

## Impact of Development of Tea Plantation Economy from 1927 to 1963 on Social and Economic Status of Nandi East Sub County, Kenya

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### Abstract

*The paper examined the impact of development of tea plantation economy from 1927 to 1963 on social and economic status of Nandi East Sub County, Kenya. This paper reviews land alienation policies on development of tea plantation economy, the colonial labour and taxation policies on development of tea plantation economy. The review showed that tea was introduced by the British through various policies. Growing of tea was introduced by British through policies like land alienation, forced labour, taxation and missionary education. Nandi East Sub-County was fundamentally impacted by introduction of tea and this was more the case with communities closer to the tea estates. Due to the colonial establishment, Africans were driven to reserves. African land was taken away; many Africans died, some migrated out of their homes hence family separation and integrated Africans into cash crop economy.*

**Keywords:** *Tea plantation, land alienation, tea labour policies, tea taxation policies, tea plantation development social impact, tea plantation development economic impact*

### 1. Introduction

The production and consumption of tea began in China and then spread to the rest of the world. A Buddhist priest brought tea plant to Japan in the year 1200 and in around 1610 tea was brought to Europe by the Dutch. 50 years later the Europeans developed its taste. China supplied tea to the West until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to tension caused by Opium Wars, Britain began to grow tea in India. Tea farming began to spread through the British Empire, to its colonies and other places (Chepkemoi, 2017).

Tea (*Camellia sinensis*), is an important cash crop that was brought to Kenya by GWL Caine in 1903 and its commercialization began in 1924. Tea Act 1950, gives the definition of tea as plant *Camellia Sinensis*. Throughout the colonial period, tea was only restricted to settlers which impeded Africans from tea growing, because they wanted to maintain high quality. In 1963, when Kenya attained its independence, growing of tea was integrated to African farmers. Since then Kenya has become a great producer of tea. Kenya is ranked third after china and India in production of tea (GoK, 2016).

Growing of tea was introduced by British through policies like; land alienation, forced labour, taxation and missionary education. The white settlers were given the rights to grow tea. When Kenya gained its independence from the British in 1963, African farmers who purchased land from white settlers were allowed to grow tea. Various studies such as Buell, 1965, Amin, 1974,

Winston et al. 1972, share the idea that: The Kenyan tea sector was outcome of colonial policies which favored the development of tea plantations (GoK, 2016).

Agriculture is the backbone of the Kenyan economy and is important to many farmers, (Kabukuru 2013; Kibere et al. 2013). Tea is an important component of the Kenyan agricultural sector. This is because it provides employment opportunities to many people both directly and indirectly. It also contributes to export earnings (World Bank, 2017).

Tea growing is the main economy of many residents in Nandi East Sub-County and it employs many of its population. Growing of tea has improved the living standards of the community. The first tea plant to be grown in Nandi East sub-county was in 1927 at Septon. By 1933, the Colonial government exported tea to earn foreign exchange to London (Chepkemoi, 2017).

The reasons to colonize Africa was because, the Europeans needed to support the industries with undisrupted flows in large quantities of raw materials, cheap labour, the new markets for their industrial goods and strategic competition among European nations, both politically and militarily, and adventurers that sought to achieve fame (GoK, 2016).

This paper examined the development of tea plantation economy, assessed its impact on social and economic status of Nandi East Sub-county. The paper analyzed the land alienation policies on development of tea plantation economy, the colonial labour and taxation policies on development of tea plantation economy.

## **2. The Development of Tea Plantation Economy and its Impact on Social and Economic Status of Nandi East Sub County**

This section covers the following: the development of tea plantation economy from 1927-1963 with reference to the land alienation policies on development of tea plantation economy and the colonial labour and taxation policies on development of tea plantation economy; and the tea economy impact on social and economic of Nandi East Sub County

### **2.1 Development of Tea Plantation Economy from 1927-1963**

#### **2.1.1 The land alienation policies on development of tea plantation economy**

Through enactments of ordinances, the colonial administration took millions of acres of the arable land from the natives (Nyawira, 2020). The fertile land of Nandi East Sub-County, included. It formed the foundation of what came to be called the white highlands, which was reserved for only the white settlers by 1932, making many African communities landless. The Maasai and Kikuyu for example lost large tracts of arable land considered "empty" by the colonial government while the Nandi, Kipsigis, Luhya and the Bukusu were taken to the African reserved areas to give room for white settlers to farm (Chelimo & Chelego, 2016).

In 1905, Koitalel Arap Samoei was executed by Meinertzhagen in a "peace" deal. The natives were defeated by Meinertzhagen, since they were motivated by the Orkoiyot. After his death, the natives became demoralized. Meinertzhagen then went Northwards with his boundless coerce, killing and driving away livestock from the Afircan community. It led to the end of resistance by the Nandi to the colonials. When the Nandi community had been defeated and surrendered,

Meinertzhagen drafted peace deal terms with the community in Nandi Hills, which is now the headquarters of Nandi East sub-county, he started displacing the Nandi community from the bororiosiek of Kamelilo and Kapchepkendi, who had settled near to the rail and the community was taken to the Northern of Nandi in Kabiyet region. In January 1906, Meinertzhagen managed to displace the Nandi to the Northern part of Nandi from South Eastern of Nandi Hills towards. Many food stores and native houses that stored harvests were burnt. The Nandi were also arrested and detained. The fighting between the Nandi and the British came to end on 26th February 1906 when the Africans were driven out from their arable territory to the demarcated reserves (Chepkemoi, 2017).

The Nandi did not have the idea of permanent and individual land ownership. Since the land owned by the natives during the pre-colonial time was so abundant and available. Land was subdivided into two in each kokwet (village), the section for farming (Oret) and that which were meant for livestock grazing. The parts of the village (kokwet), which was to be farm according to their perception of fertility was decided by the village (kokwet) elders (boisiekab kok). The presence of particular indigenous plants e.g. Tebeng'wet (sabucus Africana), determined Land fertility in the Nandi community which is to be farmed. The fields to be cultivated were set on one side of the village (kokwet). It made easy to fence a section and protect grown crops from being destroyed by livestock, wild animals and birds. Individual plots were separated by narrow paths (Tanui, 2017). The allocation of land in the community was sole responsibility of Village (Kokwet) elders to the various household. Marriage marked the point in which a man and woman could own a cultivated field (Nyawira, 2020). For polygamous men, the allocation of the cultivated land by the village (kokwet) elders was according to the number of wives on had married. It is, however, safe to say that each married woman had her farm, which she grew food crops. The size of the farm one cultivated largely depended on the capability of the person to mobilize labour from the community (Tanui, 2017). One was, therefore, not denied to choose the size of land to cultivate. The cultivated land was allocated every year. Nevertheless, the old farms could be farmed for up to three years, depending on their fertility, the left to regain fertility (Chelimo & Chelego, 2016).

A 1901 Order-in-Council ordinance changed all the native land in the protectorate to be "Crown Land" and another Order-in-Council of 1902 bestowed the Commissioner with absolute Powers to give leaseholds for up to 99 years for ownership of land of less than 1000 acres of land. This move was made to get free land from the natives for which the whites needed all the land to be freehold. The discrimination of native from this move and their property rights fell under "African Land Reserves." The settlers required input, manpower and capital to farm the land. Except for land, capital and manpower were hard to come by in Nandi community. Regarding labour, the white settlers got labour from the importation from India for labour. This plan did not attain its target, since Indian workers were few and became difficult for the Indians to adapt to climate Kenya and in Nandi land. Mistrust and animosity were created officially between the white settlers and the natives. Therefore, this mistrust and animosity led the settlers not to depend on natives to give them adequate labour. The remaining solution for the problem left for the white settlers was to move the natives by use of force to their farms (Nyawira, 2020).

On 15th January 1906, the Nandi were forced into reserve, the area bounded on the South of the Nandi Escarpment, on the West by the Nyangori and the Elburgoloti Escarpment on the North by the Nollo Segelli and Guaso Mara River and on the East by a line drawn from where the Nandi-Muhoroni road cuts the crest of the Escarpment to kipchomba. In 1926, African reserves were legalized, this followed by many other enacted ordinances that moved Africans permanently to the reserved areas of the Nandi community land. Owing to the 1930, Native Land Trust Ordinance, it legalized the African reserves and pronounced to belong to Africans permanently. The Kenya Land Commission of 1932 followed, it also saw fixation the land boundaries of the “highlands, so called the white settlers highland’,” and all Africans being removed from the “white settlers highlands,” to the African demarcated reserved areas (Chelimo & Chelego, 2016).

The British government started policies of moving the African communities to peripheral areas that had been demarcated as “African reserve land,” to give the way for other white settlers developments. In Nandi Hills and the surrounding areas, the British were keen in settling in in areas where they were suitable for large-scale farming.

### **2.1.2 The colonial labour and taxation policies on development of tea plantation economy**

Forced labour was important tool used and was institutionalized in the initial years of British rule in Kenya. This was a time when labour was needed to put in motion the European economy: Rail-lines, dams and roads were constructed and bushes cleared for white settler’s farms. Forced labour unavoidably turned into the most suitable method for getting African labour for European farms. Few colonial officers or whites were not keen on the job requirement for any type of work. For some, it was even seen as a demonstration of generosity. Through forced labour, the colonial government together with the white settlers used various ordinances that called for the African chiefs to sought physically able natives in the African community to provide manpower for the white settlers on their farms for three months as casual laborers, but it was ineffective way. The more effective way was to enact a law that could force the natives to need cash in order to look for wage labour. The Africans was not acquainted with wage labour and an architect was created to create cheap wage (Nyawira, 2020).

The role played by the pre-colonial African council of elders changed according to the powers and dictates of the colonial government on recruitment of labour. The colonial administration created a various of measures to get and maintain labour supply through ordinances like, hut and poll taxes in 1902 and 1903; the Masters and Servants Ordinance 1910, the Resident Native Labour Ordinance (RNLO) and the kipande system in 1918, stated both the legal status and the labour roles of the African squatter (GoK, 2016).

Getting revenue was one of the significant hindrances that faced the British East Africa Protectorate when it established in 1895. It was vital because the colonial government needed money to run up formal administration, create the occupation of Europeans in the whole country and to give necessary needed services such as the development of infrastructure and the maintenance of law and order. Initially, there was financial support from the British mother land such as grants-in-aid. But like other British colonies, the protectorate had ultimately to rely upon Africans to raise most of its needed revenue. Many ways were created to get needed revenue, mainly through direct and indirect taxation. Other ways used to raise revenues were obtained

through licenses and railway tariffs. It was within, that the financing budget that the saw the need to introduce direct tax for Africans by the colonial government (Nyawira, 2020).

To get the Africans into the wage labour market, the colonial government introduced hut and poll taxes that were paid in actual used money. To meet tax obligations or for their own needs, many natives were brought into the wage economy. The development of tea estate by white settlers animated the need for African to provide labour in the farms (Chepkemoi, 2017).

Taxes collected from the Africans were used for daily expenditures, transportation and extension services provided in European farms. In 1937, Resident workers ordinance was enacted, it gave powers colonial government to take away squatters' livestock' and also the squatters themselves from their land over the coming decades (Musalia, 2014).

The implementation of these taxes created the wage economy. The "hut ordinances" (East Africa Hut Tax law 1903) and the later Poll ordinance (Native Hut and Poll Tax law 1910) were enacted, it gave power colonial administration to force Africans, who could not look for wage labour. Natives were forced to provide labour in white settlers' estates or in urban areas with an aim of paying their own expenses (Nyawira, 2020).

Implementation of taxes on Africans was a significant way to make native require money and hence, native looked for wage employment to get cash. The use of money among the natives was still a strange idea to the Africans and there was a need to get them into cash related economy. The use of money as a medium of exchange in trade by the settlers and the colonial government led to the establishment of money economy in the colony. The Africans needed money in order to sought out taxes. If Africans were required to pay their taxes, then they had to look for work from either the British administration or white settlers. This was means in which tax collection was established in Kenya (Musalia, 2014).

The Native Hut Tax ordinance was enacted in 1901 through the Hut Tax Regulations of 1901. The taxes were imposed on all huts, which were abodes and paid in terms of rupees (2 Rupees) annually. The African owners of the hut were taxed for every hut. If a man had many huts, he was required to labour for quite a long time to get the money for each of the cottages or he supposed to labour with some of his wives and children to get the needed tax. The establishment of universal poll tax for all African adults, it became the alternative of the Hut tax which had begun as a family tax, slowly developing into an individual tax, like Poll tax which was a charged on African individual. The payment of Hut tax and Poll taxes was a double taxation on an African individual (Chepkemoi, 2017).

But the greatest loss for the African people was that taxation encroached on their liberty and their freedom. Africans became insecure since they were always on the lookout for the tax collector and ready to run as fast as they could when the collector's presence was announced. One of the main refusals to the hut and poll tax in colony was the manner in which the taxes were administered. Those who were not able to pay the taxes were arrested and detained by the administration. The house-to-house collection was done mostly by African chiefs and headmen; they found many Africans were not at home. This was because Africans did not have ready money available, hence they had to run away as faster as they could at the sight of the tax



collectors. These taxes were imposed on individuals without considering their ability to pay or any benefits to be derived from. The flat-rate payment on property and a 'head tax' was certainly at the expense of the poor (Chelimo & Chelego, 2016).

It led to establishment of monetization and commoditization of the economy. Since, many transactions were now made in terms of money, more land was put under cultivation to grow and produce more commodities to be sold at the market; livestock now appreciated in its value and therefore instead of being used in the community for purposes of dowry payment alone, it could now be taken to the market to be sold in order get cash (Chelimo & Chelego, 2016).

Africans small scale manufacturing and those working in local industries, were fundamentally impacted colonialism. They included the likes of craftsmen, the blacksmiths, building and experts on woodwork. Colonialism flooded the local market with cheap imports, which had implications the survival of local industry and thus, destroyed the foundation of an independent local industrial base (Moindi, 2014).

## **2.2 Impact of tea economy on social and economic status of Nandi East Sub County**

The development of tea plantation economy and its impacts on the social and economic of Nandi East Sub-County from 1927-1963, tea plantation cannot be delinking with colonialism in Nandi. The colonial government brought policies which favored the development of tea plantation economy. Colonial land alienation policies led to the development of tea plantation. The British government laid down land policies that enable them to take away African land and enable them to settled white settlers who started growing tea. Through land policies, tea was able to be introduced in Nandi East Sub-county. In the years 1945 to 1963, there was colonial modernization of the economy, this was after the end of the Second World War and Britain was experiencing economic depression. They decided to modernize the economy of the colonies to contribute to profit which could help build Britain's economy they did by imposing Multinationals Cooperation (MNCs) like Eastern Produce Kenya (E.P.K). The MNCs could now facilitate the repatriation of profit to Britain. The MNCs also mechanized the agriculture sector in which Africans were trained on the new skills like driving tractor and use of it in cultivation (GoK, 2016).

African communities were significantly impacted by the land alienation policies, labour system. It impacted more on the case of African communities who were near to the colonial economy. Generally speaking, the wage-labour system affected on African community in various ways: led to monetization and commoditization of the Nandi economy. Most transactions were now done in terms of money; more land was put under cultivation to grow and produce more produce for the market; livestock now appreciated in its value and therefore instead of being used for purposes of dowry payment alone, they could now be sold in the market to get an income. This new class of individuals occupied a unique class within the community. This class was often seen as the gateway to the establishment of European culture in the rural areas (Amutabi and Nyanhoga, 2014).

### 3. Conclusion

Agriculture tends to dominate the economy of most underdeveloped countries in the world. The major contributions to the economy of Nandi East Sub-County were contributed by British and settlers who cultivated tea. Economic growth has also been stimulated by increased export opportunities available for Nandi East Sub-County. Although the volume of export per capita in Nandi East Sub County is still low as compared with other tea growing areas in Kenya, it has increased considerably during the past twenty years as new markets and factories have been found for tea. The sub-County heavily depends on the export of tea and is vulnerable to fluctuation in world prices. The heavy dependence on tea for export is because of limitations like environmental that is rainfall limits the expansion or diversification of crop production.

The attractiveness of Nandi East sub-county as an investment location for tea is strengthened by the presence of multinationals operating in the tea sector. There has been little systematic discussion on the development of tea plantation economy. Generally, there are few historical studies done on the subject although tea production is a vital economic activity for the communities in Nandi East Sub county and Kenya.

Government is recommended to develop an economic research unit to lead in research in tea production. Intensive breeding and selection of clones should be established so as to see production of high yields and superior quality crops. The general motive of the findings of the study is, therefore, to offer adequate records. Also, further studies can still be done on the same topic.

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