

The King's Speech: Unveiling the Colonial Gaze in Kenya (1895-1918)

“Religiously, perhaps, all men are brethren: politically the negro will for centuries be a child and any attempt at pretending that within twenty or even fifty years he can attain the state of development reached by the white race in 3000 years...can only be fraught with the greatest danger.”¹

In his recent speech to the people of Kenya, King Charles III took many by surprise when he espoused a semblance of cognizance and compassion towards the sufferings endured during the sombre epochs of imperial rule. During his speech, the King expressed a ‘great sorrow’ for past “wrongdoings”, yet, lamentably, the monarch stopped short of a genuine apology, leaving many Kenyans frustrated.² The King’s royal visit rekindled strong emotions and is indicative of a complex and fraught relationship to empire, of which the shadow of the colonial gaze continues to loom large.

As we grapple with the legacy of colonialism on multiple fronts, we must confront the difficult questions it raises, not least regarding the treatment of nations thrust into subjugation and the justification of their oppression. The past cannot be undone, but in acknowledging its truths we can strive towards a better understanding of the present, and in doing so, work towards a more equitable future for all. Bearing this viewpoint in mind, this essay delves into the colonial project in Kenya and sheds the shackles of dominant Euro-centric narratives. It offers new insights into government and missionary contests and the division created between Kenyan-Africans (refers to ethnic communities in Kenya such as the Kikuyus, Maasai and Embu who were directly affected by colonial rule) and Europeans. This essay also exposes how a certain rhetoric (that improved the image of the colonial project, at the expense of Kenyan-Africans) was used between senior colonial officials and the metropole to help garner support in Westminster and maintain dominance over the colonised.

In the grand scheme of European colonialism, Africa during the late 19th century was viewed as a land of untapped resources and ancient civilizations ripe for the taking. There was a deep-seated belief in "white superiority" that permeated the very fabric of imperialist

¹ KNA: Coast Province 64/252A, Memorandum by John Ainsworth, 22 April 1912; KBU/11, Dagoretti Sub-District Annual Report, 1917-1918; PCEA: Education 1912-1919, Orr to Bishops, 25 March 1912, quoted in Robert Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*, 102.

² Jane Clinton and Caroline Kimeu, ‘King Charles Stops Short of Apology for “Abhorrent” Colonial Violence in Kenya’, *The Guardian*, 31 October 2023, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/31/king-charles-stops-short-of-apology-for-british-colonial-violence-kenya>.

schemes. This led to the development and enforcement of the so-called "colonial gaze," a narrative that elevated the colonizer and separated them from the colonized.³ Through this lens, traditional African (encompasses indigenous African communities found within the continent of Africa) identity, culture, and religion were subjected to the whims of their oppressors. Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and political philosopher, maintained that the imposition of imperialism and European claims of superiority were responsible for victimizing traditional Africans and "stripped" them of their self-identity, leading to a profound sense of alienation.⁴ The use of pejorative terms such as "savage, primitive, and uncivilized" served to cement the separation between colonizer and colonized, dehumanizing the latter and reducing them to mere objects. The result was the transformation of a self-assured, self-reliant "being" into one that believed more so in the capability of others.⁵ This psychological manipulation was a key strategic component in the colonialist project throughout the early 20th century. And along with the missions' provision of a controlled formal education for Kenyan-Africans the colonial government was able to perpetuate the power of the oppressor and subjugate the oppressed.

Some scholars argue that imperialism, education, and religion are inextricably bound. Martin Carnoy, whose interests lie in the political economy of the educational system, asserts that "knowledge itself was colonised", and that the perpetuation of colonial rule was strongly embedded in formal education.⁶ Developing upon this thought, Carnoy stated that in order for institutes of education to be deemed legitimate, the general population must trust "that it serves their interests and needs", producing students that are capable of contributing towards socio-economic progress and stability.⁷ Scholars such as Carnoy believed that through a controlled education, the colonised were made useful to the colonisers within the new societal hierarchy.⁸

In contrast, Ayobami Kehinde, a professor of literature, contends that there existed a two-pronged idea behind cultural imperialism. Firstly, Kehinde states that there is an

³ Jeanne van Eeden, 'The Colonial Gaze: Imperialism, Myths, and South African Popular Culture', *Design Issues* 20, no. 2 (2004): 18–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1512077>.

⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, ed. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 224.

⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 17–36; Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), xii, <https://archive.org/details/colonisercoloniz00albe/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed on 20-10-21); Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, 2nd ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 31–97, <https://archive.org/details/prosperocalibant00mann> (accessed on 18-09-20); Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Longman, 1977), 27–28, <https://archive.org/details/educationascultu00carn/page/2/mode/2up?q=perpetuate+> (accessed on 19-10-20).

⁶ Carnoy, 3.

⁷ Carnoy, 1.

⁸ Carnoy, 18.

imposition of linguistics upon the colonised, imparting English ideals to foster a functional “master-servant relationship”. Secondly, that the coloniser uses altruism and theological reformation as justification, eliminating traditional African cultures and religion by firstly weakening their belief in existing pre-colonial creed.⁹ Kehinde’s sentiments are witnessed as part of later missionary ideologies where religion was seen as part of the “civilising process”, and traditional African beliefs were swiftly dismissed as pagan and “blindly ignorant.”¹⁰ In deconstructing this “civilising process”, the political scientist, Belachew Gebrewold suggests the coloniser viewed the colonised as substandard, somehow justifying their exploitation and ethicizing a religious responsibility to civilise them.¹¹

On the other hand, apologists for colonialism discuss the benefits of imperialism. Bruce Gilley, a professor of political science argues that imperialism was a civilising mission, improving standards and imparting essential values to nations from countries commonly identified as part of the “third world”.¹² The historian, Niall Ferguson, even lauded the British for promoting viable economies through free trade movement, labour, and capital.¹³ Furthermore, Richard Adams of the *Guardian* explains that the theologian, Nigel Biggar, also shared in this sentiment by stating that imperialism instilled a “sense of order” in non-Westernised countries.¹⁴

The reality is that there were indeed some positives associated with colonial rule such as improved hygiene, agricultural methods and medical knowledge, but there were also extensive negative implications for Kenyan-Africans. Not least, was the commercial gains derived by the British from Kenya, which did not directly benefit the colonised (as was also the case in India). These gains included the re-settlement of thousands of Europeans in the Kenyan Highlands from other British colonies (at the expense of traditional landowners such as the Kikuyus); as well as the financial gains reaped from agricultural and commercial

⁹ Ayobami Kehinde, ‘Post-Colonial African Literature as Counter-Discourse: J.M. Coetzee’s Foe and the Reworking of the Canon’, *Ufahamu* 32, no. 3 (2006): 98–99, https://escholarship.org/content/qt4ph014jj/qt4ph014jj_noSplash_43134ebb831ddff2eede1faaf8160337.pdf (accessed on 27-10-20).

¹⁰ Kehinde, ‘Post-Colonial African Literature as Counter-Discourse: J.M. Coetzee’s Foe and the Reworking of the Canon’, 99–100.

¹¹ Belachew Gebrewold, ‘Deconstructing the Civilizing Process’, *University of Innsbruck* (Innsbruck, 2008), 2, <https://www.uibk.ac.at/peacestudies/downloads/peacelibrary/deconstructing.pdf> (accessed on 26-10-20).

¹² Bruce Gilley, ‘The Case for Colonialism’, *Third World Quarterly*, 8 September 2017, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1369037>.

¹³ Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 1st ed. (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), xxii.

¹⁴ Richard Adams, ‘Oxford University Accused of Backing Apologists of British Colonialism’, *The Guardian*, 23 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/dec/22/oxford-university-accused-of-backing-apologists-of-british-colonialism> (accessed on 02-11-20).

enterprises which were then sent back for the benefit of the metropole. In fact, in examining Ferguson's pro-imperialist thesis, one reviewer summed up British colonialism as 'a tale of slavery, plunder, war, corruption, land-grabbing, famines, exploitation, indentured labour, impoverishment, massacres, genocide and forced resettlement'.¹⁵ Equally as important, and what is a crucial underlying argument in this essay; is that despite rhetoric that stated otherwise, colonial rule was not exercised for the benefit of Kenyan-Africans, instead, whatever positives were experienced were merely by-products of the grander scheme of empire building.

Although some academics suggest positive outcomes came from colonialism and missionary education, most of them refute the claims of European supremacy. According to the historian Felicity Jensz, missions were able to expand their influential sphere by using a strategy of drawing the "pagans" in through education.¹⁶ This strategy was an important endeavour of nineteenth and twentieth century missions whose goal was to spread Christianity and "civilise" local ethnic groups.¹⁷ Scholars such as Said, Ibekwe and Rodney question the core assumptions behind the imperial project, with Said inspiring academics such as Spivak and Bhabha who share in this post-colonial criticism.¹⁸ Nigeria's Chinua Achebe and Kenyan scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also voice their respective country's sentiments, historically criticising imperialism through their post-colonial writing. Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o endeavour to re-envision traditional African people (and many around the world) in their rightful light(s) and uncovering, in the process, new epistemological terrain in the way the damaging effects of colonialism can be analysed.¹⁹

The influence of the missions and European reformers in bringing Christianity and education to the oppressed "savages" in Kenya was often viewed by imperial poets, as bringing light to the darkness.²⁰ Discussing Rudyard Kipling's poem about the "White man's burden",

¹⁵ Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2017), 245–64.

¹⁶ Felicity Jensz, 'Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire. Part II: Race, Class, and Gender', *History Compass* 10, no. 4 (2012): 306, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2012.00838.x> (accessed on 13-10-20).

¹⁷ Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire. Part II: Race, Class, and Gender," 306.

¹⁸ Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Spivak and Bhabha', in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 451–52, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470997024.ch24>.

¹⁹ Kehinde, 'Post-Colonial African Literature as Counter-Discourse: J.M. Coetzee's Foe and the Reworking of the Canon', 103–4.

²⁰ Édouard Percy Cranwill Girouard, 'The East Africa Protectorate: 1909-10', *Annual Colonial Report* (London: Darling and Son Ltd, 1910), 39, http://libsysdigi.library.illinois.edu/ilharvest/Africana/Books2011-05/5530244/5530244_1909_1910/5530244_1909_1910_opt.pdf (accessed on 20-08-20); Christopher Allen,

Ferguson describes Kipling as “Empire's greatest poet”.²¹ In his poem at the turn of the twentieth century, Kipling captured the so-called colonial burden (albeit with a focus on American imperial responsibility in the Philippines):

Take up the White Man's burden--Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile--To serve your captives' need; To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--Your new-caught, sullen peoples, Half-devil and half-child.²²

The moral superiority behind this viewpoint was already prevalent throughout British rule in India, where it was the “White man’s burden” to educate and the “civilising duty” of missionaries to advance what were often considered as backward tribes.²³

A moving example of the Western mindset at the time is also shown in the story of Molonket Olokorinya ole Sempele. Sempele was a Maasai and the first Kenyan-African to pursue higher education in the United States in 1909. A description of the harsh realities Sempele faced during his education in the Southern United is given below by a friend of Sempele:

At a Christian meeting, one of the missionaries would be saying something which seemed to minimise what an African had been saying. Molonket [Sempele] would intervene, and in the form of a joke, would talk about his experience in the States. He would tell of how white children took hold of a black doll, painted it up with thick white lips and white eyes to look like a golly wog, and then threw sticks and stones at it till it was broken.²⁴

Students such as Sempele would bring back a wealth of knowledge and a “political consciousness” about what “thing the whites were capable of doing to blacks” which they would share with their colleagues.²⁵ Following the cruel realities of WWI, there was a clear change in the Kenyan-African mindset, and a growing number would demand equal rights and political representation through the foundation of an improved literacy education.

‘Missions and the Mediation of Modernity in Colonial Kenya’, *Penn History Review* 20, no. 1 (12 November 2013): 19, <http://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol20/iss1/2> (accessed on 19-10-20).

²¹ Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 380.

²² Rudyard Kipling, ‘The White Man’s Burden (1899)’, *McClure’s Magazine* (New York, February 1899), 291, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/kipling.asp> (accessed on 18-02-21).

²³ Abdul Rasul Alidina Visram et al., ‘Evidence of the Education Commission of the East Africa Protectorate, 1919’ (Nairobi, 1919), 38, <https://dspace.gipe.ac.in/xmlui/handle/10973/18444>.

²⁴ J. T. Mpaayei, personal communication; also, Stauffacher to Minch, 16 Nov. 1903, S.P., quoted in Kenneth King, “The Kenya Maasai and the Protest Phenomenon, 1900-1960,” *The Journal of African History* 12, no. 1 (1971), 124, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/180570>.

²⁵ King, ‘The Kenya Maasai and the Protest Phenomenon, 1900-1960’, 124.

In Kenya, the British feared the political discontent that came with an advanced academic education skewed towards the Kenyan-African intelligentsia.²⁶ However, these sentiments were not shared by the administrator and explorer, Frederick Lugard, who postulated that claims of African “intelligentsia“ were unsubstantiated.²⁷ Elaborating upon the intellectual capabilities of traditional Africans following his travels, Lugard stated, “. . .nor has the educated native, generally speaking, shown himself to be possessed of ability to rule either his own community or backward peoples of his own race, even under favourable conditions.”²⁸ Despite Lugard’s claims, the colonial government’s fears over the possibility of political discontent in Kenya was primarily born out of its earlier experiences in India, where the knowledge drawn from of an academic education was used by Indian leaders to incite the masses against colonial rule.

One of the other implications of the colonial gaze was the need for the creation of areas perceived by colonialists as self-controlled regions of power and sustenance.²⁹ In Kenya, the region of the fertile Kenyan (White) Highlands serve as a historical example. Examining the “colonial space” in South Africa, Elizabeth Delmont and Jessica Dubow assert that these areas (such as the White Highlands) were intentionally sold in the media to prospective European settlers as exclusive colonial spaces where the “confident assurance of entitled leisure” could be lived out.³⁰ Similarly, in reviewing the colonial gaze in South Africa, Jeanne van Eeden states that, “the colonial metanarrative can be re-enacted in a space dedicated to entitled leisure”.³¹ In retrospect, the colonial gaze allowed for the landscape of areas such as the Kenyan Highlands to be transformed into what became a romanticized spectacle worthy of settlement. To help maintain control over the colonized, a key strategy employed by the colonial government in Kenya and throughout its colonies was the policy of divide and rule.

The divide and rule policy was a key strategic tool transferred and employed by the administration in Kenya to strengthen the colonial project by fostering disunity between Kenyan-Africans with the aim of preventing any collective calls of opposition. Examining the

²⁶ Godfrey N. Brown, “British Educational Policy in West and Central Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 2, no. 3 (1964): 365, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/158646>.

²⁷ Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 84, <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028741175> (accessed on 04-12-20).

²⁸ Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 84.

²⁹ Elizabeth Delmont and Jessica Dubow, “Thinking Through Landscape: Colonial Spaces and their Legacies” in *Panoramas of Passage: Changing Landscapes of South Africa* (Johannesburg: University Art Galleries, University of the Witwatersrand, and Washington, DC: Meridian International Centre, 1995), 14-15.

³⁰ Delmont and Dubow, “Thinking Through Landscape: Colonial Spaces and their Legacies” in *Panoramas of Passage: Changing Landscapes of South Africa*,” 14-15.

³¹ Eeden, ‘The Colonial Gaze: Imperialism, Myths, and South African Popular Culture’, 26.

similar impact of the colonial project on First Nations, Irene Watson asserts that, “The colonial project has embodied a centuries-long, ongoing campaign to annihilate, define, subordinate and exclude the ‘native’, and an arsenal of tools has been applied to these ends”.³² It was practiced by most colonial powers from the West, but it is the British that exercised the policy with the greatest dexterity. Prior to employing this policy in its colonies, Britain had meticulously analysed the Roman Empires’ expansion strategies and use of the divide and conquer policy in the East of the Mediterranean and in Germania, where Caesar had even incited “conflict between nationalist tribal leaders and other leaders allied with Rome.”³³ More recently, it was practiced in India through the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909, where a division of electorates based on social order and religion was created.³⁴ According to Shashi Tharoor, a noted political author and intellectual, the Morley-Minto reforms were purely “cosmetic at best” and provided “no power”, allowing only a feeble voice for the Indian public or at least its “elite, English-educated sections”.³⁵

The policy of divide and rule was implemented in British colonies in several ways, but according to the historian, Richard Morrock, there were four methods in particular, that essentially created a racial and religious divide amongst the colonised. The four methods employed in the Kenya were: the harsh colonization, encouragement of migration, religious conversion, and the provision of a disparate education.³⁶ By using these methods successfully, the colonial government was able to maintain great control over Kenyan-Africans, rationalizing future unjust land and educational policies, and further segregating Kenyan-Africans from Europeans, along racial, religious, and tribal lines. Additionally, as Irene Watson claims, the colonial project was “Mast-headed” by the missions, who played a crucial role in supporting the act of “civilising the native”.³⁷

A further element of the divide and rule policy was to identify certain traits in Kenyan-Africans that the colonial government could exploit.³⁸ A prime example were the Kikuyus, who were considered by the colonial administration and European settlers as the “best workers”,

³² Watson, ‘First Nations and the Colonial Project’, 30.

³³ Eric A. Posner, Kathryn Spier, and Adrian Vermeule, ‘Divide and Conquer’ (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 2–3, http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/olin_center/papers/pdf/Vermeule_639.pdf (accessed on 18-08-22).

³⁴ Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Berny SèBe, and GaBrielle Maas, eds., *Echoes of Empire: Identity, Memory and Colonial Legacies*, 1st ed. (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2015), 54.

³⁵ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, 110–30.

³⁶ Morrock, ‘Heritage of Strife: The Effects of Colonialist “Divide and Rule” Strategy upon the Colonised Peoples’, 130–31.

³⁷ Watson, ‘First Nations and the Colonial Project’, 30.

³⁸ Gathogo, ‘Settler-Missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya and the Land Question’ 5-18.

whom even after unceremoniously losing their land, could be trained, and put to work in various technical capacities, in what can only be described as indentured labour.³⁹ This form of discrimination would also be used to gather the future support of valuable tribal allies in the development of the colony. For example, the Maasai were generally regarded by the missions and administration as a warrior tribe and even considered a menace prior to European conquest, forcibly restricting the Kikuyu who were mostly cultivators, to the highlands.⁴⁰ It is for this reason the colonial administration would often employ the Maasai against other tribes as policemen and soldiers, and if it required, also use other tribes against them.⁴¹ The senior colonial administrator, Sir Charles Eliot, even remarked that, “they [the Maasai] have lived by robbery and devastation and made no use themselves of what they have taken from others.”⁴² Eliot’s remarks however, are principally unfair, as it was these specific “warrior” traits the colonial administration sought and continued to exploit. By encouraging and using the Maasai to keep other ethnic groups in check, the colonial administration further alienated the Maasai from other Kenyan-Africans and compounded upon their already damaged image within Kenya as fierce warriors and pre-colonial cattle raiders. A point to keep in mind is that the policy of divide and rule was most profound when used in conjunction with military strategy.

The devastating impact of the divide and rule policy during colonisation had already been witnessed during Britain’s earlier military expansion into Rhodesia and the Cape Colony (South Africa) in the early nineteenth century.⁴³ Analysing the harsh nature of occupation in South Africa, George Cory stated that the most efficient tactics used against traditional Africans by the British “were to burn his huts and kraals, to drive off his cattle, and to destroy his corn and other foods...in short, to devastate his country.”⁴⁴ A point worth noting here is that there were a number of harsh colonial practices (particularly military) transferred from South Africa and applied during colonisation in Kenya. The hostile approach employed during colonisation was developed in union with a particular colonial mindset, which also called for the imposition of Eurocentric ideals upon Kenyan-Africans.

³⁹ Gathogo, 5-18.

⁴⁰ Ruth Catherine Cheruiyot, ‘A Study of Racial Discrimination in Kenya During the Colonial Period’ (Oklahoma State University, 1977), 8, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/215272779.pdf> (accessed on 22-02-21).

⁴¹ Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, 144.

⁴² Eliot, 143.

⁴³ Kenneth Good, “Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 4 (1976): 600, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/160148>.

⁴⁴ George Cory, *The Rise of South Africa: A History of the Origin of South African Colonisation and of Its Development Towards the East from the Earliest Times to 1857*, vol. 4 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926), 365, <https://archive.org/details/riseofsouthafric04coryuoft/page/n5/mode/2up> (accessed on 20-10-20).

At the heart of the divide and rule policy was a colonial mindset that drove Britain's colonisation of Kenya and encouraged the use of brute force, forced labour, and the alienation of Kenyan-Africans.⁴⁵ The hostile penetration into Kenya's hinterland proved to have several damaging effects on Kenyan-African society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. An example of these damaging effects is illustrated by the recorded sentiments of Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, who served in Kenya between 1902 and 1906 as part of the Kings African Rifles (KAR).⁴⁶ In his personal diary, Meinertzhagen describes his plan to kill Koitalel, the chief spiritual leader (Laibon) of the Nandi community. This practice of quelling potential uprisings by actively trying to assassinate tribal chiefs was also part of the divide and rule policy.

Koitalel had been rallying his people to fight against British rule and is described as "a wicked old man... at the root of all their trouble."⁴⁷ Displeased with how the Commissioner was handling the Laibon, Meinertzhagen set up an "intelligence service" to relay back valuable information and employed a small number of Maasai and young Nandi, scattering them across the country.⁴⁸ Meinertzhagen would officially get the go ahead to kill Koitalel from Major Pope Hennessey.⁴⁹ The mission to kill the Laibon would eventually leave twenty three Kenyan-Africans dead. In subsequent expeditions to build colonial stations and garrisons, Meinertzhagen would also be responsible for damaging property, setting ablaze villages and the death of over 1000 Kenyan-Africans from the Embu and Kirinyaga regions of Kenya.⁵⁰ Along with the brutality of its military exploits, the colonial government also had a prevailing sense of ethical superiority over Kenyan-Africans, a mentality that encouraged the use of the divide and rule policy to pit one ethnic tribe against the other.

Intellectual and moral dominance were cornerstones behind an inflated sense of European domination and desire to maintain control over the colonised.⁵¹ Meinertzhagen

⁴⁵ Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary: 1902-1906*, eBook (Edinburgh, Oliver, and Boyd, 1957), vi, <https://archive.org/details/kenyadiary1902190000mein> (accessed on 20-11-21).

⁴⁶ Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary: 1902-1906*, 6.

⁴⁷ Meinertzhagen, 229-30.

⁴⁸ Meinertzhagen, 222.

⁴⁹ Meinertzhagen, 233.

⁵⁰ Meinertzhagen, 52-297.

⁵¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 57, <https://archive.org/details/AntonioGramsciSelectionsFromThePrisonNotebooks/mode/2up> (accessed on 26-07-21); Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.7312/VISW17169>; Robert Hayward Truman, 'The Origins and Development of Racial Pluralism in the Educational System of Kenya from 1895 to 1925' (University of Illinois, 1973), 13, <http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/origins-development-racial-pluralism-educational/docview/302645191/se-2> (accessed on 07-09-22).

vividly captures the claimed essence behind European superiority, as he describes the struggles his company faced in administering and policing the state:

Here we are, three white men in the heart of Africa, with 20 nigger soldiers and 50 nigger police, 68 miles from doctors or reinforcements, administering and policing a district inhabited by half a million well-armed savages who have only quite recently come into touch with the white man, and we are responsible for the security in an area the size of Yorkshire. The position is most humorous to my mind...⁵²

Justifications behind the brutality of colonisation and negative European sentiments towards Kenyan-Africans would later feed into how future colonial educational policies were shaped.

In utilising the policy of divide and rule during colonization, the British also engaged in the transfer of a strategy (from India) that used migrant Indians during the early 1900's as scapegoats.⁵³ This strategy allowed the colonial government to shift the focus of the brewing antipathy from Kenyan-Africans that was originally directed towards imperial rule, onto Indians in Kenya.⁵⁴ This policy was previously employed by the British during the dissolution of the East India Company in 1858. In India, the British demonstrated that it was not beyond them to use the then Moghul Emperor, Bahadur Shah, the Company's onetime "overlord" as a scapegoat.⁵⁵ Such strategies were often used during colonization, especially in situations where it meant protecting senior officials such as the King's ministers, and the future of the empire.⁵⁶

Sir Charles Eliot, a former Commissioner between 1901-1904, provides a differing account when reflecting on the experience Kenyan-Africans had when they met foreigners and migrant Indian traders. Eliot criticized the Indians in Kenya, as having failed to "inspire respect [and yet] provoke resentment by arbitrary acts and forcible appropriation of supplies."⁵⁷ As a senior colonial official, it is important to note that Eliot's views on the Indian impact (especially as they were heavily relied upon as merchants and artisans) in Kenya were quite discerning.

The reason for his frank views was that Eliot had earlier resigned unceremoniously from the administration, citing discrepancies in how land grants were issued. However, the British would continue to use the policy of divide and rule to expand and maintain their control, breaking up bigger concentrations of Kenyan-Africans who resented imperial rule. Once

⁵² Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary: 1902-1906*, 32.

⁵³ Morrock, 'Heritage of Strife: The Effects of Colonialist "Divide and Rule" Strategy upon the Colonised Peoples', 130.

⁵⁴ Morrock, 130.

⁵⁵ John Keay, *Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*, 1st ed. (London: Harper Collins, 1994), 382, <http://1.droppdf.com/files/rS5Ch/honourable-company-a-history-of-the-engli-john-keay.pdf> (accessed on 14-10-20).

⁵⁶ Keay, *Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*, 382.

⁵⁷ Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, 188.

divided, Kenyan-Africans were strategically pitted against other groups such as the Arabs and migrant Indians. Given the harsh manner by which colonization took place in Kenya, there were several concerns raised during proceedings at Westminster. To counter this apprehension, the administration used carefully worded rhetoric to describe the undertakings behind the colonial project, especially when communicating with senior officials at the metropole.

The use of rhetoric to dismiss the basic rights of Kenyan-Africans also encouraged the growth of a rampant bureaucracy which emanated from Whitehall. The usage of such language by senior colonial officials was a customary practice in other British colonies during the early twentieth century. In essence, the rhetoric used advocated for forced labour and unjust land and educational policies, whilst calling for the educational and political suppression of Kenyan-Africans.⁵⁸ The primary reason behind this careful approach was to cement the colonial government's reputation with the British public and more importantly garner political and financial support from Westminster. Discussing British colonial policy on Kenyan-African education, the historian Donald Schilling claims that rhetoric used by the missions and British officials during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century played a key role in promoting the "trusteeship" of Britain as guardians over the wellbeing of Kenyan-Africans.⁵⁹

An example of the often-paternalistic rhetoric used to defend Britain's "mission to civilise the colonised" is given by Lord Alfred Milner, a colonial administrator and graduate of Balliol College, Oxford.⁶⁰ Lord Milner was known for his callous pursuit of British hegemony and stated the following:

If I am also an imperialist, it is because the destiny of the English race, owing to its insular position and its long supremacy at sea, has been to strike fresh roots in distant parts of the world. My patriotism knows no geographical but only racial limits. I am an imperialist and not a Little Englander because I am a British race, Patriot. It is not the soil of England ... which is essential to arouse my patriotism, but the speech, the traditions, the spiritual heritage, the principles, the aspirations, of the British race...⁶¹

⁵⁸ Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 311; James Okia Opolot, 'Forced Labor and Humanitarian Ideology in Kenya, 1911-1925' (West Virginia University, 2002), 232, <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd> (accessed on 07-08-20).

⁵⁹ R.R./Fazan Papers/1, S. H. Fazan, Report on the Relations between Government and Local Native Councils, p. 8, submitted April 10, 1938, quoted in Donald Schilling, "British Policy for African Education in Kenya, 1895-1939", 171.

⁶⁰ C. C. Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience: From Carlyle to Forster*, ed. Arthur Pollard (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 141, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24950-3>; Elizabeth Turner, 'Catalogue of the Archive of Alfred Milner, Viscount Milner, 1824-1955', Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts, 2011, <https://archives.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repositories/2/resources/3231> (accessed on 23-11-21).

⁶¹ Alfred Milner, 'Lord Milner's "Credo"', *The Times*, 27 July 1925; Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 251; Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience: From Carlyle to Forster*, 141.

Before his resignation as Secretary of State for the Colonies, Milner also stated in a despatch that the Colonial Office was in favour of “communal labour which included coercion of women and children on labour projects”.⁶² By design, rhetoric that placed the colonial government in a favourable light was mainly targeted at drawing support from Westminster. It also helped to strengthen the relationship with the White settlers and maintain control over Kenyan-Africans. Official communications also spoke to the colonial mindset at the time and were pitched in language suitable to superior officials and cogent to the British public.

Rhetoric describing European support of Kenyan-African rights is often lauded by political scholars such as Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, who considered leaders such as Winston Churchill amongst the “brightest statesman”.⁶³ As Undersecretary of State for the Colonies, Churchill was credited for his peacebuilding and staunch support of South Africa’s rights for self-rule. However, further investigation of political dispatches brings an element of doubt to this viewpoint. Researching forced labour in colonial Kenya, Opolot Okia examines a Parliamentary Command Paper despatched by Churchill to the colonial administration, which in effect, reinforced the principle of compulsory and forced labour for Kenyan-Africans, as long as it was in support of government initiatives.⁶⁴

Kenyan-Indians were also impacted by Churchill’s rigid political stance. According to Sana Aiyar’s historical research, Churchill was strongly against Gandhi’s political influence on the Kenyan-Indian population in East Africa and having attained the position of Secretary of State for the Colonies, argued “that the European would drive the Indian out of the country if the Colonial Office gave in to the latter's demands”.⁶⁵ Tharoor even describes Churchill as an “arch-imperialist” who once stated unequivocally, that, ‘I [Churchill] hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion’.⁶⁶ Churchill’s personal and descriptive comments cast a bleak shadow over his legacy, and the evidence at hand shows how the rhetoric used degraded the image of the colonised whilst inspiring the European concept of supremacy. .

⁶² Opolot, ‘Forced Labor and Humanitarian Ideology in Kenya, 1911-1925’, 5.

⁶³ Nicolaïdis, SèBe, and Maas, *Echoes of Empire: Identity, Memory and Colonial Legacies*, 209.

⁶⁴ Opolot, ‘Forced Labor and Humanitarian Ideology in Kenya, 1911-1925’, 5; Anthony Clayton and Donald C. Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963, Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1974), 117, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203043202>.

⁶⁵ Sana Aiyar, “Nation, Race and Politics amongst the South Asian Diaspora: From Colonial Kenya to Multicultural Britain” (Harvard University, 2009), 82, <http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/nation-race-politics-amongst-south-asian-diaspora/docview/304891369/se-2> (accessed on 07-08-20)..

⁶⁶ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, 170–95.

The colonial government also used rhetoric that focused on the benefits that could be acquired from specific Kenyan-African ethnic groups, such as the Kikuyus (who were deemed to hold suitable characteristics geared for manual labour).⁶⁷ The intelligence of local tribes such as the Kikuyus, Nandi and Maasai was often debated by senior officials such as Sir Charles Eliot, and records indicate that they were consistently exploited by both the missions and colonial government.⁶⁸ An example of this exploitation is shown by the statements made by Oliver Lyttelton, a Cambridge graduate who would later become the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1952. Lyttelton was a politically Conservative, Westminster bureaucrat, whose father Alfred, had also served in the same capacity some 50 years earlier.⁶⁹ Commending their intelligence, respect for authority, and calibre as low-level workers, Lyttelton describes the Kikuyus as a tribe that “lived by their brains”.⁷⁰ Additionally, Lyttelton states that the Kikuyus were sometimes said to be like “the Irish in politics, without their humour; like the Jews in commerce, without Leviticus and are despised by all tribes especially the Luo and Maasai”.⁷¹ The use of such rhetoric by Lyttelton and other senior colonial officials to racially define the quality of Kikuyu workers speaks to the idea of European superiority over Kenyan-Africans, a colonial mentality that would persist throughout British rule in Kenya.

Rhetoric by senior colonial officials in support of British exploits in the Kenya resulted in increased financial and military assistance from the metropole, and consequently the continued subjugation of Kenyan-Africans. According to David Spurr’s work on the “Rhetoric of Empire”, phrases such as “The white man's burden” and “darkest Africa” were widely used in communication by Western powers such as Britain when discussing their African colonies including Kenya.⁷² There was a “rhetorical strategy” of “negation” which was used to

⁶⁷ The UK National Archives [hereafter TNA], Cabinet Papers [hereafter CAB], 129/57/C(52)407, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies,” November 14, 1952, quoted in Conor Joseph Ward Wilkinson, “Mau Mau and Masculinity: Race, Gender, and the Body in Colonial Kenya” (Master of Arts, The University of British Columbia, 2017), 19, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/ciRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0355260> (accessed on 11-14-21).

⁶⁸ Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, 95–100; Sadler, ‘The East Africa Protectorate: 1905-06’, 32; Leys, *Kenya*, 48.

⁶⁹ Oliver Lyttelton, “Kenya”, (Official Memorandum. The National Archives, Kew: Cabinet Minutes and Papers, 1952), CAB 129/57/7, <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7656883>.

⁷⁰ The UK National Archives [hereafter TNA], Cabinet Papers [hereafter CAB], 129/57/C(52)407, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies,” November 14, 1952, quoted in Conor Joseph Ward Wilkinson, “Mau Mau and Masculinity: Race, Gender, and the Body in Colonial Kenya”, 19.

⁷¹ Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: Bodley Head, 1962): 344-88, quoted in Archibald Paton Thornton, “The Change in the Wind,” *International Journal* 39, no. 2 (1984): 456-65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202343>.

⁷² David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 109–24, <https://archive.org/details/rhetoricofempire00spurr> (accessed on 12-05-21).

conceptualise the “other” as “empty” and non-existent.⁷³ As the political philosopher Frantz Fanon once stated, “In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native, when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values.”⁷⁴

These political discussions cast a rather bleak picture of Kenyan-Africans, especially in terms of their religious outlook and capacity to learn. British colonial officials and the missions are often promoted as “saviours” and “custodians of humanity”, whose interests laid in the educational, religious and character advancement of traditional-Africans.⁷⁵ In 1896,

Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, stated in his reference to the colonial government that, “We, in our colonial policy, as fast as we acquire new territory and develop it, develop it as trustees of civilisation for the commerce of the world.”⁷⁶ In support of Chamberlain’s sentiments during a session of the House of Lords, Lord Alfred Emmott asserted that one great triumph of the British empire, and a major reason why the “natives also preferred us”, is because of how it “governed coloured people more humanely”.⁷⁷ Such rhetoric was consistently used to marginalise Kenyan-Africans for the so-called greater good of the empire.

This practice eventually shaped the colonial mindset behind both land regulations and formal education and defined Western impressions of Kenya and the non-Western world. Achille Mbembe’s views although focused on the post-colonial aspects, help to shed light on the colonial mindset during British rule in Kenya. According to Mbembe, “state power”, in this case the British colonial administration, could create meanings through its “administrative and bureaucratic practices”, a “master code”.⁷⁸ This master code became the existing “society’s primary central code”, and was “fully real, turning it into a part of people’s common sense not only by instilling it in the minds of the *cibles* [Kenyan-Africans]..., but also by integrating it

⁷³ Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, 109–24.

⁷⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 42; Tsenay Serequeberhan, ‘Africa in a Changing World: An Inventory’, *Monthly Review: Independent Social Magazine* 61, no. 8 (January 2010): 2, <https://monthlyreview.org/2010/01/01/africa-in-a-changing-world-an-inventory/> (accessed on 25-10-20); Abrokwa, ‘Re-Thinking Postcolonial Education in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st Century: Post-Millennium Development Goals’, 90.

⁷⁵ Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 60.

⁷⁶ 317. United Kingdom, Parliamentary Debates: British West Africa, Lords Chamber, 13 May 1920, vol. 40 (Lord Alfred Emmott) (UK), <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1920/may/13/british-west-africa> (accessed on 07-12-20).

⁷⁷ 317. United Kingdom, Parliamentary Debates: British West Africa, Lords Chamber, 13 May 1920, vol. 40 (Lord Alfred Emmott).

⁷⁸ Achille Mbembe, ‘Provisional Notes on the Postcolony’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62, no. 1 (1992): 3–4, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1160062> (accessed on 05-04-21).

into the consciousness of the period”.⁷⁹ Through the constant imposition of such praxes, the colonisers were able to keep the Kenyan-African mentally subservient whilst maintaining dominion and creating a controlled sphere of influence around them.⁸⁰ According to Said, there was a similar colonial mindset behind the depictions made of the “Orient”. Said considered these depictions derisive, serving to self-affirm “European identity”, and helping to secure and institute European dominance over their colonies.⁸¹

In unveiling the colonial gaze, we discover that subjugation and division were key strategies of imperial rule in Kenya. With the added support of the missions and the official use of carefully worded rhetoric, the colonial government was able to both perpetuate and justify the colonial project. The legacy of colonialism in Kenya is pervasive and still impacts social, economic, and political dynamics within the country and across Britain’s former empire today. It continues to shape perceptions of the land, people, and culture long after the British have left. The King's speech was a failed opportunity for the monarch to truly and genuinely acknowledge a nation’s past and help in the healing process. To move forward, it is essential to confront and disrupt the prevailing narrative of Western supremacy that unfortunately still exists behind a sometimes-diaphanous veil of magnanimity.

⁷⁹ Mbembe, ‘Provisional Notes on the Postcolony’, 3–4.

⁸⁰ Peter Karari, ‘Modus Operandi of Oppressing the “Savages”’: The Kenyan British Colonial Experience’, *Peace and Conflict Studies* 25, no. 1 (2018): abstract, <https://doi.org/10.46743/1082-7307/2018.1436>.

⁸¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 9–13, <https://archive.org/details/orientalism0000said/mode/2up> (accessed on 15-03-2021).

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