
How Did Colonialism Affect Kenya?

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A Document Based Question (DBQ)
World History

STUDENT GUIDE SHEET

How Did Colonialism Affect Kenya?

Directions: In the late 19th century the British were the world's biggest colonizer. As the saying goes, the sun never set on the British Empire. If it was nighttime in British Bermuda it was daylight in British India, or British Zanzibar, or British Ceylon. The question before you is what kind of an impact did this British presence have on the people Britain controlled.

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It is suggested that you follow these steps:

1. Read the Background Essay.
2. Skim through the documents to get a sense of what they are about.
3. Read the documents slowly. In the margin or on a Document Analysis Sheet record the main idea of each document.
4. Organize the documents by analytical category. The first few may be context documents. Other categories might deal with classic analytical divisions like government, religion, or economics.
5. Within each category, gather information and develop opinions about the effect of colonialism on the people of Kenya.
6. Develop a summary answer to the question.

The Documents:

- Document 1: *Tabula Rasa*
- Document 2: Africa, 1900: Selected Ethnic Groups (map)
- Document 3: A Kikuyu Chief Speaks About Pink Cheeks
- Document 4: Some African Acceptance of Colonial Rule
- Document 5: Kenya's New Leaders
- Document 6: Religion Among the Kenyans
- Document 7: Abaluyia Creation Story
- Document 8: Religion in Kenya, 1962 and 2002 (chart)
- Document 9: The Missionary School Teacher
- Document 10: Education in the Kenya Colony, 1955 (chart)
- Document 11: Roads, Railroads, and Postal Service in Colonial Kenya (maps)
- Document 12: Average Earnings in Kenya, 1946-1955 (chart)

How Did Colonialism Affect Kenya?

Introduction

What happens to people's lives when their country is a colony of another country? This was an important question to Americans in the eighteenth century when they were ruled by Great Britain, and it is an important question today when countries find themselves controlled by more powerful outsiders. By looking at Kenya's experience as a colony of Great Britain, you can get an idea of what being colonized meant both to the people being controlled and to those who control them.

Colonialism occurs when one nation takes control of another. By 1800 Europeans had colonized about 55% of the earth's surface; in 1878, 67%; and by 1914 about 85%. Colonialism directly affected the great majority of the earth's population for well over a century, and the effects remained even after colonial rulers gave up control.

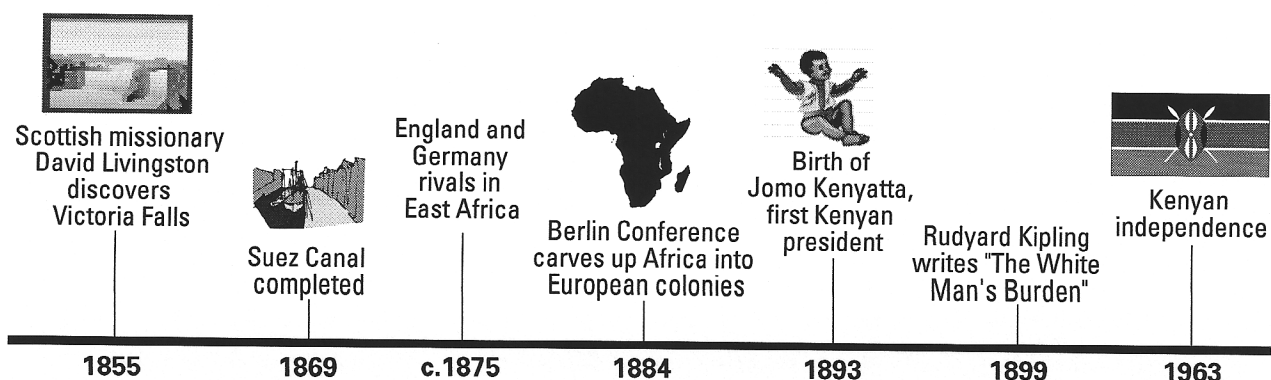
Historians disagree on what those effects were. In one respected history of England by Walter Hall and Robert Albion, we read that "... On its good side this rule of the white minority meant order, efficiency, discipline, and comparative peace." But another historian, Basil Davidson, writes: "What the central consequence of colonial rule proved to be was not the modern reconstruction of Africa, but the far-reaching dismantlement and ruin of the societies and structures which the invaders had found." Our documents will tell you what Africans, as well, thought about their country being a colony.

Though each colonized country was different in some ways, there are some things that seemed to happen in them all. The study of Kenya's history as a colony will help you see how colonialism works and thus understand an important part of the human story.

The Scramble for Africa

The story begins in the nineteenth century. As strange as it seems, the African nation of Kenya was created by Europeans. Its boundaries were drawn about four thousand miles to the northwest in Berlin, Germany. Representatives of fourteen European nations met in 1884 and 1885 to carve up the African continent. No Africans attended the **Berlin Conference**. All of Africa was placed under European control except Liberia and Ethiopia. Seven countries were given the right to "own" a particular territory. This takeover left most Africans under European rule for the next eighty years. Enslavement of Africans by Europeans ended after the agreement made at Berlin, but **indigenous** Africans soon found themselves controlled by outsiders in different ways.

Great Britain already had colonies around the world when the Berlin Conference met. They bragged that "the sun never sets on the British Empire." What Britain wanted from Africa were raw materials such as wool, copper, and tin to supply their factories; cash crops such as tea, coffee, and cocoa to fill their cups; and diamonds and gold to decorate themselves. In addition, they wanted new markets in which to



sell their products. What they felt they gave to Africans was the Christian religion, a “superior” form of government, and what they considered a more developed civilization.

The People of Kenya

The territory that became the British colony of Kenya contained within its borders at least twenty-seven **ethnic groups** with different cultures. It did not begin like England and Spain, for example, where most of the people shared the same language and culture. All Africans did not feel the same way about the British settlers. Those who made their living from farming were angry because their land was being taken from them. On the other hand, groups who did not get along with their neighbors often wanted the help of the powerful British against their enemies.

Government of the Kenya Colony

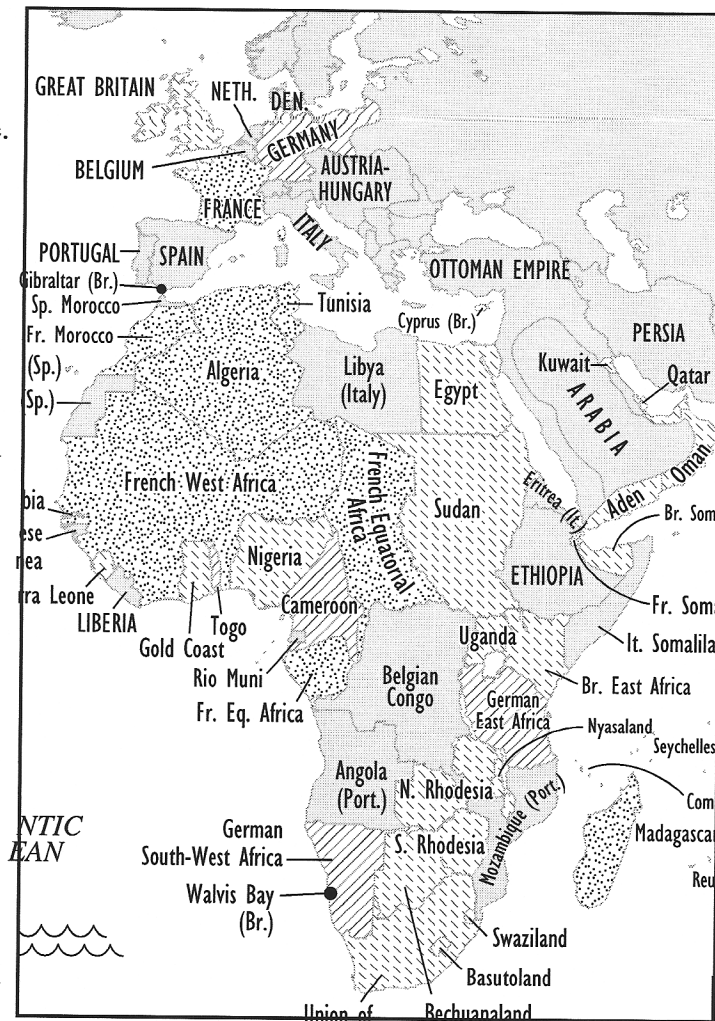
Before World War I, Kenya was ruled from Britain by a legislative council.

This group was helped by Kenyan headmen, or chiefs, who had some control over local government. Appointed by the British, these African leaders acted as both rulers of a local area and go-betweens with the British. Sometimes this person had the respect of his people – a true “headman.” In many cases the chief was not a real chief among his people and was thought of as a puppet of the colonial rulers. During World War I thousands

of Africans served the British government in World War I, mostly as “carriers” rather than soldiers, but they still suffered around 50,000 casualties.

After the war, Kenya became harder to rule. Led by Harry Thuku, a clerk in the Treasury, African Kenyans began to organize and protest British practices. First, there was the “**kipande**” – a pass carried in a small metal container

which usually hung from the owner’s neck on a piece of string. Not carried by whites, the pass reminded Africans that they were considered second class citizens. Then there was the “hut tax,” an annual payment made by each African household. The British felt that the Africans benefited from roads and schools that were built, so it seemed logical that they should help pay for them. This tax was raised shortly after the war at a time when wages were being cut. Added to these problems was the hardship brought on by a terrible



Colonial Africa, 1914

influenza epidemic in 1919 and the constant loss of African lands to Europeans. Adding to the tension, Thuku was “detained” by the government for nine years.

Because of protests by Africans, in 1923 the British said that in the future, African needs would come before white settlers’ desires. In 1925 “local native councils” were created to

give Africans a part in the rule of Kenya. To some people this seemed to be a step toward self-rule for Africans, but others saw it as a way to use more educated Africans to keep protesting Africans under control. Thuku's followers wanted to get their lands back and have more development in Kenya. Cooperation broke down when the Kenyans defended the tradition of female circumcision against protests of Christian missionaries. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the British government returned to the policy of supporting the white settler farmers. More African farmers lost their land and either became "squatters" or moved to the cities. At this time a new leader appeared, Jomo Kenyatta. Born Kamau Ngengi, Kenyatta started out as an employee of the Nairobi Water Department and later spent years in London arguing for change in Kenya.

World War II slowed the movement for change in Kenya, but it also set forces in motion that would eventually lead to the end of British rule. Africans served Britain again but this time as armed soldiers. Many fought outside of Kenya in India. These soldiers witnessed Europeans fighting and killing one another and no longer stood in awe of European power. When they learned that the war was being fought to preserve liberty and democracy around the world, they could not help but question life in Kenya under colonial rule.

The "Emergency" and Independence

After the war Kenyans directly challenged the idea that Kenya should remain "white man's country." The Kenya African Union (KAU) was formed and Kenyatta became its president. The Union demanded that settlers' lands be returned to Africans. A group of anti-colonial Africans called the **Mau Mau** went further. They wanted a total break from the British colonial system. Although Kenyatta denied the charge, the British believed that he was also the head of the Mau Mau organization. He was arrested on October 29, 1952, and a violent rebellion against British rule began, led by the Mau Mau

fighters. The British called it "The Emergency." They saw it as a threat to both British rule and the survival of white people in Kenya.

The four-year struggle for Kenya's independence was a bloody one. The British said that the Mau Maus were savage and primitive fighters who attacked innocent people on their farms and in their homes. For their part the British used harsh measures to defeat the mainly Kikuyu Mau Mau and the other ethnic groups who joined them. The Kenyans saw themselves as freedom fighters seeking independence from unfair colonial rule. To them violence was necessary. The struggle was also a civil war. The Mau Mau considered Africans who benefited from and supported British rule to be part of the enemy.

Though the British won the war, their government, in 1958, gave up the idea of Kenya as a "white man's country" and began preparing for African majority rule. The cost of crushing rebellion was more than any benefit they could have gotten out of the colony. In 1960 Africans were given a majority on the Legislative Council, and elections were held in February, 1961. Jomo Kenyatta's party won with the slogan Uhura na Kenyatta – "Independence with Kenyatta" – and Kenyatta was released from jail. By 1963 colonial rule ended, and Jomo Kenyatta became the president of an independent Kenya.

The Question

What happened to the lives of both the African Kenyans and the Europeans who colonized their land during the colonial era? The answer to that question will help the student of history understand other situations, both past and present, in which one nation attempts to dominate the life of another. Read through the documents that follow. Organize them into analytical categories and develop an answer to the question: *How did colonialism affect Kenya?*

Document 1



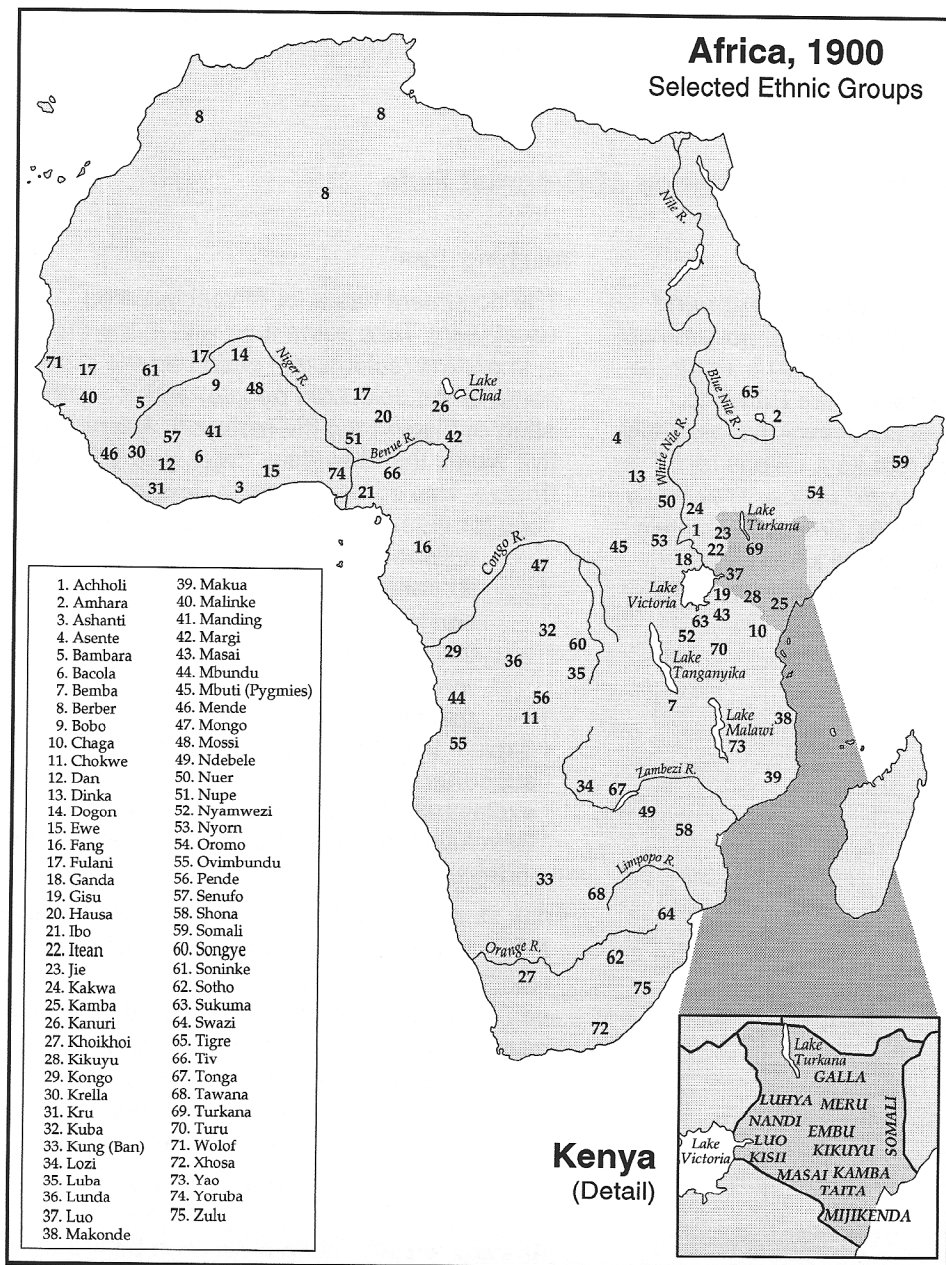
Source: Sir Charles Elliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, London: Edward Arnold, 1905.

*We have in East Africa the rare experience of dealing with a **tabula rasa**, an almost untouched and sparsely inhabited country, where we can do as we will, regulate immigration, and open or close the door as seems best.*

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Document 2

Source: Map created from various sources.



Document 3

Source: Richard St. Barbe Baker, *Kabongo: The Story of a Kikuyu Chief*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1955, pp. 109-110.

Document Note: This is the English translation of an interview conducted in Kikuyu with Chief Kabongo. The interview was conducted by Muthungu wa Miti, and then rendered into English by Richard St. Barbe Baker. Chief Kabongo lived from about 1870 to 1950.

It was in these days that a Pink Cheek man came one day to our Council. He came from far away, from where many of these people lived in houses made of stone and where they held their own Council.

He sat in our midst and he told us of the king of the Pink Cheeks, who was a great king and lived in a land over the seas.

“This great king is now your king,” he said. “And this land is all his land, though he has said you may live on it as you are his people and he is your father and you are his sons.”

This was strange news. For this land was ours. We had bought our land with cattle in the presence of the Elders and had taken the oath and it was our own. We had no king, we elected our Councils and they made our laws. A strange king could not be our king and our land was our own. We had had no battle, no one had fought us to take away our land as, in the past, had sometimes been. This land we had had from our fathers and our fathers’ father, who had bought it. How then could it belong to this king?

With patience, our leading Elder tried to tell this to the Pink Cheek and he listened. But at the end he said, “This we know. But in spite of this, what I have told you is a fact. You have now a king – a good and great king who loves his people, and you are among his people. In the town called Nairobi is a council or government that acts for the king. And his laws are your laws.”

Document 4

Source: Sheldon Gella, “The Colonial Era,” in *Africa*, Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O’Meara, editors, 2nd Edition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. Reprinted by permission of Indiana University Press.

Despite the unpopularity of colonial rule, most Africans wound up accepting the authority of the colonial state. Indeed, some African leaders and ethnic groups collaborated very closely with the colonizer in exchange for certain privileges within the colonial system, while others were grateful to the colonizer for liberating them from slavery and rule by other ethnic and religious groups. Moreover, many westernized Africans saw colonialism in Africa as a progressive and “civilizing” force which, despite its many abuses, had eliminated slavery, human sacrifice, and internecine warfare while providing opportunities for Africans with modern skills to rise socially and economically regardless of previous low social status....

Document 5



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Source: Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963.



Tom Mboya (second from left) in discussion with Jomo Kenyatta (second from right). Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, was the first President of independent Kenya. Mboya, a Luo, was a prominent member of Kenyatta's Cabinet.

Document 6



Source: *House of Commons Papers, 1900-1949*, in E. B. Denham, "Tours in the Native Reserves and Native Development in Kenya," September 15, 1925.

The religious sentiment is not highly developed among the native of East Africa.... Neither the Bantu or the Masai have enough imagination to invent a mythology or enough power of organization to create a priesthood.... Witchcraft is believed in and witch doctors pretend to detect witches, who are sometimes killed. They also pray for rain, and administer ordeals which are the ordinary form of trial. Most tribes seem to have some notion of a Supreme Being, but it is not easy to discover whether the word which they employ really denotes a personality or merely striking examples of a superhuman force, such as the sun, violent rain, or thunder. The ethical standard is not high. Murder is atoned for by a fine. Marriage is regarded as a sale, and strict fidelity is neither expected nor practiced. The women are obliged to do most of the work, but still family affection is strong, and children show great care and consideration to their parents.

Document 7

Source: John S. Mbiti, "The Abaluyia Story of Creation," *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann, 1967.

In the Abaluyia creation story, it is told that god created man so that the sun would have someone for whom to shine. Then he created plants, animals and birds to provide food for him. The husband was made first and then the wife, so that the man would have someone with whom to talk.... God made provision for the first men ... this was in the form of rain which gave them water, and animals, of which they were to eat the hoofed ones, and different types of fish.

Note: Practically every African society has its own myth. One anthropologist documented over 2,000 such stories.

Document 8

Source: S. H. Steinberg, editor, *The Statesman's Year-Book, 1961-1962*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961, p. 332.

Religion in Kenya		
	1962	2002
Protestant	7%	38%
Roman Catholic	3.5%	28%
Indigenous beliefs	80%	26%
Muslim	7%	7%
Hindu and other	2.5%	1%
Total population of Kenya in 1962: 8,636,262 2002: 30,765,916		

Document 9



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Source: Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not Child*, London: Heinemann, 1964, p. 115.

The teacher came in. He was always on time. Njoroge was often surprised by these missionaries' apparent devotion to their work. One might have thought that teaching to them was life and death. Yet they were white men. They never talked of colour; they never talked down to Africans; and they could work closely, joke, and laugh with their black colleagues who came from different tribes. Njoroge at times wished the whole country was like this. This seemed a little paradise, a paradise where children from all walks of life and different religious faiths could work together without any consciousness. Many people believed the harmony in the school came because the

headmaster was a strange man who was severe with everyone, black and white alike. If he was quick to praise what was good, he was equally quick to suppress what he thought was evil. He tried to bring out the good qualities in all, making them work for the good name of the school. But he believed that the best, the really excellent could come only from the white man. He brought up his boys to copy and cherish the white man's civilization as the only hope of mankind and especially of the black races. He was automatically against all black politicians who in any way made people to be discontented with the white man's rule and civilizing mission.

Note: Ngugi is an internationally known novelist and playwright. He has been chairman of the literature department at the University of Nairobi and has taught at Northwestern University in the United States and Makerere University in Uganda. He was a strong opponent of colonial rule and a critic of government corruption after independence.

Document 10

Source: *Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, Statistical Abstract, 1955, Nairobi, Kenya: The Government Printer, 1955.

<p>Europeans</p> <p>Compulsory for children ages 7 to 15 57 European schools for 9,000 students Over 33% received secondary education Government expenditure 750,000 pounds 83 pounds per student expenditure</p>	<p>Asians</p> <p>Compulsory for boys ages 7 to 15 130 schools for 35,000 students 15% received secondary education Government expenditure 750,000 pounds 21 pounds per student expenditure</p>
<p>Arabs</p> <p>Education not compulsory 9 primary schools for 2,200 students 10% received secondary education Government expenditure 50,000 pounds 23 pounds per student expenditure</p>	<p>Africans</p> <p>Education not compulsory 3,442 schools for 395,000 students 1% received secondary education Government expenditure 1,500,000 pounds 4 pounds per student expenditure</p>

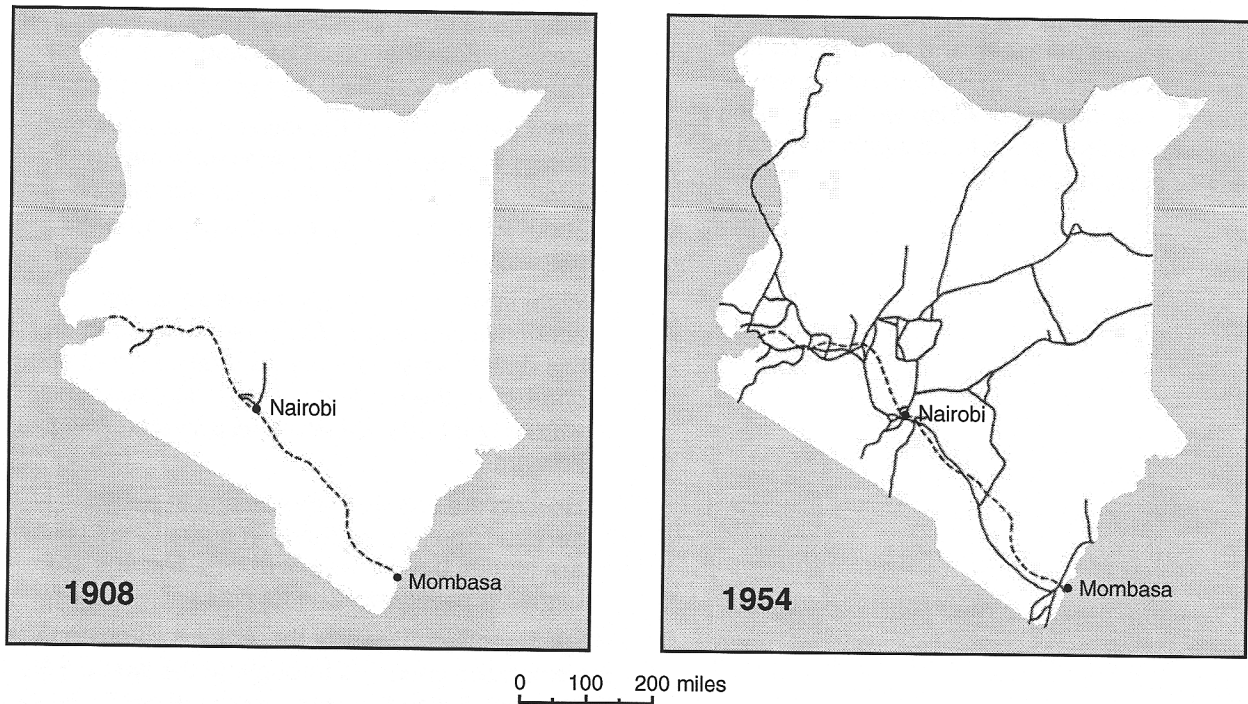
Document 11

 Notes

Source: Edward W Soja, *The Geography of Modern Kenya*, Syracuse University Press, 1968.

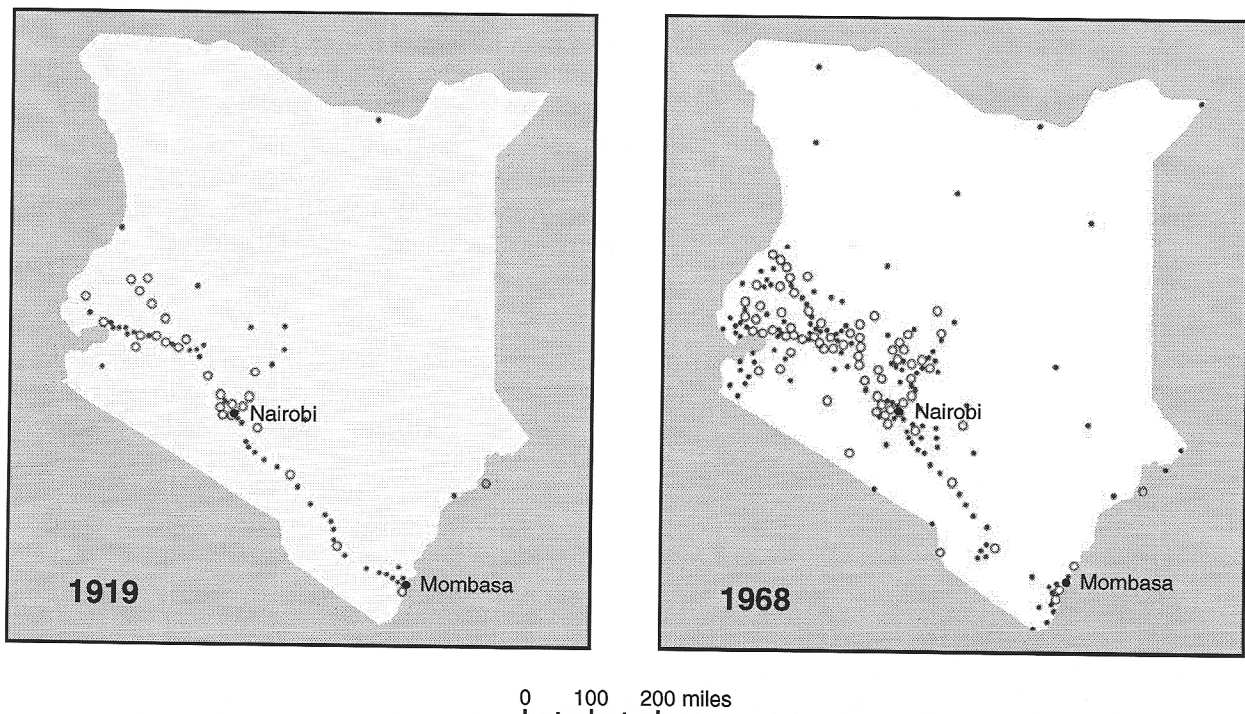
Growth of the Railroad and Road Network in Colonial Kenya

----- Main Axis of the Kenya-Uganda Railroad — Main Roads of Kenya



Growth of the Postal Service in Colonial Kenya

Large circles represent primary post offices



Document 12



Source: *Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Statistical Abstract, 1955*, Nairobi, Kenya: The Government Printer, 1955.

Average Earnings in Agriculture					
(Pounds per year)					
	1946	1948	1951	1953	1955
European					
Men	509	593	803	887	1,039
Women	242	268	328	458	486
Asian					
Men	208	299	358	469	504
African					
Men, Women, and Juveniles	13	16	20	24	31

Average Earnings in Public Services					
(Pounds per year)					
	1946	1948	1951	1953	1955
European					
Men	669	716	919	1,046	1,229
Women	346	389	531	617	685
Asian					
Men	219	272	356	389	533
Women	177	171	245	309	362
African					
Men, Women, and Juveniles	22	35	47	61	72

Note: School teachers are employed in public services and are included in these figures.