



**The Contribution of World Gospel Mission to the growth and Development of Education in Kenya:
A Case Bomet County 1935-1985.**

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Abstract

The planning and location of educational institutions in Kenya has always been a very crucial issue worth serious investigation. The World Gospel Mission (WGM) just like any other Christian missionary groups in colonial Kenya, contributed to educational development of Africans through establishment schools. The research sought to establish the contribution of World Gospel Mission (WGM) to the growth and development of education in Bomet County. The research focused on Tenwek, Longisa and Kaboson High Schools particularly factors that led to their establishment, growth and their impact to the local community. The Kipsigis community was mainly examined in relation to these schools because it forms the immediate neighbourhood of the schools under study. The study adopted historical research design which utilized both primary and secondary sources. The finding of the study revealed that the WGM established their mission stations in Bomet because the region had not been inhabited by any other group of missionaries. In order to attract the local community which was reluctant to be converted, WGM missionaries adopted different approach to evangelization for example setting up medical hospitals and schools. Furthermore, the research also revealed that the schools established by World Gospel Missionaries produced a substantial African elites who became instrumental in shaping the socio-economic conditions of their community.

Keywords

World Gospel Mission, Bomet, Kipsigis, Oral Interview (O.I), Kenya National Archives (KNA)

Introduction

Available documentary sources shows that high concentration of missionary schools were located in central and western provinces of Kenya while Bomet in Rift valley, the area of the study, was for many years sparsely settled with missionary bodies. Bomet County is one of the twelve counties in former Rift valley province of Kenya. It comprise of five educational sub-counties .which are: Sotik, Bomet East, Bomet Central, Konoin and Chepalungu. Christian missionaries did much by contributing to the African educational development. They trained the African converts as masons, carpenters and architects for the purpose of building churches. Their most important contribution was setting up of schools based on the western models. The World Gospel Mission were not left behind in this venture, their educational foundation was laid in Bomet in 1935 after it was granted a ten acre piece of land at Tenwek in the fertile highlands of Bomet County inhabited by the Kipsigis Community a sub- ethnic group of the Kalenjin.

Significance of the study

This study is crucial not only in shedding light on the contribution of World Gospel Mission to growth and Development of education in Bomet County, but also in documenting educational activities of one of the few missionary groups which worked among the Kipsigis community of Kenya during the colonial period. The study is also crucial in documenting the content and nature of instruction offered by World Gospel Mission which can be invaluable to pedagogical planners and researchers who are interested in the evolution of missionary education in Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The study endeavoured to achieve the following studies: To determine factors that was central to the development of Tenwek, Longisa and Kaboson schools in Bomet County and their impact on the local community, to establish early educational activities of WGM and to establish the content and nature of instruction offered by WGM.

Methodology

The study employed historical method of research in collecting, analysing and presenting its data. The main data sources were both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly comprised of oral interviews administered to former students, former teachers, former clergy and elders. Data obtained from the Kenya National Archives and WGM's archival documents were the other additional primary sources. The secondary sources utilized were books, magazines and theses.

Both purposive sampling and snowball sampling procedures were adopted. The collected data was perused meticulously to identify information which was relevant to the research questions and objectives. The data was then subjected to rigorous process of verification through the process of external and internal criticism of data analysis.

The Early Indigenous Education and Religion among the Kipsigis Community

Before the coming of the missionaries, the Kipsigis had their distinct form of education and worship. There was a religious leader known as *Tisindet* (diviner). His religious functions were; mediating between people and gods, offering sacrifices, acted as overseers and blessed warriors before going to war. In the social scenes, diviners officiated marriages and divorce ceremonies. They were also in charge of settling theft and debts problems. Furthermore, they led the killing of outcasts when a family or clan was getting rid of their sinful members (O.I; Kenduiwa, 24/4/2010). The Kipsigis had universal religion which was practised in full daylight. Everybody addressed his or her prayers to *Asis* (God) directly or in collective ceremonies through the medium of the *poiyot* (elder). No one even *poiyot* (elder) possess any individual power over his fellow beings. (Peristiany, 1964:214)

Kipsigis indigenous education was largely informal; children were taught through norms and they were prohibited from beating other children or killing animals. Learning was not specifically pegged on any curriculum. Individuals learned through experience as they interacted with their environment. Adults were instrumental in shaping the development of the youth into responsible members of the society. (O.I. Sang, 12/5/2010). A child learned different roles from the members of

his or her family, clan and community. They learned through practical engagement for example, looking after the cattle, descendants of medicine men could accompany them to the forest to look for herbs and in that essence learn through apprenticeship. Young boys and men underwent military training on how to fight at war and how to shoot with bow and arrows. Mock fights were often organised to reinforce this skill. (O.I. Kosge, 20/4/2010).

The content of education for boys and Girls were different. Boys were taught how to interpret alarm raised and respond to it accordingly for example; alarm raised during hunting, to ward off enemies and alarm calling for rescue mission. The boys were also taught to cultivate a sense of responsibility and maturity, develop art of war and were discouraged against irresponsible drinking behaviour. During seclusion, the emphasis was on respect paid to the age-set. They were prohibited from playing with children, Girls were taught how to take care of the family (husband and children) and how to respect men. They were prohibited against adultery and if one did so, her father was supposed to pay a fine of a cow to appease the son-in-law. (O.I. Sang, 12/8/2010).

Different methods of instructions were used to teach the youth. Boys were practically engaged in some activities for example looking after the cattle. Songs were also used to convey different themes, riddles were used to teach the youth and children about their environment and stories were used to convey moral lessons such as perseverance and importance of respect to elders. (Langat, 1969:86). From the time they begin herding sheep and goat until they go for initiation, the boys are engaged in looking after the livestock. Their life is very free and the only trouble they usually get into is when they lose livestock or allow them to get into the cultivated fields. Besides herding and manual work, children also learn how to observe. They show endless interest in plants, animals and insects among which they spend their days. Quite small children can name almost every tree, bush grass or weeds and describe where they grow and what their flowers and seeds are like; how the insects behave, where birds nest and what they say when they sing. (Orchardson, 1961:49). The main educators ranged from elders to youth. Others were religious leaders who were expected to be unblemished. *Motirenik* (circumcisers) taught the initiates, midwives played a key role pertaining family education offered to the girls. (O.I. Biy, 24/5/2010). This education was non-systematic and took place anywhere apart from seclusion where structured curriculum was offered for both boys and girls. Lessons taught were similar across the community.

The world Gospel Mission, Its origin and early educational activities in Bomet County

The Lumbwa Industrial Mission activities from 1905 spearheaded by Hotchkiss, laid the foundation for the educational activities that were later taken over by the World Gospel Mission. Lumbwa was the name by which the Kipsigis were commonly referred to for a number of years by other people, though the Kipsigis seldom used it of themselves. (Fish, 1989:28). The only missionary society then, carrying out work in Kericho District was the Lumbwa Industrial Mission, an American society which was financed from America. Its members belonged to different nationalities including Americans, Danes and Germans. In the middle of 1912, there was a split in the mission. Mr Scouten and most of the missionaries left and Jesinende Mission was left without any European in charge. Arap Ngetich who was educated in the mission was appointed headman under Arap Tere in May. The District Commissioner C.M. Dobbs inspected the mission school under charge of Miss Jones on 15th July 1913

and saw a class of about twenty five pupils being taught. All seemed very keen on their work (KNA: DC/KER/3/7).

During the 1920s, Mr Hotchkiss began to open more schools throughout the reserve in Buret and Sotik (now Bomet). A very much larger number of Kipsigis than before seem to be attracted to education during that year. By 1928, several out schools had been opened by LIM as shown in the table below.

Table 1 shows the schools opened by Lumbwa Industrial Mission (LIM)

District serial number	Education department serial number	Name of school	District Location	Government body	Date of Registration
20	1016	Chagaik	Farm	LIM	19.6.1926
21	1017	Kiptere	1	LIM	19.6.1926
22	1018	Swerder	5	LIM	19.6.1926
23	1019	Boito	10	LIM	19.6.1926
24	1020	Kiplelji	17	LIM	19.6.1926
25	1021	Jebunge (Tenwek)	13	LIM	19.6.1926
26	1022	Mugutma	16	LIM	19.6.1926
27	1023	Atebwa	17	LIM	19.6.1926
28	1024	Nyambuho	16	LIM	19.6.1926
29	1025	Jepkosa	16	LIM	19.6.1926
30	1900	Kapsigirio	3	LIM	13.4.1928
31	1901	Kapkosum	13	LIM	13.4.1928
32	-	Kipsonoi	11	LIM	13.4.1928

Source: KNA: DC/KER/1/4, 1930, S. Lumbwa District Annual Report.

This table shows the number of schools that had been established by Lumbwa Industrial Mission by 1928. Lumbwa Industrial Mission, was a mission group founded by Hotchkiss that was handed to World Gospel Mission in 1930s. Lumbwa Industrial Mission laid foundation for World Gospel Mission's educational activities in Bomet County by establishing schools at Nyambuho, Jebunge (Tenwek), Kipsonoi and Kiplelji by 1928.

It was in 1935 that WGM's educational activities began in Kenya with the arrival of Smith and Kirkpatrick. They established a Mission Station at Tenwek which later became a school. (O.I. Cheseng'eny, 10/4/2010). In a letter written to the chief secretary in Nairobi on September 1941, the Provincial Commissioner states that the National Holiness Mission also referred to as World Gospel Mission (WGM) was running a station at Tenwek in the Sotik Division of the Lumbwa Native Land Unit. The station was originally granted to the Lumbwa industrial Mission but was taken over by WGM in 1935. The mission at the time run educational and medical work, in addition to its evangelical work it run a number of schools. It maintained an adequate European staff consisting of: Superintendent in charge and his wife, missionary for practical work and his wife, qualified teacher (lady) and qualified nurse (lady). All the staff were American citizens and the mission was well organized and did well. (KNA: PC/NZA/3/6/116).

The other early missionaries at Tenwek were; Clara G. Ford, Orville E. Leonard, Alice Day, Robert Smith, Faye Kirk Patrick and Miss Shylock. Miss Alice and Mildred Ferneau were the main teachers. In early June 1936, Alice Day began supervision of the children's and school work at Tenwek primary school. Mr Webb was the Provincial education officer when WGM began its educational work in Bomet. He was based in Kisumu but travelled throughout the province establishing schools. He had a genuine concern for mission schools and gave a great deal of help to the WGM staff. He gave them the concept of how to make the mission schools work. He established the levels of qualifications so that the schools they opened would be accepted by the government. Mr Benson his successor also encouraged the mission to keep the standards high in the schoolwork. From the beginning, the schools at Tenwek as well as the out schools were inspected by the government inspectors and regular reports were sent to the Department of Education. (Fish, 1989:236).

WGM's early educational activities were not easy, there were challenges of lack of books and trained teachers. In 1942, Alice Day worked in cooperation with missionaries from AIM in Litein to prepare schemes of work and lesson plans for the teachers to use throughout the Kipsigis reserve. A duplicator was purchased to mimeograph the materials. (Fish, 1989:236). This was reflected in the report of the District Commissioner Mr Gregory Smith in 1943, when he wrote that African education had been a thorny subject during the year. The administration felt that while there was no desire to produce masses of semi-educated natives, the Kipsigis as a community were very intelligent and if they were to find their true place in the county after war, they needed to be catered for academically. (KNA: DC/KER/1/8).

Evidence of keen supervision is adduced by C.E. Donovan's letter from the Director of Education's office to the District Commissioner of Kericho on 30th July 1945 when on referring to the recommendations contained in the report made by the senior Agriculture Officer after his visit to Tenwek on the 7th April 1945, he said that:

"It seems clear that we cannot expect this mission to develop a reasonably efficient educational system unless the senior Agricultural Education officer's recommendations can be put into operation and I shall be glad to know, therefore whether you are prepared to put the matter before the Local Native Council. (KNA:PC/NZA/3/6/116)."

The content of Education offered by World Gospel Mission

In the early mission stations that were established by LIM at Jesinende in Kericho, evangelistic, educational, medical work and industrial departments were maintained. Industrial department laid emphasis upon agriculture and agricultural equipment were acquired for use including; traction engine, trashier, well equipped sawmill, a brick making machine, a turbine wheel, reapers mowers and ploughs. Several young Lumbwa were apprenticed for term of three years at the mission to learn carpentry, agriculture among others. Mr Hotchkiss gives the curriculum of the Lumbwa Industrial Mission schools as: Religious knowledge, Reading vernacular and Kiswahili, Geography, Physiology and Hygiene. (KNA: DC/KER/3/7).

The same curriculum was maintained by WGM when it took over from LIM. The students learned reading, writing and arithmetic its main essence being to know how to read the bible. The following

virtues; togetherness, unity and sense of belonging were emphasized by missionaries in schools. Students were urged to avoid cattle rustling and improve hygiene. (O.I. Kerich, 22/5/2010). Missionaries encouraged their students to conduct holy matrimony, to use terraces, crop rotation and adoption of new methods of farming. Learners were encouraged to be self-reliant through farming, poultry keeping, livestock and bee keeping. In some cases, they sponsored artificial insemination services and distributed improved seeds of high quality for high production. They also sponsored students for example Erasto Shoo from Siwot to Jean school Kabete. After graduating, he taught members of the community importance of boiling milk, digging of pit latrines. He also served as a teacher at Tenwek School. (O.I. Koech, 10/4/2010).

The Missionaries also extended their teaching beyond schools and influenced their converts economically and agriculturally. By 1943, Musa Serem who was one of the converts had constructed a big maize store which attracted the District Commissioner Mr H. Gregory. The missionaries also introduced watermills to the locals. One of the early owners being Petero Ngetich a brother to Johana Ngetich who was the first African Reverend of the WGM. The water mills imported by Hotchkiss from India. Owing to the introduced new economic activities by the missionaries, the locals prospered economically one of them being Johana Kitigo of Mengit (Longisa) who became the first local to own a vehicle. He used it to ferry honey and hide skins to Litein shopping centre for sale. Other locals who were beneficiaries of missionary sponsorship later introduced the new economic skills in the society for example Wilson Laboso who was as student at Tenwek and later joined Kabianga, introduced the art of soap making in the community. He later on served as a journalist in Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) in Kisumu. (O.I. Kerich, 22/5/2010).

WGM apart from educational activities also engaged its pupils and students in co-curricular activities as seen in Mr Hotchkiss's curriculum of the earlier Lumbwa Industrial Mission whereby physiology and hygiene were taught though not included in the code as outlined by Board of Education. In the primary schools sports meeting that was held at Kapkatet on the 21st and 22nd October 1949, there was a great success. The winning schools from Buret, Belgut and Sotik divisions competed for various shields. Tenwek won the athletics, Kyogong won football and Kiptere won singing. It is worthy to note that although there were only six LNC primary schools in the District and over seventy mission schools, all the winners with exception of Tenwek were LNC schools. (KNA: DC/KER/1/22).

The Impact of Kaboson, Tenwek and Longisa Schools on the Kipsigis Community

The former students of these schools have played different roles depending on their level of academic achievements. They have played professional and non-professional roles in the society. The most notable professionals are drawn from the following fields: provincial administration, education, politics, medicine, law, banking, engineering and theology. The non-professionals were witnessed in the following fields: sports, entrepreneurship and trade union. The pioneer students of the mission schools initiated social, economic and political changes in their traditional community compared to those who graduated later. The main way in which the western missions' station entrenched themselves in the community was through wooing the small number of people and sending them back to convert others. This led to creation of the local missionaries who first stayed in the station and later spread into the local community. This was the case in at Tenwek, Kaboson and Longisa areas in Bomet County, where pioneer students made up the mission community in the

1940s and later when they joined their communities, they broke the native customs and traditions. (O.I. Chepseng'eny, 10/4/2010).

The institution of marriage practised by the local people was also affected by educational institutions that emerged at Bomet. In the pre-Christian days, engagements and betrothals consisted of several parts. Preliminary visits were made by the young man's father to the girl's home. During the first visit the groom's father would put on a robe of blue monkey fur. Upon arrival on the girl's home, he would stand at the family altar (*mabwaita*) and send a message to the girl's father. He did this by placing a ceremonial stick (*Noogirwet*) at the family altar. This was a sign that he wanted to begin negotiations. (Fish, 1995:117). All these details in negotiations have rapidly declined with the influence of Christianity and western education because the graduates of this system no longer pay attention to them.

The main event among the Kipsigis was the initiation ceremony. It was considered the most important event in the life of an individual. Initiation rites for both male and female extended over a period of months and were very involving. The months the initiate spent in camp were a time of training for adulthood. It was almost like being in school for that period of time. (Fish, 1995:97). Before initiation, children were not considered as being Kipsigis but only as the children of Kipsigis. During initiation, they are supposed to discard all children ways and learn to control their feelings and believe in a way superior to that followed by non-initiates therefore, initiation was considered perhaps as a rebirth, of which circumcision was the cultural sign. (Orchardson, 1961:58). The rite of passage has been Christianised whereby the initiates are taught scriptures and the learned members of the community are often invited to the seclusion to challenge the youth to work hard academically in schools. Most of these role models are graduates of mission sponsored schools such as Tenwek, Kaboson and Longisa.

The creation of a mission community at Bomet and the basic religious and educational institutions that were established paved way for social transformation that spread among the local community. The out-schools and churches such as Siwot, Mengit, Sachangwan and Chepalungu had far reaching implications and social consequences in the community. These mission stations especially at Tenwek and Longisa widened the scope and perception of the local community on other people outside their ethnic group. The WGM missionaries employed Luhya teachers possibly from Friends African mission (FAM) to teach masonry. (O.I. Bargetet, 22/5/2010). This seemed to have prepared them well to compete favourably for vacancies for schools in Nyanza province following the decision of returning Kericho District to Nyanza for educational purposes on 1st July 1956. (KNA: DC/KER/1/28).

Educational development at Bomet had its effect in the traditional economic set up of the community as well as creation of the enlightened African elite who were economically powerful. The economic activities of the ex-students of Tenwek, Longisa and Kaboson contributed significantly to the economic transformation of Kipsigis community. These former students improved their economic and social status by cultivating new crops introduced to them while at school. This led to establishment of small scale cash crops, poultry keeping and zero grazing units. These crops and animals were attended to as taught at school. Notable former students who established modern houses and well-tended farms include; Reverend Ezekiel Kerich, Erick Bargetet, Philemon Rotich, Reverend Jonah Chepsengeny, Pastor Ezekiel Koech and Simon Yaban. These small scale farmers

were supervised by the government agricultural officers and their farms were well tended and modern methods of cultivation were used. Crops that were grown in their farms include; maize, tea, potatoes and bananas. This can be attributed to the agricultural education they received from these schools. Much of this agricultural activity was also attributed to the efforts made by Tenwek Community programme which is an agricultural extension outfit that was formed in order to educate the surrounding community on Agricultural skills. (O.I. Biy, 25/5/2010).

The relationships among the Tenwek, Kaboson and Longisa schools which were established by World Gospel Mission.

The schools were established near rivers for example Tenwek and Kaboson schools were established near Chepkulo River possibly for power generation. The local chiefs mobilized the local people to develop these schools. Chief Arap Kirui urged people of Tenwek to support the school although initially when missionaries had requested for land to set up their first mission station, the local community was unwilling to grant them land and had curved out to them a sloppy land near water falls believing that the missionaries would be discouraged by the biting cold therefore they would leave immediately. However, the missionaries instead utilized the falls to generate electricity and kept pigs to the amazement of the locals. Elders including Chief Arap Kirui later proposed that the mission station be relocated away from the falls to higher ground that was more habitable. Chief Simon Arap Baliach was also instrumental in development and establishment of Longisa School because he lived at Kong'otik village near the school. Arap Sonoiya one of the early WGM's converts aided the establishment of Kaboson school.

The schools have produced elites in different spheres of life; economic, social and political perspectives. They include high school principals, members of parliament, university lecturers, clergy, police commissioner, administrators and leaders of trade unions among others. Former students of Longisa for example Samuel Ng'erechi and Joseph Longocho are teachers, Alex Rono is a Lecturer at Egerton University. The prominent former students of Tenwek School are; Philemon Rotich a former principle of Kericho High School, Late Kipkalya Kones a former minister and Member of Parliament of Bomet constituency, Isaac Ruto Governor Bomet County, Josphat Nanok Governor Turkana County, John Koech a former member of parliament Chepalungu constituency, Frankline Bett a former minister and member of parliament Buret constituency and Wilson Sossion the current secretary general fore Kenya National Union Teachers (KNUT) among others. The prominent former students of Kaboson School include Dr. Julius Kones a former Member of Parliament for Konoin Constituency, Dr Edward Terer a former provincial livestock officer, Philip Langat former deputy permanent secretary among others.

The management role of WGM (AGC) in the schools is still evident today through a department called Christian education Department. This department ensure closer link between the church and the schools in Christian education ministries and activities particularly in AGC sponsored schools both primary and secondary. In conjunction with other departments, organizations and other relevant government institutions, it promoted academic excellence in this institutions. The church is given three to four slots to fill in the board of management of the schools. Their sponsorship range from spiritual which is the main focus, to physical construction of classrooms and provision of other

learning facilities which are provided in cooperation with the local community and other stakeholders. (O.I. Chepseng'eny,10/4/2010).

Conclusion

The paper has significantly discussed the role played by WGM in provision of education in Bomet County among the Kipsigis a sub ethnic group of the Kalenjin in Kenya in Colonial and post-colonial period. Although other missionary groups such as the Mill Hill and Africa Inland Mission were carrying out missionary activities in the community, Bomet County especially Kaboson, Tenwek and Longisa had not been penetrated by any other missionary group although there were available resources such as rivers that could be utilized to generate electricity and also availability of timber. These resources provided ideal ground for establishment of missionary stations especially at Tenwek and Kaboson mission stations.

The early WGM missionaries adopted diverse approaches in order appeal to the local community who initially seemed hostile. Provision of medical services was one of such approaches spearheaded by Catherine Smith and Mildred Ferneau. This attest to the fact that near each school studied, there is a hospital adjacent to each; Tenwek hospital is established next to Tenwek High school, Longisa hospital next to Longisa High school and Kaboson hospital next Kaboson high school. Finally, WGM's curriculum shaped the community's outlook to hygiene. For a long time during the pre-colonial period and early colonial period the Kipsigis used keep some of their livestock especially goats and sheep inside their houses at night. Graduates of WGM for example Erasto Shoo became instrumental in enlightening the locals on importance of hygiene and establishing livestock sheds outside their houses.

It is true that WGM's curriculum in their schools leaned towards establishing technical oriented curriculum among their learners. The ox- ploughing introduced by Hotchkiss introduced new words into the Kipsigis language namely *chokit* (yoke), *Sekeik* (wooden bars) and *toropchot* (piece of animal skin) (Sigira, 1974). Its agricultural impact on the Kipsigis can be affirmed by the District Commissioner's annual report of 1949 which asserts that when a number of distinguished guests comprising of Sir Thomas Lyoid (secretary of state for colonies), Wyn Harries, Day (Agricultural advisor to the colonial office) and Prof Mc Millan (Labour commissioner) expressed themselves highly and were impressed by the high standards of cultivation and soil conservation of the Kipsigis. (KNA: KER/1/22).

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