations in Kenya" in Political Studies: The Journal of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom, Vol. V, 2, June 1957, pp. 113-130.
  
3. The currency crisis began as a result of a rise in the sterling value of the rupee during 1918 and 1919. On 25 February 1920 the Colonial Office announced the stabilisation of the East African rupee at two shillings. As a result settlers who had borrowed money had their debt increased by about 50% and experienced a rise in other costs. The rupee was replaced by the florin. On 1 January 1922 an East African shilling was introduced at the exchange rate of twenty shillings to the pound. See Hill, Planters Progress, pp. 51, 53-54.

4. M.G. Redley, "The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918-32" (Ph.D. Cambridge University, 1976), pp. 75-76.
5. Ibid., p. 78.
6. Ibid., p. 68.
7. The Leader, 3 September 1921, p. 17.
8. Ibid., 3 August 1921, p. 17.
9. For a comprehensive account of how powerful settlers like Delamare and Grogan tried to influence what route the Uasin Gishu railway would follow, See W. McGregor-Ross, Kenya From Within: A Short Political History (London: Frank Cass, 1968) Chapter XIV.
10. The Leader, 12 November 1921, p. 13.
11. This requirement was a stipulated regulation for Kenya Europeans, See The Leader, 4 March 1922, p. 19.
12. Ibid., 5 November, 1921, p.3.
13. R. Wolff, Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The Economics of Colonialism, (Nairobi: Trans Africa Publishers, 1974), p. 84.
14. The Leader, 12 November, 1921, p.13.
15. Ibid., 5 November, 1921, p. 19.

16. Ibid., 3 December, 1921, p. 16 b.
17. Kenya Colony and Protectorate: Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1922, p. 18.
18. The Leader, 3, 12, 1921, p. 15.
19. Ibid., 4 February, 1922, p. 16 d.
20. Ibid., 11 February 1922, p. 4.
21. Ibid., 11 February 1922, p. 4.
22. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1922, p. 11.
23. Ibid., Annual Report, 1921, p. 115.
24. The Leader, 29, October, 1921, p. 12 b.
25. Ibid., 1 April 1922, p. 20.
26. East African Standard, 1 April 1922, p. 20.
27. Ibid.
28. The Kenya Observer,
29. Ibid., 1 January 1923, p. 8.
30. Ibid., 10 February, 1923, p.8.
31. See M.F. Hill, Planters' Progress, p. 57.
32. Economic and Financial Committee: Report and



Proceedings during 1922, p. 1.

33. During 1923, The Kenya Observer frequently published editorials calling on the Government to help maize farmers in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia. See for example, The Kenya Observer, 31 August, 1923 and 20 September, 1923.
34. Economic and Financial Committee, pp. 6-16.
35. Report of Proceedings of the Maize Conference, 24-25 April, 1923 (Nairobi:Department of Agriculture, 1923) pp. 1-2.
36. Out of 368,770 bags of maize exported in 1922, Nyanza Province produced 48%, compared with Nakuru district, 29% and Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia districts, 13%: See The Kenya Observer, 25, April, 1923, p.6.
37. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1923, p. 117. 3
38. Ibid., Annual Report, 1924, pp. 9 and 42.
39. The Kenya Observer, 20 September, 1923, p. 3
40. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1926, p. 11; Attempts by Trans Nzoia District Committee to have the 1927 maize moisture content standard of 12.5% raised to the 1926 standard of 14%, following the rejection of many bags from the district, failed. See East African Standard, 4 September, 1926 and Report of Proceedings of the Fourth Maize

- Conference. (28-29 July, 1926), pp. 16-17.
41. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1927, p.10.
  42. The Kenya Observer, 26. April 1923, p.4; Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1929, p. 15.
  43. See for example, M.A. Buxton, Kenya Days, (London: Edward Arnold, 1928), pp. 80-81.
  44. E. Huxley, No Easy Way (Nairobi: East African Standard, 1957), p. 84.
  45. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1927, pp. 215-216.
  46. Final cost of the branch line was £ 195,000 , an excess of £ 51,000 over the original estimate. Legislative Council Debates, 22 October, 1926, p. 517; East African Standard, 30 October, 1926, p. 7.
  47. The Kenya Observer, 25 April, 1923.
  48. The number of local farmers taking commercial loans increased rapidly from 1924, reflecting rising land values and recovery of producer prices from the postwar slump. See Redley , "The Politics of a Predicament", p. 21.
  49. Legislative Council Debates, 1924, p. 11.
  50. See Hill, Planters' Progress, p.50.

51. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Extract from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20 April, 1928.
52. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Deputy Registrar of General Titles to Commissioner of Lands, 11 February, 1924 pp. 1-5.
53. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1, Annual Report, 1920, p.1.
54. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 pp. 1-5.
55. Ibid., A.C. Johnston to Commissioner of Lands, Nairobi, 23, January 1928 and Commissioner of Lands to Johnston, 3 April 1928.
56. Ibid., extracts from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20, April 1928 and East African Standard, 8 March 1928.
57. According to the 1933 population returns, there were 417 male British farmers and only 32 European farmers of other nationalities in the district. KNA: PC/RVP 6A/29/2.
58. The Leader, 24 December, 1921, p.6.
59. Ibid., 26 November, 1921, p. 24.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 24 December, 1921, p. 6
62. Ibid., 31 December, 1921, p. 12 a.
63. G. Groen. "The Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-

51. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Extract from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20 April, 1928.
52. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 Deputy Registrar of General Titles to Commissioner of Lands, 11 February, 1924 pp. 1-5.
53. KNA: PC/RVP 2/5/1, Annual Report, 1920, p.1.
54. KNA: Lands BN 15/6 pp. 1-5.
55. Ibid., A.C. Johnston to Commissioner of Lands, Nairobi, 23, January 1928 and Commissioner of Lands to Johnston, 3 April 1928.
56. Ibid., extracts from the Kenya Daily Mail, 20, April 1928 and East African Standard, 8 March 1928.
57. According to the 1933 population returns, there were 417 male British farmers and only 32 European farmers of other nationalities in the district. KNA: PC/RVP 6A/29/2.
58. The Leader, 24 December, 1921, p.6.
59. Ibid., 26 November, 1921, p. 24.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 24 December, 1921, p. 6
62. Ibid., 31 December, 1921, p. 12 a.
63. G. Groen. "The Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-

- 1969" (Ph.D. Michigan State University, 1968) pp. 169-170. See also G. Groen, "Education as a means of promoting Afrikaner Nationalism in Kenya" in B.A. Ogot, ed., Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974).
64. Legislative Council Debates, 1924, p. 150.
65. Speech in Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on European Education (Nairobi: Department of Education, 1925) p. 7.
66. The Kenya Observer, 14 July 1923, p. 5.
67. Ibid., 17 July, 1923, p.5.
68. East African Standard, 25 September, 1926, pp. 37 and 40.
69. The Leader, 3 September, 1921, p. 17.
70. KNA: Lands BN 19/21 Commissioner of Lands to Acting Colonial Secretary, 26 April, 1921.
71. Ibid., acting Colonial Secretary to DC, Trans Nzoia, 15 November, 1921, p. 1.
72. Ibid., p. 2.
73. Ibid., Chairman, Trans Nzoia District Committee to Colonial Secretary, 13 December 1921.
74. According to the Return of Licences issued

at Kitale under the 1919 Traders Licensing Ordinance, in 1925, out of 26 licencees, 16 were Europeans. The remaining ten were Indians, Goans and Arabs. See The Official Gazette, 2 September 1925, p. 844.

75. East African Standard, 25 September, 1926, p. 39.
76. Ibid., 31 December, 1927, p. 19.
77. The Leader, 1 January 1923, p. 8.
78. Legislative Council Debates, 1924, p. 100.
79. G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History, the Colonial Period (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 58; Redley "The Politics of a Predicament" pp. 137-138.
80. KNA: Lands BN 19/21 acting Commissioner for Lands to Acting Colonial Secretary, 16 June, 1927; East African Standard, 26 January 1927, p. 28 D.
81. Proceedings of the Fourth Maize Conference and First Wheat Conference, 1928, p. 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

EUROPEAN FARMING, 1930 - 1946

The original goals of European settlement remained elusive by the late 1920s. Throughout the Highlands, mortgages and bank overdrafts had reached alarming levels. Many European farmers used borrowed money to meet ordinary living expenses rather than investing in farm improvements. Few had any savings to fall back on in the event of crop failure and there was a marked shortage of efficient farm managers.<sup>1</sup> Most of these settlers were essentially single crop farmers and the Trans Nzoia district was notable in this respect. Trans Nzoia settlers had originally petitioned Governor Northey over the issue of farm credits in 1921. High producer prices and cheap labour temporarily eased their anxieties but the fundamental problem remained. This was apparently the situation in other settled districts, prompting the 1929 Agricultural Commission to identify "a pressing need" for agricultural loans.<sup>3</sup>

Economic issues came to the fore in local European circles. By 1930 the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association had decentralised itself into branches, each with a chairman and secretary. Each branch was represented on the central Committee by two delegates. According to Elmer, Secretary of the Association, the change was effected "in order to avoid large unwieldy meetings, where farming is often ignored, and to encourage farmers to debate on farming topics." Indeed, an increasing number of settlers were

interested in technical questions like the manuring of coffee and combating coffee berry disease which was on the increase in Trans Nzoia, Sotik, Kericho, Kaimosi and Turbo.<sup>4</sup>

The plummet of producer prices on the export market underlined the importance of economic issues. One old settler recalls the price of maize dropping to shs. 3/- per bag in 1931.<sup>5</sup> As the main crop of the district,<sup>6</sup> this was a calamity and lorry transporters were forced to reduce freight rates to five or six cents per bag per mile for the haul into Kitale.<sup>7</sup> Internal prices remained higher than on the export market, with the Kenya Farmers Association quoting an average return of sh. 6/19 per 200 lb bag of maize and sh. 9/27 per 200 lb bag of wheat for the 1931 season.

European membership of the Kenya Farmers Association had grown to comprise over ninety per cent of the wheat farmers in Kenya Colony. By 1932 this association had ventured into the cooperative purchase of inputs, especially seeds and fertilizer. These inputs were supplied to farmers at cost.<sup>9</sup> The association maintained a high profile in Trans Nzoia. At a Kenya Farmers' Association general meeting held in Kitale 7 November 1933, for example, farmers were lectured on maize grading procedures at Mombasa and encouraged to improve the quality of their maize.<sup>10</sup>



Settlers in the district had quickly identified advantages to be accrued from manipulation of the internal maize market. The Trans Nzoia Farmers Association unsuccessfully sought direct European producer control during the 1931-1932 season.<sup>11</sup> Such control was, however, exerted with a varying degree of success by the Kenya Farmers Association which tried to maintain high internal prices by increasing exports of African grown produce. The associations pool price for the 1934 maize crop was declared at sh.5/68 per bag f.o.r. main line, mainly due to sales on the Canadian market at a price above export parity.<sup>12</sup> While the payout by the association for the 1935-1936 crop was only sh. 4/42 per bag, f.o.r. growers station, deliberate effort was made to forestall a further depression of internal prices by consigning 58,700 bags of African - grown maize for grading at Mombasa.<sup>13</sup> The maize payout by the Kenya Farmers' Association for the 1936-1937 season was shs. 7/20 per bag, reflecting a slight recovery in the producer price.<sup>14</sup> During 1937 no maize originating from African reserves was exported because of high demand on the local market.<sup>15</sup>

The continuation of maize marketing throughout the depression years was significant with regard to Trans Nzoia because of the importance / <sup>of</sup> this particular crop to farmers in the district. During the 1933-1934 season, local settlers planted 47,021 acres of maize, compared with 34,328 acres for Nakuru and 20,368 acres for Uasin Gishu.<sup>16</sup>

It had therefore become the principal European maize district. The gross output of maize, coffee, wheat, barley and oats produced in Trans Nzoia in 1934 totalled 37,640 tons, compared with 57,017 tons from other European districts.<sup>17</sup>

Adverse economic conditions had re-kindled interest in mixed farming. W.D.D. Jardine, a livestock officer, had addressed the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association on this matter in 1930. Warning those present that erecting fences to isolate land free of ticks was a prerequisite for eliminating East Coast Fever, he argued that beef farming was a waste of fertile arable land. In his opinion, dairy cattle were a better proposition and farmers should aim at slowly building up small, high quality herds.<sup>18</sup> Most farming in the district was, however, still based on one or two crops with dairy farming being of an "elementary and extensive type."<sup>19</sup> Besides the absence of skills and technology, this emphasis on a few crops was a result of proven returns on a minimal investment. Coffee, for example, was fetching relatively high prices and enjoyed increasing popularity.<sup>20</sup> In the words of Megson, the Land Bank Inspector for Trans Nzoia, "the outstanding lesson of 1934 is that with economical and good farming, maize can be grown as a successful and profitable crop at a price anywhere above sh. 6/50 per bag."<sup>21</sup> Few farmers showed much inclination to experiment with new crops apart from some Europeans who introduced pyrethrum cultivation on the slopes of Mount Elgon in 1934.<sup>22</sup>

One consequence of maize monoculture which was becoming increasingly evident by the early 1930s was destruction of the soil structure, leading to soil erosion. As one shrewd observer noted, this particular problem would worsen with time, particularly in those parts of the district with a sandy loam soil.<sup>23</sup> Megson himself was forced to concede in 1935 that soil erosion had reached alarming proportions.<sup>24</sup>

Over the years many settlers had mined the soil by planting an annual maize crop on the same piece of land, without a fallow period. As yields declined, more land was cleared of bush and brought under the plough and the same process was repeated. Following the onset of economic depression many settlers were left with few options beyond continuing with these rudimentary farming methods or simply abandoning the land altogether. Their predicament is illustrated by the case of F.H. Chappell, who had been farming near Kiminini in South-Western Trans Nzoia for five years by 1932, growing maize and some coffee. In that year he applied for a Land Bank loan of £1000, disclosing no outstanding debt beyond what was already covered by his last maize deliveries. His total expenses for the preceding year amounted to £230 and he was anticipating a harvest of 2500 bags of maize. The evaluator, H.C. Kirk, described Chappell as a hard working farmer who could eventually

prosper.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of this endorsement the Trans Nzoia Agricultural Advances Board concluded that the applicant seemed to own a sufficient number of plough oxen and implements to continue farming and therefore qualified for the loan.<sup>26</sup>

Most of Chappell's arable land lay fallow and he needed the money urgently to complete buying his farm from the Barberton s, who were pre-war settlers. The Land Bank loan of one thousand pounds went towards clearing this commitment and Chappell's land remained mortgaged.<sup>27</sup>

By 1946 he was still heavily indebted to the Bank and wanted to sell upto 250 acres of land to another European, Mills, for £750 to reduce the mortgage.<sup>28</sup> Chappell's diligence notwithstanding, therefore, he was evidently unable to make a financial success out of commercial farming.

Chappell's financial problems predated the economic depression and became more protracted following the decline of producer prices but the pertinent point is that money loaned by the Land Bank went towards keeping him on the land rather than streamlining his farming operations. This also applied in the case of another European, Alfred Boy, who farmed near Endebess. Boy applied for a one thousand pound loan from the land Bank in 1933. He became a mortgagee but by 1943 remained mired in debt and was trying to discharge the mortgage by selling part

of his farm.<sup>29</sup>

Other settlers found conditions too tough and gave up farming. For some, this meant leaving the district without expecting to return in the foreseeable future. Among these was George Davidson who had secured an eight hundred pound Land Bank loan in 1932. He subsequently abandoned <sup>his</sup> farm, apparently weary of continuous hardship, and died intestate in England in 1939.<sup>30</sup> Many Europeans sought temporary diversions from farming, primarily as a means of earning some money. A considerable number of local settlers, for example, left the district to participate in the Kakamega gold rush, which they hoped would be a source of instant wealth.<sup>31</sup> Captain Vaughan - Philpott was among them, leaving for Kakamega in 1932 after obtaining a fifty pound loan from a commercial bank, as his working capital. He enjoyed a measure of success in a joint mining venture with other Trans Nzoia settlers, called the Hell-fire syndicate.<sup>32</sup> Another group of farmers from Trans Nzoia, Messrs Ross, Foster and Mangan, enjoyed even more spectacular success and formed the goldmining firm, Rostermans.<sup>33</sup> For most participants in the gold rush, however, prospecting did not prove to be an Eldorado, providing a subsistence income at best. During years of severe economic recession, any form of employment which offered an alternative to destitution was attractive. Herein lay the significance of the Kakamega gold rush to European settlement in Kenya.<sup>34</sup>

In 1933 which was a peak mining year, an average of between four hundred and five hundred Europeans worked in the gold fields monthly.<sup>35</sup>

The shortage of hard cash during this period meant that those settlers remaining in Trans Nzoia often experienced a reversion to subsistence living with money being spent on only the bare essentials. One settler called Cripps, for example, was reputed to have made a return journey of almost thirty miles on foot in pursuit of a six shilling debt. The Barbertons, who farmed on the slopes of Mount Elgon, supplemented their meagre income by digging out bat guano from caves on the mountain and selling this to coffee farmers for sixty shillings per ton.<sup>36</sup>

The total European population in the district declined from 1141 in 1933 to 970 in 1938.<sup>37</sup> While this was not remarkable, settler farming was undoubtedly affected, both within Trans Nzoia and in other European districts.

Government policy which subscribed to the notion that the settlers were "an asset which the Colony cannot afford to lose"<sup>38</sup> meant that saving them was paramount. By June 1934, outstanding agricultural loans amounted to £106,450.<sup>39</sup>

The Land Bank's loan capital was increased to £500,000 in 1933,<sup>40</sup> and almost forty per cent of the money from mortgages registered by the Bank went towards discharging existing mortgages.<sup>41</sup>

Under these circumstances, Trans Nzoia settlers formed part of a dispersed European rural population whose problems were a major preoccupation of the Colonial Government. Events within the district frequently appeared more urgent to local farmers than abstract debates on European predominance within the colony, however. The reason for this was the social, political and economic conditions in situ, which influenced their outlook. They had endorsed the concept of a district council as early as 1928, for instance, but its implementation was delayed by the insistence of many settlers on the Government guaranteeing to continue making annual road grants for maintaining the local road network.

Following the settlement of this issue, an interim council was constituted and its first meeting was convened in Kitale on 25 February 1930 under the chairmanship of a farmer from Kiminini called Thompson.<sup>42</sup> The Trans Nzoia District Council quickly recommended the appointments of Messrs Carter, Marshall and Corrie. These were gazetted in due course.<sup>43</sup>

The District Council and the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association were the two main elected bodies in the district, with their activities frequently overlapping. In March 1932, for example, the councillors proposed that "in the event of new legislation being introduced, local option should include a limitation on squatters cattle."<sup>44</sup> An earlier recommendation made by the Trans Nzoia Farmers

Association executive was that as a temporary solution, a maximum of ten cattle be allowed per newly attested squatter. An upper limit of thirty cattle per squatter was set.<sup>45</sup>

Almost a year later the debate raged on, with the Association proposing that a squatters stay in the district be limited to one month after expiry of contract.<sup>46</sup> In another executive meeting held at Kiminini on 4 April 1938 under the Chairmanship of Captain Elmer, the problem was reviewed and the Trans Nzoia District Council proposals were discussed. It was finally agreed that a postal ballot be taken before submitting proposals to the government, since some farmers were opponents of livestock restrictions.<sup>47</sup>

The squatter issue involved the high cattle population in the district, of which 40,000 to 50,000 were believed to be susceptible to rinderpest.<sup>48</sup> While a growing number of farmers favoured the imposition of restrictions, others thought these unnecessary, and very sharp differences arose over what policy to adopt. A significant case involved Oswald Bentley, a settler who had permitted Jama Noor, a Somali, to graze one hundred cattle on uncultivated farmland near Kitale. The District Commissioner subsequently threatened legal action against Bentley under section 39 of the Crown Lands Ordinance cap 140, for permitting non-European occupation. Bentley protested to the Commissioner for Lands. The Solicitor General had previously advised, in similar cases, that grazing



agreements, as opposed to sub-letting of land, did breach the Crown Lands Ordinance. This precedent notwithstanding, the acting Commissioner for Lands advised the Colonial Secretary that normal procedure involved the advertisement of tender rights for grazing facilities on vacant Crown Land. In the Highlands this would be racially restricted. In practice, grazing rights were granted by Provincial Commissioners under paragraph 4 of circular number one of 1931. These grants were made to Europeans who required additional pasture. Bently, therefore, had contravened this policy.<sup>49</sup>

Another case involved Idu Wasamu, widow of Hurreh Hassan, a sargeant in the Kings African Rifles. She had complained to the Commissioner of Lands over an eviction order issued to her while residing in the Somali location. Her claim to be legally grazing twenty cattle in the Township Reserve was disputed by the District Commissioner. Observing that the maximum number of cattle allowed in each boma was twenty, he alleged that this rule was being flagrantly flouted. An average of thirty to sixty cattle were being kept in each Somali boma and he had decided to enforce the Control of Stock Rules. Asserting that 180 cattle were enough to meet Somali milk requirements, the District Commissioner claimed that Idu Wasamu did not have any boma and so her cattle were among the excess stock removed.<sup>50</sup>

The issue of Somali livestock had drawn the attention of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association in 1930, when it complained about unfair competition from Somali traders. According to the Association, European dairy farmers were being undercut by the Somali, who, for a small fee, had access to grazing rights on 15000 acres around Kitale.<sup>51</sup> In a meeting on 19 November 1930, the Trans Nzoia District Council expressed concern and sought further information from the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association on the subject of Somali Stock on Crown Land.<sup>52</sup>

Settlers in the district were not oblivious to issues involving their relationship with the colonial government and other European districts. Indeed, unlike questions concerning local farming problems and district administration which were often discussed at length by representatives from various parts of the district during local government meetings and in farmers forums, colonial questions were frequently dealt with on an ad hoc basis in public meetings. One such well attended meeting was convened on 6 September 1935 by Kirkwood, the member of Legislative Council for Plateau North. Those present elected Messrs Keyser, Tyack and Bentley as delegates to the forthcoming session of the Convention of Association. A subscription was taken to cover their expenses, with a unanimous resolution being passed that they express the districts' demand for a reduction in

Government expenditure and lower interest rates on loans.<sup>53</sup>

Another crowded meeting was held on 20 September at the Kitale hotel cinema under the chairmanship of Mr. Swain, to receive the delegates report. The settlers first endorsed the rules of the Trans Nzoia District Association which replaced the defunct Trans Nzoia Farmers Association. They agreed that the new association be affiliated to the Convention of Associations and the subscription was fixed at five shillings, with a minimum of one shilling entitling any European to become a member. Following the delegates report, the meeting pledged to support the Vigilance Committee in any action it took to safeguard the settlers' interests. Governor Byrne's apparent lack of sympathy for the settlers plight was roundly criticised. When the meeting ended, many farmers had joined the Trans Nzoia District Association, reflecting renewed interest in colonial politics following a period of apathy which had led to the demise of its predecessor.<sup>54</sup>

This interest was sustained, as was made clear in January 1936 when a public meeting chaired by Major B.H. Hill heatedly, debated the issue of farm rents. No communication had been received from the Vigilance Committee on the matter but it was evident that local farmers were keen on taking unilateral action. One of them, O.R. Arnell, read a letter he had drafted requesting a remission of farm rents pending

an improvement in producer prices. His suggestion that all farmers send a copy to the Government was, however, strongly opposed by M. Bentley. The unexpected arrival of a document from the Vigilance Committee immediately diverted everyone's attention and the meeting went in camera to discuss its contents. That same afternoon, copies of the letter concerning farmers inability to pay farm rent were posted for signatures. European professionals and businessmen working in Kitale held a meeting the following morning and decided to petition the government over the need for more time to be allowed for paying trading licences.<sup>55</sup>

Governor Byrne had made a fact finding tour of the district in 1935.<sup>56</sup> In 1932 he had acknowledged that there was little likelihood of recovering the money advanced to insolvent farmers in the Colony in the near future.<sup>57</sup> His Government continued to support European maize growers at the expense of African peasant farmers, as J.B. Pandya succinctly put it during debate on the Economic Development Committee Report.<sup>58</sup> Equally significant was the continued subsidy of European local government, with the six district councils levying no rates, except for nominal subscriptions to maintain European hospitals in Eldoret and Kitale. Basic road grants made to the European Councils in 1935 totalled £31,070. In stark contrast, Local Native Councils contributed £8,128 raised from local rates for the upkeep

of roads in their areas of jurisdiction.<sup>59</sup>

Differences between the Colonial Government and the settlers involved specific questions, therefore, rather than the principle of European predominance. This contention is borne out in a different context. When Sir Francis Scott, the de facto European leader, moved a motion in the Legislative Council demanding that all vacancies in the colonial civil service be reserved for the offspring of Europeans resident in Kenya Colony, he was not acting on sheer impulse. The motion was informed by the premise that European colonists would eventually be granted self-government, something which neither the Colonial Secretariat nor Indian leaders were willing to concede as inevitable. For this reason the motion was defeated by twenty-four votes to thirteen after Indian and official members joined forces to defeat it.<sup>60</sup> A further reflection of the outlook of European settler leaders and their sympathisers was articulated in a unanimous resolution passed by Rift Valley district commissioners in Nakuru in 1937. This called for the reservation of Crown Land for sons of settlers and the provision of agricultural training facilities for them. The expressed intention was to avoid "a poor white population."<sup>61</sup>

In Trans Nzoia, the social and political factors influencing ideas on closer settlement underlined subtle differences between local settlers and the colonial government, as well as divisions within the European community itself. The availability of unsold Crown Land,

in addition to private land which was undeveloped, had spurred debate over closer settlement. The Colonial Government wanted to dispose of land allocated for European settlement and the Commissioner for Lands suggested that this could be implemented in Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu and along the Aberdare slopes, on the basis of smallholdings.<sup>62</sup> Europeans in Trans Nzoia showed considerable interest in these proposals.<sup>63</sup>

There were several large blocks of land in the district and Booth, the district agricultural officer, reported that this could be surveyed as follows:

- 1) Block A: 6500 acres bordering the Pokot reserve, to be divided into five 750 acre farms.
- 2) Block B: 8000 acres North-West<sup>of</sup> Kitale along the Kaitobas river, to be divided into five 500 to 600 acre farms for maize, wheat and coffee.
- 3) Block C: already alienated.
- 4) Block D: 6000 acres at the foot of the Cherangani hills, to be divided into twelve 500 acre farms.
- 5) 4,378 acres South of Kitale to be divided into eight 500 acre farms for maize, coffee and wheat.
- 6) Blocks E and F to be allocated on the basis of a report on Kitale Township land.<sup>64</sup>

When this scheme was submitted to the Kenya Advisory Committee, it resolved that fifty 20 acre farms be selected around Kitale and auctioned as sub-township holdings. The motive was to provide residential and agricultural land without draining trade licence revenue from Kitale township. The Committee was of the opinion that this sort of scheme was unsuitable for the yeoman farmer, arguing that water supplies would have to be laid on at the new settlers' expense. The remaining 6000 acres in the vicinity could be surveyed into 200 acre farms, including one demonstration farm. Ten of these farms could then be allocated to local applicants, to provide working examples for new arrivals from overseas. On completion of land surveys around Kitale, the rest of the unalienated Crown Land could be surveyed for closer settlement.<sup>65</sup>

The Government subsequently gave tentative approval to a scheme incorporating an "A" component for small holdings and a "B" section for larger farms. A Trans Nzoia Farmers Association meeting held in Kitale on 19 December 1927 had resolved to back the "B" scheme but rejected the "A" scheme unequivocally.<sup>66</sup> When the government refused to revise its original proposals, another meeting of the association convened during mid-1928 requested that the scheme be proceeded with cautiously until the initial settlers' success was ensured.<sup>67</sup> These sentiments were also articulated by

by Colonel Kirkwood in the Legislative Council. While acknowledging that the district would benefit from an influx of new settlers<sup>68</sup>, he felt that they should buy large farms from the government.<sup>69</sup>

Following a stormy Legislative Council debate on closer settlement, the Kenya Advisory Committee continued to promote its original proposals on the "A" scheme. In addition the Council suggested that offers from Trans Nzoia farmers willing to take on farm pupils from Britain should be forwarded to the East Africa Office in London.<sup>70</sup>

This position failed to impress informed opinion in Trans Nzoia, as was apparent during a Trans Nzoia District Council meeting on 14 January 1930, also attended by Mr. Gilbert, the Surveyor General. The councillors rejected the "A" scheme as unworkable and wanted this reduced to five farms, with three being reserved for overseas applicants. Two hundred acres, of which only one hundred acres might be arable, was deemed inadequate, unless the soil was suitable for coffee - which was still on experimental crop and expensive to bring into bearing. Livestock were unprofitable if water was paid for at township rates. Other crops required large areas and small farmers could not supplement their income by working as artisans or mechanics due to stiff Indian competition.



As an alternative, the Trans Nzoia councillors wanted the twenty farms allocated to scheme "A" to be included in Scheme "C", for which no provision had been made in Trans Nzoia. Pensioners from Services throughout the Empire should be attracted because they had fixed incomes, experience in public affairs, leisure time and were probably raising young families. This background would ostensibly make them dedicated colonists. The councillors suggested that the balance of land be allocated to scheme "B", which they felt had the best chance of success, provided good farmers rather than artisans or small speculators, were selected. Moreover they felt that financial benefits of the government scheme for Crown Land could be extended to approved buyers of private land.<sup>71</sup>

The suggestion that farm acreages be increased under the scheme was supported by Holm, the Director of Agriculture, and Conway Harvey, an outspoken European leader, during an Advisory Committee meeting held in Nairobi on 26 February 1930. Both men justified their position as warranted by adverse economic conditions which made small holdings unviable.<sup>72</sup>

In 1930 the honorary Secretary of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association informed the Commissioner for Lands that he had received numerous requests for details of the proposed government settlement scheme. The association

had subsequently formed a Committee to assist pupil-settlers and promote closer settlement. Claiming that letters had been received from South Africa, Austria, Belgian Congo (now Zaire) and England, the honorary secretary expressed his associations' desire for a definitive government policy on European settlement. In addition, because many prospective settlers would lack working capital and commercial interest rates were very high at 8% or 9%, a Land Bank would enable them to secure soft loans.<sup>73</sup>

These remarks won tentative endorsement from the Commissioner for Lands, who sent a copy of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association letter to the East African Trade Information Office. In effect the Commissioner reiterated Government support for the principle of closer settlement.<sup>74</sup>

Vaughan - Philpott, the honorary Secretary of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association, was more specific about the type of settlers the association had in mind in a subsequent letter. His suggestion that retired civil servants and army officer could be settled on plots near Kitale ranging from ten to fifty acres<sup>75</sup> was, however, rejected by the Commissioner for Lands. The latter pointedly observed that no Government financial assistance would be forthcoming and emphasised that water supply, land prices, location of plots and communications were among many technical factors requiring serious consideration.<sup>76</sup>

Swain, the chairman of Trans Nzoia District Council Settlement Committee and Kirkwood, the local member of Legislative Council, had discussed the matter with Governor Byrne on 3 February 1932. Later that year the Settlement Committee convened a meeting to review various proposals. Those present, who included the District Commissioner and representatives from Trans Nzoia District Council and the Kitale Chamber of Commerce, resolved that Crown Land West and South West of Kitale be surveyed into plots ranging from twenty to fifty acres. While acknowledging that no Government financial support could be expected, the participants were so enthusiastic that they included the local airfield and race course as future sites for settlement. The problem of inadequate infrastructure was dismissed as secondary to the question of further land surveys and a buoyant land market.<sup>77</sup>

Over the years ideas about the scheme had varied from sales of large farms to the provision of plots near Kitale township. Central to the debate was the question of what type of farming was most viable. Initially, European leaders in the district had championed the concept of sizeable farms on the grounds that extensive mono-crop farming of the type already common in Trans Nzoia was the most viable option. Such a scheme would involve considerable capital investment on the part of purchasers, however,

besides limiting the number of farms available. Government assistance in the form of subsidised land sales and cheap credit would be a vital prerequisite. By the onset of economic depression, it was becoming increasingly clear that such assistance would not be forthcoming and emphasis shifted to what sort of settler would be willing to come out on their own resources. The British middle classes were identified as a main target group, as they had been during planning of the 1919 ex-soldier settlement scheme. When worsening economic conditions led to a crisis for European farmers in the Highlands, the proposed scheme was shelved.

The ideas about boosting the numbers of European settlers were still mooted in certain circles, however. The scheme was briefly resurrected in 1936 following its approval by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Small holdings of five to thirty acres were to be allotted to retired Indian Army officers wishing to settle in Kenya, near Nairobi, Thomsons Falls, Kitale and other suitable grants. The colonial government proposed to offer free grants, subject to normal rents and specified conditions for development and occupation.<sup>78</sup> No further Government assisted European settlement was to be implemented in Trans Nzoia, however, until 1946, when a large western section up to the Kamukuywa river was allocated for post war settlement.<sup>79</sup>

Closer settlement in the district became a major issue because there were large acreages of unoccupied and unutilised land. The reason for this were fundamental to the European agricultural economy. There were still considerable areas of unsold Crown Land including 12000 acres within six miles of Kitale, but, in fact, it was often difficult to differentiate between private farms and unsold Government land precisely because the latter remained undeveloped. In certain cases, when the occupiers failed to pay rent instalments, the Government took action. J.C. Connan for example, had taken up a 2090 acre farm (L O 2194) near Kiminini in December 1926. Following his repeated failure to pay annual rent, the acting Commissioner for Lands sued for recovery of the farm and a supreme court order was issued to this effect on 18 November 1932.<sup>80</sup>

A number of land owners were not in actual occupation. This situation was exemplified by the case of Captain Coney, the former Member of Legislative Council for Plateau North. The land, registered as LO 3631, had originally been granted to the Finch - Hatton Syndicate. Ownership was subsequently transferred to Coney. The original grant stipulated that improvements to the value of 15,640 shillings be effected before 30 June 1928. In October 1927, Coney, who was now living in England, applied for an extension

of the development period upto 31 December 1929, ostensibly because illness prevented him from returning to Kenya immediately. This request was <sup>subsequently</sup> granted by the Commissioner for Lands.<sup>81</sup>

Coney did not return to Kenya and on 17 June 1929 he wrote to the Commissioner for Lands from London, admitting failure to fulfill development conditions. He sought another extension upto 31 December 1931, promising to travel to Kenya in early 1931 to develop the farm.<sup>82</sup> His excuses did not convince the Land Advisory Board which met on 16 August 1929 and rejected the application.<sup>83</sup> The Commissioner for Lands approved this decision and duly advised Coney of his action.<sup>84</sup>

The land in question had been allocated under the 1919 ex-soldier settlement scheme and was still registered under the names of Finch-Hatton and other members of the syndicate to which the original grant had been made.<sup>85</sup> A number of other allottees under the scheme had also failed to occupy their farms. A.C.A. Thackwell was among them. In 1937 he had only recently retired from the Indian Army with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. On taking up the farm, L.O. 2034, he found it waterless and applied for a boundary alteration to allow access to water on adjacent Crown Land. He pledged to surrender an equal acreage in exchange<sup>86</sup> and the application was endorsed by the Trans

Nzoia District Committee.<sup>87</sup> On the strength of this recommendation, the Commissioner for Lands approved the proposed land exchange provided Thackwell surrendered 600 acres on the south side of his farm for an equivalent acreage of Crown Land on LO 2033. Cost of survey would be shared between Thackwell and the Government while cost of deeds, registration and other procedures of transfer were to be borne by Thackwell. The Commissioner for Lands had earlier suggested that Thackwell purchase LO 2033 but the latter declined, claiming that only a small portion of its 3149 acres was arable.<sup>88</sup> Of more significance was the fact that LO 2034 had never been farmed since the grant was made and land rent was in arrears to date. Non-cultivation of the land was cited by H.C. Kirk, acting on Thackwell's behalf, as sufficient reason for the Government to remit rent on the portion of LO 2034 being surrendered.<sup>89</sup> The Commissioner for Lands disagreed with this view, instructing the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner to claim rent upto the date of exchange, from which time rent on land added to LO 2084 would become due.<sup>90</sup>

No land had been cultivated, as R. Tough, Thackwell's farm manager, acknowledged.<sup>91</sup> This was not an isolated case. A neighbouring settler, Manley, who owned farm LO 2036, had submitted a similar request. He wanted access to water on LO 2035 and the District surveyor recommended that this application be accepted.<sup>92</sup> This endorsement

had no basis in proven farming capability, however, since development had not gone beyond the ploughing of between 100 and 150 acres of land. In fact, the land was being utilised by twenty squatters with large herds of cattle.<sup>53</sup>

Another absentee landowner was G. Hancock of Bedford in England, who wanted to form a limited liability company to take over his Green Hill farm, LO 5341, which consisted of 831 acres near Hoey's Bridge. The Commissioner of Lands duly informed him that the transfer could be done under the Registration of Titles Ordinance if he completed and signed a form to be attested by a law officer in England. The necessary transfer fees could then be forwarded to the Registrar of Titles in Nairobi.<sup>94</sup>

A significant sign of the large expanses of surplus land were speculative applications from various farmers intent on increasing the sizes of their holdings. A.C. Hoey, for example, applied for LO 2201 totalling 1365 acres along the Suwerwa river in Cherangani, claiming that the land adjoined the western boundary of a dairy farm he was developing. While he allegedly required more pasture, his extensive holdings in the vicinity included LO 3019, LO 3048 and LO 2213, totalling 4359 acres. Hoey had sold another farm, LO 3020, to a settler called I. Mackinnon. The farms had been rejected by the original soldier settler allottees and Hoey apparently had purchased



them cheaply. He claimed to have spent over £9000 on developments, besides installing a power and water unit worth over £3000 on the Suwerwa river. Besides fencing and Paddocking over 1000 acres, he kept 400 grade stock and had ordered a pedigree bull from America.<sup>95</sup> For all intents and purposes he was portraying himself as a progressive dairy farmer in a district where herds of indigenous livestock kept by many settlers were often secondary to maize or other crop farming.<sup>96</sup>

Arguing that besides additional grazing his grade cattle required protection against undipped squatter cattle carrying East Coast Fever, Hoey promised to fence the western and southern boundaries of the land if it was sold to him cheaply. In effect he wanted the land sold to him at his price and this was complied with by the government, which accepted his quotation of Shs. 20,925/- for the farm.<sup>97</sup>

Hoey also applied for land in partnership with R. Ferguson, under the name of the Hoey's Bridge Sisal Syndicate. The application was for a direct grant and this was eventually recommended by the Advisory Land Board and approved by the Governor - in - Council. The land was a portion of LO 1802 A, totalling 1400 acres and was allotted at a stand premium of twenty shillings per acre<sup>98</sup> at an annual rent of twenty cents per acre.<sup>99</sup>

Another speculative application came from H. Brian Bates of Longlea Estate, Kitale. Bates wanted one or two

thousand acres of well watered grazing land and enquired whether any Crown Land was up for sale.<sup>100</sup> He was advised that direct grants were no longer being made.<sup>101</sup> Unperturbed, he argued that he wanted "to go in for cattle" by building up an indigenous herd and proposed that LR 2162 which was Crown Land near his farm would be ideal for this purpose. Since purchasing a 1064 acre farm in partnership with W.E. Nops in 1928, 200 acres of maize and 100 acres of tung had been planted. In his view such effort warranted access to more land.<sup>102</sup>

Major Keyser, a well known politician in the district had also applied for part of LR 2162, besides LR 2160. The Crown Land Valuation Board, meeting on 29 March 1938, had valued LR 2160, consisting of 2940 acres, at shs. 7/- per acre stand premium.<sup>103</sup> The Trans Nzoia District Council recommended both Keyser's and Bates's applications<sup>104</sup> but the District Land Board opposed this decision on the grounds that Keyser already owned huge tracts of land and so granting him an additional 1719 acres at shs 7/- per acre was uncalled for. Bates application for 2000 acres was stood over until Bower, a Board Member, visited the locality.<sup>105</sup>

Bower reported that the farms consisted of well wooded and watered land in the Cherangani hills. He had interviewed Bates who reiterated his desire to develop a dairy farm to settle his son and nephew on. In Bower's view, the land was

fertile and could be developed by anyone with enough money to build a dip and breed a good dairy herd.<sup>106</sup> Bates' credentials were evidently wanting in this respect and the Land Board rejected his application together with Keyser's on the grounds that both had enough land to develop. The Board suggested that the land be earmarked for closer settlement.<sup>107</sup>

Land sometimes became an issue when applicants felt they were being placed at a disadvantage by influential rivals. One disgruntled applicant was W.F.K. Morrice of Kathini Estate, Nairobi. He had bought a 230 acre farm, LO 5350, in south western Trans Nzoia in 1923, hoping to develop it after developing a 308 acre Kiambu coffee farm in which he had one-third interest. Morrice left for England in 1927 because of ill health, returning to Kenya in 1938 with his son. On appraising farm LO 5350, he identified the only permanent water source as a small section of the Kamukuywa river along the farm boundary. This was used as a watering hole by Bukusu herdsmen from the adjacent reserve and he wanted to return the farm to the government as a total loss.

Morrice had applied for an alternative piece of land which was part of LO 2066 on the slopes of Mount Elgon. Claiming that he needed additional income from farming to meet personal expenses and his son's education, he alleged

that the chances of his application succeeding were being thwarted by applications for the same farm from members and former members of Trans Nzoia District Council.<sup>108</sup>

These allegations were rejected by the Council's Executive Committee, which expressed dissatisfaction with Morrice's explanation for failing to develop farm LO 5350.<sup>109</sup> The Land Board accepted these views and rejected his application.<sup>110</sup> Most land applications were free of such controversy, however, with grants being made in many cases. Homboe of Orange Farm, Lugari, for example, was granted LO 2985 in Trans Nzoia, consisting of 1233 acres.<sup>111</sup> The acreages involved were usually relatively small with the land in question being adjacent to an applicant's farm, as in the case of F.J. Buck, a tractor and motorcar dealer in Kitale, who wanted to buy 30 acres adjoining his farm from W. Swain.<sup>11.2</sup> When the acreages were larger, the intention was probably to procure more pasture. This applied in the case of Bowker who applied for the purchase or lease of 500 acres of Government outspan along the Kitale - Eldoret road.<sup>11 3</sup>

The land market remained the forte of local settlers or Europeans from outside the district with a fair knowledge of which farms were available. Prices were low because of the sluggish demand which did not warrant, for example, further land auctions. In 1936, for instance, prices

ranged from shs 17/50 to shs 60/- per acre depending on assessed potential of the land.<sup>114</sup> Many farmers in the district owned more land than they could possibly use, as two local settlers, Morgan and Swain admitted on separate occasions.<sup>115</sup> This had become increasingly evident during the depression years when farm development was relegated to "a back seat"<sup>116</sup> The surplus of farm land prompted one Land Bank Inspector to recommend that the settlers sell some land and invest the money in their farms. In his view, "A successful settlement policy would thus be of the greatest benefit to the district and the older settlers therein."<sup>117</sup> Nicol, the Member of Legislative Council for Mombasa was more explicit, condemning the 1919 Soldier-Settlement Scheme as a failure, he felt future settlement should involve experienced farmers. In his view "It is no use sending the old school tie round the shows at Home in an endeavour to get workers for Kenya."<sup>118</sup>

Views of this type were unpopular in the district, with many settlers seeking further Government financial relief. One public meeting held in Kitale demanded a general remission of land rents but the Government proved unwilling to adopt this sweeping measure.<sup>119</sup> Such complaints were not isolated to insolvent farm owners. Water Keyn, the Managing Director of Suam Estates in North-Western

Trans Nzoia, petitioned the Rift Valley Provincial Commissioner over £752 rent being paid on 4706 acres of unused land since 1919. He described the land as being suitable only for "grazing native cattle" and wanted to exchange this for a piece of land lying between the Suam and Aptaka rivers.<sup>120</sup> The land in question bordered the Pokot reserve and after failing to secure an exchange,<sup>121</sup> WaterKeyn urged the Government to take over the 4706 acres in exchange for a free rental for five years on the remaining 16058 acres belonging to Suam Estates.<sup>122</sup> He later requested a drastic reduction in land rent because most of the company estate was ranchland.<sup>123</sup> The District Land Advisory Board recommended that rent be waived for 1935 and 1936, a decision accepted by the acting Commissioner for Lands, pending approval from the Colonial Office in London.<sup>124</sup>

Kitale township, which was the administrative centre and commercial hub of Trans Nzoia district, was expanding very slowly. This was partly attributable to the relatively small consumer market, composed mainly of scattered European farmers and under paid African farm workers, a situation worsened by economic depression. Many township plots remained undeveloped. When S.H. Powles, Manager of Estates and Investments Limited, wanted to purchase a plot for his company near the township centre,<sup>125</sup> his application was rejected because no auction was being held and there

were many vacant plots available for renting.<sup>126</sup> Following his protests<sup>127</sup> the Kitale Township Committee reiterated its earlier position.<sup>128</sup> In agreement, the acting Commissioner for Lands noted that there was "no evidence of sufficient demand for plots in Kitale to justify an auction sale."<sup>129</sup>

Subsequent events confirmed this point. One land auction was held at the District Commissioner's office on 22 July 1937 under Cap.140 of the Crown Lands Ordinance.<sup>130</sup> Only three plots were sold, the purchasers being Mrs. Lovisa Buck, who bought plot number 10 in Section III for shs 1408/- ; East African Timber Co-operative Society, Nairobi, which bought plot number 23 in section III for Shs 2142/- and Barclays Bank (DCO), Kitale which bought plot number 43 in Section XVII for shs. 1318/-. All three plots were sold at the upset price. No bids were received for the other four plots put up for auction.<sup>131</sup> In another auction held on 22 March 1938 at the same venue, two plots, numbers 33 and 34, were sold to the Kenya Farmers Association and another two plots, numbers 35 and 36, were sold to F. Tellatin. Two more plots remained unsold.<sup>132</sup> While urban plots were available for Indian buyers also, no evidence is available on competitive bidding between Europeans and Indians, implying that a de facto racial barrier prevailed on land in certain sections of Kitale. This is illustrated

by an auction held on 26 October 1938, when two plots were purchased by Indians. Mistry Mavji Visram bought plot 29 in section VI for Shs 460/- and Gorhandas Kalyanji bought plot 31 in the same area for shs 450/-.<sup>135</sup>

The contention is that the colonial government continued to perform an important administrative function in Trans Nzoia with regard to European political and economic interests. When the district was placed under a district officer reporting to the Uasin Gishu District Commissioner in October 1935,<sup>134</sup> this measure was resented by local settlers<sup>135</sup> and another District Commissioner was posted to Trans Nzoia in May 1937.<sup>136</sup> The Government was committed to devolving certain local government functions to Europeans despite overwhelming evidence that the local farming community would not rate itself. In March 1936, for example, the Public Works Division in Eldoret was abolished and its road function assumed by the Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia District Councils.<sup>137</sup> European leaders articulated popular opinion and because the District Commissioner was the initial point of contact between the executive arm of the Colonial Government and local settlers, the latter continued to expect an authoritative administrative presence. Racial affinity was important in this relationship. This was exemplified <sup>by</sup> a resolution passed by the Trans Nzoia District Council, demanding the immediate removal of Indian police officers from outposts



in the district.<sup>138</sup> In 1939 racial solidarity still characterised relations within the European community although the predominant influence <sup>was</sup> essentially British, with other nationalities being expected to toe the line.<sup>139</sup>

The outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 and the subsequent departure of 102 settlers on military service prompted the introduction of a group farm management scheme.<sup>140</sup> European leaders from the district had earlier insisted that appointments to the district manpower committee be vested in Trans Nzoia District Council as the "Local Governing Authority."<sup>141</sup> They now demanded representation for the district on the colonial production, settlement and supply Committee.<sup>142</sup> By 1940, with over 150 settlers conscripted, coordinated production was being implemented. During the year between 5000 and 6000 acres of flax was planted.<sup>143</sup>

The settlers remaining were either too old for active service or were experienced farmers, retained to coordinate agricultural production. In July 1940, 134 of the 152 European farmers still in the district were aged 40 years and over, and 73 of these were 50 years old or more.<sup>144</sup> Among those retained for farmwork was Vaughan-Philpott, who was released from the army in late 1940 at the request of the district production Committee.<sup>145</sup> The Trans Nzoia Manpower Sub-Committee had already resolved

that no more men could be spared for military service, although it did not consider the release of any serving farmer essential.<sup>146</sup> Many of the more capable settlers were managing more than one farm. J.F. Seymour of Endebess, for example, was in charge of five farms with a total of 500 acres under maize, 130 acres of coffee, 150 acres of beans and 125 acres of wheat. R.M. Buswell of Lugari managed 1200 acres of maize, 30 acres of coffee and 250 dairy cattle on four farms. H. Crampton of Hoey's Bridge managed 750 acres of maize and 330 acres of coffee on four farms.<sup>147</sup>

Extensive acreages of wheat and flax planted in 1941 were damaged by heavy rain but coffee, pyrethrum and maize yields were above average. More farmers were diversifying into dairy farming and pig rearing, with almost 250 000 pounds of butter fat being sent to the Eldoret creamery.<sup>148</sup> Maize remained the staple, however, with Kirkwood continuing to insist in the Legislative Council that it was "an absolutely essential crop."<sup>149</sup> European maize acreages in the colony had declined from 233, 973 acres during the 1929-1930 season, to 63,100 acres in 1941 due to low prices.<sup>150</sup>

European leaders had demanded a guaranteed minimum price on maize,<sup>151</sup> and this was provided for under the Increased Production of Crops Ordinance, which enacted minimum prices and subsidised inputs. Under Government contract, European

farmers were able to sell as much coffee, sisal, pyrethrum and flax as they could produce.<sup>152</sup> Executive bodies like the Agricultural Production Board were monopolised by settlers<sup>153</sup> who ensured that Government policy remained skewed in the Europeans' favour. The maize acreage in Trans Nzoia increased from 40 000 acres in 1941 to 58,906 acres in 1945. The area under wheat expanded from 8000 acres to 10,714 acres over the same period. In Uasin Gishu district the maize acreage increased from 12,513 acres in 1941 to 28,446 acres in 1945 and the area under wheat rose from 45,816 acres to 70,070 acres.<sup>154</sup>

It is arguable that the 1939 - 1945 war period "Killed the Slump" in European agriculture.<sup>155</sup> The emphasis remained, however, on cereal farming and problems like soil erosion were a constant reminder of destructive farming methods.<sup>156</sup> Experiments with chemical fertilizers and improved techniques upto 1939 had been restricted to a few innovative farmers and large concerns like the Kibomet estate owned by Estates and Investments limited. The situation had not changed significantly during the war, with improved agricultural methods remaining secondary to the priority of bringing more land under the plough.<sup>157</sup> The Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee exerted considerable influence in this respect. In one instant it censured W.J. Van Maltitz for failing to boost production

on his farm and recommended that he be drafted into the army.<sup>158</sup> The same committee refused to release C. Preddy from his position as farm manager to work in Nakuru.<sup>159</sup>

The war had heightened patriotic sentiment in British circles and other Europeans were prudent to follow suit. By April 1940 one German settler had taken out British citizenship while another three Germans and one Russian were in the process of becoming naturalised Britons.<sup>160</sup> Events had underlined the settlers' role as clients of the Colonial Government.<sup>161</sup> When the war ended local farmers were unwilling to compromise over this relationship. Following widespread dissatisfaction with low maize prices in 1946, the Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee and all production sub-committees resigned.<sup>162</sup> Major Keyser, the member of Legislative Council for Trans Nzoia, had earlier taken up the issue with the Trans Nzoia Association. A planned boycott by maize farmers had failed and the resignations represented an attempt to present a united front over the issue.<sup>163</sup> The prices were eventually raised,<sup>164</sup> after protracted debate culminating in a high level decision to send the Chairman of the Agriculture Production Board to Trans Nzoia for discussions.<sup>165</sup>

Relations within the settler community continued to be influenced by the politics of racial consensus which blurred social and economic divisions. This situation had been evident during 1945 when a split in the District Council threatened to upset the balance. Some councillors favoured an expansion of local government functions while others wanted these to be reduced. Both groups, however, were against the imposition of local rates on Europeans and the controversy soon passed.<sup>166</sup> This common outlook was clearly revealed by European views about Africans. Consequently, racism was an important factor, shaping relations between European settler and African labourer.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1929 p. 583.
2. F.H. Weller interviewed by N.W. Fedha and K. Ward, KNA: 967.6203 FED; See also The East African Standard, 12 February 1927, p. 3.
3. Report of the Agricultural Commission (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1929) p. 20.
4. AGR 1/243 L.A. Elmer to the Coffee Officer, Department of Agriculture, Nairobi, 24 July 1930; Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1929, p. 23.
5. A.M. Barberton interviewed by K. Ward, KNA: 153.3 WAR, p. 10.
6. NCC: LG 5/1/3/2 Engineer Clerk to Commissioner for Local Government, Lands and Settlement, 24 June, 1931.
7. NCC: Minute book no. 6 summary of a meeting between Governor Byrne and Messrs Graham and Tebbit, representing Trans Nzoia District Council. See also Legislative Council Debates, 1932, p. 190.
8. Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1931, p.8
9. Ibid., Annual Report, 1932, pp. 10-11.
10. Ibid, Annual Report 1933, p. 222
11. M.G. Redley 'The Politics of a Predicament: The White Community in Kenya, 1918 - 32' (Ph.D. Cambridge, 1976) pp. 227 - 9.

12. Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1934, pp.6-7
13. Ibid, Annual Report, 1936,p. 13
14. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1937  
(Government Printer, 1939) p. 12
15. Ibid., p. 109.
16. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: Food Shortage  
Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943 (Nairobi:  
Government Printer, 1943).
17. NCC Minute book No. 8, p. 56
18. AGR 1/243 Mitchell, Secretary of TNFA to Holm,  
Director of Agriculture 2 February 1931.
19. Department of Agriculture. Annual Report, 1933, p. 121.
20. Ibid, p. 32.
21. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank  
1934, p. 10.
22. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1934, p. 10
23. Ibid, Annual Report, 1933, p. 125
24. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank 1935  
p. 20 Among rudimentary soil conservation measures  
taken by Land Bank supervised farmers were trenching  
and strip planting with Napier grass.

25. AG 2730 Loans to Mr. and Mrs. Chappell.
26. Ibid., Evaluators Report
27. AG 2730, Chappell to Land Bank Secretary,  
29 August, 1946.
28. Ibid., Land Bank Secretary to Attorney General,  
29 August, 1946.
29. AG 4/2726
30. AG 4/2722
31. Weller interviewed by Fedha and Ward, KNA 967  
6203 FED pp. 7-8 and Ward. See also A.M. Barberton,  
interviewed by K. Ward, KNA: 158.3WAR, 21 August  
1971. p. 12.
32. Philpott, interviewed by Fedha and Ward, KNA: 967.  
6203 VAU; p. 1.
33. Luck, interviewed by Ward, KNA: 158.3 WAR, p.5.
34. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1932, p. 7
35. Report of the Economic Development Committee  
(Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935) p.179
36. Barberton, interviewed by K. Ward, p. 11, KNA:  
158.3 WAR
37. PC/RVP. 6A/29/2 Population Returns, Trans Nzoia  
1933, 1938.



38. Interim Report of the Agricultural Indebtedness Committee (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1936) p. 7
39. Report of the Economic Development Committee (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935) p. 9
40. Ibid., p. 19
41. Ibid., p. 21
42. NCC: Minute book no. 3 Butler to Thompson, 5 February 1930, p. 15.
43. PC/RvP. 6A/34/11 DC, Kitale to PC, Nzoia, 17 July 1931
44. NCC: Minute book no. 8. Standing Executive Committee meeting, 23 March 1932 p. 4
45. AGR 1/243 cutting from The East African Standard 3 March 1932. 3
46. NCC: Minute book no. 8 Executive Committee Meeting 3 May 1933, p. 26; Minute book 9, Council Meeting 8 February 1933, p. 45 and 7 June 1933, pp. 52-53.
47. AGR 1/243, cutting from The East African Standard 11, April 1933.
48. Ibid., cutting from The East African Standard, 3 March, 1932.

49. LANDS BN 66/15 Oswald Bentley to Commissioner for Lands, 6 July 1936, meeting between Commissioner for Lands and Bentley, 13 August 1936, Acting Commissioner for Lands to Colonial Secretary, 18 August 1936, Acting Commissioner of Lands to Colonial Secretary 23 August 1936.
50. LANDS BN 66/15 Widow of Hurreh Hassan to Commissioner for Lands, 17 May 1938; Commissioner for Lands to District Commissioner, Kitale, 21 October 1938; District Commissioner, Kitale to Commissioner for Lands, 24 October 1938.
51. LANDS BN 46/10 Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia Farmers Association to Commissioner of Lands, 26 September 1930.
52. Ibid., Engineer Clerk, Trans Nzoia District Council to District Commissioner, Kitale, 24 December 1930.
53. Kenya Weekly News 13 September 1935<sup>2</sup>, p. 19.
54. Kenya Weekly News, 4 October 1935 p. 26. On the formation of Trans Nzoia District Association, see also PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1935, p. 11
55. Kenya Weekly News 24 January 1936.
56. PC/RVP/ 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1935, pp. 4-5.
57. Legislative Council Debates, 1932, p. 310.
58. Legislative Council Debates, 1935, p. 473.

59. Report of the Select Committee on Economy (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1935) pp. 63-65.
60. Legislative Council Debates 1935, pp. 319 - 321 and 334 - 335.
61. PC/RvP. 6A/34/7. Minutes of the District Commissioners' meeting held at Nakuru, September 7 1937, p. 6.
62. Ed 1/51 Acting Director of Agriculture to Acting Colonial Secretary 20 August 1927.
63. The East African Standard, 31 December 1927, p. 37.
64. LANDS BN 46/10 Booth to acting Director of Agriculture, 5 March 1928.
65. LANDS BN 46/10 Extract from Minutes of a Kenya Advisory Council meeting, 11 April 1928
66. Ibid, Honorary Secretary of Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association to Colonial Secretary, 21 January 1928 see also the East African Standard 31 December 1927, p. 37.
67. LANDS BN 46/10 President of Trans Nzoia Farmers Association to Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1928.
68. Legislative Council Debates, 1928 p. 508.
69. Legislative Council Debates, 1928, p. 508.
70. LANDS BN 46/10 Extract from Kenya Advisory Committee Minutes, 12 July 1928.

71. LANDS BN 46/10 Extract from Minutes of Trans Nzoia District Council meeting, 14 January 1930, and PC Nzoia to Colonial Secretary, 20 January 1930.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia Farmers Association to Commissioner for Lands, 26.9.30.
74. LANDS BN 66/15 Commissioner of Lands to Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia Farmers Association, 14 October 1930.
75. LANDS BN 46/10 Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia District Council Settlement Committee to Commissioner for Lands 12 February 1932.
76. Ibid. Acting Commissioner for Lands to Honorary Secretary Trans Nzoia District Council, 24 February 1932.
77. LANDS BN 46/10 Honorary Secretary, Trans Nzoia District Council to Commissioner of Lands, 20 May 1932.
78. Legislative Council Debates 1936 (Government Printer, 1937), p. 245.
79. PC/RVP/ 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1946 p. 330.

80. Legislative Council Debates, 1939, col umn210;  
AG 4/1790.
81. LANDS BN 11/11 Resident Commissioner, Kitale to  
Commissioner of Lands, 25 July 1929.
82. Ibid, Coney to Commissioner for Lands, 17 June 1929.
83. Ibid, Extract from minutes of the Land Advisory Board  
16 August, 1929.
84. Ibid, acting Commissioner for Lands to Coney, 22  
August, 1929.
85. Ibid, DC. Kitale to W.A. Shaw, Advocate, Eldoret,  
13 January 1930.
86. Lands BN 15/2 acting Commissioner for Lands to acting  
Colonial Secretary, 9 August 1927. Thackwell to  
Commissioner for Lands, 15 March 1928.
87. Ibid, acting Commissioner for Lands to acting Attorney  
General; 9 August -927 .
88. Ibid., Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale, 3 July  
1930.
89. Ibid., Thackwell to Commissioner for Lands 17 July  
1930.
90. LANDS BN 15/2. Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale,  
2 April 1930.

91. Ibid., H.C. Kirk to D.C. Kitale
92. LANDS BN 15/5 Commissioner for Lands to Colonial Secretary, 17 February 1927.
93. Ibid., District Survey, Eldoret to Director of Surveys.  
or
94. LANDS BN 30/114 G. Hancock to Commissioner for Lands, 29 September 1923, Commissioner for Lands to Hancock, 4 January 1933.
95. LANDS BN 1/218 A.C. Hoey to Commissioner for Lands, 17 July 1934.
96. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank, 1936 p. 28.
97. LANDS BN 1/218 Commissioner of Lands to Hoey, 21 December 1934.
98. LANDS BN 1/221 Hoey's Bridge Sisal Syndicate to Commissioner of Lands, 16 July 1937.
99. Ibid., Commissioner of Lands to A.C. Hoey, 8 July 1937.
100. LANDS BN 41/111 H. Brian Bates to Land Office, Nairobi, 9 October 1937.
101. Ibid., Commissioner of Lands to H.B. Bates, 26 October 1937.

102. Ibid., H.B. Bates to Commissioner of Lands, 22 January 1938.
103. LANDS BN 41/111, Extract from minutes of the Crown Land Valuation Board, 29 March 1938.
104. Ibid., DC, Kitale to Commissioner for Lands, 16 August 1939.
105. Ibid., Minutes of the District Land Board 10-11 October, 1939.
106. Ibid., Report by W.A.C. Bouwer, 29 December 1939.
107. Ibid., Minutes of the District Land Board, 31 February, 1940.
108. LANDS BN 41/109 W.F.K. Morris to Commissioner for Lands, 1939.
109. Ibid. Clerk Supervisor, Trans Nzoia District Council to Commissioner for Lands, 4 July 1939.
110. Ibid., Commissioner of Lands to W.F.K. Morris, 17 October 1939.
111. LANDS BN 1/222 acting Commissioner for Lands to E. Holmboe, 2 February 1938.
112. LANDS BN 3/6 F.J. Buck to Land Office, 16 January 1939.
113. NCC: Minute book no 13: Executive Committee meeting 12 January 1938, p. 13.

114. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank,  
1936, p. 29.
115. NCC. Minute book no 13, Full council meeting,  
16 March 1938 p. 30 and Executive Committee  
meeting .25 March 1938, p. 33.
116. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank,  
1934 pp. 7 - 9.
117. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank,  
1938 p. 37.
118. Legislative Council Debates, 1938, col umn 112.
119. NCC: Minute book no 12: Full Council meeting,  
27 January 1937, p. 4.
120. LANDS BN 15/6 WaterKeyn to PC, Nakuru, 5 May 1935
121. Ibid., DC. West Pokot /: to Officer in charge of  
Turkana District, 16 September 1935; Commissioner  
for Lands to PC, Nakuru, 4 October 1935; acting  
PC, Nakuru to Commissioner for Lands, 29 October  
1936.
122. Ibid., WaterKeyn to PC, Nakuru 19 July 1936.
123. Ibid., WaterKeyn to PC Nakuru, 29 October 1936.
124. Ibid., acting Commissioner for Lands to Honorary  
Secretary, Land Advisory Board, Kitale 24 February  
1938.



125. LANDS BN 41/75 S.H. Powles to DC, Kitale, 7 January 1932.
126. Ibid., Kitale Township Committee, Minute 5
127. Ibid., Powles to DC, Kitale 10 February 1932
128. Ibid., DC, Kitale to Powles, 2 March 1932.
129. Ibid., acting Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale 29 March 1932.
130. LANDS BN 19/22 The Official Gazette, 22 June 1937, p. 143.
131. LANDS BN 19/22 DC? Kitale to acting PC, Nakuru, 22 July 1937.
132. Ibid., acting PC, Nakuru to Commissioner for Lands, 22 April 1938.
133. Ibid., DC, Kitale to acting PC Rift Valley, 26 October 1938.
134. PC/FvP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1935, p. 4.
135. Ibid., Annual Report, 1936, pp. 6-7.
136. Ibid., Annual Report, 1937, pp. 5-6.
137. PC/RUP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1936, p. 37
138. NCC: Minute book no. 9. Full Council meeting, 18 November, 1936, p. 139.

139. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1937, p. 9.  
In his report the PC noted that the German settlers in Trans Nzoia had refused to support the local Nazi leader, who was eventually sacked by his employer because of his political activities and forced to leave the district.
140. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1939, p. 10  
The scheme was enacted under the Compulsory Service Ordinance on 4 September 1939. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: Food Shortage Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1943) p. 11.
141. NCC: Minute book no. 14 Full Council meeting, 8 February 1939, p. 11.
142. Ibid., Full Council meeting, 20 December 1939, p. 69.
143. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1940, p. 3
144. Defence 9/16 Director of Agriculture to Chief Secretary, 26 July 1940.
145. Vaughan-Philpott interviewed by N.W. Fedha and K. Ward.
146. Defence 9/48 Trans Nzoia Manpower sub-committee, 8 November 1939.
147. Defence 9/16 Director of Agriculture to Chief Secretary, 26 July 1940.
148. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1941, p. 3

149. Legislative Council Debates, 1940 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1941) p. 156.
150. Food Shortage Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943, p. 22.
151. Legislative Council Debates, 1942, p. 43.
152. Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1945, pp. 1-2
153. Ibid., p. 19.
154. Ibid., pp. 38 - 39
155. A.M. Barberton interviewed by Kendall Ward, p. 12.
156. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1945, p. 40, R.E.T. Hobbs, who identified the continuation of careless farming methods, was a Senior Agricultural Officer. In 1946 he was elected Chairman of the Trans Nzoia Production Committee. See PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1946 p. 4.
157. Yields per acre did not raise significantly. Maize yields in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu averaged 8.5 and 5.3 bags per acre in 1942. Corresponding yields for 1945 were 7.1 and 5.6 bags/acre. Wheat yields in 1942 averaged 4.1 bags per acre in Trans Nzoia and 2.5 bags per acre in Uasin Gishu. In 1945 corresponding yields were 5.2 bags per acre and 4.5 bags per acre. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report 1945, pp. 38-39.

158. Defence 9/48 Chairman, Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee to Director of Manpower, 2 March 1943.
159. Ibid., Chairman of Trans Nzoia Production and Manpower Committee to C. Preddy of Kitale, 26 July, 1944.
160. Ibid., DC, Kitale to Deputy Director of Manpower 18 April 1940, pp. 7-8.
161. AGR 5/1/11 cutting from The East African Standard 21 February 1945p. 1. Following enactment of the Increased Production of Crops Ordinance, £ 204,000 in advances had been made to European farmers, at an interest rate of only four per cent.
162. Defence 9/16 DC. Uasin Gishu/ Trans Nzoia to acting PC Rift Valley, Chairman of Agricultural Production Board and Director of Manpower, 5 June 1946.
163. Ibid., DC, Uasin Gishu/Trans Nzoia to Deputy Chairman, Agricultural Production Board, Nairobi 6 June 1946.
164. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1946, p. 4.
165. AGR 5/1/11 Secretary, Agricultural Production Board to Chief Secretary, 26 June 1946.
166. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report 1943, p. 4.

CHAPTER FIVE

AFRICAN SQUATTERS AND MIGRANT LABOUR IN  
TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT 1920-1946

European Settlers and Farm Squatters

Reports by the Director of Agriculture in December 1910, the Land Ranger in March 1911 and the Principle Medical Officer in September 1912 described Trans Nzoia as an uninhabited area. The district was surveyed under this premise and emphasis on European political and economic interests became the cornerstone of administrative policy. In the wake of complaints over denial of Pokot land rights, Governor Henry Belfield, acting on the advice of the Provincial Commissioner for Naivasha, had in 1916 authorised their continued occupation and use of pasture in Northern Trans Nzoia. Surveyed but unalienated farms bordering the Pokot reserve were identified for this purpose but the pledge was repudiated by Governor Edward Northey in 1919, when the implementation of soldier settlement began.<sup>1</sup> Pokot grazing cattle on the farms were driven back into the reserve in November 1919.<sup>2</sup> Those remaining

in the district were regarded as farm squatters.

The district boundary was not clearly marked, many of the original beacons having been removed. In 1927 of the fifteen farms bordering Pokot, six were occupied by their owners, four had resident managers and six were unoccupied. Cattle owned by squatters grazed on unoccupied farms number 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038 and 2033 along the boundary and this became a bone of contention between the Pokot District Commissioner and his counterpart in Trans Nzoia. The former was unwilling to endorse curbs imposed on Pokot herdsmen utilising pasture over the boundary while squatters grazed their herds with impunity. This issue was taken up by the Senior Commissioner for Kerio Province who wanted the boundary rebeaconed and police action taken against squatters in Trans Nzoia using unalienated Crown Land as pasture.<sup>3</sup>

The Pokot continued to enter Trans Nzoia, using tracks that had existed prior to the 1913 survey of the district.<sup>4</sup> Most land in the vicinity was not suitable for arable farming and this had discouraged a number of Europeans, including one who abandoned farm LR 2112 R as waterless. This farm, which was a 310 acre triangular piece of land jutting into the reserve, was suggested as being

suitable for inclusion in Pokot by the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner. In response, the Provincial Commissioner for Turkana observed that the acute shortage of pasture in the reserve was compelling Pokot to cross the border into Karamoja and therefore any small addition of land was useful.<sup>5</sup>

European settlement had effectively limited the amount of pasture available to the Pokot and, in addition, salt licks used by them were now on alienated land.<sup>6</sup> In 1923 the provincial administration proposed that an additional 3700 acres be included in the reserve, returning some salt licks to the Pokot. This change was approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1924 but no alteration of administrative boundaries was made to conform with the amendment.<sup>7</sup> When proposals that 10,770 acres be added to the Pokot reserve were forwarded to the Kenya Land Commissioners they declined to endorse this boundary extension, declaring that the Pokot had failed to use land recently given to them because it was infected by livestock disease and was too high.<sup>8</sup>

The boundary remained unsatisfactory, with Pokot continuing to cross into Trans Nzoia.<sup>9</sup> European farmers in the vicinity considered these movements as tantamount to trespass. One settler, P.M.

Bretelle of Kapkoi estate, complained that a Pokot sub-headman, Porit, was illegally entering his farm, LR 2037 to water his cattle. Claiming that this would interfere with his cattle dipping schedule, he wanted the District Commissioner for West Suk to restrict Porit to the reserve.<sup>10</sup>

This boundary dispute is significant as an illustration of European relations with Africans in neighbouring reserves to whom white settlement often meant new constraints on access to land, water and other natural resources. Unlike North Nyanza, West Suk remained relatively unaffected by social and economic change under colonialism. Taxation remained the main lever of colonial rule and this was collected in the form of goats and sheep. Only severe drought in 1924 forced some young Pokot men to enter European wage employment to earn tax money and these remained a minority.<sup>11</sup> The main level of contact between them and the settlers, therefore, was in competition for natural resources.<sup>12</sup>

A similar situation prevailed in eastern Trans Nzoia where Cherangany had lost land to European settlement. The alienated farms included the strategic Kaptian salt lick in addition to large expanses of fertile agricultural land and settlers in the vicinity



were unwilling to cede any territory. The dispute came before the Kenya Land Commission, which dismissed the Cherangany land claims as groundless and recommended that only twelve square miles be added to the Marakwet reserve.<sup>13</sup>

Under these circumstances, squatting on alienated land was an attractive alternative and many Cherangany simply ignored warnings from government officers over the sanctity of private property under the European system of land tenure. Indeed, with the settlers holding large acreages of undeveloped farmland, squatters were often considered as a cheap, resident labour force and their presence was ignored. Nevertheless, the squatters were not protected under colonial law and were therefore, liable to ad hoc measures initiated by European farmers or government officers. During a routine tour of inspection through Cherangani, Trafford, an assistant District Commissioner, discovered two private farms inhabited by Nandi Squatters. This was not unusual but he was riled by the absence of a European occupier and duly alerted his District Commissioner. The D.C. wrote to the owner of both farms, A.C. Hoey, threatening eviction of the squatters unless a European manager was sent there. Hoey ignored this warning and in June 1925 ten

squatters were arrested on the farms and charged with trespass. Subsequently all of the squatters, numbering some fifty families with thirteen hundred cattle and fifteen hundred sheep and goats, were rounded up.<sup>14</sup>

The action involved asserting a modicum of colonial authority over the squatters. To this extent Trafford was enforcing the status quo by administrative means, as the Attorney General argued on his behalf.<sup>15</sup> Many attested squatters had been signed on under the 1918 Resident Labourers Ordinance and there was widespread confusion in European circles over the application of specific clauses in the recently enacted 1925 squatter ordinance. This particular issue had been raised by Coney in the Legislative Council in 1924, during debates on the bill.<sup>16</sup>

Popular sentiment was largely in favour of such administrative intervention as a method of regulating African movement in the district. A Trans Nzoia Farmers Association meeting convened in Kitale on 11 July 1925 expressed "sincere appreciation of the policy of Mr. Trafford and of his energetic action in dealing with stock thefts in the district."<sup>17</sup> Hoey was roundly condemned for allo-

wing squatters a free run of his farm. This criticism incensed him and he wrote a brusque letter to the Colonial Secretary, demanding an explanation for the squatters' eviction without his consent.<sup>18</sup> He raised this question of propriety with other farmers who, confronted with the issue of their own authority over Africans, hastily recanted the earlier views. Weller, president of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association, admitted that his members' prior position appeared "subsequently to have been based on false premises".<sup>19</sup> Confronted with these developments, the acting Attorney General apologised to Hoey "that inconvenience may have been caused to you and your squatters."<sup>20</sup>

On this particular occasion a European settler's interests coincided with those of African squatters, essentially because Hoey had felt picqued by unilateral Government action. More frequently, however, African interests were subordinated to the whims of European farmers and government officers on the spot. In October 1923 a fire gutted several buildings on Captain Hewitt's farm in south-western Trans Nzoia. Arson was suspected but evidence against four African suspects proved too flimsy to secure their conviction, even under punitive colonial law. The District Commis-

ioner subsequently recommended collective punishment of Bukusu squatters on the farm. The Bukusu were from the neighbouring reserve and apparently Hewitt had recruited them as resident labour.<sup>21</sup> This perfunctory arrangement exposed the squatters to drastic unilateral action, as was exemplified when a fine of 2800 shillings was promptly imposed on fifty-six of them. Governor Grigg, endorsing this measure, concluded that "the deliberate suppression of evidence by the squatters acting in combination on Captain Hewitt's farm was established."<sup>22</sup>

Lord Amery, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in concurrence felt "bound to accept the local view that it was necessary and equitable to apply the Ordinance."<sup>23</sup> The Colonial Secretary in Nairobi interpreted this as "covering sanction" and the fine was confirmed. Following the squatters' failure to raise the amount, forty-four head of their cattle were seized and auctioned for shs. 5885 shillings.<sup>24</sup>

Punitive intervention by government officers was rarely a method of last resort and was rapidly becoming normal practice in official circles. An incident involving a group of Nandi squatters on a block of four farms in Cherangani jointly owned by Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Hoey illustrates this.

The squatters were accused of colluding in stock theft, with cattle allegedly being stolen in the adjoining reserve and driven into Trans Nzoia. Following a formal enquiry, the assistant District Commissioner, Gillespie, imposed a collective fine of 8,640 shillings on the squatters. In the absence of conclusive evidence, this was apportioned on the basis of hut tax lists of Africans on the farms.<sup>25</sup>

The enquiry had been conducted cursorily and the acting Colonial Secretary, realising this, solicited the Attorney General's advice. He was duly informed that a new enquiry should be ordered.<sup>26</sup> Crampton, the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner believed this was unnecessary, but the case was reopened in Kitale on 22 January 1929. The magistrate's conclusions merely verified earlier findings and on the strength of this, the acting Governor notified the Secretary of State that the enquiry was properly conducted, and recommended sanction of the fine.<sup>27</sup>

Sydney Webb, Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Labour Government, did not challenge the principle of collective responsibility. He did, however, question the severity of the punishment, observing that "the imposition of a fine of Shs. 8640 would mean that each native implicated will

have to pay about £ 20."<sup>28</sup> Colonial officials in Nairobi did not go beyond appraising the legal technicalities involved.<sup>29</sup> When the Colonial Secretary eventually sought clarification from the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner over payment of the fine,<sup>30</sup> he was advised that the entire amount had been collected with only eight shillings outstanding.<sup>31</sup>

This action on the spot by government officers is revealing. The Nandi squatters involved were labourers on a sisal estate in neighbouring Uasin Gishu, who utilised adjacent vacant farmland as pasture.<sup>32</sup> Their presence, therefore, was not in contention. In the view of the district administration, however, farm squatters were primarily a reservoir of resident labour. Matters concerning their social and economic interests were subsumed under the notion of Pax Britannica, which presumed racial subordination.

The implication was that African administration in European districts was essentially a question of law enforcement, particularly where white farmers were involved. An Elgeyo Marakwet District Commissioner seemed to perceive this when he was provoked into protesting over unproven alle-

gations by Eldoret police that tribesmen from his district had stolen drought oxen from Snyman, a Uasin Gishu farmer. He saw no reason for arbitrary punishment.<sup>33</sup> The population of Africans in settled districts had soared as European farms continued to attract squatters in search of pasture and land for cultivation. The settlers, dependent upon them for seasonal labour and sometimes also taking African livestock and produce in lieu of land rent, were unable to exert control. It had become increasingly difficult for government officers, under conditions where European and African livestock, for example, were grazing virtually together. The squatters were often suspected of stock theft and this provided a justification for sporadic forays by European officials.

A Nandi District Commissioner defended such forays when he recommended an intensive search for stolen livestock among squatter herds in the district, asserting that similar searches in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia had proven to be highly effective.<sup>34</sup> In his view:

One of the principle objections to squatters is that it is economically unsound that able bodied natives should only be worth a wage of shs. 6/- or shs. 8/- per month, such is the pre-

vailing rate for squatters, they are undoubtedly worth more, it therefore, follows they are receiving payment in kind for grazing rights, which is contrary to a specific section in the [1925 Resident Labour] Ordinance.<sup>35</sup>

The problem was a consequence of European farming. According to an old Trans Nzoia settler, "even in those early days ( I am talking of 1919 onwards) we all had mostly native cattle".<sup>36</sup> A similar situation existed in neighbouring Uasin Gishu and by 1924 the veterinary department was trying to curb a series of rinderpest outbreaks in both districts by conducting an inoculation campaign. These precautions proved inadequate and O'Shea, Legislative Council Member for Plateau South called for the appointment of an investigating committee.<sup>37</sup> The committee was subsequently appointed. It reported that the rinderpest epidemic was caused by the increasing influx of susceptible cattle from African reserves.<sup>38</sup> Quarantines were imposed, but these had already proven unpopular because they discouraged squatters. On 12 May 1923 a general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association had demanded the reopening of Kamukuywa cattle boma on the Bukusu reserve boundary, following its prolonged



closure by the Chief Veterinary Officer.<sup>39</sup> The same meeting had also agreed that opening up the Marakwet reserve would enable settlers to buy cattle and procure labour.<sup>40</sup> Innoculation remained the main method of disease control, therefore. During November and December, 1928, for example, 50,000 cattle were inoculated in Trans Nzoia.<sup>41</sup> The cattle population continued to soar and in 1934 there were an estimated 40,000 squatter cattle in Trans Nzoia and 100,000 squatter cattle in Uasin Gishu.<sup>42</sup>

The Convention of Association's Labour Committee acknowledged the importance of squatters as a cheap seasonal labour supply for farmers in sparsely settled areas like Kericho, Sotik and Turbo.<sup>43</sup> In Trans Nzoia they remained the main labour source. The Trans Nzoia District Council tacitly accepted this fact when it recommended that squatter wages be stabilised at a minimum of five shillings per month, during a period of economic depression.<sup>44</sup> There was a growing body of opinion among the district political leadership, however, that numbers of squatter livestock be reduced and harsher employment terms be introduced. Rear Admiral Crampton, a councillor representing Cherangani, where squatt-  
ing was commonplace, was a staunch advocate of such

restrictions. The Trans Nzoia District Council and Trans Nzoia Farmers Association drafted regulations to this effect.<sup>45</sup> but implementation was an entirely different proposition. This problem was confirmed when the District Commissioner reported that while about 8000 cattle had been removed in 1934, the net reduction was minimal. Councillors blamed this on "the natural increase of squatter cattle" and an ongoing influx of livestock from the North Kavirondo reserve.<sup>46</sup>

Farmers in the district and elsewhere were not used to the squatter system and retained a vested interest in its continuation.<sup>47</sup> This applied particularly to the more marginal settlers, to who squatting permitted high returns on a minimal outlay. Fenton was one such farmer and in 1935 he applied for permission to increase his squatter livestock up to 250 head for purposes of manuring his coffee.<sup>48</sup> The prevalence of such attitudes militated against any drastic reduction of squatter-owned cattle, as a councillor representing Naitiri ward, Major Jack, implicitly recognised. He suggested that each family be allowed only fifteen cattle.<sup>49</sup> By 1935 it was optimistically claimed that there was "a greater number of labour units to a smaller number of stock"<sup>50</sup> but this is debatable. Livestock redu-

ctions were difficult to enforce and a number of settlers continued to solicit more squatters. One of these, a Hoey's Bridge farmer called Major Hill, applied to the Trans Nzoia District Council for permission to bring fifteen more squatters into the district. His application was rejected.<sup>51</sup>

At a time when arable European farming in the Highlands was undergoing an economic crisis because of the fall in prices of staple crops like maize and coffee,<sup>52</sup> squatting remained entrenched as an integral part of the settler economy.<sup>53</sup> In 1937, Trans Nzoia District Council appointed a sub-committee to liaise with the Trans Nzoia District Association over squatter policy. Previous measures had been ineffective. The settlers continued to draw heavily on the labour of squatter men, women and children and livestock restrictions often affected the labour supply. This was particularly evident in Cherangani where Pokot and Marakwet labour was in short supply during the 1936-1937 season.<sup>54</sup> In 1937, 1500 unbranded squatter cattle were rounded up in Cherangani and fines of two shillings per head were imposed on the settlers concerned. The cattle were mostly stock brought onto farms by settlers anxious to attract more squatters, in contravention of the 1925 Resident Labour Ordinance.<sup>55</sup>

Continued European dependence on squatter labour was deplored during a settlers' meeting in Nakuru. The participants wanted drastic reductions in numbers of livestock, with Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia being cited as districts where such measures were urgently required.<sup>56</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by the executive committee of Trans Nzoia District Council, which resolved that the District Commissioner should evict all squatters from Crown land and unoccupied private farms.<sup>57</sup> The Council also recommended enforcement of Maize Inspection (European Areas) rules to curb illicit marketing of squatter grown maize.<sup>58</sup> Payment in kind for access to land was not an isolated practice, as the Rift Valley Provincial Commissioner insinuated when he endorsed Trans Nzoia settlers' procurement of free manure from farm squatters.<sup>59</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 interrupted the debate - but in 1941 Trans Nzoia District Council renewed its efforts to reduce the number of squatter livestock by drafting regulations to this effect.<sup>60</sup> This remained a controversial issue among those farmers not away on military service, with the order eventually being approved in 1942 "after considerable differences of opinion".<sup>61</sup> The order, enacted under section twenty one of the 1937

Resident Labourers Ordinance, was specifically intended to restrict squatter access to land. A maximum of two acres was stipulated for subsistence cultivation and each family was limited to keeping ten cattle and five sheep. A minimum of 240 days labour was to be rendered annually and contracts were valid for three years.<sup>62</sup> In 1943 an enactment prohibited squatters from selling maize to anyone besides the settlers,<sup>63</sup> thus outlawing an informal market in which African producers obtained higher prices.<sup>64</sup>

An informed observer noted "a tendency... for those in authority to look with disfavour on squatters." In his opinion, however, any drastic reduction of squatter livestock would affect agricultural production and "hit some farmers badly."<sup>65</sup> Views of this sort did not deter the district administration and by 1946, both the Trans Nzoia District Council and its Uasin Gishu counterpart had passed legislation to eliminate squatter cattle completely. One contemporary explanation for this decisive step was that "the farmers are convinced that the presence of cattle eventually will give the resident labourer a right a moral if not a legal one, to the land he grazes." The expressed intention was to replace "the pastoral labourer with the cottage labourer."<sup>66</sup>

### Forest Squatters

The European occupation of Trans Nzoia district disrupted the economies of those communities inhabiting the area from the precolonial period. The Konyi of Eastern Trans Nzoia, in particular, were forced off farmland, retreating up the slopes of Mount Elgon or into North Kavirondo and Uganda. The colonial government regarded them as forest squatters and their habitat soon attracted European attention. Initial attempts to curb Sabaot movement in the vicinity of Mount Elgon, between Lwakhakha and Suam, had started by 1925. To one European administrator they appeared "a useless and lazy lot"<sup>67</sup> and such contempt conditioned action taken against them. The Konyi, who were the largest Sabaot community in Trans Nzoia, had been pushed from Mount Elgon towards the South West by police from Kitale in 1923.<sup>68</sup> This eviction was unwarranted, as the Assistant D.C. for North Kavirondo suggested when he argued:

These people cause no trouble whatever, pay their taxes regularly through Headman Tandeti, are rarely seen, and no allegations from outside have been made against them to the District Commissioner, Kakamega, either officially or otherwise.

They are regarded as having an absolutely prescriptive right to the territory they inhabit.

The Assistant DC revealed that the Forest Department considered the Konyi a menace because they allegedly stole cattle from European farms and burnt forest cover while collecting honey or clearing land for grazing. He observed that the Trans Nzoia District Commissioner, Kitale Police, forestry officers and local settlers all wanted to push them out of their habitat near the Kisawai river into North Kavirondo.<sup>69</sup> These views were corroborated by the acting Chief Native Commissioner, who noted that settlers in the Legislative Council wanted the area included within the boundaries of Trans Nzoia.<sup>70</sup> Farmers in the vicinity were already exploiting timber stands in the forest, after being granted lucrative concessions. They included Brigadier-General Baker-Carr and Mr. Tweedie, both of whom farmed near Suam, and the De la Harpe family of Saboti.<sup>71</sup> European demands were acceded to and a new boundary was demarcated between the North Kavirondo reserve and the Southern edge of Mount Elgon forest.<sup>72</sup>

The Konyi were not intimidated and began returning to the forest reserve by 1927, where they

were subjected to another raid by police from Kitale. Nine owners of cattle, sheep and goats were charged with offences under the Forest Ordinance and Diseases of Animals Rules with heavy fines being recommended.<sup>73</sup> They were among a group of squatters on the Sabotĩ farm of De la Harpe and were probably attracted by the lush pasture on the moorland above. Eventually, sixty of their cattle were served and auctioned in Kitale to a European farmer.<sup>74</sup> A subsequent meeting of the Trans Nzoia District Committee resolved that the area excised from the forest reserve "should be surveyed and then thrown open for alienation as soon as possible."<sup>75</sup> Confronted with this potential threat to the sanctity of its domain, the Forest Department termed the resolution "ignorant" and vowed to oppose further land alienation.<sup>76</sup>

An officer from the Department, citing specific reasons for this position, emphasised that the land in question was "unfit for any agricultural purpose other than grazing".<sup>77</sup> In a colonial situation characterised by conflicting racial interests,<sup>78</sup> such reasoning failed to discourage the determined settlers. One exasperated forestry officer discovered this when he attended a Trans Nzoia District Council meeting. The councillors gave him a brief hearing before one of them launched



into a tirade over "the iniquity of allowing land to go back from White Settlement to Native Reserve." The meeting hastily resolved that the land in question revert to forest reserve only if an equal area was alienated to the district elsewhere. The officer saw no reason for Government to be influenced by such resolutions and proposed that if the land was not gazetted as Forest Reserve it should remain unalienated Crown land, instead of being sold as farmland.<sup>79</sup>

When the dispute came before the Kenya Land Commission, its findings emphasised European settler opinion. Dismissing the Sabaot precolonial presence in Trans Nzoia as myth, the Commissioners intoned that, "in view of all the circumstances, we do not consider that any claim to land beyond the mountain region need be considered."<sup>80</sup> They then remarked that:

The Policy of the administration is to move the El Gonyi off the farms where they are an embarrassment to the European settlers and to the Government, and where it is clearly not in their own interests that they should be permitted to remain.

The Commission recommended "that the policy of the administration of moving the [Konyi] from

alienated farms should be continued ..."<sup>81</sup> The Commissioner for Lands accurately deduced this as approval of the eviction measures and suggested that compensation be paid.<sup>82</sup> This was opposed by the Kitale District Commissioner,<sup>83</sup> who was supported by his Provincial Commissioner. The latter did admit, however, that the Konyi were unhappy with the evictions, recalling:

I interviewed Headman Arap Kassis and several of his people last week, and they are most concerned with the provision of arable land suitable for cultivation. The moorlands on Mount Elgon - which are suitable for grazing will undoubtedly be too high to provide suitable land.<sup>84</sup>

The settlers resolved that no moorland be reserved for the Konyi.<sup>85</sup> Their concern evidently did not go beyond removing the squatters from the district. Those remaining in Trans Nzoia were attested under stiff squatter contracts. In 1934 the District Commissioner estimated their number to be 2014, with 7570 cattle and 2117 sheep. Those on the moorlands were estimated by the Forest Department to be 608, with 5,345 cattle and 1,764 sheep.<sup>86</sup> The accuracy of these figures is unveri-

fiable but they do provide an idea of the numbers involved. A victim of this incident recalls:

We were driven away because the Europeans said that the land had become theirs and that the cattle we were keeping could not produce enough milk and they were not of the special type they wanted. So we were driven away to the reserves.<sup>87</sup>

European settlement had meant economic dislocation for the Konyi, whose mixed pastoral and agricultural mode of production was constricted by denial of access to the best land. Like the Nandi of the KipKarren salient, who lost 45,000 acres to Soldier-Settlement,<sup>88</sup> land remained the basis of their grievances long after eviction.

Wage Labour

Squatters were the main source of farm labour in Trans Nzoia district, but over the years, a growing number of men from reserves and other European farming districts were arriving in search of wage employment. By 1927, there was a daily group of job seekers outside the DC's office in Kitale awaiting registration, during peak periods.<sup>89</sup> Zacharia Gicheru was among the early wage labourers. Born in Kiambu before 1914, he was later orphaned and according to him, "I came to the European farms in order to eat." Gicheru first worked on a Londiani farm and entered Trans Nzoia in 1930, when he was hired by a Saboti farmer called Anderson. In 1937 he moved to a farm near Centre Kwanza, before moving on to work for another settler near Sandum's Bridge.<sup>90</sup>

Cosmas Sifuna's experience illustrates some of the vagaries of wage labour. Arriving on Major Jack's farm in South - Western Trans Nzoia in 1930, he was initially deployed as a mshika kamba (rope holder), guiding a team of plough oxen along the furrows. His other duties included collecting maize stalks for burning. During the planting season, he and others walked along a line measured by rope, digging holes. Women and children followed behind, dropping in maize seed. Labourers turned out early, with ploughing starting at the crack of dawn.

Other work like clearing, planting and weeding started at 7 am, with the nyapara (overseer) allocating tasks. The usual signing off time was 3 p.m.

Wages were low, averaging between six and eight shillings per month for adults, with children being paid one or two shillings. The basic diet was invariably posho (maizemeal) and salt. Unlike squatters who were often allocated land along river banks, downhill from a European's compound, wage labourers occupied bachelor quarters constructed close together in lines.

Sifuna returned to the Bukusu reserve in 1932, at the height of the Depression, when employment opportunities were scarce. He re-entered Trans Nzoia in 1934 to work for a European near Kiminini, before migrating to Namanjalala to work for Vaughan-Philpott in 1936. In later years he was a sisal cutter on the farm of a settler called Moss, near Hoey's Bridge (now Moi's Bridge).<sup>91</sup>

This transient way of life seems to have characterised seasonal wage labour. Many young bachelors were forced to brave the hazards of farm labour by a heavy poll tax burden, compulsion by colonial headmen in reserves or sheer financial hardship. There were few alternatives for young men without land or cattle. Economic pressure was probably the major incentive, rather than wanderlust. During the Depression, taxation in particular, became

very oppressive in African reserves. Archdeacon Burns had raised this issue in the Legislative Council, claiming that in Central Kenya a sack of maize was being sold for one shilling and a goat for about the same amount, during tax collection.<sup>92</sup> In 1937, because of a surplus of unemployed men, the Trans Nzoia District Council advised the District Commissioner that there were no employment opportunities for Kipsigis in the district.<sup>93</sup> The African population was now estimated at 31,074, including an increasing percentage of ethnic groups from distant reserves like the Kikuyu, Luo and Kipsigis, who were mainly wage labourers.<sup>94</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 marked a transition for farm labour in the White Highlands. Increased agricultural production became an official priority. In 1940, for example, between 5000 and 6000 acres of flax was planted in Trans Nzoia.<sup>95</sup> Later that year the Nanyuki Farmers Association demanded labour conscription for civil purposes. In August, 1941, the Settlement and Production Board expressed concern over the labour position. Two months later the Kenya Farmers' Association called a meeting in Nakuru to protest over Government inaction. At the Association's annual general meeting, held in Kitale in December, 1941, members voted unanimously for civil conscription. This gesture had already been superceded by events,

however, since Governor Moore had secured Colonial Office approval for the introduction of agricultural labour conscription.<sup>96</sup>

Labour deployment was already an important function of the Trans Nzoia District Council, which sponsored an Assisted Recruitment Scheme.<sup>97</sup> Three hundred men were recruited for retting flax in 1941, for example.<sup>98</sup> Following termination of this scheme, colonywide labour conscription was introduced under the Defence (African Labour for Essential Undertakings) Regulations. Implementation of these measures in Trans Nzoia involved "the lively cooperation of the District Commissioner, North Kavirondo."<sup>99</sup> Low wages and difficult working conditions caused sporadic strikes and widespread desertions during the year.<sup>100</sup>

Under the Defence Regulations, European farmers submitted requests for conscripts to the District Labour Committee. Approved applications were sent to the Provincial Commissioner, who forwarded them to African district selection committees in various areas. This system was enforced throughout the highlands.<sup>101</sup> Kibukuna Matere, who was conscripted near Kamukuywa in 1942, was later deployed in Nakuru.<sup>102</sup> According to another informant, Jacob Masinde Matere, "when the war started they seized people. Some went off on forced labour for the Government, others went to KAR (Kings African Rifles) and the rest went

to the farms."<sup>103</sup> Conscription camps were established in Kitale and Nakuru.<sup>104</sup> The settlers enforced minimum wage rates, which averaged eight or nine shillings per month by 1946. Farm strikes were rife.<sup>105</sup>

Labour conscription ceased by Government Order on 31 December 1945, but Trans Nzoia settlers were allowed to retain men whose contracts had not been completed.

Subsequently, Minchin, the commandant of Kitale Labour Conscript Camp, announced that 250 conscripts would be available for the next planting season, with 90 going to Eldoret and 150 being retained in Trans Nzoia.

European settlers and Government officers attending a joint meeting of the Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia district production committees in Eldoret, decided that conscripts be allotted to sub-committees. Each sub-committee would be responsible for allocation and movement of labour between farms and no labourer would be returned to camp before completion of his work tickets.<sup>106</sup>

The official wartime policy of compulsory labour recruitment, therefore, had led to a rapid expansion of the wage labour force in Trans Nzoia. Unlike previous years, large numbers of men were being seasonally deployed simultaneously, with the result that squatters had ceased to be the main source of agricultural manpower within the district.<sup>107</sup> These developments reflected changing labour



relations in an expanding European agricultural sector.

Social and economic conditions of African Farm Labour

A general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers Association was held in Kitale on December 10-11, 1921 and the effect of wage reduction on African labour was avidly discussed. One farmer, Elmer, proposed that a letter be written to the Chief Secretary, requesting a rebate on hut tax for Africans in European employment ranging from 12½% for three months work to 50% per cent for twelve months work. Furthermore the hut tax on ethnic groups which were major sources of labour and tax on non-labour providing peoples should be equalised. The resolution was passed unanimously. Elmer then proposed that a Select Committee be appointed to examine the effects of a scheme adopted the previous June for reducing wages, with any changes being based on a maximum signing on rate for unskilled labour of three shillings per month. The committee would also standardise a number of tickets covering all farm tasks, to ensure that hard workers earned more. After this resolution was carried with only one dissenter, Elmer proposed that a maximum wage be set for skilled labour and this was carried nem con. A labour committee was appointed, including Brigadier-General Baker Carr, Lt. Colonel Kirkwood, Messrs Manley, Taylor, Scally, Elmer, Hallowes, Tyack Eckhlin, Sharp, Hewitt, Brown and Kruger. 108

The Committee submitted its report to a general meeting of the association held in Kitale on 17 March 1922. and the following monthly rates were adopted:<sup>109</sup>

Category	Maximum Signing on rate	Maximum wage
Unskilled labour	Shs. 6/-	Shs. 10/-
Children	Shs. 4/-	-
Ox-drivers	Shs. 24/-	Shs. 30/-
Plough boys	Shs. 8/-	Shs. 12-
Headmen	Shs. 30/-	Shs. 40/-
Gangers	Shs. 8/-	Shs. 12/-
Women	Shs. 4/-	-
Squatters	-	Shs. 6/- with <u>posho</u>

Enforcing low wages throughout the district was a priority for many farmers. A general meeting of the Trans Nzoia Farmers' Association convened in Kitale on 6 June 1923 deplored violations of wage guidelines and resolved that the collective agreement must be upheld. The associations honorary secretary was instructed to contact a Kitale contractor who had raised wages to attract more labour, demanding that he conform to the stipulated maximum rate.<sup>110</sup>

The settlers refused to accept that poor pay was a major disincentive. They attributed intermittent labour shortages to African indolence and Government reluctance to resort to compulsion. Tebbitt, who farmed on Chebusan estate near Kitale, was an outspoken advocate of forced labour. Claiming that labour shortages were a consequence of rapidly expanding European agriculture, he argued that Africans were unwilling to work "unless one is willing to turn half one's holding into Native reserve and have a few squatters who will deign to work for 180 days each year." In his view, increased pay meant fewer months worked.<sup>111</sup> Condemning attempts "by those who favour the West Coast Policy to impose 'Dual Policy' at the settlers expense, he remained adamant that European interests were paramount.<sup>112</sup> A similar argument was pursued by another local farmer, Napier, who asserted that there were over 400 000 idle Africans available for farm labour. Alleging that Africans in Trans Nzoia could easily pay tax and meet living expenses for a whole year by selling two sheep and two broods of chicken per family, he proposed the introduction of vagrancy laws on the English model.<sup>113</sup>

European farmers justified harsh labour conditions in absurd ways. One Kitale settler dismissed allegations about the poor diet of African workers by referring to a Professor Drummond who believed that vitamin C was manufactured in the body by exposure to ultra-violet rays, regardless of the diet. In this settler's opinion, a naked African was exposed to sunlight, which converted posho and wild ants into vitamin C. Clothing or decent housing blocked the sun rays, making an African a "sour belly".<sup>114</sup> Le Breton, who farmed near Soy in Uasin Gishu district, asserted that including meat in the diet encouraged "sleep and lethargy." Explaining that this was the reason for most settlers issuing meat only on Saturday so that Sunday could "be spent in sleeping off the after effects," he claimed that housing Africans in permanent dwellings was unnecessary.<sup>115</sup>

The racial outlook of these Europeans was characteristic of this period. Governor Edward Grigg articulated these premises during a speech at Falmouth in England, when he asserted:

In the settler there you have one world and in the natives you have another world. The native in his own Reserve is living under his tribal organization, only guided by the offices of our Government. There is an entirely primitive world, living side by side with the civilization which our own people have already planted.<sup>116</sup>

Incidents of European brutality were not exceptional. One particularly gruesome case involved the severe beating of a five Africans by a European woman and her African employees in 1937. One victim died soon afterwards. The survivors were locked up in a maize store for the night and walked seventeen miles to Kitale hospital the following day.<sup>117</sup> Such cruelty usually earned derisory penalties. When a settler called Macdonald shot an African house servant dead with five bullets at point blank range during an alleged burglary attempt at Bellerine estate on the night of 4 April 1943, the Kitale District Commissioner refused to hold an inquest, demanding that Macdonald be charged for manslaughter. Following a routine inquest, Rudd, the Eldoret resident magistrate, nonchalantly ruled that the killing was justifiable homicide.<sup>118</sup> Whipping remained common place on particular farms, and in the opinion of Major Keyser, Member of Legislative Council for Trans Nzoia in 1945:

If flogging is considered degrading and is considered degrading by the person who is flogged, then I advocate it wholeheartedly, because imprisonment to many natives is not a deterrent as it carries no social stigma with it, whereas with a civilised person it carries a stigma with it all his life.<sup>119</sup>

Some settlers were neither brutal nor blatantly racist, adopting a paternalist approach in their relations with Africans. During a period when labourers sometimes took up to three months to complete a thirty day ticket, an employer's conscience was influential. The Trans Nzoia District Councillors once related this particular factor to the problem of sporadic labour shortages and concluded that because some farmers enjoyed a labour surplus while others experienced a shortage, the issue involved "the personality of the employer."<sup>120</sup> One fairly liberal farmer was Colonel H.F. Stoneham. He had bought an 1800 acres of land in Cherangani under the 1919 soldier settlement scheme,<sup>121</sup> resigning his army commission in 1925 to take up farming.<sup>122</sup> On occupying the farm, Stoneham decided to recruit Luo labour, having commanded Luo troops during an earlier tour of duty in East Africa. He initially hired a Luo from Gem called Odera, in 1925.<sup>123</sup> In February of the following year Odera brought another Luo from Gem called Apiyo Ombogo.<sup>124</sup> More Luo soon followed. Among these later arrivals was Leonard Ochieng, who arrived from Siaya in 1934 and was hired by Stoneham at the rate of five shillings per month.<sup>125</sup>

In 1926 Stoneham started evening classes for his labourers and Istaare Central School became the first formal African school in Trans Nzoia. He also established a dressing station which was maintained until an African

hospital was opened in Kitale . Such innovations made him a popular employer and his labour force grew rapidly from about fifty to one hundred and fifty.<sup>126</sup>

Stoneham's benevolence was unusual and reflected a sensitive nature, which steered him towards unusual pastimes. Besides farming he was a keen amateur ornithologist and started a small natural history museum in his house.<sup>127</sup> More often, racial relations were characterized by mutual animosity and the African response to European belligerence was often hostile. Arson was one way of exacting revenge against an unpopular employer. When Captain C.C. Johnstone lost 900 bags of maize and agricultural implements in a fire on his farm near Kitale, suspicion was directed towards discontented Bukusu coffee pickers. Rear-Admiral Crampton also lost his maize cribs in a fire on his Cherangani farm.<sup>128</sup> Covert resistance was frequently resorted to because of the risks involved in openly defying Europeans enjoying unquestioned authority. Labour overseers employed by settlers often hailed from <sup>a</sup> different ethnic group from most of the farm labour to minimise chances of active collaboration. This was exemplified on Mr. Hunter's farm on the slopes of Mount Elgon, where Zachayo Nyongesa Sindu and other Bukusu worked under the close supervision of a menacing Wanga overseer. Occasionally, a sympathetic overseer could ease the workload by ignoring idlers, as

was once the case on Mr. Moore's farm near Hoey's Bridge.<sup>129</sup>

In a situation where Africans were increasingly able to identify common grievances, especially concerning wages and working conditions, collective action could result. By 1937 the desertion rate was soaring<sup>130</sup> and the Trans Nzoia District Association published a list of tasks which labourers could perform.<sup>131</sup> The problem worsened as more wage labourers entered the district and during 1941 there were sporadic farm strikes and widespread desertions.<sup>132</sup>

There were <sup>isolated</sup> / incidents of assault on European employers. This was the case when Colonel Cunningham, an Endebess farmer, was attacked on the night of 15 August 1938. He had earlier sacked a Mugishu worker called Yafes, confiscating the latter's maize plot. Yafes was subsequently employed by a neighbouring settler called Heape. He evidently bore a grudge towards his former employer, however, deciding to steal some money in compensation for his lost maize. In the ensuing commotion Cunningham was seriously injured.<sup>133</sup> Cunningham had reduced the wages and cut the ticket of another suspect, Masobo, during the preceding week.<sup>134</sup> In the Africans' view, Cunningham would probably not deserve the investigating officer's description of his being "a good master and just." In the event Yafes was sentenced to 7½ years with hard



labour and his alleged accomplice was jailed for fifteen  
fifteen months.<sup>135</sup> As a former policeman Yates was probably  
under no illusions as to the possible consequences of  
his actions. Moreover, Hargreaves had appointed him an  
overseer, which involved considerable trust on an employer's  
part. The incident involving Cunningham was probably a  
calculated act of vengeance rather than just a bungled  
burglary.

The colonial judicial system was an important  
institution of racial domination. As the African population  
in Trans Nzoia increased, the colonial administration  
was confronted with the problem of routinely enforcing  
law and order over various ethnic communities. The Trans  
Nzoia Central Native Tribunal was formally established  
on 9 September 1933 by the acting Native Commissioner.  
Subject to supervision by the District Commissioner, it had no  
criminal jurisdiction, covering<sup>only</sup> civil cases involving  
amounts not exceeding shs. 2000. President of the  
tribunal was paid five shillings per sitting and each  
member received three shillings per sitting. They sat  
in Kitale on Sundays and<sup>were</sup> drawn from the main ethnic groups  
in the district.<sup>136</sup>

Criminal jurisdiction remained with European courts  
and the Native Tribunal functioned as a de facto tool of  
social catharsis with virtually no real power. African  
crime was regarded as inevitable and, therefore, an  
administrative problem. During 1940, for example, the

"the great volume of petty criminal cases" were cleared with the help of bi-monthly visits by the Eldoret Resident Magistrate and weekly visits by the Kapenguria District Officer.<sup>137</sup> Decisions of these courts were informed by the belief that justice was racially defined, with Africans being on the lower scale of humanity.<sup>138</sup>

The expansion of European settlement in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu districts had resulted in an increase in chest ailments among farm workers.<sup>139</sup> Settler disinterest in the welfare of their employees was paralleled by the callousness of Uasin Gishu railway contractors. By 1922, an annual death rate of 83 per 1000 was being experienced in the construction camps, prompting the Secretary of State for the Colonies to order an enquiry into labour conditions.<sup>140</sup> Labour lines on Trans Nzoia farms were remarkably insanitary in 1926. No African hospital existed in the district. In the absence of adequate treatment, malaria was common and venereal disease was rampant.<sup>141</sup>

Cannolly, Medical Officer of Health, appraising the question of poor housing in the African Location of Kitale, felt that in the absence of security of tenure, few Africans would invest in building better houses.<sup>142</sup> Conditions continued to worsen as the township population increased. Housing provided by private employers in the location was described as being "extremely bad"<sup>143</sup>

and government dwellings were considered "disgraceful"<sup>144</sup> The Kitale Township Committee had solicited the Government for money to develop an African housing scheme. In response, the acting Commissioner for Lands observed that employers were responsible for providing decent housing and if they preferred renting accommodation it was the township committee's responsibility to provide this.<sup>145</sup> The matter remained unresolved, with housing sanitation and medical facilities remaining deplorable. Even Kirkwood was compelled to admit in the Legislative Council that "the conditions obtaining at that native hospital in Kitale are a disgrace to the Colony."<sup>146</sup> Following the outbreak of war and an influx of labour conscripts and soldiers, the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhoea in Kitale rose rapidly and African elders called for the establishment of a venereal disease clinic. Eventually a room was rented from a local businessman, Sheikh Abdul Rehman bin Mohamed, by the Officer Commanding 97 Pioneer Corps, which was then based in Kitale.<sup>147</sup>

Squatter families cultivated subsistence crops like maize, sweet potatoes, sugar-cane millet and beans, besides keeping cattle. They were usually not economically dependent upon European employers. Wage labourers, in contrast, were men who relied on their employers to provide food and shelter, besides a wage. Consequently, they

were more frequently exposed to social and economic hardship which they could not mitigate. This distinction blurred over time as squatters were subjected to more restrictions.<sup>148</sup> It can be argued, however, that wage labourers bore the brunt of the farm labour system to a significant extent. Following a maize shortage in the Colony for example, the Defence (Employers maize Ration) Regulations, enacted on 5 February 1943<sup>149</sup> reduced maize rations to 1½ lb. per day and this was promptly implemented in Trans Nzoia. The 2 lb. ration was eventually restored in the district in October.<sup>150</sup>

The rate of desertions remained high, with farmers trying to "lock up" labour on short term contracts. During the war years conscripts were often sent to farms around the district for three or four months, during weeding and harvesting periods and then detained in Kitale labour camp until they were required again.<sup>151</sup> In effect, labourers were unable to complete their work tickets within the stipulated period because of settler connivance with government labour officers.

Over the years African labour had worked under difficult conditions. Significantly, it was among the Bukusu squatters, who had experienced a marked economic decline under colonialism, that initial signs of overt political organization were to be found. The implementation

of a postwar European settlement scheme along the Kamukuywa river was, in particular, bitterly resented. Under the auspices of the Bukusu Union, they continued to lay claim to alienated land adjoining the Bukusu reserve,<sup>152</sup> and Dini ya Msambwa drew many adherents from among Africans who had experienced settler domination in Trans Nzoia district.<sup>153</sup>

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. DC/West Pokot 1/7/17 Special Commissioner/ acting Commissioner for Lands to Secretary, Royal Commission to East Africa, 1 May 1954 pp. 1-2. See also J. Barber Imperial Frontier: A Study of Relations between the British and the Pastoral Tribes of North East Uganda (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), pp. 164-165.
2. PC/RVP 2/5/1 Annual Report 1920, p. 5.
3. DC/West Pokot 1/7/17 DC West Suk to Senior Commissioner, Kerio Province, 6 May 1927, Senior Commissioner, Kerio Province to Chief Native Commissioner, Nairobi, 13 May 1927.
4. Ibid., DC/West Suk to Surveyor General, Nairobi 21 April 1931, Surveyor General to DC, West Suk, 27 April 1931.
5. Ibid., DC, Kitale to DC West Suk 23 May 1931, DC, West Suk to PC Turkana, 21 January 1932, pp. 1-2, PC, Turkana to Chief Native Commissioner, 11 February 1932 pp. 1-2.
6. Another new problem the Pokot had to confront was East Coast Fever, which caused heavy losses in the hitherto clean southern portion of Pokot District. The infection spread from European farms in Trans Nzoia. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1921 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1922), p. 50.

7. DC/West Pokot 1/7/17 Special Commissioner/  
acting Commissioner for Lands to Secretary,  
Royal Commission to East Africa, 1 May 1954.
8. Report of the Kenya Land Commission 1934  
(London: HMSO, 1934) p. 245.
9. DC/West Pokot 1/7/17 DC, West Suk to PC,  
Rift Valley, 28 October 1943.
10. Ibid., P.M. Brettelle to DC, West Suk, 8  
September 1939, DC, West Suk to Brettelle, 27  
September 1939.
11. K.D. Patterson, "The Pokot of Western Kenya  
1910-1963: The Response of a Conservative  
People to Colonial Rule" (Occasional Paper,  
November 1969, Syracuse University).
12. DC/West Pokot 1/7/17 Executive Officer,  
Trans Nzoia District Council to Major A.G.  
Keyser, 10 December 1948. The letter  
concerns a resolution passed by farmers from  
the North East ward on 9 December 1948. They  
wanted the boundary fenced, ostensibly to  
prevent Pokot livestock from infecting their  
grade cattle with foot and mouth disease and  
other contagious livestock vectors.
13. Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 1934,  
p. 268.
14. AG 4/1237 Trafford to Colonial Secretary 31  
July 1925.

15. Ibid., Attorney General to acting Colonial Secretary, 4 September 1925.
16. Legislative Council Debates 1924, Vol. II, p.63.
17. AG 4/1559 acting Governor, forwarded by the acting Colonial Secretary to Attorney General, 27 September 1925.
18. Ibid., Hoey to Colonial Secretary, 15 October 1925.
19. Ibid., Weller to Hoey, reproduced in Hoey to Colonial Secretary, 15 October 1925.
20. Ibid., acting Attorney General to Hoey, 12 November 1925.
21. AG 4/1237 acting Attorney General to Colonial Secretary, 24 December 1923.
22. Ibid., Grigg to Amery, 5 July 1925.
23. Ibid., Amery to Grigg, 17 July 1925.
24. Ibid., Colonial Secretary to Attorney General, 21 December, 1925.
25. AG 4/1250 Gillespie to acting Colonial Secretary 14 November 1928, acting Governor to Secretary of State; Davies to acting Colonial Secretary 20 February 1929.
26. Ibid., Davies to acting Colonial Secretary 6



6 December, 1928.

27. Ibid., Acting Governor to Secretary of State.
28. AG 4/1250 Sydney Webb to Governor of Kenya Colony 14 June 1929.
29. Chief Secretary to Attorney General, 17 July 1929; acting Solicitor General to Colonial Secretary 30 July 1929.
30. PC/RVP GA/34/1 Colonial Secretary to DC, Kitale, 12 April 1930.
31. Ibid., DC, Kitale to PC, Eldoret, 26 April 1930.
32. AG 4/1250 Crampton to Colonial Secretary, 20 December 1928.
33. PC/RVP GA/34/7 DC, Tambach to PC, Nzoia 19 August 1930, DC, Tambach to PC, Nzoia, 13 September 1930.
34. PC/RVP GA/33/2 DC, Nandi to PC, Nzoia, 19 April 1930.
35. PC/RVP GA/33/2 DC Nandi to PC, Nzoia, 19 April 1930.
36. F.H. Weller interviewed by N.W. Fedha and K. Ward, KNA: 967.6203 FED, p.9.
37. Legislative Council Debates, 1925, Vol. I p.

193. For a description of early inoculation methods see R.A. Hammond "The Advance of Veterinary Science in Kenya" in M.F. Hill (ed.) Cream Country: KCC, 1956) p. 111.
38. Report of the Committee on Alleged Losses in Connection with Rinderpest Inoculations in Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia Districts (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1923) p.3.
39. Kamukuywa was a major point of entry for African owned livestock. In 1921, 2675 trade stock were impounded at the quarantine station there. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1921, p. 55.
40. The Kenya Observer, 2 June 1923, p.5.
41. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1928, p. 40.
42. PC/RVP GA/31/1 Annual Report, 1934.
43. Report of the Convention of Associations Labour Committee ... 1927, p. 2.
44. NCC: Minute book no. 9 Minutes of Council Meeting, 8 February 1933, p. 45.
45. NCC: Minute book No. 9 Minutes of Council Meeting 7 June 1935, p. 52.
46. Ibid., Council Meeting 28 November, 1934, p. 79.

47. Report of the Labour Commission (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1927), p.5.
48. NCC: Minute book No.9 Minutes of Council Meeting 27 February 1933 lp. 83; Minutes of Council Meeting, 13 February 1935, p. 60.
49. Ibid., Minutes of Council Meeting 13 November 1935, p. 106.
50. Ibid., Minutes of Council Meeting 21 August 1935, p. 97.
51. NCC: Minute book No. 9 Minutes of Council Meeting, 21 August 1935, p. 97.
52. Kenya Weekly News, 6 September 1935, p.6.
53. Report of the Committee on the Working of the Resident Native Labourers Ordinance, 1925 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1934), p.4.
54. NCC: Minute book No.9 Minutes of full council meeting, 19, February 1936 p. 117 See also PC/RVP 2/5/1 Annual Report, 1937, p. 29.
55. Minute book No. 11 Minutes of Executive Committee, 22 April 1937, p. 55.
56. Francis Scott Papers: Memorandum on "Native Policy" Circular No. 8/59, 24 March 1939.
57. NCC: Minute book No. 15 Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 27 September 1939, p. 7.

58. NCC: Minute book No. 15 Minutes of Full Council Meeting, 3 May, 1939, p. 45.
59. NCC: Minute book No. 12 Minutes of Full Council Meeting, 22 September 1937, p. 53.
60. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1941, p. 3.
61. Ibid., Annual Report, 1942, p. 3.
62. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: A Handbook of the labour laws of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya (Nairobi: Government Printer 1945), pp. 123-126.
63. PC/RVP 2/3/1, Annual Report 1943, p. 3.
64. Sharecropping was apparently still a prevalent practice in the district. Hosking, the Chief Native Commissioner, refuting Kirkwood's allegations about Government inactivity over the Native Labourers Ordinance, queried how the Government could intervene when Africans were encouraged to grow maize on European land. See Legislative Council Debates, 1939-40, Vol. VIII, Column 434.
65. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank, 1944 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1945), p. 8.

58. NCC: Minute book No. 15 Minutes of Full Council Meeting, 3 May, 1939, p. 45.
59. NCC: Minute book No. 12 Minutes of Full Council Meeting, 22 September 1937, p. 53.
60. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1941, p. 3.
61. Ibid., Annual Report, 1942, p. 3.
62. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: A Handbook of the labour laws of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya (Nairobi: Government Printer 1945), pp. 123-126.
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65. Annual Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank, 1944 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1945), p. 8.

66. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1946, p.3; Implementation of the policy to remove squatter stock continued throughout the decade. All African-owned stock were to be evacuated from the district by 31 March, 1950, with the exception of an area on South Elgon. See PC/RVP 3/1/2 Handing Over Report J.M. Lewis to P.J. De Bromhead, 1950, p. 7.
67. For 1/225 J.C. Rammell, Assistant Conservator of Forests to Senior Commissioner, Nyanza, 20 February 1925.
68. Ibid., Rammell to Conservator of Forests 2 April 1925. The Konyi returned and were moved South of the Kisawai river in October 1924.
69. For 1/225 Assistant DC to DC North Kavirondo, 22 April 1925, pp. 5-6.
70. Ibid., acting Chief Native Commissioner to Senior Commissioner, Nyanza 31 August, 1925.
71. Ibid., 8 December 1921; 17 September 1924, 8 August 1928.
72. Ibid., Assistant DC, Kakamega to Senior Commissioner, Nyanza, 12 March 1926.
73. For 1/225, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kitale to Commissioner of Police 22 August 1927.
74. Ibid., Assistant DC, North Kavirondo to DC,

North Kavirondo, 9 January 1928.

75. Ibid., Resident Commissioner, Kitale to Land Assistant, Eldoret, 21 April 1928.
76. Ibid., acting Senior Assistant Conservator of Forests to Messrs Suam Saw Mills.
77. Ibid., Forest Adviser to Conservator of Forests, 7 September 1930.
78. For 1/225 Assistant Conservator of Forests to Conservator of Forests, 1 January 1928.
79. Ibid., Senior Assistant Conservator of Forests to Conservator of Forests, 19 May 1930.
80. Report of the Kenya Land Commission (London: HMSO, 1934) Cmd. 4556, pp. 281-282.
81. Report of the Kenya Land Commission, p. 283.
82. PC/RVP 6A/15/SS Logan to Welby, 2 August 1934.
83. Ibid., DC, Kitale to acting PC, Rift Valley 28 August 1934.
84. Ibid., PC, Rift Valley to Commissioner for Lands, 31 August 1934.
85. PC/RVP 6A/15/55 by Chairman, Trans Nzoia District Council to Commissioner for Lands.
86. Ibid., DC, Kitale to PC, Rift Valley, 24

September 1934.

87. Interview with Ndiwa Masiro, Saboti.
88. AGR 5/1/268 Secretary for Agriculture and Natural Resources to Secretary to the Treasury, 18 October 1949.
89. East African Standard, 5 February 1927, p. 28 A.
90. Zacharia Githeru, interviewed at Kapsara, 22 February, 1985.
91. Cosmas Sifuna, interviewed at Kipsoen, 25 February, 1985.
92. Legislative Council Debates, 1935, p. 122.
93. NCC: Minute book 6, 10-6-31, p. 16.
94. PC/RVP 2/3/1, Annual Report, 1937, p. 47  
The Pokot, Turkana and Cherangany were also turning out for seasonal wage employment during the late 1930's. Numbers of labourers from these ethnic groups remained fairly low, however, because most apparently wanted to raise money for poll tax, before returning home. See Legislative Council Debates, 1938 Vol. IV Column 65.
95. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1940, p. 122.
96. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour



in Kenya, 1895-1963, pp. 238-239.

97. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1941, p.3.
98. PC/RVP 3/1/2 Handing Over Report, 1941  
Hodge to Izard, p. 10.
99. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1942, p.3.
100. Ibid., Annual Report, 1941, p. 3.
101. Clayton and Savage, Government and Labour  
in Kenya, 1895-1963, p. 240.
102. Kibukuna Matere, interviewed at Kiminini, 18  
January, 1985.
103. Jacob Masinde Matere, interviewed at Kiminini,  
20 January, 1985.
104. PC/RVP 3/1/2 Handing Over Report, 1944,  
Izard to Hodge, p. 2.
105. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1946, p. 2.
106. ARC/MD 4/5/157 Minutes of the Joint  
Meeting of Production and Manpower Commi-  
ttees of Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia, held  
in Eldoret on 4 April, 1946.
107. ARC/MD 4/5/157 Minutes of Joint Meeting  
of Production and Manpower Committees of  
Uasin Gishu and Eldoret, held in Eldoret on  
4 April 1946.

108. The Leader 31 December 1921, p.5.
109. Ibid., 8 April 1922, p. 164.
110. The Kenya Observer, 2 June 1923, p. 5.
111. The East African Standard 7 August, 1926, p. 37.  
21 August, 1926, p. 30.
112. Ibid., 4 September 1926, p. 37.
113. Ibid., 2 October 1926, p. 28 E.
114. East African Standard 25 September 1926, p. 38.
115. Ibid., 21 August 1926, p. 7.
116. Speeches by Sir Edward Grigg, 1927 p. 8.  
Legislative Council Debates, 1945, 655.
117. A Clayton and D. Savage Government and Labour  
in Kenya, 1895 - 1963, p. 173.
118. AG 4/586, Solicitor General to Resident  
Magistrate, Eldoret, 6 May 1943; L. Griffiths,  
Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kitale to  
Superintendent of Police, Rift Valley, 29  
April 1943; Police enquiry into the shooting

- of a Native by M.R. Macdonald, 21 May 1943, pp. 1-2.
119. Legislative Council Debates, 1945, p. 655; Keyser's predecessor, Kirkwood, was of a similar mind. He had once asserted that Africans were like children and must be disciplined by liberal use of "the cane". See Legislative Council Debates 1941, Vol. XIII, Column 201.
120. NCC: Minute book No. 13 Minutes of meeting, 16 March 1938, p. 29.
121. H.F. Stoneham, unpublished memoirs "Forty Years in Africa" p. 45.
122. Ibid., p. 82.
123. Ibid., pp. 85-86.
124. Ibid., p. 88.
125. Interview with Leonard Ochieng, Cherangani, 25 February 1985.
126. H.F. Stoneham, unpublished memoirs, "Forty Years in Africa", pp. 88-89.
127. This museum was the precursor of the present day Kitale Museum.
128. East African Standard 5 February 1927, p. 28A.
129. Interview with Zachayo Nyongesa Sindu,

Namanjalala, 19 February, 1985.

130. PC/RVP 3/1/2 Handing Over Report, 1938, Hodge to Hopkins, p. 26. African labourers recognised the value of collective action. If people wanted to down their hoes in protest, this had to involve everyone since the participation of a minority would result in summary dismissal. Cosmas Sifuna, interview.
131. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1938, p. 27.
132. Ibid, Annual Report, 1941, p. 3.
133. KNA AG/4 563 Precis from file No. Kitale C.F. 96/38 by Hargreaves, Assistant Superintendent of Police, p. 1.
134. Ibid., statement by Cunningham, 16 August 1938, p. 1.
135. AG/4 563 acting Commissioner of Police to Attorney General, 10 November 1938.
136. PC/RVP .6A/34/12. The original members included Sheikh Abdul Hamid, (Swahili) as president, Naekwe s/o Sakwa, (Bukusu), as vice president, Arap Kibor, (Nandi), member, Chembea arap Tapkwen (Konyi) member, Hauka s/o Simate (Mugishu) member, Manyenyi s/o Wapata (Mkedi) member, Muganda s/o Odongo (Jaluo) member. See also PC/RVP 3/1/2 Handing Over Report S.O.V. Hodge to J.G. Hopkins.

137. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1940 p. 4.
138. PC/RVP .6A/34/4 Report of the Commission on circumstances of the Kitale Murder Case and allegations made by Mr. Oswald Bentley.
139. A. Clayton and D.C. Savage, Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963 (London: Frank Cass and Co. 1974) p. 148.
140. W. McGregor Ross, Kenya From Within: A Short Political History (London: Frank Cass, 1968) pp. 249-250.
141. East African Standard, 11 September 1927, p. 25 and 15 October, 1927, 1p. 25.
142. PC/RVP 6A/35/4 Medical Officer of Health, Eldoret to DC, Kitale, 13 February 1931.
143. Ibid., DC, Kitale to PC, Nzoia, 9 January 1930.
144. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1937 p. 41.
145. PC/RVP 6A/35/4 acting Commissioner for Lands to DC, Kitale, 22 July 1933.
146. Legislative Council Debates, 6 December 1933, p. 807; According to Dr. Paterson, Director of Medical Services, the Kitale hospital could muster only one bed per thousand Africans. See Legislative Council Debates, 1938 Vol. VI, 1938 Column 296.

147. Health 2/387 Medical Officer of Health,  
Trans Nzoia to Director of Medical Services  
11 December 1941; DC, Kitale to Medical  
Officer of Health, Uasin Gishu and Trans  
Nzoia, 21 June 1944.
148. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1942 p. 3.  
During this year requisitioning of squatter  
stock for the livestock control was  
implemented.
149. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: Food  
Shortage Commission of Inquiry Report, 1943  
(Nairobi: Government Printer, 1943) p. 61.
150. PC/RVP 2/3/1 Annual Report, 1943 , p.4.
151. ARC/MD 4/5/157 Chief Secretary to Labour  
Commissioner, Nairobi 18 January 1946.
152. PC/RVP 2/3/2 Annual Report, 1946 , pp. 4-5,6.
153. J.B. Shimanyula Elijah Masinde (Trans Africa  
Press: 1978) p.4 ; A. Wipper Rural Rebels:  
A Study of Two Protest Movements in Kenya  
1977) pp. 171, 224, 229. In 1945 the total  
estimated registered squatter population in  
Trans Nzoia was 18,575, See The Problem of  
the Squatter: Economic Survey of Resident  
Labour in Kenya (Nairobi: Meteorological  
Service Service Press, 1947).

### CONCLUSION

The history of European settlement in East, Central and Southern Africa has emphasised the significance of racial domination within its social, political and economic contexts. In Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), L.H. Gann and P. Duignan pointed out that:

the frontier farmers' racial outlook was usually of the harshest. His own life was tough, and all too often his interests seemed to clash with those of black people. The farmers' cash economy competed with tribal economies for unskilled labour and often also for land, the basic means of production on which they both depended.<sup>1</sup>

In Kenya racial conflict was presumably intensified by the South African origins of many settlers.<sup>2</sup>

This assumption obscures the significance of European domination by emphasising the concept of plural racial interests.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the colonial situation encompassed various racial groups, there was never any doubt about white predominance, and government policy was informed by this axiom. Consequently, competition for economic resources between European farmers and African peasants and squatters was mediated by the colonial state, with public

resources being diverted into bolstering the settler economy. Hence the relationship between European and African was inherently unequal.

Racial domination on the ground was not an abstraction. In Trans Nzoia district social and economic divisions within the European community soon became secondary to the essential need to promote racial solidarity. This pattern was particularly marked during periods of economic crisis and transition in the 1920s and 1930s, when the overriding priority remained the survival of the predominantly British settler community.

Government officials in the district sided with the settlers on most questions and the formation of Trans Nzoia District Council provided an alternative political forum to the less formal farmers association. Within the district, politics involved farming problems and contributions by district representatives in the Legislative Council and Convention of Associations were often related to local issues. The "small man" issue of the early 1920s, which contrasted frontier farmers with earlier, more established settlers, underlined the in situ perspective of many Europeans in the district.

This same perspective shaped racial relations.



Most settlers had entered Trans Nzoia expecting to recruit cheap African labour and their outlook rarely transcended the concept of Africans as "hewers of wood and drawers of water". European excesses and appalling labour conditions were concomittant to this. Indeed, it is evident that the African experience within the settler domain was often one of unmitigated subordination to European individual and group interests.

The period covered by this case study represents, therefore, a crucial episode in Kenya's colonial history. Over the years European farming underwent very little change and closer settlement was not implemented. Eventually, events proved that the community could only survive on colonial government largesse and the outbreak of War in 1939 provided a respite for many settlers from the monotony of monoculture and financial hardship. Patriotic fervour was in vogue again but the significance of the war years lay in changes wrought to European agricultural production. By 1945 price regulation and forced labour had made Trans Nzoia a major centre for commercial agriculture.

Ultimately the success of European farming in the district depended on its integration into the colonial economy, with the settlers remaining

subject to events taking place elsewhere. For many of the soldier settler generation, the inter war years were marked by unfulfilled promise. As time took its toll, the community contracted slowly. Racial supremacy was the hallmark of this community's existence and in this respect it left an indelible mark. In the final analysis, however, European settlement in Trans Nzoia did not fulfill the expansive goals of its progenitors.

This study has dwelt on the local history of one district in the White Highlands. The historical context, however, is Kenya's colonial history during the inter war years. Racial, social-political and economic conflicts and contradictions during the period underlined the impact of European settlement in the country. The broad course of events has been depicted in the literature, with recent interpretations emphasising the settlers' client relationship with the colonial state. While many generalisations made by this "underdevelopment" genre are reasonably accurate, divisions within the European community have remained obscure. In essence, this lacuna is attributable to undue stress on the settler as a political animal in the colonial arena and, consequently, the background to white social, political and economic life has been overlooked.

The contention of this thesis is that Europeans in the Highlands were primarily farmers, their technical incompetence notwithstanding. Their immediate problems, therefore, had to do with farming issues like crops, livestock and labour. They sought to determine the resolution of these issues in their favour and identified this common interest in racial terms. Differences between farmers within one district, between farmers in different districts, between growers of different crops and leaders in Nairobi were usually based on diverse rural interests. A significant exception to this trend was the cultural dichotomy which emerged between Briton and Boer, but the latter were never a major threat to British predominance.

Similar case studies would contribute towards resolving unanswered questions about settlers in Kenya and go some way towards decyphering myths. This would remove interpretation of the history of the white immigrant community from the realm of presumption and allow for a more objective analysis of the settlers diverse social and national origins, why they came to Kenya, what their impact was and how they failed to establish a self-governing settler state.

FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. L.H. Gann and P. Duignan "Changing Patterns of a White Settler Elite: Rhodesian and other Settlers" in Colonialism in Africa 1870 - 1960 Vol. 2 eds. Gann & Duignan (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970) P. 108.
  
2. G. Bennett "Settlers and Politics in Kenya" in History of East Africa Vol. 2 eds. V. Harlow et al (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) pp. 268 - 272. See also G. Bennett "British Settlers North of the Zambezi, 1920 - 1960" in Colonialism in Africa 1870 - 1960 Vol. 2 eds. L.H. Gann & P. Duignan (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 60 - 61.
  
3. L. Kuper "Political Change in White Settler Societies: The Possibility of Peaceful Democratization" in Pluralism in Africa eds. L. Kuper et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) pp. 170 - 171.

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The Leader of British East Africa, 1919 - 1921.

<u>List of Informants</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>
Jonathan Barasa	18 February 1985
Zadeki Cheremani ✓	21 February 1985
Bwayo Chesikaki	21 February 1985
Zacharia Gicheru	22 February 1985
Kipkeino Kaptima ✓	26 February 1985
John Kharinda	18 February 1985
Kipkoskey ✓	26 February 1985
Owindo Kwoba	16 January 1985
Jacob Matere	20 January 1985
Kibukuna Matere	18 January 1985
Ndiwa Masiro ✓	17 January 1985
Joseph Mukanda	3 February 1985
Wellington Mukhwana	21 February 1985
Jackson Muliro	22 February 1985
Eliakim Mutende	18 February 1985
Narwenyi Mauwachi Nalengi	3 March 1985
Julius Kipsoi Ngeywo ✓*	13 February 1985
Zakayo Nyongesa	19 February 1985
Leonard Ochieng	25 February 1985
Odera	27 February 1985
Cosmas Sifuna	25 February 1985
Jackson Singalabo	20 February 1985
Wakoli	18 January 1985
Gatonye Wa Nyumba	22 January 1985

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J.M. Lonsdale, "The Politics of Conquest; the British in Western Kenya, 1894 - 1908" in The Historical Journal Vol. 20, 4, 1977, pp. 841-870.

J. Lonsdale & B. Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: the Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914" in Journal of African History, 20, 1979, pp. 487-505.

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B. Berman, J. Lonsdale, "Accumulation and Control: the making of the Colonial State in Kenya 1888 - 1929" Annual Conference of the African Studies Association of United Kingdom, September 1978, paper No. 6.

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