

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the educational work of the Christian missionaries in Gusii, Western Kenya, from 1909 to 1963. Before doing that however, the thesis briefly examines the nature of Gusii society in the pre-Christian period with particular emphasis on its socio-economic and educational aspects. The thesis shows that traditional African education was not only practiced but it was economic, real and about, as all worthwhile education should be, culture of the Abagusii.

The thesis further shows that it was the missionaries who inflicted a deadly blow to this education by calling the venues of circumcision rites and ebisarate, "heathenish surroundings" yet the kind of education the missionaries introduced was mainly theoretical and external to Gusii. Though by supporting missionary education the colonial government in weakening indigenous African education, it is argued that first and foremost it was the Christian missionaries who rendered the traditional Abagusii education helpless.

The thesis recognize that the modern Euro-Christian education in Gusii was introduced and, for a long time shouldered by the Christian missionaries representing the seventh day Adventists, Mill Hill, Swedish Lutheran and the Pentecostal Assemblies of God missions to name only a few. Yet it also made clear that in the thesis that most of the missionary education was evangelical. For besides religious education, reading and writing were based on extracts from the bible. Had not the Africans complained against this religious content of education and had not the colonial administration also accepted that the Africans complaints were genuine, that that kind of education would have persisted in Gusii for a long time.

The thesis reveal that early emphasis in education in Gusii was the work of the colonial government and the Africans themselves. They collected and voted money for construction of the Government African Schools, Kisii (1934), and the subsequent local Native council schools. It was really the competitive spirit and good examination performances staged by the schools that ushered modern education in Gusii into a new era of literary education. The missionary bodies were forced to improve their schools so as to be able to measure up to the standards of education staged by the government African school, Kisii, and the local Native council or district education board of the African district council schools.

It was really the new type of schools which influenced the Christian missions to improve the education offered in their schools.

The thesis also shows that it was Christian missionary education that produced the first modern elite classes in Gusii. It did not only produce clerical and administrative cadres for the colonial government, but also commercial and political elites among the Gusii. In addition mission schools produced local teachers who, though largely poorly educated, helped to spread and plant modern education in Gusii more firmly than before. The elites nevertheless helped to submerge their importance of the old type of elites, for example rainmakers, medicine men and other elders in society. The new elites formed the reference group instead of the traditional Gusii elites. Although by imposing taxes on the Africans and by making it possible for foreign goods to reach Gusii makers. The colonial administrators created a new need which needed a cash economy, it was the Christian missions which helped the Abagusii to the modern agriculture and trade very seriously. The missions especially protestant ones stress a higher degree of cleanliness among their followers if they were to conquer what they called 'paganism' and to be good examples in their society. This helped to instill some industriousness among the Abagusii which has helped to tame the Gusii environment.

The Gusii Christians had to work much harder than the non-Christians so as to meet the standards asked for by their missions. Hence the high standard of development discernible in and around former mission centres or sub-centres of stations