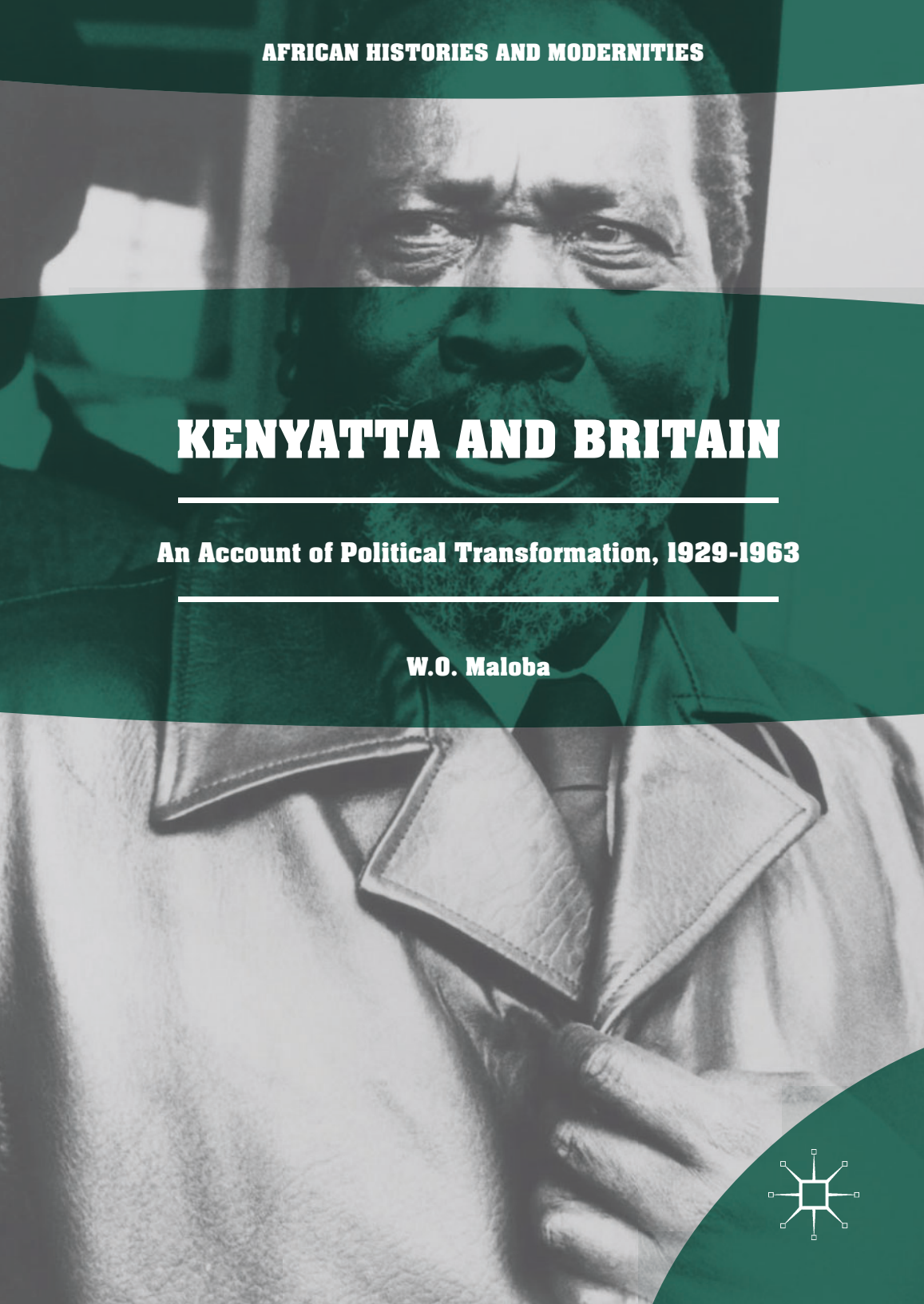
AFRICAN HISTORIES AND MODERNITIES



KENYATTA AND BRITAIN

An Account of Political Transformation, 1929-1963

W.O. Maloba

African Histories and Modernities

Series editors
Toyin Falola
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX, USA

Matthew M. Heaton
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, USA

Aim of the Series

This book series serves as a scholarly forum on African contributions to and negotiations of diverse modernities over time and space, with a particular emphasis on historical developments. Specifically, it aims to refute the hegemonic conception of a singular modernity, Western in origin, spreading out to encompass the globe over the last several decades. Indeed, rather than reinforcing conceptual boundaries or parameters, the series instead looks to receive and respond to changing perspectives on an important but inherently nebulous idea, deliberately creating a space in which multiple modernities can interact, overlap, and conflict. While privileging works that emphasize historical change over time, the series will also feature scholarship that blurs the lines between the historical and the contemporary, recognizing the ways in which our changing understandings of modernity in the present have the capacity to affect the way we think about African and global histories.

More information about this series at
http://www.springer.com/series/14758

W.O. Maloba

Kenyatta and Britain

An Account of Political Transformation, 1929–1963

palgrave
macmillan

W.O. Maloba
University of Delaware
Newark, DE, USA

African Histories and Modernities
ISBN 978-3-319-50894-8 ISBN 978-3-319-50895-5 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-50895-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017940351

Cover image: © Collection Historical/Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

For Carol.

Acknowledgements

Many of the questions tackled, and issues explored, in this study can be considered politically sensitive. To a large degree, many of these issues have hitherto not received extended scholarly scrutiny and analysis. It is therefore not surprising that this study relies heavily on archival sources to provide citations whenever such revelations come into play. The vast majority of the sources for this book are primary accounts, many never cited before in scholarly works on Kenya's history. And here I would like to express my profound gratitude to archivists and librarians at several institutions, including the Morris Library, University of Delaware (especially the Interlibrary Loan Service). They were kind and generous with their time as they helped me locate and order all the material that I requested over the last ten years of working on this book. Archivists at the National Archives, Kew, London, were extremely helpful in pointing out useful directions to pursue. It is certainly a joy to work at this well organized and efficient institution.

I should like to thank the cheerful and helpful staff at the Kenya National Archives, especially Richard Ambani. His knowledge of the holdings of the Kenya National Archives is truly impressive. At Durham University, I would like thank the Senior Assistant Keeper and other archivists for their efficiency and professionalism. I felt most welcome during all the time that I worked at Durham University Archives.

But, above all, I should like to thank my wife, Carol A. Rudisell. A trained archivist and librarian, she was extremely useful in helping me locate various documents, even from obscure sources. We worked

together in all the archives and her expertise was invaluable in searching for and locating crucial relevant documents. Her selfless contributions to this study are immense and admirable. Thank you.

I should like to thank many individuals for their support as I wrote this book. Dan Rich, former Provost of the University of Delaware, offered me the first substantial funding for this project. I am grateful for his support and kindness extended to me on a number of occasions. The departments of History and Black American Studies also provided some financial support. The Institute of Global Studies at the University of Delaware awarded me a generous grant that made it possible to undertake the last research trip to the archives.

There are many colleagues who discussed with me some of the issues tackled in this book. These include William R. Ochieng, the eminent Kenyan historian. He passed away before the completion of this book. On many occasions, over roasted goat meat in Nairobi, we discussed some of the issues tackled in this book whenever I returned to Kenya for research or a holiday. Here, let me also thank Okete Shiroya, Eric Aseka, Robert Maxon, and John Higginson for sharing with me their vast knowledge of African history, especially post-colonial African history. I should also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Toyin Falola. The publication of this book owes a great deal to his support. His generosity of spirit and dedication to excellence in scholarship continues to inspire many scholars and students. At Palgrave Macmillan, I had the good fortune of working with Kristin Purdy, an outstanding, supportive and resourceful editor. The shape that this book has taken owes a great deal to her imaginative intervention. I am also grateful for the immense support that I have received from Megan Laddusaw, Commissioning Editor, History, and Christine Pardue, Editorial Assistant, History, at Palgrave Macmillan.

At the University of Delaware, I should like to thank several friends for their constant interest in this project and for their unfailing support. Erica Armstrong Dunbar is a wonderful friend and colleague and an exemplary Pan Africanist. George Basalla, a friend of many years, listened to me as I discussed both my triumphs and frustrations with this book project. He was always on the look-out for any new publications that might be of value. Angie Hoseth helped me with all my computer problems and in the photographic reproduction of many of my archival documents. Gail Brittingham typed portions of this book as it went through numerous revisions.

My family in Kenya were always generous in their welcome to me, my wife, and daughter when we visited. I should like to thank my brother William and his wife, Janet, for truly looking after us in the village with laughter, joy, and celebrations. My nephew Tafawa (Peter) and his wife, Millie, were generous with their time and superb hospitality. They represent the best in our cultural tradition of mutual respect, reciprocity, and generous hospitality. Let me also thank my other nephews, Ayunda and his wife, Sue, and Reuben and his wife, Linet, for their warm hospitality. Lastly, I would like to thank my daughter, Amanya (Kukhu), for her effortless patience, support, and encouragement as we traveled to several places and archives. She is a young woman with extraordinary abilities and resolve, and a published author in her own right. To all of you: my sincere gratitude. Here is the product of all that time spent away in the archives and on the study.

Newark, DE, USA
June 2016

Contents

1	**Introduction**	1
2	**The Two Trips and Petitions to the Center of the Empire**	9
3	**Spying on Political Activism**	45
4	**Pan Africanism: Discussions on Strategy for Liberation, Marriage, and Surveillance**	81
5	**Back Home: Politics of Nationalism, Mau Mau, Prison, and Surveillance**	109
6	**"Let Jomo Go": Defining and Framing a Symbol**	143
7	**The Search for Alternatives**	195
8	**The Turning Point: Kenyatta and Malcolm MacDonald**	223
Bibliography		273
Index		293

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

By all accounts, Jomo Kenyatta was one of the legendary pioneers of modern African nationalism. "In the context of decolonizing Africa," Guy Arnold has written, "Kenyatta's unique claim to fame is that he was the first to arrive: he said things about colonialism that other African nationalists were subsequently to repeat in one form or another ten to 20 years later."[1] A significant contributory factor in the formation of this legend was Kenyatta's extended stay in Britain, first from 1929 to 1930 and then from 1931 to 1946 as an emissary of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). He was the first Kenyan African to go to Britain with the express purpose of appealing to the British government on behalf of his people: a political emissary to the center of the empire. These trips to Britain earned Kenyatta a unique status among Africans in Kenya (and elsewhere in the Pan African world). "He was seen as the Kenyan hero who had accepted the people's challenge to go to Britain and confront the colonialist in his own turf. He was admired as the man who spoke the language of the white man to demand the end of colonialism; the man who was brave and bright enough to write letters to the Queen in English."[2] It is necessary to point out that by the 1920s and even 1930s,

[1] Guy Arnold, *Kenyatta and the Politics of Kenya* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd. 1974), p. 37.

[2] Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story* (Nairobi: Kenya Leadership Institute, 2006), p. 254.

W.O. Maloba, *Kenyatta and Britain*, African Histories and Modernities, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-50895-5_1

it was still very rare for colonized Africans to undertake such a trip to Britain. "During these same years," Cedric J. Robinson correctly pointed out, "the British Empire's African and Caribbean subjects were not frequent visitors to the metropole. In actuality, they had much less access to Britain than their Francophone counterparts had to the European continent."[3]

For the white settlers, the colonial government in Kenya and later the Colonial Office, the "name of Jomo Kenyatta aroused anger and fear."[4] This was especially true in the period leading to the Mau Mau peasant revolt in 1952, and then in the period prior to the attainment of political independence in 1963. It is fair to state that "No figure in the whole of British Africa, with the possible exception of Kwame Nkrumah (who had no settler minority to deal with in the Gold Coast) excited among settlers and the colonial authorities alike, so many feelings of anger, denigration and fury as did Kenyatta."[5] This anger and fear led the colonial security agencies, and then the British intelligence services, to spy on Kenyatta throughout his political career. These intelligence services maintained a very detailed account and analysis of Kenyatta's political (and even personal) activities while in Britain, and also in Kenya after he returned to the country in 1946.

Yet, in the period after 1963, Kenyatta emerged as about the most admired post-independent African leader: from the "leader to darkness and death" to the beloved elder statesman hailed in the West. By the end of 1963 the "near unanimous view of the white settlers that he was the Devil was replaced by the equally widespread view that the good old Jomo was the best protector European agriculturalists and businessmen could possibly have." In the past, "the 17 years he had lived in Britain and the fact that he had an English wife had … been held against him." However, in 1963, "when his English wife flew to Nairobi to join him and his two surviving wives at the independence celebrations, everything changed. It was as though he had become every white settler's

[3] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1975), p. 369.

[4] George Delf, *Jomo Kenyatta: Towards the Truth About "The Light of Kenya"* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 153.

[5] Arnold, *Kenyatta and the Politics of Kenya*, p. 37.

brother-in law. They saw him as an ugly caterpillar miraculously changed into a butterfly."[6]

It is this political transformation that has puzzled and frustrated Pan Africanist scholars and activists. Equally, scholars of African nationalism have, since 1963, engaged in either outright speculation or incomplete analysis of this transformation. Kenyatta has thus remained one of the most complex political figures in colonial and post-colonial Africa. Within Kenya it is now evident that there is a crucial need for a detailed and informative political biography of Kenyatta. An article entitled "Biographies add rich footnote to our history," which appeared in the Kenyan newspaper *The Standard* (digital news) on October 18, 2014, underscored the critical need for such a study. "But of-course the greatest loss for Kenya and a tremendous disappointment," the article pointed out, "is the lack of a credible memoir on Jomo Kenyatta, our first President. Kenya's history is incomplete without this man, the reverberations of his leadership continue to be felt to date. The fact that we have no first hand record of how the fun loving Londoner named Johnstone converted to be the larger than life Jomo of the 60s is unfortunate. What is the story behind his expansive family that has produced King and Priest and how did it end up owning a significant part of the entity called Kenya? What explains the changed perception of the colonialists who at one point believed he was the 'leader to darkness and death,' but later on became his most voluble supporters? What informed his bitter dispute between him and the erstwhile colleagues including Jaramogi?"[7]

This book, a political biography of Kenyatta, provides answers to many of the questions raised in the article in *The Standard*. Part of the difficulty in writing Kenyatta's political biography lies in combing through the multiple layers of his career. During his reign he published two edited volumes of his speeches: *Harambee: The Prime Minister of Kenya's Speeches, 1963–1964* and *Suffering Without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation*.[8] The speeches and writings included in both of these books were selected by senior civil servants to reflect the new image of Kenyatta in post-colonial Kenya. This new image both

[6] Brian Lapping, *End of Empire* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 444.

[7] *The Standard* (digital news) October 18, 2014.

[8] Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee: The Prime Minister of Kenya's Speeches 1963–1964* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964); Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968).

facilitated and relied upon the cult of personality that was cultivated around him from 1963 until his death in 1978. This cult of personality purposefully omitted any linkages that Kenyatta had in the past to radical nationalism and radical Pan Africanism. In both of these edited volumes of his speeches there was hardly any attempt to link Kenyatta to radical Pan Africanism during his days in Britain. He had, at this time, fraternized with radical Pan African activists such as C.L.R. James, George Padmore, and Kwame Nkrumah. Indeed, these volumes contained no articles written by Kenyatta and published in radical periodicals, including the *Negro Worker*. Some of these articles were very critical of British imperialism in Kenya. In 1964, while still Prime Minister, Kenyatta "proclaimed to the people, and all friends" of Kenya, "that the foundation of our future must lie in the theme: *forgive and forget*. There was no point then, and there is no point today," he emphasized, "in dwelling on the past, in stocking fires of revenge, in looking back on the scenes of anguish. Uhuru for Kenya," he concluded, "had to be joyful, not somber; vigorous rather than brooding."[9]

In this retooled image, Kenyatta was portrayed as a man who had always been opposed to radical nationalism and all that it entailed. One of the inescapable consequences of this cult of personality (and retooled image) was to situate Kenyan nationalism (its aims and course) around the political career of Kenyatta. As a result, Kenyan nationalism could not be discussed without privileging his political career. This career was now repackaged with care, to be illustrious, selfless, heroic, and dedicated to the freedom and advancement of all Kenyans. Edited details of this political career came to constitute a large portion of the "revered national political mythology."

This book follows the contours of Kenyatta's complicated political career, from 1929 to 1963. It is a political biography but with a marked difference from similar books. It explores in detail the linkage of both the colonial intelligence services and then the British intelligence services to Kenyatta's political career. As stated, these intelligence services spied on him until his death. His political career was in many ways shaped by this linkage, first as an enemy to be thwarted and derailed, and then as a friend to be protected, supported, and safeguarded. No other leader in colonial and post-colonial Africa was subjected to such close surveillance

[9] Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness*, p. xv.

over such an extended period by British intelligence services; from aiming to eliminate or at least permanently derail his political career, to becoming his indefectible shield. In large part, this was a major indicator of Kenyatta's political transformation after 1963.

In the period before 1963, Kenyatta's reputation as the "Burning Spear" was, in large measure, based on his political activism in both Kenya and Britain. Activities in Britain included correspondence with the Colonial Office, his writings published in several journals and magazines, and membership of radical political organizations. Here we see the impact of radical Pan African activists on his political reflections (sometimes conclusions) on key issues pertaining to colonialism, and even imperialism.

Spying on Kenyatta had political objectives. To determine the nature of these objectives, this study explored these questions: How extensive and intrusive was this spying? What information was sought and what information was found and recorded? Which colonial and British intelligence agencies sought this information and how was it used? What was the extent of the active cooperation between the colonial and British intelligence services? How did this spying affect Kenya's history? And to what extent did the British get the Kenya they wanted in the end?

In writing this political biography I have been acutely aware of the fact that biographies are indeed part of history. Thus, this book is constructed as a contribution to Kenya's colonial and post-colonial history. Books of biography can, in the current times, be easily accused of advancing the "big man" theory of history at the expense of the common people; that this is writing the history of the rulers and not of the masses. Such criticism therefore sees a complete distinction between so-called new and old history. Yet the complete separation between old and new history has been difficult to maintain in imagination and practice. For indeed, as E.J. Hobsbawm observed, "there is nothing new in choosing to see the world via a microscope rather than a telescope. So long as we accept that we are studying the same cosmos, the choice between microcosm and macrocosm is a matter of selecting appropriate technique. It is significant that more historians find the microscope useful at present, but this does not mean that they reject telescopes as out of date."[10] The value of biography as history is that it offers a window

[10]E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Revival of the Narrative: Some Comments," *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies*, 86, February 1980, p. 7.

through which we can observe and analyze the surrounding historical events. These events had a definite impact on the individual under study. "There is no such a thing as a life lived in isolation. Biography even more than autobiography," Hermione Lee shrewdly observed, "has a duty to the stream as well as to the fish."[11]

The writing of political biography, especially of a major historical figure, poses several challenges. Is there a standard format that must be followed? Should such study "proceed chronologically from cradle to grave"? In her incisive and valuable book on this matter, Lee concluded that indeed there is no standard structure, let alone format, that must be adhered to in the conceptualization and writing of biography. "Biographies can run backwards, can be organized by themes, can choose to dwell on certain key moments in a life, or can inter-cut their narratives with passages from history, literary criticism, description, or autobiography … Total coverage is not an invariable rule."[12]

In very direct and practical ways, biographies do add to a society's historical knowledge. While it is never easy to speculate on the value of historical knowledge to any society, it is still hoped "that it can teach society to make more rational decisions about actions to be taken or policies to be pursued"; that such knowledge can "prove useful in the determination of policy."[13] This is especially true in those situations, as in Kenya, where part (or whole) of this past has been shrouded in secrecy or incomplete knowledge, or has been reworked into mythologies. These mythologies then give rise to social and political beliefs (some decidedly corrosive) that often lead to political decisions being made on the basis of an "imagined past." Here, therefore, the historian or biographer must be rigorous in research and analysis. If not, there is the danger of repeating deliberately carved mythologies as history. "Untruths gather weight by being repeated and can," Lee warned, "congeal into the received version of a life, repeated in biography after biography, until or unless unpicked."[14] The starting point here is that nothing can be more crucial

[11] Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 13.

[12] Lee, *Biography*, p. 8.

[13] Theodore S. Hamerow, *Reflections on History and Historians* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 209.

[14] Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 7.

to the future of any society than knowledge of itself; a willingness to know itself by accounting for its past.

CHAPTER 2

The Two Trips and Petitions to the Center of the Empire

Kenyatta left for London on February 14, 1929. He had been recommended by James Beautah, and chosen by the elders of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), "because of his better English," and not due to his burning radicalism at that time. By 1929 "he had been General Secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association for one year."[1] Married with two children, he was cautious and avoided any radical activities or statements that would have led him "to be whisked off into exile like Harry Thuku." Even in his role as editor of the KCA's periodical, *Mwigwithania*, Kenyatta had been very careful in his contributions. "He supported the churches, district commissioners and chiefs; he urged on his fellow Africans the importance of agricultural education and self advancement; and he praised the role of the British Empire."[2]

The trip, as expected, only took place after being authorized by the local colonial government. The Chief Native Commissioner, acting on instructions from the Governor's Office, informed the KCA that

[1] Ann Beck, "Some Observations on Jomo Kenyatta in Britain, 1929–1930," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines,* 6, *Cahier*, 22, 1966, p. 309. Beautah was an early and uniquely cosmopolitan Kikuyu nationalist. KCA had initially approached him to travel to London as the Association's emissary. He declined the offer. He "considered his responsibilities towards his family too great," and thus suggested Kenyatta's name. Jeremy Murray-Brown *(Kenyatta,* 1972), states that although "Kenyatta was an affectionate father," he was willing, "unlike Beautah … to sacrifice family to his new calling," p. 110.

[2] Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), p. 105.

W.O. Maloba, *Kenyatta and Britain*, African Histories and Modernities, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-50895-5_2

the government had "no objection to Mr. Johnstone Kenyatta proceeding to London with a view to placing certain representations before the Secretary of State, who has been informed of this intention."[3]

The immediate impetus for sending Kenyatta to London was the appointment of Sir Edward Grigg as the Governor of Kenya in 1925. He was not only a snob[4] but also ruthlessly pro-settler in his policy formulation. "He quickly fell under the influence of Delamare and his cousin, Lord Francis Scott," and accordingly steered his administration to seek for the "consent of the settlers." At this time, there were also widespread and very worrisome rumors regarding the alleged impending "federation of Britain's three East African territories: Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika."[5] To Africans, the federation "was at once suspect." It represented an expansion of settler power with incessant demands on African labor and land, and the enactment of racist laws that stifled and derailed their social and political advancement. The KCA felt very strongly "that the time was ripe for a direct approach to the British officials and members of parliament."[6]

This strategy of sending delegations to the center of the empire would be fervently embraced by many organizations in Africa (and beyond) throughout the colonial period. The adoption of this strategy by many educated Africans was guided by the constant belief that indeed there were two Englands: "the England of the colonies, the settlers and the plantocrats, and the England of Westminister, the anti-slavery societies, and the rebel movements of the Left."[7] Thus, it was important to have a representative at the center of the empire to "put the case" to this other England, seen as more progressive and sympathetic to the plight of the colonized. Further, there was a belief that the quest for major changes in policies in the colonies and especially "pressure for constitutional

[3] London, The National Archives [henceforth TNA], CO 533/395/6, p. 16. This statement is reproduced as part of Kenyatta's Introduction to the pamphlet, *Correspondence between the Kikuyu Central Association and the Colonial Office, 1929–1930.*

[4] Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 105.

[5] Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 105.

[6] Beck, "Some Observations," p. 11.

[7] Ras Makonnen and Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism from Within* (Nairobi and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 150.

change could be more effectively exerted at the center than at the colonial periphery."[8]

Kenyatta carried with him two petitions, hoping to present them directly to the Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies. The first was very short and dealt with the limited purpose of appealing for the release of Harry Thuku from imposed "internal exile." Thuku had been in detention, then exile, since 1922. Before this he had been the leader of the East Africa Association (EAA). This was one of the pioneer proto-nationalist movements in Kenya. It was overwhelmingly Kikuyu in composition and leadership. Its initial hope of being able to appeal to "a wider constituency than the Kikuyu" never materialized. The EAA was Nairobi based and concerned itself initially with urban issues, such as reductions in African wages due to depression and poor economic circumstances in the post-World War I period. Its members were the new emerging urban dwellers, mainly in Nairobi, who came to see themselves as best "suited to articulate the grievances of their fellow Africans." This claim to political leadership put the organization on a collision course with both the colonial government and the more conservative Kikuyu Association; an organization formed, led, and dominated by appointed African chiefs in Kikuyuland.

The EAA represented a threat to the supremacy of chiefs in the rural areas. "And so the colonial state chose in its own interest to back the conservative rural society against Thuku and his populist politics. The chiefs and missionaries, whose teaching he criticized, conspired against him and had him arrested and detained."[9] Protests against his detention led to the "worst urban massacre in Kenya at that time." In his absence, still in exile, Thuku was chosen as the leader of the newly formed KCA.

The KCA informed the Colonial Secretary that Harry Thuku, the Association's Chairman, "and a beloved and respected leader of the Kikuyu tribe of this Colony, was deported some years ago by the Government. He is in exile for many years and we beg most earnestly that he may be released and allowed to return to his native land." There were also humanitarian reasons for appealing for his release. He had "an old and blind mother whose only support was her son" now in exile. The blind mother

[8] Makonnen and King, *Pan Africanism From Within*, p. xvii.

[9] W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of A Peasant Revolt* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 47.

had "no means to live and she is waiting to have her son back before she dies."[10] If this request were granted, "all the natives of this Colony will be grateful to His Majesty's Government."

The second petition was really the main one; the reason why Kenyatta had made the trip to Britain. Its historical significance lies in the fact that "it represented in a condensed form the grievances which had been uppermost in the minds of many Kikuyu" for a long time.[11] Further, this petition marked the first time that any group of African nationalists in Kenya had dispatched an emissary to London to make a direct appeal to the British Government for the redress of their grievances against the local colonial government.

What issues were covered in the petition? First and foremost was land. The KCA noted that the "absence of legal title to our lands has exposed some of our people to exploitation and expropriation in favour of non-Natives and it leaves us all without security against further attempts at encroachment on our lands."[12] The Association therefore demanded that, "before anything is done, individual title deeds should be given to every Kikuyu land holder to ensure that no one will take this land away." The KCA proposed that, in future, "no lease should be given to non-Natives inside the kikuyu lands, and that where this has been done in the past, compensation should now be paid to the Githaka-holders who were affected (or to their descendants to-day)."[13] Regarding lands already alienated for European settlement, the KCA proposed that they "should be redeemed if possible and returned to their original owners (or their descendants) who should be paid compensation for the loss they have suffered during the years since the land was taken away." The petition also wanted Africans, specifically the Kikuyu, to be "permitted to plant economic crops like Arabian coffee, etc., on the lands they occupy, without any hindrance."[14]

On African representation in the Legislative and Municipal Councils, the KCA requested that the "Native population should be allowed to elect three Africans and two Europeans as an initial step to represent

[10] TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 17.
[11] Beck, "Some Observations," p. 313.
[12] TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 18.
[13] TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.
[14] TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.

Native interests, and that ultimately the number of African representatives in the Legislative Council should predominate."[15] In the meantime, "three African Natives" should be "elected by the Natives to represent their interests in the Municipal Council."

Access to educational institutions had come to be identified as critical to the social advancement of Africans at this time. Thus, the KCA petition recommended that "primary and agricultural domestic education should be made compulsory for native boys and girls." Further, the government should ensure that "sufficient number of Secondary and High Schools" are "established all over Native areas to impart higher education to Native boys who have completed their primary education."[16] To facilitate the pursuit of higher education by Africans, it was crucial that "several Scholarships should be established by the Government for the training of all Natives of ability locally and abroad."[17]

The petition touched on the thorny issue of the *Kipande* system (registration/identity certificate carried by Africans). Such registration, the KCA insisted, restricted "the freedom of movement of the African Native subjects of the Crown and facilitates efforts to keep them in a state of slavery."[18] Still on the labor question, the petition wanted "a guarantee that, provided that Natives pay and produce crops on their own Shambas, they will not be compelled to leave their land and go out to work for Europeans." Also, the petition wanted women to be "exempted from hut and poll-tax."

Specific requests were also made regarding the form and structure of the "Kikuyu Native Administration." In the future the petition wanted the "Kikuyu tribe formed into one compact whole and not divided into separate districts." The KCA requested the establishment of a new position of Paramount Chief for the Kikuyu. This Paramount Chief would be "elected by the Kikuyu people," and would "rule over them in accordance with their tribal customs."[19]

Lastly, the petition touched on what were termed "miscellaneous matters." These included a request "that accused Natives be tried by

[15]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.
[16]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.
[17]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.
[18]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.
[19]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 19.

Native juries." The KCA was also concerned about the repugnant "practice of the non-Natives living openly with the Native women without going through the forms of legal or tribal marriage and thus encouraging immorality among the Natives." The petition wanted this practice "stopped through special legislation against it."

In its conclusion the petition struck a very conciliatory tone affirming loyalty to the Crown and respect for the British Parliament. The destinies of millions of Africans, the petition stated, "are in the hands of His Most Gracious Majesty the King Emperor and in the hands of the British Parliament, both of whom are exercising a sacred trust for the helpless children of this soil, who being unable to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, look unto them alone as their protectors."[20]

Kenyatta was not able to meet with the Colonial Secretary. The Governor of Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg, who was also in London at this time, "to try to rescue something of the Closer Union," had sent a telegram to the Colonial Office raising objection to such a meeting. The KCA, according to the Governor, "was not recognized" by the colonial government as the sole representative of the Kikuyu. It was only "one Association among many and it represents only a limited number of persons of one tribe, the Kikuyu." The Governor therefore recommended to the Colonial Office that Kenyatta "should not be received."[21] And he was not. Instead, Kenyatta forwarded the petition to the Colonial Secretary through the Governor, whom he met in London on April 16, 1929. "The petition," writes George Delf, "was not permitted to reach the Colonial Secretary direct from the hands of the colonial, but he eventually saw it by devious means."[22] In spite of this rather "frigid reception," the petition itself received serious consideration at the Colonial Office. It was formally forwarded to the Governor in Kenya to respond to the issues raised in "the Kenyatta memorandum." The "Governor's comments" formed the basis of the official response from the Colonial Secretary communicated to Kenyatta on January 2, 1930.

Regarding the release of Harry Thuku from "internal exile," specifically from "Marsabit to the Kikuyu Reserve," the Colonial Secretary

[20] TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 20.
[21] TNA, CO 533/422/1, p. 3.
[22] Delf, *Jomo Kenyatta*, p. 66.

noted that, if the "Government of Kenya should find it possible to submit a recommendation in regard to his return, it will receive most careful consideration."[23] As expected, the bulk of the response touched on the issues raised in the KCA's second petition.

On land, the Colonial Secretary stated that "In the Native Lands Trust Bill … not yet passed into law, provision is made for proclaiming in the most formal manner possible that the Native Reserves are set aside for the use and benefit of native tribes forever." Therefore, "no native tribe need have any fear as to the security of the lands now reserved for them, as the Government of Kenya has no desire to take away those lands, nor would His Majesty's Government sanction a reduction in the area reserved, if such a reduction should be proposed."[24] The granting of title deeds to the Kikuyu landowners did not receive favorable consideration. Much would depend on the recommendations of "A Committee … recently appointed by the Governor of Kenya under the chairmanship of the Chief Native Commissioner, for the purpose of enquiring into the principles of Kikuyu customary law of land tenure and formulating rules which can be promulgated under the Native Lands Trust Ordinance, when that measure is enacted."[25] The government appreciated the desire for title deeds, even though the "position is not free from difficulty." The Committee would consider, "among other matters, the possibility of the introduction of documents for recording family or individual holdings."

The Colonial Secretary effectively by-passed the issue of alienated lands, since it was not clear to him "what lands are referred to when it is suggested that Kikuyu lands which have been alienated in freehold should be redeemed and returned to their original holders or descendants, and that compensation should be paid, as also in the case of lands leased in the past to non-natives." He relegated the matter to the future; "enquiries will be made and further consideration will be given to this matter." The Governor had, in his comments to the Colonial Secretary, provided some indication as to why the colonial government was quite reluctant to entertain any discussions over this matter. "Though there is evidence that in the early days of the country considerable areas of land

[23]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 20.
[24]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 20.
[25]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 21.

now claimed by the Kikuyu were alienated to European settlers," the Governor stated, "financial reasons make it impossible in the interests of natives as well as non-natives, to re-open the question of Githaka claims outside the Reserves in the Kiambu-Nairobi area." Alienation of land had taken place a long time ago and, as such, there might arise problems regarding the veracity of the evidence that could be provided seeking for compensation. But, "even if a clear case were made for the restoration of certain areas to the Kikuyu, the compensation to dispossessed persons involved in such a decision would inflict a crushing financial burden on the whole community, native and non-native from which the Kikuyu would suffer as severely as any others."[26]

No specific response was given to the question of the Africans (the Kikuyu), being allowed to grow "valuable crops such as *Arabica* coffee." Instead, the Colonial Secretary referred to a local Commission appointed to investigate this matter and make recommendations on the possibility of "any persons whatever their race" being able to "undertake such cultivation without undue risk of spreading disease." He avoided making any recommendation, "pending the receipt and consideration of the report of the Commission." Likewise, the Colonial Secretary avoided giving any specific response to the question of the representation of Africans in the Legislative and Municipal Councils. "The question of the representation of native interests in the government of Kenya", the Colonial Secretary noted, "is engaging the attention of His Majesty's Government in connection with the report of the Commission on Closer Union in the East African Dependencies."[27]

On the question of African women paying poll tax and hut tax, the Colonial Secretary did not regard this as a major issue since "no women are liable to poll tax." Only a widow who "retains during her life time the control of her late husband's property … might herself have to find money for the tax on the hut in which she lives."[28] However, if the Colonial Secretary were to be notified, "through the proper channel … of cases in which women are paying hut tax … consideration will be given to the question of exemption from the tax, should the absence of means or other circumstances appear to justify this."

[26]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 42.
[27]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 22.
[28]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 22.

A request for the expansion of secondary schools and high schools in the Colony was turned down. The Colonial Secretary felt that "in the present circumstances the establishment of a large number of 'secondary schools' and 'high schools', as contemplated in the petition, would be useless, as there would not be pupils sufficiently qualified for admission to such schools."[29] Makerere College, in Uganda, was equipped to provide advanced training in "arts, medicine, etc.," and it was hoped that promising pupils "would take advantage of the instruction which the college provides." There would be no further increase in the number of scholarships given to Africans for study, since it was "not at present clear that the Kikuyu themselves appreciate the value of such scholarships."

The *Kipande* system was not seen as restricting "the legitimate movement of natives." On the contrary, "the certificates provide a means of identification which are of value to the natives themselves, except those who break the law; and in the case of the latter the certificates are admittedly and designedly a handicap."[30] There was therefore no basis for suggesting that the colonial government intended to keep the Africans "in a state of slavery."

Appointment of a Paramount Chief over the Kikuyu was rejected, as this "would be foreign to the tradition and customs of the Kikuyu." Besides, such an appointment was "in no way calculated to improve their position." The combination of all districts of Kikuyuland "into a single administrative unit is not considered practicable" and thus the existing administrative districts would be maintained.[31]

The establishment of Native juries was also rejected. The Colonial Secretary saw no compelling reason to modify the "practice now obtaining in Kenya," whereby "when a native is brought before a Judge for trial … native assessors" assisted the judge. These assessors gave "valuable advice to the judge as the result of their special experience and their acquaintance with native law and custom and native thought." Thus, "at the present stage of native development in Kenya the substitution of native juries would not make for an improvement in the administration of justice."[32]

[29]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 22.
[30]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 22.
[31]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 22.
[32]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 23.

Lastly, in the matter of "non-natives living with native women to whom they are not married," the Colonial Secretary informed Kenyatta that it was "hardly necessary to say that the Government of Kenya and the Secretary of State are in entire agreement with the view that it is desirable to put a stop to immorality of all kinds." Further, the Colonial Secretary knew "that the general opinion of the European community in Kenya is strongly against the practice, and the information at his disposal leads him to believe that happily the practice is comparatively uncommon." Were the practice to become common, the Colonial Secretary "would be compelled to consider whether action could be taken by the Government in the matter." In such matters, however, public opinion (African and European) was seen as being more effective than "the introduction of special legislation, which would inevitably be difficult to enforce."[33]

Kenyatta was expected to send to the KCA "a copy of this reply to their petitions." The Governor of Kenya was also instructed to "arrange for a copy to be communicated to the Headquarters of the Association."

Still in London, Kenyatta responded to the reply from the Colonial Secretary on April 15, 1930. He was gracious and expressed his thanks "for the very full and courteous consideration that has been given to the two petitions submitted by" the KCA. He expressed his gratitude for those requests granted, which were not many, and on the others he provided more information or demonstrated how the Africans would continue to be adversely affected.

As expected, the bulk of Kenyatta's response dealt with the issue of land. There was the problem of the scarcity of land, and then the insecurity felt by Kikuyu landholders due to lack of title deeds to their land holdings. Linked to both issues was the demand for a return of alienated lands and/or adequate compensation. He pointed out to the Colonial Secretary that "there was no single question about which my people are so anxious as their getting title deeds. It is more important and urgent to them than any other question."[34] What measure would make the Kikuyu feel safe at this time on matters pertaining to land? Kenyatta's response suggested a written guarantee from the Crown: "My tribe would feel safe if the external boundaries of their Reserve and the security of the land

[33]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 23.

[34]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 24.

within those boundaries were guaranteed directly by the King." It was hoped that this guarantee could be locally enforced and supervised by "an independent Protector answerable only to Your Lordship and one whom we could, therefore, trust, and who could get to know us and our language and customs and who could, when our external boundaries are rendered safe, discuss with our tribe new arrangements and the issue of title deeds for lands within our boundaries."[35]

Kenyatta informed the Colonial Secretary that many Kikuyu people had been rendered landless as a direct result of land alienation for European settlement. "There are hundreds of Kikuyu wandering about Kenya to-day, landless and homeless, because of their being evicted from their lands in the past without compensation whatsoever. Some of the land so taken from us is now held on freehold tenure and much of the remainder is on 999 year leases, which is much the same thing from our point of view."[36] What the Kikuyu now demanded was the return of this alienated land "or adequate compensation." On a more hopeful note, Kenyatta felt that his people would be satisfied "to know that the question of the growing of Arabica coffee by any persons, whatever their race (given freedom from risk of spreading disease), is going to receive Your Lordship's consideration."

On education, Kenyatta's response again reaffirmed the value of establishing and then funding several high schools and secondary schools in "the country of the Kikuyu (and other tribes)." The establishment of such schools in Kenya, as opposed to "the existence of a school in a distant protectorate," would arouse the interest of "Kikuyu boys and girls … for advanced education in our own country." Kenyatta also pointed out that Africans in Kenya do not get their "fair share of money for education from the public funds. We provide large amounts from voluntary taxation towards building our own schools."[37]

The current system of choosing representatives of African interests in the Legislative and Executive Councils was patently unfair on several grounds. First, "all Europeans who have so far been selected by the Kenya Government as special representatives of native interests have failed on many occasions to advance or support our interests on issues

[35]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 24.
[36]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 24.
[37]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 25.

when we both needed or expected their support." Second, Africans had "no voice at all in the selection of our representatives." Further, these European representatives did not hold any conferences with Africans "as to what they are to say on our behalf." The remedy to this problem was to allow Africans to at least "suggest a list of the names of representatives whom we would choose to support our interests on the Legislative and Executive Councils."[38]

Labor, and especially the *Kipande* system, remained painfully contentious. "I am afraid," Kenyatta submitted to the Colonial Secretary, "that my people could not be persuaded that the registration system has been applied for any other reason than to oppress them." Therefore, "it need not be hoped that the native tribes of Kenya will ever agree that the taking of all male finger prints, and that the imposition of punishment under the criminal law for failure to carry certificates, are applied by the Kenya Government for their good or their benefit."[39] The KCA wanted "permission to advance valid ground for modification of the system." The current implementation of the system inflicted racial humiliation on the Africans. As a result, "any African is liable to be challenged by the police to produce his certificate if he is outside of his Native Reserve. If he walks out after dark he may always be called on to produce it. If he has not got it on him he is fined before the Courts. This procedure is enforced only against Africans in Kenya, which His Majesty's Government has declared to be primarily an African territory."[40]

[38]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 25.

[39]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 25.

[40]TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 25. This is in reference to the *Devonshire White Paper,* issued in 1923. This document stated in part that: "Primarily, Kenya is an African territory, and His Majesty's Government think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if, and when, those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail." Nonetheless, the interests of the white settlers and other non-African immigrants were still protected under special dispensations allowed under this document. "Obviously the interests of the other communities, European, Indian or Arab, must severally be safeguarded. Whatever the circumstances in which members of these communities have entered Kenya, there will be no drastic action or reversal of measures already introduced, such as may have been contemplated in some quarters, the result of which might be to destroy or impair the existing interests of those who have already settled in Kenya." The British Government was however uncompromising on one issue. "But in the administration of Kenya His Majesty's Government regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population, and they are unable to delegate this trust, the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races … This paramount

Kenyatta then posed a provocative rhetorical question. "May I respectfully submit", he stated, "that if such police methods were applied to Englishmen in England they would protest against them as imposing a 'state of slavery'?"

The payment of taxes by African women (mainly widows) was seen by the KCA as a clear case of racial injustice. Kenyatta reminded the Colonial Secretary that European women "do not pay one cent of direct taxation." This appeared to the Africans in Kenya as "entirely unfair and oppressive." The fact that "African widows should have to pay direct taxation, while all other women in the Colony escape, appears to us", Kenyatta emphasized, "to be an unjust piece of discrimination to the detriment of the most helpless section of the combined populations in the Colony."[41] He appealed to the Colonial Secretary to consider "total exemption for widows irrespective of proof of absence of means." Only such exemption will ensure that "African women will no longer be treated more harshly in the matter of direct taxation than are the women of other races in the Colony."

Kenyatta insisted that, contrary to the advice provided by the colonial government, the institution of a "Paramount Chief" was indeed part of the traditions and customs of the Kikuyu. "When I was a young boy," he recalled, "there were two chiefs, paramount among their respective portions of the Kikuyu people between Ngong and Mount Kenya. These were Wangombe and Waiyaki." The KCA still held the position that "it would be a marked advantage to appoint an educated paramount Chief who enjoyed the people's confidence." Before refusing to consider the merits of this matter, it would be useful "to ascertain the general attitude of the Kikuyu tribe to this proposal." Lastly, Kenyatta again appealed for the establishment of the office of "a friend and protector appointed by His Majesty, the King, who could look after our welfare and remain among us sufficiently long to learn our language and customs and who

---

duty of trusteeship will continue, as in the past, to be carried out under the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the agents of the Imperial Government, and by them alone." See *The Devonshire White Paper* (Cmd. 1922). For the cited extract, see *Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa* (Cmd. 2904), presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, July, 1927.

[41] TNA, CO 533/395/6, p. 26.