

11  
**A BIOGRAPHY**  
**OF**  
**SENIOR CHIEF SOLOMON KASINA wa**  
**NDOO OF MIGWANI DIVISION, KITUI DISTRICT,**  
**1889-1989** 11

BY  
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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF**  
**MASTER OF ARTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**AUGUST 2000**

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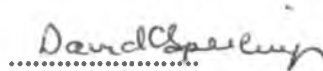
# DECLARATION

THIS THESIS IS MY ORIGINAL WORK AND HAS NOT BEEN PRESENTED FOR  
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DR. DAVID SPERLING

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Karanja', written over a horizontal dotted line.

DR. JOHN KARANJA

## **DEDICATION**

TO MY PARENTS AND IN MEMORY OF MY GRANDFATHER whose efforts to  
educate my Dad has had a direct blessing on this thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

	PAGE
Declaration	
Dedication	
Acknowledgements	(i)
Abstract	(iii)
Maps	(vi)
 <u>CHAPTER ONE</u>	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1.0 Background: The Geographical Setting	1
1.1.1 Topography	1
1.1.2 Rainfall	2
1.1.3 Vegetation	3
1.1.4 Geographical location of Migwani Division	4
1.2 Statement of Problem	6
1.3 Objectives	8
1.4 Hypotheses	9
1.5 Methodology	9
1.6 Literature Review	12
1.7 Theoretical Framework	17
1.8 Justification of the study	20
 <u>CHAPTER TWO</u>	
2.0 Socio-Political,Economic and Historical Background	24
2.1.0 Socio-Political Organization	24
2.1.1 Social ties of kinship	24
2.1.2 Political Organization	27
2.2.0 Pre-colonial Kamba Economy	31
2.3.0 Historical setting	35
2.3.1 Migration and settlement of Kamba people	35
2.3.2 Early immigration to Kitui	36
2.3.3 Establishment of Colonial Rule in Kitui District	39
2.3.4 Effects of Colonial Rule on the Kamba	42
2.3.5 The institution of Chieftainship in Kenya	45
2.3.6 Chieftainship in Kitui District	49
2.3.7 The Local Native Council	53
 <u>CHAPTER THREE</u>	
3.0 Kasina's Early Life	55
3.1 Birth, Childhood and Early Occupation	55

	PAGE
3.2 Kasina at the Government School in Kitui	62
3.3 Early Association with Colonial Officials	65
3.4 World War I and Recruitment to the Kings African Rifles	66
3.4.1 World War I	66
3.4.2 Recruitment to the Kings African Rifles	68

#### CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Career as a chief and councillor of Migwani Location	78
4.1 Background to his appointment as chief	78
4.2 Kasina as the councillor of Migwani Location	81
4.3 Chief Kasina and soil conservation measures	83
4.4.0 Construction of dams bore-holes and roads	87
4.4.1 Dams and bore-holes	87
4.4.2 Construction of roads	91
4.5 Promotion of Educational facilities	92
4.6 Locust campaign	97
4.7 Kasina and Agricultural development	100
4.8 Kasina's performance as a colonial chief	106
4.9 Awards, promotions, medals and decorations	115

#### CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Kasina and the Second World War: visit to troops during and After the war and journey to England	121
5.1 The Second World War	121
5.2 Visit to troops in various parts of the colony	124
5.3 Visit to troops in the Middle East	129
5.4 Effects of the Second World War on the returning soldiers	133
5.5 Journey and visit to England	140

#### CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Mau Mau and chief Kasina's struggle against the movement	148
6.1 Mau Mau - Introduction	148
6.2 Kasina's struggle against the Mau Mau	155
6.2.1 Previous attempts and threats on chief Kasina's life	157
6.2.2 Chief Kasina on the hands of the assailant	161
6.2.3 Chief Kasina in hospital and messages of condolence	167
6.2.4 The trial and conviction of the assailant	171

#### CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 Kasina's family and private life before and after retirement	175
7.1 Kasina's family life	175

	PAGE
7.2 Private family activities	186
7.2.1 Acquisition of western material culture	186
7.2.2 Distinguished visitors to his home	190
7.2.3 Business ventures	192
7.2.4 Acquisition of land	195
7.2.5 Development on Kasina's land	200
7.3.0 Life after retirement	204
7.3.1 Retirement	204
7.3.2 Kasina the farmer and businessman	207
7.3.3 Involvement in development matters: construction of Mwingi Town A.I.C.	209
7.3.4 Establishment of Kasina primary school	212
7.3.5 Death and funeral	214

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion	216
Sources and Bibliography	225

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Last but not least my heartfelt gratitude go to my wife, Elizabeth Muli, and our two sons masters Peter Muimi and Brain Musyimi. They were particularly patient, understanding and tolerant even when I tended to devote more time to this work than their company. I, alone, take full responsibility for this work.



## ABSTRACT

The study of biographies of those personalities who have contributed in one way or the other in influencing history can be quite fascinating because it furthers our understanding of broader issues and processes in any given society. Quite a number of historians have written biographies of those among the colonial chiefs who in one way or another played important roles in shaping the destinies of their people and of this country to a certain extent. There were those who utilised every opportunity created by the colonial officials to improve education, agriculture, health, water and infrastructure in their areas. Such colonial chiefs included senior chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u, chief Musa Nyandusi, Odera Akong'o, Njiri wa Karanja and paramount chief Kinyanjui Gathirimu just to name a few.

As I read through the literature on colonial chiefs, it occurred to me that there is no one who has written a biography on colonial chiefs in Kitui District even though there were a few chiefs among them the likes of senior chief Kasina wa Ndoe and chief Mwendwa wa Kitavi who played very important roles in shaping the destinies of their people. The mention of the name of chief Kasina among the Kitui Akamba rekindles memories of a leader who through collaboration with colonial officials played a significant role in improving the lives of Kitui people. Hence it is for this reason that this research was carried out with a view to exposing who chief Kasina was and how and why he had become what he was.

This thesis is an attempt to write the biography of the Late Senior Chief Samson Kasina wa Ndoe of Migwani Division, Kitui District. The Late Chief Kasina was born around 1889 and passed away in 1989 having lived for a record one hundred years. He

was first appointed a Headman in 1925 before being made a chief in 1927. He served the colonial government for thirty-eight years before he voluntarily retired in 1963.

As demonstrated in this thesis, Kasina was not just a chief like any other. He was an extremely rare type that was hard to come by during the colonial period. His loyalty in serving the colonial government was unquestionable. He devoted all his energy and time in rendering service to the colonial government. In other words he was always totally committed and dedicated to his duties as a colonial chief.

This thesis further shows that chief Kasina was endowed with leadership qualities that were not readily found in other chiefs. He was a born leader. Lacking as he did any kind of formal education, he nonetheless proved to be a better administrator compared to those who had acquired formal education. He was able to succeed where others failed. His leadership qualities were a great asset to the success of colonial rule in Kitui District.

Chief Kasina played a crucial role in the protection and advancement of his peoples' interests and well-being. He was very instrumental in advocating the uplifting of the living standards of his people through the initiation of various development projects in his location. He was able to do this by performing his dual role of being the chief and councillor of Migwani Location. As a result his Location as well as the Division were always constantly far ahead of the others in many aspects and respects. It is therefore no wonder that chief Kasina was made the most powerful chief in Kitui District by being given the title of a Senior Chief.

There has been a belief among the Kitui Kamba that chief Kasina was unpopular. The thesis demonstrates that the chief was not as unpopular as many people tend to believe. His popularity as well as his reputation suffered a great deal when he was

carrying out his duties as a colonial chief. He had to convince his masters that he merited being appointed a chief and this he could only do by making sure that he strictly and outrightly carried out his chiefly duties according to the standards set forth by his colonial masters. In other words chief Kasina acted as the cutting edge of the colonial sword and the result was that he quite often collided with his people.

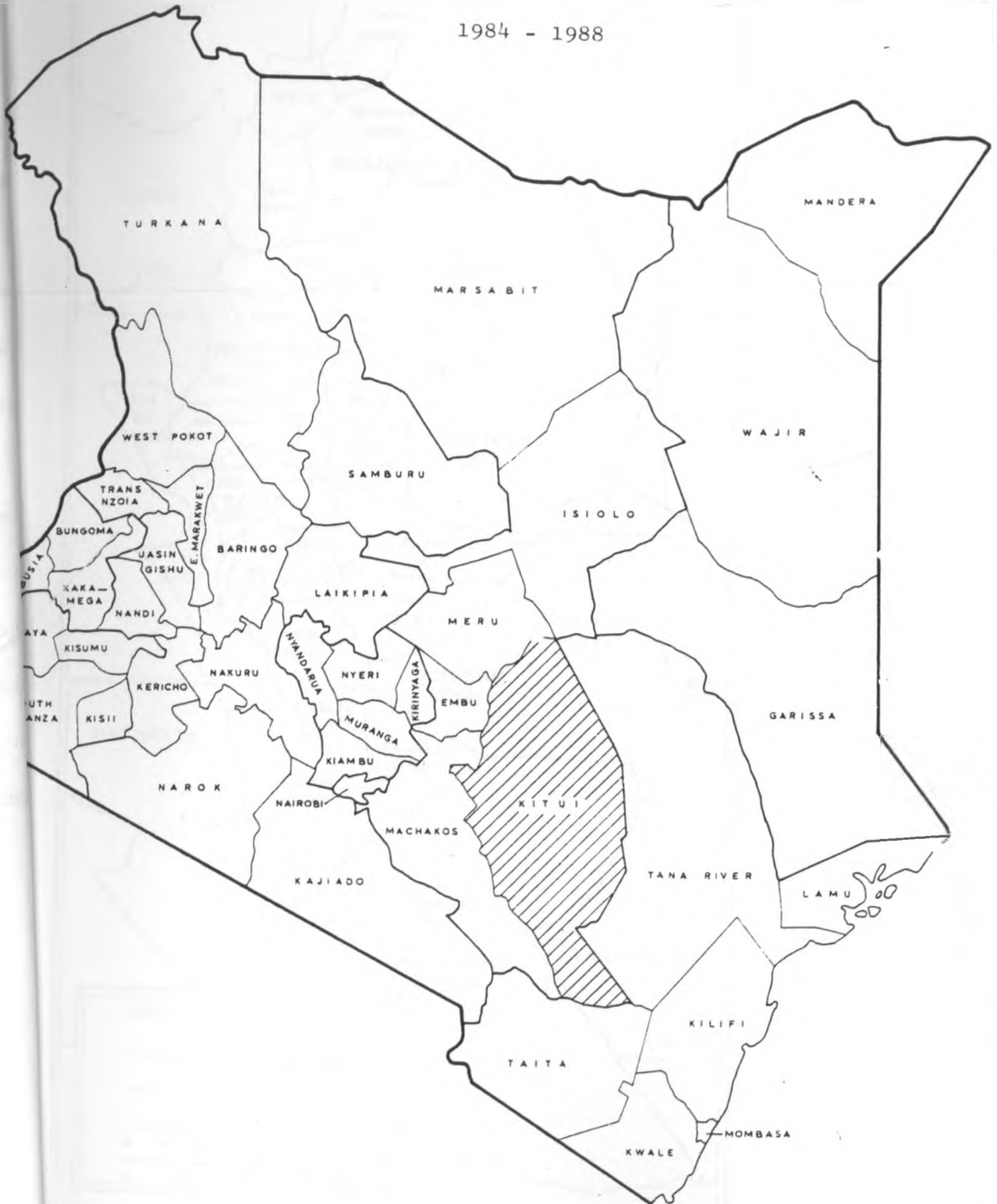
The brutal attempt to assassinate chief Kasina on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1953 showed and awakened the colonial officers in Kitui to the gravity of the Mau Mau activities in Kitui District. Before then, the D.C. and other colonial officials in the District held the believe that Mau Mau phenomenon was non-existent in the district with the exception of a few members who were living outside the District. Their view was however proved wrong with the eventual attempt to assassinate chief Kasina.

It is therefore hoped that this thesis will add to the existing literature on colonial istory by among other things examining the working of the colonial government in Kitui istrict during the colonal period. This is the case since the thesis discusses to a great gree the extent to which chief Kasina used or was used by the colonial government to hieve certain ends. Likewise it is expected that this thesis fills important gaps which ist on the available information on chief Kasina which apart from being scanty is ttered in various documents.

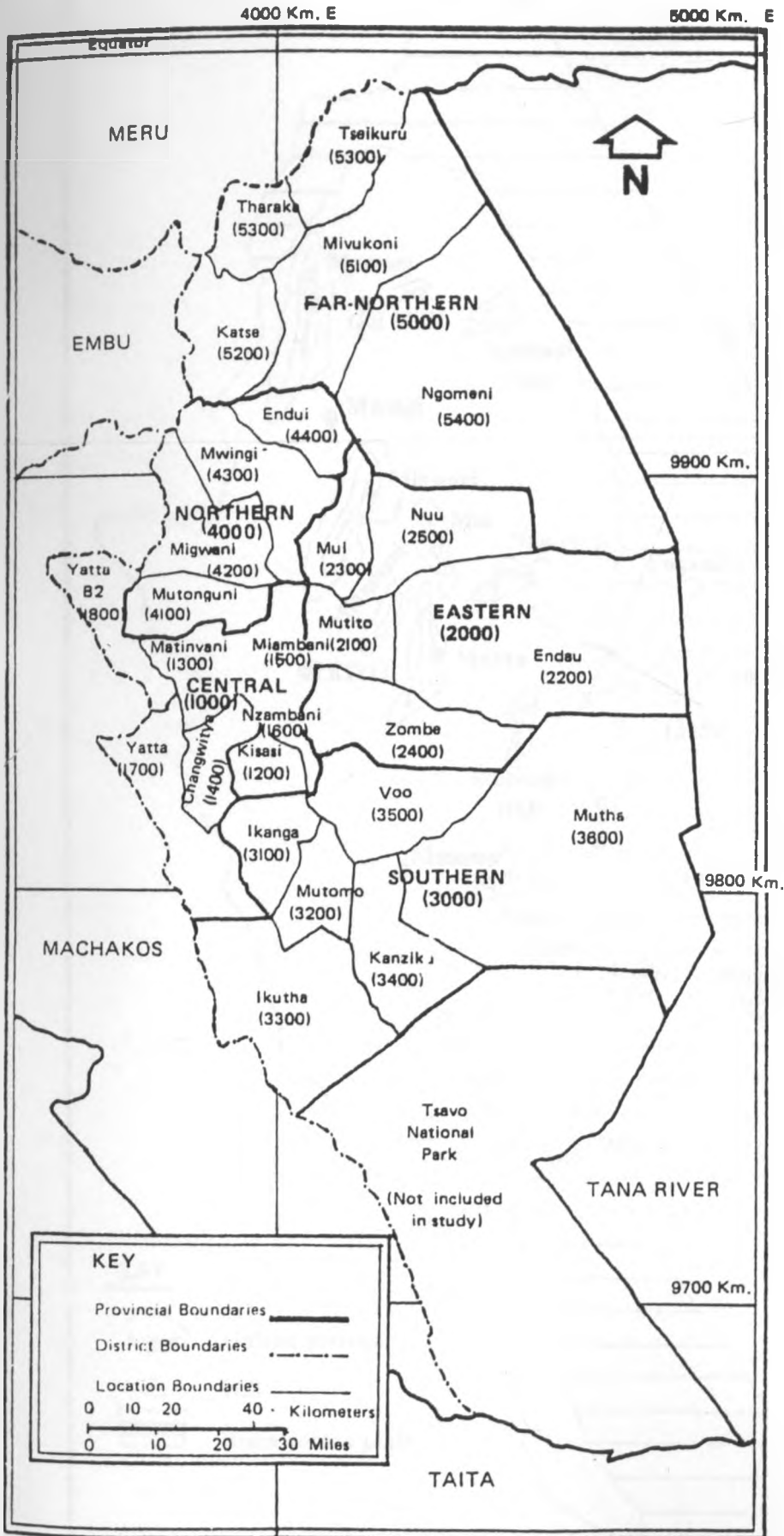
MAP 1  
KITUI

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

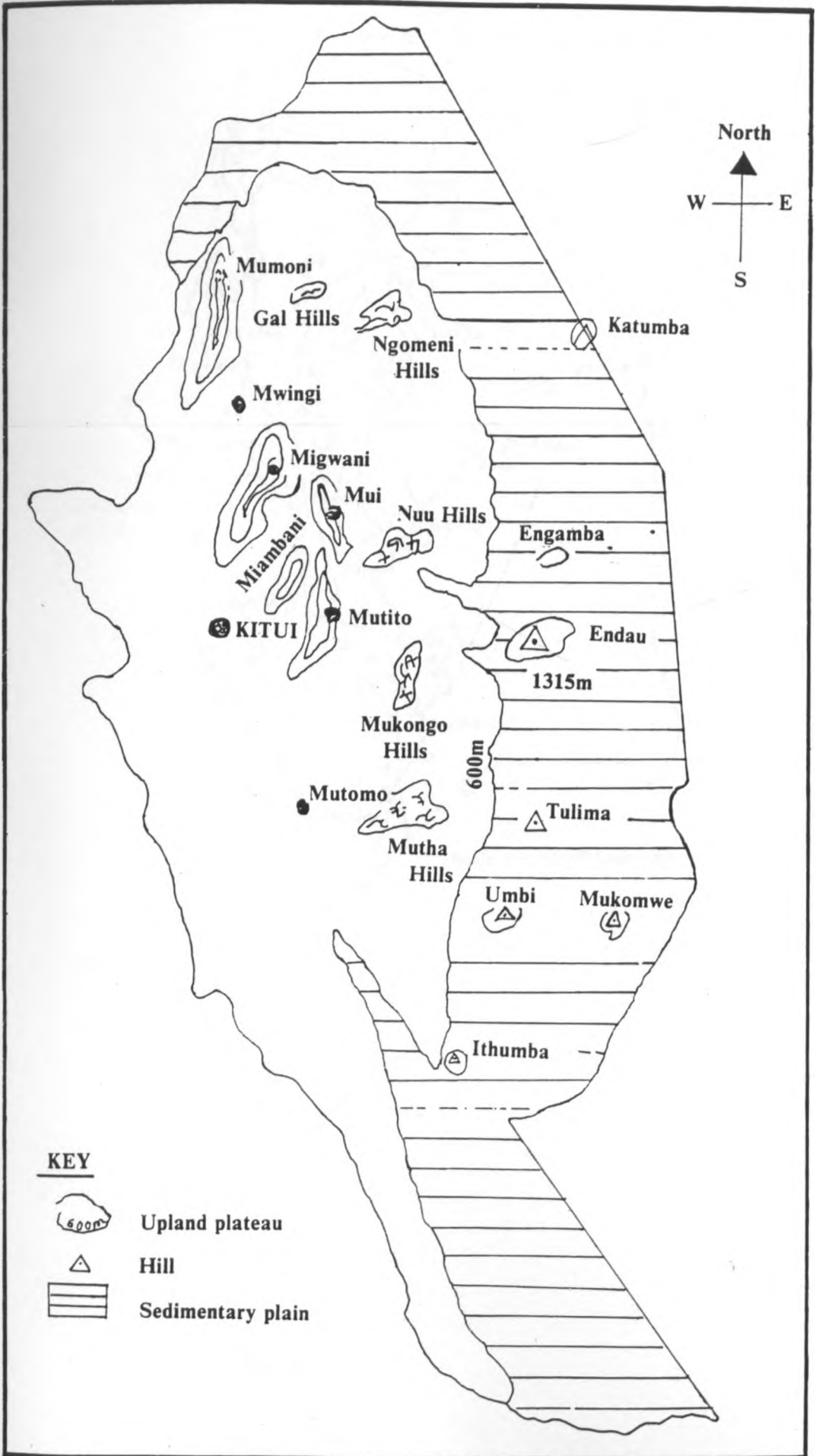
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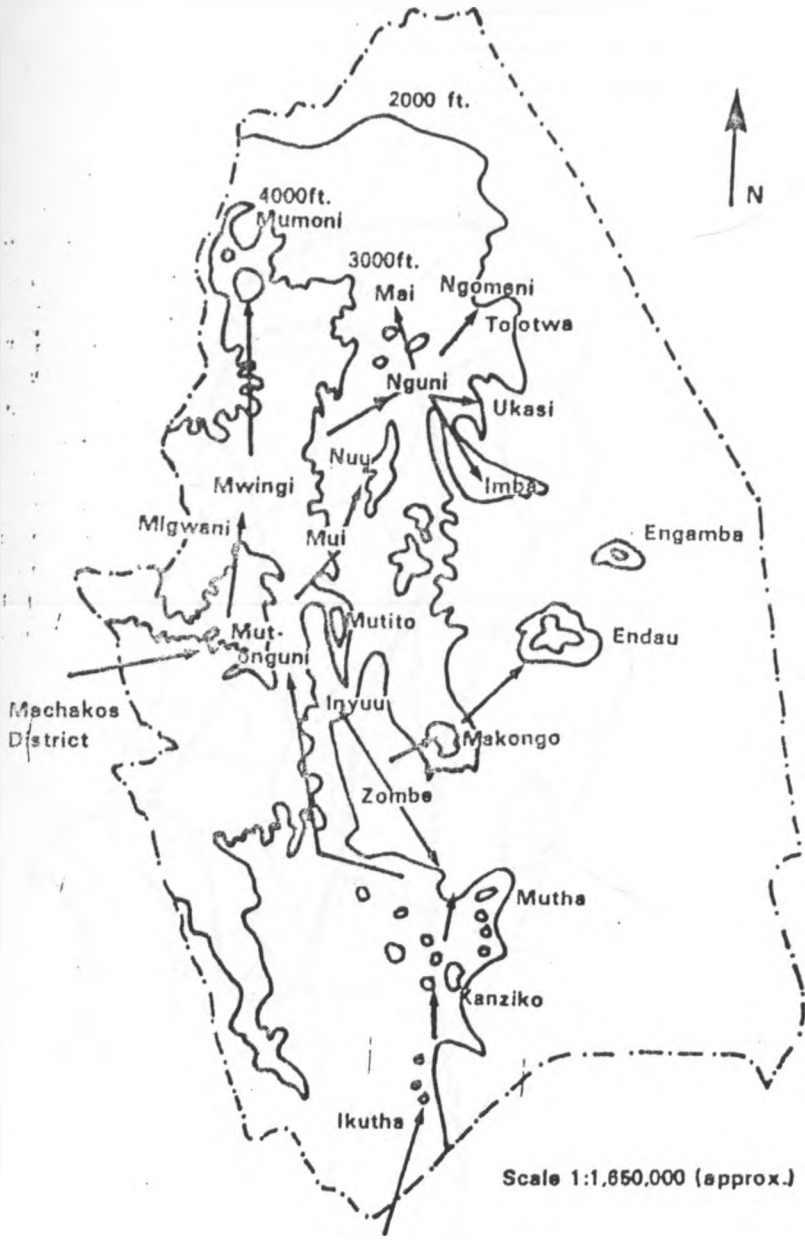
**MAP 2**  
**KENYA - KITUI DISTRICT**  
**DIVISIONS, LOCATIONS, and UTM GRID**



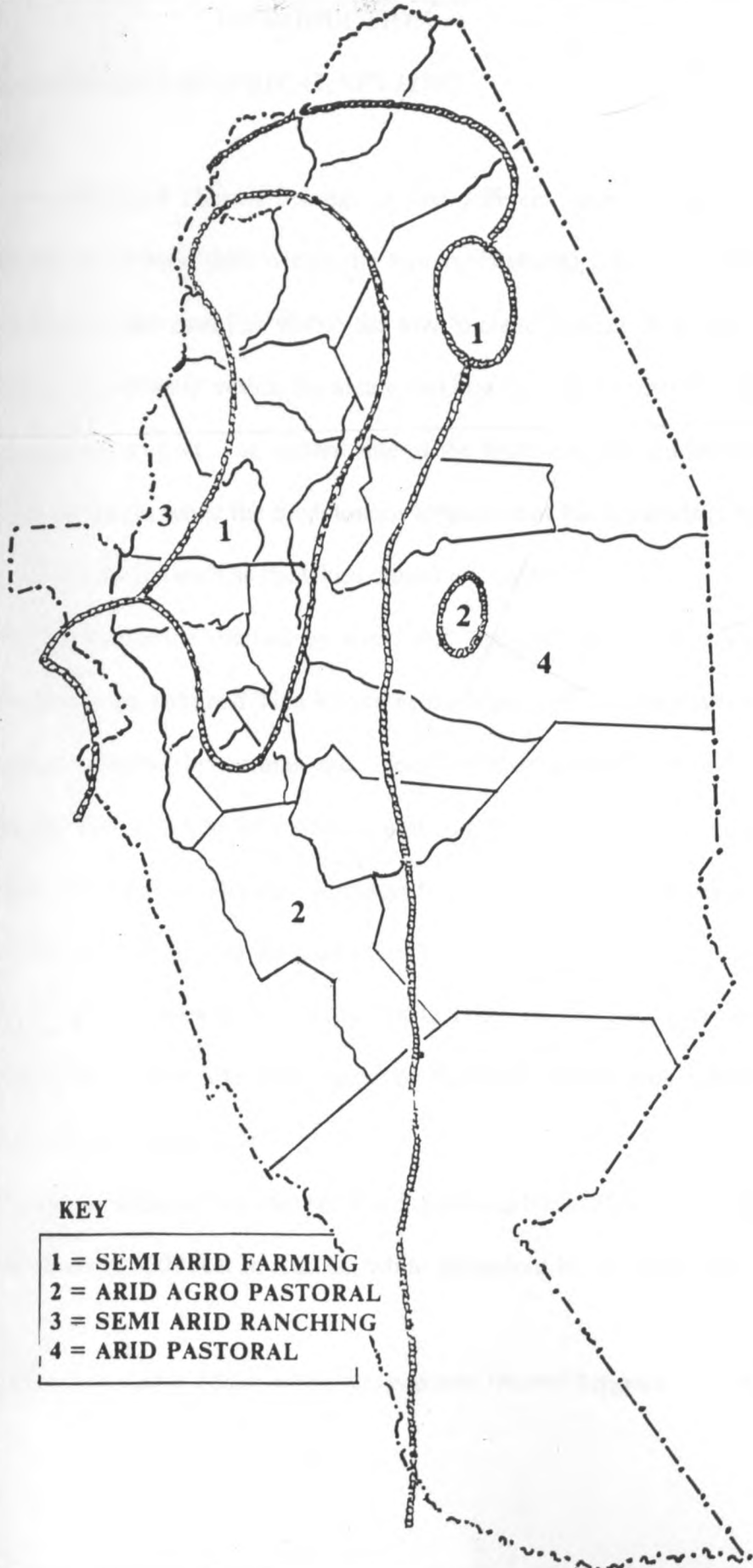
PHYSIOGRAPHIC UNITS of KITUI DISTRICT MAP 3



MAP 4  
Migrations within Kitui District (Pre-Colonial Period)



**AGRO-ECOLOGICAL LAND USE  
KITUI DISTRICT MAP 5**



**KEY**

- |                        |
|------------------------|
| 1 = SEMI ARID FARMING  |
| 2 = ARID AGRO PASTORAL |
| 3 = SEMI ARID RANCHING |
| 4 = ARID PASTORAL      |



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.0 BACKGROUND: GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

#### 1.1.1 TOPOGRAPHY

Topographically Kitui District belongs to two different physical regions. The land above 3000 feet in altitude falls within the eastern Highlands of Kenya, and the territory below 3000 feet elevation lies within the low foreland plateau of Kenya.<sup>1</sup> The former region falls predominantly within the area extending from Kitui town to Mwingi on the western side of the district. The eastern side of the highlands contain hills which run in a north-south direction, while the monotonous landscape of the lowlands is broken by the occurrence of inselbergs such as the Ukasi cluster of inselbergs.

The central highlands are drained by rivers and streams, which either join the Tana River to the north, the Athi and Tiva Rivers to the west, or the Thua River to the east. The lowlands are drained by streams and rivers which either flow into the Tana River to the north, the Tiva and Athi Rivers to the south, or one of the major rivers which traverse the eastern lowlands, namely, the Mitamisyi River, Thunguthu River, Enziu and Thua Rivers. All the rivers and streams except the Tana and the Athi are usually dry during the height of the dry season. It is important to note that the two rivers do not traverse the district. Tana River borders the district on the north-western side, while Athi River borders on the south-western side.

There are notable hills and hill-ranges, which form visible landmarks. To the far north Mumoni hill is about 3000 feet in altitude, while Mbondoni hill is about 4000 feet.

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1. Any, F.F. and Ogendo, R. B, *Kenya: A Study in Physical Geography* (Nairobi: Longman, 1973), 42.

There are also inselbergs and rock outcrops scattered in different places. The most notable include Ukasi cluster of inselbergs, Endau inselberg and the inselbergs lying within the Mutomo, Mutha and Kanziko areas.

Also a notable feature of the district is the Yatta plateau, a volcanic outcrop 290 km long averaging about 3 km in width only about 6 to 15 meters in thickness, part of which runs along the southwest corner of the district dividing the Athi and Tiva Rivers.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1.2 RAINFALL

Like the rest of Kambaland, Kitui District experiences two rainfall seasons, the short rains and the long rains. The short rains start in October and continue through December. This is known as *mbua ya mwee* (the rain of millet), so called because during this season people used to plant and harvest millet in plenty. Then follows a period of drought in January and February, which menaces the young crops. January is one of the hottest months, and the temperatures in lower altitudes may go as high as 90 F.<sup>3</sup> The long rains on the other hand begin in March and continue through May. The Kamba people call these rains *mbua ya muvya* (rain of sorghum). This is because traditionally sorghum is planted in plenty during this season. Dry cold weather continues from June to August. July is the coldest month, and the temperatures may be as low as 40 F. Dry weather then begins in late August and continues until the resumption of the short rains.

Rainfall in Kitui District is not reliable. Rainfall reliability is used here to refer to probability that the precipitation of a season is sufficient to provide an adequate yield. Since crops vary in the amount of rain they require, then rainfall reliability is a

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1, 30.

Kitui, K., *Elements of Akamba Life* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1972), 13.

function of the type of crops grown. For example, maize and beans, the dominant crops grown in Kitui, require about 380 mm of rainfall per season, while millet, sorghum and coupes, the major crops planted in the lowlands, require about 254 mm per season. The November/December rain average about 264 mm per season, while the March/April rain average about 362 mm.<sup>4</sup> From this it can be seen that the average rainfall is hardly enough to ensure good regular crops every year.

In the matter of water-supply, Kitui District has been treated very scurvily by nature. There are no lakes and rivers are usually dry, except during and directly after the rainy period. The shortage of water becomes a troublesome problem during the dry season.

### 1.1.3 VEGETATION

The vegetation of Kitui District falls into several types, and their occurrence coincides largely with rainfall. Most of the land is covered with dry bush-land and thickets. In this category, two types of vegetation are recognizable. First are the low bushes and shrubs that may shed leaves once a year or remain green all the year round. The second type of vegetation consists of woody-interlacing bushes similar to the first and it is sometime difficult to distinguish between the two.

The acacia savanna comprises another cluster of vegetation. In distribution, it is second to the bush-land and thickets. This vegetation is typified by such plant species as

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<sup>4</sup> O'Leary, M., *The Kitui Akamba: Economic and Social change in Semi-Arid Kenya* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1984), 129.

*euclea*, *acacia*, *commiphora*, and interspersed with these plants is tall grass of which *hyparrhenia* species dominates.<sup>5</sup>

There are no thick forests found in Kitui except on top of some of the higher mountains such as Mutito hill and Mumoni hill where there are to be found small remains of primeval forests. These undoubtedly had greater extension in earlier times than they have today, but the Kitui Kamba are an agricultural people and require the slopes of the hills for their fields. One can often see that a forest existed in a place which is bare as evidenced by solitary trees and immense stumps present. Indigenous forests have long since disappeared owing to the shifting cultivation which was practised by the local people.

#### 1.1.4 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF MIGWANI DIVISION

In colonial times, Migwani Division was one of the five administrative Divisions which formed Kitui District. The other Divisions were Northern Division, Eastern Division, Southern Division and Central Division.<sup>6</sup> To the north, Migwani Division bordered on the North Division, to the east on Eastern Division, and to the south it bordered on Central Division. Unlike the other Divisions of Kitui District, Migwani only had two Locations namely: Migwani and Mutonguni. This was mainly because the two locations were areas of high population density. In fact Migwani was the largest location and the most populous, hence the population of the two locations justified the formation of a Division.

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<sup>5</sup> Ndeti, K., *op.cit.*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/19, Kitui District Annual Report, 1962.

Migwani Location was roughly situated between Tyaa River to the west and the great Mutitu ridge to the east. To the north it bordered on Endui Location, to the east on Mui Location, to the southeast on Mutito Location, while to the south it bordered on Mutonguni Location.<sup>7</sup>

The topographical boundaries of the location were well defined. To the north it stretched up to Ithumbi hill, Kathoko and Tulandulini, thence northwards to the Tyaa River, then by that river to its junction with the Tana River. To the west, the boundary extended along the Tana River upstream to its junction with the Kithyoko River, thence up that stream as far as Ndalai hill and then by a line to Chandula hill crossing the main road to Garissa about one mile north of Kaimu hill. To the west, the location gradually opened out onto the Yatta plains.<sup>8</sup>

The land in the southern portion of Migwani Division is hilly with numerous streams most of which drain into the Tyaa River. These streams have created a topography of alternating high and narrow ridges making this area perhaps the most elevated of any in the district. There are numerous hills and sloping areas. Mbondoni hill, over 4000 feet in altitude, is the most elevated part of Migwani Division.

Much of the land found in Migwani is of clay black cotton soil, which is fertile and suitable for farming. Hence, during the colonial period Migwani Division was agriculturally relatively more productive, especially when compared to other locations in the northern part of the district which have red-sandy soils. Likewise, Migwani Division experienced a considerably higher amount of rainfall most likely due to its higher elevation compared to the other locations in the lowlands.

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<sup>7</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/4/1, Kitui District Gazetteer, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/4/1, Kitui District Gazetteer, 1931.

Migwani Division of colonial times, the administrative unit referred to throughout this study, was much larger than the present day Migwani Division. It included most of the present Mwingi Division and Mutonguni Division and some parts of what became Mutito Division after independence. Migwani Division of colonial times was administratively part of Kitui District, and continued to be so even during the post-colonial period.

However, in 1993 Kitui District was split into two, Kitui and Mwingi Districts. The creation of a new district changed the administrative boundaries of what used to be Migwani Division. Some parts of the original Migwani Division were transferred to the newly created Mwingi District, while the other part remained as part of Kitui District. Of the two Locations which made up Migwani Division of colonial times, Mutonguni Location remained as part of Kitui District, while Migwani Location was administratively transferred to Mwingi District. Whereas Migwani Division of colonial times was administered as part of Kitui District, the present day Migwani Division is administered as part of Mwingi District.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Chief Kasina was one of the most respected colonial chiefs in Kitui District by both the colonial administration and the local people. He was promoted from the position of a sub-headman to the prestigious position of a Senior Chief- the highest office occupied by Africans in the colonial administrative structure. This placed him at a central position in the colonial administration, a position he capitalized to become an effective change agent for the colonial government.

There were economic, social and political developments taking place in Kitui during Kasina's tenure as a chief. Development projects such as construction of schools, dispensaries, bore-holes, earth dams, water reservoirs, soil conservation methods and roads construction were implemented in Migwani location during this period. The extent to which chief Kasina was responsible for these development projects needs to be established through research. It is not known what role colonial chief Kasina played towards the implementation of the said development projects. It is therefore necessary to establish whether chief Kasina was responsible for these developments through pressurising the colonial government or they were initiated as an overall development strategy adopted by the colonial government aimed at uplifting the well-being of the local people. This will definitely lead us to establish the role which chief Kasina played as the local leader of his people and the level of his commitment (or lack of it) to the interests and the material well-being of the people he ruled.

The fact that Kasina was the most local influential chief in the district placed him in a position to be used by the colonial government to mobilize resources. Like all other colonial chiefs, he was expected to obey with the colonial officials while carrying out his official duties. He owed his appointment to the colonial officials hence he was expected to play his role within the colonial setting. He was to act as a channel through which the government would pass its policies to the people while on the other hand people passed whatever grievances they had to the colonial officials through the chiefs. Thus chiefs acted as the bridge between the colonial officials and the people. Being mere functionaries, colonial chiefs did their best to please their colonial masters. They could be far harsher towards their fellow Africans than the colonisers themselves. In this way, they

acted as the shock absorbers since the immediate repercussions of their harshness were not rubbed against the colonisers but against the chiefs. Colonial chiefs were therefore subjected to pressure both from the rulers above and the people below. The government on the one hand expected undivided loyalty from the chiefs while on the other hand their people expected to be provided with services and favours, a requirement they could not fulfil without being accused of corruption and nepotism. It is interesting to find out how he used or was used by the colonial government. If at all he used the colonial government to achieve certain ends, the nature of these ends needs to be found through research. It is only then that it will be revealed whether by performing his duties as a colonial chief, he implicitly and explicitly compromised the economic, social and political rights of the people he ruled for personal political power and material gain.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The underlying objectives of this study are:

- 1) To examine and analyse the career of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina wa Ndo.
- 2) To determine and establish whether by collaborating with the colonial government, chief Kasina compromised the economic and political rights of the people of Migwani in exchange for the power and material gain which accrued from the collaboration.
- 3) To determine the extent to which chief Kasina was responsible for the various development projects implemented in his location.
- 4) To determine the extent to which chief Kasina was able to maintain his popularity among the people despite of the duties he performed as a colonial chief.



## **1.4 HYPOTHESES TO BE TESTED**

The following are the basic hypotheses to be tested in the due course of the study:

- 1) That chief Kasina spent much of his life serving the interests of the colonial authorities and at the same time, he made some positive and discernible contributions towards the protection and advancement of his peoples' interests and welfare.
- 2) Chief Kasina was either directly or indirectly responsible for all development projects which the colonial government implemented in his location during his tenure in office. He actually did "campaign" for those development projects.
- 3) That the peoples' contempt and dislike for chief Kasina had to do with unpopular duties such as the collection of taxes and conscription of communal labour which were delegated to him by the colonial authorities.
- 4) That chief Kasina's popularity among the colonial officials did not arise from the fact that he was a collaborator but rather due to his efficiency in carrying out his duties as a colonial chief.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

A combination of different methodologies were used to obtain essential data for this study. Accordingly the research was based on the existing literature, archival materials and oral interviews. Extensive document analysis of archival materials was conducted at the Kenya National Archive. Consulted archival material included both the available official and non-official documents. most of these documents were found in the K.N.A. Field research was conducted in the Migwani area of Mwingi District. Oral interviews were not administered on a structured questionnaire. However, some guiding

questions were formulated early enough before the start of each interview session but mostly questions were formulated on the spot. This gave me a wide margin for formulating additional questions as new issues arose.

Most of the oral interviews were conducted on individual basis. However, at times a group of two up to four informants was interviewed at the same time. The informants were visited at their own homes. Group interviews and at times individual interviews were conducted at the various trading centres all over the area under study. Several criteria were used in the selection of informants who were scattered in various places both within Mwingi District and outside. Age factor was dearly considered when selecting the informants. Both the aged and middle-aged people of both sex were interviewed. Quite a number of the Kasina family were also interviewed. A son of the late chief, Mr. Joseph M. Kasina provided me with a list of names and addresses of family members and other individuals within Migwani Division whom he considered to be useful for this study.

Secondly, the interviewed informants, at my request suggested additional names of other people they considered to be knowledgeable. They also directed me to those people they thought could assist me in my research. Thirdly, some informants were selected mainly because their names appeared in the numerous letters, correspondences and other documents both official and non-official found at the late chief's home.

A number of problems and shortcomings were encountered during the field research as well as the archival research. As for the archival research, a lot of time was spent in the K.N.A. because the available materials on chief Kasina were scanty and scattered in various documents which took time to locate. Further some of the files could

not be traced due to misplacement even though they were indicated to be present in the archive. Some of the documents were practically unreadable because of the long time since they were written (especially those hand-written).

There were also some problems faced during the field research. The area covered is a big one and this involved a lot of travelling. Tracing some informants was a major problem owing to the large size of the area under study. As a result some informants could not be reached. The field research had to be delayed for two months due to heavy rains known as the El-Nino rains. As a result even when the rains subsided, some roads were damaged which resulted to exorbitant fares being charged. There was also a scarcity of public transport in some areas leading to fare hikes. I also faced the problem of getting to some areas which could not be reached through public transport owing to the poor state of roads. This forced me at times to walk very long distances on foot.

Some of my informants demanded to be paid a "commission" before they could offer me an interview. They argued that since whatever I was doing, I was doing it for my own benefit, they also had to benefit in one way or the other. Some became adamant even after explaining to them that the research was not based on monetary backing forcing me to part with a few coins. This caused a further constraint on the meagre finances available. Further, some people failed to keep or even forgot previously made appointments. Other informants were rarely in when I paid them a visit due to personal commitments. All the same I managed to interview at least thirty-five people. Most of them were very co-operative and accommodating while others proved to be highly resourceful.

## 1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of colonial chiefs has been carried out by many historians and as such there is a lot of existing literature on colonial chiefs. Ogembo M.A ("The Role of Colonial Chiefs in Kenya: A case study of Ezra Ododi", 1978) argues that colonial chiefs have been grossly misrepresented and given all sorts of labels such as self-seeking rogues, collaborating nonentities, corrupt lot and so on simply because they served as agents of a colonising power. Ogembo in this particular work presents the view that it should not be outrightly accepted that all or the majority of colonial African chiefs were collaborating nonentities who formerly had no standing in their societies nor were they merely self-seeking rogues who had no interest in the conditions and progress of their people. According to him, there were those chiefs who took advantage of the new ideas promulgated by their colonial masters to improve the well-being of their people.

Ogembo's work is relevant to this study in that he gives an insight into the performance of colonial chiefs by refuting any kind of generalization while assessing the contributions which colonial chiefs made towards improving the welfare of their people. While acknowledging the fact that there were those chiefs who did much to improve the well-being of their people, he nonetheless points out that there were those who failed to grasp the nature and demands of their offices and who proved to be failures and were swiftly removed from their offices.

Munro F.J. (*Colonial Rule and the Akamba: social change in the Kenyan highlands 1889-1939*, 1975) claims that the British colonial officials sought to appoint chiefs in the first place due to lack of funds, shortage of trained European officials and the consequent need for local manpower rather than preconceptions and theories about

appropriate forms of colonial government. He further notes that in the establishment of local systems of government, it was these factors which dictated British attitudes and opened the way for bargaining with African authorities and for African initiatives. As such the British established an administrative superstructure with a hierarchical civil service, staffed by Europeans at the top administering areas divided into provinces and districts. The Africans were at the bottom in charge of locations.

This policy of Indirect Rule according to Ochieng W.R. ("Colonial African chiefs- were they primarily self-seeking scoundrels?" in *Hadith 4*, 1972) required traditional authorities to play their roles within the colonial setting. It required that they take accurate account of new rules promulgated by the imperial power and that each chief's actions was to be geared towards that set of rules rather than any other set (tribal set) to which traditional leaders had hitherto paid full heed. He further argues that this policy did not in any way mean to protect or preserve traditional political structures. The colonial powers evolved a pragmatic policy which involved working with or without chiefs in one way or the other but always within the framework of overall colonial rules and values. It meant that whenever and to whatever degree chiefs retained power, they did so at the grace of the colonial power.

Both Munro and Ochieng provide the framework within which to assess the contributions which colonial African chiefs could possibly render to their societies. It is within the framework of the colonial rules, values and conditions that we should assess such contributions. On the one hand, the chiefs had their own people whose values and concepts of leadership were clear and unmistakably defined. On the other hand, their

colonial positions, which they could maintain only by satisfying certain European values and demands completely estranged them from their people.

O'Leary F.M. ("Variation and change amongst the Kitui Akamba: A comparative study of two vicinages", 1979) gives the view that in appointing the colonial chiefs, the District Commissioner considered those individuals and lineages which had sought access to British power from the beginning and that those who were friendly to the D.C. were automatically appointed chiefs. He is, however, quick to note that in choosing chiefs, the British were not simply fascinated by empty loyalty or collaboration but also considered the background connections and the estimation which their choices had in the eyes of their people. It is therefore completely untrue and a blatant camouflage of facts to suggest that any nonentity who presented himself to the D.C. and smiled sweetly was made the chief. In most cases the persons chosen had been notable personalities whose pre-colonial activities had won them respect and admiration in the society.

There is some general agreement among some historians that the roles and duties which colonial chiefs performed tempted them to become corrupt. According to Tignor L.R. ("Colonial chiefs in chiefless societies" in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1971), the role of chiefs as mobilisers of local resources gave them and the headmen ample occasion to enlarge their incomes. Tax collecting methods of payment by result encouraged them to extract the largest possible revenue for the largest possible commission, while the confusion and uncertainty of the ordinary people about the nature and extent of colonial tax demands enabled them to charge extra for a hut and poll tax

receipt, seize more livestock from defaulters than was necessary for taxes owing or simply demand livestock 'for the *asungu*' and add them to their own herds.

Tignor offers the argument that corruption among the colonial chiefs could best be attributed to the low salaries they were paid. Their salaries were totally unrealistic and inadequate compensation for the important duties demanded from them. In addition to enriching themselves, chiefs had to appropriate wealth to finance the tribal retainers since for a long time no government salaries were allocated to them. Some of the colonial chiefs were very corrupt and adopted a very ruthless policy of exploitation of their positions to amass wealth.

Tignor's work is relevant to this thesis in that it shows the attitude of the colonial chiefs towards material gains and the ways and means which they used to acquire wealth. It is, however, important to point out that it would be unjust to generalize from examples of some few chiefs that all colonial chiefs were corrupt self-seekers concerned with their own material gain and who did very little for their people.

Those historians who have attempted to write about colonial chiefs in Ukambani have tended to focus their attention on Machakos District while at the same time overlooking the neighbouring Kitui District. Munro F.J has written on colonial chiefs in Kambaland. However, his study concentrates mainly on Machakos District. His discussion centres around the colonial chiefs in that district and mentions nothing about colonial chiefs in the neighbouring Kitui District. Other historians who have attempted to write about colonial chiefs in Kambaland have, like Munro, concerned themselves with Machakos District. Robert Tignor (1971) in his article picks up three tribes in Kenya as his case studies- Kikuyu, Kamba and Maasai including the Ibo of Nigeria. Like Munro he

talks of colonial chiefs in Machakos District with reference to the Kamba tribe. However, both Munro's and Tignor's works are quite useful and relevant to this study.

Ochieng W.R (1972) in his article portrays chief Kasina as being a development oriented chief. He points out that chief Kasina was quick to realise that water shortage was a severe problem in his location and that the colonial government could do little to alleviate the problem. Realising the predicament of his people, he formed the Migwani Committe Council which was a voluntary self improvement organization open to people of all ages and sex in his location. Their first undertaking was the building of water dams and wells all over the location. Ochieng's article deals with the role of colonial chiefs in general and so he only mentions chief Kasina as his case study of those colonial chiefs who lived up to the requirement of their offices and who were concerned with the well-being of their people.

Margaret Ndambiri, in her dissertation, "A Biographical essay on ex-Senior Chief Njiri wa Karanja" (1972) also portrays chief Kasina as one who lived up to the requirements of his office and one who was loved and respected not only by his own people but also by the often haughty and ungrateful colonial officials. Ndabiri goes ahead to equal Kasina with such other colonial chiefs as Musa Nyandusi of Gusii, Odera Akongo of the Luo and Karuri wa Gakure of Kikuyu. Her work only deals briefly with the career of chief Kasina firstly due to the fact that she was primarily interested in writing a biography of chief Njiri wa Karanja, and thus mentions chief Kasina only when giving examples of other chiefs.

Mchael F. O'Leary (1979), in his Ph.D thesis also has occasion to refer to chief Kasina as a very progressive chief whose reputation went beyond his locational



boundaries. He, however, does not say more about the chief and one is left wondering what is actually meant by the word "progressive". Likewise Carson, J.B in his book, *The life story of a Kenyan chief* (1957) describes chief Kasina as a leading and the most senior chief of the Wakamba of Kitui District. He, however, does not discuss much more about the chief. Though Carson carried out some oral interviews with the late chief Kasina, he doesn't provide a detailed account of the biography of chief Kasina.

The existing literature on colonial chiefs in general and colonial chiefs in Ukambani in particular do not provide detailed account of senior chief Kasina. Few historians like Ochieng W. R. (1972), Ndambiri. M. (1972) and O'Leary F. M. (1979) only mention Chief Kasina in passing without given an insight as to who he was and how and why he became what he was. This is quite understandable since their works were concerned with providing biographies of other colonial chiefs and only mention Chief Kasina in passing especially when giving case studies of those colonial chiefs who lived up to the requirements of their offices and who were concerned with the well being of their people. Even Carson J. B. (1957) who carried some interviews with the late Chief Kasina doesn't give a systematic, coherent and objective account of chief Kasina hence the need for this study to demystify and expose who chief Kasina was and how and why he had become what he was.

## **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study falls in the field of colonialism which was a product of European imperialism. The essence of imperialism was exploitation. Based on European exploitation of Africa, it can be conceded that colonialism was a system which functioned

well in the interest of the metropolis.<sup>9</sup> Colonial states worked directly in the economic exploitation of Africa. In order to attain their exploitative goals, the colonial governments sought to work through traditional institutions thus establishing at the local level the office of the chief.

Collaboration was the basis of colonialism and the theory of collaboration states that the working of colonialism was determined by the indigenous collaborative systems which connected its coloniser and the colonised components. As a result, the choice of collaborators largely determined the organization and character of colonial rule.<sup>10</sup>

The benefits which accrued from identifying with the colonisers tempted many of the indigenous people to become collaborators. Colonialism therefore offered an alternative source of wealth and power which had to be exploited in order to preserve or improve the social standing of indigenous elites in the traditional order. Some people collaborated with the missionaries in their quest for spiritual satisfaction. Others collaborated with the traders for material gain while those who collaborated with the colonial administrators hoped to obtain monetary gain. Thus at any level, collaborators exploited the wealth, prestige and influence derived from the colonisers to increase and improve their traditional standing as well as improving their modern opportunities.

Prominent among the collaborators were chiefs through whom the colonising powers sought to administer their territories. By so doing the colonial governments sought to work through the established traditional institutions. They required the chiefs to play their roles within the colonial setting. chiefs therefore acted as the channel through

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<sup>9</sup> Hobson, J.A. *Imperialism: A Study*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1938 and Lenin, V.I. *Imperialism, The Highest stage of Capitalism; a popular Outline*, London: Martin Lawrence, 1934.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, R. "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: A sketch for a Theory of Collaboration", in *Studies in the Theory of Collaboration*, by Owen R. (ed), London: Longmans, 1972.

which government policies would be put across to the people. The colonial officials made the policies which they wanted to be implemented. They then passed them to the chiefs who would in turn lead the people in implementing them. On the other hand people passed whatever grievances they had to the colonial officials through the chiefs. Chiefs acted as the go-between the colonial officials and the people.

Both the chiefs and the colonial officials acted for the mutual benefit of each other. The co-operation of the chiefs enhanced the moral presence of the colonisers. At the same time the colonial officials guaranteed and safeguarded the position of the chiefs. It can therefore be argued that collaboration was simply a system of ruling cheaply given the badly strained resources and a handful of European administrators. Lack of enough European officials raised the necessity of working with the local rulers hence the indispensability of welcoming the collaborators. It is also important to note that chiefs made the colonial rule far much cheaper because they were poorly paid.

Colonial chiefs were subject to a double pressure and double pull from the rulers above and the ruled below. The rulers expected the chiefs to play their roles within the promulgated rules while their people considered the roles they were supposed to play to be unpopular. As a result chiefs found themselves caught between governmental pressure and popular criticism. The government on the one hand asked for their undivided loyalty while their people on the other hand expected services and favours which they could not provide without being accused of corruption and nepotism.<sup>11</sup>

Colonial chiefs had to balance the two popular demands and it was here that many failed. They had to take into account the interests of their people so as not to alienate

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<sup>11</sup> Gann, L.R. *Burden of Empire*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1968, p226.

themselves from the people while at the same time they had to satisfy their masters that they merited their continued stay in power. It is within this context and framework that the career of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina Ndo is examined and analysed.

## 1.8 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

African personalities occupied central positions whether as collaborators, rebels or trade unionists during the colonial period and these positions influenced the masses in one way or another, thus it is impossible to ignore the studies of such important personalities in our colonial history. It is important to find out how they influenced the masses and the reaction of the colonial government towards such personalities. In other words it is important to give biographies of such personalities wider sketches. As John Iliffe puts it, a biographical approach to history can yield useful results because it furthers our understanding of broader issues and processes in any given society.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, it is my conviction that if we have to understand the colonial history of Kitui District and its effects, it is necessary to study the biography of Senior Chief Kasina wa Ndo. He occupied a central position in the colonial administrative machinery, a position which favoured colonial domination and this makes him one of the outstanding personalities in the district for historical study.

It is justifiable to study the biography of chief Kasina because he provides a framework in the study of economic, political and social developments in Kitui District during the colonial period. This was the period when the people of Kitui were experiencing the impact of western education, good methods of farming such as soil

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<sup>12</sup> Iliffe, J. *Modern Tanzanians*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973.

erosion control, construction of boreholes and earth dams among other development projects. It will be interesting to find out what role chief Kasina played in shaping the economic, social and political life of Kitui people during this period.

This study is also necessary in understanding the policies of the colonial government in respect to uplifting the welfare of the local people. By studying the development projects taking place at the time of chief Kasina's tenure as a colonial chief and the circumstances under which they were initiated, we can be in a position to understand the colonial government's attitude towards developing the colonial territories. This study definitely establishes whether chief Kasina together with the other chiefs in the district "campaigned" for these development projects or they were initiated as an overall development strategy adopted by the colonial administration to develop the area.

It can be argued that the role which the colonial chiefs in Kitui District played in Kenya's colonial history has not attracted the attention of many scholars. Historians writing about colonial chiefs have tended to focus their attention on leading colonial chiefs mainly from central and western parts of Kenya completely outshadowing those from other parts of the country. However, there were outstanding colonial chiefs from other parts like Eastern Province who played a leading role in shaping Kenya's colonial history and whose contributions should not be relegated to the periphery. For instance, it is worth noting that chief Kasina of Kitui District equalled (in many respects) personalities such as chief Waruhiu wa Kungu of Kiambu, Musa Nyandusi of Gusii, Odera Akong'o of Luo just to name a few and as such needs to be offered a place in Kenya's colonial history.

Senior chief Solomon Kasina Ndoo was one of those in colonial Kenya of whom one hears a lot about and yet can hardly come across numerous literature on him. Despite the fact that he was a leading colonial chief in Kitui District and one whose fame went beyond his locational boundaries, it is surprising that not many historians writing about colonial chiefs in general or writing the history of Kitui District in particular have had interest in Kasina. Likewise, many historians who have attempted to write about colonial chiefs in Ukambani have focused their attention on chiefs in Machakos District. Such notable scholars like Munro F.J. and Tignor L.R. have tried to write about colonial chiefs in Kambaland but their efforts have been concentrated on Machakos District without making any reference to the neighbouring Kitui District.

It is thus evident that there is no single historical work in existence which primarily devotes itself to the study of the life history of Senior Chief Kasina Ndoo despite the fact that both Ndambiri and Ochieng portray him as a chief who occupied a central position in the colonial administration in Kitui. The available information about Kasina apart from being scanty and scattered in various documents has also left many important gaps which require to be filled up. This justifies a systematic, coherent and objective account of chief Kasina. Also Kasina's association with colonial administration earned him a reputation which has long persisted even after his retirement as a chief and also after his death. For the people of Kitui District, the name Kasina has for a long time been a "household" name. However, despite this, many people do not seem to know who he was beyond the fact that he was a colonial chief. This has been the case since no scholar has ever undertaken a systematic and detailed study of Kasina's life history. This

justifies a comprehensive biography of chief Kasina so as to demystify and expose who he really was and how and why he became what he was.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 SOCIO-POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1.0 SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

##### 2.1.1 SOCIAL TIES OF KINSHIP

The basic unit in Kamba social organisation is *musyi*. The word *musyi* literally means a “family”, and is also used to refer to a home. Thus, as Ndeti clearly points out, the word *musyi* combines both residence and affinal-consanguinal relations.<sup>1</sup> Hence, among the Kamba people *musyi* assumes at least three broad relations. The first one is monogamy. This refers to the man, his wife and their children.

The second relationship is polygamy. This type of relationship, (where a man married more than one wife) was most popular in traditional Kamba society. The capacity of a man to marry more than one wife depended on his wealth. Only those who could afford to pay *ngasya* (bride-price) could marry another wife. And in Kamba traditional society, only old established men could afford the luxury of more than one wife. A young man depended largely on the good will of his father for the payment of the bride-price, hence the father determined whether his son would get a second wife or not. Often, if a man was wealthy and could afford to pay the bride-price, he took a second wife with the consent of his parents and, of course, that of his first wife.

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<sup>1</sup> Ndeti, K., op.cit., 66.



The last relationship is that of the extended family. This includes both monogamy and polygamy. Strong ties of consanguineous and affinal relationships over three generations, namely, grandparents, parents, siblings, and also collateral relatives, are maintained. Primarily, this is a functional social unit which allows for mutual dependability and symbiosis relationships. Each member of the extended family contributes to the welfare of the family according to his or her experience, age, wisdom and skill. For instance, the grandparents stay around the home with their grandchildren, teaching them the wisdom of age-old traditions, while the rest of the able-bodied pursue various economic activities and other necessities of family life.

*Mbai*, or the clan, ranks second to *musyi* in the kin structure and function of the Kamba people. The functions of the *mbai* merge on many points with those of *musyi*, but they differ both quantitatively and qualitatively. The first distinction between the two is membership. The membership of *musyi* is usually small in relation to that of *mbai*. *Mbai* comprises several families that can trace their descent to a remote common ancestor.<sup>2</sup> *Mbai* can therefore be characterized as a clan organisation which traces its line of descent from a known hero, although finer distinctions of direct relations to the founding hero remain unclear.

Traditionally, each *mbai* derived its name from the some activity of its founder. For example, *mbaa Amutei* (trappers) derived their name from a great ancestor who was noted for trapping animals. Similarly *mbaa Atui* (blacksmith) derived their name from a great ancestor who was an outstanding blacksmith. Likewise *mbaa mutongoi* (leader)

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<sup>2</sup> Muthiani, J., *Akamba From Within* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), 15.

derived their name from their ancestor who was a natural leader. Thus, every clan has a name which is descriptive of the ancestor of that particular clan.

One of the functions of the clan was to make sure that its members adhere to the codes proclaimed by the founder. These codes included general good conduct and disciplining any member who failed to fulfill their obligations of family. For example, in a case of a man who beat his parents or mistreated other people, his age-group could come together and punish him. Also a father who became cruel to his grown-up children or mistreated his wife could be reported to the *mbai* and be punished by his age-group members of the clan. A cruel wife could also be punished by the husband's *mbai* age-group.

Among the Kamba, *mbai* provided codes and means of social control among its members. For example, if a man could not afford to pay the bride-price for his wife because of being poor and if members of the clan recognized that such was the case, then the clan ordered its members to contribute towards the payment for the same. The contributions had to be made, and any one failing to pay could receive severe punishment. This was the case, since all proclamations made by the clan were binding on all its members, and the last entanglement a person wanted was one involving clan. It can therefore be argued that clans used to undertake major social-economic problems cooperatively. They bore the immediate responsibility of disciplining their members as well as helping those in economic crisis.<sup>3</sup>

Within the clan, there were codes governing its function and existence. For example one of the codes found among the *Asii* clan was that no one was allowed to eat

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

liver and that any *musii* (person of *Asii*) breaking this code of conduct was bound to suffer from permanently watery eyes. *Mbaa Aombe* similarly urged their members not to eat *nduva* (certain species of antelope) because it caused itching, irritation and swelling of the body. Members of *Aombe* who broke this code suffered from the prescribed body reactions.

### 2.1.2 POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The age-set and class ranks among the Kamba were the basis of their political organization (see diagram next page). The highest age-set and class rank was composed of *atumia* (elders). For one to be recognized as a *mutumia*, he had to make payment to those who were already *atumia*. It is, however, important to underscore the fact that all *atumia* were not on the same level. The highest in rank were those who administered the affairs of the clan and watched over religion. These were known as the *atumia ma nzama* (council of elders) and *atumia ithembo* (shrine elders).

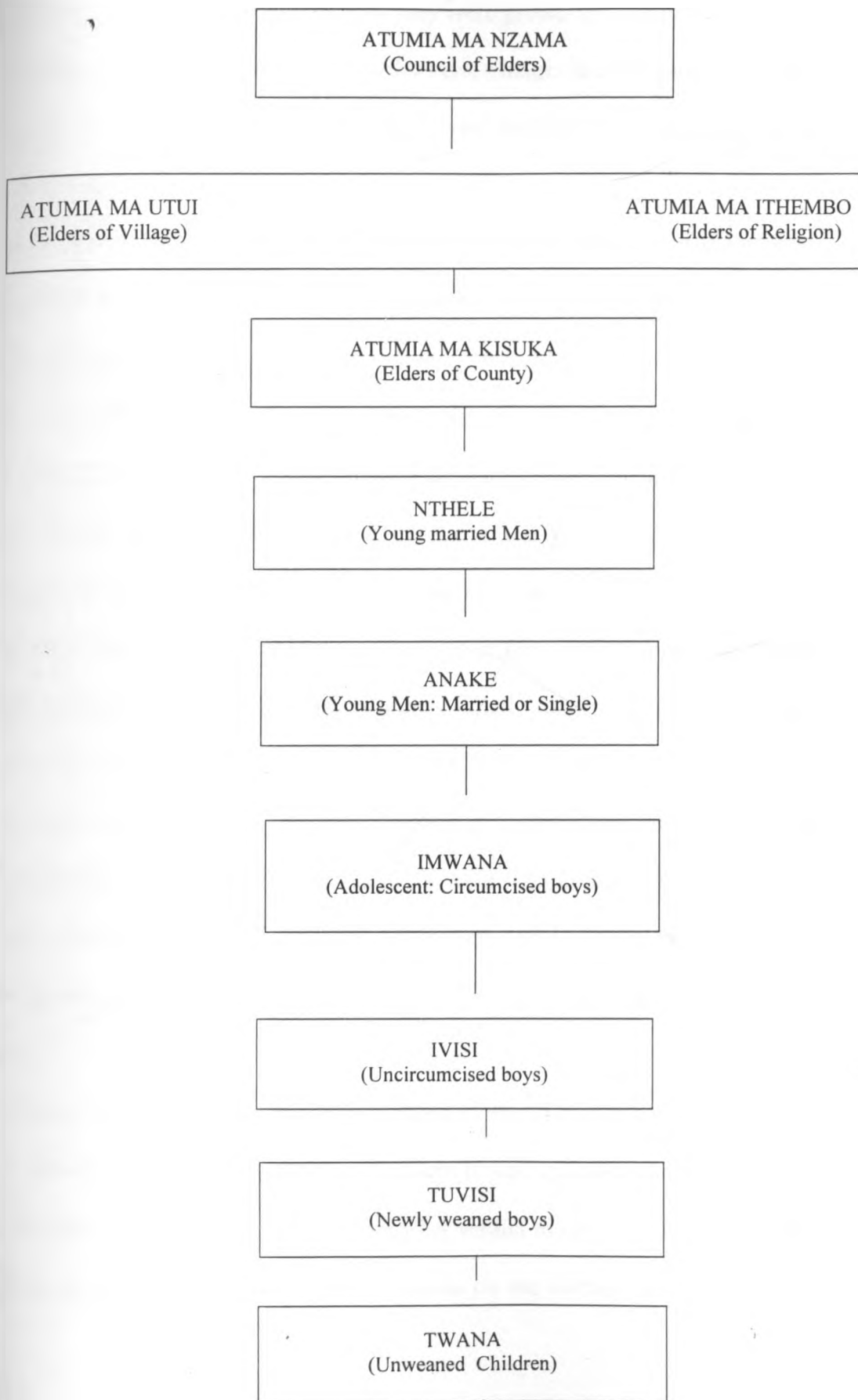
According to Lindblom, the attainment of a higher grade among the *atumia* was chiefly a question of economic means.<sup>4</sup> However, this was only one aspect. Other considerations were made when moving from one grade to another. For instance, age was an important factor. It was uncommon to find middle-age *atumia* in the council of elders. This was a preserve for the senior members of the clan, and experience and knowledge of clan traditions were also considered.

From early times, a patriarchal form of government prevailed among the Kamba people. Every *mutumia* extracted obedience from the members of his family, and he had

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<sup>4</sup> Lindblom, G., *The Akamba in British East Africa: An Ethnological Monograph* (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri, 1920), 144.

# AKAMBA SOCIAL PRESTIGE HIERARCHY



absolute authority over his sons even long after they were grown-ups and had families of their own. However, questions which concerned several villages and the clan as a whole and which were of general interest, were dealt with and decided by a large assembly of elders called *nzama* (council).

The affairs of the clan were therefore in the hands of a council of elders also known as *nzama*, of which only *atumia* were members. However, not all *atumia* were members of the council of elders. In fact, the *atumia* grade did not in itself carry with it the right to a seat in the council of elders. Any *mutumia* who wished to be admitted in the council of elders had to make a special payment to the sitting council members and had to be a member of the immediate lower grade. It was the sitting council members who had the right to appoint and determine the suitability of the new recruits.

The most important function of the *nzama* was to form a court which dealt with and decided all kinds of cases. The court meetings usually took place in the open air usually under a tree in a designated place, and a crowd of interested listeners were allowed to attend the proceedings. The word *nzama* in Kikamba means "secret" and was possibly used as the name of the court because after the disputing parties had been heard and the case debated among the council members, the oldest and most experienced *atumia* among the council members withdrew to a secret place where they would decide on a verdict.

A verdict was based on the evidence induced by the disputing parties as well as on the witnesses cross-examined by the council elders. It was upon the selected *atumia* to decide on the strength of the evidence given on what verdict to arrive at. Sometimes the elders (sitting as judges) could not reach a consensus on the verdict. This was usually

because the disputing parties did not hesitate to make wrong statements, hence making it a very difficult and lengthy business for the elders to arrive at a decision. When the elders reached a deadlock in their efforts to reach a verdict, it became necessary for them to vote so as to decide the verdict to give.

The verdict arrived at was supposed to be binding to both parties. However, when either party felt dissatisfied with the verdict, or even when the elders could not come to a decision in any other way, the use of *kithiitu* or *muma* (oath) was resorted to. The *kithiitu* was used as a last resort, and both parties were supposed to swear that they were right.<sup>5</sup>

The breaking of an oath sworn over *kithiitu* was considered to be followed by death, and the consequence was that the guilty party either confessed or refused to swear, in which case he was at once judged guilty. At the end of the trial both parties would often swear that they were to perform exactly what had been imposed on them. They also used to swear to their honest intention, in the case of internal feuds, to keep any agreement entered into.<sup>6</sup>

The executive authority of the *nzama* was discharged by the *atumia ma kisuka*, who were supposed to put into effect the decisions arrived at by the *nzama*. If, for example, the plaintiff refused to be present at the trial, members of the *kisuka* would go and fetch him. When anyone persisted in disobeying, the *atumia ma kisuka* could be instructed by the council elders to impound a certain number of his goats or cattle. At the same time the men of *kisuka* were required to be present when cases were tried, and sat

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

and listened so that they could later on, in turn gain admission to the *nzama*. As Muthiani rightfully points out, the *kisuka* was a preparatory institution for entry into the *nzama*.<sup>7</sup>

The *nzama* also decided on wars of aggression. The council of elders had to give permission before any war expedition could be carried out. After they gave their consent, experienced warriors, who were normally of the age-set of *nthele*, were selected as leaders, the so called *athiani*, but their authority was only temporary, and in times of peace they occupied no public position in the clan.

Next to its duties as a judicial authority, the other most important function of the *nzama* was the care and maintenance of religion and the offering of sacrifices. Among the elders of the council, there were those *atumia* who were specialized in the matters of religion, known as *atumia ma ithembo*. They were also members of the *nzama* and could best be termed a "sub-committee" of the *nzama*. To the religious duties of *nzama* pertained also that of carrying out the ceremony of purification on the advent of all public misfortunes such as outbreak of epidemics and cattle plague.<sup>8</sup>

These old men of the *nzama* and the *ithembo* (place of sacrifice) were the custodians of the tribe's traditions, in the manners and customs pertaining to which they were well versed. They saw to it that they were maintained, and they had on the other hand the authority to prevent the rise of customs which they considered harmful and they could abolish customs which were already in existence. Anyone who was in doubt as to how he ought to proceed in a certain case according to the customs of the tribe went to the *atumia ma nzama* for information for which he paid a small fee such as a goat or a bull if he was a rich man.

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<sup>7</sup> Muthiani, J., op.cit., 83.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

From the diagram given, it seems that the *atumia ma nzama* represented the highest authority with the *atumia ma ithembo* below them. However, this was not the case. In fact *atumia ma ithembo* could best be described as being a "sub-committee" of the council of elders. Hence, they were also members of the *nzama*, supporting the argument that the two were the top grades in the Kamba political organization.

Below them were the *atumia ma utui*. These were in charge of a locality. *Utui* (location) was made up of several *ivalo* (sub-locations). The *atumia ma utui* were supposed to run the affairs of their *utui*. They could hear ordinary cases which affected members of their *utui*. However, complicated cases which they could not handle were forwarded to the council of elders for further arbitration. This actually shows that among the Kamba, a kind of local government existed with the council of elders functioning as a kind of central government for the whole clan.

Once a man was officially recognized as a *mutumia* or a member of the council of elders upon payment of a certain fee to the members of the *nzama*, and it was the *nzama* elders who recognized such a person as an elder, one first underwent the grade of *atumumia ma kisuka* where he would be one of those with the responsibility of counseling about war, peace and essential communal work, such as digging a large water hole for the cattle in the case of a river drought.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.2.0 PRE-COLONIAL KAMBA ECONOMY

The topography of the land inhabited by the Kamba people called for a mixed farming economy of animals and crops. Traditionally, the Kamba people cultivated fields

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 84.



along the river valleys and other well-watered places, supplemented by fertile gentle slopes in the highland areas, when there was enough rain. Shifting cultivation was practised by the slash-and-burn procedure, abandoning exhausted fields after a short time, depending on how long the soil fertility could support the crops. A broad-bladed, one-edged sword called *kivanga* was used for clearing the fields. Men did the hard work of clearing and cultivating the fields while women did most of planting, weeding and harvesting.

On their fields, the Kamba planted maize, sorghum, millet and other traditional grains. For tubers, they had various kind of potatoes, yams and arrowroots in the river valleys and swamps. They planted various kinds of legumes, including cowpeas and pigeonpeas, while common creepers were gourds (or calabashes), sweet potatoes and pumpkins.

The animals kept by the Kamba included cattle, goats and sheep. Animal wealth had a high prestige, with cattle the most prestigious. Those people who kept large herds of cattle were held in great respect. In other words animal wealth defined the social status of a person. As a result, every man strived hard to own as many cattle as possible since the Kamba attached great value to cattle.

Apart from meat, goats gave milk, which was used only to supplement the commonly used cow milk. On the other hand, the fat-tailed African type of sheep was also used to supplement meat, and its fat was used for cooking, seasoning and also for ceremonial rituals. Many Kamba people had a belief about sheep's fat being a protection against witchcraft when eaten.

From cow's milk, they got butter and ghee, the latter being extracted from the former through a technique which called for churning the milk in a calabash until butter started collecting, after which the milk was poured into a large half-calabash and then collected and ladled off by a wooden spoon. Then some of the butter that was not going to be used right away was boiled with a millet flour to absorb the impurities of the remaining milk. This was the method used to extract ghee from butter. At the same time, animal skins were used as baby cribs, knife-sheaths, quivers, men's hats and bags as well as sandals. They were also used as clothes and bedding after intensive beating and conditioning.

The animals were also used for traditional payment of bride-price. Traditionally, the bride-price, known among the kamba as *ngasya*, was paid in terms of so many cows, goats and sometimes (but not common) sheep. There was not a standard amount set for bride-price but it was a common practise that the girl's bride-price should be the same as that of her mother. However, it was the number of goats that varied not cows, unless one counted cows in place of goats.<sup>10</sup>

The Kamba people were also expert hunters. With their bows and arrows, they could hunt during the day. They killed carnivores to protect their livestock, and they hunted game animals to supplement their food. Other than hunting, they also used trapping method, whereby string traps were used for small animals and pitfall traps for the larger animals. For a pitfall trap, they dug a large hole in the ground along the animal tracks. The soil was thrown away and the top of the hole was covered, first by a network

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<sup>10</sup> Muthiani, J., op.cit., 32.

of small thin sticks, then by little grass and twigs to make the area look as natural as possible. The animal would fall into the pit upon stepping on the twigs and grass leaves.

Bee honey was used widely. As Muthiani points out, in the tropical jungle-like grassland which covered most of Kambaland, a lot of bees were found, some of which made honey anywhere, in holes on the ground, or trees or in beehives.<sup>11</sup> When the honey was gathered, it was stored in special drums made of very soft wood carefully hollowed to make a very thin drumwork. The drum was covered on both sides with special skins, with one of them serving as a lid. The honey was readily consumed when raw or it was used to make the local brew. It was also an important ingredient in the payment of bride-price.

During the pre-colonial period, the Kitui region supported a wide variety of wildlife due to the presence of thick forests and thickets. These included such animals as elephants, buffaloes, lions, leopards, monkeys, gazelles, hyenas and many others. These animals provided food and items of trade. For instance, the Kitui Kamba were well known for their long-distance trade in ivory with the coastal people during the pre-colonial period. The distribution of the larger animals in Kitui has been affected by human settlement. Few, if any, wild animals are now found in areas of high population density. Most of the larger animals have been driven into the neighbouring Tsavo National Park.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

## 2.3.0 HISTORICAL SETTING

### 2.3.1 MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT OF KAMBA PEOPLE

The Kamba people have inhabited the region of present-day Machakos, Kitui, Makueni and Mwingi Districts from pre-colonial times. Statements as to the origin of the tribe are contradictory and numerous thus making it almost impossible to come to a definite conclusion in the matter.

Two historians<sup>12</sup> writing on the subject agree that the Kamba came to their present homelands from the south. Jackson locates the place of origin of Kamba migration northwards in the stretch of countryside that radiates outwards from Mount Kilimanjaro.<sup>13</sup> Munro is less definite and states that no such precise siting can be made because the Kamba use the name Kilimanjaro simply to represent the southern point of the compass.<sup>14</sup> He claims that the Kamba immigrants came to the Machakos hills as part of the dispersal of the north-eastern Bantu-speaking peoples sometime between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Some Kamba traditions of origin claim that the Kamba came to the Machakos area through Kikumbuliu in the vicinity of Chyulu hills. A period of residence in Kikumbuliu could be connected with the beliefs that the name "Kamba" derives from an association with the baobab tree. Traditionally Kikumbuliu was an area which had been associated with a heavy concentration of the baobab trees called *mwaamba* by the Kamba, the fruit being known as *ngamba*. Traditionally the tree was of much importance

<sup>12</sup> Munro, F. J., *Colonial Rule and the Akamba* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 8-11 and Jackson, K., "Dimensions of Kamba Pre-colonial History" in *Kenya Before 1900*. Ogot B.A (ed), (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1976), 180-194.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson, K., *op.cit.*, 181.

<sup>14</sup> Munro, F.J., *op.cit.*, 9.

to the Kamba people. It served two important functions in their life. Firstly the Kamba made from it their most prized string called *ikanda* (or *kamba* in Kiswahili) and secondly it was used as an *ithembo*, a sacred tree or shrine. It is, however, evident that many historians<sup>15</sup> agree that the ancestors of the Kamba came to the Machakos area from the southeast through Makueni and Nzauni. They, however, disagree on the place of origin, some claiming that the Kamba came from the area around Mount Kilimanjaro, while others place the ancient home of the Kamba down towards the coast in the neighbourhood of Giriamaland. Yet still some claim that the Kamba, together with the other Bantu-speaking peoples of the eastern highlands, came from the Shungwaya area to the northeast.

The land which the Kamba came to settle was largely hill country bordered in the west by the Kapiti and in the north by the Athi plains. To the east, it bordered the Athi River which curves round the solitary hill known as Donyo Sabuk to flow to the south-east.

### 2.3.2 EARLY IMMIGRANTS TO KITUI

The Kitui Kamba moved into what is today Kitui District from Machakos, which is believed to have been the initial place of settlement of the Kamba. Oral traditions suggest that the kyulu (or Chyulu) hills were the site of the original division of the Kitui and Machakos Kamba. Jackson specifically argues that all migrations into Kitui came eastwards from Machakos.<sup>16</sup> After crossing the Athi River, the Kitui Kamba first settled

<sup>15</sup> Such as Prins, A.J.H. (1952), Lambert, H.E. (1946), Lindblom, G. (1920), Munro, F.J. (1975) and Jackson, K. (1976).

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, K., *op.cit.*, 204.

around the Yatta plains before moving in all directions as they increased in numbers and as the demand for grazing and farming land increased.

It is important to note that the territorial expansion was a continuing process taking place not in any series of sharply defined stages but rather in a slow, protracted advance. The main dynamic was a slow growth in population and a relative abundance of land matched the needs of the growing population for land to cultivate, for grazing of livestock and for trees on which to hang beehives.

Land was quite plentiful and permitted the abandonment of the unit of agriculture when the soil had been exhausted. Abundance of land encouraged high degree of mobility and as a result a continually expanding frontier of settlement resulted. Individual pioneers moved into the bush or wasteland and established their own homesteads and were joined by members of other clans who settled nearby. As a result, a custom evolved whereby elder sons left home to set up their own homesteads.

The group of Kamba who left the Machakos area and crossed the Athi River into Kitui must have been attracted by the plentiful open grazing and hunting opportunities which the Kitui bush country offered. Another reason for this migration could have been that the Kamba were trying to escape from the raiding Maasai.

The migration into Kitui was a continuing process, yet the physical separation was sufficiently strong to permit the development of a number of differences between the two sections both in language and in styles of personal adornment. According to Dundas, it is certain that this migration, whatever its details may have did take place. Many old

men whom he interviewed stated that their ancestors came from Machakos and thus he arrives at a conclusion that the story was too well known to be entirely doubted.<sup>17</sup>

Following the migration, there seems to have been a gradual spreading of the Kitui Kamba over the whole of present-day Kitui District, from around the east side of the Yatta, where it is said that there was a large settlement of them. It thus seems likely that the Kitui Kamba settled around the foot of the Yatta, and spreading from these, adopted other customs and differences of speech after leaving their original settlement.

From Yatta settlement, the Kitui Kamba moved to the hill complexes of Ikutha, Kanziko, Mutha and Inyuu until eventually they reached the central block of mountains located in central Kitui, including Mutito hills. From there migrations went south-eastwards towards Zombe. At Zombe, one migratory path went towards Makongo mountain and from there to Endau hill while another edged southwards towards Mutha and Kanziko where there were Kamba settlements already.

Another migratory route from the central block of mountains went northwards through Mutonguni and Migwani hill ranges, reaching as far as the hills which surround Mwingi. At Mwingi, one migratory route continued northwards reaching the Mumoni range, while the other followed Enziu River eastwards. At Nguni, this migratory path split. One route moved northwards to the Thunguthu hill ranges of Mai, Ngomeni and Tolotwa while the other route turned southwards towards the hill complexes of Imba and Ukasi.

It is believed that before the Kamba migrated from Machakos into the Kitui area, some parts of this area were inhabited by the Galla. According to Dundas, by the time the Kamba were crossing the Athi into Kitui, the Galla inhabited Kitui as far east as the

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<sup>17</sup> Dundas, C., "The Kitui Akamba", *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 33, 1913, 481.

Mutito hiiis.<sup>18</sup> The Kamba made uninterrupted war against them, driving them gradually back until they seemed to have retired into their own country. The Galla were weak in numbers but they were fierce and warlike, so that it is evident that although the Kamba outnumbered them they must have been considerably more united.

The Kamba were also in constant conflict with the Tharaka people and the Embu people whom they encountered as they migrated further north. It is believed that the Tharaka people occupied the northern part of present-day Kitui District long before the Kitui Kamba moved on to occupy the area. And once they did occupy the area, they waged constant attacks on the Tharaka people, raiding them for cattle, and hence pushed them further north into their present day area of occupation.

### 2.3.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL RULE IN KITUI DISTRICT

From 1895 to 1902, Kitui region was part of a loosely defined Athi District, which was governed from Machakos some seventy miles west of Kitui station. Athi District was one of those districts which made up what was known as Ukamba province. However, from 1902 onwards Kitui region was administered as a separate district with its own District Commissioner (D.C.).<sup>19</sup> This marked the beginning of effective colonial rule in Kitui District.

One of the first colonial officials to serve in the newly established district was Mr. Charles Dundas, who was posted to the district in 1908 as a District Officer (D.O.). According to Dundas, Kitui had in the previous years been regarded as one of those back-

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 483.

<sup>19</sup> O'Leary, F.M., "Variation and change amongst Kitui Akamba: a comparative study of two Vicinages", Ph.D. Thesis University of Manchester, 1979, 46.



of-beyond districts that did not merit more attention than that needed to keep the flag flying, to maintain after a manner the King's peace and to collect taxes as best one might from penurious natives disinclined to pay them.<sup>20</sup>

It should be remembered that once the British conquered and established their rule over Kenyan societies, the next pressing problem was how to administer this large country. A sound administrative system had to be adopted. Several factors dictated the kind of administrative system which came to be followed. In the first place, the colonial government was in short supply of funds. Secondly there was an acute shortage of trained European officials to work for the colony.

Thus, owing to the above factors and for administrative purposes, the British divided Kenya into a small number of provinces, which were in turn divided into districts and locations. Provinces and districts were under the jurisdiction of British officials, the Provincial Commissioners (P.C.'s), D.C.'s, D.O.'s and Asst. D.O.'s respectively. Kitui District was one such administrative unit created by the colonial government for the sole purpose of effective colonial administration of the area.

After the creation of Kitui District, the plan was to divide the district into sub-sections termed locations, over which presided an administrative chief appointed by the D.C. on his assessment of the candidate's leadership qualities. Some of the leadership qualities which were considered included the previous attempts of the candidate to lead his people against raids, the candidate being a distinguished hunter or a *muthiani*. For example Kingau, appointed the first headman of Nuu location, had emerged as a natural leader in pre-colonial days when he organized the defense of Nuu *kivalo* against the raids

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<sup>20</sup> Dundas, C., *African Crossroads*, (London: Macmillan, 1955), 13-14.

of the residents of an adjacent Mutito *kivalo*.<sup>21</sup> Likewise Makuthu Nzioka, appointed headman of Endau location, was described as being “formerly a great hunter by report.”<sup>22</sup>

In appointing chiefs, the D.C. sometimes relied on the wishes of the people. The people of a location were given the opportunity to nominate those among themselves whom they thought could be their leader. This confirms the argument by Munro that, “in filling the posts of chiefs and headmen, the initiative lay with the Kamba people rather than the over-worked and rapidly rotating D.C.’s.”<sup>23</sup> Likewise, the D.C., commenting on the appointment of new chiefs in 1951, confessed that they were the best men available and that all were either first choices of the people or on the list of those nominated.<sup>24</sup>

It should, however, be pointed out that it was not always that the people were consulted whenever the D.C. had to make an appointment of a chief. There were instances when some men were appointed to the position of a chief without the people’s approval. This occurred mostly when the person preferred by the people did not possess what the D.C. considered to be good leadership qualities. For example, Kitheka Ngungu, the chief of Voo location proved to be inefficient. He was removed and replaced by Mbaki wa Masila, who likewise proved incapable. It was therefore necessary for the D.C. to make an appointment regardless of the wishes of this troublesome location.<sup>25</sup>

Initially Kitui District was divided into twenty-four administrative locations, each being presided over by a headman with sub-headmen as assistants.<sup>26</sup> Two of the locations

<sup>21</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/3, Kitui District Miscellaneous Statistics, pre 1914.

<sup>22</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/3, Kitui District Miscellaneous Statistics, pre 1914.

<sup>23</sup> Munro, F.J., op.cit., 58.

<sup>24</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/8, Kitui District Annual Report, 1951.

<sup>25</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/8, Kitui District Annual Report, 1951.

<sup>26</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1916.

were, however, amalgamated with others so that towards the end of colonial rule Kitui District had twenty-two administrative locations.

From 1902 onwards, the principle occupation of colonial administration in the district was the collection of taxes, the inducement of men to work outside the district, particularly on white settler farms and plantations, the establishment of trading centres, the building of roads, and to a minor degree the improvement of local practices in agriculture and the introduction of formal schooling. The policy of taxation was linked with the aim of extracting labour from the district. It was expected that at least some people would be forced to seek employment outside the district to meet tax payment requirements. These were the functions which the newly appointed chiefs were required to perform. Their effectiveness and suitability to occupy their offices was determined and judged according to how well they carried out these duties and functions.

#### 2.3.4 EFFECTS OF COLONIAL RULE ON THE KAMBA

With the establishment of colonial rule in Kitui, the long tradition of Kamba independence was approaching a fateful time. Initially the Kamba people had lived with minimal interference from outside their territory. Save for the minimal interactions with their neighbours, mostly the Maasai, Kikuyu, Embu and Tharaka during times of famines and wars, the Kamba lived an independent life free from outside interference.

The establishment of an alien rule over the Kamba people brought with it significant changes in their way of life. It brought social, economic and political changes which adversely affected their previous way of life. On the political front, the British introduced a new administrative system based on setting up one individual (referred to as a chief) as the one and only local authority. This was something totally new to the Kamba

since traditionally they did not have any government with structured powers for kings, chiefs or headmen. Instead the council of elders was the principle and ultimate authority in the community. Thus the introduction of colonial rule demanded that the Kamba people learn to accept the authority of an individual rather than the council of elders as the one and only local authority. This totally changed the pre-colonial political organization of the tribe even though the elders could, and did in some instances, continue to influence the chief, who though in theory a single authority, in practice faced serious constraints.

On the social front, colonial rule introduced formal education. Faced with the problem of lack of personnel, the colonial officials found it necessary to train the local people in order for them to assist with the administrative work. For example, the first school in Kitui District was built in Kitui town to train sons of headmen in arithmetic and literacy in swahili, with the view to using them as minor officials in administration.<sup>27</sup> In 1910 the school had fourteen scholars, but it was closed in April 1914 due to lack of interest among the local people. Only after World War One did the Kitui Kamba begin to see the importance of education. In 1921, it was reported that, "There is undoubtedly a desire for schools among the Kitui Kamba, and at least six more schools could have been opened had the necessary teachers and equipment been forthcoming."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the establishment of government schools, and later mission-supported schools, was a new phenomenon among the Kamba people. The Kamba had not experienced formal education. What existed was informal education, whereby parents and grandparents taught their children about the traditions and customs of their clans and

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O'Leary F.M., (1984), 36.

KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1921.

society verbally. The introduction of formal schooling entailed the acquisition of new ideas and values, which in turn affected the thinking and understanding of the Kamba, and their way of living.

At the same time colonial rule brought with it the establishment of missions and mission-schools. The principle task of the missionaries was to spread Christian teaching among the Kamba. Some aspects of Christian teaching contradicted Kamba traditional beliefs, practices and customs. As a result those who were converted to the new religion found it necessary to abandon some of their customs. For example, the Kamba people believed that there were some places which could not be settled since they were regarded as the dwelling places of the spirits or were believed to be prone to certain diseases. Christian teaching challenged this perception on the part of the Kamba people. For example, the missionaries would argue that there was nothing like dwelling places for spirits, and would encourage their converts to settle on the so-called sacred places. So what we find is a scenario whereby with the coming of missionaries and the establishment of missions in Kitui District, there is a decline in the importance of some traditional beliefs and customs. Some of the new converts never bothered to follow some of the ways of life of their forefathers, as the teachings of the new religion could not accommodate the traditional beliefs and customs.

On the economic front, colonial rule introduced money economy. The Kamba were used to barter trade whereby people exchanged what they had in excess with whatever they did not have. With the introduction of the colonial economy, money became an important ingredient of people's way of life. For example, the policy of taxation which was introduced by the colonial government in Kitui was linked with the

aim of extracting labour from the district. It was expected that at least some people would be forced to seek employment outside the district in order to meet their tax requirement.

Wage labour brought with it the possibility for people to accumulate wealth who might not have otherwise been able to do so. Those who had access to wage labour accumulated more wealth as compared to those who did not have access to paid employment. The end result was differentiation and the rise of social classes based on economic empowerment. The group of people who had early access to paid employment turned out to be the most well-off in their localities. It can therefore be seen that the establishment of colonial rule brought with it changes which affected the traditional way of life of the Kamba people and which determined the kind of life the Kamba people were going to live thereafter.

### **2.3.5 THE INSTITUTION OF CHIEFTAINSHIP IN KENYA**

Colonial officials, with African submission to their authority secured, were pressed by reluctant British taxpayers to find finances for their operations within the colonial territories. They therefore needed to consolidate their position through an enlargement of the administrative apparatus, to secure more effective control of local resources. This requirement in turn raised the issue of whether and in what way existing African systems of government could be incorporated into the new quasi-state structure of colonial administration.

The development of British administration in Kenya, as in other parts of Africa, was therefore influenced by several factors. It was lack of funds, shortage of trained European officials and the consequent need for local manpower, rather than preconceptions and theories about appropriate forms of colonial government, that were

paramount.<sup>29</sup> In the establishment of local systems of government, it was these factors which dictated British attitudes and opened the way for bargaining with African authorities and for African initiatives.

As in many other countries in Africa, the British government officials in Kenya followed the usual practice of establishing an administrative superstructure with a hierarchical civil service staffed by Europeans, administering areas divided into provinces and districts. The D.C. reported to the P.C. who in turn reported to the Governor. The latter was answerable to the Colonial Secretary. This formed a chain of command designed to transmit and enforce orders from the British Colonial Office. The chain was a weak link, short-staffed and over-worked.

Faced with many problems including that of maintaining law and order, the colonial administration decided that it needed officially appointed headmen or chiefs who might be held responsible for acts of lawlessness. The British therefore created chiefs not only among societies where they had been in existence, but even in societies where the institution of chieftainship had never existed and in these areas, they sometimes overlooked the traditional council of elders who were held as leaders of their societies and appointed those who collaborated with them. Colonial chiefs became the channel through which the colonial administration tried to administer the various areas over which they were in control. Chiefs thus formed a middle strata, elevated from the majority of citizens but subservient to the colonial administration.

The colonial chiefs were responsible to and owed their powers to the British officials. They worked under the strict supervision of these officers who assigned to them

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<sup>29</sup> Munro, F.J., *op.cit.*, 53.

the duties that they had to perform as part of their appointment to office. These chiefs were denied the freedom that the pre-colonial leaders had enjoyed and some of the judicial and political powers. The new colonial situation required them to follow the rules promulgated by the imperial power, and each chief's actions had to be geared towards these rules. In other words colonial rule created profound limitations on the judicial and political authority of traditional rulers.

Stanner, commenting on the institution of chieftainship in Kitui had the following observation to make:

The institution of chieftainship or headmanship is just as alien to Kamba tradition. There has been no precedent in their history for the centralization in one man or in a group of men of this order of so much legal, political, social and economic authority. Nevertheless the administration has persisted with its system of nominee headman. There has been much opposition, hostility, irritation, non-co-operation and at times wilful disobedience among the Kamba. The system may be said to work about as well, perhaps even better than might have been expected under such circumstances. The government is well enough aware of the weaknesses which are enough to outbalance the administrative advantages of retaining it.<sup>30</sup>

The powers and duties of chiefs revolved around three broad areas of responsibility. They were to maintain public order and could be fired if disturbances occurred in their areas. They were to keep roads clear, and they could hear petty cases. In addition they could issue orders restricting the manufacture of African liquor (local brew), the holding of drinking bouts, the cultivation of poisonous plants, the carrying of arms and any conduct likely to lead to unrest. As the official responsible for the village, chiefs were required to turn up able-bodied people for communal work.

Colonial chiefs also acted as mobilizers of local resources and this gave them ample occasion to enlarge their incomes, an opportunity which many took especially

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<sup>30</sup> Stanner, W.E.H., "The Kitui Akamba: A study of British colonial administration in East Africa" manuscript, 1938, 9.



among the "upstarts." Tax collecting methods of payment by result encouraged them to extract the largest possible revenue for the largest possible commission, while the confusion and uncertainty of the ordinary people about the nature and extent of colonial tax demands enabled them to charge extra for a hut tax receipt, seize more livestock from defaulters than was necessary for taxes owing, or simply demand livestock for the *asungu* (whitemen) and add them to their own herds.

Colonial chiefs thus devised many ways to enrich themselves. They used the courts to accumulate land holdings. As recruiters of labour, they accepted bribes to exempt certain peoples, and stock sold in distress for non-payment of tax was undervalued and purchased by the chiefs and their assistants.<sup>31</sup> Chiefs as such became the wealthiest persons in a location. They had large land holdings, many wives and stone homes. They were among the first to build European-style homes. All these were traditional signs of wealth, much of which was acquired through illegal use of their power.

However, some of the colonial chiefs took advantage of the new ideas brought by their colonial masters to improve the conditions of their people. They embarked on a programme of modernization, constructing schools and encouraging parents to send their children to school. They also improved on agriculture, trade and communication in their areas. Hence, while such chiefs loyally served their masters, they did not forget or alienate themselves from their people.

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<sup>31</sup> Tignor, L.R., "Colonial chiefs in chiefless societies", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No 3, October 1971, 66.

## 2.3.6 CHIEFTAINSHIP IN KITUI DISTRICT

When the British came to Kitui, they found a people weak of tribal structure, scattered over a vast area in an unconnected form of settlement and without traditional chiefs or headmen. Among the Kamba, Kikuyu and kindred tribes, chieftainship had never been established. The sole individual authority the Kamba man recognized was his father. As Dundas points out, "Is he my father?" was a remark occasionally heard when someone was exhorted to obey the chiefs or headmen who had been appointed.<sup>32</sup>

In Kitui District, like the rest of the districts in Kenya, chiefs were appointed by the D.C. on his assessment of the candidate's leadership qualities. Sometimes the people of the location were consulted on who should be chosen as a chief. In Kamba opinion, however, wealth was an important ingredient of any man's claim to leadership. It should be noted that not all men chosen as chiefs were men of influence. Some were young and without much influence. For example the D.C. noted that "Mbuvi Nzioka, the headman of Siontheka, was willing to assist but apparently did not have great control of his people." He further noted that chief Musau Kithesia of Mutonguni seemed to him rather useless, could not get his people under control who neither obeyed him nor the *nzama* while Kiema Mumo of Kanziko was described as "young and progressive."<sup>33</sup>

The fact that Kitui Kamba had influence over who should be appointed chief was further demonstrated by the D.C. when in 1951, he made the following comment:

...several chiefs were retired while new ones were appointed.  
All the retiring chiefs are pensionable. The new men were the available and should do well. All were either first choice of the people or in the list of those nominated.<sup>34</sup>

However, it should be emphatically stated that the people of the location were not always consulted when the appointment of the chiefs were made. There were times when

<sup>32</sup> Dundas, C. (1955), 38.

<sup>33</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/3, Kitui District Miscellaneous statistics, Pre 1914.

<sup>34</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/8, Kitui District Annual Report, 1951.

the D.C. appointed certain chiefs against the wishes of the people. This was the case especially if the D.C. considered the men in question to possess the qualities which he considered in the appointment of persons to chieftainship. The following could be cited as examples:

...the appointment of Ngwei wa Mutemi in 1935 over Ndatani and Ukasi combined as Ngomeni has proved very successful. Also Mwasya wa Mbenza appointed in 1935 against public wishes has brought some order to the Yatta location and his elders seem to have worked better with him.<sup>35</sup>

...Kitheka wa Ngungu of Voo, reported last year as the most inefficient was replaced in March by Mbaki wa Masila, who likewise proved incapable. It was therefore necessary to make an appointment regardless of the wish of this troublesome location.<sup>36</sup>

The administrative system based on setting up a single individual as the one and only local authority proved inadequate as well as inappropriate where council elders were the principle and ultimate authority of local administration in the community. Commenting on the colonial administrative system itself in Kitui in 1913, the D.C. noted that, "...the Native authority itself has appeared in a much altered aspect of late. Despite years of endeavour to establish authority in persons designated as chiefs or headmen, this has most singularly failed. This is due to the character of the tribe but principally to the real native authority which however imperceptible, yet constituted an irregressable buffer and opposition to the chief."<sup>37</sup>

One problem with the establishment of the chieftainship in Kitui was that the institution was itself alien to the Kamba people. Among the Kitui Kamba, the only recognized form of authority was the council of elders. Hence the appointment to position of great authority of an individual who possessed no traditional right whatsoever to

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<sup>35</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1936.

<sup>36</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1936.

<sup>37</sup> KNA, DC/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1913, 2.

exercise such powers was resented by the people. As such, the people naturally turned to their original authorities, the council of elders and readily enough submitted to them but to no other authority and the combination of the people and their elders could not be forced to accept unpopular authority.

The first generation of appointed chiefs faced a lot of resistance from the people. People were not ready to accept their authority while at the same time the colonial officials expected them to assert their authority over the subject people. It was as a result of this that the D.C. noted in 1913 that;

The chiefs, having proved a failure but the councils at least indispensable, a different scheme is called for..... The chief can not even be the head of the elders unless he is both of tribal standing and of an age which he would be useless for active work of any sort. His authority must therefore not be exercised as the head of, but the instrument of the council.<sup>38</sup>

The realization that the administrative system based on setting up a single individual as the one and only local authority proved inadequate precipitated a change in the structure of local administration in 1911 with the traditional council elders being co-opted into the administrative and judicial organizations of their locations under the Native Tribunal Rules of 1911. This was intended to generate a system more in keeping with Kamba tradition. In the new arrangement the elders were expected to do more than mere settling of cases. Every elder was expected to control and look after his locality. All communal work and the collection of taxes was to be supervised in each locality by its elder.

Many chiefs resented the curtailment of their former powers implied in the policy change. It led to confrontations and power struggles between chiefs and their councils.

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<sup>38</sup> KNA, DC/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1913, 2.

Headmen from the beginning were assisted by sub-headmen who also directed their own councils in their own parts of the locations. The upgrading of the *thome* elders led eventually to the decline in the importance of sub-headmen. Nonetheless the introduction of *nzama* elders was reported to bring an improvement on local administration- "these elders who were given official charge of small groups of villages in 1924 are still working well."<sup>39</sup>

By the late 1920's, headmen had lost their judicial responsibilities to special tribunals manned by the elders. These special tribunals were required to deal with all judicial matters in their area of operation. However, it should be noted here that chiefs continued to hold ad-hoc courts whereby they dealt with minor cases. In 1934 there were only four such tribunals in the whole district, at Katse, Mui, Mutomo and Kitui, with plans to begin another one at Migwani. Each tribunal consisted of a president (who was paid Ksh 20 per month) and a number of sitting elders, varying from 9 to 11. When sitting, an elder earned Ksh 15 per month. Each tribunal had the services of a clerk paid by the Local Native Council.<sup>40</sup>

With the division of judicial and administrative functions of government, the headman's role developed into one of prosecutor, head constable and executive of his location.<sup>41</sup> It should, however, be pointed out that despite the separation of functions, chiefs still continued to hold ad hoc courts to judge on minor cases arising among the members of their location. This illustrates the rivalry which existed between the chief and the tribunal elders.

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<sup>39</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1925.

<sup>40</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1934.

<sup>41</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/3, Kitui District Annual Report, 1929.

### 2.3.7 THE LOCAL NATIVE COUNCIL (LNC)

In 1925, a substantial step was taken to involve the Kitui Kamba in their own development with the setting up of a Local Native Council under the chairmanship of the D.C. This was in accordance with the Native Authority Ordinance of 1924. In theory the public was free to nominate candidates to the LNC. In 1925, there were ten councillors in the Kitui LNC and by 1928, this number had increased to twenty two. The council had the same number of members in 1950, one for each location and two nominated members.<sup>42</sup>

The LNC had jurisdiction over health services, use of land markets water supply, the establishment and maintenance of the district road network, education, agriculture and livestock development. It was empowered to make by-laws and to levy cess in order to finance its schemes.

In some cases the chief was also the location councillor. However, where this was not the case, dispute often emerged between the councillor and the chief over who was to be rightfully engaged in the development of the location. The LNC itself became dominated by a solid phalanx of chiefs in the front bench!<sup>43</sup> The LNC's were the forerunners of African District Council's (ADC's) instituted by the ADC Ordinance of 1946.

Local government became closer to the people with the introduction of he locational councils which were created by the ADC and had such powers as were delegated to them by the latter. The locational councils assisted in the implementation of projects in agriculture and livestock management, water schemes and education. They, as

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<sup>42</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

<sup>43</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1945.

instruments of public opinion, were thwarted in some instances by a small number of influential people like the chiefs. In 1954, it was reported that, "locational councils by committee system is still very much part of this district and so locational councils continue to be largely representative of the ruling classes."<sup>44</sup> However, they were later put on a more democratic footing by balancing group interests in the location.

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<sup>44</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/11, Kitui District Annual Report, 1954.





Senior Chief Kasina Ndo around 1952.



## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 KASINA'S EARLY LIFE

#### 3.1 BIRTH, CHILDHOOD AND EARLY OCCUPATION

Senior Chief Kasina wa Ndoo was born and brought up at Kavaini village in present day Kavaini location of Migwani Division in Mwingi District.<sup>1</sup> His exact date of birth is uncertain. This is quite understandable since during the pre-colonial and colonial period, the Kamba people dated things from the years of famines. Kasina himself estimated his date of birth to be the year 1889, for he was about ten years old at the time of the greatest of famines nicknamed by the Kamba people *nzaa ya ngomanisye* of 1898-99 and the famine was so called because it was experienced in almost every part of Kenya.<sup>2</sup> The word *ngomanisye* in Kikamba means 'all round.' It is therefore quite plausible to say that the late Senior Chief Kasina wa Ndoo was born around 1889.

His would-be father Ndoo wa Ndundu died long before Kasina was born, and in accordance with Kamba traditions his mother was inherited by his uncle Nzambu wa Ndundu who infact was his natural father.<sup>3</sup> Kasina was therefore brought up by his mother, who was called Kithele wa Ndoo. According to Kamba traditions, once a man died, his wife was taken care of by one of his brothers. As such Kasina grew up under the care of his uncle Nzambu wa Ndundu. As a result, sometimes he was referred to as Kasina wa Nzambu.

<sup>1</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina on 23/2/98 at Itoloni, and Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina on 25/2/98 at Mwingi.

<sup>2</sup> Carson, C.B., *The Life-Story of a Kenya Chief* (London: Evans Brother Ltd, 1957), 15.

<sup>3</sup> O.I. Joseph M. Kasina and Mrs. Nzila Kasina on 15/3/98 at Kavaini.

Very little is known about his father Ndoo except what Carson says of him, that he was a 'chief' in the days before the Europeans came to Kenya.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that during the pre-colonial period, the Kamba community, like other so called stateless societies, did not have chiefs. Among the Kamba people, chieftainships were the creation of the British colonial officials. There were, however, people of outstanding leadership qualities who could qualify to be called 'chiefs' by modern standards.

Ndoo wa Ndundu was a great warrior and hunter. He normally led raiding expeditions, for during the pre-colonial days among the Kamba people, life was a series of raids and counter-raids. There was continual strife among the Kamba themselves and occasional raids by the Maasai and Kikuyu, both of whom used spears while the Kamba used poisoned arrows. The Maasai generally only raided for cattle, but the Kikuyu took away women as well.<sup>5</sup>

Once, a Kikuyu raiding expedition attacked Ndoo's village. There was fierce fighting and the attackers escaped with livestock, women and some foodstuff. It was a very successful raid on the part of the Kikuyu while it was a big loss on the side of the Kamba. After a short while, as was the tradition, the Kamba organized a counter raiding expedition which was led by Ndoo himself. They went to Kikuyuland to try and get back the women and cattle which had been taken away from them. They made several raids, of which a few were successful while others were not. It was during this great fight that Ndoo wa Ndundu, the leader of the Kamba expedition, fell into the hands of his enemies.

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<sup>4</sup> Carson, C.B., *The Life-Story of a Kenya Chief* (London: Evans Brother Ltd, 1957), 15.

<sup>5</sup> O.I. Nyaa wa Nguli on 7/2/98 at Mbondoni.

He was speared to death, prompting the Kamba to flee with whatever little they had secured.<sup>6</sup> With the death of their leader, the Kamba were driven away from Kikuyuland.

Ndoo and Kithele had three sons born to them. These were: Katuta, Ithuli and Mbulo, while the fourth son named Kasina and a daughter called Mumbi were born to Kithele after the death of her husband. At the time Kasina was born, his uncle Nzambu was the undisputed leader of the Akamba living around Kavaini having taken the leadership after the death of his brother, Ndoo.

It was during the great famine of 1898-99 that Kavaini village was attacked by Kikuyu from Fort Hall and some Kamba from Machakos under the leadership of Mwatu wa Ngoma who was a great warrior. The Kamba from Machakos had some guns from Mombasa, which they had obtained from the Swahili traders in exchange for ivory. The fact that they had guns meant that they had better weapons. There was a big fight in which Kasina together with his mother and a few other people were captured and taken away as war prisoners.<sup>7</sup> At the time when Kasina was captured together with his mother, the boy was only a few years old. It was such a bad experience for the young boy.

After a short while, a rescue party was organized to pursue the raiders before they reached their destination. By good luck, the rescue party was able to free those taken prisoners, and at the same time Mwatu wa Ngoma was taken prisoner but his people fled. The rescuers were surprised to find out that Mwatu wa Ngoma was a fellow Kamba and not a Kikuyu as they had suspected, and for that reason his life was spared.<sup>8</sup> Through the

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<sup>6</sup> O.L. Nyaa wa Nguli on 7/2/98 at Mbondoni.

<sup>7</sup> O.L. Mrs. Kalunda Kasina on 10/2/98 at Thitani and Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>8</sup> Mwatu wa Ngoma could not be released until a ransom was paid. As a result, he sent a message to Machakos people in order for them to send cattle, both to pay blood money for the person killed during the battle (Mwathi Nduli) and to pay ransom for his own release. A sum for final settlement was reached and Mwatu was released.

efforts of the rescuers, Kasina together with his mother were able to return to their home at Kavaini.

As a young boy, Kasina performed those duties which were carried out by other boys. These included, among others, looking after cattle. As such Kasina's earliest occupation as a young boy was looking after his uncle's cattle, sheep and goats. His father Ndoò was a very rich man. He had large herds of cattle. As a warrior and a *muthiani*, he usually benefited greatly from raiding expeditions by taking the largest share of the cattle they managed to secure during the raids. As such he was among the richest men in his location.<sup>9</sup>

Among the Kamba people, the economic status of a person was judged in relation to the number of livestock which he possessed. Wealth in Kamba terms constituted cattle, sheep and goats, and any one who possessed these in large numbers was considered to be rich. Ndoò had many cattle, sheep and goats and could not compare with anybody in Kavaini village. After his death, all his wealth was taken over by his brother Nzambu in accordance with Kamba traditions since he also inherited his wife.

Young Kasina therefore primarily occupied himself with the task of looking after his uncle's cattle.<sup>10</sup> As a young boy, he accompanied his elder brothers and other boys from the locality to herd the cattle. The boys did not need to take the animals far away from home since grazing land was plentiful. It was only during the times of famines or at times when the rains failed that the animals were taken to graze far away in the fields in search of pasture and water. It was a usual practice for the livestock from the same locality to mingle and graze together. Boys and young men from each homestead drove

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<sup>9</sup> O.I., Nzivuru wa Kaleli on 19/2/98 at Kyome and Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>10</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

their livestock into the fields where they would meet their counterparts and they would graze the animals together the whole day until in the evening when each party would take their own cattle back home. They would then meet the following morning at their usual place. Such an arrangement of grazing the animals together was advantageous in several ways. In the first place it made it easier to protect and defend the livestock against wild beasts such as leopards, hyenas and even lions. It was easier for the boys to scare away hyenas or lions while in a group rather than as individuals.

Secondly, this method of grazing the cattle together offered the herdsboys the opportunity to co-operate and interact freely. It was a means of socialization. The boys would play various games such as archery, jumping, racing, throwing and hide-and-peek, while the cattle grazed in the fields or even rested in the shade. This way the herdsboys overcame the feeling of loneliness and boredom throughout the day. Given all these circumstances, the boys enjoyed grazing the animals together.

As a big boy, Kasina sometimes accompanied the other boys and the young men to herd the livestock out on the plains. Some of the livestock was taken out onto the plains (*syengo*) where they were grazed together in turns by mixed teams of boys and young warriors for specific periods of time, mostly during the dry season. While out on the plains, the herders lived in temporarily constructed shelters and food had to be delivered by their respective families. The warriors kept themselves busy by practicing battle drills and dancing, while the herdsboys in their turn occupied themselves with a variety of games such as hide-and-peek.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> O.I., Nzivuru wa Kaleli and Kavuvi wa Ngandi on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

As a young man, Kasina distinguished himself as a great hunter. Whenever he went out to graze the cattle, he rarely came back empty-handed. He made sure that he came back home carrying a gazelle. Even when his fellow herdsmen went home empty-handed, Kasina would usually have something to take home. At times he would kill more than one animal, one of which would be roasted while in the field. As a result Kasina was loved and respected by his fellow colleagues since they knew that with him around they would always have plenty of meat to roast.<sup>12</sup>

It so happened that one day Kasina went to graze the cattle far away from home and away from where they usually grazed them. He was only accompanied by his elder brother, Katuta. While in the fields, they were attacked by a lion which killed a cow and was about to attack another when Kasina shot it with a poisoned arrow killing it instantly. This was a proof enough that young Kasina was a courageous person since he did not fear even a dangerous animal like a lion. His qualities of being courageous and a great hunter were equalled only by those of his father.<sup>13</sup>

As a young man, Kasina Ndoo was quite well known locally because he was the leader of the local dance (*ngoma*).<sup>14</sup> Being the leader of the local dance, Kasina was responsible for the organization of dancing competitions between different clans in the same locality and also between different localities. He was the best dancer in Kavaini village and as a result he commanded a lot of respect among his peers. He represented his clan as well as his village during the dancing competition. Besides this he also participated in the training of up-coming dancers. His fame went beyond Kavaini village

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<sup>12</sup> O.I., Mr. Mbila Kasina and Mrs. Prescilla M. Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mbondoni.

<sup>13</sup> Carson, J.B., op cit., 46.

<sup>14</sup> O.I., Mrs. Kalunda Kasina and Carson, J.B., op.cit., 18.

for best dancers were known over long distances since *ngomas* were highly valued among the Kamba people.

During the pre-colonial period as well as the colonial days in Kambaland, dancing was one of the major activities among the youth. Dancing competitions were organized either during the day time or even during the night, and there were particular centres designated particularly for that purpose. The centres were commonly known as *ivaata*. Every village had a *kivaata* where the youth usually met to practice dancing and also to watch the best dancers dance to their tune. Drums and other musical instruments were used during the dance.

Within a *kivalo* or locality, there was one big *kivaata* which was used for competition by members of different clans within the same *kivalo* as well as those of different *ivalo*. Dance leaders from every village were well known and very much respected by their colleagues since they were a source of entertainment to others. Kasina was one such person who had distinguished himself as the leader of his local dance or *ngoma*.

*Ngomas* were used as a means of socialization among the youth. It was there where both girls and young men met and interacted freely. In fact the presence of married people in the dances was not allowed. It was purely a youth affair. Once a person married, he was supposed to keep away from the dances for he was taken to be an adult and a responsible person.

It was also during the dancing ceremonies that the youths got the opportunity of identifying their future spouses. It is therefore no wonder that the best dancers won themselves the hearts of many girls. Many of the girls would identify with the best dancer

though at times this was very risky for the dancer for he would become the subject of envy by his fellow colleagues. Being the leader of the local dance may have paved the way for Kasina's future leadership positions as it helped him develop desired leadership qualities.

### 3.2 KASINA AT THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL IN KITUI

The first school in Kitui District, built in 1917 in the township, was started with the intention of educating the sons of chiefs and headmen in arithmetic and literacy in Kiswahili in order that they might assist later in the administrative work of government. The first generation of chiefs, old, illiterate, and incapable of exercising the authority commensurate with their rank, had proved a failure as far as the colonial officials in Kitui District were concerned.<sup>15</sup> There was, of course, the problem of communication between the illiterate chiefs and the colonial officials, which hindered effective administration. The performance of these early chiefs was summarized by the D.C. when he pointed out that, 'It is difficult to make the chiefs and their headmen realize their responsibility and powers and in many cases it is necessary to inflict heavy fines on them when they fail to carry out orders.'<sup>16</sup> In order to make the administration of the locations more effective, it was necessary to train future chiefs and as far as the colonial officials in Kitui District were concerned, chiefs were to be succeeded by their sons which was, of course, in conformity with Kamba traditions whereby leadership was hereditary.<sup>17</sup> Owing to the above, the colonial government conceived the idea of building a school in the

<sup>15</sup> KNA-DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1916.

<sup>16</sup> KNA-DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1910.

<sup>17</sup> KNA-DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1910.



district with the sole aim of training the sons of the chiefs and headmen so that they could succeed their fathers as good and qualified administrators.

Once the school was completed in April 1917, the D.C. sent orders to the chiefs and their headmen instructing them to take their sons to school. Nzambu wa Ndundu, who was the chief of Migwani location at the time, was the recipient of such an order and he was very pleased to nominate Kasina, who was his nephew, to attend school at Kitui. As a result Kasina ended up being among the first pupils to attend the government school at Kitui.<sup>18</sup> However, his mother was not very happy with the idea of sending her son to school. In fact she was reluctant to let her son go to school but since it was an order from the D.C. she had no alternative but to oblige.

A few days after the boys were sent to school, a rumour went round that the children had been taken under false pretenses and that they were really to be sent by the British as slaves for the Portuguese.<sup>19</sup> The rumour was very terrifying to the parents and most of them lost no time in getting their sons back home. Kithele, Kasina's mother, was no exception. She brought Kasina home and so his school career ended after only one month.

This was a big blow to Kasina who had been excited by the idea of schooling. He would have wished to continue with school but at the same time he could not over rule the decision of his mother. When he was first nominated by his uncle to go to school, he was over come with joy and had expressed outright desire for education.

Most of the initial entrants into the school left after a short while due to the rumour which had spread like bush fire. In fact by the end of 1917, the school had only

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<sup>18</sup> Carson J.B., op.cit., 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

fourteen scholars out of the initial thirty-five entrants.<sup>20</sup> Lack of interest among the pupils led to its being closed down in April 1918.<sup>21</sup> It was not until after the First World War that some interest in education emerged in Kitui District. By 1921, the D.C. was in a position to give the following report:

There is undoubtedly a desire for schools among the Kitui Akamba, and at least six more schools could have been opened had the necessary teachers and equipment been forthcoming.<sup>22</sup>

By this time, there were only two schools which had been opened in Kitui District. These were the government school at Kitui township and Ikutha primary school in Ikutha location.

Kasina did not acquire formal education. This was a missed opportunity. He had dropped out of school owing to factors far beyond his control, and even though he had wished to continue with schooling, it was not possible for his mother was totally opposed to the idea. All the same, what Kasina had failed to acquire in the classroom, he would acquire later through experience, even though his level of literacy remained low. His many travels during his service in the K.A.R. and the trips he made abroad, most notably the trip to England and the Middle East while he was a chief, coupled with his interaction with many people of different races during this time, gave him the basic knowledge required in administration. Through the above, he was able to overcome the main administrative handicap of not being able to read and write, for with time he was able to read and write though with some difficulty. In fact illiteracy seemed to be a minor

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<sup>20</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1917.

<sup>21</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1918.

<sup>22</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/2, Kitui District Annual Report, April to December 1921.

handicap to him, for even during his tenure as a chief he kept well abreast of world and colony affairs.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.3 EARLY ASSOCIATION WITH COLONIAL OFFICIALS

After dropping out of school, Kasina became more and more involved in the activities of the colonial officials in Kitui District. He had made himself known to the officials long before being taken to Kitui school. For example, when Mr. Charles Dundas was posted to Kitui in 1908 as a young D.O., Kasina was among the first persons to make friends with him.<sup>24</sup>

It so happened that Mr. Dundas was doing some survey work in the district, and so he engaged young Kasina to be his aide. Kasina used to carry some of his loads as they moved all over the district doing surveying. As a result, the two men became good friends. In 1912 when Mr. Dundas returned to Kitui as the D.C., he remembered Kasina and gave him a job as a headman in charge of safari parties.<sup>25</sup> The two were to meet later in the K.A.R. at Voi when Kasina was a lance-corporal and Mr. Dundas a captain. The former acted as the latter's orderly. The two were further to meet at a later date in 1943 when Kasina, then the chief of Migwani location, was coming back from a trip in the Middle East and Sir Charles Dundas was the Governor of Uganda.

It was not only Mr. Dundas whom Kasina got on well with, but all the colonial officials in Kitui. The D.O.s and D.C.s in Kitui found Kasina quite invaluable for his assistance during the safaris. They would employ him as their tour guide as well as being

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<sup>23</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Handing Over Report: Northern Division by Mr. A. L. K. Liddle, District Officer, 1960.

<sup>24</sup> Dundas, C., *African Crossroads* (London: Macmillan, 1955), 16.

<sup>25</sup> Carson, J.B., *op.cit.*, 20.

among those hired to carry their luggage. When Mr. Dundas put him in charge of safari parties, this gave Kasina the opportunity to meet and interact with most of the colonial officials in Kitui.

It can therefore be said that after leaving school, Kasina spent quite some time working for the colonial officials in the district, thus making himself well known to them, a situation which was, together with the fact that he was well known locally, instrumental in paving the way for a career in the military and later in the colonial administration.

### **3.4 WORLD WAR I AND RECRUITMENT TO THE KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES**

#### **3.4.1 WORLD WAR I**

The war of 1914-18, which has come to be known as the First World War, began in Europe. It is called a world war because, before it was over, most countries in the world took part. Only twelve countries in the end remained neutral: three in America, two in Asia, two in Africa and five in Europe.<sup>26</sup> Africa and most of Asia were involved in the war, simply because they were ruled by European colonial powers and their men fought for their colonial rulers.

The causes of the war lay in Europe and it seemed to many Europeans that it would be wrong to expect Africans to fight in a European quarrel. However, this was not to be. As Sir Charles Dundas points out, war against Germany in Europe also meant that British and German East Africa would be at war.<sup>27</sup> General Von Lettow-Vorbeck, the commander of the German troops in Tanganyika, knew that the war would be won and

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<sup>26</sup> Ward, W.E.F., *East Africa: A century of Change 1870-1970* (New York: African Publishing Corporation, 1972), 78.

<sup>27</sup> Dundas, C., *op.cit.*, 71.

lost on the western front in Europe where the French and British armies were facing superior numbers of German troops. He also knew that the British navy would quickly cut off the German colonies from all contact with Germany, so that they could not count on getting any more supplies from home.

He further argued that it was in Britain's interest to keep East Africa out of the war so that as many British men as wished would be able to go home, join the army and increase the forces fighting against Germany in Europe. If this was the case, then it was in Germany's interest to bring the war into Africa so that no man would go from Kenya and Uganda to fight in Europe, and perhaps the Germans thought that British troops would have to be sent from Europe to fight in East Africa, thus easing the pressure on the Germans in Europe. General Lettow-Voebeck did not hope with the small forces at his disposal to conquer Kenya and Uganda but in any event he would be able to keep the British there very busy.

Towards the end of 1914, the war had spread to East Africa and both British and German civilians rushed to join their armies and both sides called up thousands of Africans to join as soldiers and also carry supplies for the armies. Both British and German governments had regiments of African troops with European officers. The Africans too were called up to serve either as soldiers or carriers and many thousands died in the battle or from disease.

As the East Africa campaign intensified, the colonial government in Kenya increasingly called upon the people to join the British in their efforts to overcome the Germans. Many more people were therefore enlisted into the various units in the army while others were taken as porters. The task of ensuring a steady supply of soldiers and

porters lay with the colonial chiefs who were in direct contact with the people. Many young men and women were forcibly recruited to serve in the armies. It was upon the chief to ensure that enough men were supplied as was required. Chiefs on the other hand used their tribal retainers to go round their locations looking for the suitable persons to recruit.

It was not an easy task for the chiefs to obtain recruits since they faced outward resistance. Many people would leave their homes upon learning that a recruiting party was visiting their village. Others would run away even after being captured. The whole situation was summarized by the D.C. in 1916 when he reported that:

The supply of porters and soldiers was kept up but the matter got worse and worse. Whole locations would take to bush when they heard an officer was coming and there would either have been open opposition or the supply would have stopped shortly when in March the Director of Military Labour decided to begin repatriating men.<sup>28</sup>

Young Kasina must have been very lucky to have escaped a forceful recruitment into the military service at the initial stages, owing to his close association with the colonial officials in the district from as early as 1908. While most of the youth of his own age and from his village were being recruited by force as soldiers or porters, Kasina was exempted from the same. However, young Kasina later found himself in the service of the King's African Rifles but under different circumstances.

#### 3.4.2 RECRUITMENT TO THE KING'S AFRICAN RIFLES

Mr. Scholefield, the D.C. of Kitui District in 1914, was responsible for recruiting both *askaris*<sup>29</sup> and carrier corps from Kitui District during the First World War. Many

<sup>28</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/1, Kitui District Annual Report, 1916.

<sup>29</sup> Askaris- This is a swahili word commonly used to refer to those Africans who were employed as soldiers during the colonial period.

young women and men were forcibly recruited into the K.A.R. and carrier corps service and taken to various parts of the country as well as to Uganda and Tanganyika in order to participate in the war. Many of the young men who were recruited from Kitui District were first taken to Thika, where they were supposed to receive some basic training before being deployed into the various fighting units.

It so happened that some trouble had broken out at Thika between the young Kamba recruits and the officers at Thika military camp. Reports reached Kitui *boma*<sup>30</sup> to the effect that the youths were dissatisfied with the conditions at the military camp. The D.C. was requested by the officers at Thika to send anyone who he knew would have an influence over the young men and who would be able to prevail upon them to keep calm. It was a difficult request for the D.C. Mr. Scholefield, but when consulting with his officers, the name of Kasina Ndoos was suggested as the ideal person. Kasina's association with the colonial officials had a lot to do with his being nominated, together with the fact that he was well known in Migwani as the best dancer and leader of the *ngomas*. As a result, Mr. Scholefield did not fail to nominate Kasina to go to Thika and see what help he could offer. Once at Thika Kasina was able to reason out with his peers and he got on well with them. The officer in charge of the Thika military camp was called Major Montgomery, who spoke Kamba fluently, and he and Kasina got on very well.<sup>31</sup>

While at Thika, Kasina was able to watch the drills and army training that were taking place. He somehow became very interested. He was very keen on watching all that

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<sup>30</sup> Boma- This word was used during the colonial period to refer to the stations where colonial administrators such as District Commissioners were based. Thus a district headquarters could be referred to as boma.

<sup>31</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 19.

was happening, and it did not take long for Major Montgomery to notice his interest in the military camp. He then persuaded Kasina to join the army. In this way Kasina became a soldier, a career which would last for the next ten years of his life and a career which would be a cornerstone or rather which acted as a spring-board for his future career as a colonial chief.<sup>32</sup> Life seemed to be taking Kasina along a path that was not entirely of his own planning. He had never seriously thought of a career in the army and in fact had been left out when the initial recruitment was carried out in Kitui. But the assignment he was given by Scholefield introduced him to a previously unknown world, that of the military, which he found extremely inviting.

Life in the army was at first puzzling for the young Kasina and his colleagues. He was, however, very keen to learn new things and ideas. At the camp, the recruits were fed on such food as rice, flour, meat, sugar, milk and dates. These kinds of food were quite rare back at home. They were also provided with clothing. They wore black puttees, khaki shorts and black vests. They were also provided with blankets and bedding sheets. As Kasina himself would recollect later during one of his interviews with Carson in 1957, his first surprises at the camp were seeing milk coming out of a tin and using soap for the first time!<sup>33</sup>

At the camp, the training was very rigorous and it proved very difficult especially for the lazy. The recruits went on long marches and carried heavy loads. This proved very useful since during the fighting, the *askaris* moved long distances on foot and carrying heavy loads especially in cases where they were not served by the carrier corps. The

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



soldier trainees also had plenty of drills and they were taught how to handle rifles and Lewis guns.

At the camp, there were five companies, each of which was made up of four platoons, and there were about twenty-five porters attached to each platoon. The porters were supposed to be the hands of the *askaris*. Their work consisted mainly of carrying supplies for the soldiers, which included food, water, camping materials and personal effects. During those days the soldiers were not taken about in jeeps and Bren-gun carriers, as would be the case during the Second World War, but rather they traveled on foot with the carrier corps carrying supplies for them.<sup>34</sup> Each of the five companies was made up exclusively of people from the same tribe. People from different tribes were never put in the same company for any reasons whatsoever. Thus the five companies were made up as follows: company 'A' consisted of Kamba, while company 'B' was exclusively for Nubians from Sudan. Company 'C' was exclusively composed of Nandi, while the 'D' company was the reserve for the Swahili and lastly company 'E' consisted of Luo.<sup>35</sup>

During the First World War campaign, the soldiers travelled far away from their homes to many parts within the country and even outside to Uganda and Tanganyika depending on where their presence was required. In most cases, the recruits from Kenya were taken to Tanganyika where the fighting against the Germans was more intensive.

Soldier Kasina had the opportunity to travel far afield. His first assignment was to go across to Uganda. From Thika they were taken to Kisii, then to Bukoba on the western side of Lake Victoria. From there, they were returned to Nairobi and then sent to Magadi,

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<sup>34</sup> O.I., Joseph Thiaka on 18/2/98 at Thokoa market and Nungu wa Mbalu on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

<sup>35</sup> O.I., Joseph Thiaka on 18/2/98 at Thokoa market and Nungu wa Mbalu on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

Longido and on to Voi. This was in 1915 at the height of the War. By this time, soldier Kasina had distinguished himself as one of the best soldiers in his company. He carried out instructions correctly as well as being obedient and hardworking. He was therefore promoted and made a Lance-Corporal.<sup>36</sup>

It was while he was a Lance-Corporal that Kasina was involved in one of the worst battles of his whole army career. It was at Taveta where they encountered the German troops and then fierce fighting ensued. Both sides had high casualties. The British army on its part lost twenty-two officers and two hundred *askaris*. The loss was so big that General Smuts, the 'bwana mkubwa'<sup>37</sup>(Officer in-charge) of the whole East African campaign came over to Taveta to see the officials while they were burying their dead. He gave the assurance that they were about to win the war.<sup>38</sup>

From Voi, the soldiers were moved into Tanganyika. By 1917 the Germans had been pushed southwards as far as the border with Mozambique and they were definitely on the verge of losing the East African campaign. The soldiers serving in the K.A.R. were taken to Tanganyika to deal the final blow to the Germans. This adventure saw Kasina visit Korogwe, Tanga, Bagamoyo, Dar-es-Salaam, Morogoro, Dodoma and Tabora. They also travelled to Ujiji, back to Dar-es-Salaam and crossed the Ruvuma River into Mozambique towards the end of the war. These journeys were all made on foot and it took roughly three years of fighting. At the end of the First World War in 1917 and

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<sup>36</sup> O.I., Joseph Thiaka on 18/2/98 at Thokoa market and Nungu wa Mbalu on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

<sup>37</sup> General Smuts was in charge of the whole East African campaign on the part of the British. He had been appointed to oversee the British campaign in East Africa during the war.

<sup>38</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 21.

while stationed at Tabora in Tanganyika, Kasina wa Ndoos was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.<sup>39</sup>

Towards the end of the war and by the time he became a Sergeant, Kasina was serving in the third King's African Rifles. But soon after the promotion and also after the war, he was transferred to the sixth K.A.R. battalion, which was almost exclusively composed of captured German soldiers. This battalion was sent to Jubaland (as Somalia was then called) to deal with the Italians who were still continuing with the war. Jubaland was a hard two and half year campaign. It was while in Jubaland in 1920 that Kasina received his third promotion. He became a Sergeant-Major and was put in charge of the whole battalion.<sup>40</sup> After the campaign was over, the battalion was moved to the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, where they served in Moyale, Lodwar and Wajir. It was while in Wajir in 1922 that Kasina received his fourth promotion. He was promoted to the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major (R.S.M.). Barely two years later, his career in the military was cut short by the sudden death of his uncle. It was in 1924 while still stationed at Wajir that Kasina received a telegram from the D.C. at Kitui informing him that his uncle had died.<sup>41</sup> This was shocking news to Kasina who immediately returned to his home in Migwani.

Back at home, things did not work out very well for Kasina. The death of his uncle had serious implication for the whole family. Besides Kasina's mother, his uncle had taken his own wife, but he had continued to take care of Kasina's mother and her children. And as might be expected, there was outright hatred between the two women.

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<sup>39</sup> O.L., Jonathan K. Mutambu on 29/1/98 at Kalitini and Simeon Mwanzia Mwanzwii on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.

<sup>40</sup> Carson, J.B., *op.cit.*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

Kasina's mother was mistreated by the other woman together with her children, who accused her of making a living out of her husband's wealth. This was also one reason which had forced Kasina to seek employment from an early age.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Kasina's relationship with his brothers was not cordial. They constantly accused him of being favoured by their uncle who had inherited their father's wealth without giving them their own inheritance. They also accused their mother of not making sure that they received part of their father's inheritance hence with the death of Nzambu, the whole family was in trouble.<sup>43</sup>

The situation back at home could not allow Kasina to be away from home for a long time. For one, with the death of his uncle, Kasina had to assume the responsibility of looking after his mother, who was threatened with eviction after the death of her "husband." He also had to try and make peace with his brothers. Hence Kasina had to make the most painful decision of resigning from the army. The decision must have been hard to make considering the fact that he was already doing well in the army having been promoted to the rank of a R.S.M. His resignation marked the end of his career in the military. During the ten years which Kasina had served in the military, he had achieved what many people could not have achieved. Within the ten, he had earned himself one promotion after another. It took him barely a year to move from the rank of being a mere soldier to become a Lance-Corporal in 1915 and between 1917 and 1922, he received three more consecutive promotions. By the time he left the army, he held the respected rank of a R.S.M. We can only speculate going by the successive promotions which he received, that Kasina could have attained the highest rank in the army attainable by

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<sup>42</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina and Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina.

<sup>43</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina and Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina.

Africans were it not that his career in the military was short lived. This was quite a big achievement on his part and a sign that he was destined for bigger things in the future.

Kasina could not have achieved what he did in the army without deserving it. There were many of his colleagues in the K.A.R. who never made it past the rank of a corporal or that of a soldier. There are several factors which explain the secret behind Kasina's success. In the first place, he was usually on good terms with his superiors. He had special respect for his masters. It was while he was working for Mr. Charles Dundas and other colonial officials in Kitui as their *safari* guide that he had learnt the benefit of being obedient and respectful to his masters. He had also learnt how to take orders from his employers. When he joined the army, he did not forget to apply these virtues and attributes which he had developed over time and the results were splendid.

Secondly, Kasina was a very hard working man. From the very beginning he was keen to learn. It was while at Thika military camp that the officers in charge and especially Major Montgomery started to notice the keenness with which Kasina was taking his training.

Thirdly, he was full of initiative. He did not wait to be constantly reminded of his duties while in the army. He quite often applied his own initiative to do what he thought was the right thing. When he combined all these virtues, his performance in the army was commendable. He attained what most of his comrades failed to attain. It is also no wonder that when Kasina became a chief at a later date, he applied the same virtues while dealing with his superiors and was able to succeed where others failed.

From the foregoing, it can be said that Kasina did not have a smooth life from his childhood. In the first place, he lost his 'would-be-father' long before he was born, and

this was to have some serious implications at a later date. Secondly, when he was only ten years old, he had had a very difficult experience when, together with his mother and a few other people, he was captured and taken prisoner by a raiding party from Machakos. This was really a trying experience for the young boy.

Moreover, the relationship between Kasina and his brothers was not cordial. They accused him of receiving favours from their uncle whom they accused of inheriting their father's property without giving them their share. On the other hand, Kasina's step-brothers also disliked him for they did not want him to be party to the inheritance of their father's property. These must have been some of the reasons which made Kasina seek employment at an early age and prompted him to be hard-working. He was determined to succeed in life. This partly explains the reason why he worked very hard while in the army eventually earning himself one promotion after the other.

Finally, the death of his uncle while he was in the army dealt a big blow to his career in the military which seemed to be bright. The problems back at home could not allow him to pursue his career and he had to resign against his will.

What we see is a scenario whereby Kasina is struggling to succeed in life from his childhood. He faces a lot of difficulties and obstacles all of which he is determined to overcome. His desire to overcome these problems seem to have been the driving force towards achieving a successful life. For instance, he was forced to take up employment at a very early age so as to enable him support his mother and the other family members. Likewise, his desire to join the military could have been as a result of his determination to succeed in life.

In conclusion, it can be said that all the circumstances surrounding Kasina's early life, such as the loss of his would-be-father (long before he was born), an up-bringing by a single parent, unfavourable relationship with his uncle's family members and the death of his uncle who was supposed to be his guardian, contributed in one way or the other to his determination to lead a successful life. In addition, his employment and military experience were excellent preparation for the next challenge he faced.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 CAREER AS A CHIEF AND COUNCILLOR OF MIGWANI LOCATION

#### 4.1 BACKGROUND TO HIS APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF

The colonial administration in Kitui District was already aware of the good performance of Kasina while in the K.A.R. Thus, when he returned home in 1924, the D.C. wanted to make him a chief just like his uncle, but people objected, saying that he was too young and had not yet married.<sup>1</sup> People could not accept to be ruled by someone who was not married since it was considered to be a sign of immaturity. The D.C. was, however, determined to appoint Kasina to a position of leadership, and so he ended up appointing him the headman of Nzaoni location in 1925. It was not until two years later, in May 12, 1927, that he was made the chief of Nzaoni location.<sup>2</sup>

Before Kasina's appointment as chief, Nzaoni location had been under chief Ngondi wa Moki, who was dismissed in order to pave the way for Kasina whom the D.C. had been wanting to appoint as chief since 1925. It was Mr. Crewe-Read, the then D.C., who had appointed Kasina a headman in 1925. Two years later, the D.C. Mr. Davenport made Kasina a chief. This was after he had married his first wife, Mary Kamola as a result of which his appointment was duly approved by the elders of the location.<sup>3</sup> The appointment of Kasina to the chieftainship was not only approved by the D.C. but was also endorsed by the elders of the location. This was largely because the elders had seen the leadership qualities which Kasina was endowed with. It was his record of service in

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, J.B., *The Life Story of a Kenyan Chief* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1957), 22

<sup>2</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/4/1, Kitui District Gazette, 1931. The appointment was contained in Government Notice Number 335/27.

<sup>3</sup> O.I., Nzivuru wa Kaleli on 19/2/98 at Kyome and Kavuvi wa Ngandi on 19/2/98 at Kyome.



the K.A.R. that convinced the local administration in Kitui that he was the best choice they could make at that time.

Kasina was appointed chief at the age of thirty-eight, and he served the colonial government for thirty-six years until he voluntarily retired in 1963 at the age of seventy-four. During his career as a chief, he rose through the ranks to become a Senior Chief in 1954, thus becoming the most powerful and influential chief in Kitui District. Although he was appointed a chief in 1927, Kasina did not receive confirmation until 1930 when his name was gazetted, and when he was given the chiefs' stave by the D.C. Commander Mackay.<sup>4</sup> The three years between the appointment and confirmation appear to have been a probationary period during which time his performance was closely monitored.

During these years, Kasina must have proved quite successful, for in 1930 his appointment was gazetted and the location was also enlarged. Nzaoni location was found to be too small for chief Kasina, who had shown that he was capable of good leadership. Consequently, in April 1930, Migwani location which was under chief Kitema wa Nzinga, and Nzaoni location under chief Kasina wa Ndoo were combined to form a new enlarged Migwani location, which was also known as location I. Chief Kasina was appointed the chief of the new Migwani location in April 1930.<sup>5</sup> The new location was much larger than the original Migwani location, and in fact it was the largest location in the district with an area of 600 square miles.<sup>6</sup>

The promotion of Kasina was a result of the conviction of a criminal offence and eventual dismissal of chief Kitema wa Nzinga. Kitema was known to be a mischievous

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<sup>4</sup> Carson, J.B., *op.cit.*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/3, Kitui District Annual Report, 1930.

<sup>6</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/4/1, Kitui District Gazette, 1931.

person who did not respect his superiors. He could at times fail to carry out orders from the D.O. or even from the D.C. He could even fail to attend the D.C.'s *baraza* (meetings) without a proper cause.<sup>7</sup> In his dismissal letter, the D.C. noted that Nzinga had been convicted of concealing an offence of culpable homicide.<sup>8</sup>

By increasing the size of the location entrusted to Kasina, the colonial officials showed they believed he had the capacity to control a much larger area. Thus it is no wonder that Migwani location ended up being the largest in the district and also the most populous.<sup>9</sup> Chief Kasina controlled the new enlarged Migwani location effectively. This is evidenced by the D.C.'s comment in his Annual Report in 1931 to the effect that, "Chief Kasina is a very good chief and has his people well under control."<sup>10</sup>

As a chief, Kasina was in charge of a location which was the smallest administrative unit in the colonial administrative machinery. As a chief, he was directly responsible to the D.C. who could appoint and dismiss chiefs at will even though he had to make recommendations to the P.C. Kasina was thus the direct representative and agent of the government in his location. He was answerable to the D.C. for anything that happened within his location.

The duties demanded of him as a chief included the maintenance of law and order, reporting crime, arresting criminals and issuing as the occasion required, instructions for certain definite purposes to be obeyed by the inhabitants of his location.

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<sup>7</sup> O.I., Daniel Katuku on 20/2/98 at Thokoa market.

<sup>8</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/3, Kitui District Annual Report, 1930.

<sup>9</sup> KNA, DC/4/1, Kitui District Gazette, 1931.

<sup>10</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1931.

He was also responsible for the collection of central local government taxes as well as the implementation of government policies and directives.<sup>11</sup>

In order to carry out these duties effectively and efficiently, chief Kasina was assisted by a staff which included the tribal police commonly referred to as the tribal retainers, appointed and remunerated clerk, headmen and a team of unofficial and unpaid sub-headmen and elders who owed their positions to the chief.<sup>12</sup>

Chief Kasina performed the above duties extremely well. He made sure that taxes were collected promptly and that he did not wait for the D.C. to remind him when the taxes were due. Law and order were maintained and quite often offenders of such crimes as illicit beer-brewing, excessive drunkardness or theft were heavily fined to ensure that they did not repeat the offences.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.2 KASINA AS THE COUNCILLOR OF MIGWANI LOCATION

Besides being the chief of Migwani location, Kasina became the councillor of the location having first been elected in 1931, a year after he was confirmed as chief. In subsequent years, he was re-elected to the councillorship, a position he occupied until his retirement from public life.

In 1925, the colonial government took a substantial step towards involving the Kamba people in their own development with the setting up of Local Native Councils (thereafter LNC) under the chairmanship of the D.C. This was under the ruling of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1924. According to this ordinance, LNC's were to be

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<sup>11</sup> Tignor, L.R., *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Maasai from 1900-39* (New Jersey: Princeton university press, 1976), 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> O.I., Nyumu Nguli and Joseph Thiaka on 18/2/98 at Thokoa.

<sup>13</sup> O.I., Misyili wa Mutwetwe on 30/1/98 at Musuani.

established in every district throughout the colony. The public was free to elect councillors to the LNC's. In 1925, there were ten councillors in the Kitui LNC, and the number was subsequently increased to twenty-two in 1928.<sup>14</sup>

Every district had one LNC which was made up of councillors elected from every location. In some locations, the chiefs were elected as councillors. In other locations, there were chiefs as well as elected councillors. In such cases, conflict occurred quite often between the chief and the councillor over who was to be overly involved with the development of the location. The LNC's were later transformed into African District Councils (ADC) by the 1949 Ordinance which was intended to streamline the Local Authorities all over the colony. In 1950, chief Kasina was elected deputy chairman of the Kitui ADC.<sup>15</sup>

Chief Kasina therefore combined his duties as a chief and a councillor of Migwani location. He was the government representative in his location as well as being the peoples' representative in the LNC. As a chief he had an obligation to ensure that government policies and directives were implemented. For example, he had to make sure that law and order were properly maintained and that communal labour was always available whenever it was required. On the other hand, as a councillor and peoples' representative, it was his duty to ensure that roads and earth dams were properly maintained, that agriculture, education and water supply were improved.

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<sup>14</sup> O'Leary, M.F., "Variation and Change Amongst Kitui Akamba: A Comparative study of two vicinages", Ph.D Thesis University of Manchester, 1979, 66.

<sup>15</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

### 4.3 CHIEF KASINA AND SOIL CONSERVATION MEASURES

On the list of government policies which the colonial chiefs were required to implement in their locations was that of soil conservation. Chiefs were under instructions to ensure that their people were made aware of the importance of preventing soil erosion, and as such the colonial government, through the co-operation of the chiefs, sought to put measures in place to ensure that soil erosion in the district was properly controlled. This was one area where chief Kasina excelled.

The topography of Migwani is such that the area is covered by alternating high and narrow ridges. The high ridges with steep sides were very prone to soil erosion. As a result, Migwani attracted the attention of the government's soil conservation campaign. Chief Kasina was quick to notice the importance and benefits of digging contour terraces. Thus he embarked on a campaign to ensure that terraces were dug communally and individually throughout the location.

In order to set an example to others, chief Kasina had terraces dug in all his *shambas* and also on his land which was not under cultivation.<sup>16</sup> This way, he hoped that his people would be able to emulate his example. However, he was disappointed to learn that his people were not willing to dig terraces. After all, farming land was in plenty and people practiced shifting cultivation, abandoning a piece of land when it became less productive. Given these circumstances, they could not comprehend the importance of digging terraces.

When chief Kasina was issued with the order to ensure that terraces were dug all over his location, he moved into action with a lot of vigour. His first course of action was

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<sup>16</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina, on 23/2/98 at Itoloni.

to request that the assistant agricultural officers be sent to Migwani to do the work of measuring the contour terraces in every *shamba* in Migwani location.<sup>17</sup> He then made it compulsory for the people to dig terraces in their own *shambas*. Those who were not willing to do the work voluntarily were forced to do so and those who failed to comply with the chief's directive were arrested and prosecuted at Migwani Tribunal Court. At other times, chief Kasina personally imposed fines on those who failed to dig terraces by having their livestock confiscated.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Migwani location became the scene of a compulsory anti-erosion terracing campaign, a policy which created a lot of friction and bad feeling between the administration and the local people.

In order to ensure that his orders were fully followed, Kasina worked in close collaboration with his aides. He instructed his tribal retainers, together with the headmen, to go round the location checking on how well the terracing work was progressing. They would then report back to him with names of those whose *shambas* were not terraced.<sup>19</sup> This made it easier for Kasina to identify those who were not taking the work seriously, and also made it hard for people to exempt themselves from the exercise. Thus, terracing was extensively carried out in Migwani. With regard to soil conservation measures, Migwani location became a shining example to other locations. By 1943, of the three locations which were leading in the work of terracing, Migwani was far ahead of the other two. The D.C. in his Annual Report noted that,

"In 1943, 50 acres of land were terraced in the township, 40 acres were terraced in Mutonguni location while 65 acres in Migwani were terraced during the year."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> O.L. Rinda Mbithuka on 10/2/98 at Kiomo.

<sup>18</sup> O.L. Kavuvi wa Ngandi.

<sup>19</sup> O.L. Misyili Mutwetwe and Rinda Mbithuka.

<sup>20</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1943.

He attributed the large area terraced in Migwani location to the measure of popular support for terracing from among the local people while with regard to the other locations in the district, he noted that very little progress was being made and that obviously a lot of hard work and propaganda was still necessary.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that though initially Kasina had to force many of his people to undertake terracing, it seems that with time he did succeed, even though partially, in convincing his people that terracing was for their own good, thereby inducing a measure of co-operation on their part.

Any government official who visited Migwani could not fail to notice the impressive work on terracing being undertaken in the location. For example, in 1947, the D.O. Mr. F.R. Wilson, on his tour of the district visited Migwani and had the following to say:

Terracing in the general vicinity of Migwani camp has been extensively carried out. It may be chief Kasina's stock showpiece, although he assured me that terracing is now being done in many *shambas* of this location. I impressed upon Kasina the necessity for this work to continue in all seasons and not just when crops are growing. Chief Kasina fully realises this but wants an instructor to help with terracing.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, Kasina received a compliment from the D.C. in 1950 for his outstanding efforts in ensuring that soil conservation measures were carried out more effectively in Migwani location. The D.C. had the following comment to make:

Chief Kasina of Migwani location was outstanding throughout the year. His work on dams, grazing control and contour terracing has been an example to all the rest.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1943.

<sup>22</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/3/6, Safari Report. 25/5/47 to 30/5/47 by F.R. Wilson, D.O., Kitui.

<sup>23</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950, 9.

Chief Kasina could not have received all this praise for nothing. Of course his work on soil conservation was outstanding compared to other locations, and this was the reason why his superiors were always full of praise for him. Though he had at times to force many of his people to dig the terraces by threatening them with fines and prosecution in court, he nonetheless produced good results which was all that his superiors wanted.

Other than forcing people to dig terraces in their *shambas* chief Kasina also employed other strategies in order to ensure that soil erosion was controlled. He held numerous *barazas* during which he explained to the people the importance of digging terraces on the uncultivated land and the fallow land which had been cultivated and abandoned.<sup>24</sup> He also had terraces dug in those areas which looked more prone to soil erosion, such as along the banks of streams and valleys and on hill sides. He issued orders to his headmen and tribal retainers to recruit labour force in large numbers. Those who showed non-cooperation were arrested and fined.<sup>25</sup>

During the numerous *barazas* which Kasina held throughout the location, he used to tell his people that though they were not willing to dig terraces, they would only realize the benefit of the same in future. That, though they were getting free services from the assistant agricultural officers, in future they would pay for the same services.<sup>26</sup> This way many realized the importance and benefit of conserving the soil and with time more and more people came to appreciate his efforts. Even those who at first thought that chief Kasina was harassing them by forcing them to dig terraces against their will later

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<sup>24</sup> O.I., Nyumu Nguli and Nzivuru wa Kaleli.

<sup>25</sup> O.I., Kasia wa Mulatya on 15/2/98 at Kavaini.

<sup>26</sup> O.I., Tabitha Mumbi Kimanzi on 15/2/98 at Nguutani.



realized that he was only doing that for their own benefit. One respondent was quick to point out that, "chief Kasina was surely like a prophet for most of the things he told us came to be true."<sup>27</sup> It is thus no wonder that this culture of digging terraces has persisted in Migwani and the area is heavily terraced.

Chief Kasina was certainly a forceful personality in the sense that he did not hesitate to use force whenever his people showed unwillingness to obey his orders. On the other hand, the fact that he held *barazas* to explain to the people the importance of his directives means that he was by no means thoroughly coercive. During such meetings he would persuade and convince the people to dig contour terraces even those who were at first opposed to the idea. Thus chief Kasina used coercion and persuasion together as a means of obtaining compliance from his people.

#### **4.4.0 CONSTRUCTION OF DAMS, BORE HOLES AND ROADS**

##### **4.4.1 DAMS AND BORE HOLES**

Water shortage was a severe problem faced by the people of Migwani, owing to the fact that there are no permanent rivers passing through the area. Thus, one of the major concerns of the colonial government was to provide Migwani residents with an alternative water supply. To ensure this was done, the government embarked on the programme of having dams and bore holes constructed in the location. In 1927, the year when Kasina was appointed chief, he supervised the construction of the first dam in the location with the help of Mr. Fazan, one of the first D.O.s to interest himself in building dams, which were greatly needed in the district.

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<sup>27</sup> O.L. Jane Kamene Nguli on 4/2/98 at Migwani.

Migwani dam, also known as Fazan dam, was started on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1927 by labour called out from Migwani and Nzaoni locations under the Native Authority Ordinance of 1924.<sup>28</sup> Kasina being the chief of Nzaoni location worked hard to ensure that large numbers of people were turned out for work. He used his headmen to assist him. Each headman had to provide a list of all able bodied young men and women in his village so that they could be assigned the number of days they were supposed to work. Only young boys and girls and the aged were exempted from this communal work.<sup>29</sup>

Those who failed to turn up for communal work were arrested, and chief Kasina would force them to spend the whole day working in his *shambas*. Women would be sent to work at the chief's compound or at the camp, attending to such duties as planting and watering trees, gathering grass for thatching or even sweeping the compound for general cleanliness. On the other hand, men would be taken to the chief's *shambas* where they would spend a whole day either digging terraces, cultivating or harvesting, depending on the nature of work available.<sup>30</sup> As a result, Kasina made sure that nobody in his location escaped communal labour.

Water shortage was a serious problem in Migwani, and the government could do little to alleviate the hardship which this brought because, as chief Kasina pointed out in one of his interviews with Mr. Carson, in those days there were no funds available designated for particular projects.<sup>31</sup> The government could not be wholly relied upon to construct earth dams and bore holes. It was upon the chief to organize his people to

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<sup>28</sup> By the terms of this Ordinance, chiefs were required to provide unpaid labour for communal undertakings deemed beneficial to the whole community.

<sup>29</sup> O.I., Nyaa Nguli on 7/2/98 at Mbondoni.

<sup>30</sup> O.I., Syanda Munga on 30/1/98 at Musuani and Joseph Thiaka.

<sup>31</sup> Carson, J.B., served as a D.O. in Kitui District in 1930's. He made good friends with chief Kasina whom he found to be very useful during tours of the district. Later in 1957 he returned to Kitui and carried out several interviews with Kasina on his life history.

construct dams on their own. The government's role, apart from sometimes providing the materials required, was purely supervisory.

It was with this idea in mind that chief Kasina embarked on the programme of constructing dams and bore holes in Migwani. In 1934, two dams were completed in Migwani. These were Mbondoni and Ngondini dams. He further supervised the construction of many dams in Migwani. He believed that his people would benefit from these dams. It was not an easy task, since initially not many people were willing to provide labour for they were not paid. They had at times to be forced to work. In 1950, two more dams were constructed in Migwani. These were the Kauwilu dam, which was the largest in the district with a capacity of 10 million gallons of water, and Kwa-Ngula dam.<sup>32</sup>

In total, it was to chief Kasina's credit that by 1951 Migwani had eight dams, all of which were constructed permanently. The eight dams were: Migwani (Fazan) dam, the first to be built in the location, Kanyonyoni, Mbondoni, Ngondini, Kiiyo, Thokoa, Kwa-Ngula and Kauwilu dams.<sup>33</sup> Many more dams were constructed after these, such as Nzeluni dam.

In 1951, a full day's tour was arranged to enable chiefs to visit some of the large successful dams which had been built the previous year in Migwani and Mutonguni locations, together with the large dam programme in progress. The chiefs were able to report that in Migwani great enthusiasm was being shown for the dam building programme. In particular at Nzeluni, where a large body of workers had openly requested chief Kasina to rest, as there was no need for him to use any persuasion to get people to

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<sup>32</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

<sup>33</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/8, Kitui District Annual Report, 1951.

work.<sup>34</sup> This was a clear indication that the relationship between the chief and his people had improved over time with the former managing to persuade the latter to accept the responsibility of constructing dams and bore holes.

The problem of water shortage in Migwani also made Kasina prevail upon his people to contribute money to be used for drilling bore holes in those areas where there was a shortage of rainfall and water. He put his headmen, who included Muthusi Mbulo of Kaliluni, Katwei wa Mwaniki of Mwingi, Katembu wa Varu of Nzaoni, Matu wa Mulu of Mbondoni, Mbulo wa Ndoo of Kavaini and Mulindu wa Ivia, who was his principal deputy, in charge of the collection of the money in their sub-locations. The money was collected from those who volunteered to pay as well as from those who were not willing to pay, since Kasina knew that the bore holes would be for the benefit of all the people in his location.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, in 1953, the D.C. in his Annual Report stated that two locations, namely Migwani and Mutonguni, were each collecting money for bore holes to be drilled in their underwatered and undergrazed areas. He further reported that four more locations had stated that they wished to install bore holes on this basis.<sup>36</sup> An indication of the success of chief Kasina's campaign (and of the campaign in the neighbouring location of Mutonguni) was the fact that in 1954 the D.C. was in a position to report that both Migwani and Mutonguni locations had each contributed \$2,500 for the construction of their own bore holes and that by the end of the year the pump had been installed at Mutonguni where the yield was expected to be 1,700 gallons per hour while in Migwani

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<sup>34</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/MV/2/4, Administrative Chiefs Meetings, 1949-1982.

<sup>35</sup> O.I., Rinda Mbithuka and Joseph Kasina.

<sup>36</sup> KNA, PC/SP/1/4/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953.

the pump was on the site awaiting installation. The bore hole at Migwani was expected to yield over 1,400 gallons of water per hour.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, by 1954 the 400 acre Kyome springs scheme had been completed. The scheme had shown the possibility of improving water supplies by regeneration of springs through proper conservation of soil around the spring.

It is interesting to note that the circumstances and the behaviour of chief Kasina seemed to be changing with the passage of time. Whereas in 1927, when the first dam was built in Migwani, he had to use coercion in order to obtain labour, in the 1950's it seems that he had made a breakthrough in having the people realise that the construction of dams and bore holes was intended for their own benefit. As a result, the people no longer required to be supervised or even pushed, for they were willing to work voluntarily as evidenced by the Nzeluni incident in 1951. We can therefore conclude that the relationship between Kasina and his people improved over time to the extent that in the 1950's he did not have to use force in a regular way when dealing with the people.

#### 4.4.2 CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS

On the side of road construction, the first road tracks in the district were opened up by forced communal labour mobilised by the chiefs and *nzama* elders under instructions from the D.C. Thus, organization for road construction was one of the early functions of chiefs and headmen. Chief Kasina on his part organized and supervised the construction of many roads in Migwani. He was responsible for the provision of labour when the Thika-Garissa road was being constructed through his location.

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<sup>37</sup> KNA. PC/SP/1/4/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1954.

In the early 1930's the public works department, in conjunction with the LNC, provided funds for road construction and maintenance in Kitui District. At times some of these funds were used to remunerate the work parties employed. It is important to point out that the funds from the public works department and the LNC were not enough for the construction and maintenance of all roads in the district. Consequently, the work of the construction and maintenance of the roads fell on the chiefs. They were to recruit labour for the construction of new roads as well as for the maintenance of the existing ones. This was one area where chief Kasina excelled. He made sure that the roads in his location were well maintained and kept in passable condition.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.5 PROMOTION OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

The fact that chief Kasina never acquired formal education doesn't mean that he did not value education. On the contrary, he was aware of the benefits which accrued from education. During his ten years' service in the K.A.R. he had travelled widely all over East Africa, and had met and interacted with many people. His interaction with those who had acquired education made him regard it with high esteem. His love for education coupled with the fact that as a chief he received orders from the D.C. to the effect that he had a duty to ensure parents sent their children to school, and also the fact that as a councillor he had to promote education in his location, led Kasina to be fully involved in educational matters.

The first school in Migwani was constructed in 1927, the same year when Kasina was appointed chief. This was the third school in Kitui District after the Government

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\* O.L. Kavuvi wa Ngandi on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

school at Kitui township and Ikutha primary school in Ikutha location.<sup>39</sup> The school was built at a place called Kwa Katuli (the location of the old Migwani town where Indians had build their first structures). It was later transferred to Kwa Singu, where it still stands and also where the town of Migwani is located. The school was completed in December 1927.

Upon its completion, chief Kasina called a meeting of the parents who had school-age children and explained to them the need to take their children to the newly built school.<sup>40</sup> There was outright opposition from the parents, who argued that their sons were best suited to look after cattle. They could not comprehend why they were being asked to take their sons to school yet from the times of their grandfathers, the occupation of young boys had been to look after their father's livestock. As a result there was a lot of resistance.

On the other hand, the children themselves were not willing to be taken to school. Sometimes many would desert home whenever they discovered that there was a plan to take them to school. It is no wonder that chief Kasina faced an uphill task of ensuring that the D.C.'s orders of having children sent to the newly built school were complied with. To ensure this was done, Kasina would send word to a parent informing him that his son was among those nominated to go to school. The son was therefore to be sent to school, failing which the parent would be arrested and fined as much as two cows.

Those parents who were wealthy ended up bribing the chief in order to have their children exempted from going to school. A parent could offer up to three bulls in order to

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<sup>39</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1927, 26.

<sup>40</sup> O.J., Nyumu Nguli and Joseph Thiaka.

have his child exempted.<sup>41</sup> This way only the sons of those parents who could not afford to bribe the chief, together with the sons of chiefs and headmen, ended up attending the school when it opened its doors in December 1927. As a result, it was reported that most of the 39 pupils who were registered when the school opened were sons of the chiefs, headmen and *thome* elders.<sup>42</sup>

Chief Kasina's efforts to encourage parents to take their children to school were not in vain, for in the following years the number of those wishing to be registered increased. In 1927 the D.C. had the following to say in his Annual Report:

Migwani school opened in December last year with 39 pupils and others desire admission. The numbers will therefore be brought up to seventy as soon as accommodation has been extended.<sup>43</sup>

Though the school was initially intended to be a mixed institution, the parents could not agree to their daughters being taken to school. According to them daughters were supposed to stay at home helping their mothers with domestic duties until they reached a marriageable age. They would then be married off in exchange for dowry. Daughters were in fact a source of wealth to their parents. They often looked forward to the day when their daughters would be married so that they could receive the dowry. It was a common belief among the parents that if girls were taken to school they would become prostitutes since they would be away from their mothers and grandmothers who were supposed to ensure strict vigilance over them.<sup>44</sup> As a result the girls would fail to get married and this would mean their parents missing dowry. No parent could afford to miss dowry since it was a source of wealth as well as a prestigious thing to have their

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<sup>41</sup> O.I., Nyumu Nguli and Joseph Thiaka.

<sup>42</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1927, 26.

<sup>43</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1928.

<sup>44</sup> O.I., Mrs. Mwende Mwangangi on 15/2/98 at Nguutani.



daughters married. It is therefore no wonder that among the first 39 pupils registered in the newly build Migwani primary school, there was not a single girl. They were all young boys aged between nine and twelve years old.

Chief Kasina also encouraged missionaries in Kitui District to open schools in his location. The earliest missionary society to establish itself in Kitui District was the Africa Inland Mission (A.I.M.), which settled at Mulango near Kitui town in 1915. It was followed years later by the Catholic Mission, the Holy Ghost Mission (H.G.M.) which established itself at Mutune, also near Kitui town, in 1945. Apart from the mission of preaching the word of God, the missionaries engaged themselves in other humanitarian activities such as building schools and health centres. Some of their schools were aided by the government while others were exclusively managed by the missions.

Chief Kasina, himself an early convert of the A.I.M., was instrumental in prevailing upon the A.I.M. to build schools in his location. He believed that his people would be able to benefit from the mission schools since, apart from providing formal education, the mission schools also offered spiritual guidance. Thus Migwani location was the beneficiary of some of the first mission-sponsored schools to be built by the A.I.M. in the district.

The first school to be built by the A.I.M. in Migwani location was Kyome primary school. It was also at Kyome where the A.I.M. had opened its first branch and two missionaries were stationed there permanently. The other schools built by the A.I.M. in Migwani included Ithumbi, Itoloni, Nzeluni and Thitani primary schools.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

In 1949, the A.I.M. applied for 30 acres of land at Kyome for the construction of a secondary school. In the following year, the approval was granted by the government. Hence, the construction work for a junior secondary school (as it was referred to by the colonial officials) at Kyome under the auspices of A.I.M. started immediately, and chief Kasina was entrusted with the task of supervising the construction. And in 1952 a secondary school, which was later named Kyome intermediate school, was opened in Migwani location, the first of its kind in the district.<sup>46</sup>

The H.G.M. also made an effort to open a school in Migwani location. On 28 April 1945, Fr. White, in charge of the H.G.M. at Mutune, wrote to chief Kasina about a school plot. It was, however, not until 1950 that the H.G.M. opened a school at Tyaa in Migwani location.<sup>47</sup> The delay in opening the school could have been occasioned by the fact that Kasina did not offer outright support to the H.G.M. compared to the A.I.M., the obvious reason being that he did not share their faith.

It can therefore be said that through his association with the missionaries, particularly those of the A.I.M., chief Kasina was able to improve education in his location. This can be seen against the background of the many schools opened by the A.I.M. in Migwani location as compared to other locations in the district. For example, by 1950, out of the eleven schools run by the A.I.M. in Kitui District, four were built in Migwani location while in the northern locations there was none.<sup>48</sup>

By 1950, there was one junior secondary school at Kyome, a secondary school at Kitui (Government African School) and thirty-six primary schools in the district. The schools were run by three bodies, namely; the District Education Board (D.E.B.), the

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<sup>46</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

<sup>47</sup> MacCamphill, P.J., *The Catholic Church in Kitui: The Beginnings*, Unpublished work, 1989.

A.I.M. and H.G.M. Out of the thirty-six primary schools, the D.E.B. ran fifteen schools, A.I.M. eleven and the H.G.M. ten schools. But in Migwani location alone, the A.I.M. ran four schools, with the D.E.B. and the H.G.M. each having one school.

#### 4.6 LOCUST CAMPAIGN

Chief Kasina's work in the control of locusts, which invaded the district quite often, was outstanding. The locusts proved to be highly destructive to the young crops, thus posing a threat of famine in the whole district. These insects had to be controlled whenever they invaded at all cost to avoid the looming danger of famine which accompanied them. Locust control became one of the major concerns of the colonial government in Kitui District in the 1940's.

Chiefs were put in charge of locust campaigns in their own locations. Whenever the locusts invaded their locations, it was up to the chiefs to organise their people to physically destroy them, an exercise which demanded a lot of devotion on the part of the chief and his people. In some cases the chief's performance in administration was evaluated on his ability to control locusts. Those who failed to impress their superiors that they were doing a thorough job in ensuring that the hoppers were not allowed to spread found themselves at odds with the D.C. They were either given a strict warning, or even dismissed and replaced by more effective persons. Chief Kilungu of Mui location was one such victim who was dismissed for failing to initiate an effective locust control campaign. It was reported that hoppers in Mui location had got away to a flying start owing to chief Kilungu's negligence.<sup>49</sup> This earned him his dismissal.

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<sup>48</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

<sup>49</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1943.

Chief Kasina always took orders from his superiors seriously, and when in 1942 the district was invaded by locusts and the D.C. gave orders to the chiefs to contain the spread of the hoppers, he moved into action with speed. He devoted most of his time to mobilising groups of people who were taken to the areas where the locusts had invaded to physically destroy the hoppers and the eggs laid by beating them with tree branches.<sup>50</sup>

Men, and sometimes women, were required to take part in the campaign. Chief Kasina delegated the duties of supervising the exercise to his headmen and tribal retainers. He relied more on his chief tribal retainer Musila wa Muli in the enforcement of his orders. It should be noted here that the relationship between chief Kasina and his headmen was good, and they were always ready to implement his orders. This partly explains the reason why chief Kasina was able to implement projects in his area successfully. Chief Kasina therefore instructed his headmen and tribal retainers to turn up men from their villages to take in the locust campaign exercise. His tribal retainers were always on the alert to ensure that the chief's order of recruiting labour was adhered to. Those who failed to turn up for the exercise were arrested and fined and at the same time forced to do the work.<sup>51</sup>

In 1943 the district was invaded by flying swarm of locusts in the months of January and February. The northern locations were the most affected by the invasion, which posed a great danger to the young crops in the fields. Migwani location was not spared either. The locusts which had invaded in these two months were the left over of the considerable infestation which had begun in the month of November the previous year, when flying swarms of locusts had damaged young crops over extensive areas in

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<sup>50</sup> O.I., Simeon Mwanzia wa Mwanzwii and Stephen Muvengei Nzovo on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.

<sup>51</sup> O.I., Simeon Mwanzia wa Mwanzwii and Stephen Muvengei Nzovo on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.

Mui, Nuu, Waita, Katse and Mivukoni locations in the northern part of the district. Eggs were laid over a large part of the affected locations.

The most affected areas in Migwani location were the eastern and the northern frontiers. As a result, during the month of January, a gang of both men and women was taken to Mutukya hill in the eastern frontier where the locusts had laid eggs and hoppers had started to fly around.<sup>52</sup> Another gang was taken to Kwa-Muthingo on the northern frontier.<sup>53</sup> The campaign took almost two months during which time the hoppers were completely destroyed, thus averting a famine threat.

Chief Kasina was in some cases at the scene of destruction supervising the work being done and at same time assessing the progress being made. His presence would speed up the work being done, since he would occasionally physically assault those who were not being serious in their work.<sup>54</sup> This behaviour was also seen when he was supervising construction of roads, bore holes and dams. Thus, to some people, mostly those who were not willing to obey orders and directives from the chief, Kasina was a bully and an all-powerful master who could do anything he pleased to his servants, an aspect which brought a lot of dislike and hatred from a section of his people.

So well did chief Kasina manage the locust campaign in his location that he also sent his people to neighbouring locations to assist with the exercise. For example, in 1943 the chief of Mui location was unable to control the locust invasion. The position was, however, largely restored by chief Kasina's initiative in moving several hundreds of his

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<sup>52</sup> O.I., Stephen Muvengei Nzovo.

<sup>53</sup> O.I., Stephen Muvengei Nzovo.

<sup>54</sup> O.I., Simeon Mwanzia Mwanzwii and Mrs. Muthakye Kongo on 10/2/98 at Thitani village.

people into Mui location. Beating of the locusts continued throughout the year and very few escapes, if any, occurred.<sup>55</sup>

Chief Kasina also applied other methods of containing locust invasions in addition to organising for the locusts to be killed after invading. He knew that thick bushes and thickets were the breeding places for the locusts and so, as a control measure, there was need to clear the bushes. The heavily forested areas were the northern frontiers, and so chief Kasina embarked on a programme of bush clearing as a preventative as well as a control measure. A group of men was taken to the junction of Tyaa and Tana rivers to clear forests in order to destroy the breeding places for the locusts.<sup>56</sup>

The work of bush clearing went on throughout the year 1943. Large tracts of bushes were cleared. By the end of the year, 49 miles of bush had been cleared for the sole purpose of destroying the breeding places for the locusts, as well as for the purpose of pasture improvement. Seeded grass was planted instead. The principle being followed was to clear useless scrub and trees and to allow the cut tree branches to rot.

#### 4.7 KASINA AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Throughout his career as a chief and councillor, Kasina was very much concerned with the improvement of agriculture in Migwani. He was always at the centre-stage encouraging his people to use modern methods of farming, such as contour terracing and use of manure. In those days famines were quite frequent and it was advisable for the people to produce enough food for consumption and storage in case of a shortage of rainfall in the next season.

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<sup>55</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, District Annual Report 1943.  
<sup>56</sup> O.I., Peter Nzenga Ngumbau on 20/2/98 at Thokoa

In Migwani, increased agricultural production was encouraged, and through the efforts of chief Kasina the location cultivated locational *shambas*.<sup>5758</sup> This was occasioned by the increased demand for food, especially for the soldiers who were serving in the army during the Second World War. The administration in Kitui, as in other parts of the colony, encouraged the chiefs to increase their production so that surplus food could be sent to those serving in the army. In addition to producing food for the soldiers in the armed forces, surplus food obtained from the locational *shambas* was sold to other locations in need of it, hence earning some money for the location.

Chief Kasina, having served in the K.A.R. during World War I, knew that the men in the battlefield had to be supplied with food. He therefore believed that it was necessary that the people back home had to increase food production in order to have enough for themselves and also surplus to be supplied to the men serving in the army. With these ideas in mind, he organised for the cultivation of locational *shambas* in his location. He formed a committee and appointed eleven elders chosen for their knowledge and experience to be in charge of the locational *shambas*.<sup>59</sup> The elders were to act as managers of these *shambas*. Chief Kasina kept the D.C. informed about the progress of the locational *shambas*. He even went ahead and requested the D.C. to register his committee, which he did, and the committee was approved on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1939.<sup>60</sup>

Migwani committee is said to have been the first co-operative venture in Kambaland.<sup>61</sup> It was a brainchild of chief Kasina, and it proved to be a success. Kasina

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<sup>57</sup> Carson, J. B., op.cit., 25.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ochieng W. R., "Colonial African Chiefs- Were They Primarily Self-Seeking Scoundrels ?" in *Hadithi 4* by Ogot B. A (ed) Nairobi: EAPH, 1972.

believed that one way of increasing food production in Migwani was through working together as a group and it was with such an idea in mind that he organised for the cultivation of the locational *shambas* whereby everybody in the location was required to take part in one way or the other through planting, cultivation or harvesting. The idea behind the whole venture, apart from producing food for the soldiers in the army, for which the colonial government paid, was to create food reserves for the location.

The large quantity of food produced on the locational *shambas* was stored for future use in case of a famine or any other disaster. The food was also given to people in short supply, as well as to the families whose menfolk were taking part in the Second World War, though the food was not distributed freely. So well did the location manage with agricultural production that in 1941, when there was famine in the southern part of the district, the Migwani committee was able to sell food obtained from the locational *shambas* to the famine stricken areas.

The committee requested the D.C. to allow them to use Local Native Council lorries to carry the food, and in December 1941 the committee sent seventy bags of various food stuffs to the southern part of the district as relief food. Two years later, in 1943, when there was famine in the northern parts of the district, the committee once more requested the D.C. to let them have a lorry. He obliged and in May that year the committee sent 250 bags of cassava, maize and beans to the northern locations. The money got from the sale of the food was deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank for future use. This money was also used to remunerate the persons employed on these *shambas* as well as the elders managing them.



In 1944, Migwani was invaded by locusts which destroyed the crops. This brought about a threat of famine. Once more the locusts invaded the location and destroyed the crops the following year, when the *askaris* were returning home from the army. Again there was considerable famine in the district which became more serious by 1946. The committee then utilized the money which it had got from former sales, which by this time had of course accumulated considerable interest, to buy food for Migwani location.

This project of cultivating locational *shambas* seems to have been quite different from other 'forced' projects such as dam-building. The fact that chief Kasina was able to organise such a project successfully is quite revealing. The success of the project required the cooperation of so many persons, and it is a clear indication that Kasina was able to convince the people of the importance of the project to the extent that even those who hated and disliked him because of the way he handled other projects, were able to offer their support to this particular project.<sup>62</sup>

It can thus be seen that Kasina, being both the chief and councillor of his location, was totally committed in the field of agricultural development. He ensured the co-operation of his people in order to increase food production. He also worked in co-operation with the agricultural officers in the district, who were always available to give advice and instructions whenever it was necessary. However, lack of enough agricultural officers was a hindrance to the development of agriculture in the district. For example, though there was one agricultural officer in the district in 1938, any progress in agriculture was very limited since his staff was small and instructors were paid by the

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<sup>62</sup> O.I., Nzivuru Kaleli on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

Local Native Council whose funds were also very limited. Thus, there was hardly enough agricultural officers in the district, though with time more and more assistant agricultural officers were trained and their work became invaluable to the success of agriculture in the district.<sup>63</sup>

Another secret to chief Kasina's splendid performance in the field of agriculture was that he quite often liaised with the agricultural officer to ensure that assistant agricultural officers were sent to his location. He further liaised with the D.C. and his D.O.s for the services of agricultural officers. For example, in a meeting with the D.O., Mr. F. R. Wilson, after touring Migwani location in 1947, Kasina outrightly expressed the desire to have an agricultural officer sent to his location to assist in giving instructions on how the terraces were to be dug.<sup>64</sup> Kasina also quite often took the advice of the agricultural officers very seriously, which he would later disseminate to his people. As a result the people of Migwani benefited from the expertise of the agricultural officers in the district.

Likewise chief Kasina, through the co-operation of the agricultural officers in the district, encouraged the use of modern methods of farming, especially the digging of terraces and cut-offs to prevent the top fertile soil from being washed away from the *shambas*. He also encouraged the use of manure and fertilisers, which were intended to boost food production. In 1956, the agricultural officer in the district had an occasion to report that there was increased activity in the planting of napier grass and fodder crop in areas where it had never been grown before in Migwani location. There was also an

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<sup>63</sup>Carson, J. B., op.cit., 23

<sup>64</sup>KNA, DC/KTI/1/3/6, Safari Report 25/5/47-30/5/47 by Mr. F. R. Wilson, District Officer, Kitui.

increase in silage pits and a considerable extension in the use of manure. It was also noted that, an interesting experiment was being undertaken by a few farmers in Migwani, most notably chief Kasina, in wheat growing.<sup>65</sup>

Another factor which contributed towards the uplifting of agriculture in Migwani, apart from chief Kasina's commitment to ensure the same, was that he set himself as an example for the others to follow. His *shambas* were well terraced, and he applied manure to increase production. They were so well maintained that they were used by the agricultural officers for field-days and demonstration purposes.<sup>66</sup> As a result, those who saw how well his *shambas* were maintained would endeavour to have theirs look the same. His efforts were recognised in 1943 when the D.C. noted that:

... mention should however be made that chief Kasina has composted with compost manure from his own pits an excellent *shamba* in front of his farm.<sup>67</sup>

Kasina is also credited with having been the first to start a dairy farm in the location. He was, however, at pains with the fact that the cattle of Migwani were small, and that through lack of grass they could only lactate for one month at stretch. He consulted the agricultural and veterinary officers about the possibility of acquiring grade cattle like the many he had seen on European farms in the central province. It was found that the climate of Migwani could not guarantee the survival of grade cattle. All the same, chief Kasina selected the most healthy and best looking cows which he kept for milk

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KNA, PC/SP/1/4/2, Kitui District Annual Report, 1956, 1.

O.E. Mrs. Kalunda Kasina and Mr. Nzuva Kyangavo, on 15/3/98 at Kavaini.

KNA, DC/KT/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1943.

production. He also encouraged his people to start dairy farms to ensure increased milk production.

It can be concluded that Kasina's involvement in agricultural matters in his location was outstanding and is an indication that he was concerned with the improvement of the living standards of his people. Though it was the policy of the colonial government to improve agriculture in the district, without the efforts of chief Kasina, as a leader of his people, Migwani could not have attained much of what was attained in agriculture. The efforts of the government were fully supplemented. There was always enough food in store obtained from the locational *shambas* in case of a famine. Migwani was also able to export food to other locations whenever the need arose.

#### 4.8 KASINA'S PERFORMANCE AS A COLONIAL CHIEF

Before being appointed a chief, Kasina had worked with the K.A.R. for over ten years during which time he rose through the ranks to the position of a Regimental Sergeant Major (R.S.M.) shortly before he retired. While in the army he had travelled widely and had worked under many European officers. He had also acquired some of the attributes which go with military training such as obedience and respect for one's superiors. These attributes proved to be very useful throughout his career as a chief.

It is therefore no wonder that chief Kasina acted immediately whenever he was issued with an order. He could never rest until the order was satisfactorily carried out. He always made sure that he implemented whatever decisions were made by his superiors. He rarely questioned the directives and orders from his superiors, and even if he had anything to complain about, which was hardly ever, this would come later after the

directive had been implemented.<sup>68</sup> He knew that he owed his appointment to the D.C. and so he had a duty to obey all his orders and also respect his superiors. This partly explains why the D.C. in 1952 had the following comment to make:

Chief Kasina is still the outstanding chief in the district, thoroughly loyal, sensible and fearless. His true worth has been shown since the declaration of emergency.<sup>69</sup>

As a result, chief Kasina's location was always ahead of the other locations in the district. It was a shining example for others to follow. Government officials who visited Migwani always had something positive to report about the location. In 1949, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, accompanied by the Provincial Commissioner, visited Migwani location. The Governor had the following to say of the visit:

The drive through Migwani location was like a royal procession in Elizabethan times. The entire population appeared to be stretched along the roadside digging terraces, building dams, making *sanzus* and dancing *ngomas* or just clapping. Flags were flying and at Thokoa dam, chief Kasina mounted a Guard of Honour of some hundred ex-servicemen, the Royal salute being sounded uncommonly well on reed horn.<sup>70</sup>

Chief Kasina was endowed with leadership qualities which most chiefs in his times lacked. His greatest and indispensable assets were his powers of eloquence, persuasion and diplomacy. He could persuade his people to obey what they considered to be unpopular decisions made by the colonial officials. He had an accomplished *baraza* (public meeting) technique and was very useful for putting points across and explaining them to his people. He was truly a born showman.<sup>71</sup> He was an outstanding orator. His oratorical skills were comparable to none in the district. He often used his powers of

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<sup>68</sup> O.L. Mr. Nzuva Kyangavo and Mrs. Esther K. Kasina.

<sup>69</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/9, Kitui District Annual Report, 1952.

<sup>70</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/6, Kitui District Annual Report, 1949, 2.

<sup>71</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1960.

oratory in swaying a crowd. As such he commanded considerable respect from many of his parishioners.

He used his powers of oratory to implement and enforce sometimes unpopular and unjust government directives. It is thus no wonder that Mr. J. W. Balfour, then sitting D.C. at Kitui in 1956, equated chief Kasina to Winston Churchill, the great British prime minister in the 1940s, when he described him as a formidable figure with a 'Churchillian' manner and approach to men and affairs.<sup>72</sup> It is important to point out that Kasina used his powers of oratory to win the hearts of many including those who hated and disliked him for one reason or the other. His power of persuasion helped him when dealing with those he perceived to be his enemies.

Kasina received favourable and commendable reports from his superiors. For example, in 1949 the D.C. noted that, 'Chief Kasina had shown all his high qualities of tact and leadership.'<sup>73</sup> He was also described as being efficient, obedient, dependable and a man with an astute mind whose illiteracy seemed to be little handicap to him.<sup>74</sup>

Chief Kasina could not have received all this praise for nothing. It is important to note that not every chief in the district received favourable comments from the D.C. There were those who failed to master administrative skills and who received very discouraging reports. For example, chief Mwaniki wa Muthengi of Mui location was considered to be 'unsatisfactory, drank excessively and had been concerned with brawls'.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, chief Kitheka wa Ngungu of Voo was reported to be the most inefficient chief in the district and was replaced by chief Mbaki wa Masila who likewise

<sup>72</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, October, 1956.

<sup>73</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/6, Kitui District Annual Report, 1949.

<sup>74</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1960.

<sup>75</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1936.

proved to be incapable.<sup>76</sup> Chief Mbiti Nzau of Mivukoni location was described as being a fitinous, lazy and unintelligent chief. He was largely responsible for the backwardness of his location and was considered to be out of date.<sup>77</sup> In contrast, Kasina possessed the skills and qualities that most of his colleagues seemed to lack. He was a born leader, as a result of which he was always ahead of others administratively.

Another secret to chief Kasina's success in his administrative work was his spirit of initiative. Not only was he conversant with the duties which he had to perform as a chief, but he never waited to be prodded unlike most of his colleagues who had to be constantly reminded of their duties. He was very clever, gifted, and intelligent, and was explicitly committed to his duties as a chief.<sup>78</sup>

He must also have realised from the very beginning that he owed his appointment to the D.C., and that as a government agent he was duty-bound to obey and respect his superiors. Thus, he handled his superiors with dignity, respect and caution. He quite often avoided anything which could hurt his bosses or antagonise them.<sup>79</sup> In this way he was able to maintain a good relationship with his masters. This was no easy thing since the government had its own policies and directives which were to be implemented, while the people had their own interests which were to be safeguarded at all costs and the two quite often conflicted.

Chief Kasina promoted the interests of his colonial masters and at the same time was very careful not to antagonise his people. Even when he was implementing very unpopular directives, he depended on his oratory and persuasive skills to convince his

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<sup>76</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1936.

<sup>77</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1960.

<sup>78</sup> O.L., Kavuvi wa Ngandi and Nzivuri wa Kaleli.

<sup>79</sup> O.L., Misyili wa Mutwetwe and Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

people that the measure was intended to benefit them. This way he balanced the wishes of his colonial masters and those of his people and the result was that his position as a chief was safeguarded.

Though Kasina was careful not to antagonise his people through his actions, it is apparent that he quite often collided with many when he was carrying out his duties. For example, those people who were forced to provide labour during the construction of dams and implementation of other projects developed hatred and dislike for the chief. There were also those people who did not need to be forced in any way and who appreciated what the chief was doing for them. It seems that with the passage of time, many people came to appreciate and accept that what chief Kasina was doing was for their own benefit.

It is important to point out that chief Kasina had some weaknesses which portrayed the negative side of his administration. According to some respondents, he at times, but not often, misused his powers to harass and take other peoples' property by force. For example, tax defaulters had their livestock confiscated by the chief and taken for auction. Chief Kasina would then instruct his own men and give them money to purchase the livestock on his behalf, usually at a throw-away price. For instance, a cow worth Ksh. 20 could be sold for Ksh. 9, if the tax owing was equivalent to that amount.<sup>80</sup> This was one way in which Kasina amassed wealth.

The fact that chief Kasina did not buy the livestock personally but used his men is a clear indication of the fact that he did not want to be seen as being corrupt. He also did

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<sup>80</sup> O.I., Nyumu wa Nguli.



not want to be seen as being exploitative, hence he was able in a way to stifle public criticism.

There were also a few other instances which indicate that Kasina in a way misused his position. For example, he took by force the fertile land along the Itoloni valley without compensating the owners.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, whenever he visited a home, a goat had to be slaughtered for him and the owner did not have much choice as to whether to slaughter the goat or not. Likewise he at times made people contribute livestock intended to be presents to the colonial officials but most of them ended up in his *boma*<sup>82</sup> This is one reason why some people have labelled Kasina as being exploitative, a collaborator and a chief who was concerned with amassing wealth at the expense of his people. But considering the fact that he gave his whole life to his people in helping them in many different ways, this accusation could be attributed to personal differences and hatred.

But it should be pointed here that the system of independent chiefs, all powerful in their locations and answerable to none except the D.C., left the chiefs with a leeway to abuse their positions. Even the colonial officials were critical of such a system as evidenced by an observation made by the D.C in 1945 that;

It is my considered opinion that the system of independent chiefs, all powerful in their locations and answerable to no one except the D.C is not a success although the absence of any reliable section of the community in which trust might be reposed renders any alternative at present infeasible until there is an organised body of public opinion which is not afraid to voice local grievances and protest against persecution and corruption.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> O.I., Alex N. Mwosya on 5/3/98 at Ihokoa Primary School and Stella Muthama on 5/2/98 at Musengo.

<sup>82</sup> *Boma* here is used to refer to cattle shed.

<sup>83</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1945, 3.

Thus, under such a system, an unscrupulous chief aided by his followers was often able to stifle public criticism of his actions and render life very difficult indeed for anyone who had the temerity to inform on him. Indeed, unless a chief committed some injustice so flagrant as to evoke general disapprobation resulting in an appeal to higher authority, his position was not likely to be endangered, however multifarious his exactions from and his impositions upon those who were not of his own particular clique.

Under such a system, therefore, it was often open for a Chief to increase his emoluments by numerous means, and it was very exceptional when a chief did not become a rich man within a few years of appointment. In fact the chiefs confided to the D.C. in a meeting in 1945 that there was not a single man in their locations who would not accept the post of a chief even if it carried no pay.<sup>84</sup> Most of the chiefs were therefore little interested in the performance of any duty which did not entail personal gifts or possibly prestige.

Chief Kasina was no exception to this temptation of enriching himself through unorthodox means. His malpractices were also known to his superiors. This can be deduced from some of the comments which came from them. For example, in 1945 the D.C. noted that Kasina had over the year not come up to expectations and that he had given the impression that he had other pre-occupation in addition to his duties.<sup>85</sup> He was reported to have been engaged in countless shady deals over land.<sup>86</sup> Likewise in 1957 he was among the chiefs in the district made the subject of anonymous accusations of

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<sup>84</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1945, 4.

<sup>85</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1945.

<sup>86</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Handing Over Report: Northern Division by Mr. A. L. K. Liddle, District Officer, 1960.

corruption, bribery and nepotism on a scale so vast as to be difficult of belief, though none of the allegations were substantiated.<sup>87</sup>

Kasina had made a good name to his superiors to the extent that they could not take the accusations made against him seriously. This did not, however, mean that there were no people opposed to his unethical deeds. In fact an anti-Kasina function existed in Migwani led by one Philip Musee Kanyingi and Kalele Atui.<sup>88</sup> He was also very unpopular with the younger generation and was heartily disliked by the young people of the location.<sup>89</sup>

Chief Kasina was perceived to be favouring people of his own clan of *Mbaa Muli* and more specifically those of his family- the *Mbaa Kyala* family. Members of his family and to some extent those of his clan, would be exempted from such requirements as construction of dams, bore holes, roads and other development projects. Likewise during the re-settling of the ex-soldiers after the Second World War, chief Kasina is said to have favoured the soldiers from his clan in the allocation of shops and other business premises within the location.<sup>90</sup>

At times chief Kasina collided with his people when he was carrying out his duties. Some of the duties which he performed were quite unpopular and this made him unpopular too. People did not take such measures as recruitment for communal labour happily. Likewise they could not understand nor comprehend the reason why they were being taxed. They therefore labelled Kasina all sorts of names such as a collaborator,

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<sup>87</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/14, Kitui District Annual Report, 1945, 7.

<sup>88</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/2/3, Handing Over Report; Northern Division by Hickson Mahony, District Officer, 1958.

<sup>89</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/2/3, Handing Over Report; Northern Division by Mr. A. L. K. Liddle, District Officer, 1960.

<sup>90</sup> O.L. Simeon Mwanzia wa Mwanzwii.

traitor and a stooge of the white man, simply because he worked for the colonial government. Chief Kasina thus acted as a thin veil for the colonial government. He also acted as the cutting edge of the colonial sword as he was directly in touch with his people.

Most of the measures enforced and implemented by chief Kasina were supposed and designed to benefit his people. Such measures as uplifting their hygienic standards by digging pit latrines, increasing their food production through increased soil conservation by digging terraces, ensuring adequate availability of water through increased dam construction were in fact intended to benefit the people. They, however, did not seem to appreciate such measures simply because they had emanated and originated from the colonial government which was considered to be alien and oppressive. They therefore thought him a bother for urging and compelling them to uplift their living standards. Also most of those whom he prosecuted or collided with for such crimes as illicit beer-brewing and tax defaulting, for one reason or another quite often would spread malicious rumours against him out of bitterness.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that chief Kasina was concerned with the welfare of his people and it seems that he did everything possible to ensure that development in Migwani location was carried out. Though a cross section of people accuse him of having been harsh when dealing with the people, this was expected, since as a chief he had his official duties to carry out and which he had to perform well, otherwise his credibility as a chief and government agent could be questioned. He had to balance the wishes of his masters and his people, and this is an area where it seems that he did succeed.

#### 4.9 AWARDS, PROMOTIONS, MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

Chief Kasina was properly rewarded for his unswerving co-operation and collaboration in ensuring that law and order were maintained and that development projects were implemented in his location. He was elevated above all the other chiefs in the district by being awarded the most prestigious title of Senior Chief. and above all he was promoted to higher salary scales and grades compared to his fellow chiefs.

Chief Kasina was among the most highly remunerated chiefs in the district. Being one of the longest serving chiefs and having been made a senior chief in 1954, his remuneration was much higher than that of the other chiefs. This is shown by the fact that he was upgraded to the special grade 'B' with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1958.<sup>91</sup> The rates of this special grade followed scale 'E' of the African Civil Service. The special grade had been recommended by a meeting attended by the P.C.s in 1953. The grade was created for chiefs of exceptional merit. Entry into this special grade was considered individually at the Provincial Commissioners' meetings.

Besides the salary which he received as a chief, Kasina also enjoyed other fringe benefits. These included consolidated car, travelling and night-out allowances. By 1953, he was entitled to a maximum consolidated car allowance of Ksh. 75 per month. But whenever he was required to undertake special journeys on government business beyond the distance represented by the Ksh. 75, an increase could be granted by the P.C. on recommendation of the D.C.<sup>92</sup> By 1947, he was entitled to a travelling allowance of varying rates at the discretion of the P.C. When staying on duty in Nairobi or Mombasa

<sup>91</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/15, Kitui District Annual Report, 1958.

<sup>92</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/6, 'Terms of Service', 1952.

or outside the colony, he was paid Ksh. 5 per night while when outside the district or even visiting districts headquarters, he received an allowance of Ksh. 4. When in the district but outside his own location, the allowance stood at Ksh. 3 per night.

There were also other ways in which chief Kasina was rewarded for his devotion and commitment in carrying out his duties. For example, he was the recipient of numerous promotions, awards, medals and decorations, which were all given to him as a way of appreciation for his unreserved service to the colonial government. He was also honoured with many visits which he made outside the colony. He travelled widely especially during the Second World War, when he was quite often nominated to visit the Kamba troops serving in the various units in the K.A.R. Notable among the visits was the trip he made to the Middle East. He also travelled to Somalia and Libya among other countries. More importantly, chief Kasina was honoured by the nomination of being among the few dignitaries selected from the colony (and in fact the only one from Kitui) to attend the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in England in 1953.

Chief Kasina was the recipient of many awards given selectively to individual chiefs depending on their dedication and intelligence in carrying out their duties. In 1938, he was the recipient of the King's Medal for Chiefs. He was presented with the medal at Government House in Nairobi on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1938.<sup>93</sup> The prestigious King's Medal for African Chiefs had been instituted in 1920. The medal was awarded to specific chiefs in recognition of the efficient control of their chiefdoms. The medal was also awarded for enlightened acts of services undertaken for the benefit of the community or for specific services of a long and faithful nature. This medal was not awarded to every colonial

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<sup>93</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 24; KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/3, Kitui District Annul Report, 1938, 5.

chief. It was awarded to chiefs upon the consultation and recommendation by the D.C. and the P.C. on the suitability of the chief proposed for the award. As a prerequisite, the recipient had to have effective control of his people. He had also to have outstanding record in the implementation of government policies. In other words the recipient had to show that he merited the award.

Senior chief Kasina on his part had proved through effective control of his location that he merited the award. This is why in 1938 the D.C. Mr. Pedraza recommended him for the award. The actual medal was stolen from him while in Nairobi together with everything else which he possessed at the beginning of the Second World War. Not only did he lose his medal but his W.W.I ribbons and \$50 in cash were taken away from him.<sup>94</sup> He reported the loss of the medal, and another one which was a solid George V one with a silver chain was forwarded to him.

In 1952, chief Kasina was awarded the British Empire Medal (B.E.M.). It was in a red leather case, stamped 'E.R II 1953' and was forwarded from 10 Downing Street with the Prime Minister's seal in a letter of December 16, 1952. The letter from the Prime Minister of England read in part:

I have the honour to inform you that the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve the P.M.'s recommendation that the British Empire Medal be awarded to you. Your name therefore appears in the Honours list published on January 1, 1953.<sup>95</sup>

This award was given in recognition of chief Kasina's long and faithful service to the British government and his people.

In 1954, chief Kasina was honoured with the presentation of a Union Jack from General Erskine, commander-in-charge, East Africa.<sup>96</sup> General Erskine was one of the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

many distinguished persons who paid chief Kasina a visit in his hospital bed after he was injured in an attack.<sup>97</sup> During the visit, General Erskine sought to know what Kasina would like to have from him as a mark of appreciation. Kasina replied that he wished to have a Union Jack to fly over his house. This must have pleased Erskine very much and he promised him that he was to get it as soon as he had recovered.

General Erskine, true to his promise, did not forget about the Union Jack. It was a big occasion for chief Kasina when Erskine sent Captain Grey, together with twenty five K.A.R. *askaris* to make a presentation to Kasina at Kitui *Boma*.<sup>98</sup> More than 4,000 persons were in attendance at the impressive ceremony which was held in the *boma*. There was a police band, a parade of tribal police and a unit of the Home Guard. Kasina was formally presented with the Union Jack which used to fly over his house at Itoloni day and night. This shows the extent to which chief Kasina respected and loved the Union Jack which was a sign of British authority.

In the same year, chief Kasina was awarded the Member of British Empire (M.B.E.) medal. This particular medal was awarded to African chiefs with exceptional merit in administrative skills and efficiency. It was given to Kasina in recognition of a long and dedicated service to the colonial government.

By Queen's order, the name of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina s/o Ndo was published in the London Gazette on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1957 as Mention-in-Dispatch for distinguished service. Consequently, on 1<sup>th</sup> April 1957, Senior Chief Kasina wa Ndo

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<sup>95</sup> The letter was found among the many documents kept by Mr. Joseph Kasina, a son of the late chief in his house at Itoloni village.

<sup>96</sup> O.I., Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>97</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>98</sup> *Boma* - This word was used during the colonial period to refer to the stations where colonial administrators usually the D.C.s were based. Thus a District headquarters could be referred to as 'boma'.



was awarded the medal of a Mention-in-Dispatches.<sup>99</sup> The medal was sent from the Ministry of African Affairs in London. This award was in recognition of the chief's loyalty and the long and outstanding service he had given in the fight against Mau Mau. The Mention-in-Dispatches award was only given to those chiefs in Kenya who had shown total loyalty in the fight against Mau Mau. It was a sign of appreciation on the part of the colonial government to those colonial chiefs who had been very instrumental in having Mau Mau crushed. Thus for all his efforts in the fight against Mau Mau, Kasina was rewarded with the presentation of the award in 1957.

In 1959, Senior Chief Kasina Ndoos was presented with the medal of the Order of British Empire (O.B.E.). By this award, chief Kasina was nominated and appointed to be an ordinary member of the civil division of the most excellent order of the British Empire. The award was accompanied by a letter from Queen Elizabeth II addressed to him. The letter read in part as follows:

Elizabeth II, by the grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other realms and territories, Queen, head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the faith and sovereign of most Excellent Order of the British Empire. to our trusty and well beloved Kasina son of Ndoos. Greetings. Whereas we have thought to nominate and appoint you to be an ordinary member of the civil division of our said most Excellent Order of British Empire, we do by these present grant unto you the dignity of an ordinary member of our said Order and hereby authorise you to have hold and enjoy the said Dignity of Rank of an ordinary member of our said Order together with all and singular the privilege there unto belonging or appertaining.<sup>100</sup>

It can therefore be said that chief Kasina's collaboration with the colonial government was not in vain. He was well rewarded materially as well as being elevated socially by being given so many honorary awards. It can as well be concluded that the

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<sup>99</sup> Notification letter was found among other documents kept by Mr. Joseph M. Kasina (son of the late chief) at his home in Itoloni.

<sup>100</sup> Notification letter was found among other documents kept by Mr. Joseph M. Kasina (son of the late chief) at his home in Itoloni.

Colonial officials in Kitui District did not have any reason to regret ever having appointed Kasina as a chief. This is because he performed his duties to the satisfaction of his colonial masters. In other words Kasina was a prototype colonial chief.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 KASINA AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR: VISIT TO TROOPS DURING AND AFTER THE WAR AND JOURNEY TO ENGLAND

#### 5.1 THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Chief Kasina's willingness in serving the colonial government was demonstrated when the Second World War broke out in 1939. He went out of his way to do everything possible in order to assist the British in their war efforts. He had taken part in the First World War which the British, together with her Allies, had won, and he considered the victory to be his own since he had fought alongside the British forces. Therefore, when the Second World War broke out chief Kasina was ready to assist the British colonial government. Though this time round he was not serving as a soldier in the K.A.R., he nevertheless proved that his services towards the war effort were indispensable.

Thus when the Second World War started in Europe in 1939, chief Kasina devoted all his energies to ensure that he took part in the war as much as possible. In the first place, he started training people in his location at his own Migwani chief's camp in readiness for recruitment into the armed forces.<sup>1</sup> Having arisen to the rank of a Regimental Sergeant Major while serving in the K.A.R., he was conversant with some of the basic techniques used in training soldiers. He then invited volunteers to attend the training sessions. Unlike during the First World War, when chiefs had to forcefully recruit people into the K.A.R. this time young men volunteered. Therefore when chief

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<sup>1</sup>Carson, J B, *The Life Story of a Kenya Chief* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1957), 24.

Kasina started training the soldiers, many young men volunteered to be trained in readiness for enlistment into the various divisions of the armed forces.

He then called upon those soldiers who had served together with him in the K.A.R. during the First World War, and those who had gained promotions, to help him with the training. Those who assisted him in this work included P.S.M. Kathuli wa Ngambi, C.M.S. Katembu Bali and Sergeant Daniel Kanyolo.<sup>2</sup> Together with these three ex-soldiers, chief Kasina trained more than 900 soldiers in Migwani. Those officers who came to enlist soldiers in Migwani location usually did so from among those trained by Kasina. All together they recruited half a battalion and, of course the three ex-sergeant majors joined up at once.<sup>3</sup>

The training of soldiers in Migwani by chief Kasina usually made recruitment very easy on the part of the recruiting officers. In the first place, the officers did not have to move around Migwani location looking for young men to recruit. All they were required to do was to travel to the chief's camp where they would find *askaris* already pre-trained by chief Kasina and all ready for enlistment. Secondly, the pre-training which these soldiers received from chief Kasina was very useful since it made the real training for the *askaris* easier. They would have already acquired some of the required basics, especially discipline which was highly emphasised during the training sessions.

Chief Kasina's efforts in ensuring that the war was won by the British were also shown in the way he encouraged increased food production in his location. It seemed to him that the people at home had to increase food production in their *shambas* so as to supply the men in the field. Government efforts in supplying food to the soldiers had to

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<sup>2</sup> O.I., Daniel Katuku on 20/2/98 at Thokoa and Joseph M. Kasina on 23/2/98 at Itoloni.  
<sup>3</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 25.

be subsidized, and thus chiefs were advised to increase food production in their locations so that they could provide surplus to be sent to the soldiers. It was with these ideas in mind that chief Kasina started a series of locational *shambas* in his location.<sup>4</sup> Part of the produce got from these *shambas* was sent as emergency food for the men in the field while what remained was stored as security measure in case of a famine or disaster of whatever nature.

Likewise chief Kasina encouraged his people to donate cattle which would in turn be taken to provide meat for the soldiers. Whereas chiefs in other locations had problems in ensuring an adequate supply of cattle, those of Migwani generously contributed so many cattle which were then forwarded through the D.C. However, as one informant confided, chief Kasina used this as a way of enriching himself. What he actually did was to order people to give those cows which were fat and healthy. He would then exchange these for the thin and weakling among his flocks. At other times, he retained some of the cattle as part of his flocks.<sup>5</sup> Also, as a measure to help the colonial government in its war effort, a war fund was set up in Kitui District. This was intended to collect money from individuals as well as from locations in order to help the government finance the war. Chief Kasina made a personal donation of Ksh 300, while the people of Migwani through the efforts of their chief, contributed the largest amount of any location in Kitui District of Ksh 3001/68.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> O.I. Nzivuru wa Kaleli and Nungu wa Mbalu on 19/2/98 at Kyome.  
<sup>5</sup> O.I. Peter N. Ngumbau on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.

## VISIT TO TROOPS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COLONY

Chief Kasina was quite often requested by the colonial officials in the district as well as in the colony as a whole to make several journeys to see Kamba soldiers serving in various depots at home and abroad. Sometimes this would be as a result of the soldiers having expressed dissatisfaction with their living conditions as was the case with soldiers in Somalia and the Middle East. In such cases chief Kasina would be sent to meet with the soldiers and advise them accordingly. Some other times, he was asked to visit the Kamba soldiers in order to assure them that all was well back home and also to give them information concerning their families. This was considered to be a way of boosting the morale of the soldiers. For example, in July, 1942, chiefs from Machakos and Kitui Districts were requested to visit K.A.R. troops in Gilgil, among other things to give the *askaris* local information regarding their families, crops and such things. The two chiefs selected from Kitui were chief Kasina wa Ndoo and chief Mwendwa wa Kitavi.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, in October 1942, chief Kasina was selected by the D.C. as the only chief from Kitui District to accompany other chiefs to visit troops in Mombasa. Chiefs from several districts had been invited by the Naval Authorities in Mombasa to visit the troops which were stationed there. Chief Kasina together with chiefs from Machakos met a number of Kamba soldiers who were serving in various units there.<sup>8</sup>

In December 1944, the Chief Secretary of the Colony requested a party of Kamba chiefs to pay a visit to the *askaris* at Jinja in Uganda.<sup>9</sup> The chiefs were required to visit Jinja Training Centre. He further pointed out that chief Kasina was among the six chiefs

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KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/4, Kitui District Annual Report, 1939, Appendix No. 8.

KNA, DC/KTI/7/5, Political Record Book; Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1942.

KNA, DC/KTI/7/5, Political Record Book; Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1942.

KNA, DC/KTI/7/5, Political Record Book; Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1944.

from Kitui whom the troops in Jinja had expressed a special desire to see. The fact that the askaris had expressed a desire to meet chief Kasina guaranteed his being a member of the party to visit Jinja. Three chiefs from Kitui, who included chief Kasina, chief Stephen Kalungu and chief Ndunda, finally made the journey to Jinja on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945.<sup>10</sup>

Chief Kasina was yet again asked by the colonial government in 1949 to make a safari (journey) to Somaliland to visit Kamba soldiers who were expressing dissatisfaction with their conditions there.<sup>11</sup> Reports had reached the colonial office to the effect that Kamba soldiers serving in various units in Somalia were in constant disagreement with their commanding officers. It was thus decided that it was necessary to send chief Kasina there to look into their problems. In 1949, chief Kasina travelled by road to Somaliland and carried out inspections in divisions at Mogadishu, Muduga and Upper Juba. There was as many as 105 askaris in one large detachment and altogether he was able to visit about 300 Kamba Constables stationed in Somalia.<sup>12</sup> For the two weeks which he spend in Somalia, Kasina had the opportunity of seeing the soldiers and discussing their problems with him. The soldiers raised five points which they requested chief Kasina to submit to the Somalia authorities of the Somalia Police Force in Mogadishu. The points were, firstly, the question of their leave, their salaries, bedding, demanded to be issued with boot and metal polish for cleaning their buttons and a gazette called, "HABARI za Kitui" from the Kitui D.C. every month.

Chief Kasina's visit to Somalia for the purpose of looking into the welfare of Kamba personnel of the Somalia Police Force was highly appreciated by the colonial

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<sup>10</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/7/5, Political Record Book; Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1945.

<sup>11</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/7/5, Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1949.

<sup>12</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1949.

government. The then Chief Secretary of the Colony, Mr. A.N. Law commended the chief for having been able to visit all the main centres at which the Kamba police were stationed. He noted that the visit had been greatly appreciated by the colonial government and that it had done a great deal of good towards raising the morale of the Kamba personnel.<sup>13</sup>

District Commissioners were also required to visit *askaris* from their own districts who were serving in the armed forces. On such occasions the D.C. would nominate those chiefs whom he thought would have considerable influence on the *askaris* to accompany him. For example between April 20<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 1957, the Kitui D.C. visited K.A.R. units in Nanyuki, Nyeri and Nairobi. During the visit, he was accompanied by four chiefs from the district who included Senior Chief Kasina Ndoo of Migwani location, Chief Mwanduka wa Kisemei of Ikanga, Chief Munyu of Mutito and Chief Syengo of Tseikuru location.<sup>14</sup>

In 1957, Senior Chief Kasina expressed a desire to make a tour of the armed forces in Northern Province. In a letter which W.F.P. Kelly, the then P.C. of Northern Province wrote to the D.C. Kitui in reply to the request, he expressed satisfaction that such tours were chiefly for the benefit of Kamba soldiers and the police, and that Kasina's visit would only do them some good. It was subsequently agreed that chief Kasina make the tour on 16/5/58.

Also in January 1958, the Secretary of the Colony proposed that the D.C.s and their chiefs should visit K.A.R. units at Nanyuki, Nairobi and Nakuru between 12<sup>th</sup> and

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<sup>13</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1949.  
<sup>14</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/7/5, Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1957.



16<sup>th</sup> May 1958.<sup>15</sup> He further noted that it had been recommended that senior chief Kasina should accompany the party from his district but that he had to return to Nanyuki from Nakuru on 16<sup>th</sup> May instead of going back to his district. This was to enable him to carry on a tour to K.A.R. and police posts in the Northern Province as he had earlier requested. The D.C. Kitui nominated Senior Chief Kasina Ndo, Chief Mutuku Muoki, Chief Mwangangi Mwenga and Chief Mwalili Kisungo to accompany him on this visit to troops.<sup>16</sup>

Since chief Kasina had himself served in the K.A.R. during the First World War, he knew something of the men's needs. He encouraged their people at home to write letters to them. He also carried with him some traditional food, meat and tobacco.<sup>17</sup> As a result the soldiers would feel as if they were back home whenever they were with chief Kasina. On the other hand, chief Kasina took the grievances of the soldiers very seriously. For instance, when he visited Somalia in 1949, he took up the grievances which the soldiers had with the authorities. As such he was well known to play the role of a go-between the soldiers and the authorities.

There must have been a good reason for chief Kasina to be always among those selected to visit troops in various units. There were many chiefs in Kitui who could be nominated to visit the troops but it is no wonder that among the three or four chiefs selected, chief Kasina was always among them. Several factors explain this phenomena. In the first place, chief Kasina as a youth had started off with a career in the military. His more than ten years in the K.A.R. during the First World War and after gave him the

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<sup>15</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/7/5, Visit of Chiefs to Troops, 1958.

<sup>16</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/15, Kitui District Annual Report, 1958.

<sup>17</sup> O.I., Mrs. Nzila Kasina on 15/3/98 at Kavaini and Kalunda Kasina on 10/2/98 at Thitani.

necessary experience as a soldier. As a result chief Kasina was believed to have the necessary knowledge and experience in handling the soldiers, himself having been one.

Secondly, it should be remembered that chief Kasina did not forget the kind of training which he had received while in the K.A.R. even long after leaving the army. He kept contact with the ex-soldiers in his location and called upon them to turn up whenever their services were required. Thus, when the colonial officials, like the D.C., P.C. or even the Governor visited Migwani location, chief Kasina would organise the ex-soldiers to mount a Guard of Honour.

Likewise on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1950, celebrations were held at Kitui *boma* on a Remembrance Sunday. Chief Kasina led a parade of 95 ex-servicemen, who after the ceremony marched round the *boma* singing, "Amri ya Kapten" and other war songs.<sup>18</sup> Further, when General Sir George Erskine, the commander-in-chief of forces in East Africa visited Migwani in 1950, a parade of over 200 ex-servicemen turned out at Migwani and mounted a Guard of Honour for him. The most interesting thing is that this parade had been organised by chief Kasina from his hospital bed after having been injured in an attack.<sup>19</sup> It is for this reason that Mr. A.L.K. Liddle, in 1960, in his Handing Over Report described Kasina as a "man who is seen at his best with his *ex-askaris* guards of honour on his Excellency's *safaris*.... a man of very good value on *safari* and a fountain of knowledge on local lore."<sup>20</sup> As most of the ex-soldiers interviewed pointed out, chief Kasina's relationship with the *askaris* was always good and cordial.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950, 4.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>20</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1960 by A.L.K Liddle, D.O.

<sup>21</sup> O.L. Joseph wa Thiaka, Rinda Mbithuka and Nungu Mbalu.

### 6.3 VISIT TO TROOPS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Chief Kasina was fortunate enough in 1943 to be appointed as an official visitor to visit the East African troops in the Middle East. This particular appointment must have come as a big surprise for him. Although it had always been known in most British circles that *askaris* had very strong feelings about some aspects of the treatment they received from the British military authorities, it was not until 1940 that *askaris* managed to present their case openly to the highest ranking officials in East Africa. Those serving in the Middle East sent what has been referred to as a most important and historic petition to the East African commanding officers.<sup>22</sup> The document stated the grievances which the soldiers had. Among other things the soldiers complained that they were being discriminated against simply because they were Africans and that they were not being well treated because they had no leaders of their own. They also argued that they were being treated as slaves and consequently proposed that if the colour-bar could not be removed, it would have been better for them to be returned to their own country and wait for a war in Africa rather than be sent to foreign places. The importance of this petition was that it showed clearly that *askaris* were keenly aware of some of the political and economic problems that faced them and their countrymen. It was also important because in subsequent investigations by the British authorities, it proved to have been very representative of *askaris* everywhere.

The news of dissatisfaction among the East African soldiers serving in the Middle East came as a surprise to the East African commanding officers and also to the colonial

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<sup>22</sup> Shiroya, O., "World War II Veterans and popular Nationalism in Kenya" in *Historical Association of Kenya Annual Conference*, Nairobi, 1973, 2-3.

authorities in the East African countries. As a result it was decided that a delegation of colonial chiefs from the three East African countries be sent to the Middle East in order to discuss these issues with the soldiers and to assure them that their grievances were being looked into. These chiefs were also required to assess the validity of the grievances set out in the petition. It had actually become a tradition for certain colonial chiefs to be sent on a mission to visit African troops serving in various units of the army whenever some problems arose.

Thus, in 1943, chief Kasina Ndoos was appointed together with a chief from Nyanza, chief Amoth Awira, as official visitors to visit the African troops in the Middle East. All together six chiefs were appointed from East Africa to visit the troops in the Middle East. It was only chief Kasina and Amoth Awira who were selected from Kenya. The nomination of chief Kasina did not come as a surprise. In the first place, having served in the First World War, the colonial officials believed that he understood very well the kind of grievances which normally arose among the soldiers and more so he knew how to solve such problems. His experience during the war gave him an added advantage, especially when dealing with the soldiers. Secondly, chief Kasina had, in October 1942, made a successful visit to Mombasa to meet a number of Kamba soldiers there upon the invitation of the Naval Authorities. He had also, in July 1942, paid a successful visit to the K.A.R. troops in Gilgil. Thirdly, chief Kasina had shown every commitment in serving the colonial government during the Second World War. As a result the colonial officials in Kenya were convinced that chief Kasina could, and was best suited, to take care of the interests of the soldiers in the Middle East. This partly explains the fact that his appointment to make a trip to the Middle East was not in vain.

The visit was certainly one of the strangest journeys for chief Kasina and his colleagues, for it took place in the middle of a War which was on a much larger scale than that of the First World War. In January 1943 chief Kasina, together with chief Amoth, set off on a warship from Mombasa all the way up to Suez where they arrived early in February at the entrance to the Suez Canal. They then proceeded to Ismailia and Kaintara where they held talks with the soldiers stationed there. They listened to the grievances of the soldiers and gave whatever advice they could including information about the homes of the *askaris*. As a result the chiefs were able to cool down and boost the moral of the soldiers. It was a complete break through for the chiefs towards their mission.

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the chiefs had the opportunity of visiting the Pioneer Corps Base Depot at Ismailia and also met the officer-in-charge Lieut.-Colonial Richmond. They then moved on to Cairo and Alexandria, and it was from Alexandria where the big *safari* to the Middle East began. The *safari* took them from Alexandria to El-Alamein, Dermah, Tobruk, Palestine up to Jerusalem where they visited the office of the High Commissioner to Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> It was at Haifa that Kasina played darts for the first time in his life.<sup>24</sup> In Jerusalem, the chiefs visited many holy places we read of in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. For example they visited the Mount of Olives, Nazareth, Jacob's well, Bethlehem and Gethsemene. They also had the opportunity of visiting the Garden of Eden, the Biblical first home of mankind, and as a proof that he actually did set his foot in the place, chief Kasina came back home carrying some leaves which he

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<sup>23</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 28.

<sup>24</sup> O.L., Joseph Kasina on 23/2/98 at Itoloni.

claimed he had picked from the Garden of Eden.<sup>25</sup> Apart from visiting the troops in different stations throughout the Middle East, chief Kasina and his colleagues had the opportunity of visiting some of the very important places in the history of mankind.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1943 the chiefs finally left the Middle East and made their way to Khartoum in Sudan in a huge air-liner. From Khartoum they flew to Port Bell in Uganda and were able to pay a courtesy call on the Kabaka of Buganda. While in Uganda, they also had the opportunity of viewing the cemetery of Mutesa among other important sites in the country. On the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1943, the Kabaka gave them a car in which they travelled to Kisumu, from where they boarded a train to Nairobi, thus ending their long and most successful journey. They arrived in Nairobi on March 17<sup>th</sup> upon which they gave a broadcast from the offices of the the Kenya Information Service concerning their trip. The trip had been very successful and they had found the soldiers in good heart. In fact their journey did some good, establishing as it did contact for the soldiers with their homes. The chiefs had been in a position to deliver information to the soldiers concerning their homes thus easing the tension which had been building up among them.

To chief Kasina it seemed a very wonderful thing to be transported around as they were in the middle of a big campaign for nothing like this could have happened during the First World War which he could as well term as 'his war' since he had taken part in it. During this war and up to the time he left the army in 1924, they travelled always on foot for there was no mechanised transport at all. This advance in methods of transport seem to provide the most outstanding difference between the First and the Second World Wars. After the journey, chief Kasina was glad to get back home and report on his journey to

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O.I., Esther Kola Kasina and Joseph Kasina on 25/2/98 at Mwingi.

the people of Kenya, not only through broadcasting but in his own district in a series of

articles.<sup>26</sup>

## 54 EFFECTS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR ON THE RETURNING SOLDIERS

After the war was over, the colonial officials in Kitui District were faced with the same problem as the rest of Kenya, the problem of resettlement of returning soldiers. This involved a great deal of work for chief Kasina for most of the soldiers from the district were drawn from his own location. It was no easy task for there was a great deal of difference between the returning soldier after the East African campaign of 1914-18 and the returning soldier of 1945.

At the end of the First World War, the Kamba soldiers had not been out of East Africa. They had had a wretched and a gruelling war, and they were only too happy to get back home where they settled down at once in their old ways. It should be remembered that the soldier who took part in the First World War campaign had been forcefully recruited and he actually longed for the day when he would be re-united with his family. No sooner had he been back home than he joined the rest of his family members in the continuation of their traditional way of life.

However, the returning soldier in 1945 was a very different person. To begin with, he had travelled a very long way and seen many strange countries and people. He had acquired many curious ideas and some bad habits, particularly in India and Burma. He had had contact with peoples of different races such as the Indians, Egyptians, Europeans, Burmese and many more and the collective impression was often a very queer

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Carson, J.B., op.cit., 30.

one. For example, the Indian soldiers seemed to talk about little else than self-government which tended to upset the African soldier's ideas not only about government but also about religion. It should be remembered that it was during this time that the Indians were agitating for self-government which they eventually won in 1947. The result of all this was a general tendency among the returning soldiers not to obey orders nor indeed to accept any authority at all. Service in the British armed forces had greatly influenced the political thinking of the average soldier. Although not turning him into a modern nationalist, it certainly made him politically more conscious and enlightened than his counter-part back home who had not taken part in the war. As Shiroya puts it, "When the soldiers returned to civilian life, they turned their experiences and observations into political weapons against the colonial rule."<sup>27</sup>

African soldiers expected a lot better treatment from the Europeans both during and after the war. Soldiers and British officers had to relate to and interact with each other as persons. This interaction created some practical problems which had to be dealt with on a day-to-day basis. For instance, there were orders as well as responsibilities to be given and taken. The underlying factor in these matters was, however, the fact that the army commanders or leaders, that is, generals and officers were Europeans while the soldiers were Africans. The former belonged to the colonizing group while the latter belonged to the colonized. Therefore in most cases, the European-African relationship in the army was very much patterned after that which existed between them in civil life. This was in most cases the root cause of the discontent among the Africans serving in the army. They expected to be treated the same way as the other races and when this was not forthcoming, it quite often brought a lot of discontent among the soldiers.

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Shiroya, O., op.cit., 2.



Soldiers underwent numerous experiences while serving in the army and when they returned to civilian life, they had a lot to tell their relations and friends regarding these experiences. Discussions centered around actual military operations, countries they had visited and the people they had met. However, the most popular subject of discussion was their relationship with or their new evaluation of the Europeans.<sup>28</sup>

It can therefore be argued that the most important change which took place in the mind of the soldier as a result of his war experience seem to be his re-evaluation of the British in particular and Europeans in general. In short the African soldier began to question the whole idea of the British or any other European deciding for him what kind of life he should lead.

These new experiences amounted to nothing less than a "revolution" in the thinking of the soldier. Back home in the Reserve, the D.C. had regarded him as one of the boys or natives, now he regarded himself and was regarded by his officers and comrades in-arms as a great soldier. Back home he had been only familiar with a select group of British ladies and gentlemen, while in the army he came into contact with an assorted group of Britons under very different and trying circumstances.

The re-thinking and re-evaluation on the part of the *askaris* was due to a number of reasons. In the first place, while in the Middle East as well as the Far East, they were greatly impressed with the level of political and economic freedom which the local people there had attained. The soldiers were able to observe that these people were freer and more independent in their business life than the Africans were in their own countries. Furthermore they noticed that big businesses in these countries were owned and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 3., O.I., Nungu wa Mbalu on 19/2/98 at Kyome and Simeon M. Mwanzwii on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.

controlled by the local people themselves. As a result of such observations, many *askaris* began to think in terms of becoming economically independent once the war was over.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the soldiers received their political education through discussion and by observation. In the army for example, they observed hundreds of commissioned officers who lived on terms of equality with their British colleagues, yet Africans did not have even a single commissioned officer. This must have encouraged them to desire similar opportunities and wider educational facilities which would enable them to realize these conditions. The *askari's* life in the army and his personal experiences exposed him to new ideas, experiences, loyalties and sentiments.<sup>30</sup>

The returning ex-soldiers thus had a lot of information to pass on to those back home. The dissemination of information took basically two forms; planned conscious political education where the ex-soldiers' objective was to influence their listeners politically, and secondly, the unplanned form where the ex-soldiers would tell their tales for fun or enjoyment and it was left to the individual listener to draw any conclusion he desired. In either case the listeners were bound to be influenced, at least they became more politically enlightened than before. But this was not the only role that ex-soldiers played. Spreading of ideas went hand in hand with the actual involvement and participation in various anti-colonial movements which were going on in Kenya at that time.

There was a general tendency among the returning soldiers not to obey orders nor even accept any authority at all especially the chiefs' authority. This created a lot of problems for the local administrators, who were supposed to make sure that the orders of

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Shiroya, O., op.cit., 5  
ibid

the colonial officials were strictly obeyed and that their authority was accepted by all. The influence which the ex-soldiers had on the local people upon their return also contributed to the general lawlessness and lack of respect for the leaders.<sup>31</sup>

Migwani location was no exception to the influence of the returning soldiers. In fact Migwani location had contributed the largest number of soldiers from the district. Thus after the war was over, a large number of them returned to their homes. The returning soldiers created a lot of problems for chief Kasina as far as his administrative work was concerned. In the first place, their war time experience had completely transformed them. They were no longer ready to obey the chief's orders nor were they ready to respect unjust laws imposed upon the people by the colonial government.<sup>32</sup> The kind of respect that they had had for the white man before the war had actually faded away and the war time experiences had brought upon them a new perception of the white man.

The returning soldiers also influenced the people of Migwani a great deal. This was done through the dissemination of their war experiences to their fellow people. The end result was a general tendency of lawlessness in Migwani location immediately after the end of the war. Chief Kasina had to develop new strategies when dealing with the ex-soldiers. According to one ex-soldier whom I interviewed, chief Kasina tried as much as possible to avoid physical confrontation with the ex-soldiers.<sup>33</sup> He in fact feared and respected them, and so he was very cautious while dealing with and handling them. He

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>32</sup> O.I., Joseph Thiaka on 4/2/98 at Migwani

<sup>33</sup> O.I., Simeon M. Mwanzwii.

was aware of the kind of experience and influences which the soldiers had acquired while they were in the army.

This does not mean that chief Kasina left the ex-soldiers on their own to do whatever they pleased. He had to get them under control for there were rules and regulations which had to be obeyed, otherwise his credibility as a chief could be questioned by the D.C., in case trouble broke out in his location. However, getting the ex-soldiers under control was no easy task for this involved a great deal of work for him. He had to balance the wishes of the ex-soldiers and those of his masters.

The most valuable 'gift' the ex-soldiers brought back to the people at home was ideas they had acquired while in the service. As Shiroya has observed, "Apart from playing a large role in the organizations such as nationalistic and political organizations, what counted most was ideas which the *ex-askaris* brought home."<sup>34</sup> In small groups and individuals, *ex-askaris* began to influence the masses. It was, however, easier for them to transmit ideas as individuals than it was for them, due to government policies to do so as an organization. They could have needed licenses before they could convene meetings but this obstacle was not placed in their way when they engaged in private discussions and conversations. It was mainly through these private contacts that ex-soldiers managed to have their greatest impact on the masses. The returning ex-soldiers also turned to formation of organisations and societies upon their return.

In Migwani location, the ex-soldiers formed a number of societies and movements. The most notable was the Migwani Youth Movement. Its activities were anti-government and it became a forum for expressing their grievances. Most of the

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Shiroya. O., op.cit., 6.

youths in Migwani joined the movement, which created a great deal of trouble for chief Kasina. The first resolution adopted by the movement was to refuse communal labour and for the members to disobey orders from the chief.<sup>35</sup> The movement was totally opposed to the activities of the colonial government and though it was not a political party, its activities were geared towards undermining the colonial government and particularly the colonial officials in the district right from the chief at the locational level.

The colonial government was quick to deal with the Migwani Youth Movement. It took the efforts of chief Kasina with the assistance of the D.C. to crack down on members of the movement. In 1946 the movement was banned and most of its ring leaders rounded up and charged in the Migwani tribunal court for subversive activities.<sup>36</sup> The rest of the members voluntarily disowned the movement. The movement had, however, proved to be a true test on the administrative capability of chief Kasina. He was responsible for arresting those who were suspected of being members of the outlawed movement. Then he would take them to court and have them prosecuted. Thus it was to his credit that the movement did not succeed.<sup>37</sup>

Apart from the Migwani Youth Movement, there were other organizations which gained a following in Migwani. For example, the new Kenya African Union (K.A.U.) formed by the Kikuyu of Central Province received considerable support in Migwani and acquired a large number of members in the location.<sup>38</sup> Nearly all the local teachers and many ex-soldiers became members of the K.A.U. and since the activities of K.A.U. were considered to be anti-government, this organization created a great deal of trouble for

<sup>35</sup> O.I., Simeon M. Mwanzwii and Joseph Thiaka.

<sup>36</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1946.

<sup>37</sup> O.I., Joseph wa Thiaka.

<sup>38</sup> O.I., Misyili wa Mutwetwe on 30/1/98 at Musuani Market.

chief Kasina. All the same, chief Kasina, through the collaboration of the other administrative officials, tried as much as possible to ensure that none of these organizations and societies succeeded in Migwani, and by 1946 most of their activities had been minimized though many of the ex-soldiers continued to be underground members of K.A.U.<sup>39</sup>

A large number of ex-soldiers were anxious to engage in trade and since it was the responsibility of the colonial government to help them with resettlement, the whole task fell on chief Kasina. As a result trading centres with shops all neatly built often of burnt bricks were organised all over the location in order to accommodate the needs of the ex-soldiers. Also regulated markets were started whereby trade expanded enormously with the marketing of cattle. For example Mwingi trading centre was started during this time basically for the returning ex-soldiers. The trading centre was later to grow and develop into a small *boma* with a European D.O. and Agricultural Officer stationed there in the 1950's.<sup>40</sup>

## 5.5 JOURNEY AND VISIT TO ENGLAND.

In 1953, chief Kasina was invited to Government House in Nairobi to meet Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. This was not the first time chief Kasina was meeting members of the Royal family. He had had the opportunity to meet other members of the Royal family before for he had been in a guard of honour in 1924 when King George VI and the Queen mother, as Duke and Duchess of York visited Kenya. He

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<sup>39</sup> O.I. Joseph wa Thiaka.  
<sup>40</sup> O.I. Nungu wa Mbalu.

had also had the opportunity of meeting Edward VIII, then Prince of Wales, when he visited Kenya in 1928.

It therefore didn't come as a surprise when in 1950 chief Kasina was once more among the few dignitaries invited from Kenya to attend the coronation of Princess Elizabeth as Queen of England. In fact chief Kasina was the only person nominated by the colonial officials in Kitui District to attend the coronation in London.<sup>41</sup> This was a great honour, not only to chief Kasina but also to the people of Kitui District as a whole. On the part of chief Kasina, this was a gesture of appreciation from the colonial government for his dedicated service. It was a reward for his collaboration and unreserved service to the colonial government.

However, due to the large number of people who wanted to attend the coronation, it became particularly impossible for the colonial government to sponsor each and every person who wanted to travel to England. As a result the government was unable to provide an official seat for Kitui District. This meant that if chief Kasina was to attend the coronation, he had to meet all the expenses, or else the people of Kitui District were to look for ways and means of meeting the cost of sending him to England.<sup>42</sup> Since it was an opportunity which not only chief Kasina but also the colonial officers in Kitui District did not want to miss, it was decided by the chiefs through the efforts of the D.C. Mr. Birkett, that the people of Kitui were going to meet the cost of sending chief Kasina to England. The chiefs, under the chairmanship of the D.C. agreed that people were going to contribute money voluntarily for that purpose. However, there was a lot of resistance from

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<sup>41</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953.

<sup>42</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953.

ix-wakarīs and young men who argued that the journey to England did not have anything to do with them. As was characteristic of colonial policies, they were forcefully made to give their contributions and by the end of the year, the D.C was in a position to give the following report:

Chief Kasina's visit to England during the year had been made possible by the generosity of the Kamba of Kitui District who subscribed in the neighbourhood of \$700 for this visit as government was unable to provide an official seat for Kitui District.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, all the arrangements for chief Kasina's visit to London were made for him by Mr. Kelly, formerly a District Commissioner in Kitui, with whom chief Kasina had got on very well.

The people attending the coronation from Kenya left Nairobi by air on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1953 and travelled via Entebbe, Khartoum, Malta and Nice arriving in England on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May. At the airport to meet chief Kasina were his former D.C., Mr. Kelly, together with his wife, and with them were Mr. and Mrs. Rev. P.A Unwin. Rev. Unwin had been a C.M.S. missionary in Uganda and had been a chaplain in the K.A.R. during the Second World War and had had the opportunity of meeting chief Kasina while in Uganda. He therefore hoped to utilize this opportunity to return some of the hospitality which he had received while he was staying in East Africa.<sup>44</sup> While in England, chief Kasina, besides attending the coronation had the chance to visit some of the most important places in England. For example, he visited Buckingham Palace, the home of members of the Royal family. He also had the opportunity to visit the famous Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and Trafalgar Square. He also visited London city, and Oxford and Cambridge universities.

<sup>43</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report. 1953.

<sup>44</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 35; O.I., Esther K. Kasina.



On 1<sup>st</sup> June, chief Kasina was taken to East African House where there was a club for people of every tribe from East Africa. It was at this place that all people from East Africa in England usually met and exchanged views and experiences. Here, chief Kasina had the opportunity of dining with friends from Kenya, who included chief David of Machakos District, chief Ignatio of Fort Hall and a schoolmaster, Mr. Gerald Owino from Nyanza.<sup>45</sup> Also at East African House, chief Kasina visited *askaris* camp where he met Major Goldsworthy, whom he had met before when he was in the 6<sup>th</sup> K.A.R. and First Pioneer Corps in both the First and Second World Wars in Tanganyika. He also met with seven non-commissioned officials from Kitui and nine from Machakos.

While in London, chief Kasina did not forget his people back home for the generosity which they had extended to him by contributing money to enable him attend the coronation. He therefore wished to acknowledge the generosity of the Kitui people by purchasing a present which could satisfy everybody in Kitui. And since it was not practical to buy individual presents for everyone, it dawned on him that he could purchase a super cup which could be competed for by all people in Kitui. Hence with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Kelly, chief Kasina was taken to a well known shop in Regent Street where he bought a valuable silver cup as a prize for sports in Kitui District.<sup>46</sup>

The silver cup which was later named the Kasina cup was used for competitions among the locations in Kitui District. The cup was awarded to the location making the most all-round progress during the year. There were also cash prizes, which accompanied the cup, which were donated by the A.D.C. Thus the location which won the cup was also awarded first prize of Ksh 3,000 while the second location won the second prize of Ksh

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Carson, J.B., op.cit., 35.

O.I., Joseph M. Kasina and Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina.

5000. The cup acted as an inspiration to the people to improve their living conditions, since all aspects such as economic, social and political were considered when determining the winner of the cup. For example in 1956, the D.C. had the following to say about the Kasina cup:

The Kasina cup for the best all-round progress made by any location during 1956 was awarded to Tseikuru location which also received the A.D.C award that goes with it of Ksh 3,000. The winning of this cup by a comparatively backward and unprogressive location was a most popular result and has acted as a spur to other less advanced locations most of whom regard themselves as non-starters in the past. The Ksh 3,000 was devoted towards the construction of a sub-health centre in Usueni designed to act as a visible memorial to their effort.<sup>47</sup>

It can thus be seen that the Kasina cup was beneficial to the whole district.

While in London, chief Kasina had the opportunity of observing some of the agricultural and livestock activities there. He was shown around wheat fields and pastures where cattle and sheep were grazing. He must have been particularly impressed by the Guernsey cattle which he learnt gave four and half gallons of milk or twenty seven bottles a day. This was in complete contrast to the cows back home in Migwani which could give only one bottle a day and which through lack of grass could only give milk for one month at a stretch.<sup>48</sup>

It was also an experience for chief Kasina to learn that the cattle slept on straw and were milked by machinery. He also saw lots of sheep which had wonderful wool and were padlocked in small half-acre blocks which were moved from time to time so that the sheep got plenty of food and at the same time thoroughly manured each paddock as they moved around. As such chief Kasina was in a position to learn much more on agriculture

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<sup>47</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/13, Kitui District Annual Report, 1956.

<sup>48</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/3/6, Safari Report by F.R. Wilson, District Officer Northern Division 27/7/1947 to 10/7/47.

and livestock keeping which he could persuade his people to practise once he got back home.

The coronation took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1953. There was a tremendous collection of people who attended the coronation at Hyde Park. Luckily enough for chief Kasina, his neighbour in the stand where they were seated was a European of the Police Reserve in Tanganyika whom he had met in Tobruk when he paid a visit to the soldiers there in 1940, and he explained everything that was taking place to chief Kasina in Kiswahili. This way, chief Kasina was in a position to follow the proceedings well. The service took place in Westminster Abbey. Guns were fired in the air to mark the occasion while regiments from every part of the Empire each with its own band marched past the Queen and the King of England. The *askaris* of the K.A.R. from East Africa also marched splendidly past the dais.<sup>49</sup>

Once the schedule for the visit to England ended, chief Kasina and other visitors had to travel back to Kenya. He had seen many wonderful and interesting things during the visit. Back home, he hoped to report to the people of Kenya about his journey. He went round the locations holding *barazas* in order to inform the people about his tour. In fact a schedule of his meetings was prepared by the D.C. showing the particular places which he was to visit and address a *baraza* at particular dates.<sup>50</sup>

For example he was to address a *baraza* at Migwani on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, then Gai on 4<sup>th</sup>, Mui on 6<sup>th</sup>, Zombe on 7<sup>th</sup>, Mutomo on 10<sup>th</sup>, Mutha on 11<sup>th</sup>, Chuluni on 10<sup>th</sup>, and finally

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<sup>49</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 36.

<sup>50</sup> The letter from the D.C. to Kasina dated 30/6/53, was found among the many other documents of the late chief kept by his son Joseph Kasina.

Syongila on the 14<sup>th</sup>. During the meetings, he explained to the people all what he had learnt and experienced during his successful visit to England.

In a letter<sup>51</sup> which Rev. Unwin later wrote to chief Kasina, he acknowledged together with his family members that though they had been having visitors in the past, chief Kasina would remain in their history as the only visitor who had impressed them a lot because of his good manners and behaviour while he was in their house. They requested chief Kasina if there was anything they could do to assist him while in England. For example that if he had any of his people going to study in England, he could inform them and they in turn would be only too happy to welcome him in their house.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that chief Kasina was committed to serving the interests of his colonial masters. Not only did he perform his chiefly duties well, but was also willing to help the British government in its war against Germany and her allies. This is evidenced by the fact that when the Second World War broke out, chief Kasina immediately also started giving young men from his location some military training in readiness for enlistment into K.A.R. He also helped with the recruitment of these pre-trained young men once recruitment parties visited his location. Other than that, he also played a significant role during the war in the sense that he was always available whenever the colonial officials wanted him to visit Kamba soldiers stationed in various parts of the world.

Chief Kasina was rewarded for his active involvement in the Second World War. In the first place, the war gave Kasina an opportunity of travelling widely both in Africa and abroad. In Kenya, he had the chance of visiting almost every part of the colony where

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<sup>51</sup>The letter from Rev. Unwin to Kasina dated 30/6/53, was found among the many other documents of the chief kept by his son Joseph Kasina.

Kamba soldiers were stationed. In Africa, he visited such countries as Libya, Egypt, Uganda Ethiopia and Sudan. However, the most notable trip was the one he made to the Middle East. Likewise, he was rewarded by being offered the opportunity to make a journey to England during the coronation of Princess Elizabeth. The fact that he was the only person chosen from Kitui District to attend the coronation is quite revealing. It was a true gesture to the fact that the colonial officials in Kenya and particularly in Kitui were satisfied with the work chief Kasina was doing for the government.

There were also some economic gains which chief Kasina received. There were special allowances such as night-out and travel allowances which he received especially when he was on official tour of the Kamba soldiers. It can therefore be argued that the colonial government benefited from the services of chief Kasina during the Second World War while on the other hand chief Kasina also benefited from the numerous rewards which he was accorded.

## CHAPTER SIX

### MAU MAU AND CHIEF KASINA'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE MOVEMENT

#### MAU MAU- INTRODUCTION

The Mau Mau movement was a complex and complicated multi-faceted phenomenon that was geared and committed to violence. In its initial stages, Mau Mau was an alliance and conglomeration of the Rift Valley squatters, Kikuyu peasants, ex-squatters and urban proletariat. The movement therefore embraced those people who were disillusioned, displaced, embittered and discontented. Many historians who have written on the Mau Mau phenomenon have come up with various descriptions and conclusions regarding the movement.<sup>1</sup> To some the movement appeared at times to be atavistic, terrorist, a Kikuyu civil war, a traditional cult, anti-christian and anti-European uprising as well as a liberation movement.

The secret Mau Mau movement started in the Olenguruone settlement scheme in the 1946-47 period when the inhabitants took the first Mau Mau oath.<sup>2</sup> The squatters living in Olenguruone at that time were being threatened with imminent eviction from the settlement scheme. As a result the Olenguruone oath was a means of eliciting communal solidarity against colonial oppression. The oath raised the level of political commitment of those who took it, who in addition accepted 'any sacrifice in the pursuit of their just

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Historians such as Kanogo, T. (1987), Rosberg, C.G. and Nottingham, J. (1966), Corfield, F.D. (1960), Wamagatta, E.N. (1988) and Throup, D. (1980)

<sup>1</sup> Kanogo, T., *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1907-63* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987), 117.

By 1948 the Olenguruone settlers were united in resisting the unjust practices of the colonial government.

Thereafter the Olenguruone oath rapidly spread to the surrounding European farms in the Rift Valley, Central Province and Nairobi area, and with time many more people took the oath and became members of the secret Mau Mau movement. By 1950, the movement was firmly established in many parts of central Kenya and was spreading to other areas in the country where it had not reached before. By 1952 Mau Mau violence and general lawlessness had reached serious enough proportions so as to start worrying the colonial officials. The volatile situation was aggravated by the activities of K.A.U., which increasingly and rapidly became more and more extreme. K.A.U. leaders continuously made provocative speeches at the K.A.U. rallies held throughout the country. As mass oathing became a significant factor in the dynamics of the politics of central Kenya, it increasingly affected the character of political organization. K.A.U. remained the public forum for nationalism but the widespread use of a secret oath for mobilisation and unity could only be carried out by equivalent structure for communication and action. By late 1952, in central Kenya and other Kikuyu dominated areas, the leadership of these structures had become almost synonymous with those of K.A.U. many of the members of K.A.U. also having taken the Mau Mau oath.

As time went by, the activities of K.A.U. and Mau Mau greatly increased insubordination against the established authority. People no longer attended the chiefs' *barazas* enthusiastically. When they did, they openly disagreed with and defied their chief's orders. In conjunction with insubordination, people no longer showed respect and

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Rosberg, C. and Nottingham, J., *The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), 248.

obedience to their chiefs and the European administrators. Many people no longer  
bothered to stand up or remove their hats while in their presence as was hitherto the  
practice. But what greatly worried the general populace, and the government as well, was  
escalation of violence and lawlessness. This was directed towards the irreconcilable  
collaborators and betrayers of the Mau Mau activists. Many people mysteriously  
disappeared during this period never to be seen again. Most of them were murdered in the  
most brutal and horrific manner. Many people were compelled by intimidation and in  
many cases actual violence to undergo the Mau Mau oath-taking ceremony.

Many people had their houses burned down for opposing the Mau Mau militants  
one way or the other. During a short period of about six days in the later part of  
January 1952 at Nyeri, the homes of eleven African families were fired. In two cases the  
houses had been secured on the outside with the family in the house.<sup>4</sup> In each of these  
cases the victim was normally a headman, a person who had given evidence for the  
government, a person who had given information to the police about the Mau Mau activities or  
a strong supporter of the government.<sup>5</sup>

Mau Mau violence was more pronounced in its retaliatory reprisals against  
collaborators, especially those who had given information about the movement to the  
colonial authorities. For example in May 1952, a bullet riddled body was found in a river  
in Kiambu. The man had assisted the police to track down wanted Mau Mau activists.  
Chiefs and other government employees became the outright target of Mau Mau since  
they were seen to be working in collaboration with the colonial government to stamp out

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Magatta, E.N., "A Biography of senior chief Waruhiu wa Kungu of Githunguri, Kiambu 1890-1952",  
Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1988, 377-78.  
d., 379.



Mau Mau. Most of the Mau Mau victims were normally trapped or ambushed. Others were seduced and lured to their deaths by women and girls. And as Mau Mau tension mounted, attacks on the loyalists also correspondingly increased. Loyalists attacks were principally directed against chiefs and their agents in reprisal for their loyal attitudes. A few chiefs, like Ignatio Ndungu of Muranga, had attempts made against their lives. However, the assassination of senior chief Waruhiu was probably the worst blow struck by the Mau Mau since he was a symbol of moderation.<sup>6</sup>

By 1950, Mau Mau had spread to many parts of the country where it had never been before. In Kitui District, Mau Mau was synonymous with K.A.U. which had come to Kitui in the 1940's championed by its leaders, like Paul Ngei. The local leaders of K.A.U. in Kitui included Daniel Katuku, Ngala Mwendwa, Frederick Mati Mbiti, John Mutua and Daniel Munyasya among others. People were informed that K.A.U. intended to seek independence and as a result many people in Kitui sought membership.<sup>7</sup> As the activities of Mau Mau increased in the early 1950's, all those people who had taken K.A.U. membership cards were identified as Mau Mau adherents. Oath-taking also increased as a means of showing solidarity in support of the Mau Mau. However, many people in Kitui took the Mau Mau oath mostly out of the influence of those Kitui Kamba living in Nairobi or Mombasa. In 1954, the D.C. had the following to report about Mau Mau activities in the district:

Politically, the district has remained quiet through out the year though a constant vigil has been necessary to prevent infiltration from outside the district. The people of this district have no love for Mau Mau but there has been a constant threat from Nairobi. Numerous people have confessed to taking the Mau Mau oath but nearly all of them appear to have done so under duress.<sup>8</sup>

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Ibid.

01, Daniel Katuku, Peter N. Ngumbau and Stephen Nzovo on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.  
KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/11, Kitui District Annual Report, 1954, 3.

Faced by the mass emotions exhibited at K.A.U. rallies and by an expanding pattern of violence against white settlers, for example, arson, cattle maiming and a campaign of selective assassination, the settler leaders demanded the declaration of an Emergency in the country. However, within the government there were differences of opinion. The Governor, Sir Mitchell, who had had a most distinguished career in the colonial service, believed that the government faced essentially just another *dini* or cult or fanatical religious movement. He did not feel that the Mau Mau activities up to that time merited any such drastic measure or action. He was to leave the colony on final retirement in June 1952.

The provincial administrators were also pressed with the seriousness of the situation. One of their first reactions, however, since they too agreed that Mau Mau was probably some sort of '*dini*' was to organise cleansing ceremonies and at the same time to press for powers to detain the leading agitators. The cleansing ceremonies were counter-oathing ceremonies by traditional medicinemen.

But on October 7<sup>th</sup> 1952, Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kungu, the leading government spokesman in Kikuyu country and one of the most prominent Christian leaders in Kiambu District, was assassinated.<sup>9</sup> This event finally united all shades of European opinion behind the settlers' demand for immediate and drastic action. Waruhiu's death was an enormous and painful blow to the colonial administration. The death stunned and shook the government to the core. It awakened the authorities to the gravity and unpredictability of the Mau Mau phenomenon. The assassination in fact confirmed how determined and daring the Mau Mau militants were to dispose of the

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<sup>9</sup> Wamagatta, E.N., op.cit., 362. and Aseka, E.M., *Jomo Kenyatta: A Biography* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1992), 42.

Jeetractors and collaborators. Waruhiu's death finally convinced Governor Baring that an Emergency had to be proclaimed as soon as authority to do so could be obtained from London.

After attending Waruhiu's funeral, Baring informed the colonial office in London that a state of Emergency would have to be declared. He claimed that the Kenyan government was facing a planned revolutionary movement controlled from Nairobi. Consequently, the Secretary of State for the Colonies gave his consent on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1952 that an Emergency be declared in the Kenya colony.<sup>10</sup> The dramatic assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu just outside Nairobi was therefore considered to be a direct and serious challenge to the authority of the colonial government. The new Governor Sir Evelyn Baring, who had arrived in the colony in September decided that his first duty was to restore law and order. And after several consultations and also after the response from the colonial office, on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1952, he signed a proclamation declaring that a public emergency had arisen which made it necessary to confer special powers on the government and its officers for the purpose of maintaining law and order.<sup>11</sup> Senior Chief Waruhiu's assassination seems to have been the catalyst that precipitated the declaration of the Emergency. The government had been reluctant to impose such a measure in spite of a lot of pressure from the leaders of the minority European community. For example between June and September 1952 when Henry Potter was acting Governor, they had put intense pressure on him to declare a state of Emergency.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Throup, D., "Militants and Mau Mau: African Politics in Kenya 1944-72" in proceedings of a conference of Historical Association of Kenya held in Nairobi in June 1986, 233.  
<sup>11</sup> Mosberg, C. and Nottingham, J., *op.cit.*, 277.

<sup>12</sup> Throup, D., *op.cit.*, 233.

The declaration of Emergency was equivalent to a declaration of war against the proscribed Mau Mau movement. The coming of the security forces brought a dramatic change in the situation. As the full weight of the government power was brought to bear on the Kikuyu, the assertive character of their radical politics was transformed into desperate resistance as they sought to preserve their hopes and ideals as a people under increasingly severe siege conditions. On the other hand, it was a formal recognition and acceptance that there was a grave situation in the colony which required urgent measures to contain and stamp it out. Such a situation had been brought about by the Mau Mau.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted here that the declaration of the Emergency did not head off an incipient mass revolution, but rather precipitated further mobilization for small scale, violent resistance in the rural areas along with increased violence in Nairobi. In this respect, it can be argued here that much of the violence which occurred during the Emergency period was not simply a continuation of either pre-emergency political tactics or the government's security measures but derived from the conditions of the Emergency itself. The deployment of British and East African troops and the strengthening of the police introduced a new element of violence into the situation.<sup>14</sup>

The declaration of a state of Emergency gave the government special powers to deal with the Mau Mau phenomenon. At the district level, District Commissioners took charge of ensuring that the forces of Mau Mau were crushed. In order to achieve this goal, the D.C. relied heavily upon the chiefs who were in direct contact with the people. In Kitui District, the D.C., Mr. Birkett, relied upon Senior Chief Kasina, the most dependable chief in the district in identifying and arresting those who associated

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Rosberg, C., and Nottingham, J., op.cit., 277.

ibid.

themselves with the outlawed Mau Mau movement. As a result, chief Kasina, considered by the Mau Mau adherents as loyalist number one, cultivated hatred among his own people who were supporters of Mau Mau and who eventually sought ways and means of eliminating him.

## 6.2 KASINA'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE MAU MAU

The outbreak of the Mau Mau movement gave chief Kasina an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment in serving and assisting the colonial government. He devoted all his energy in ensuring that Mau Mau was not allowed to spread into Kitui and Machakos Districts. He was one of the staunchest and most vocal opponent of the formidable Mau Mau movement in the district. He actually did everything possible to curtail the spread of the movement. In order to achieve this goal, he held numerous *barazas* all over the two districts to urge the people not to associate themselves with the outlawed movement.<sup>15</sup>

Chief Kasina was also responsible for arresting those people suspected of being hard-core supporters of Mau Mau. To start with, he championed the crack-down of those who had taken K.A.U. membership tickets with the pretext that K.A.U. was anti-government and that its activities were subversive. By the end of 1950, most of the K.A.U. members had been arrested and charged with being members of the outlawed Mau Mau movement.

By this time the colonial officials in Kenya had reached a conclusion that only violence could eventually counteract or eliminate the Mau Mau shadow. It was therefore

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<sup>15</sup> O.I., Joseph wa Thiaka on 4/2/98 at Migwani.

decided to set up local resistance groups of loyalists to assist the government in stamping out Mau Mau and restoring law and order. These loyalist resistance groups were known as the home guards after the state of Emergency was declared. Senior Chief Kasina set about this new campaign of rallying the loyalists with vigour and enthusiasm. He advocated the posting of home guards to Mumoni hill where the Mau Mau militants were said to be posing a threat of invasion in the northern parts of the district.<sup>16</sup>

Senior Chief Kasina's commitment in fighting the Mau Mau forces was outrightly expressed in 1954, when His Excellency the Governor Sir Evelyn Baring, accompanied by the then Colonial Secretary, Sir Oliver Lyttleton, visited Kitui District. Chief Kasina thanked the visitors on behalf of the people of Kitui and gave a short address. In his speech, he gave an assurance that Mau Mau would never be allowed to spread to Kitui or Machakos Districts. He was, however, quick to point out that his people were worried about members of the tribe who were living in Nairobi and elsewhere outside their own districts for they had been completely infected with the Mau Mau disease.<sup>17</sup> Referring to the Kikuyu, chief Kasina asserted that if the Kamba had educational facilities like the Kikuyu had enjoyed, they would have made better use of them. The Kikuyu, he claimed, had shown little appreciation of what had been done for them.<sup>18</sup>

Chief Kasina's fight, commitment and efforts in helping the colonial government stamp out the Mau Mau rebellion was duly recognised and appreciated by the colonial office when, in 1957, he was lucky enough to be one of the Kenyan civilians who were honoured by a Mention-in-Dispatches for their outstanding work during the Emergency.

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<sup>16</sup> O.I., Daniel Katuku, on 20/2/98 at Thokoa.

<sup>17</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/11, Kitui District Annual Report, 1954. 8.

<sup>18</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/11, Kitui District Annual Report, 1954. 8.

His fight against Mau Mau almost cost him his life when he was attacked by a fellow tribesman who was executing a plan stage-managed by the Mau Mau militants to assassinate the chief, whom they considered to be the stumbling block in the way of Mau Mau interests in Kitui District.

#### 4.2.1 PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AND THREATS ON CHIEF KASINA'S LIFE

Before the actual attempt to assassinate chief Kasina was executed in 1953, he had received several attempts and threats to eliminate him. As the Mau Mau activities increased in Kitui District, as in many parts of the country, attacks on the loyalists also increased correspondingly. These attacks were principally directed against chiefs and their staff in reprisal for their loyalist attitudes. In Kitui, chief Kasina was considered by the Mau Mau militants to be the stumbling block of the Mau Mau cause. This was so because he had identified himself as the staunchest critic of the Mau Mau movement, and was instrumental in helping the colonial officials arrest those people who were suspected of being Mau Mau followers. As a result, he incurred a lot of hatred among the hard-core supporters of Mau Mau many of whom were also members of K.A.U.

In October 1952, immediately after the state of Emergency was declared in the colony, chief Kasina received two anonymous letters threatening his life. Inside one of the letters there was a ten shilling note and the words, "use this money for the last time."<sup>19</sup> The authors of the two letters accused chief Kasina of identifying too much with the colonial government and also of being behind the many arrests made of those

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<sup>19</sup> Weekly Newspaper \_ East African Standard of 27<sup>th</sup> September 1953, 1.

suspected of being supporters of Mau Mau. The letter went ahead to warn the chief that his days were numbered and that soon or later 'they' would get him.<sup>20</sup>

Chief Kasina did not take the threats lightly, considering the fact that attacks on loyalists and especially the colonial chiefs was on the increase. Chiefs were considered by the Mau Mau militants to be their main enemies since they were the true collaborators of the colonial government which they were fighting. The Mau Mau militants reasoned that the only way they could achieve their objectives was first to eliminate the loyalists before dealing with the colonial officials.

It should be remembered that by this time a number of chiefs had either been assassinated or attacked by the Mau Mau militants. In addition to Senior Chief Waruhiu, chief Ignatio Ndungu of Muranga, another prominent chief in Kikuyuland, had had an attempt made against his life.<sup>21</sup> Even more casualties were registered among the assistant chiefs, who did not have adequate security at their disposal. For example, in October 1950, assistant chief Kimburi and an African driver were shot dead when they were ambushed by a gang of about 50 terrorists near Githakwa in Tetu location.<sup>22</sup>

As a result chief Kasina was not ready to take any chances. When he received the threatening letters, he quickly put some precautionary measures in place, besides reporting the matter to the D.C. Firstly, he made sure that he did not stay out late at night. He always made sure that he arrived home early.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, chief Kasina avoided using the same path or road twice a day in order to escape being way-laid.<sup>24</sup> This way he hoped

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<sup>20</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina on 23/2/98 at Itoloni.

<sup>21</sup> Wamagatta, E.N., op.cit., 362.

<sup>22</sup> East African Standard, September 27<sup>th</sup> 1953, 1.

<sup>23</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina and Joseph M. Kasina on 27/2/98 at Mwingi.

<sup>24</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina, on 27/2/98 at Mwingi.



to escape unexpected ambush from his enemies. Thirdly, he made it his habit to be sleeping alternatively in his different homes. He could not sleep in the house of one wife for more than two days.<sup>25</sup> Since he had many wives (he was the proud husband of eight wives), he could spend one night in every wife's house weekly. This arrangement was intended to confuse his detractors about his whereabouts during the night.

True to the words contained in the letters which were sent to chief Kasina, an attempt was made on his life in November 1952. During this month, two Kamba soldiers were sent from Kiambu by the Mau Mau militants in central province to kill the chief. It was hardly a month after the assassination of senior chief Waruhiu.<sup>26</sup> It so happened that the two soldiers who had been sent to kill the chief came to his home one evening. They came to the home of the second wife, Kalunda Kasina, situated in Kavaini village along the Thika- Garissa road. They inquired about the whereabouts of the chief upon their arrival pretending that they were his visitors. They however, declined to disclose their identities, thus raising some suspicion. Luckily enough chief Kasina was not at home at that particular moment. He was in the house of his first wife, Mary Kamola, at Itoloni near Migwani chief's camp. After learning that the chief was not at home, the two men said that they were proceeding to Mwingi where they would sleep and that they would come over to see the chief the following morning.

The people at home being naturally suspicious and also owing to the fact that the two men had declined to identify themselves did not tell them where the chief had gone. Instead one of his sons ran all the way to Migwani and informed his father about the two strange-looking men. It was dark about eight o'clock at night but without losing time,

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<sup>25</sup> O.L., Mrs. Nzila Kasina on 17/3.98 at Kavaini.

<sup>26</sup> Carson, J.B., *The Life Story of a Kenyan chief* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1957), 39.

chief Kasina went to Kitui that very night and informed the D.C., Mr. Birkett, and the D.O., Mr. Browning, about the incident. Without taking any chances, the D.C. mobilised some armed soldiers and they all drove to chief Kasina's home at Kavaini. When they arrived, they were informed that the 'visitors' had gone to Mwingi and so they followed them there where they found them sleeping in an hotel belonging to one Masai wa Mbutu. When they seized the two men, they found that they were in possession of two guns and nine rounds of ammunition. They were arrested and taken to Kitui where they were charged with attempting to murder chief Kasina and were subsequently imprisoned.<sup>27</sup>

After this occurrence, the D.C. gave chief Kasina three armed *askaris* to act as his bodyguards. Besides the three armed *askaris*, chief Kasina was issued with a gun for self-defense. He carried the gun wherever he went. As for the three *askaris*, they were to accompany the chief at all times while visiting his location and even when outside the district. They were entrusted with the task of ensuring the safety of the chief. The presence of the armed bodyguards must have scared away those who were plotting to kill chief Kasina for there was no other attempt made against him as long as the body guards were with him. They continued guarding him until May the following year when he, together with other dignitaries, went to England for the coronation. But for some reason the bodyguards did not join chief Kasina when he came back from England. This must have encouraged his enemies to plan another attempt to eliminate him.

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<sup>27</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

## 2.2 CHIEF KASINA ON THE HANDS OF THE ASSAILANT

“WAKAMBA chief maimed: police arrest forty tribesmen.”<sup>28</sup> These were the  
which captured the front page headline of the East African Standard on 25<sup>th</sup>  
September 1953. At long last the detractors of Senior Chief Kasina had caught up with  
After having escaped the previous attempts, he was only too unlucky this time round  
have fallen into the hands of the Mau Mau militants.

After the attempt on chief Kasina's life in November 1952, the D.C. had  
proved his security by posting three armed soldiers to act as his bodyguards. They  
looked after him until when he went to England. When he came back, however, they did  
join him in his *safaris* around the district whilst he was telling the people about his  
trip in the United Kingdom.

Surprisingly, the D.C. had withdrawn the security which he had earlier given to  
chief on the assumption that Mau Mau activities in the district had virtually come to  
an end. In his Annual Report in 1953 the D.C. had the following to report concerning the  
Mau Mau activities in the district:

Generally speaking, throughout the year, the district has remained virtually  
uncontaminated by the Mau Mau forces except in the case of people who have been  
working in Nairobi in particular....The people of this district generally have no love for  
Mau Mau but there has been constant threat from Nairobi.<sup>29</sup>

A result when the enemies of chief Kasina saw that he no longer had armed soldiers to  
protect him, they once more made a plot to kill him.

Owing to the increased waves of killings of loyalists, especially in the Central  
Province, and more specifically after the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu, Senior  
Chief Kasina had taken all necessary precautions in order to avoid falling prey to Mau

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<sup>28</sup> East African Standard Newspaper dated 27/9/53, 1.  
<sup>29</sup> D.C. Report, DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953, 1-2.

militants. As a result, he never walked alone. He usually walked around in a company of about five or six men mostly his tribal retainers and he never left his shot-gun behind.<sup>30</sup> It was a bit difficult for the Mau Mau militants to get at him unless a well thought out strategy was used.

The Mau Mau adherents in Kitui conceived of a plan to use one of the men who was very close to chief Kasina and one whom the chief could not suspect as being able to execute a plan to murder him. Consequently Munyambu wa Kivite, who had taken the Mau Mau oath and was a strong supporter of the movement, was prevailed upon by his colleagues to seek ways and means of eliminating chief Kasina.<sup>31</sup>

There were several reasons as to why Munyambu Kivite was chosen as the ideal person to eliminate chief Kasina. Firstly, he was a staunch supporter of the Mau Mau in the district. He had taken the Mau Mau oath which entailed keeping secrets about the organization and the workings of the movement. As a result the organizers of the plot to eliminate the chief were sure that Munyambu could not betray their cause. They were convinced that Munyambu, having taken the oath to kill those people considered to be enemies of the Mau Mau, would not shy away from the task of killing chief Kasina. Secondly, Munyambu wa Kivite was very close to chief Kasina. He had married into the family of the chief, and besides that, being a qualified carpenter and mason, he was employed by chief Kasina on monthly basis. He was one of the many workers employed by chief Kasina. This offered him an advantage in that he was very close to the chief and could gain access to him whenever he wanted.

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Mrs Kalunda Kasina on 10/2/98 at Thitani.  
Nzivuru wa Kaleli on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

Thirdly, Munyambu had personal misgivings about chief Kasina. Ever since engaging him as his employee, Kasina had refused to pay him his salary in full. At the end of the month, he never paid him his full salary. He normally gave him half the salary and promised to pay the other half the following month, which he never did. After a long while Munyambu demanded to be paid his arrears, which Kasina flatly refused and dared him to report wherever he so wished. This must have annoyed Munyambu very much, and he planned for revenge in one way or the other.

Likewise, Munyambu had crossed ways with chief Kasina when the latter forcefully took land belonging to the former without any compensation. When chief Kasina moved from Kavaini to Itoloni near Migwani (where he built a home for his first wife), he realised that the land along the Itoloni valley was very fertile and productive. He therefore declared the whole land along the valley to be his. He took the land from the original owners without ever compensating them.<sup>32</sup> Munyambu was one of those whose land was taken. Like the others, he was very bitter but there was nothing that they could do, since chief Kasina was all powerful and there was nowhere they could report him. It can therefore be seen that the enemies of chief Kasina could not have made a better choice than Munyambu to carry out their wishes. They knew that bad blood existed between the two. On his part, Munyambu looked forward to an opportune time when he would revenge the wrongs which had been committed against him by chief Kasina. Therefore, when the Mau Mau militants conspired and contributed money to give to him, he was ready to receive the money and execute their wishes.

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32. Nzivuru wa Kaleli on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

On the night of 21<sup>st</sup> September 1953, Munyambu, who was in fact a neighbour of chief Kasina came to the chief's home at Itoloni, a thing which he normally did, so there was no cause of suspicion at all. After chatting with the chief and the other members of the family and shortly before he left, he informed the chief that he wanted to see him privately to which chief Kasina replied that they could meet the following day at his *shamba* where they would have plenty of time to talk and discuss whatever problems Munyambu had. The latter then left shortly after 10.00 p.m. in the night. Had chief Kasina agreed to move a distance from the other people as Munyambu demanded, this would most probably have been his last day alive for it appeared that Munyambu had planned to carry out the assassination that very night.<sup>33</sup>

The following morning on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1953 chief Kasina took his shot-gun which he never left behind, and headed for his *shamba* at Itoloni valley where he had agreed the previous night to meet with Munyambu. They went round the *shamba* inspecting the people, who were busy planting onions and sugarcane. Munyambu had a very sharp panga, which he used to cut sugarcane, which they chewed as they walked around the *shamba*. Unfortunately chief Kasina this particular day was not accompanied by his bodyguard or any of his tribal retainers. As they moved further away from where the workers were, Munyambu offered to help the chief with his shot-gun which he had been carrying all along to which he outrightly obliged. It was a very strange thing, though at this particular moment there was nothing unusual which could have made the chief suspicious. As they walked further from the other people and chief Kasina was leading the way, Munyambu seized the opportunity to attack him. He attacked him from behind with his panga cutting him on the neck. As the chief fell down, the attacker followed him

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<sup>33</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

and cut both his hands as he tried to shade his head from the panga. He also slashed him on the stomach. By this time the attention of the people in the *shamba* had been drawn by the shouts for help coming from chief Kasina. They therefore ran for his rescue. They started throwing stones to the assailant who disappeared into the nearby forest still in possession of the shot-gun. He never made use of the gun most likely owing to the fact that he did not know how to use it.<sup>34</sup>

Chief Kasina was quickly rushed to Kitui hospital where he was hospitalized for about two months. In the mean time, the D.C., shocked by the news of the attack on chief Kasina, mobilized his security men and drove to Migwani. At Migwani chief's camp, he ordered every male adult in the neighbourhood to arm himself with every available weapon including pangas, bows and arrows and then ransack the whole area looking for Munyambu and have him arrested. People were divided into several hunting parties, each headed by a contingent of police officers armed with guns.<sup>35</sup> The searching party was unable to get hold of Munyambu, who had travelled during the night to Machakos. It was, however, reported that the police had arrested forty Wakamba who were present at the incident for failing to take any action to arrest the assailant.<sup>36</sup>

In the mean time, the crack-down on the Mau Mau suspects in Kitui District intensified. Chief Kasina was totally convinced that the forces of Mau Mau were behind the attack, although the D.C. had a different view. Commenting on the attack on chief Kasina, the D.C. noted that the attack could not directly be attributed to Mau Mau but

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<sup>34</sup> D.L. Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>35</sup> D.L. Nyumu Nguli and Joseph Thiaka on 4/2/98 at Migwani.  
<sup>36</sup> Weekly Newspaper\_East African Standard of 27/9/53.

quick to point out that the organizers of the attack were educated people who no could read in the newspapers about the Mau Mau methods.<sup>37</sup>

Many people who had taken K.A.U. membership and who possessed K.A.U. tickets were arrested. Those arrested were tortured so as to give information about those who had taken the Mau Mau oath and those who were members of K.A.U. Women had soda bottles inserted in their private parts while some men were castrated in the effort to extract information leading to the total elimination of Mau Mau and the K.A.U. phenomenon in Kitui District. Those arrested were taken to different prisons all over the colony such as Manyani, Garissa and Makueni prisons where they performed hard labour.<sup>38</sup>

Those people who were arrested in connection with Mau Mau and K.A.U. were dearly tortured. Those who refused to part with information concerning the other people who had taken the Mau Mau oath dearly paid for that. However, as people went through these ordeals, the others who stood by waiting for their turn used to sing songs of comfort. One such favourite song went as follows:

Mwiitu umwe wa Mkamba,

Athekaa tukolwa ni mathina,

Aituita masyitwa maiitu,

Aitwia kyeve kitheele,

Nundu kwovwa ti kungelwa,

Ngai enda tukauma yiela.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> D.L., Daniel Katuku.

<sup>39</sup> O.L., Daniel Katuku.



(One Mkamba girl,

Used to laugh until we forgot our troubles,

Calling us by our names,

Telling us not to worry,

Because being taken to court is not like being hanged,

If God so wishes we shall come out of prison.)

Literally this was a song of comfort. It encouraged those arrested to take heart.

being arrested and sent to jail was not like being executed. It further consoled them

informing them that if God so wished, they would one day come out of the prisons and

free as before.

### CHIEF KASINA IN HOSPITAL AND MESSAGES OF CONDOLENCE

After the attack, chief Kasina was rushed to Kitui hospital where the action of Dr.

Carswell and his wife saved his life. His hands had been extensively damaged and so had

to be cut off a few inches above the wrist. The forces of Mau Mau, or at any rate his

enemies who were using the Mau Mau rebellion as a pretext, seemed to have scored over

him for he was destined to live the rest of his life without hands. All the same he made a

complete recovery and was able to return home on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, less than two

months after the attack, thanks to the specialized treatment which he received from Dr.

Carswell and his wife. In 1953, the D.C. Mr. Birkett gave the following report:

The most serious incident in the year had of course been the attack on chief Kasina who as a result lost both his hands and had only the medical officer of health and his staff to thank for his survival.<sup>40</sup>

While in hospital, chief Kasina received many visitors who came to sympathize

with him. Also to his comfort he received a large number of letters and messages of

condolences. Nearly all the white officials who had served in Kitui and who knew Kasina well either came personally to see him in hospital or sent messages of condolence. For example, former Kitui District Commissioner Commander Mackay, then serving in the same capacity in Turkana and one whom Kasina had known in 1930 sent a letter of sympathy. A District Officer, then in the West Indies, Mr. Thorp and one who had been in Kitui in 1935 sent a letter of sympathy as well as some money.

Chief Kasina also received many visitors while in the hospital, the most notable being General Erskine, commander-in-chief, East Africa. Erskine had been posted to East Africa and particularly in Kenya to deal with the Mau Mau uprising.<sup>41</sup> He was in charge of the whole operation intended to bring down the Mau Mau movement. Since General Erskine was scheduled to visit Migwani Division, chief Kasina whilst in his hospital bed sent messages to his comrades in Migwani, and they turned out a parade of 200 ex-soldiers, many of them non-commissioned officers in the General's honour. Commenting on General Erskine's visit to Migwani location, the D.C. noted that a parade and guard of honour of over 200 ex-servicemen had been mounted at Migwani in honour of the General. He further added that the parade had been organised by chief Kasina from his hospital bed.<sup>42</sup>

While in hospital, chief Kasina also received many telegrams from different people all over the world, those who knew him and also those who did not know him personally but had heard about him.<sup>43</sup> For example, he received a telegram dated 25/9/53

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KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953.

Rosberg, C. and Nottingham, J., *op.cit.*, 292-3.

KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/10, Kitui District Annual Report, 1953.

Most of the telegrams were found among other documents kept by Mr. Joseph M. Kasina, a son of the chief.

from Mr. Eliud Mathu who was the first African member of the Legislative Council. In his telegram, he wished the chief quick recovery.

Also not left behind in registering their sympathy were institutions and organizations based in different parts of the world. On 27<sup>th</sup> September 1953, the Medical Missionary Association based in London sent a letter of sympathy. Also a white settler farmer based at Lumbwa, on behalf of the white settlers in Kapsigeri farm, sent a letter of sympathy dated 26<sup>th</sup> September 1953. The letter read in part as follows;

Though we seldom saw eye to eye whilst I was working in Kitui, I would like to say that if I can help you in any way, I would only be too glad to do so. So do not hesitate to let me know if I can do anything at all.<sup>44</sup>

On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1953, the Ag. Chief Native Commissioner in Kenya sent a message of condolences. Likewise, the Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, was dismayed by the fact that the forces of Mau Mau had once again struck one of their staunchest supporter and collaborator. He too wrote a letter of sympathy to chief Kasina. In addition, in a letter he wrote to the D.C. and also copied to Kasina, the Governor was emphatic that the attackers were to be arrested and brought to justice at all cost.<sup>45</sup>

It can therefore be concluded from the many people who visited chief Kasina in hospital as well as the many letters he received that many people sympathized with him. Colonial officials in the colony and more specifically those in Kitui District were shaken to the core by the attack on chief Kasina. This was because he was their strongest supporter and hence the attack on him was almost an equivalent to an attack on one of their own. This also explains the reason as to why the colonial officials in Kitui so

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<sup>44</sup> The letter dated 26/9/53 was found in the custody of Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>45</sup> The letter dated 30/9/53 was found in the custody of Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

... ruthlessly dealt with those who were suspected to have conspired and arranged the plot to eliminate him.

The Kamba of Kitui had been really generous in subscribing Ksh 14,000 to enable chief Kasina to travel to England for the coronation. Luckily he had not used all the money while in the United Kingdom and it was suggested by the chiefs and the D.C. that artificial hands be bought for him from the United States with the unspent balance. These artificial hands were measured specifically to suit him and he continued using them until when he passed away in 1989.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime the fight against Mau Mau continued and spread into Kitui District. So, as soon as chief Kasina left the hospital, he continued with the work against it, both inside and outside the district. Although it seemed that the forces of Mau Mau had scored over him, he was determined that they should not get away with it. Thus, in the following year he helped to form the Akamba Association of Kitui, Machakos, Nairobi and Mombasa and he was chosen the president of this Association. The Akamba Association was a forum intended to bring the Kamba together in opposing the activities of the Mau Mau. Its organizers also wanted to educate the Kamba on the dangers of associating themselves with the unlawful Mau Mau movement. Its leaders were from both Kitui and Machakos Districts and it also had its members drawn from other places where Kamba lived such as Mombasa and Nairobi. Through the auspices of the Akamba Association, chief Kasina organised many meetings wherever Kamba people lived in order to form a unity of Kamba against the Mau Mau.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Carson, J.B., op.cit., 40.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 42.

Although the enemies of chief Kasina were intent on killing him, he did not bear any particular malice towards those misguided people who injured him. Though the man who mutilated him was eventually arrested and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment, he nonetheless continued to provide for his assailant's wife when she was in need while her husband was in jail. Furthermore chief Kasina continued to pay school fees for her two sons enrolled at Kyome intermediate school until they completed their studies.<sup>48</sup> This was a true gesture that chief Kasina did not want to revenge the evil deed which Munyambu had committed against him. He even went to visit his assailant while he was in prison, though he outrightly insulted him by asking him how he felt to be in prison while his wife was thousands of miles away back home with other men.<sup>49</sup> Chief Kasina did not attempt to revenge after the man who had mutilated him was released from prison in 1963 through a presidential pardon after only serving nine years of the initial twenty years sentence.

#### 2.4 THE TRIAL AND CONVICTION OF THE ASSAILANT

After attacking chief Kasina, Munyambu disappeared into the nearby forest in order to avoid being arrested. The forty or so people present during the incident did not attempt to arrest him, for which they were later arrested and charged with failing to apprehend the attacker. After the incident, Munyambu went up to nearby Kuimbu hill where he watched the parties which had been mobilised by the D.C. to search for him. He travelled during the night on foot up to Kithyoko before proceeding to Matungulu in

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D.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

D.I., Maluki wa Kongo on 10/3/98 at Thokoa.

hakos where he had a friend who accommodated him for quite some time. The search for him continued all over the country. In Kitui District, chiefs mobilised their people in every location to search for Munyambu but all in vain. For a whole month, they were unable to trace him.

In the meantime the search for him intensified, with the government announcing through the radio that Munyambu was wanted by the police and that anybody who had information which could lead to his arrest was required to contact the police. His pictures were published in the newspapers, and in special government publications, and distributed all over the country for easy identification of him, but for a whole month he remained hidden.<sup>50</sup>

However, it was unfortunate for him when a person who had seen his photograph discovered his hideout and leaked the information about his whereabouts to the police who moved swiftly and arrested him. True enough he was found in possession of the hot-gun which he had taken away from chief Kasina after the attack. He was arrested and taken to Nairobi and prosecuted in the High Court. The proceedings of the High Court were however moved to Kitui. During the year 1954, the D.C. gave the following report:

The supreme court, represented by Mr. Justice MacDuff had sat at Kitui for the first time for several years. This was a special session to deal with the case involving the attack on chief Kasina.<sup>51</sup>

Henry Guy Muli was the court interpreter for the high court during the trial. He was later become Kenya's Attorney General in the 1980's.

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D.I., Maluki wa Kongo.  
KENYA. DC/KTI/1/1/11, Kitui District Annual Report, 1954, 8.

The court found Munyambu guilty of attempting to kill chief Kasina and causing severe bodily harm on him. Consequently, he was sentenced to twenty years in prison and hard labour.<sup>52</sup> He was however released in 1963 after serving only nine years in jail. The release was as a result of a presidential pardon on prisoners on the eve of Kenya's independence.

After the release, Munyambu came back home in Migwani but did not stay long there obviously because he feared that chief Kasina or even his kinsmen, members of the *mbaa kyala*, would take revenge and kill him. He left his wife and children behind and went to live at Katothya in Gitaru, Kikuyu, where he married another wife and never came back to Migwani.<sup>53</sup>

Munyambu was regarded by some of his fellow Kamba as being the most courageous and daring man in the whole of Kitui District. He had attempted to do what most men would have shunned. As a result his legacy has remained over the years in Kitui District and even beyond as the man who attempted to take the buffalo by its horns!

In conclusion, it can be noted that the assassination attempt on chief Kasina revealed that there were people who were totally opposed to his close co-operation with the colonial government. Such people viewed Kasina as an impediment to their liberation struggle. As a result, they thought that the only way they could achieve their goal was by eliminating the chief. At the same time, the fact that of all the colonial chiefs in Kitui District the Mau Mau militants targeted chief Kasina is quite revealing. It shows that he had identified himself too much with the colonial government especially when dealing with the Mau Mau issue. The assassination attempt must have had some lasting impact on

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<sup>52</sup> O.I. Mr. Joseph Thiaka.

<sup>53</sup> O.I. Mr. Nyumu Nguli.

his thinking. It must have dawned on him that it was risky for him to identify himself too much with the colonial government. While he had to perform his chiefly duties, he had also to take into account the collective interests of his people. This called for the balancing of the interests of his people and those of his colonial masters. In other words this called for his change of attitude towards his people and such a change could improve his relationship with the people.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### KASINA'S FAMILY AND PRIVATE LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER RETIREMENT

#### KASINA'S FAMILY LIFE

Chief Kasina was among the first converts of the African Inland Mission (A.I.M.) when the missionary society established its second out post at Kyome in Migwani location in 1925 and two European missionaries were posted there permanently. The missionary society had first established itself at Mulango near Kitui township in 1915. It was the practice of the missionaries to work closely with the colonial administration. This was intended to make their work easier since they would be guaranteed of security as well as making it a bit easier for them to reach the people. They would liase with chiefs and headmen who would inturn offer them any assistance they required. Hence, missionaries would make first conducts with local administrators.

When the A.I.M. mission was opened at Kyome, the two missionaries posted there found it necessary to make contact with the local chiefs and headmen. By this time, Kasina had been appointed the headman of Nzaoni location<sup>1</sup> in the neighbourhood of Kyome. Hence, he was one of those whom the two missionaries sought assistance from. This was his first conduct with the A.I.M. missionaries. Kasina had interacted with Europeans before as early as 1908 and even when he was in the K.A.R. and had come to admire anything associated with them. So, once the word of God was preached to him, he did not hesitate but outrightly accepted to become a Christian. He was therefore among

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Four.

first people to be baptized by Rev. Leone, one of the two missionaries and was given the name Solomon at baptism.<sup>2</sup>

Kasina was a staunch Christian and he never failed to attend church service and functions. He was an active member of the church. In fact With the assistance of Rev. Leone, he had helped to built up a church in his home area at Kavaini village when there was hardly any other church in the whole of Migwani Division. He became a church elder and sometimes he could lead the congregation when the pastor failed to turn up. This shows that he was really a committed Christian. Also as a show of his support for the church, he in 1972 donated a piece of land near Mwingi township on which a church was built which he helped to construct both morally and financially.

It should be noted here that Kasina had got on very well with the missionaries in Kitui, especially those of the A.I.M. to whose doctrines he ascribed. His relationship with the missionaries was cordial. Besides giving spiritual guidance to its faithful, missionaries were also interested in undertaking other humanitarian activities such as establishing schools and health centres. Therefore chief Kasina's association with them was deemed to be beneficial to the people of Migwani. It was therefore necessary for chief Kasina to co-operate with the missionaries especially in the field of education. To his credit, most of the schools established by the A.I.M. were concentrated in his Migwani Division.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of being a committed christian, Solomon Kasina was nonetheless a polygamous man. Though the christian teachings demanded that he marries only one wife, traditional inclination and some other factors prevailed upon him to do contrary to

O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina on 25/2/98 at Mwingi.  
KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950.

teachings and regulation of the church even after he had accepted the new faith. Therefore, he ended up marrying a total of eight wives. Being a polygamist did in fact lead to some difficulties with the A.I.M. For one, according to the teachings of the A.I.M., polygamy was unacceptable. A man was expected to marry only one wife. However, when the missionaries realised that that even their new converts were reluctant to abandon the practice, they also abandoned the idea of refusing those who had married more than one wife attending church hoping that the practice would die out with time. This way polygamists like chief Kasina ended up being accepted as *bona-fide* members of the church.<sup>4</sup>

Several factors combined to motivate and encourage him to marry many wives. In the first place, the underlying motive behind the multiple marriages was his desire to maintain his social status in the society. In traditional Kamba society, a man's social status was judged among other things by the number of wives and children one had. Those who had many wives commanded a lot of respect from the people since they were considered to be 'real men.'<sup>5</sup> Taking care of more than one wife was considered to be a very difficult task. Besides this, one had to be very rich so as to be able to pay the bride-price for all one's wives as well as providing for them. Therefore, Kasina's marriage to many wives can be directly attributed to his desire to be on an equal footing with his wealthy and polygamous colleagues in the district, especially chief Mwendwa Kitavi and chief Karovwe wa Ikunga of Mumoni.

Secondly, chief Kasina married many wives since he wanted to have a large family because to have many wives and children was also considered a symbol of

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<sup>4</sup> O.I., Daniel Katuku on 20/2/98 at Thokoa Market.

<sup>5</sup> O.I., Mrs. Nzila Kasina on 15/3/98 at Kavaini and Mrs. Kalunda Kasina on 10/2/98 at Thitani.

access, wealth and status.<sup>6</sup> Men who had large families were held in high esteem in the society. They were considered to be men of high standing and were usually very influential in community affairs. In order to gain and maintain social standing and respect among his people, it was necessary for chief Kasina to have a large and extended family.

Thirdly, Mrs. Mary Kamola, Kasina's first wife seems to have influenced her husband's decision to take another wife. She kept on complaining whenever Kasina failed to come home in the night. She found it difficult to believe that the chief spent so many nights out owing to his official duties. She constantly kept quarreling him for spending many nights out since she suspected that he was having secret affairs with other women.<sup>7</sup>

Chief Kasina had also acquired enough wealth so as to enable him pay bride-price for many wives. He had enough to pay for the bride-price as was required and also enough to support his many wives. Besides this, being a powerful chief offered him an advantage in the sense that many young girls found it a prestigious thing to be married by chiefs who were considered to be men of high social standing in the society. Likewise many parents found it a honour to have their daughters married to a chief. Some were even willing to give their daughters free of charge to the chiefs as a way of creating linkages. Becoming a father-in-law to the chief was considered to be a big honour. This is why many of the colonial chiefs ended up becoming polygamists.<sup>8</sup>

Last but not the least, Kasina's mother was also very instrumental as she constantly kept on urging her son to marry many wives so that they could keep her

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.I., Mrs. Kalunda Kasina.

.I., Mrs. Nzila Kasina.

.I., Rinda Mbithuka on 10/3/98 at Kiomo.

company.<sup>9</sup> She constantly kept on reminding him that a man's standing in the society was judged by the size of his family. Therefore the more wives he married the better. As a result chief Kasina ended up marrying eight wives.

His first wife was called Mary Kamola, whom he married in 1925, a year after he returned home from the K.A.R. The D.C. had wanted to make him the area chief to succeed his uncle but the elders had resisted the move arguing that since he was not married he could not be in a position to have influence over the people. As a result, Kasina married his first wife that same year as a prerequisite to being appointed a chief. And between that year and 1938, he married all his eight wives in the following order: his second wife was Kalunda, the third Mwenze, the fourth Mbathe, fifth Kawila, sixth Kalunda, seventh Nzila and lastly Esther Kola.

Chief Kasina paid the full bride-price for all his wives. He never took peoples' daughters by forces to become his wives as some colonial chiefs were accustomed to doing. He usually paid all that was sanctioned by custom and tradition in exchange for his wives. By so doing he avoided being accused of misusing his position as a chief to harass other peoples' daughters. In this regard he was morally an upright man.<sup>10</sup>

According to Kamba traditions, it was unusual for a man to build houses for his two wives in the same compound.<sup>11</sup> As per practice, once a man married his second wife, he built a new home for her at some distance from that of his first wife. This was intended to limit conflicts between the two wives. By keeping them apart, the husband hoped that

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<sup>9</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina.

<sup>10</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina.

<sup>11</sup> Muthiani, J., *Akamba From Within: Egalitarianism in Social Relations* (New York: Exposition press, 1973), 40.

Each woman would concentrate on the matters concerning her home, and this would limit conflicts and confrontation which could result if the two were living together sharing the same compound and kitchen.

In conformity with this practice, chief Kasina did not keep his wives in the same compound. He acquired land at different places within Migwani location where he built homes for his eight wives. Initially his original home was at Kavaini village where his father lived, and this is where he built houses for his first wife and seventh wife. He was, however, to move his first wife from Kavaini to Itoloni near Migwani in 1940 after he had acquired land there and built a home on that piece of land. He also built two homes for his fifth and sixth wives at Thitani, while the second and the fourth wives had their homes built at Kanyekini village. The last wife had a home built for her near Mwingi town.<sup>12</sup>

Out of the eight wives, the late Senior Chief is survived by only three, the others having passed away. Mbathe was the first to pass away in 1943 while Mary Kamola, the first wife of the late chief passed away in 1994, exactly five years after the death of her husband. The three surviving wives of the late chief Kasina are Kalunda, Nzila and Esther Kola. In total the chief had 44 children: twenty two sons and twenty two daughters. His was such a big family.<sup>13</sup>

Chief Kasina did not discriminate against any of his wives as is the case with some who marry more than one wife. He treated all of them quite fairly. This was demonstrated mostly when his wives were in conflict. For example, when two of his wives had a quarrel or even fought (as was the case sometimes), he would punish both

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O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina and Joseph M. Kasina on 25/2/98 at Mwingi.

O.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

equally without showing favourism to either the offender or the offended.<sup>14</sup> This was likely intended to discourage his wives from constant conflicts.

Chief Kasina treated his wives harshly. He could not hesitate to use force (such as punishment through beating) to extract obedience from them. As a result, his wives feared and respected him and could not do anything which could bring them on the conflict path with their husband. This is one aspect of chief Kasina's character which shows that there was not much difference between his official life and his informal life. In spite of being a strict disciplinarian, he nonetheless took care of all his wives. He provided for them well and also made sure that he met all of their needs without failure. In other words he was a responsible family man.<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, chief Kasina's relationship with his children was that of a strict parent. He wanted his children to be an example to others in the neighbourhood in all aspects, discipline included. He could not hesitate to discipline his children whenever they wronged. He also avoided discriminating against children of different wives. He was committed to provide for his children especially with respect to education. He made sure that his children had access to education and that they succeed in life hoping as most parents do, that they would be able to take care of him in his old age. This is evidenced by an incident which occurred in 1978 when chief Kasina gathered his family for a get-together. He then instructed his wives to bring along with them all his clothes. He had invited all his sons. The clothes were put on the ground and then Kasina instructed his sons to collect any of the clothes which any of them had bought for him. There was only

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D.I., Mrs Kalunda Kasina.

D.I., Mrs Esther Kola Kasina.

one suit which had been bought for him by one of his sons for which he received some blessing. Without further business, he declared the meeting over.<sup>16</sup> Such an act portrays the behaviour of chief Kasina with regard to his family life.

Chief Kasina, though not having acquired formal education himself in his youth, nonetheless greatly valued education. He was quick to realise the benefits which accrued from education and as such he encouraged his children to strive for the highest possible educational attainments. He not only wanted them to be good examples to other peoples' children, but also to be abreast of the children of other chiefs. All his children therefore attained basic education. Most of them attended Kyome intermediate school before proceeding to Kitui government school and then to Machakos high school.

The fact that chief Kasina valued the education of his children was underscored in 1956 by the District Officer for Northern Division, Mr. J.W. Balfour when he noted that, "Chief Kasina is a bit jealous of the highly educated Mwendwa sons and is very anxious to get one of his sons on an educational trip to England."<sup>17</sup> This attitude demonstrated that chief Kasina did not want his children to be left behind by those of other chiefs. Consequently, he made sure that all his children received quality education.

He was among the first parents in the location to send his daughters to school. This he did among other things to set an example to others. Initially, parents in Kitui District were skeptical about sending their daughters to school. They believed that girls should stay at home under strict supervision of their mothers and grandmothers until they attained marriageable age. Then they would be married off in exchange for a bride-price. In other words daughters were considered to be an alternative source of wealth to their

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<sup>16</sup> O.I., Nzivuru Kaleli on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

<sup>17</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1956.



parents. Hence parents were reluctant to send girls to school. As a result, chief Kasina could set an example to other parents to follow by being the first to send his daughters to school.

There was a common belief among the parents that if the girls were allowed to go to school, they would become prostitutes since they would be away from their parents most of the time.<sup>18</sup> This would prevent them from getting married since no man would like to marry a prostitute. And there was nothing more dishonourable to a parent than to have his daughter remain unmarried. This was considered to be a bad omen. This partly explains why many parents were reluctant to send their daughters to school in the first place.

However, chief Kasina made sure that his daughters received quality education alongside his sons. He did not discriminate. He therefore sent his daughters to school, and by 1956 two of chief Kasina's daughters had acquired secondary level of education and had taken up the task of teaching the women of the district, instructing them on how to live better lives and make good homes.<sup>19</sup>

Of all the children of Senior Chief Kasina, Francis M. Kasina was the only one who attained very high standards of education. He started his primary education at Migwani primary school before moving to Kyome Intermediate school. He then proceeded to Kitui Government school and then to Machakos High school. In 1956, he was nominated by the D.C. for a full bursary to enable him to proceed to the United States for higher education. This was after his father had expressed the desire to have

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<sup>18</sup> O.I., Kavuvi wa Ngandi on 19/2/98 at Kyome.

<sup>19</sup> Carson J.B., *The Life Story of a Kenya Chief* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1957), 11.

of his sons sent abroad for higher education.<sup>20</sup> That same year the nomination was approved by the colonial government, and in January, 1957, Francis Kasina proceeded to the United States where he registered for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration at Harvard University College.

The fact that Francis was sponsored to proceed to the United States for higher education any not any other child of Senior Chief Kasina does not mean that he was favoured by his father, nor does it mean that he was more close to his parents than others. This is attested by the fact that it was the D.C. who made the nomination. The most likely conclusion to make against the circumstances is that Francis was more academically qualified to proceed for further education than any of his brothers, hence his nomination by the D.C.

Upon his return to Kenya in the early 1960's, Francis held several positions in the government before finally settling for a career as a diplomat. Throughout his career as a diplomat, he was accredited to Zaire, Sweden and Norway as Kenya's Ambassador. He also worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he rose through the ranks to become the Director of the Department of Political Affairs.

It should, however, be noted that chief Kasina had miserably failed to secure scholarships for his other sons to study abroad. The position which he held in the colonial government and his social status would normally have meant that he should have secured more scholarships to enable his sons travel abroad. Alternatively he could have used his wealth to send them abroad. This was unlike some of the colonial chiefs of his standing such as Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kungu, Senior Chief Koinange and his powerful

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<sup>20</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1956.

Survival, Senior Chief Mwendwa wa Kitavi, each of whom were able to send more than a dozen of their sons for higher education. This was because the well placed colonial chiefs found it easy to secure government scholarships for their children.

Most of chief Kasina's sons joined the military in pursuit of a career which their father would have wanted to pursue. Kasina quite often encouraged his sons to join the armed forces since he had grown to like anything associated with the military. The progress which he had made while in the army had earned him one promotion after another most likely contributed to his liking the military. It can therefore be argued that chief Kasina contributed a great deal in having many of his sons join the army. One of his sons, Joshua M. Kasina joined the Kenya army, and like his father he rose through the ranks to attain the post of a Major before he retired in 1995. His other two sons, John K. Kasina and Paul M. Kasina, both joined the Kenya Police and attained the rank of Warrant Officer III, while Mr. Mbila Kasina became a Regimental Sergeant Major in the army.<sup>21</sup>

Yet still, some of his sons opted to take up the occupation of their father by joining the colonial administration. Musyoka Kasina, the eldest son of Senior Chief Kasina, became a colonial chief in Nairobi in 1959, while his younger brother Katuta also became a chief in Nairobi before he left the occupation to become a very successful businessman. In the 1970's, he joined politics and was among the contenders for the Kitui North parliamentary seat in the 1979 general elections. He, however, disappeared mysteriously during the electioneering period never to be seen alive again. His death still remains a mystery up to date. Like his brothers, Joseph M. Kasina also became a Senior

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<sup>21</sup> O.L., Mbila Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mbondoni and Joseph M. Kasina.

Assistant Chief in Migwani Division.<sup>22</sup> Other children of the late chief Kasina were trained at the Jeane's school and Kabete Agricultural Centre and became agricultural officers. One of his son who had been taught farming methods at the Jeane's school became his father's farm manager. Other sons and daughters took up the teaching profession and ended up becoming school masters.

It can therefore be seen that it was the wish of chief Kasina to have his children succeed in life. First, he was keen to see to it that they received atleast some basic education. As a result most of his children attained secondary level of education which in turn enabled them to acquire good and well-paying jobs. It is therefore no wonder that some of chief Kasina's sons and daughters became prominent personalities in Kitui District in the post-colonial Kenya.

## **7.2 PRIVATE FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

### **7.2.1 ACQUISITION OF WESTERN MATERIAL CULTURE**

Chief Kasina was in the forefront in the acquisition of western material culture and in the adoption of new technological innovations in many aspects of life. In so doing, whether consciously or unconsciously, he acted as a pace-setter for his people to follow towards change and modernity. To begin with, he built modern decent houses for his wives. By 1936, he had built a sun-dried brick house with corrugated iron sheets. The house was big enough to accommodate two of his wives. It was the only house in the whole of Migwani Division built of corrugated iron sheets besides the chief's camp at Migwani. The house was advanced enough by the standards of the time considering the

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<sup>22</sup>O.I., Mbila Kasina.

fact that the majority of the people lived in dwellings made of wood and mud walls with grass thatched roofs. In fact in 1939, after the outbreak of the Second World War, they had to put grass on top of the iron sheets so as to prevent the house from being air-bombarded by the enemy. The grass covering was intended to hide the easy location of the house.<sup>23</sup>

Chief Kasina was among the first persons in Kitui to build a good and decent modern house. By 1940, he had constructed a one-storey house for his first wife at Itoloni. The house was built of unburned sun-dried bricks with a corrugated iron sheets roofing. This was the first storied house in the whole of Migwani Division. The house however collapsed after several years owing to the fact that it was built of sun-dried bricks. Thereafter, in 1954, he built an ultra-modern maisonette probably the most decent house in the whole district at that time.<sup>24</sup>

In 1947, the District Officer, Mr. F.R. Wilson, visited Migwani location upon which after touring the location, chief Kasina invited him for a cup of tea in his house. The D.O. in his report had the occasion to describe chief Kasina's house as the most luxurious house in the district. As such chief Kasina was quick to acquire western-styled mode of buildings.

Chief Kasina also had well maintained latrines when many people in the district either had none or were unwilling to have them. In fact as early as the 1950's, many people in Migwani location rejected the idea of digging pit latrines at their homes. Many parents were opposed to the idea of having to share the same latrine with their children. It took a lot of time to convince some men that it was morally right for them to share the

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<sup>23</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina, and Mrs. Nzila Kasina.

<sup>24</sup> O.I., Mrs. Nzila Kasina.

same latrine with their daughters. It was something which the Kamba traditions did not sanction.

However, chief Kasina, having travelled widely, had come to appreciate the importance of having latrines at every home. According to him, it was unhygienic not to have latrines at home. He therefore built latrines in all his homes so as to set an example to other people to emulate. On top of this, the many distinguished visitors whom he hosted dictated that he had to have well kept latrines. It was as a result of this that by 1945 he had installed a modern type of toilet at his Itoloni home which was frequented by visitors.<sup>25</sup>

His compound was always kept neat and tidy. Besides the many workers who were employed to keep the compound clean, he also had those people, mostly women, who failed to take part in communal work, brought to his home to spend the day doing general cleaning of the compound. They would spend the whole day cutting grass, attending to flowers, watering trees and generally sweeping the compound. As a result chief Kasina's compound was kept clean and tidy as though in readiness for distinguished visitors!

Chief Kasina was likewise in the forefront in the acquisition of western material culture in the form of utensils, tools and implements. He did not buy local household equipment. He mostly bought utensils which were not commonly used by the local people. As such his household equipment were classic and similar to what was commonly used by Europeans during that time.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore no wonder that whenever he

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<sup>25</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>26</sup> O.I., Mrs. Kalunda Kasina and Mrs Nzila Kasina.

travelled outside the district, he bought anything good which he came by. He did his shopping in Nairobi and while on a tour outside the country.

Senior Chief Kasina was among the first people in Kitui District to own a bicycle and a motor vehicle. In 1938, he bought two bicycles. He used one of the bicycles to ride as he moved around his location, while the other bicycle was strictly reserved for visitors. It was purposely to be used by any of his visitors who wished to accompany him on his endless tours to meet his people and also as he moved around the location supervising the various development projects being initiated.<sup>27</sup>

He was the first in Migwani Division to own a vehicle when in 1940 he was the proud owner of a Chevrolet pick-up. He bought the car, brand new while on a *safari* in Nairobi in 1940. The car had cost him Ksh 5,000 (of course a lot of money during that time) but he managed to pay the whole amount promptly. Then, immediately after the Second World War in 1946, he bought a brand new lorry which was used both for public transport as well as for commercial purposes. A year later, he managed to purchase another lorry which he transformed into a bus. The bus, principally used for public transport, used to ply the route between Thika-Kitui and Tseikuru. It was the first means of public transport in Migwani Division as well as in the northern parts of Kitui District as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

In 1955, two years after the chief had been involved in an accident, he bought a Land Rover. After a short while, he sold it and bought yet another new Land Rover. In 1962, he bought a Mercedes Benz lorry. This was only a year before he retired from the colonial administration. This lorry was principally used for commercial purposes. He

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O.I., Mbila Kasina.

O.I., Mr. Joshua Kasina and Mrs. Mary Joshua Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mwingi.

... further bought a Fiat car in 1965 and finally a Datsun saloon car registration number  
... NK 1200 in 1969. This was the last vehicle which chief Kasina ever bought. Besides  
... these vehicles, he also owned two tractors which he used to plough his farms of nearly  
... six hundred acres.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that chief Kasina could afford to purchase so many vehicles is a clear  
... indication that he was really a rich man. He had acquired enough wealth to enable him to  
... enjoy the kind of luxury which only his white masters could afford. He was in fact a  
... wealthy man according to the standards of those days.

## 2.2 DISTINGUISHED VISITORS TO HIS HOME

Senior Chief Kasina was the recipient of many distinguished visitors to his home  
... at one time or the other. Colonial officials in the district as well as from outside the  
... district paid him a courtesy call at his luxurious house at Itoloni near Migwani town.  
... Colonial officials on their tour of Migwani Division never failed to pay a visit to chief  
... Kasina after touring the division. In 1947, the D.O., Mr. F.R Wilson, after touring  
... Migwani location took tea with chief Kasina at home. He was full of praise for chief  
... Kasina's compound which he described as being exceptionally neat and clean.<sup>30</sup> There  
... was hardly any D.C. who served in Kitui who did not come to pay chief Kasina a visit.

In 1949, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, accompanied by the  
... Provincial Commissioner paid chief Kasina a visit. They were on their way from Kitui to  
... Garissa.<sup>31</sup> Another Governor to visit chief Kasina's home was Sir Evelyn Baring in 1954.  
... This was shortly after Kasina had been attacked by a gang of malcontents among his own

<sup>29</sup> O.I., Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>30</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/3/6, Safari Report 25/5/47 to 30/5/47 by F.R. Wilson, District Officer.

<sup>31</sup> KNA. DC/KTI/1/1/6, Kitui District Annual Report, 1949.



Baring had written a letter of sympathy to him while he was hospitalized at Kitui hospital. In April 1959 the Governor came over to see chief Kasina at his Itoloni home a few months after being discharged from the hospital. He had come specifically to give his personal sympathy and also to assure the chief that the colonial government had been sympathetic towards the misfortune which had befallen him. He also brought some presents.

Other prominent personalities who visited chief Kasina included the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, who was then the president of the Kenya African Union (K.A.U.) and Mr. Eliud Mathu, who was the first African member of the Legislative Council.<sup>32</sup> The duo visited chief Kasina at his Itoloni home in 1947. Obviously the visit was aimed at selling the K.A.U. policies to the chief and the people of Kitui. Since chief Kasina was the most influential person in the whole district, the two must have reasoned that if they could win his support then he would in turn be able to persuade his people to become followers of K.A.U. This was, however, not to be. Chief Kasina, being aware that the activities and the approach of K.A.U. were anti-government, could not compromise the trust and support which the colonial officials accorded him by succumbing to their demands. One of chief Kasina's son, Mathu Kasina, is indeed named after Eliud Mathu since the boy was born when the former was visiting the family.

Other visitors on record were some of the distinguished colonial chiefs in the colony. These were some of the chiefs whom Kasina had met and made friends with during his numerous tours of the colony. Among the chiefs who visited him were Senior

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O.I., Esther Kola Kasina and Joseph Kasina.

Chief Koinange from Kiambu, chief Munyiri Kombo and chief Murwa Tetu from Embu.

These and many more paid a courtesy call on chief Kasina at his home at Itoloni.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.3 BUSINESS VENTURES

Colonial chiefs were among the first few Africans to engage themselves in commercial businesses. This was the case because they had access to money and power by virtue of being colonial administrators. Wamagatta argues that colonial chiefs were generally at the vanguard of many commercial enterprises such as retail shops, whole sale enterprises and transportation.<sup>34</sup> They dominated all sorts of businesses as a means of enlarging their incomes and enhancing their social status in society.

Senior Chief Kasina was not left behind in the field of business. Like most of his fellow chiefs, he was engaged in businesses of different types. This fact was underscored by the District Officer for Northern Division Mr. C.G. Hemwood, when he noted in his Handing Over Report that chief Kasina was engaged in all sorts of businesses and various fiddles.<sup>35</sup> The statement was to be echoed a year later, when the sitting D.O. for Northern Division, Mr. A.L.K. Liddle, stated that chief Kasina was a little inclined to usurp his authority in trade matters and that he, together with his family, were engaged in trade of all sorts.<sup>36</sup> It is therefore clear that chief Kasina had established himself as a very successful businessman.

One of the main business occupations which he engaged in was that of trading in livestock. He went round the district during market days looking for cows, goats and

<sup>33</sup> O.I., Mbila Kasina.

<sup>34</sup> Wamagatta, E.N., "A Biography of Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kungu of Githunguri, Kiambu, 1890-1952" M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1988, 287.

<sup>35</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1959.

<sup>36</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1960.

to buy. He would in turn sell the animals he had bought in Embu and Muranga Districts, usually at very high profits. He bought the livestock cheaply since during this time the market value of the livestock in the district was very low. As a result, he would usually obtain huge profits from the sale of the livestock.

He employed his close relatives, who usually went round the district during market days and at auction centres to purchase the animals on his behalf. He also bought livestock which was confiscated from tax-defaulters usually at very low prices. For example, if a person owed a tax worth Ksh 9, a cow confiscated for the payment of the same could go for the same amount even if the true market value of the said cow was Ksh 20. He could give his men money to buy the livestock during the auction. He could not buy himself so as not to be seen as engaging in high level corruption.<sup>37</sup> This was, however, outright exploitation and as such chief Kasina made huge profits from such deals.

Chief Kasina also had an interest in the honey industry. He traded in honey in large quantities. He bought the honey from the people locally, which he would in turn sell to the Indian traders at Kitui. Honey gathering was one of the main economic occupations of the Kitui Kamba. As Muthiani points out, in the tropical jungle-like grassland which covered most of the Kambaland, a lot of bees were to be found some of which made honey anywhere, in holes on the ground, hollow tree trunks or in man-made beehives.<sup>38</sup> The hives were large trunks of certain trees that could not crack easily in the heat of the sun. As such the Kamba people produced honey in large quantities.

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O.J., Joseph wa Thiaka on 18/2/98 at Thokoa.  
Muthiani, J., op.cit., 63-64.

Besides buying the honey from the people, chief Kasina also personally produced honey from the many beehives which he possessed. He employed some people to make the beehive for him, as well as forcing men to deliver ready-made beehives to him as a way of buying freedom whenever they were caught with certain offences. This is one aspect of chief Kasina's ethics which portray him as being selfish and unjust when dealing with his people. It can therefore be deduced that chief Kasina made a good share of fortune out of the sale of the honey.

Another area of business which chief Kasina ventured into was the transportation sector. He was a pioneer in public transport in the northern parts of Kitui District. At around 1946, immediately after the Second World War, he became the proud owner of a commuter bus and a lorry nicknamed Mwomboko which were plying the route between Thika-Kitui-Tseikuru. The bus was principally used for public transport while the lorry was used both for public transport as well as for commercial purposes.<sup>39</sup> Chief Kasina was indeed the first person in Migwani Division to engage in the public transport sector.

Another area of business operation where chief Kasina dominated was in the running of retail shops. He had established a chain of retail shops all over Migwani Division. He usually opened retail shops for his sons and relatives virtually in every trading centre in Migwani Division. There was hardly any trading centre in the whole of Migwani Division where a retail shop belonging to Senior Chief Kasina could not be found. He sold almost everything in the retail shops including food stuff, clothing, household wares and other items.

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39. Daniel Katuku on 20/2/98 at Thokoa and Joseph M. Kasina.

It was in Migwani and Mwingi trading centres where chief Kasina had acquired many plots. As the area chief and councillor, he was directly responsible for determining who should be allocated a plot and who should not. And this was an area where chiefs applied high level nepotism. They would allocate many plots of land to their kin as they wished. For example, immediately after the Second World War, many of the returning soldiers were allocated plots and business premises at Mwingi. After the attack on chief Kasina in 1953, he was convinced that his attackers were members of the K.A.U. and Mau Mau. Since most of the ex-soldiers were suspected to be K.A.U. members (and indeed most of them possessed K.A.U. membership tickets), chief Kasina confiscated the plots which he had allocated to the ex-soldiers at Mwingi and is said to have distributed them among his relatives.<sup>40</sup> It can therefore be concluded that chief Kasina sometimes used his position in government to acquire plots for himself as well as for his relatives. Besides the long chain of retail shops which he owned, Kasina also operated a wholesale shop at Migwani market.

#### 2.4 ACQUISITION OF LAND

Chief Kasina inherited some land from his father. Being a *muthiani* (leader of raiding and hunting parties), Ndoo wa Ndundu was a relatively rich man. He owned a large piece of land as well as herds of cattle. According to Kamba traditions, family property belonged to the family as a whole under the direct responsibility of the male head. In theory, property of the head of the family belonged to all the members of that family. However, in practice, family property belonged to the sons as rightful heirs. That was the rule of thumb concerning Kamba property ownership.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> O.I. Daniel Katuku and Joseph wa Thiaka.

<sup>41</sup> Muthiani, J., op.cit., 74.

The easiest way of acquiring land and property was by inheritance. When the head of the family felt that death was approaching, he called his sons and described his wealth and debts (if any) to them. Then he divided it among them, giving the eldest son the largest share because he would take over the responsibility of the family when the father died. This meant that if anything had to be financed for security of the whole family, he would do it usually without the contributions of his brothers.

It can therefore be said that in Kamba traditional society, land was usually acquired through inheritance. It was the obligation of the father to ensure that he subdivided his land according to the number of sons he had. Every son had to get a piece of land as inheritance from his father. Land was considered to be an important component of the Kamba life. Being traditionally agriculturalists, the Kamba people valued land very much. To be landless was considered to be the most unfortunate thing to befall a man. It is within this context that even *mboswa* (foreigners) had a right to own land. Initially the owner of the land would give it to *mboswa* to cultivate for certain seasons during which he would acquire enough food stuff which he would give the owner of the land in exchange for the piece of land in question. Then the piece of land would become his own property. Through such arrangements, foreigners were allowed to acquire land among the Kamba people.

Apart from the land which he had inherited from his father, chief Kasina gradually increased his land holdings immediately after he became a chief by buying cheaply from those of his neighbours who were willing to sell to him for one reason or another. He usually bought land from those people who could not raise their tax money. Since tax payment was a compulsory exercise, those people who could not raise money

to pay tax and who did not have any other property which they could sell besides land found it necessary to dispose of some of their land so as to pay tax. It was such people whom Kasina targeted. He would buy the land cheaply since the owners were in a desperate situation. He also purchased land from those who had urgent and pressing money problems. Likewise he also bought land belonging to people who for one reason or another emigrated from the area to other areas outside Migwani location.<sup>42</sup>

Besides buying land, chief Kasina also obtained some pieces of land in the form of gifts from among his people. In Kamba traditional society, traditional gift-giving was an accepted practice and sometimes it was a form of reciprocity between the powerful and supplicants. Some people could offer land to the chief in exchange or even in appreciation of a favour done to them by the former. The favour could be in the form of exemption from tax payment, exemption from communal work or even a passage of judgment in favour of the concerned party in case of a dispute. As Tignor notes, local inhabitants were prone to the practice of continually plying the chiefs with gifts.<sup>43</sup> Colonial officials, however, looked at such practices as a way of enhancing bribery and corruption. It can, however, be argued here that sometimes what the colonial officials called corruption was mainly the result of the misapplication of European norms of good government to quite dissimilar societies.

At the same time, chief Kasina obtained land which was not claimed by anybody. There were specific places which were considered by the people not to be suitable for human settlement owing to traditional beliefs. Places such as Thitani and Thaana Nzau

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O.I., Mr. Mbila Kasina and Mrs. Prescilla Mbila Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mbondoni.

Tignor, L.R., "Colonial Chiefs in Chiefless Societies" in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 9, No 3, October 1971, 351.

were traditionally believed to be unsuitable for human settlement. Even the names suggested the same. For example 'thita' is a Kikamba word for rinderpest, a common disease among cattle. Thitani was an area where this disease was believed to exist. There was a common belief among the local people that if anyone claimed land in Thitani, all his cattle would die because of the disease hence no one would claim land in such a place. Likewise, 'thaana' or 'thaano' is a Kikamba word for a dry season. Hence, Thaana Nzau was an area which remained dry most of the time. Nobody would have wanted to live in an area which was dry most of the time.<sup>44</sup>

However, with the coming of the Europeans and the establishment of colonial rule, the Kamba traditional way of life also began to evolve gradually. The teachings of the missionaries usually conflicted with Kamba traditional beliefs and practices. Hence, early converts to the Christian faith such as chief Kasina started to view things differently from their grandfathers. For example, the belief that Thitani was an area infected with rinderpest became irrelevant to the new converts. Thus it is no wonder that chief Kasina obtained land in those areas which were initially designated as unsuitable for human settlement. Afterwards people began to acquire land in such places.

There were also times when chief Kasina forcibly took away other people's land without their consent and without compensating them. A case in point was the fertile Itoloni valley. When he bought land around Itoloni, it did not take long for him to realise the agricultural potential which Itoloni valley offered. The area was exceptionally productive for crops such as sugar cane, potatoes, tomatoes, yams and cassava. Using his position in the government, he claimed the whole land to be his, disregarding the initial

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<sup>44</sup> O.I., Mrs. Nzila Kasina.



owners of the land. One of the victims was Munyambu wa Kivite who swore to have revenge one day. True to his words, he carried out the revenge when he nearly killed the chief after he attacked him in 1953. Though he had been hired by the Mau Mau militants and chief Kasina's enemies, the underlying objective behind the attack was revenge for his lost land.<sup>45</sup>

Chief Kasina acquired large tracts of land all over his Migwani location at places such as Thitani, Thaana Nzau, Kavaini, Mwingi, Itoloni, Nzeluni and Mbondoni. There were several factors which motivated and compelled him to acquire land. In the first place, land acquisition elevated him socially and economically and placed him at the same level with other leaders in the district.<sup>46</sup> Land ownership was considered to be an expression of the social status of an individual, hence those who possessed large tracts of land were considered to be very rich and to be men of high social standing in society. It can therefore be argued that Kasina acquired land so as to among other things enable him to maintain his social and economic position in society.

Secondly, chief Kasina believed that land acquisition was the best form of investment.<sup>47</sup> considering the fact that he had a very large family, he must have reasoned that he had to acquire more land so that he could be in a position to give each and every son his own share of inheritance in accordance with Kamba traditions and practices. This argument can also be supported by the fact that whenever chief Kasina acquired new land at a particular place, he also build a home for one of his wives on that piece of land. The

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<sup>45</sup> O.I., Mr. Alex N. Mwosya on 5/3/98 at Migwani.

<sup>46</sup> O.I., Mr. Mbila Kasina, and Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>47</sup> O.I., Mr. Mbila Kasina.

motive behind this arrangement was so that the sons of that wife could claim inheritance of that particular piece of land.

The fact that chief Kasina owned large tracts of land enabled him to donate some of the land for construction of schools and setting up of other development projects. For example, he donated the piece of land on which both Migwani primary school and Migwani secondary school are built. He also donated about five acres of land near Mwingi town for the construction of a church and a primary school which was named after him.

Though chief Kasina owned a large amount of land, it should be emphasized that not all his land holdings had been acquired through orthodox means. One colonial official in the district had an occasion to report that chief Kasina's wealth and land of course had not been all acquired by entirely orthodox means.<sup>48</sup> Another report stated that through out his career as a chief, he had been engaged in countless shady deals over land.<sup>49</sup> These reports point to the fact that chief Kasina did not acquire all his land holdings by entirely orthodox means. There were some instances when he irregularly took by force land belonging to other people, such as the land at Itoloni Kanyekini and Mwingi.

#### 7.2.5 DEVELOPMENT ON KASINA'S LAND

Chief Kasina was a great farmer, farming nearly six hundred acres of land and practicing modern agricultural methods. He had big and numerous *shambas* located at different places. Each wife had her own *shamba*. Therefore Kasina had large *shambas*

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<sup>48</sup> KNA-DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division 1956.

<sup>49</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division, 1960.

located at Itoloni, Kavaini, Thitani, Kanyekini, Thaana Nzau and Mwingi.<sup>50</sup> There are two factors which explain the reason behind his success in agriculture. The first one was eagerness and willingness to adopt modern farming methods such as the use of fertilizers, manure and soil conservation measures in order to prevent the loss of soil fertility. Secondly, he received valuable advice from agricultural officers who also used his farms for various demonstrations.

He applied modern farming techniques such as the application of fertilizers and manure so as to improve the quality of his crops. His efforts in the use of manure were acknowledged by the D.C. in 1943. He had the following comment to make:

...mention should however be made that chief Kasina has composted with compost manure from his own pits an excellent *shamba* in front of his farm.<sup>51</sup>

And besides the use of compost manure, he also applied farm yard manure. As a result, when the rains were enough, he usually harvested huge yields.

He grew surplus food crops such as maize, beans, millet, sorghum and peas. These were the basic food crops among the Kitui Kamba. Besides the food crops, Kasina also planted some cash crops. These included sisal and cotton. The two cash crops have been known to do very well in Kitui. Chief Kasina also tried to plant both coffee and wheat as cash crops. However, they failed to do well due to climatic conditions.

Chief Kasina produced huge yields of food crops owing to the fact that he applied advanced farming methods. Some of the harvested yields were sold while the rest was stored for future use and in case of famines. Commenting on chief Kasina's efforts in

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<sup>50</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina.

<sup>51</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/5, Kitui District Annual Report, 1943.

farming, the D.C., Mr. W.F.P. Kelly, in 1950, had the following to say in his Annual

Report:

...the April rains being the third failure in succession, very little maize was planted in the November rains though these were counted as the most reliable season. The welcome return of bulrush millet provided what little harvest there was, pulses did fairly well in April....Thus after four bad seasons there was little food left in the district though some prudent farmers such as chief Kasina had large stores of millet from the November 1948 season.<sup>52</sup>

Besides cultivating food crops, chief Kasina also practiced pastoralism. He kept large herds of cattle, sheep and goats. He employed a good number of farm-hands to assist in the management of his holdings. Some herded the cattle and large flocks of sheep and goats. Since he owned a large piece of land, he could manage to keep as many cattle, sheep and goats as he wished because grazing land was available.

By 1947, he had expressed the idea of starting a dairy farm in Migwani though he was disappointed by the fact that the cattle of Migwani were small and that through lack of grass, they could only produce milk for one month at a stretch.<sup>53</sup> This nonetheless did not prevent him from keeping cattle for milk production. He had wanted to keep grade cattle in his farm like the many which he had seen in European farms in the central parts of the country. After consultation with the District Veterinary Officer, it was decided that grade cattle could not withstand the climate of Kitui District thus he had to drop the idea of ever owning grade cattle.

Needless to say, he selected the type of cows which he kept for milk production. He selected the best breeds available locally and those which could yield much more milk. As a result he produced a lot of milk which was used for domestic consumption

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<sup>52</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/1/7, Kitui District Annual Report, 1950, 13.

<sup>53</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/3/6, Safari Report: 25/5/47 to 30/5/47 by F.R. Wilson, District Officer Kitui.

while the surplus was sold. He had acquired a milking machine from Kabete Veterinary Centre so as to make the work of milking much more easier.<sup>54</sup>

Chief Kasina was the first person in Migwani to construct cattle dips with the help of the veterinary officer. These were intended to prevent the animals from various diseases caused by ticks. Afterwards he supervised the construction of cattle dips all over Migwani location. He also arranged for routine inoculations of his location's cattle against the dreaded rinderpest disease.

He kept livestock for various purposes. Most important was the provision of milk which could be used either fresh or sour. Normally sour milk was not used before it was churned. The animals also provided meat as a source of food. Kasina also used the livestock for the payment of bride-price for his wives and also for the wives of his sons.<sup>55</sup> The fact that Kasina was in a position to pay for the bride-price of his eight wives plus those of his sons' wives is a clear indication that he kept large herds of cattle. They were so many such that some had to be taken to designated places known as *syengo*, far away from home where they grazed. Only herders stayed there in the *syengo* looking after the cattle in semi-permanent built structures. Food and other necessities had to be taken for them on weekly basis.

In conclusion, it can be said that there was not much difference between chief Kasina's official and informal life. His character and behaviour when dealing with his family members was more or less the same as when he was dealing with his subordinate staff or even the people of Migwani location while on official duty. For example, he could not hesitate to use force while enforcing his authority both to his wives and

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O.I., Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

O.I., Mr. Joseph M. Kasina.

children. At the same time he used force especially when implementing communal projects such as construction of dams, roads and schools as well as when dealing with tax defaulters.

### 7.3.0 LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT

#### 7.3.1 RETIREMENT

Towards the close of the 1950's, Kasina's effectiveness as a chief started to decrease due to old age. He rarely visited many parts of his location. In 1959, the D.O., Mr. C.G. Hemwood, in his Handing Over Report, stated, "Old age has begun to tell on chief Kasina and that parts of his location very rarely, if ever receive a visit even after his acquisition of a Land Rover."<sup>56</sup> But even after receiving such a comment, Kasina felt that the time for retirement had not yet come and so he continued with his duties as a colonial chief.

By 1962, the colonial officials in Kitui had started to put more pressure on chief Kasina to retire. However, he was still adamant. In his Handing Over Report, the D.O. for Northern Division in 1962, Mr. P.A. Watcher, noted that he had had tentative discussions with the chief about his retirement. He was, however, quick to add that the chief had remained adamant and had flatly put it to him that he liked to remain in office until he had once again re-established his authority in the location.<sup>57</sup>

During this period, agitation for independence was on the increase, and so there were many activities mostly considered to be anti-government taking place in Migwani

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<sup>56</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division by C.G. Hemwood, D.O., 1959.

<sup>57</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division by P.A. Watcher, D.O., 1962.

education, especially among the youth. Chief Kasina found it rather difficult to adopt and adjust himself to the changing conditions, although he still commanded considerable respect from many of his parishioners, and when the occasion demanded, his powers of oratory in swaying a crowd were as effective as ever.<sup>58</sup> This was maybe one reason as to why the colonial officials were putting pressure on him to retire so that he could pave the way for "young blood", someone who could understand and comprehend the demands of the changing situation.

In fact, in 1962 the D.O., Mr. P.A. Watcher, was emphatic when he noted that he had thought for sometime that the time had come for chief Kasina to retire and that this would be the time to split the large and unwieldy location of Migwani into two, namely: Mwingi and Migwani locations.<sup>59</sup> This was an admission that chief Kasina controlled a very large and unwieldy location and it seemed to them that nobody else could effectively control this large location as Kasina had done, hence the need to split it into two.

It is important to note that the colonial officials in Kitui had to persuade chief Kasina to retire, even when they considered his administrative worth to be on the decline. This was an expression that they held him in high esteem. This was not always the case with the other colonial chiefs in the district. Many of those who attained what was considered to be the retirement age were forcefully retired. They received letters informing them that they had been retired even without their knowledge. Others were disposed after a short period of appointment depending on their performance.

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KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division by P.A. Watcher, D.O., 52.

KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division by P.A. Watcher, D.O., 52.

However, chief Kasina's case was unique. He was not retired even after the colonial officials noted that his effectiveness as a chief was decreasing. It is also interesting to note that even after the D.O.'s strong Report in 1962 to the effect that the time had come for Kasina to retire, he nonetheless did not heed the call until 1963 when he felt that the appropriate time to retire had come. What can be deduced from this scenario is that chief Kasina's service to the colonial government had been invaluable and had been appreciated by all the colonial officials in Kitui District. This was why they found it rather difficult to retire him by force.

It was not until in February 1963 that Senior Chief Kasina wa Ndoo informed elders at Migwani and Mwingi of his intention to retire by June that year.<sup>60</sup> And in a letter he wrote to the D.C., he confirmed that he wished to voluntarily retire from the post of chief. True to his promise, chief Kasina formally retired in June 1963, only six months before Kenya attained her independence in December 1963.<sup>61</sup> This was after a long and successful career in the colonial administration. He had served the colonial government for thirty eight years with loyalty and dedication. He actually made history for being the longest serving colonial chief in Kitui District. He retired at the age of seventy four. True to the words of the D.O. in his Handing Over Report to the effect that after the retirement of senior chief Kasina the large location was to be split into Mwingi and Migwani locations in 1966. Before this, Benjamin Mulyungi had been appointed to replace ex-chief Kasina as the chief of Migwani location.

Senior Chief Solomon Kasina wa Ndoo had had a very successful career in the colonial administration. He had proved that illiteracy was no hindrance to good

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KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Monthly Report, February 1963, Northern Division of Kitui District.  
O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina and Mr. Joseph M. Kasina interviewed on 25/2/98 at Mwingi.



administration. Having not acquired any formal education, he nonetheless performed even better than those who had acquired modern education such as chief Wilson of the neighbouring Mutonguni location. Perhaps that lion which chief Kasina had killed when he was a young man had brought him good luck. When he killed the lion with an arrow in his youth, the lion coughed up a small piece of gut as it died, a thing which all lions were said to do. His brother who was with him seized the gut and told him that it would bring him great luck and prosperity if he kept it as a talisman.<sup>62</sup>

And perhaps that lion really brought him good luck for despite his misadventure, he certainly survived many trying moments during his career in the army and with the colonial government. He certainly survived two world wars which killed many soldiers in Kenya and he also survived the loss of his hands after he was attacked by the Mau Mau militants.

### 7.3.2 KASINA THE FARMER AND BUSINESSMAN

After formally retiring from the colonial administration, ex-senior chief Kasina concentrated on farming and the management of the chain of businesses which he had established while he was still chief. He had acquired large tracts of land, some of which had been obtained through irregular and shady deals. He was the proud owner of numerous pieces of *shambas* located at different parts within Migwani location.

All together, ex-chief Kasina cultivated nearly six hundred acres of land, practicing modern farming agricultural methods.<sup>63</sup> He was a great believer in the use of manure and fertilizer as well as crop rotation. He also practiced mechanical farming

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<sup>62</sup> Carson J.B., op.cit., 46.

<sup>63</sup> O.I., Mr. Joshua Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mwingi; Joseph M. Kasina, and Esther K. Kasina.

whereby he used his two tractors to cultivate his farms. One of his sons who had been taught farming methods at the then Jeane's school took up the position of his farm manager.<sup>64</sup>

Chief Kasina was a great farmer not comparable to anybody else in the district. He obtained huge harvests of food crops such as maize and beans. This was mostly because he practiced highly mechanized farming. The huge yields of food harvested were sold, and he would then invest the money obtained from the sales in buying plots and building business premises at different trading centres in the district. In fact, at Mwingi town, there are numerous business premises which the late Senior Chief constructed for his sons and other dependents.

Other than farming, ex-chief Kasina, after his retirement also concerned himself with the management of the many business premises which he had established over time. He had established all sorts of businesses ranging from retail shops to trade in livestock when he was still in the colonial administration. In fact in 1960, it was reported by one colonial official that Senior Chief Kasina, together with his family, was engaged in trade and business of all sorts. The report went further to reveal that by that time chief Kasina was still a little inclined to usurp his authority in trade matters.<sup>65</sup> It can therefore be concluded that upon his retirement from the colonial administration, ex-senior chief Kasina primarily occupied himself with the task of managing his farms and businesses which were run by his sons. He was driven around by one of his sons who had earlier given up his work in the police to come and drive him about in his Land Rover. This was

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<sup>64</sup> O.I., Mr. Joshua Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mwingi; Joseph M. Kasina, and Esther K. Kasina.

<sup>65</sup> KNA, DC/KTI/1/2/3, Kitui District Handing Over Report, Northern Division by Mr. A.L.K Liddle, D.O., 1960.

after the chief had been attacked and his hands cut off thus making it impossible for him to drive.

Besides the above, chief Kasina was involved in the various development projects which were taking place in his area intended to improve the living conditions of the people. Most notable was his involvement in the construction of schools such as Migwani primary school, Migwani secondary school, and Kasina primary school at a later date. Besides these, he also helped to built a church for his people near Mwingi town.

### 7.3.3 INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT MATTERS: CONSTRUCTION OF MWINGI TOWN

#### A.I.C

Long after retiring from the colonial administration, ex-senior chief Kasina continued to be involved in development matters in his area. It was not only when he was a chief that he felt the obligation to serve his people, but also after becoming an ex-chief, he still felt the need to continue helping his people in the best way possible. He therefore devoted much of his energy and resources to helping the people of Migwani in uplifting their living conditions.

Ex-chief Kasina was willing to be involved in the development of his area. It was as a result of this that he donated land to be used for the construction of schools. He donated land for the construction of Migwani primary school (not Migwani D.E.B. primary) and also for the construction of Migwani secondary school. The land on which these two schools are built was donated by chief Kasina for the sole purpose of improving education in Migwani location.<sup>6b</sup> Though himself not literate for he was unfortunate not to have had any formal education, he nonetheless believed that his people could only

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<sup>6b</sup> O.I., Joseph M. Kasina.

prosper if more and more people received quality education. This was the reason why he spent a lot of time and resources in order to ensure that schools were constructed in every sub-location in Migwani.

Apart from the above, chief Kasina also donated land freely around Mwingi town for the construction of a church and a primary school in 1972. He also devoted much of his energy and resources to ensuring that both the school and the church were completed so that they could benefit the local community. It can therefore be concluded that chief Kasina spent much of his time after retiring from the colonial administration in helping to initiate development projects in his area especially in the education sector. He helped in the construction of many schools such as Kasina primary, Migwani secondary school, Itoloni primary and Thitani primary in both Migwani and Mwingi locations. This he did through donation of land on which the schools were built and even through financial contributions towards meeting the construction cost.

One of the development projects which ex-chief Kasina initiated was the construction of a church for the Africa Inland Church situated near Mwingi town. To start with, he donated about five acres of land for the purpose of the construction of the church and a school. In addition, he also put a lot of his resources in order to ensure that the two projects were completed.<sup>67</sup> Besides the financial contributions which he made towards meeting the cost of purchasing building materials, he also used his tractors to fetch sand and stones and also for transporting building material such as timber and corrugated iron sheets.

When chief Kasina built a home for his last wife, Esther Kola near Mwingi town (and in fact he spend most of his last days after retirement there), they faced a problem in

that there was no A.I.M. church nearby. The only A.I.M. church was at Ithumbi several kilometers northwards while the other A.I.M. church was at Kyome and Mutonguni also far away from Mwingi. Thus chief Kasina and his people faced a problem of not having a church where they could worship.

As a result Kasina conceived of a plan to built a church for his people in the neighbourhood of Mwingi town. He went to Mutonguni where the regional headquarters of A.I.M. was and talked to the church elders there together with the church ministers, and informed them of his plans to build a church for his people. He also informed them that he was willing to donate a piece of land for that purpose. This must have pleased the church elders very much for acquisition of land for church construction was one of the hindrance towards the expansion of the church.<sup>68</sup>

In 1972, a pastor was posted to Mwingi from Mutonguni to be in charge of the church which Kasina was starting. They then started worshipping under a big tree since the church had not been constructed. And as a follow-up to his promise to construct the church, Kasina paid somebody to construct a semi-permanent structure made of wood and mud. He then bought corrugated iron sheets for roofing and some chairs which he put inside the newly build church. It can therefore be seen that chief Kasina did most of the work towards the construction of the church. If at all the other church members did make any contributions, it was minimal.

Unfortunately, thieves came by night and took away the iron sheets leaving the church without a roof. This action did not deter ex-chief Kasina from buying other iron sheets. He bought new iron sheets and contracted one Yoana Kinyungu to re-roof the

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<sup>67</sup> O.I., Mrs Prescilla Mbila on 9/3/98 at Mbondoni and Nyaa Nguli on 7/2/98 at Mbondoni market.

<sup>68</sup> O.I., Mrs. Prescilla Mbila and Mrs. Kisio M. Kongo on 12/3/98 at Thokoa.

church. After only three months, thieves once more came and stole the iron sheets. It should be remembered that by this time iron sheets were in high demand for the construction of the upcoming Mwingi town. Thus thieves stole the iron sheets and sold them to those who were constructing houses at Mwingi township.

The second theft must have given Kasina a new perception for he reasoned that thieves were taking advantage of the semi-permanent structure to easily pull down the roof and remove the iron sheets. This brought about the necessity of constructing a permanent structure. With such an idea in mind, Kasina engaged workers to carry sand and stones. He then bought cement and contracted a brick maker to make concrete bricks for the construction purpose and the construction of the church commenced.

By the time the walls were completed in the early 80's, old age had completely caught up with Kasina to the extent that he could not co-ordinate the construction of the church any more. It was from this point that the other church members joined hands and completed the construction of the church.<sup>69</sup> All the same, much of the work had been done by Solomon Kasina and he would have wished to construct the church up to its completion, however old age denied him that chance. But before his death he bought three well decorated chairs for the pastor and church elders. These chairs are still being used by the church upto today.<sup>70</sup> Solomon Kasina gave the community the best a human being can offer his fellow human beings - a place for spiritual satisfaction.

#### 7.3.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF KASINA PRIMARY SCHOOL

The land which Kasina had donated at Mwingi was large enough to allow for the construction of a church and a school. He had also expressed a desire to have a school

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<sup>69</sup> O.I., Mr. Mbila Kasina on 9/3/98 at Mbondoni and Mrs. Prescilla Mbila.

<sup>70</sup> The author visited the church and saw the three chairs which are still in use.

built on that piece of land. His plans to construct a school did not materialise, however, for by the time preparations for the construction of the primary school were complete, he was already advanced in years and unable to participate in the construction of the school.

Kasina Primary School was started as a nursery school in 1985.<sup>71</sup> The nursery school children used to be taught inside the church since no classrooms for the school had been built. The first classroom was constructed in 1988 just a year before the death of the ex-senior chief. It was also in this year that the first group of standard one pupils were admitted. Ex-chief Solomon Kasina Ndo passed away the following year when the school was only two years old.

Chief Kasina had earlier donated land for other public utility and had also done other great things to help his people uplift their living standards. But till his death there had been nothing to keep his name in memory after his death. Nothing had been set up or named after him despite the fact that he had done so much for the people.

It was with such ideas in mind that the parents of the school decided to name it after this great son of the Wakamba as an honour to the departed ex-senior chief.<sup>72</sup> Another reason why the parents decided to name the school after Kasina was as a sign of appreciation for his efforts to ensure that his people received quality education. The school was named after the ex-chief in order to keep the memory of him always in the mind of the Wakamba of Kitui District.<sup>73</sup>

Since its construction in 1988 up to this time, the headmistress of the school has been none other than Mrs. Mary Joshua Kasina, a daughter-in-law of the ex-Senior Chief.

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<sup>71</sup> O.I., Mrs. Mary Joshua Kasina, on 9/3/98 at Mwingi.

<sup>72</sup> O.I., Mrs. Mary Joshua Kasina, on 9/3/98 at Mwingi.

<sup>73</sup> O.I., Nyaa wa Nguli, Esther Kola Kasina and Prescilla Mbila.

This might be a mere coincidence but most likely the retaining of a member of the Kasina family as the head of the school might be intended to keep the school in the proper line of its origin. Whatever the case might be, the school is a valuable asset to the surrounding community. It serves the educational needs of the children of the people living nearby plus the workers who stay at the ever-expanding Mwingi town. The school has been doing very well in the national examinations since its first sitting in 1995. For the past three years it has always been among the best ten schools in the district. The pupils maintain high standards of discipline. In fact the school is considered to be among the best schools within the township.<sup>74</sup> The fact that the only thing which reminds the Kitui people of this great son of theirs is this school which is named after him leaves a lot to be desired. It is a clear indication that Senior Chief Kasina was more than anything else concerned with the improvement of education in his area.

### 7.3.5 DEATH AND FUNERAL

Having accomplished the many things which he had done in his lifetime, the time came for ex-chief Kasina to join his ancestors in the other world. Despite of old age, his health had completely deteriorated by 1988 after he had fallen ill the previous year. He kept complaining of backache and was also diagnosed to suffer from malaria. He spent the most part of 1988 in hospital.<sup>75</sup> It was on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1989 that the ex-Senior Chief succumbed to the mighty powers of death. This was after having lived for a record one hundred years. In fact by the time of his death, old age had completely caught up with him to the extent that he could not even recognise his own wives and children.<sup>76</sup> It is also

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<sup>74</sup> O.I., Mrs. Mary Joshua Kasina.

<sup>75</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina and Joseph M. Kasina.

<sup>76</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther Kola Kasina and Joseph M. Kasina.



important to note that chief Kasina met a natural death having survived two previous attempts on his life especially when he was working for the colonial government.

In recognition of the Kamba traditional customs, ex-Senior Chief Kasina was buried at the home of his first wife, Mary Kamola, at Itoloni area near Migwani town. He could not have been buried at the homes of the other wives for this would have contravened the established Kamba traditions which recognises the right of the first wife to bury her husband when he passes away while she is still alive.

A big funeral service was organised for the Kamba people to pay their last respects to their departed leader. Many people estimated to be several thousands were in attendance at the burial ceremony which took place at his home in Itoloni. People from all walks of life from the district and even beyond attended. Top government officials in the district also attended led by the District Officer for Mwingi Division.<sup>77</sup> The large number of people who attended the burial ceremony was a true reflection of the affection of the people for the chief. He had been a respected leader of his people and so many people felt obliged to pay their last respects to their fallen hero.

True to the instructions which he had given his sons when he was alive the coffin was decoratively wrapped with the Union Jack which General Erskine had presented to him back in 1954. All this done ex-Senior Chief Solomon Kasina wa Ndoo was laid to rest with his ancestors. Five years later, in 1994, his first wife also passed away and she was buried besides her husband.

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<sup>77</sup> O.I., Mr. Mbila Kasina.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

The image and reputation of many of Kenya's colonial chiefs has not been good and that of Chief Kasina is no exception. During the colonial period, chiefs were often dismissed by their own people as being collaborators and stooges of the white man. To many people, chiefs were as oppressive as their colonial masters. They were often accused of promoting their own interests and those of the Europeans at the expense of their own people.

The reputation of Senior Chief Kasina suffered most when he was discharging his chiefly duties. Some people believe that he was an autocrat and a tyrant who handled his people with an iron-fist hand. Others believe that he spent all his life serving the interests of the Europeans. Others still claim that he was concerned with amassing wealth and material gain for himself at the expense of his people. In other words, he has been accused of having compromised the interests and well-being of his own people for his personal material gain.

Chief Kasina was one of the few exceptional colonial chiefs who were endowed with administrative and leadership skills. He was an extremely ideal and a prototype colonial chief who was committed to his duties as a colonial chief. He performed his duties so well that the colonial government had no cause to regret for having appointed him a chief in the first place. He was one of the staunchest supporters of the colonial government in Kitui District. Thus the colonial government could not have made a better choice than him (at the time).

He never spared himself in his efforts to serve the colonial government. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he was conversant with the duties which he had to perform and so he did not wait to be reminded on what to do by his superiors. In many instances, he applied his own initiative and knowledge when performing his duties. As a result, his location was always far ahead of others in all aspects. As already discussed, many schools, bore holes, earth dams and roads were constructed in Migwani location through his efforts.

There are several factors which explain his extraordinary performance. In the first place, he acted immediately he was issued with an order. He could never rest until an order was fully and satisfactorily implemented. He never argued with his bosses over the validity and suitability of a directive. Even if he had anything to complain about a directive issued by his superiors, this would come later after having already implemented the said directive. In any case, his complains were rare.

Secondly, chief Kasina was endowed with leadership qualities which most chiefs during his time lacked. His greatest and indispensable assets were his powers of eloquence, persuasion and diplomacy. He could persuade his people to obey what they considered to be unpopular decisions made by the colonial officials. He had an accomplished *baraza* technique and was very useful for putting points across and explaining them to his people. He was an outstanding orator. His oratorical skills were comparable to none in the district. He often used his powers of oratory in swaying a crowd. As such he commanded a considerable respect from many of his parishioners. He was truly a born leader.

His other secret to success in his administrative work was his spirit of initiative. Not only was he conversant with his duties which he performed as a colonial chief, but he never waited to be prodded unlike most of his colleagues who had to be constantly reminded of their duties. He was very clever, gifted, intelligent and a born leader and was explicitly committed to his duties as a chief.

Fourthly, chief Kasina must have realised from the very beginning that he owed his appointment to the D.C. and that as a government agent, he was duty-bound to obey and respect his superiors. Thus, he handled his superiors with dignity, respect and caution. He quite often avoided anything which could hurt his bosses or antagonise him. In this way, he was able to maintain a good working relationship with his masters.

It was due to his efficient control of his location that put him on the side of his masters. He had earned a good name for himself and as such he received commendable reports such as being an outstandingly efficient and a thoroughly reliable and dependable man with an astute mind whose illiteracy seemed to be little handicap to him.

The fact that chief Kasina was always totally committed to his duties as a chief, and the fact that he discharged those duties with a lot of zeal, prompted many people to conclude that he was concerned with the promotion and protection of the interests of the Europeans at the expense of his people. It was during the process of discharging his chiefly duties that his reputation and popularity suffered the greatest blow. The duties which he had to perform as a colonial chief were unpopular, and this made him unpopular too. It was when carrying out these 'unpopular' duties that he quite often collided with those who failed to observe the law. He had to convince his masters that he merited being appointed a chief and this he could only do by making sure that he strictly carried out his

chiefly duties according to the standards set forth by his colonial masters. In other words chief Kasina acted as the cutting edge of the colonial sword and the result was that he at times collided with the people.

He was responsible for making sure that people were arrested and prosecuted before the Migwani Tribunal court for various offences such as illicit liquor brewing, excessive drinking of local brew, tax defaulting and theft among others. The colonial measures he put in place, such as provision of communal labour, compulsory terracing programmes and compulsory education, were viewed negatively by most people. The victims of such measures could not comprehend, leave alone appreciate, what he and the colonial government were doing for them. They often associated him with the unpopular and unjust colonial measures that he enforced and implemented on behalf of the government. Being the government official in direct contact with the people, he received the wrath of the people who could discern little difference between him and the colonial masters. It is therefore no wonder that many malicious rumours which portrayed him negatively were widely spread against him.

Chief Kasina did not snatch other peoples' wives or daughters as some other colonial chiefs were accustomed to do. He paid all that was sanctioned by traditions with regard to bride-price. With very few exceptions (such as the fertile land along Itoloni valley which he grabbed from owners), he never confiscated other peoples' property for his own use, even though he relied heavily on his chiefly influence to acquire much of his wealth. He paid for his land holdings from the profits he made out of his long chain of businesses as well as the profits he made from his better and advanced farming techniques.

There are several factors which account for chief Kasina's disrepute. Those people who were forced to provide labour during the construction of dams and implementation of other projects developed hatred and dislike for the chief. Most of the measures enforced and implemented by chief Kasina were supposed and designed to benefit his people. Such measures as uplifting their hygienic standards by digging pit latrines, increasing food production through increased soil conservation by digging terraces, ensuring adequate availability of water through increased dam construction were in fact intended to benefit the people. They, however, did not seem to appreciate such measures simply because they had emanated and originated from the colonial government which was considered by many to be alien and oppressive. They therefore thought him a bother for urging and compelling them to uplift their living standards. Also most of those whom he persecuted or collided with for such crimes as illicit beer brewing and tax defaulting, for one reason or another quite often would spread malicious rumours against him out of bitterness.

The brutal attack on Senior Chief Kasina by the Mau Mau militants together with his opponents in Kitui District further worsened his reputation and popularity. The episode provided his critics with a basis to portray him as a bad and unpopular chief. They portrayed him as a blatant collaborator and one who was concerned with promoting his material well-being at the expense of the economic and political rights of his people. His loyalty to the colonial government and his uncompromising stance against the activities of the Mau Mau adherents finally convinced the Mau Mau militants that they could not liberate themselves from the colonial yoke while he was alive. As a result, they sought ways and means of eliminating him, hence the attempted assassination.

The fact that the Mau Mau militants targeted chief Kasina and not any other chief in Kitui District provided his opponents with an opportunity to paint him as a bad and unpopular chief. However, as it has already been shown in this thesis, chief Kasina had risen above all the other chiefs in Kitui both in influence and administrative work. He was administratively second to none. As a result, the colonial officials in the district used him more than any other chief in their efforts to stamp out Mau Mau. Likewise, some of the subordinate chiefs could take refuge under him while enforcing colonial directives in regard to suppressing Mau Mau. This had the effect of projecting chief Kasina as the originator of such harsh and unpopular directives.

Chief Kasina tended to avoid issues and situations that could antagonize the authorities and thereby jeopardize and compromise his position. He never supported or associated himself with those organizations or bodies (such as Mau Mau) which the colonial administration considered to be anti-government. This is one reason why his critics and opponents thought that he compromised his own peoples' economic, social and political rights.

It is evident that chief Kasina did indeed try to promote and safeguard the interests of the Europeans to a certain extent. This was expected and quite procedural. As a government employee, there were official duties delegated to him by the District Commissioner which he had to perform well in order for him to maintain his position in the colonial government. The worth of the colonial chiefs was judged on the performance of their duties. Hence, for chief Kasina to keep his chieftom, he had to convince his masters that he was worthy by performing his duties well.

Likewise, as a government employee at the grass-roots, his services were supposed to be geared towards the pursuit of good government. It was, however, a government that was mostly concerned with the welfare of the Europeans in the colony at the expense of the other races. As a result, it was while he was discharging his duties that he was seen by many people to be promoting the welfare of the Europeans.

Chief Kasina quite effectively combined the roles of a chief and a councillor. As a chief, he had the responsibility of making sure that government directives were implemented without failure. On the other hand, as a councillor, he was supposed to act as the representative of his people. The fact that he was able to combine these two positions enabled him to reap the maximum possible benefits that he could for his people. Some of the measures which he put in place were intended and designed to benefit his people. For example his protracted fight against excessive drinking of local brew and dancing at odd hours was intended to encourage and compel the people to spend much of their time in constructive and productive projects which would help uplift their living standards.

His soil conservation campaign was aimed at curtailing soil erosion, thus preventing the washing away of the top-fertile soil, hence improving agricultural production. Likewise, his constant reminder to his people on the importance of applying manure and other modern farming methods was intended to help his people increase their food production. It is important to note here that the importance of the soil conservation measures that he so vigorously and enthusiastically enforced was realised and well appreciated by his critics many years later as the benefits of his campaign became obvious to everyone.



Chief Kasina's wish to have the government construct cattle dips in the district was motivated by a genuine desire to enable his people to keep healthy cattle free from tick-borne diseases. Likewise, he made sure that various taxes collected by the government were used for the welfare of the people. The money provided many facilities such as those in the fields of education and health. The roads and bridges that he helped to construct and the hygienic measures that he so rigorously enforced were clearly to the advantage of his own people.

It is therefore evident that chief Kasina used his position in the colonial government to reap the maximum benefits for his people. His stalwart collaboration with the colonial government enabled him to acquire a lot of benefits for the people of Kitui District and more specifically for the people of Migwani Division. It can therefore be concluded that chief Kasina did not wholly compromise the interests and well-being of his people at the expense of those of his masters. On the contrary, his contribution in uplifting the welfare of his people was quite unequaled.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be said that Kasina's performance as a chief was excellent. To his colonial masters, he was an obedient, hard-working, trustworthy and an efficient chief who was quite indispensable to the success of colonial rule in Kitui District. On the other hand, to his people of Migwani location in particular and Kitui District in general, he was a chief who was concerned with uplifting the living standards of the people. He fought for his peoples' social, political and economic advancement. This is evidenced by the many projects both of social, political and economic nature which he put in place using his chiefly influence. It is therefore important to point out here that the factors advocated to account for chief Kasina's disrepute don't qualify to

describe Kasina as a bad and unpopular chief. In other words his advantages as a colonial chief far much outweigh his disadvantages. The fact that chief Kasina was able to balance the interests of his colonial masters and those of his people is quite revealing. This is one area where many of the colonial chiefs not only in Kitui District but in colonial Kenya as a whole failed and hence ended up receiving the wrath of the colonial officials from above and that of the people from below. On his part, chief Kasina was able to pass this test thus becoming the most powerful and highly respected colonial chief in the whole of Kitui District. This makes chief Kasina an important personality in the study of colonial history of Kitui District.

Looking at the contributions which chief Kasina made towards assisting his people as well as his spirit of initiative while carrying out his duties, it can be concluded that he did not blindly collaborate with the colonial officials. While on the one hand he was expected to do only what pleased the colonial government (for that is why he was appointed as a chief), on the other hand he exploited all the opportunities which came across in order to assist his people both economically, socially and spiritually as well as assisting himself as an individual. This is in total contrast to those other colonial chiefs who collaborated with the colonial government blindly since they feared being accused of promoting the interests of their people at the expense of those of the colonial government. Such chiefs ended up doing nothing for the people they ruled apart from benefiting as individuals from the few benefits, which accrued from their collaboration. It can therefore be concluded that chief Kasina used the colonial government to attain certain ends while at the same time he was used by the colonial officials to achieve their administrative goals.

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<u>NAME</u>	<u>INTERVIEW DATE</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
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2. Daniel Katuku	20/2/98	Thokoa
3. Esther Kola Kasina (Mrs.)	25/2/98	Mwingi
4. Joseph M. Kasina	23/2/98	Itoloni
	25/2/98	Mwingi
5. Joseph wa Thiaka	4/2/98	Migwani
	18/2/98	Thokoa
6. Joshua wa Kasina	9/3/98	Mwingi
5. Jane Kamene Nguli	4/2/98	Migwani
8. Jonathan Kimanzi Mutambu	29/1/98	Kalitini
9. Kalunda Kasina Ndoo (Mrs.)	10/2/98	Thitani
10. Kavuvi wa Ngandi	19/2/98	Kyome
11. Kisio Maluki Kongo	12/3/98	Thokoa
12. Kasia wa Mulatya	15/3/98	Kavaini
13. Maluki wa Kongo	10/3/98	Thokoa
14. Mary Joshua Kasina (Mrs.)	9/3/98	Mwingi

15. Mbila Kasina Ndoo	9/3/98	Mbondoni
16. Misyili wa Mutwetwe	30/1/98	Musuani
17. Misira wa Nzoka	10/2/98	Kavaini
18. Munanye Munyoki (Mrs.)	15/3/98	Thitani
19. Mwende Mwangangi (Mrs.)	15/2/98	Nguutani
20. Nungu wa Mbalu	19/2/98	Kyome
21. Nyaa Nguli	5/2/98	Mbondoni
22. Nyumu wa Nguli	4/2/98	Migwani
	18/2/98	Thokoa
23. Nzila Kasina Ndoo (Mrs.)	15/3/98	Kavaini
24. Nzivuru wa Kaleli	19/2/98	Kyome
25. Nzuva wa Kyangavo	11/2/98	Kanyekini
26. Peter Nzenga Ngumbau	20/2/98	Thokoa
27. Prescilla M. Kasina (Mrs)	9/3/98	Mbondoni
28. Rinda wa Mbithuka	10/3/98	Kiomo
29. Sammy Nyumu	14/3/98	Migwani
30. Simeon Mwanzia Mwanzwii	20/2/98	Thokoa
31. Stella wa Muthama	5/2/98	Musengo
32. Stephen Nzovo Muvengei	20/2/98	Thokoa
33. Syanda wa Munga	30/1/98	Musuani
34. Tabitha Mumba Kimanzi	15/2/98	Nguutani

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