Mutira Mission (1907-2011): the birth of a Christian empire in East Africa

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Abstract

The tiny Mutira village in the then Ndia Division, Kirinyaga County of Kenya, East Africa, began as a Church Missionary Society (CMS) station, between 1907 and 1908 after Rev AW McGregor bought land from the locals. The mission work could not however take place until the end of 1912, as resistance by some dissatisfied locals forced the European mission team to temporarily abandon Mutira mission and migrated to the neighbouring Kabare and Kigari missions. This article begins by surveying the political history of Kenya, from 1895 when it was made a British protectorate and from 1920 to 1963 when it was made a British colony, and also during its post independence times (1963 onwards). The article sets out on the premise that the birth of Christianity in Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries came after a painful labour. In other words, European missionaries, with the help of a few Africans, who midwifed this painful birth deserve our special attention, as it is through them that a Christian empire was born in Africa.

Introduction

From the ancient times, east African coast has been visited by sailors, merchants and traders from the East. In particular, the fleets of the Phoenicians and of King Solomon frequented east African shores. The book of first Kings in 1 Kings 10: 22 is a clear testimony to the aforesaid statement:

> For the king [Solomon] had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks."

Before the 19th century, the interior of Kenya was largely cut off from the modern development trends; while the coastal region had been well known to merchants for at least over 2000 years, as they sailed southwards from Arabia in search of gold. In the seventh century, the Arabs settled in the coastal parts of Kenya, thereby building trading centres and towns, the remains of which can still be seen even today. Characteristically, slave trade and the raiding of the vulnerable were rife. Mombasa was established in the 15th century by the Portuguese as a vital link in their trade with the East, but the Muslim influence eventually proved superior. Save for a few missionaries and explorers in the middle of the 18th century, the hinterland was not penetrated by Europeans up until about the year 1900. As it will be shown later, the Anglican body, Church Missionary Society (CMS), managed to reach the heart of central Kenya in 1900 when it reached Kabete, the present day Kiambu County. Later, the church body managed to reach Weithaga in 1904,[1] Kahuhia in 1906, Tumu Tumu in 1906 (which was later to be taken by the Presbyterians), and Githuguya-Sagana – as part of Mutira Mission in 1907. However, the local chief, Njega wa Gioko, did not allow the CMS missionaries to start a mission at Githuguya near Sagana in 1907 as they had envisaged. He directed them to *gacumbirira ka Mutira* (the hilly place called Mutira Mission) and they arrived there in early 1908. At this juncture, it is imperative to acknowledge that Mutira, the famous centre of the Anglican Church in the present day Kirinyaga County, is on the southern slopes of Mount Kenya, where most dwellers are largely the Kikuyu and their Embu, Mbeere and Meru cousins. In particular, Mutira people are part of the larger Ndia sub-group of the Kikuyu Nation. Today, the Ndia people occupy two districts out of the four districts that form Kirinyaga County. That is, Kirinyaga West and Kirinyaga Central. They also occupy the Western and Central part of Kirinyaga South District (Mwea).[2]

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1 Weithaga is situated in the present day Murang'a County.

2 See Julius Gathogo, *The Pangs of Birth in African Christianity: Essays in Commemoration of One Hundred Years of Mutira Anglican Mission, 1912-2012* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishers, 2011), 83.

Certainly, the first contact with Europeans (regardless of their social orientation) among the people of Central Kenya, living around the slopes of Mount Kenya, was in 1887 when Count Teleki and his caravan arrived in Dagorreti near the capital city of Nairobi.[3] It is here that they were received with lots of African hospitality by Waiyaki-wa-Hinga, the paramount leader (*Muthamaki*) of the Southern Kikuyus of the current Kiambu County. Teleki and Waiyaki took the oath of blood brotherhood, as it was customarily done to all outsiders. Encouraged by these developments, Europeans later trooped into Waiyaki's domain in a quick succession of events. In 1890 Captain FD Lugard and George Wilson followed. As expected, Waiyaki and his clansmen took an oath of brotherhood with the "visitors" as a measure of uniting the two races. By the time when AW McGregor, a CMS missionary, arrived in Fort Smith (Kikuyu, at the Centre of Kabete Division) on October 13, 1900, the people around the slopes of Mount Kenya had already spread the word about the expected coming of the white people (the Europeans).[4]

With regard to the Eastern African region, the initial driving force was not purely the national interests of the British and the Germans, but the sole desire to develop lucrative trade routes. Businessmen such as Carl Peters from Germany and William Mackinnon from Scotland became the first to use the opportunity to their advantage. They compelled their governments to protect their interests; and in 1885 the Eastern African territories were carved-up between Britain, Germany and France. The Germans took Tanganyika (present day Tanzania and Zanzibar), the British assumed control of Kenya and Uganda, whilst the French received the island of Madagascar. In Kenya, early development between1887 and 1888 was as a result of Sir William Mackinnon whose shipping company, the Imperial British East Africa (IBEA), linked the main ports of the Indian Ocean, and who began to open up the hinterland.[5]

When the Germans established themselves in what is now called Tanzania, (it was then called the German East Africa), a treaty was signed in 1886 that ceded the rights to Britain in the area later to be called Kenya. Consequently, the head office of the Imperial East African Company was established at Mombasa in 1888 at a critical moment when there were moves by the British Government and the Sultan of Zanzibar to end the trafficking of slaves. To this end, the beginning of the building of the so-called Uganda railway in 1895-6 served to open up the interior. It was built with 32, 000 cheaply hired unskilled labourers from India; and by 1899, the railway line had reached Nairobi, 326 miles from the coast of Kenya, and was subsequently opened to the public. In 1901 the railway line reached Port Florence (the present day Kisumu), which was by then, part of Uganda. Then the following year (1902), Nyanza (where Kisumu is situated) and Rift Valley were transferred from Uganda Protectorate to Kenya. With the opening up of the so-called, Uganda Railway, and other developments, the British East Africa, as Kenya was then called, saw the first influx of white settlers from South Africa in 1904, and since then Kenya was never the same again. In 1895, the coastal strip was leased from Sultan of Zanzibar as Protectorate; and in the same year, the IBEA Company sold rights to the British government. Subsequently, the protectorate of British East Africa was proclaimed. It only ended in 1920 when Kenya became a British Colony.

Thus, Kenya became a Crown Colony in 1920; comprising the whole territory with the exception of a ten-mile wide coast strip (including Mombasa) which was known as the Protectorate of Kenya. This ten-mile coastal strip "belonged" to the Sultan of Zanzibar, who used to receive an annuity of 16, 000 British Pounds for it before 1963. In 1954, a multiracial government was created by the Lyttleton Constitution. The Lyttleton Constitution was later revised in 1957 to produce the Lennox-Boyd Constitution. Under the new constitution, the government was administered by the Governor, assisted by a council of 16 ministers drawn from the Legislative Council (or Parliament). In turn, the Legislative Council consisted of a president (the Governor), a vice-president and a speaker; 16 ministers, 34 nominated members; 36 elected members (14 Africans, 14 Europeans, 6 Asians and 2 Arabians). Soon after the inauguration of the Lennox-Boyd Constitution, difficulties arose when the African elected members led by Mr Tom Mboya refused to cooperate in taking up those ministerial offices envisaged for Africans in the Constitution. The tension went a notch higher when, early in 1959, all the African elected members and the three Asian elected members boycotted the Legislative Council proceedings, due to what they described as blatant inequality amongst all races living in Kenya. This inequality was evidenced by the fact that despite over 75% of the population being predominantly black Africans, the number of Europeans and Africans in the legislative Council was equal, 14 Africans and 14 Europeans.

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3 C. G. Richards ed., *Count Teleki and the Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie* (London: Macmillan & Co.), 11-16.

4 Paul Mwangi, et al eds., *A century of God's Household: Diocese of Mt. Kenya South 1900-2000* (Nairobi: Uzima), 10ff.

5 http://www.kenya-vacations.com/about-kenya/history-of-kenya/ (accessed 13/8/2010)

Mutira Anglican Mission (1907-2012)

The opening of Mutira Anglican Missionary Centre in 1907-1912 did not come in isolation. It came at a time when the British government had spread its tentacles in the vast land of East Africa. Again, the neighbouring CMS centres had already been operational in as early as 1900. These centres were; Kabete in 1900, Weithaga in 1904, Kahuhia in 1906, Tumu Tumu 1906 (later taken over by Presbyterians) and Mutira Mission was set to start after Tumu Tumu in 1907. When the Weithaga missionaries under Rev AW McGregor planned to open an outstation and build a church at Kithuguya near Sagana in 1907, they met Chief Njega wa Gioko of the Ndia subgroup of the Kikuyu Nation. After careful and lengthy discussions, Njega accepted to allow the establishment of a mission centre within his chiefdom; and in turn, he advised them to go and establish their mission station at Mutira, in the land of the Agaciku clan of Ithimbwi family, as he considered Githuguya area warm and suitable place for grazing.[6] Subsequently, he sent McGregor's team to his assistant Chief, Ndegwa wa Kimere, to allow them to settle at the hill of Mutira, which he called *gacumbirira* or *Njumbi*.

Njega by then wanted to expose the missionaries to the dangers of the wild animals such as Hyenas since Mutira was at the slopes of Mt. Kenya (then called Kirinyaga). In 1908, McGregor came to Mutira (*Njumbi*) from Mbiri District (later Fort Hall and currently called Murang'a) accompanied by some fellow Europeans and two Africans, namely: Paul Kigondu, and Thomas Meero. Upon their arrival, they met a lot of resistance from the local Ithimbwi family of Agaciku clan, who did not want their 15 acres of land to be taken away by the "foreigners" in pursuit of building school (12 acres) and church (3 acres). Following this resistance, the missionaries, under Rev McGregor, left for Kabare and Kigari-Embu and by 1910 they had established the respective stations.

It was only at the end of 1909 that the deal was settled after land was finally bought by Rev McGregor from one, Karunditu wa Gitura, at a cost of 30 Rupees (approximately KES 60/= then but today in 2012, about KES 600 000 OR $7 500). The deal was witnessed by his half-brother, Gacubi. McGregor then placed a placard on a *Muthariti* tree to indicate that the land had already been bought. Sadly, not much is known about Karunditu wa Gitura as he reportedly died soon after. After the 1908 encounter in Mutira, where resistance threatened to permanently stop the missionary work, McGregor proceeded to Kabare and Kigari and bought land for the mission centre in 1910.

Rev McGregor: St Paul of Central Kenya?

Certainly, Rev McGregor can be safely referred to as the "St Paul of Central and Eastern Kenya," a church planter who always planted a church and installed pastors who would oversee it. Rev McGregor went about doing this for some time and he would then move to another place also to establish another branch. And this is the exact methodology that St Paul used when he started the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Philippines, Asia Minor and many others. Rev McGregor started churches in Kabete (1900), Weithaga (1904), Kahuhia (1906), Tumu Tumu (1906) and moved to Kithuguya-Sagana in 1907 with the hope of opening another missionary station there. In 1908, he reached Mutira and soon started the process of negotiating for the land purchase and other discussions under a lot of trying conditions. As an itinerant preacher, linguist, theologian, anthropologist, and a skilful negotiator, McGregor visited several parts of Kikuyuland and also made trips among the Maasai of Kenya. Expectedly, he was received in a very friendly manner in Kikuyuland even though the Kikuyu appeared some what different from the Wataita and the Wataveta. He noted that while the Wataveta showed great respect for the Europeans, on the contrary the Kikuyu did not. In particular, the Kikuyu never addressed anyone as a Mister. The Mr was never prefixed in front of the person's name. At this stage, McGregor noted that "a Kikuyu thinks that he evidently stands as high in the social scale as a white man (sic)".[7] The main reason for this "deep" respect for the European by the other tribes must have been as a result of the Taita and Taveta people meeting the white missionaries quite earlier. McGregor also noted that in Taveta and other places, "it is very difficult to get the men to sit with women and children, or to open their mouths in church", but for the Kikuyu, "they show no false shame, as they can sit anywhere and anyhow".[8]

As noted above, after McGregor founded the Kabete Missionary Station in 1900, he went to Weithaga and founded the Weithaga Station/Centre in 1904. Interestingly, Weithaga is a neighbouring station from Mutira. But as McGregor negotiated with Chief Njega about opening another station, now among the neighbouring Ndia of the present day Kirinyaga County, he was operating from Weithaga Station – thereby making Weithaga the missionary base for the Northern Kikuyu, as opposed to Kabete

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6 Joseph Karimi, *Njega Gioko The Ndia Pride (*Karatina: Gakaara Press, 1986), 31.
7 Paul Mwangi et al, *A Century of God's Household: Diocese of Mt. Kenya South 1900-2000* (Nairobi: Uzima, 2000), 14.
8 Paul Mwangi et al, *A Century of God's Household: 14.*

for the Southern Kikuyus[9] of Kenya. Of importance to note is that Kithuguya-Sagana is just a mere thirty minutes' drive from Weithaga-Murang'a where McGregor was operating from. This drives us to ask ourselves, why would McGregor of Murang'a cross over to the Kithuguya-Sagana, Chief Njega wa Gioko's headquarters, to plead for a plot to plant a church? Wasn't it tantamount to interfering with other administrative districts, outside Murang'a, as set out by the then British Protectorate government? In this, it is imperative to consider three points:

Firstly, from 1885 to 1911 Mutira-Ndia and Kirinyaga in general were part of Mbiri (Murang'a) District. From 1912 to 1932 Ndia became part of Nyeri District. Kirinyaga was part of Embu from 1933 to 1963. It was only in 1963 that Kirinyaga was made a separate district deriving its name from its nearest mountain to the north – mountain Kirinyaga (Mt. Kenya). When the boundaries of Ndia Division and the Kirinyaga District (now County) were redefined in 1963, it was reduced in size by one location. This was Muhito location which became part of Mukurwe-ini Division of the present day Nyeri County. This was done after the death of Chief Njega wa Gioko in 1948 – the man revered as the father of the community of the Ndia subgroup of the Kikuyu Nation. Wa Gioko ruled for forty seven years, from 1901 to 1948.

Secondly, with Chief Karuri wa Gakure of Weithaga location of Murang'a, having seen the "white magic" in Kabete 1900, with regard to education, and subsequently invited McGregor in 1901 to come and start a school in his village in Tuthu, McGregor had learnt to work with the local chiefs, or communal leaders – as Africa is a socialist society where converting a king was tantamount to changing the whole kingdom.

Thirdly, McGregor was in the habit of building houses (made of wattle and mud) for his successor-clergy rather than leaving them fending for themselves, even when he knew he was going for a transfer. For example, before McGregor left Kabete, after three years, to take the assignment at Kenya Mission, which is the area comprised Murang'a, Nyeri, and the Trans-Tana Embu Districts, he engaged in building his own house and building a house for Rev H Leakey (nicknamed *Giteru*) and family. The Leakey's were to join him later; and they served Kabete from 1902 to 1930.[10]

Brandon Laight becomes the first Clergy at Mutira

In view of this, the church building that was constructed under McGregor's supervision in Mutira (between 1911 and 1912) the Anglican Mission Centre, also served as a school with the first European teacher/missionary, Rev Laight, who was nicknamed "Kamonde". Rev Laight who had come as a CMS missionary, encouraged the locals to see the need for western education; and to demonstrate this, he first taught the first class from his house. To this end, Laight got his first students as: Gedeon Kabugi, Philip Karanja, Joshua Nguba, Stephano Kathuki and another eight. When Laight went for a vacation leave in 1915, Mr Clacker came to Mutira with a black missionary from Taveta, named Thomas Meero. In a short while, Meero, with support from Clacker, had managed to mobilise his fellow Africans to take education seriously. As a result, he managed to draw a huge class of 60. Johanna Njumbi (1886–1991), who later became Rev Canon Johanna Njumbi and the first Anglican clergyman in Ndia Division, was one of them. Meero went on to lead in the construction of Mutira Primary School, a grass-thatched building. By then, Rev (later Canon) Crawford, who founded Kabare Mission Centre in July 1910, was the inspector of CMS Schools; while his assistant was Jacob Kirii from Kariti, near Sagana. Rev Crawford was also a brother to Dr Crawford, a missionary doctor based in Kigari, Embu.[11]

Apart from the Anglican church, another denomination which approached Njega was Consolata (Roman Catholic) Church Mission (CCM). This mission asked for land to build the church. Njega allowed them to settle their mission and gave them land near Mt. Kirinyaga (later Mt. Kenya) forest. They built their church at the present day Kerugoya – the headquarters of the old Kirinyaga District. This small mission centre contributed to the growth of the now Kerugoya Town. Similarly, when another group of Roman Catholic missions approached him to give them land to settle, he showed them Baricho. Today, Baricho is not only the headquarters of Kirinyaga West District, and the headquarters of Ndia Division, but it is also headquarter of Ndia Consituency. Again, the place where it is situated has one of the best schools in Kirinyaga – Baricho boys, St. Agnes Girls, several primary schools, polytechnics, mission centres for both Protestants and Catholics and the list is long. As the church grew, the residents grew economically, socially, intellectually and spiritually.

Bishop Alfred R Tucker makes the first step

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[9] Kikuyu is the largest ethnic group in Kenya. They comprise 20% of Kenya's 40 million population.

[10] Paul Mwangi et al, *A Century of God's Household:* 15.

[11] Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya: A Short History of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Mount Kenya (1900-1970)*, (Melbourne: Ridley College, 1970), 60.

As we focus on Mutira Anglican Mission and other "neighbouring" stations mentioned above, it is critical to appreciate that a long journey starts with one step. For indeed, it is the third and last Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, Alfred R Tucker (served from1890 to 1897), who made the first step by urging the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to evangelise the Maasai and Kikuyu. In 1900, Sir Arthur Hardinge, the first Consul General of British East Africa, implored the CMS to commence missionary work among the people living around the slopes of Mt. Kirinyaga. Taking another step, Hardinge wrote to the Rt Rev WG Peel, the first Bishop of Mombasa Diocese who served from 1899 to 1916, and stated that "the natives are troublesome and the Consul-General thinks that the missionary work would help to pacify them!"[12] This leads us to the fact that, both missionaries and the colonial authorities supported the missionary work, but with divergent motives. The missionaries aimed at winning the "heathens" for Christ, the colonialists, like the Roman Emperor, Constantine, in the history of the early Church (318 CE), wanted to use the gospel to calm down the populace as he carried his administrative duties in a cool environment. Again, the missionaries and colonial authorities had to maintain a symbiotic relationship as they needed each other. For the missionaries, protection by the colonial authorities was paramount hence the existence of colonial administration was necessary.

The opening up of Anglican Mission Stations, such as Mutira, around Mt. Kenya region was also energised by the missionary zeal itself. In particular, Bishop Peel made several journeys from Mombasa to Nairobi. For example, in both January and June 1900, he visited Nairobi with one aim: to obtain a site and thereby make preliminary arrangements for the establishing of a centre for the mission. Subsequently, he encouraged the local CMS administrative body to deliberate on that, and as a result, a missionary conference was held on 18 July 1900. The resolutions of the meeting were clear: "add Fort Smith [Kikuyu] and Machakos to the eleven already existing CMS missionary districts in British East Africa [Kenya]".[13] It is from there that the Rev A. W. McGregor was sent as a pioneer missionary worker in Central Kenya, in particular Kabete in 1900.

Another major step that brought about the final success of the mission work is the ability to persevere and thereby appreciate suffering as the way of the cross. This trend of appreciating suffering as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit was first set by St Paul in the New Testament. At one stage, he appears to glorify suffering by saying that it is when he is weak that he realises that he is genuinely strong (refer to 2 Corinthians 12). Certainly suffering was overwhelmingly experienced. McGregor, for instance, had escaped death for the first time when their tent failed, during his ministerial duties at Taveta in 1892. As a result, he and A Rogers were forced to put their blankets down under a tree. During that time, he was disturbed by something that he felt was on his face, and quickly grabbed it, as he thought it was a mere branch of tree. To his surprise, he realised that it was a deadly black snake; and whipped off the four feet long reptile. McGregor had to escape another death from a wounded leopard but not before it had mauled his hand. With a shortened hand – where fingers were chopped off, the Gikuyu nicknamed him *Gakono* (small hand).[14] Such moments confirm that the ability to persevere was the single major gift that the early European missionaries bequeathed to Africa. With faith, snakes, lions or leopards of our times need not impede our missionary journeys to the Promised Land. In other words, no discouragements should stop an idea whose time has come. Thus, the painful birth of Christianity in Kirinyaga County of Kenya, Mutira Anglican Mission in particular, was born from that backcloth, a backdrop that was characterised by risks, misunderstandings, fears and hope.

Rev Herbert Butcher arrives as the second priest

Following the transfer of Rev Laight from Mutira to the coast of Kenya, in 1917 the Rev (later Canon) Herbert J Butcher and his wife Elizabeth arrived on May 24, 1919. Throughout the interregnum (1917-1919), Rev GW Wright from the neighbouring Kabare paid several pastoral visits to Mutira and reported that many young people were ready for baptism; an observation that matured on February 20, 1920, when the first baptismal ceremony took place in the locality. Among the candidates who were baptised included Paulo Samweli Kangi, Stefano Philipu Githinji, Musa Ngure, Johana Njumbi (who later became the first Anglican Clergyman in the locality), Simon Petero Kanjobe, Andrea Mwangami and Jakubu William Macaria.[15] Rev GW Wright served Kabare Mission Centre from 1917 to 1919.[16]

Butcher becomes a "rainmaker"

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12 Paul Mwangi et al, *A Century of God's Household:* 10.
13 Paul Mwangi et al, *A Century of God's Household:* 10.
14 Interview with Rev Canon John Mararo, Cool Breeze Hotel – Mombasa, November 11, 2010.
15 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 64.
16 James Munyambu Nyaga, *ACK Kabare Centenary Celebrations (2010)*: A Brief History of the Church of Christ (Kabare: Kabare Centenary)

It was during Butcher's stewardship that Ndia Division experienced two severe droughts; one in 1921 and the other in 1924. In turn, these droughts threatened both human and animal lives. To counter its damage, medicine men and the rainmakers from Ethaga clan attempted to bring down rain by conducting their rituals without success. Surprisingly to the locals, when Chief Nguru approached Butcher in 1921 to ask him to pray for the rain to fall, he dutifully agreed. Butcher prayed that it rains, and it did. He did not do it once but twice. As fate would have it, Butcher's prayer was instantly followed by hailstorm hitherto unseen, which quenched the thirst of the dry land. In turn, this development had two implications: One, Butcher's prayer and the subsequent torrential rain, which fell after three hours after his prayer, were crucial as they confirmed to Chief Nguru and the rest of the local population that God of Christendom is "real." Second, it made the locals to get interested in Butcher's "religion". In other words, it gained "some" credibility to an otherwise eager crowd, and locals could now look forward to more of its future "miracles". This resulted in a "conversion boom" followed, as large numbers of people streamed into Mutira mission. This included some medicine men who gave up their practice and surrendered their divining equipment to be burnt.[17] With time, Butcher was looked upon as a formidable medicine man representing a more powerful religion than the local one practiced by unbelievers. Before joining the CMS in 1912, Herbert Butcher, who was born in England in 1879, was an auctioneer.[18] Rev Butcher who served the centre from 1915 to 1927 was able to build a new church of mud-brick, a combination of wattle and mud, (*Nyumba ya Magoko na Maturubari ma tiri*) which was consecrated by Bishop AW Peel, of the then Mombasa Diocese, in November 30, 1924.

Rev Hillard (Gikubia) arrives as the third clergy

Subsequently, Rev Butcher's place was taken by Rev and Mrs WH Hillard when the former and his wife left Mutira. On Rev Hillard's appointment, it was suggested that Kabare should become the pastoral centre and Mutira the educational centre for the training of teachers for outcentres. This scheme did not see the light of day as it was not given the necessary support by both Mutira and Kabare centres. Another interesting dimension during Rev Hillard's tenure is that the first woman evangelist called Jane Edith Asher was sent to Mutira to help with the women's and girl's work.[19] This development points towards the critical role of women ministries right from the missionary era. As the people of Kirinyaga, in 1980s and in the early part of the 1990s, resisted women ordination to priesthood, there was need to appreciate that women ministries have been there in the early church and in the missionary era, and therefore, our contemporary society has nothing but to appreciate that reality.

While Rev Butcher made a mark as a baptist, Hillard made a mark in conducting church marriages. Alice Wakanugu Mwari wa Gatangi, w/o Michael Karuga, recalls that Rev Hillard, who was nicknamed Gikubia, was mighty and a giant figure. In an interview, on the 10th of March 2010, Alice explained that Rev Hillard, who replaced Butcher in 1927, will be greatly remembered for how he forced Africans to attend church services on Sundays. During those days, it was a common practice for Africans to work on Sundays but Hillard declared that this was to stop. To Africans, all days were equal working days hence none of the days of the week was more special than the other nor was there a day which was insignificant to the other. Alice confirmed that Rev Hillard would walk around the farms that surrounded the church and mostly Kiamai pastoral area[20] and literally beat up men and women on Sundays with a whip. It was a common practice to hear wails and screams on Sundays – as people were being made to attend church services by force. Armed with a gun and a whip, Hillard would evangelise with or without a bible, and where the need arises, he would beat up non-church goers too.

Mutira without resident European Missionaries (1929-)

On the eve of January 7, 1928, a severe earthquake shook Mutira and the entire Mount Kenya region. As a result there was an extensive damage to the two mission houses, the church, the school and the dispensary. This forced the missionaries and their assistants to sleep in tents for a period of six months.

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17 Karanja's (1999:34) interview with an eye witness, Canon Johana Njumbi, April 19, 1991. Others who were interviewed included Mariko Kangi (26th April 1991); Gerishon Matiti (16th May 1991); and Joshua Wagiti (July 16, 1991).

18 KNA: CMS 1/638, Mutira Log Book, entry for 12th December 1921; CMS Archives: G3AL 1917-34, annual letter from Butcher, 1924.

19 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 65.

20 Kiamai pastoral area is near the Mutira Mission Centre/Headquarters.

As for Rev and Mrs WH Hillard, they had to shift to the neighbouring Kabare Mission Centre. They only returned to Mutira in June 1928 and built the current house that is now the parish office.[21]

From 1929 onwards, there was no resident European missionary priest at Mutira. In fact, a research in the Nairobi national archive shows that the Mutira Mission was officially closed in 1929; though in reality, it continued under African lay leadership. For some years after 1929, the resident missionary at Kabare and Kigari visited Mutira mission centre taking overall responsibility for all ecclesiastical duties. Among the clergy who visited Mutira during this period to offer pastoral care were: Rev HJ Church (1933-43) and Rev Canon Thomas Francis Cecil Bewes (1935–1937) who translated the book of Ecclesiastes to the local language in 1940. Other clergymen who visited Mutira for pastoral oversight included: Rev LJ Beecher (1937-39) and Rev John Comely who served Mutira from Kigari, Embu. Under the stewardship of Rev Comely, many people were joined in a holy matrimony. One of them is Jason Gathumbi and Susan wa Reuben Kimotho, on September 1, 1930.[22] Later in 1932, Mr Gathumbi worked hand-in-hand with Mr Justin King'uru Karoki to steward Mutira Primary School, when the first African head teacher, Peter Gatheru – 1930-1934, left for Nairobi.[23] To this end, the Rev Canon Bewes, the missionary at Kabare mission, wrote:

> Peter Gatheru, an old High School boy is now in charge (of the school) and is doing extremely well. The Rev Johana Njumbe (deacon) is living at Mutira, and is in charge of the pastoral work there. His wife conducts classes for women. The dispensary was opened at the beginning of 1934.[24]

Consecration of Emmanuel Church Mutira

During this period, 1933 to 1945, the Anglican Church around the slopes of Mount Kenya was experiencing an assortment of challenges. Among them was the inability to pay its workers, with some going for months without their stipends. According to John Karanja, many of them had to live on the produce of their own little plots of land, which "was the price of devolution".[25] Another challenge in the 1930s was increased sexual immorality among the youth, a situation that was caused by the collapse of cultural sanctions and the sharp rise in bride price. Certainly, the collapse of the old social order brought down hitherto restrictions on sexual activity among the youth. In addition, young men continued in sexual promiscuity as they postponed their marriages so as to first work hard and acquire enough wealth in the form of livestock and money, as dowry. This trend upset both African elders and the European missionaries. The fact that it was also a period of devolution (where the church was moving faster to the grassroots), revival and consolidation did not help matters. As a stop gap measure, the missionaries encouraged sex education in schools which they sponsored plus taking disciplinary measures to their adherents who were found guilty though the challenge remained as a thorn in the flesh.[26]

Despite financial constraints, African Christians in Mutira and in the rest of Central Kenya displayed remarkable zeal for construction of permanent church buildings. In total, from 1933 to 1945, about seven permanent buildings were either completed or started. In particular, St. Michael's Church Gathukeine, Murang'a[27] which was built in 1926 was enlarged in 1936; St. John's Church Kahuhia which was started in 1926 was consecrated in September 1939; Emmanuel Church Mutira which was started in 1933 was consecrated in June 1937; and St. Paul's Church Kiruri which was started in January 1938 was consecrated in September 1939. The latter three (Mutira inclusive) were built without financial assistance from the CMS. Again, St. Paul's Mother Church Kabete and St. Stephen's Church Njumbi were started during this period (1933-45).[28]

What factors made it possible to complete Emmanuel Church Mutira in a short period of three years (1933-37)? This could be attributed to the hard working people that the church had – a people who understood the importance of the task, and the leadership of Rev Johana Njumbi. According to

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21 CPK Mutira Parish, History of Mutira Parish, 1981, Unpublished material, Kerugoya.

22 CPK Mutira Parish, History of Mutira Parish, 1981, Unpublished material, Kerugoya.

23 Among the people who studied around this time included: Hosea Mbui, Jeremiah Kimengi, Eliud Njiraini Machuki and Leonard Mwangi Kathuki. Later, Arthur Gitura became the third African Headmaster and taught Jackan Kangangi, Tirus Kagucia and his wife, and Leonard Mwangi Kathuki.

24 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 65.

25 John Karanja, *Founding an Anglican Faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity 1900 – 1945* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1999), 222.

26 See John Karanja, *Founding an Anglican Faith:* 241-2.

27 Gathukeine church, Murang'a, is the birth place of the illustrious clergyman, Rev Felix Nyoro, whose services to Mutira pastorate and the larger Kirinyaga remains remarkable.

28 For details, see John Karanja, 223.

Karanja, he was "wise and dynamic".[29] Again, a missionary clergy from the neighbouring pastorate, Kabare, Rev Bewes, in his 1936-7 annual letter, praised Njumbi for his dynamic leadership which had made the construction of the Church and pastorate office possible.[30] Undoubtedly, when the leadership is entrusted to the wise and dynamic, whether in the country, county, or municipal level or even in the church, the tasks ahead become easy. Third, Mutira as a medium-sized pastorate did not begin an extraordinary big building; rather, they put up a medium size building for about four hundred worshippers which cost about 150 British pounds to build.[31]

Njumbi's dynamic and wise leadership must have been a product of good leadership of his predecessors, Laight, Butcher, Hillard, and Comely among others. It is no wonder that by 1923, Mutira Anglican Mission had been elevated to a pastorate. By elevation to pastorate status, it meant that the local Christians got a greater voice in the running of their own church. In each pastorate, a committee was set up comprising an African pastor (where one was available), the resident missionary, and at least five communicant members of the pastorate. In turn, the committee had several responsibilities some of which included: collection and disbursement of church funds, making church programmes, taking direct responsibility of church property, evangelism campaigns, and advising the priest on disciplinary matters.[32]

Although there were no set rules for declaring an area a pastorate, Bishop Heywood in 1924 attempted to clarify this by using numbers as opposed to finances. To this end, he suggested that all centres/stations with over 50 communicants should become pastorates. Upon being confirmed a pastorate, a centre was allowed to send delegates to the African Church Council (ACC), the central organ of the young African Church. In turn, ACC had the duty of deliberating on critical issues facing the church and finding a way forward. It also included payment of all African clergy under the Council's terms and regulation subject to approval by the serving Bishop.[33] Like the current Diocesan Pastoral Care Committee (PCC), it could also nominate African candidates for holy orders, transfer African clergy and even discipline where necessary.

Thus, a pastorate status was seen as a great achievement for a mission centre; since Africans were excluded from the Missionary conferences, which was the principal decision making body in Kenya before the formation of the Diocesan Synod in 1921. Being members of a pastorate gave them a forum where they could air their views. To this end, six mission centres/stations in central Kenya had attained a pastorate status by 1924. Those mission centres were: Kabete (1917), Weithaga (1917), Gathukeine (1922), Kahuhia (1923), Mutira (1923) and Kabare (1924).[34]

Mutira Out-Centres (1930-1970)

By the 1930s, a number of outcentres had sprung up around Mutira, notably in Baricho, Kiburu, Kiini and Gakoigo. Later on the new church, the Emmanuel Mutira, was built of stone and was dedicated by Bishop Richard Heywood, of the then Mombasa Diocese, in August 1935. From the time of the departure of the Rev LJ Beecher from Kabare in 1939, Mutira, like Kabare, had been under the care of African clergy with occasional supervision from Kigari, Embu. African Clergymen of note in the early history of Kabare mission centre included: Rev Musa Mumai who retired after a long and faithful Anglican Church ministry in 1952. With regard to Mutira mission centre, great clergymen of note who oversaw the mission since the 1930s included: the Reverends Canon Johana Njumbi (1939-1952), Nathaniel Gacira (1953-1954), Paul Kibuti (1955-1958), Johana Muturi (1958-1965), Joseph Mwangi Ngooro (1965-1966), Joseph Kangangi Mwanake (1966-1970), Zakariah Nyaga Karani (1971-1975), Godfrey Ngigi Ndirima (1976-1978), Jeremiah Njogu Mugo (1978-1979), Peter Karanja Njoroge (1980-1981), Daniel Munene Ngoru (1981-1989), Frederick Ndege Mutugi (1989-1990), Ephantus Muriuki (1990-1991), Rev Canon Jeremiah Njogu Mugo (1992-1996), Johnson Marichu (1997-2002), John Kangangi (2002), Daniel Mbogo (2004), Francis Mwai (2010) and Julius Njogu Nyamu (2011). Others who served as curates included: Reverends Bernard Kamau, Jason Minja Mwai, Gerishom Wachira Wambugu, Wilson Kangunu, Jephthah K Gathaka, Cephas Njenga Njoroge, Amos Karani and John Karani among others.

In 1970, outcentres connected with Mutira included: *Kamuiru* under lay leadership of Erastus Mwai Ngunju; *Karaini* which was started in 1931 was under the leadership of several elders, namely:

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29 Ibid*:* 224.
30 KNA: CMS 1/638: Mutira Log Book, entry for 13th November 1935.
31 See John Karanja, 224.
32 CMS: G3AS/1923/9, Constitution of the African Church Council as revised by Delegates in Nairobi, 17th November 1922.
33 Ibid.
34 CMS: G3AL/1917-34: Annual letters from Leaky (1917), Hoper (1923) and Rampley (1924); CMS Gathukeine Station Log Book, entry for 29th September 1922; KNA: Mutira Log Book, entry for 6th August 1923.

Gerishon Kibugi, Gordon Kariti and Gardi Macaria. *Gatwe* was under the lay leadership of Samuel Gakuya; *Kabonge* under Henry Kuruga; Kiamaina which was started in 1920 was by 1970 under the lay stewardship of elders who included: ex-chief Habrew and Samuel Gicoya. *Mutuma* was stewarded by Charles Muraguri; *Kangaita Factory* under Samuel Gakuya; while *Karimaini* was under Moses Gachimu and Edward Nguu.

With regard to Kiandangae parish which was curved out of Mutira parish, it was begun by Rev Hillard in 1926 as a mere outcentre. At the same time, Mr David Gaciraini founded a school in the locality, as part of his pastoral ministry. As the centre grew, it was deemed necessary to establish a parish in its own right. Later, it was felt that it could not stand as a parish. Consequently, it was returned to its old status where it was cared under Mutira. But in 1962, it became a subparish and later a full parish. As a parish Kiandangae had her own subcentres which included: *Kagio*, *Baricho* (started in 1923), *Kiburu* (started in 1920), *Kiini* (started in 1922), *Sagana*, where classes were held in the school, *Gacaru*, *Karima*, *Kianjege*, *Kombuini*, and *Thiguku*. In turn, leading elders who have been associated with the old Kiandangae parish, before 1970, included: Elijah Kimani, Harun Maina, Phinehas Wang'ombe, Zakayo Nguba, Joseph Kanyoro, Erasto Kanama, Njeru Githae, and Paul Kibuto. Clergymen who have served in the old Kiandangae parish include: Revs N Gicira (1950-53), Paul Kibuti; F Nyoro; J Kago (1960-62); Jason Minja (1962-64); E Makaho (1964-67); and Richard Mbui (1967-1971).[35]

With regard to Kerugoya parish, which was curved from Mutira Parish, it is imperative to acknowledge that it was established in 1970. Rev Gerishom Wacira was its first parish priest. By the time of its inauguration in 1970, it had various outcentres which included: *Gakoigo*, *Gatuto*, *Kiaritha*, *Kiabarikiri*, *Mukinduri*, *Kangaita*, *Kiamuthambi* and *Thaita*. Her leading elders included: Amos Kathigo, Daniel Gathiomi, Joel Gatungo, Henry Karani, Charles Nderi, Mrs Josephine Wamwetha, Andrea Njogu, John Gacoki, Gerishon Mboi and Bernard Ngari.[36]

Concerning the Mwea parish of 1970, centres that made up the parish included: *Gategi*, *Kimbimbi*, *Mutithi*, *Karaba*, *Nguka*, *Murubara*, *Muruara*, *Rukanga*, *Ndindiruku*, *Kiorugari*, *Gathigiriri*, *Kandongu*, and *Marikiini*. Leading elders included: Elishah Gatuna, Stephen Musyimi Kisilu (father to Hon Rev. Mutava Musyimi), Joseph Githui, Zablon Gathogo, Phares Muhia, Reuben Ngumbe, Wilson Mwaura, Earnest Mathenge, Frederick Karaya, Micah Muciga, Mrs Alice Muasa, Francis Gicuki, Chief Joel Karubiu, Moses Kariuki, Samuel Ngige, and Alam Mugo.

Historically, Mwea was established as a settlement scheme and it was seen as part of the healing process for the rehabilitation of *Mau Mau* detainees. In view of this, a series of workcamps were built on the Mwea plains and the detainees went there on a daily basis and placed the whole area under irrigation with water from the Thiba and Nyamindi rivers. To this end, large areas were put under rice cultivation, and detainees were given first priority in taking up plots on this scheme. By the time the erstwhile governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, declared a state of emergency on 20 October 1952, Rev (later Bishop) Sospeter Magua had worked and established valuable contacts that culminated to the success of Mwea mission work as we know it today. It is important to state that not every part of Mwea was in the old Mutira pastorate, but only half of Mwea was. It was the western side to be precise. Rev Magua was succeeded as a priest by the Revs Manases Kuria (later second Archbishop of Kenya), Bedan Ireri, Daudi Petro and J Kago. Other notable reverends included: EN Chandi (1965-69), Godfrey Ngigi (1970-71), Timotheo Mwasya and Solomon Kago.

It is during the stewardship of Manasses Kuria that St Christopher Church was built by the Mau Mau detainees just outside the Thiba Camp. In turn, this became the centre of the newly formed parish of Mwea. Within Mwea yet another mission centre was established in 1947 at Riakanau, on the banks of Tana River locally called *Rui rwa Thagana*. As a result of these developments, the Riakanau church and Riakanau Primary School were built in 1948. Here, the undisputed leading elder was Stephen Kisilu.[37] Today, Riakanau Parish, as it is now called, is in Mbeere Diocese. Politically, it is in Gachoka constituency, Embu County. It points to the fact that the old Mutira parish which the likes of Canon Johana Njumbi served was too large that today it is found in both Embu and Kirinyaga Counties. It was a great sacrifice for pioneers of the old Mutira Parish to have served huge areas, which were risky, difficult and inconvenient. With transport system being a challenge, Canon Johana Njumbi and his contemporaries struggled to reach various destinations using bicycles, or merely trekking long distances. They lacked stipends as parishes could not afford to pay them. At times their young families went hungry – as the flock could not effectively sustain the clergy. This therefore raises a worthy question: Were these struggles worth it?

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35 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 66.
36 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 63.
37 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 67.

Mutira: the London of the locality?

Today, Mutira is loosely called "London" – as the history of white missionaries, thought to have come from London, continues to impact on the locality. Being the first Europeans to settle there, the Reverend and Mrs Laight had a very painful beginning as lack of housing and medical necessities including the issue of language and cultural barriers posed a serious challenge to their missionary work. As if this was not enough, the admission of boys at school in Kabare dropped drastically. The school had started off with 30 pupils in 1910, but the numbers went down sharply after the circulation of the rumours that those boys who continued attending school would never be allowed to eat cold food or to marry; and that they would be given the nickname "Mwalimu" (teacher), and eventually not be productive to the communal African society.[38]

With time, the Laights were able to establish educational, medical and pastoral work at Mutira. As a matter of fact, it took some time to build a house, a church and a dispensary, but by 1913, they were all completed. Subsequently, Rev Laight was pleased to report to his senior, Bishop Peel and the Diocesan Synod, that there were good congregations each Sunday.[39] This shows that Laight was a good steward who filed information concerning the assignment given and later reported back to his manager. This smacks off good accountability.

Following their very busy schedule in establishing the new Mutira Anglican Mission, a centre within the existing Diocese of Mombasa which had been established in 1897 under Bishop William G Peel (1854-1916), Rev and Mrs Laight went on leave, in 1915; and since no replacements were available, the centre was left without European supervision. Nevertheless, Mr Thomas Meero, the African missionary, who arrived from the neighbouring Kabare Anglican Mission Centre – a station that had began in 1910, started a school with 14 boys. This was a turning point in the history of the locality, as "formal" European education introduced new ways of living to date. Again, being taught by a fellow African, the evangelist, was very much appreciated by the locals as the need to compare Western and African forms of education was overwhelming.

Meero's hard work was confirmed by Rev (later Canon) Crawford, who began the neighbouring Kabare Mission Centre in July 1910, when he visited Mutira Anglican Centre, in November 1915. Interestingly, he found that "Thomas [Meero] the teacher has been steadily going on with the school work and has upwards of 40 boys on his roll. As he has no school building, we are trying to erect a small temporary one of grass which should suffice until Laight's return."[40] On his return, Laight was able to do so.

Some setbacks: the case of Kiburu Church

Despite the remarkable progress in the mission work, the African adherents of the "new" religion found themselves, in some places, divided long ethnic and subethnic lines, thereby affecting the smooth progress of the Mutira parish negatively. Speaking from a wider perspective, John Karanja notes that African Christians were divided by two main factors, namely: family conflicts and divergent attitudes towards Kikuyu beliefs and practices.[41] For, before the coming of Europeans, the Kikuyu society was divided into competing factions who revolved around powerful families whose economic and political strength was based on acquired land, polygamy, large families with many children, and the ability to attract many tenants into their land. Unfortunately, this rivalry between the "rich" and the "poor" transplanted into the church hence the rivalry continued in another dimension altogether. With the church overturning its understanding of high or low status (sociologically called status inversion, where those who were first become last), it was felt that the only way to regain lost status was by going to church, acquiring western education and be able to rate wealth and prosperity in the new understanding. To do this, some sought to secure positions within the church's hierarchy so as to enhance their status. In view of this, powerful *mbaris* (extended families) objected to the local churches being led by the local people from the smaller clans. In some cases, an outstation church in a particular area could find that it had no "local" leaders as lay readers or catechists. That is, the running of an outstation could be administered by Africans from a far clan, from across the neighbouring hill or valley; and after some time, agitations would begin as the locals would start wondering why it isn't one of their local people who was serving as an evangelist, catechist, lay reader or even as a priest.

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38 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya: A Short History of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Mount Kenya (1900-1970)*, (Melbourne: Ridley College, 1970), 60.

39 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 63.

40 Keith Cole, *The Cross Over Mount Kenya:* 64.

41 John Karanja, *Founding of an African Faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity 1900-1945* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1999), 194.

But such an agitation is theologically problematic, for the church is one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. Is there any credible justification for keeping away our brothers and sisters just because they come from certain families, clans, races, backgrounds, ethnic groups – even though they are competent? Why then do we talk of ecumenism? In any case, reconstruction is inclusivity for all regardless of prejudices. Further, as St Paul correctly puts it, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women, between Africans and Europeans, between foreigners and inhabitants, for "You are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Additionally, the Great Commission does not know borders. It is simply: "Go then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples ..." (Matt. 28:19). St Paul tells us that we have many gifts of the Holy Spirit. These include: the gift of teaching, suffering, administration, prophecy, interpreting and speaking in tongues (I Cor. 12-14) among others. These gifts should be shared interculturally to edify the church. These divisions were therefore unnecessary.

A case in point is Kiburu which was begun in 1920 as an outstation of Mutira Mission Centre which led to a split of the Anglican Church in 1931 for various reasons, one of them being unpopular leadership. According to reports in CMS archives, London, Rampley ascribed the division to the unwillingness by Kiburu church leaders to be governed by the elders from Mutira Mission Centre itself, as the locals felt demeaned by the "visiting servants".[42] Why not elevate locals to serve in the church rather than "importing" people from the church headquarters? they wondered. Nevertheless, while the struggle for autonomy played an important part in the split, it was both preceded and overshadowed by clan conflict. Its leading elder was Elijah Kimani (1918-1985), whose style of leadership was seen by some as authoritarian while others saw it as decisive and pragmatic. Even though the Anjiru clan were the largest and most powerful in the locality, they had no voice in the running of the church, as the Aithekahuno (Angari) clan members who controlled it were comparatively a small group. Such factors caused resentment among members of larger clans in the area surrounding the present day St John's Kiburu Anglican Church, Kirinyaga West District of Kirinyaga County, Kenya.

The final trigger that led to the "official" pull out in 1931 was when Elijah Kimani announced the Anglican Church's stand against female circumcision. Kimani was immediately accused of introducing "new commandments" that are not in either the Old or the New Testament; hence they could not understand what he was up to. Some wondered: "Is he trying to privatise the church? Is it Kimani's clan conspiracy?" As a matter of fact, Elijah Kimani's announcement on the church stand was long overdue and was belatedly done, as he was supposed to have announced it in as early as March 1929. In other words, the suspicions that were felt after he announced his "personal commandments" with "intent to chase away other clans" from the Anglican Church were unwarranted. The announcement came after an ecumenical conference involving various denominations (Anglican, Presbetarian, AIC/AIM) which was held in Tumu Tumu Presbyterian Church, in the present day Nyeri County, from 8th to 12th[h] March 1929. In this conference, the Mutira Anglican Mission was represented by Elijah Njogu, Johana Njumbi and Elijah Kimani. The fact that all the three were Africans shows that Mutira had taken African leadership much earlier. European representation included: Rev WP Knapp (Kambui Station), Rev LH Downing (Kijabe Station), Rev R Reynolds (Githumu), Miss Rogers (Gathukeine), Rev WJ Rampley[43] (Kabare), Rev Dr. Phillip (Tumu Tumu), Rev RGM Calderwood (Tumu Tumu), Miss Stevenson (Tumu Tumu) and AR Barlow (Kikuyu). In the conference, Mr Calderwood opened with a devotional session, while Dr Phillip, in the name of the mission staff at Tumu Tumu and the church, heartily welcomed all the delegates. Mr Calderwood explained the steps which led to the meeting being called. Afterwards, the Rev Kahuho of the Presbyterian Church (Tumu Tumu) was elected the Chair of the meeting; while Stanley Kiama (Tumu Tumu) was chosen as the clerk/secretary of the meeting. Interestingly, the Europeans "retired" – as they unusually took part as ordinary members.

In this conference of 1929, various resolutions were made. They included the following:

a) ***Concerning female circumcision***: It was agreed with one dissentient that this custom is evil, and should be abandoned by all Christians. This resolution proposed that all who require their children to submit to it be suspended by the churches everywhere.

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[42] KNA: CMS 1/638, Mutira Log Book, entry for March 30, 1931.

[43] Canon William James Rampley (1882-1959) was a son of a farmer from Suffolk in England. He spent his early years as a coachman on an estate in Sussex. He first went to Kenya in 1913 as an African Inland Mission (AIM) missionary. He joined the CMS in 1917. From 1919 to 1932, he was serving at Kabare where he was stationed. As a priest, he used hands-off approach in leadership, as he adopted a policy of handing over responsibility to the local church.

b) ***Beer***: All agreed that beer is evil, and that it should be forbidden in our churches, and be made a matter of discipline. Things that were to be included in this "law" were: drunkenness, beerdrinking, buying and selling beer, manufacturing it, paying part of the bride price with beer, and so forth.

c) ***Mission Spheres***: A memo of cooperation was circulated that gave an account of mission decisions on cooperation.

d) ***Education of Christian children***: The elders asked the missions to consider the possibility of providing educational sessions both in the mornings and afternoons for Christian children.[44]

From the above resolutions, it is therefore clear that in announcing the Anglican Church's stand against beer and female circumcision, Elijah Kimani was just merely conveying what had been agreed upon in the ecumenical conference at Tumu Tumu on 12 March 1929. It is interesting though to note that he took time before he announced this resolution to the members of the congregation. Did he fear the possible repercussions? Was he "converted" to those ideas? Following his final announcement, a large group of Christians, consisting mainly of Anjiru clan, seceded from CMS as Anglican Church was then loosely called. They joined the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) loosely called locally as *Indi*. Today in 2010 both churches (Anglican and AIPCA) are built side by side, each with a sizeable membership. In fact, the headquarters of the AIPCA Archdeaconry, Kirimara, are situated at Kiburu Township opposite Kiburu Anglican Church. During the 1931 "schism", only thirteen members, mainly from Aithekahuno clan of Elijah Kimani, were left in Kiburu Anglican church when others moved to African instituted churches, especially the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) in Kiburu. Some travelled as far as Karatina, in the present day Nyeri County, every Sunday to worship in other African instituted churches, but those who crossed over to AIPCA Kiburu appeared to be numerically superior.

From this narrative, we gather that the underlying trouble at Kiburu was an interclan power struggle, which dated back to the precolonial era. Interestingly, Elijah Kimani's son, Joshua Kiongo, is a leading Pentecostal church leader well known in Kirinyaga County and beyond, as an energetic preacher and mobiliser. By 2012, he was heading the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya (FGCK) in Kirinyaga County as a pastor with the main office in Kerugoya Township. Kimani's other sons include: Councillor Charles Kiringa, Manasseh Ndegwah a renowned teacher and administrator. Ndegwah's daughter, Leah Wangithi was, by 2011, an active church leader at St. John's Kiburu Anglican Church. When Kimani died in 1985, he was buried within St John's Kiburu Church compound as his name was synonymous with the church which he painfully built; and as his grave lays there, his offspring have gallantly continued with church and social affairs from where he probably left.

Kiburu's case compares with that of Gacharage in 1930. In turn, Gacharage which was founded in 1925 as an out-school of Kabete and was inhabited by *Mbari ya Muya*, a wealthy family whose ancestors migrated from Murang'a in the middle of the 19th century. On the other ridge, *Mbari ya Kihara*, an equally wealthy and powerful family occupied the other part. With time, a strong rivalry developed between the two extended families. Although CMS missionaries had already set a base in Kabete as early as 1900, being rich in land and livestock, *Mbari ya Muya* did not see the value of western education, which was being propagated by missionaries, until in the late 1920s. In particular, they objected to the establishment of a school in their locality because they realised that teachers would come from *Mbari ya Kihara*. From the researches by John Karanja, (currently an Associate Professor of Church History, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, USA,) in March 1991, the Muya extended family (*Mbari ya Muya*) was wondering why the Kiharas failed to provide land for the building of a school if education was as important as those teachers suggested.[45] Curiously, Joshua Mucheru, a member of *Mbari ya Muya*, who had provided land where the school was finally built, but later denounced mission Christianity, decided to hand over the school to the independents during the infamous female circumcision crisis in Central Kenya of 1930s (see details in the chapter on "Missionaries and Colonial Authorities" in this book). Supported by some mission adherents who were members of his clan, Mucheru violently disrupted a church service one Sunday morning in 1930. In particular, he attacked Andrew Machua, one of the teachers. Though he was arrested, his supporters attempted to destroy the school completely. Their plans were however thwarted by the timely arrival of Cecil Bewes, the resident European missionary.[46]

Thus, the case of Kiburu is not an isolated case as Gacharage 1930 crisis has demonstrated. While the Kiburu "schism" took place in 1931, one wonders whether these two incidents informed one

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[44] See details, CMS Archives: G3A5/1929/66 (see also John Karanja 1999: 202-205.

[45] John Karanja, *Founding of an African Faith:* 195.

[46] Ibid

another. Considering that they both took place in central Kenya, the big question is: Can they speak for the whole of Africa? To a large extent, the incidents speak for the collective pain of the birth of African Christianity where disagreements, suspicions, misunderstandings, conflicts between culture and the gospel among other challenges were the order of the day. Coupled with this, various groups took different positions, especially with regard to the case of gospel and culture. In some cases, the liberals' readiness to resort to traditional medicine after "modern" methods of treatment had proved ineffective upset the "hardliners". In turn, the liberals were ready to employ both modern and traditional methods to resolve personal crises – a phenomenon which was dismissed by "hard-liners" as taking people back to "paganism". The Kiburu case, where clan supremacists dominated the scene, is one dimension of underlying challenges in establishing an African Christianity. Other challenges in different dimensions dominated the early growth of the church during the latter part of the 19th and the first half of the 20th Century.

Conclusion

As we re-asses the failures and successes of the Christian empire that the missionary and the colonial authority worked hand-in-hand to construct, we need to acknowledge that the old Mutira Parish had by 2010 grown from a mere mission centre to about seven archdeaconries. Those archdeaconries were: Mutira, Kerugoya Cethedral, Kiandangae, Thiba, Wang'uru (though not all parishes were in the old Mutira parish) and Karaba Archdeaconry, which is in Mbeere Anglican Diocese. In turn, Karaba Archdeaconry had Gategi Deanery comprising of Gategi, Makima, and Riakanau parishes. Karaba Archdeaconry also had Makutano Deanery which in turn had Makutano, Karaba, and Wango parishes.[47] With regard to Mutira Archdeaconry, it had three rural deaneries by 2010. That is, Kamuiru with Mutira, Kamuiru and Kabonge parishes; Kiamaina with Ndiriti, Kiamaina and Muragara parishes; and Kamuruana with Kiranja, Kamuruana, Mutuma and Gatwe parishes. Kerugoya Cathedral Archdeaconry had Thaita Deanery with Kangaita, Mugwandi and Thaita parishes; Kiamuthambi deanery with Gakoigo, Kianjogu, Kiamwenja, Kiamuthambi, Gatuto and Mutitu parishes; and Cathedral deanery with Cathedral, Kiaritha and Kimandi parishes. In 2010 Kiandangae Archdeaconry had Gacaru deanery which has Kahiro, Kinyakiiru, Kiine, Kianjege, Karima, and Githuaini parishes. It also had Kagio deanery, which in turn has Gathuthiini, Kiandangae, Kagio, Kiaga, and Baricho parishes. Karimaini deanery is part of Kiandangae Archdeaconry. In turn, the deanery comprises Karimaini, Kiburu, Getuya, and Kiangoma parishes. With regard to Thiba Archdeaconry, it comprises of Nguka deanery with her Thiba, Mbui Njeru and Nguka parishes; Kangai Deanery with her Kathiga, Kangure, Gitoo-ini, and Kombu-ini parishes; Sagana Deanery with her Sagana, Kandongu, and Rukanga parishes; and Mutithi Deanery with her Mutithi, Ciagini, Kiandegwa and Rurii parishes. Likewise, Wang'uru Archdeaconry which has Gathigiriri deanery comprising of Gathigiriri, Ndindiruku, Wang'uru, and Murubara parishes; Kutus Deanery comprising of Kutus, Kamiigua, Kithiriti, Kimbimbi, Nyangati and Kiorugari parishes. Wang'uru Archdeaconry also comprises of Rianjuki and Nyamindi deaneries. The latter (Nyamindi and Rianjuki) deaneries were not part of the old Mutira parish of 1907-12. It is also not clear whether Kutus, Kamiigua and Kithiriti parishes of Wang'uru Archdeaconries were in the old Mutira parish. Certainly, a huge Christian empire was born, by 1970s, through one tiny village in Kenya, Mutira – that began in 1907 – an empire which was able to influence socioeconomic affairs of the entire society to date. Was it not the mustard seed that grew into a huge tree despite the pains thereof? Surely, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed … nothing will be impossible to you" (Matthew 17:20).

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