

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

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BY

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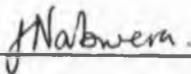
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DR. Y. A. NZIBO

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A B S T R A C T

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

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

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

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

Developments within the district centred on

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

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

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

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

ABBREVIATIONS

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

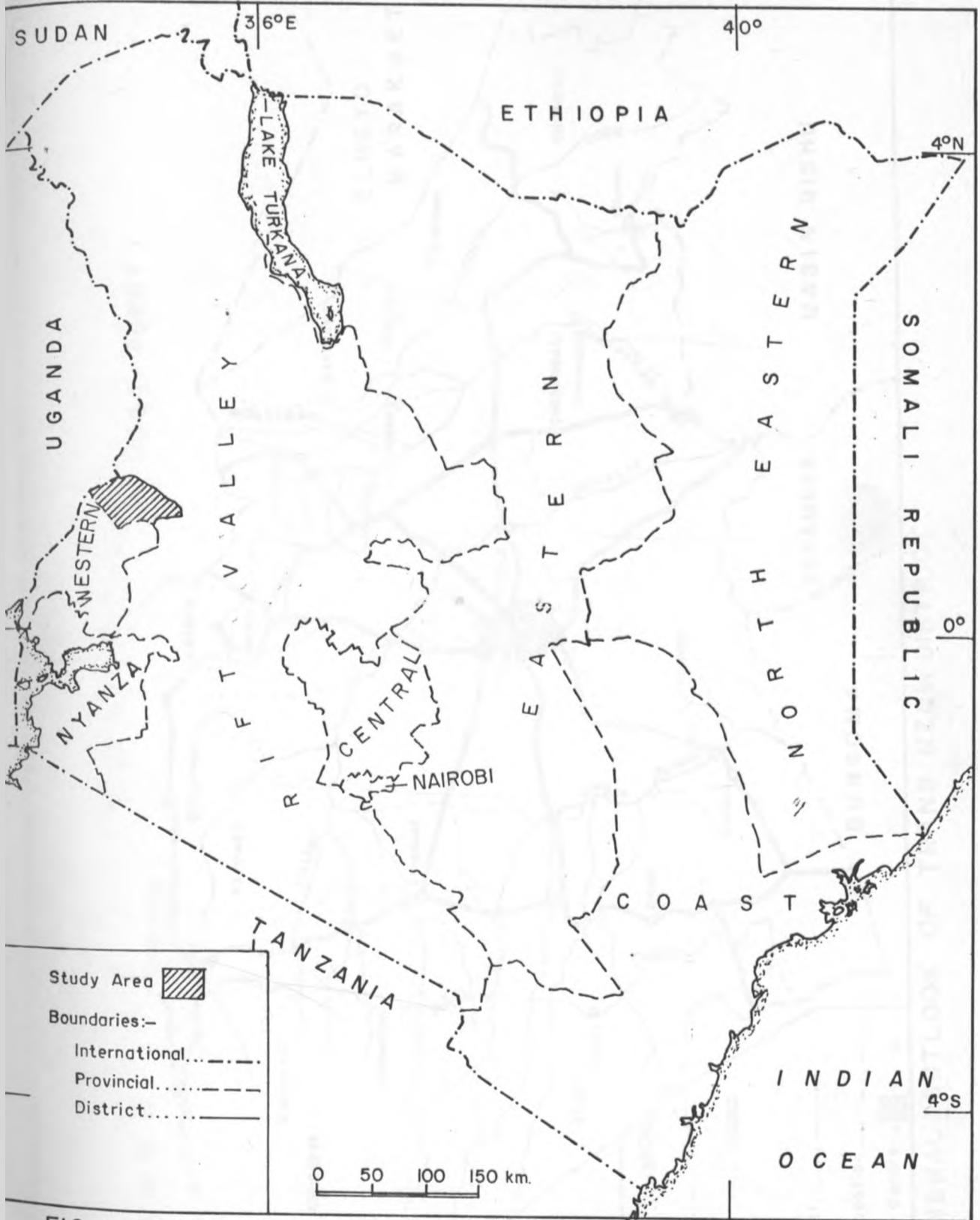


FIG. 1 : LOCATION OF TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT

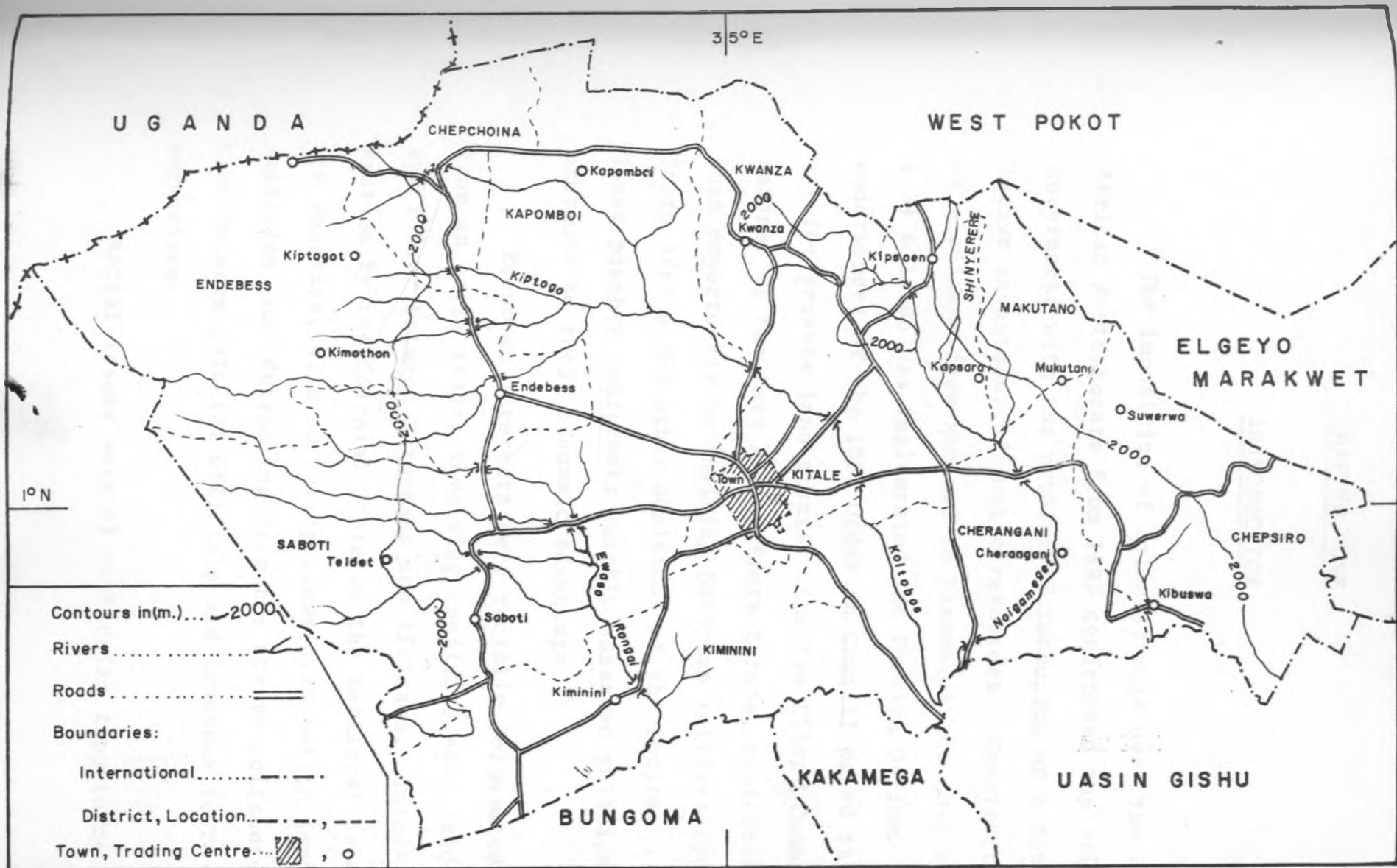


FIG. 2: GENERAL OUTLOOK OF TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

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

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

Racial issues were of particular importance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

was unified in 1945, reverting to separate status in 1949.²

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Statement of the Problem

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Literature Review

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

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

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

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

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

An influx of new settlers after 1919 opened up new areas to European farming. The colonial Government strived to accommodate White demands, which were frequently at variance with African interests. Labour policy in particular began attracting considerable publicity within British humanitarian and liberal circles. Unprecedented criticism of European excesses was published in book form by two former colonial officials in Kenya. Norman Leys Kenya⁸ and William McGregor Ross's Kenya From Within⁹ are both indictments of discriminatory social and economic policy and provide informative accounts of contemporary efforts to promote European interests by suppressing African peasants and labourers. There is no definite attack, however, on the colonial system which formed the basis for African subordination.

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

territories where they had worked and many felt compelled to publish their experiences in the form of memoirs or monographs. Frederick Lugard was among the most prolific writers on British policy in sub-Saharan Africa. In The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa¹⁰ he addressed himself to the contentious issue of reconciling European interests with those of Africans in Kenya. Suggesting that racial segregation on the land would create a prosperous enclave of European smallholders in the Highlands, Lugard overlooks the point that resident African labour was integral to the European farming economy. Charles Hobley's Kenya, From Chartered Company to Crown Colony¹¹ omits the issue of European settlement altogether. Failure by authors with extensive administrative experience in African colonies to fathom the wider implications of white immigration reflects a contemporary belief that the settlers were percursors of colonial development rather than a disruptive socio-economic presence.

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

Statesman, Jan Smuts. In Africa and Some World Problems¹²

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

Literature written by settlers during the inter-war years was mainly based on personal experience and there was a proliferation of memoirs seeking to describe the hardship and adventure of life on the farming frontier. Notable examples from this genre include Karen Blixen's Out of Africa,¹⁵ Eve Bache's The Youngest Lion,¹⁶ V.M. Carnegie's A Kenyan Farm Diary¹⁷ and M.A. Buxton's Kenya Days.¹⁸ Images evoked by these books invariably reflect European racism, with African characters emerging as rustic tribesmen and bewildered farm hands. The impression created is that Kenya before colonialism was a seething cauldron of backwardness and savagery. This tabula rasa perspective is adopted by Elspeth Huxley in White Man's Country, a biography of Lord Delamare which describes European settlers as having achieved substantial economic progress.

Scholarly critiques published during this period are conspicuously few. Labour Policy is discussed by R.L. Buell in The Native Problem in Africa²⁰, who draws on his research findings to outline the subordination of African interests within the political economies of settler colonies in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. This seminal work was, however, part of a general review of colonial policy in Africa as was Lord Hailey's An African Survey.²¹ Inevitably, European settlement in Kenya is appraised in summary form. A more detailed interpretation is found in M.R. Dilley's British Policy in Kenya Colony.²² All three authors however, draw similar conclusions about the fact of European social, political and economic domination. The subject of European supremacy is also pursued by Margery Perham and Elspeth Huxley in Race and Politics in Kenya.²³ Their published collection of letters reflecting conflicting liberal and conservative views of colonial policy offer valuable insights into contemporary European perceptions of racism and racial domination.

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

condemnation of African agitation and romantic reminiscences of past years of undisputed European predominance. Christopher Wilson's Kenya's Warning: The Challenge to White Supremacy in Our British Colony²⁴ is an extreme example of this genre. White Africans²⁵ by Lipscomb adopts the same approach in less caustic language. The settlers also sought to immortalise the development of European agriculture in books like M.F. Hill's Cream Country²⁶ and E. Huxley's No Easy Way²⁷ which narrate the history of two important European farming institutions, the Kenya Cooperative Creameries and the Kenya Farmers Association. Michael Blundell's memoirs, So Rough a Wind,²⁸ published after the demise of colonialism, offers an interesting account of how the settlers sought and failed to attain their ultimate political ambition, a self governing European state.

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

Remole's doctoral thesis, "White Settlers or the Foundations of European Agricultural Settlement In Kenya"²⁹ introduced the era of detached scholarly enquiry into colonial history. Other work in a similar Whig tradition include Bennett's Kenya: A Political History, The Colonial Period³⁰ and Sorrenson's Origins of European Settlement in Kenya.¹³ The latter work is of particular significance, representing a reassessment of the formative years of land and labour policy favouring the settlers.

Brett's Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939³² pioneered the "underdevelopment" approach to colonial economic history, relating the growth of European agriculture to impoverishment of African reserves. A similar framework is adopted by Wolff in Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930³³ and Van Zwanenberg's Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya 1919-1939.³⁴

More recently labour history has come into vogue, with the intention of reconstructing the African role in the colonial economy. A general survey is found in Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963³⁵ by Clayton and Savage. The historical significance of resident labour on European farms

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

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

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

There is a paucity of recent interpretations of European social history in Kenya. Norman Best's Happy Valley⁴³ is a nostalgic narrative of major episodes in the lives of British settlers which tends to rely on anecdote rather than serious enquiry. Errol Trzebinski revisits the earliest days of European settlement in The Kenya Pioneers⁴⁴ which meticulously reconstructs life as a white colonist from the perspective of an anglophile who is unabashedly sentimental. An authentic history of the social relations and cultural institutions among the settlers, however, remains unwritten.

The colonial history of Trans Nzoia district

has been barely touched on. Published sources recounting the European experience are sparse, the major exception being Lander's memoirs, My Kenya Acres: A Woman Farms in Mau Mau Country⁴⁵ which describes farm life in the district during the 1950s. Another postwar settler, Fleming, devotes a few pages of his book Blue is the Sky⁴⁶ to describing the selection and purchase of a 676 acre farm there in 1943.

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

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

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

Methodology

Archival Sources

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

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

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

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

Oral Interviews:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ntly mentioned. Certain testimony also tallied with archival evidence.

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

FOOT NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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2

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGINS OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN
TRANS NZOIA DISTRICT

The Beginnings of White Highlands
Policy, 1895 - 1914.

The nineteenth century marked the imposition of European colonial rule throughout Africa, a process which was endorsed by the 1885 Berlin Conference. In East Africa, Britain and Germany initially annexed territory through the agency of chartered trading companies. William MacKinnon's Imperial British East Africa Company established a presence in British East Africa while Karl, Peter's German East Africa Company occupied German East Africa. The ostensible purpose of these ventures was to make commercial profit but their main shareholders were keen to promote the imperial interests of their respective countries. When the Imperial British East Africa Company proved too undercapitalised to sustain the expansive ambitions of its directors, the British Government formally assumed control in 1895.¹

Strategic interests had a major bearing on the

decision to impose colonial rule. Meanwhile various European travellers were venturing inland and reporting on the considerable agricultural potential of the highlands. Among these was Joseph Thomson, who crossed the Uasin Gishu plateau on route to Lake Victoria in 1883.² Charles Hopley sighted the Trans Nzoia peneplain in 1896 during an excursion along the eastern foothills of Mount Elgon.³ Following completion of a tour of duty as Special Commissioner for Uganda in 1901, Harry Johnston traversed the Rift Valley. In his final report he remarked that the highlands were "admirably suited for a white man's country."⁴

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

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

The law officers interpreted African land rights in terms of actual occupation only. De facto ownership over the land was, therefore, asserted by the Crown, which subsequently reserved the right to alienate land at will. On this basis Eliot proceeded to make generous land grants to concessionaire interests, of which one of 100,000 acres between Njoro and Molo to Lord Delamare was probably the most publicised.⁹ Arbitrary grants expedited the process land alienation, turning Africans into squatters on their own land or involving outright eviction. The latter situation was exemplified by the 1904 Maasai Agreement and its sequel in 1911.¹⁰ These agreements revealed the duplicity of colonial officials. Contemporary European opinion was expressed by the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The settlers campaigned for their interests by organizing themselves into pressure groups. The Colonists Association had been formed in Nairobi in 1902 to encourage European settlement. Delamare formed the Planters and Farmers Association during the following year. Ostensibly concerned with potatoe marketing in South Africa, it steadfastly supported further white immigration and firmly opposed Jewish settlement in the Protectorate.²¹ In January 1905 the association was renamed the Colonists' Association, which continued to lobby local officials and the Colonial Office.²² Other local associations were formed in various settled districts²³ and these were brought together in the Convention of Associations, which first met in February 1911.²⁴

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

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

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

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

The Opening Up of Trans Nzoia District to European Settlement

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

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

The 1913 land eviction marked the first expansion of European settlement north of the Uasin Gishu plateau, which had been occupied by Van Rensberg's Afrikaners in 1908.³³ Most farms at the auction were bought by English-speaking settlers, with only six being sold to Afrikaners, and of the eight Uasin Gishu farms sold at the same auction, only one was bought by an Afrikaner. Consequently, "their inability to monopolise the purchase of newly opened lands on the Uasin Gishu and in the Trans Nzoia prevented the Afrikaners from establishing a geographically distinct Afrikaner community in the Protectorate".³⁴

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

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

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

encouraged in every possible way."⁴⁰

The few settlers in Trans Nzoia district by 1914⁴¹ were not engaged in cash-crop production on any significant scale. A number of Europeans remained absentee land owners. One of these, A.K. Macdonald, had purchased a farm there in 1913 by making a 10% down payment on the purchase price of 1900 rupees. He undertook to clear the balance by annual instalments.⁴² In December^{1914,} Macdonald requested a moratorium on payments for 1915, allegedly because his bankers in Paraguay had failed to remit the money.⁴³ Gower, the acting Land Officer, found this excuse unconvincing. Jacob Barth, the Attorney General, made a caustic criticism of Macdonald's failure to bring his land under crop when he remarked "there is a good market for all produce grown."⁴⁴

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

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

In December, 1915, the War Council of the Protectorate mooted the idea of a post-war scheme for British veterans. The suggestion was approved in principle by Bonar Law, the Secretary of State. By 1917 the Colonial Government had decided to promote soldier-settlement. Governor Belfield appointed a commission chaired by the Attorney General, Barth, to draw up a provisional scheme to this effect on 13 March 1917.⁴⁸

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The recommendations were revised following Edward Northey's appointment as Governor in 1919.⁵⁹ Land alienation under a Government scheme for closer settlement in Trans Nzoia and other districts was formally approved. Debate over the issue had involved two different schools of thought. Concessionaires interested in high land values and some civil

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

rash of farm strikes during that year.⁸⁴

The predominance of British settlers was important because by 1921 Trans Nzoia remained isolated by inadequate communications and minimal administrative interference. Previous divisions of nationality, education, birth and occupation were perpetuated. One consequence was that Afrikaners within the district were often regarded with suspicion and contempt. Only two Afrikaners sat on the twenty-two member Trans Nzoia District Committee in 1921, for example.⁸⁵ Within the English-speaking community, imported social status exerted a considerable influence and this was reflected by the flaunting of service ranks among the sizeable retired officer element. Distinctions were also drawn between pre war and postwar settlers. The former initially dominated events. Out of an eight member provisional district committee which was formed in 1920, only Brigadier-General Baker-Carr and Major C.R.T. Thorp did not own land in Trans Nzoia by 1914.⁸⁶

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

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

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

The removal of purchase prices on soldier - settler farms under the 1921 Crown Lands (Discharged Soldiers' Settlement) Ordinance⁹² underlined the Government's continued commitment to keeping Europeans on the land. By 1921, depressed market conditions in Europe had disrupted white immigration to Kenya Colony.⁹³

In Trans Nzoia, the main wave of postwar settlement had ended. There were 231 European farm owners in the district in 1922.⁹⁴ The majority had arrived after the War, hoping to become successful farmers. As various problems relating to commercial farming became apparent, they identified basic common interests as white agricultural producers. These interests shaped local politics to a significant degree and also influenced relations with Europeans elsewhere in the highlands.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

p. 379.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER THREE

CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS AMONG THE
SETTLERS, 1921 - 1929.

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

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

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

Hoey had defeated an Afrikaner candidate in Plateau South constituency over the language issue in 1920.⁶ His posturing as a cosmopolitan leader had impressed the predominantly English - speaking electorate suspicious of Boer motives for promoting the use of Afrikaans. This victory, based on irreconcilable cultural values rather than substantive political issues, had encouraged him to contest the by-election in neighbouring Plateau North. Here he faced a much more formidable opponent in Captain Coney, an outspoken English Soldier-settler who portrayed Hoey as an intruder. Delamare's Reform Party, to which Hoey belonged, was described as the party representing wealthy settlers. Coney pledged to chart out an independent course if elected.⁷ Consequently, differences in outlook between the new settlers and land barons who had

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Following the Conference, compulsory maize

grading was introduced under the Agricultural Products Ordinance, from 1 November 1923.³⁷ During the 1924 growing season, European farmers in the highlands increased maize acreage by 41% in response to the low freight rates and high producer prices. Many were now growing the "flat white" variety of maize originally introduced from South Africa, which fetched the highest prices after grading. The European land market was also buoyant, with the number of occupiers increasing by 249 during 1924.³⁸ "In the Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu conditions were very favourable and good yields were obtained."³⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

Baker-Carr occupied the vast estate, near Suam and soon became a well known personality in the district, being a member of the provisional district committee in 1920.⁵³ Most other retired soldiers in the syndicate never migrated to Kenya and no capital for meeting development conditions or paying land rent was forthcoming from them, the money being drawn from the American businessmen. The latter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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