

Research Article

Contribution of Church Missionary Society in Developing Western Education in Kaloleni District in Colonial Kenya (1890-1950): Historical Perspective

Joseph Ogutu Owino¹, Kazungu Joseph Jumaa², Paul Amolloh Odundo³

Department of Educational Communication and Technology, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract: This study examined the contribution of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to the development of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District, Kilifi County. The objectives of the study were to examine the rise and development of Western education and Christianity among the Giriama; the contribution of African teachers and catechists towards it; and challenges the Church Missionary Society faced in Kaloleni District. Modernization theory was used in explaining how the introduction of Western education in Kaloleni District brought social advancement and conflict among the Giriama. This paper was written using both primary and secondary sources. Semi-structured oral interviews were conducted to gather data on activities of the CMS in Kaloleni District. The oral interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using qualitative method. The study findings demonstrated that the spread of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District led to social transformation of the Giriama from traditional to modern practices. The findings further revealed that African catechists played a great role in the development of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District.

Keywords: Church Missionary Society, Development, Western education, Christianity.

1.1 Introduction

Kenyan communities had their own systems of education before the advent of colonialism (Storold, 1960). Indigenous knowledge was important in the preservation and transmission of culture from one generation to another in the traditional African society (Wosoyanju, 2012). In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries came to the Kenyan coast to convert Africans to Christianity. To fulfill this aim, they concentrated their efforts on teaching Africans Western education and translated portions of the Bible into African dialects. Missionaries inculcated the values of European Civilization in the minds of Africans through formal education. They also used schools as rehabilitation centers for freed slaves (Oliver, 1942). African converts who acquired formal education played an important role in missionary activities in the interior of Kenya. This study examined the contribution of the Church Missionary Society to the development of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District of Kilifi County.

According to Bogonko (1992), Africans contributed to the spread of Christianity and Western education in various ways. First, Africans offered their land to accommodate missionary stations. Second, they mobilized building materials and provided labor for the construction of schools and churches. Third, some African converts became teachers and evangelists, thereby advancing missionary activities in at the Kenyan coast (Bogonko, 1992). Bogonko provided a general account of the role of Africans in the expansion of Christianity and Western education in Kenya. He however did not discuss specific missionary activities among the Giriama. William (1971) observed that slave trade, poor transport and

communication, and insecurity were the key challenges that hindered missionary activities at the Kenyan coast before colonialism. Irrespective of the prevailing challenges, missionaries managed to establish various stations at the Kenyan coast. This study sought to find out how African catechists and teachers helped the missionaries to overcome their challenges.

Hewith (1942) observed that missionary operations began at the Kenyan coast around 1883 and gradually moved to the hinterland. During the first years of the 1900s, the southern parts of Giriama land were synonymous with missionary activities. He contended that missionaries were the pioneers of formal education in Kaloleni District between 1932 and 1938. However, he did not mention specific missionary groups that introduced formal education in the Giriama community. As such, this study examined the contribution of the CMS and African catechists to the development of education in Kaloleni District. Okoth (2000) asserted that missionaries initially focused on eliminating slave trade and rehabilitating freed slaves and gradually began spreading Christianity at the East African Coast. He noted that the Holy Ghost fathers from Reunion Island began their missionary activities in 1803 in Zanzibar. Further, Okoth (2000) discussed the role of missionaries in the colonization of Kenya.

A study by Muraya (1983) revealed that missionaries first settled at the Kenyan coast and later moved to the interior. He averred that missionaries begun by converting freed slaves to Christianity before reaching out to the African masses. Muraya (1983) linked the early spread of Christianity to the development of the Kenya Uganda Railway, which facilitated

rapid movement of missionaries. He, however, failed to recognize the contribution of Africans to the spread of Christianity and Western education. In writing about the rise and spread of Christianity in Kenya, Temu (1972) pointed out that missionaries taught Africans basic formal education to facilitate the spread Christianity.

1.2 Problem Statement

Kaloleni was among the first districts at the Kenyan coast where the CMS established mission stations (Storold, 1960). Available literature on CMS evangelism at the Kenyan Coast tends to focus much on their activities in Mombasa and either ignores, or only mentions in passing their activities among the Giriama in Kololeni. There is no comprehensive information on how Islam, slave trade, and the conservative nature of Africans hindered the spread of Western education and Christianity among the Giriama (Martyn 2011). Furthermore, existing literature about Christian missionary activities in Kaloleni centers much on the roles of European missionaries in the spread of Christianity and Western education, but ignores the participation of Africans in it. This provides a biased account of the missionary activities among the Giriama. This background inspired the study of the role of the CMS and African catechists in the development of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To examine the development of Western education and Christianity among the Giriama in Kaloleni District.

To assess the role of African catechists and teachers in the spread of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by modernization theory, which refers to the changes, which occur when a traditional society adopts modern technological and social practices of an advanced society (Inglehart, 2005). This theory examines how society develops, the variables that influence development and societal reaction to development. It analyses factors that are favorable for transformation to occur in society (Inglehart, 2005). Moreover, it encompasses the world of globalization where cultural morals and ideas are spread throughout the world leading to a universal culture. In this study, modernization theory was used in examining how the CMS introduction of Western education in Kaloleni District led to social transformation of the Giriama. It also helped in assessing how the introduction of western education in Kaloleni District led to social conflict between modernity and the traditional Giriama education system and customs.

1.5 Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources of information informed this study. Specifically, scholarly journal articles and books on missionary activities were used as sources of secondary data. Archival materials augmented secondary sources of

information for the study. Primary data were collected using semi-structured oral interviews on the activities of CMS in Kaloleni District. An interview guide was used to keep the interviews focused and made the respondents provide adequate information on missionary activities. Fieldwork activities were carried out in three Divisions in Kaloleni District. A priest at the CMS centre and the area chief of Kaloleni assisted the researcher in identifying the respondents. The participants included early Christina converts, missionary teachers, evangelist church leaders, retired government administrators, and Kaya (village) elders. These respondents provided detailed information about the contribution of African teachers and catechists to the spread of Christianity and Western Education in Kaloleni District.

2.0 Findings on the Spread of Christianity among the Giriama in Kaloleni District

The Giriama are a sub-tribe of the Mijikenda community in the coast region of Kenya. They occupy a strip of land, which extends inland from the southern part of Kilifi to north of the Sabaki River. Today, some of them inhabit Malindi and Takaunga Districts (Barrett, 1911). The Giriama were politically decentralized during the pre-colonial period and were ruled by a council of elders (Patterson, 1970). Agriculture, livestock keeping and trade were their main economic activities before colonialism (Burton 2013). The Giriama lived in large compact villages known as kayafungo, a circular open space on top of a hill encircled by a dense forest.

The first Christian community emerged among the Giriama in the early 1870s in Fuladoyo, which was located approximately thirty miles from Takaungu (Stock, 1950). It was founded by Besedi, a Giriama evangelist, whose village became a haven for runaway slaves. By 1872, Besedi had only managed to convert eleven Africans to Christianity (Stock, 1950). Reverent Grafftey Smith opened the first official Christian missionary station at Jilore in 1883. The following year he was joined by Rev. F. Burt and Rev. Douglas Hooper, accompanied by his wife (Storold, 1960). These missionaries ruled the Jilore station rigidly and ensured that African converts adhered to the Christian doctrines (Jefwa, 2013).

In June 1904, Florence Deed and M. L. Mason created the Kaloleni Missionary Station (Hewitt, 1971). Their aim of missionary work in Kaloleni was twofold. Their first objective was to introduce European medicine to the Giriama and the second was to gain Christian converts. They also established a formal education program in Kaloleni to enable African converts learn to read the bible (Hewitt, 1971). The CMS missionaries taught Africans converts reading and writing and wrote books called Masomo ya kigiriama (Education for the Giriama). These books became famous in Giriama land because they were commonly used in informal education (Hewitt, 1971). In 1914, Miss Florence and Mason abandoned their activities for several months because the Giriama uprising against the colonial regime caused serious insecurity (Stock, 1950). During the uprising, Florence and Mason

relocated to Rabai. They went back to Kaloleni after seven months and the Giriama elders fined them a couple of goats for allegedly bringing misfortune to their society (Stock, 1950).

2.1 Establishment of a School for Catechists and Teachers at Kaloleni

Kaloleni is a Giriama word, which refers to an uphill place from which an individual can spot an encroaching enemy (Barrett, 1911). In Kaloleni, the Giriama were not eager to embrace Christianity and western practices (Morad, 1999). A number of reasons can be advanced for their reluctance to convert to Christianity. First, the Giriama never wanted to abandon their customs and traditions (Hewitt, 1971). Among the Giriama, elders were believed to possess magical powers of evil and going against their wishes could prove fatal. Second, Africans perceived missionaries as an integral part of the European groups, and agents of colonization and oppression (Thopson 1976). Moreover, the Giriama suspected missionaries to be slave raiders (M. J. Kamango, personal communication, September 24, 2013). In light of these challenges, the missionaries hurriedly trained many Africans catechists and teachers and sent them to go preaching to the Giriama on their behalf (Kamango, 2013).

In 1908, the great Pan Anglican Congress was held in England and one of the outcomes of the meeting was that the Church of England contributed money for educating African converts (KNA/5/8661, 1900). Part of the money, which found its way to Kenya, was assigned to educational activities in Kaloleni (Beck, 2014). The CMS started training African teachers in Kaloleni in 1920 on a modest scale. Some of the initial trainees at the CMS in Kaloleni station included Reuben Kombe, Joseph Mramba, Petro Mwaro and James Golowa among others (S. Wara, personal communication, August 29, 2013). Despite their poor training and lack of facilities, they were the pioneers of formal education in Kaloleni District (Wara, 2013).

In 1927, Miss E. Bodger founded the Kaloleni Vocational Training Centre, which enrolled many students who came from as far as Taita, Koro and Nakuru (Hewitt, 1971). Apart from the general instructions, vocational skills were offered in agriculture, carpentry, and masonry. In 1928, the Normal School, which had been under Rev. F. Cribb in Mombasa, was transferred to Kaloleni under the direction of Miss. E. Bodger (Hewitt, 1971). For eight years, teachers from Giriama, Rabai, Mombasa, Taita, Nairobi and from the CMS stations at Mazaras were trained at Kaloleni Missionary Centre. Students who excelled in Kaloleni Vocational Training Centre went for further studies at Kabete Technical College in Kiambu County. After graduating from college, they were deployed to teach in out-schools in Vitengeni, Jaribuni, Jilore and Kaloleni. Jeanes teachers supervised the out schools regularly and advised teachers on curriculum matters. They inspected the status of school facilities and equipment and paid attention to the welfare of students. Each month, they forwarded reports

of their activities to the principal of the Jeanes School at Kabete (KNA/6/3, 1932).

2.2 Bush Schools in Kaloleni

African catechists and teachers established several bush schools to facilitate the propagation of Christianity and formal education among the Giriama. In 1931, Kenneth Storold, a missionary, arrived at Kaloleni and helped in the creation of bush schools (KNA/2/1/2/1135, 1931). By 1934, the outskirts of Kaloleni Missionary Centre were dotted with several bush schools. Some of the remarkable bush schools included Jaribuni, Ng'ombeni, Kadzinuni, Wango'ngo, Dungicha Kafuloni, Dulukiza, Mwijjo, Chalani, Mirihini, Mgamboni, Chakama, Jilore, kakuyuni and Chilulu among others. The Native Local Council started Mariakani Out School in 1930 (Mwaro, 2013). In August 1931, Simeon Kirao started an out school in the north of the Giriama Reserve (KNA/5/68/47, 1932). In 1937, James Golowa founded the Jilore Out School. Shadrach Mganga established Jaribuni out school in 1938 (MS.K.11, 1937). Some of these out schools were supported by colonial government grants and others were sponsored by the CMS. Rev. Wilson Kajoro, William Mutta, David Mzungu were some of remarkable African catechists who served in the bush schools (C. Bayah, personal communication, August 21, 2013). The European missionaries, regardless of their education qualifications, supervised learning activities in these bush schools (KNA/5/68/47, 1932). Later, the Jeanes teachers replaced the missionaries in supervision of the bush schools (KNA, 1927).

In 1930, the colonial government granted missionaries freedom to move the interior to carry out evangelism and formal education activities (KNA/5/32, 1937). This development created the need for more catechists. Meanwhile, the extension of colonial government activities to Kaloleni created demand for educated Africans to fill a wide range of subordinate clerical and administrative posts. Since the parallel expansion of mission work absorbed the great majority of the products of mission schools, the government found itself unable to recruit from these schools and in any case, official opinion of mission educational activity and mission school products was very low. This challenge was overcome by training more African converts to assume teaching and evangelism work in the newly established bush schools (Mwaro, 2013). In 1937, the Coastal Normal School was transferred from Kaloleni to Wusi under Rev. P.G. Bostock. By 1940, Kaloleni Primary School was the centre of all pupils in the elementary level (KNA/5/32, 1937). Towards the end of the 1940s, Kaloleni became an all-purpose mission centre approximating more closely to the large establishments typical of the CMS at Kikuyu (Mwaro, 2013).

2.3 Learning Activities in the Bush Schools

In the bush schools, the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) were the core of the curriculum. Missionaries taught the three Rs skills because they knew that the success of their work was dependent on a person's ability to read and

understand the bible (Sifuna & Otiende, 1994). This explains why missionary education was restricted, especially during the early years to the basics, which would enable students to carry out evangelistic-catechetical functions. Besides the three Rs and religion, the curriculum in the bush schools included life skills, such as personal hygiene and environmental sanitation skills (Sifuna & Otiende, 1994). Apart from the formal school curriculum, the missionaries taught informal education known as "elimuyamilamba" among the Giriama (L. Bennetti, personal communication, September 16, 2013). Early mission schools emphasized religion so much that Africans deemed them 'prayer houses' (Mwiandi, 1993).

The organization and operation of bush schools was such that learners possessed little motivation to master schoolwork or to be attracted beyond vague curiosity about the written and printed words (Mwiandi, 1993). With some notable exceptions, the emphasis during the early missionary expansion in Kaloleni District was basic education to enable pupils become better Christians. Post primary education was not encouraged and was in fact considered not useful by some who feared that those who achieved it would be unable to communicate with the masses.

In the Giriama bush schools, teachers played the double role of preaching and teaching. A teacher in a bush school was a man of poor education, probably a product of a similar school. Every morning students of mixed ages and sexes repeatedly rehearsed the English syllables in an attempt to grasp simple English vocabulary (Mwiandi, 1993). Sometimes, students had to move around with teachers and catechists who were preaching in the surrounding areas. Evidently, the missionaries' intentions in providing western education to the Africans differed from the Africans' interests and conflict was bound to ensue. The former were focused on teaching the message of the gospel to the Africans, along with the minimum literacy skills to support this primary objective (C.G. Chondo, personal communication, August 18, 2013). In some cases, basic technical education was offered to the Africans to introduce them into western civilization and to enable them render services to the missionaries and settlers. On the other hand, Africans were interested in advanced education that would enable them to have better standards of life. They also wanted superior education that would enable them participate in the new emerging economic and social conditions of life (Omolewa, 2006).

This disenchantment was expressed in complaints from Africans and Europeans alike that the "imported" educational system failed to achieve its objectives (Chondo, 2013). Western education was considered "too European," and irrelevant to African needs. At the same time, some Africans' complained that the new system of education had introduced new values of intolerance, hatred, competition, disharmony, pride, arrogance, covetousness and even cheating among children (Chondo, 2013). It was further suggested that there was too much rote-learning and too little application of the acquired knowledge. There was often a mixed reaction to this

new system of education. Students were often withdrawn from school by their parents. After sometime, parents could again take back their children to school when there was demand for educated children (Chondo, 2013). Despite these challenges bush schools greatly contributed to the spread of Christianity and western culture among Africans.

3.0 Conclusion

As demonstrated in this paper, the primary objective of the CMS in Kaloleni was to convert Africans to Christianity. It is worth noting that Western education and medicine were not naturally Christian. Rather, they were made an integral part of Christianity to facilitate winning of African converts. The CMS achieved their objectives through creation of a network of bush schools and training of many African catechists. In Kaloleni District, Africans took part in missionary education by donating land, building materials and labor for construction churches and schools. Without the support of African catechists and teachers, the CMS missionaries in Kaloleni could have not succeeded in their work. Africans, therefore, were active recipients of Western education and Christianity in Kaloleni District. This study has also revealed that the introduction of formal education created social tension among the Giriama. On one hand, some members of the Giriama community felt that missionary education eroded their cultural practices. On the other hand, the converts supported formal education. Therefore, there was clash between tradition verses modernity among the Giriama. Nevertheless, the benefits of the introduction of Western civilization among the Giriama outweighed its shortcomings. Indeed, the missionary education and Christianity freed the Giriama from the bondage of blind belief, illiteracy, poverty and disease. European missionaries, African catechists and teachers therefore left a great legacy in Kaloleni District.

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