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The Role of Kenya Police Force in South Nyanza between the Two World Wars (1914-1945)

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ABSTRACT

Laws are formulated for the common good of society and the role of the police is to enforce law and order with impartiality. But in theory, it is not the practice. Those who have written about the role of the colonial police in Kenya have showered the police with praise. Historians have failed to analyze the role that the colonial laws, and the police who enforced them, played in that time. This study argues that colonial police force served imperial interests of the colonizer at the expense of the colonized African masses, class and racial differences were manifested through the role that law and police force played in colonial Kenya. By focusing on their role in South Nyanza between the two world wars, it shows that they were instruments of the ruling political elite and dominant economic classes used to oppress and exploit the African masses. Thus they controlled state affairs. The study will reveal the police force in the past in order to understand why the police force is today tainted with corruption unprofessionalism and inefficiency among other ills. The study applied historical design technique, and used sampling and snowball techniques too. Target population was residents of the area of study. The sample size considered age, knowledge and experience on the colonial rule and the police force. The African state theory by Jackson and Rosberg was adopted to help analyze the role of the police force between the two World Wars. The force grew from an armed guard to a state police. Their presence in South Nyanza was due to Germans presence in the area and conflicts among ethnic communities.

Keywords: Colonial, Police, Role, South Nyanza.

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1. Introduction

The police force was founded in Kenya in 1887 by the Imperial British East African Company. The Company employed armed guards to secure trade route from Mombasa to Uganda. Therefore, along the trade route, attempts were made to establish a Police Force to maintain law and order in the Kenya Colony (Foran, 1960). South Nyanza was not found along the trade route. The colonial state was

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officially established in Kenya in 1895. From this time onwards, attempts were made to gradually establish and strengthen the Kenya force. The police force was established at Kisumu in 1901 following the completion of the Railway there (Barker, 1974). The presence of the police force in South Nyanza was felt in 1903 when the District Commissioner was posted at Karungu (John Mburu, interviewed on 24th August, 2015). Their initial role was limited to guarding the government station and escorting the District Commissioner. As time went by, the role of the police was expanded. In 1905 and 1907, they were employed to deal with anti-colonial resistance among the Gusii people. They also got involved in curbing cattle thefts which was a rampant activity among ethnic communities in South Nyanza (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/1, Ugeya and South Kavirondo District Annual and quarterly Report, 1908-1909 and 1913-23). However, it was after the outbreak of the First World War that the police was properly established in South Nyanza.

Basically, the period between 1895 and 1914 was consumed up by government efforts to establish the colonial presence on a sound note. The District Commissioner was busy installing chiefs on Africans, demarcating district and location boundaries and overseeing the establishment of trading centers. In doing all these, the District Commissioner relied on police escort and protection. This was in addition to mainstreaming local African populations to colonial needs such as increased agricultural production. By 1914, when the First World War broke out, the people of South Nyanza had been properly brought into the colonial armpit. Young men were going out to work on White settler's farms and other government projects such as road construction. Taxes were being collected by colonial chiefs and headmen with the enforcement of the police (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2 South Kavirondo Administration annual report 1913-23).

More importantly, by 1914, the colonial state had established itself in place and enacted laws which needed to be enforced with the aim of achieving imperial goals. These laws included native administration laws, tax laws, land laws and labor laws, among others. The enforcement of these laws was as equally important as achieving the motives behind their formulation. The role of the police, as well as the laws which they enforced, was viewed within the modernization theory. The laws and the police were viewed as modernizing instruments, especially to the Africans. But did the police and colonial laws really modernize Africans in South Nyanza or were they instruments of oppression and exploitation or both? To answer this question, this chapter interrogates the role that colonial police played in South Nyanza between the two world wars. Before embarking on the analysis of the role of the police in South Nyanza, a brief description of the study area (South Nyanza) is provided below.

1.1 Description of South Nyanza: The study area

This chapter provides an analytical account of the role of the colonial police in South Nyanza. Geographically, South Nyanza is located in the South Western Kenya along Lake Victoria. The area was administered as part of Eastern Uganda until 1902 when it was transferred to Kenya. The area covers approximate 7,778 square kilometers. It borders Bomet and Nyando districts to the East, the Republic of Tanzania to the South, and Lake Victoria to the West. South Nyanza is presently made of four counties namely Migori, Homabay, Kisii, and Nyamira. The region was inhabited by several ethnic communities which included the Luo, Abakuria, Abagusii, and Abasuba. Its inhabitants practiced agriculture owing to the fertile soils and reliable rainfall. Other than farming, the people also practiced livestock-keeping, fishing, and trade as well as hunting, gathering and handcrafts. Politically, these people had uncentralized form of government consisting of numerous chieftaincies (Ominde, 1968).

2. Methodology

This study used a historical research design which refers to the exploration, explanation and understanding of past phenomenon from data already available (Febre, 1973, Bloch 1954 and Braudel, 1980). This design suited this study because it helped the researcher to dig into historical processes that helped to understand the connection between the past and present Police service in Kenya. The target research population of the study comprised of residents of the area which fell under South Nyanza during the colonial period. The target population included respondents from both genders who had knowledge and or experience in police force in the colonial period. They included the ex- policemen or servicemen, religious leaders, administrators, friends, relatives (wives and children), elderly men and women.

Both purposive and snowballing techniques were employed. Snowballing was important for this study because the researcher asked his first group of informants to provide contacts of equally other informative informants that they knew. The first group was identified by use of religious leaders, administrators, friends and relatives. Through use of snowballing technique, key informants were identified. The researcher used an interview schedule with open-ended sample questions for the respondents. Purposive sampling was employed because the study examined what happened long time ago in Kenyan history. As such old people were purposefully recruited in the study. These are old people who possessed crucial information concerning colonial police force.

2.1 Data collection

Data which was used in writing up this chapter was derived from Archival, oral and secondary data which the author collected and used to write a Master's Thesis. Archival data was collected from the Kenya National Archives (KNA). Primary data used were oral and archival data. The interview schedule was prepared, which included open-ended questions regarding the role of the Kenya police force South Nyanza. Oral interviews were conducted in South Nyanza while secondary data was collected from libraries and the internet.

2.2 Presentation of findings, analysis and discussion

The study entailed a historical interrogation of the role of the Kenya police in South Nyanza between the two World Wars. Analysis, discussions and presentation of findings are presented in this section.

3. The role of Kenya police in pacifying Africans in South Nyanza

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 presented a security challenge to the colonial administration not only in Kenya but in South Nyanza. The security challenges presented by the war South Nyanza were informed by two issues. Firstly, South Nyanza extended towards Tanzania-Kenya border and Tanzania was under German rule. Germans in Tanzania and the British in Kenya were on the opposite sides of the war. In spite of the huge expectation on the Kenya police to deal with the cross-border security challenges occasioned by the War, they were not up to the task owing to the fact that they were inadequate in numbers. At the same time, the police were working under poor conditions (poor housing, lacking requisite training and earning low wages). The poor working conditions were occasioned by small sum of money provided by the Police Department (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1914).

As a result, the police in South Nyanza failed to secure the district against German invasion. They were, instead, evacuated upon orders from the headquarters in Nairobi (Maxon, 1989). The German took advantage to move and camp on Nyanchwa Hill in Kisii from where they attacked the Kisii Police Station only to find no police officer on site (Beka, 22nd August, 2015, O.I) The attack on the government station in South Nyanza by Germans made the local population to ridicule the British administration. Writing about this incidence the District commissioner states:

The fact that the occupation of Kisii government station by Germans on September 12th 1914 and the wholesale disturbances and regrettable incidents which arose as a result of that occupation have brought the South Kavirondo District very prominently before the government and public eye (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2).

The colonial government felt that it was important to secure colonial infrastructure against German invasion rather than protect the interests of Africans in South Nyanza. As a result, the few police officers in South Nyanza were asked to secure the Uganda Railway against destruction by Germans (Foran, 1962). The temporary evacuation of the police from South Nyanza, and from the Kisii government station in particular, made the local population to think that the colonial government had left for good. As a result, the local Gusii population attacked, looted and vandalized the government headquarters in South Nyanza. By attacking the government station, the colonial government interpreted the whole affair as a threat to the security of the colonial state in Kenya. Consequently, the interpretation led to massive use of police force on the people living around the government station. This use of force proves that the colonial police were used to secure the colonial state rather than the subjects, most Africans, who were ruled by the state. It also proves the point that the ruled masses had

not accepted the colonial presence in their midst by virtue of consensus. The colonial presence was made possible by use of the police force and that is why the local population became lawless when the police were evacuated from South Nyanza. One of the strategies which the police used to deal with lawlessness occasioned by the outbreak of the First World War in South Nyanza was confiscation of livestock as well as subjecting the people to merciless beatings (Maxon, 1989). Communal or collective punishment was applied in situations whereby:

Unless the amount of the fine shall be forthwith paid, issue the warrant for the levy of the amount of the fine by distress and sale of any moveable property of the offender, of the offender's family, or of any member of the offender's family, sub-tribe or tribe (Communal Punishment) Section 3 & 4 of the ordinance (East African Protectorate, Ordinances, 1913: 11-12).

In 1914, for example, communal or collective punishment was applied in North Mogirango Location on a section of Gichora clan under headman Mwebe whereby the clan was subjected to a fine of Rs. 3000/- following a murder of two women alleged of witchcraft (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2). In addition, the people of Gitutu location were also subjected to yet much collective punishment in 1916 on two occasions. In one instance, 60 head of cattle were imposed on them for grievously hurting their chief (Nsungu). In a second instance, they were ordered to pay 352 head of cattle for theft of sim-sim from Mumbo (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2). The people of Gitutu were mostly dealt with through collective punishment because they were branded as troublesome even before the establishment of colonial rule in their midst. The Gitutu clan of the Gusii community had been in the habit of attacking other clans (Ochieng,' 1974; Maxon, 1989)

Collective punishment was not the only punishment to which the people of south Nyanza were subjected when they attacked the government station at Kisii because more than 3,000 young men were arrested and made to work on government projects as punishment (Maxon, 1989). Of the 3000 men, 525 men were sent to Kisumu, 950 were put to work around Kisii and 1,500 were sent to work on the pier at Kendu Bay. These numbers included people of Luo ethnicity who had participated in the looting of missions and the Homa Bay Trading Centre but most of them were the Gusii (Maxon, 1989). There occurred a series of punishments on the Gusii subjected to hard work until law and order had been restored. Any crime which threatened the existence of the colonial state was met with brutal force. The people of Kisii were taught a tough lesson, since then, which reminded them never to repeat to threaten the state. However, there were a few instances where activities of the people of South Nyanza were interpreted as an attack on the colonial state and measures were taken to deal with such clandestine activities. For example, there was the emergence of a politico-religious sect which agitated against European presence in South Nyanza. The sect or cult was called Mumbo cult (Wipper 1977). This is discussed in the next section.

3.1 Dealing with Mumbo cult in South Nyanza by the Kenya police

The colonial government was vehemently against any movement or organization around which people were mobilized against the colonial state. Such movements were crushed to the core and the leaders were usually deported to live away from their homes. Deportation was the method used to separate the agitator from the agitated. A politico-religious movement emerged in South Nyanza called *Mumbo*. Leaders of this cult, as it was referred to by local colonial administrators in South Nyanza, blamed European rule for the economic depression which was witnessed in the 1930s (Maxon, 1989). The cult also blamed the heavy financial burdens in the form of taxes together with the destructions caused by locusts on European presence in their midst (Maxon, 1989). The Gusii looked for the teachings of Mumboism as providing an avenue of escape in the trying times. While the sect emerged in the period leading to the outbreak of the First World War, it was during the 1930s that its impact was felt across South Nyanza.

Some Gusii Elders of Wanjare Location had resurrected the cult of Mumboism, by warning natives not to do communal road work as the Europeans were believed to be shortly leaving and roads would not be needed any longer (Maxon, 1989). Further the adherents of this sect were made to believe that a great snake (mumbo) was coming to destroy all the chiefs, especially chief Ooga of Gitutu, if only a sufficient number of people would be faithful and secondly no one should pay more than three shillings in tax and Local Native Council taxes. A more serious allegation by the teaching of the cult was that the leader of the sect was going to occupy the District Commissioner's house and this

greatly threatened the colonial administration (Maxon, 1989). The District Commissioner arrested most of the sect's leaders and, later, an inquiry into the conduct of the sect's adherents was instituted. The recommendation of the task force appointed to inquire was that leaders of the sect be deported. The sect's leaders were tried before a judge, Mr. Justice H. Horne, who recommended their deportation and, subsequently, the governor approved their exile at Kipini at the Kenyan Coast (Kenya National Archives, DP/1/21; and Kenya National Archives, PC/NZA/4/5/7).

3.2 Dealing with cattle theft in South Nyanza by the Kenya police

Right from the time when the colonial administration set foot in South Nyanza, the area had been buzzing with incidents of cattle thefts. The outbreak of the First World War only served to re-ignite and exacerate the incidents of cattle thefts. By the close of the First World War, the problem which occupied the minds of the Police in South Nyanza District were "Stock Theft Cases" (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1917). Cattle was a most valued asset among Africans in South Nyanza because, other than providing food in the form of meat and milk, it was used as the currency with which dowry was paid and barter trade effected. Most rituals such as marriage, death and initiation involved slaughter of cattle. It was for this reason that cattle were highly valued among Africans living in South Nyanza. Equally important was the fact that a lot of crimes involved cattle and cattle theft was the easiest method through which people acquired cattle.

Cattle thieves in South Nyanza were subjected to communal punishment and communal punishment was effected by the Kenya Police either through arrests or forceful seizures of cattle from perceived offenders. Collective punishment was enacted in 1913 (East African Protectorate, Ordinances, 1913, pp. 11-12). This punishment was effected by chiefs and enforced by the police in their respective areas of jurisdiction. In 1914 for example, a collective punishment was awarded onto the people of Wanjare location, under chief Oyugi. The fine was in the amount of Rs.1300/- on account of stolen cattle traced to the location. The chief collected the amount in full. Gitutu Location, a section under headman Mairura was subjected to collective fine of Rs.500 following theft of a cow which was traced to the location. North Mogirango Location, a section of Gichora clan under headman Mwebe was also subjected to fine of Rs. 3000/- following a murder of two women alleged of witchcraft (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2).

Collective punishment produced good results in certain situations. In 1927, for example, the Commissioner of Police stated that the "affliction of collective punishment on neighboring reserves also proved of material assistance to the police in their efforts to control this popular form of native crime" which was cattle theft (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, The Kenya Police Department Annual Report, 1927). In such case the government agents who were the Policemen assisted the headmen and chiefs to walk through homes seizing animals from a specific region suspected to hide thieves or stolen things or animals. Where resistance was experienced the whole area's houses and crops were set on fire in order to weaken the people of that area. Collective punishment was complimented by police patrols along areas perceived to incur many cases of cattle theft. As noted by the Commissioner of Police in 1928, "prevention of crime is effected by Police Patrols travelling on passenger and at times on the trains, and by a system of day and night, and plain clothes patrols" (Police Department Annual Report, 1928, p.45). Most patrols were situated along the South Lumbwa-Kisii boundary where cattle theft was a perennial problem (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, The Kenya Police Annual Report, 1928, p.33).

Also, in addition to police patrols, the colonial establishment established police border posts which also proved successful. The District Commissioner, Kisii, notes for example in 1932 that: "The establishment of border guards and Police Posts has undoubtedly led to more peaceful conditions along the Kisii-Lumbwa and Kisii-Maasai boundaries" (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1932, p. 29). Some incidences of stock theft were followed by counter attacks (revenge attacks) in which human life and property was lost. The District Commissioner notes in his annual report of 1932 that:

There happened to be a stock theft by the Maasai during December and the Kisii pursuing party are accused of killing two Maasai. A week later one Kisii was killed and another wounded by Maasai in the Basi Location (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/3 South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1932, p.28)

Furthermore, cross-border movement involving the Kisii and their neighboring tribes (the Maasai and the Lumbwa) was enforced to achieve some level of law and order but this did not translate into friendly relations among tribes. The most serious problem of them all was cattle thefts which caused rivalry amongst the Gusii, the Luo, the Kuria and the Maasai against each other not only during the inter-war period but also during the Second World War (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/3; Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/4). There were persistent tensions between the Gusii and their neighbors. For example, Sotik sellers of butter were unable to send their boys through Kisii. Count Dornhoff complained that his boys who took shortcuts through Kisii country going from Kilgoris to the Sotik were robbed and beaten up. Apart from preventing cattle thefts and acts of retaliation, the police did play a vital role in effecting justice. This was in the area of assisting to recover stolen cattle which was returned to their rightful owners. In 1929, for example:

The situation became easier in October when a patrol of K.A.R and extra police were stationed at Chemagel in the Sotik area.... at least 264 head of cattle were stolen by the Lumbwa of which only 115 were recovered. (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/3 South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1929, p.13).

There was a change in the policy of recruiting police officers. Police officers were recruited to work among people of their ethnic communities. This improved relations between the police and the communities among whom they worked. Police posted to the reserves were specially selected men, consideration being given to their knowledge of Native customs (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, The Kenya Police Department Annual Report of 1943, p.4). Use technology also helped to curb cattle thefts. In order to deal with cattle thefts occurring in the communities inhabiting Narok and South Nyanza Districts, “wireless receiving and transmitting sets were installed at Narok and Kilgoris in 1945, which much improved communications between Narok and the Kisii border area” (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, The Kenya Police Annual Report, 1945, p.9). Cattle theft was perhaps the greatest security issue that the Kenya police force had to deal with in South Nyanza. However, there were other issues of security concern that the police had to busy themselves with. Opium smoking and excessive drinking of alcohol were the other issues which occupied the minds of the Kenya police officers.

3.3 Dealing with opium smoking in South Nyanza by the Kenya police

As we noted in the previous section, the police dealt with crimes that threatened colonial interests with a great measure of brutal force. One would want to ask whether opium smoking and excessive drinking of alcohol was a threat to colonial interests. The answer is yes because drinking interfered with the productivity of labour. Alcoholics and drunkards were not productive labourers and the colonial government made efforts to regulate excessive drinking and bhang smoking among Africans. It was the District Commissioner and the Police who were on forefront in dealing with the suppression of “the habit of bhang” growing and smoking. The fight against bhang growing, and smoking had been reported upon and complained about in 1913 (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1913). By 1914, the police and other local administrators managed to file 54 cases under opium regulations of growing bhang with satisfactory percentage of convictions (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1914). Bhang smoking was indulged in to a very large scale all over the District, particularly along the lake Shore and in the neighborhood of the German Border” (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1917).

Bhang smoking, whose incidence had increased during the WWI period, became a leading cause of other crimes. People often committed murder under the influence of bhang or beer. In 1921, for example, a habitual bhang smoker killed his chief and a retainer while they attempted to effect his arrest, the offender was condemned to death, ordered a retrial on appeal, and was sentenced to three years imprisonment only for guilty of murder (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1921). Excessive beer drinking was regulated through establishment of native beer drinking halls near the District Commissioner’s watch. In a meeting of District Commissioners of Nyanza Province held on 3rd May 1944, it was resolved that “in future the sitting of native beer shops should be in the discretion of District Commissioner, provided that they should not normally be established within five miles of an inter-district boundary without prior consultation between the District Commissioners concerned” (Kenya National Archives, DP/1/30). Preference for sitting native

beer shops was in areas with established Police Posts. This requirement was designed to decrease incentive of brewing and selling beer illicitly.

3.4 Involvement of the Kenya police in securing African labour from South Nyanza

The two resources that the colonial government targeted for exploitation was land and African labour. Cheap land and labour was promised to European farmers who settled in Kenya as an incentive to lure them to settle in Kenya Colony. The influx of European settlers in Kenya, starting in 1902, led to increased demands for male labour. Several laws and policies were established and pursued in order to secure cheap male labour from reserves. The land laws and policies were designed with the aim to deny Africans access to enough land and the only option was secure paid work. Also, tax laws were introduced so that Africans would seek paid work in order to get money with which to pay taxes. Africans did not accept these laws willingly and, in most cases, the police were called in to enforce them. Land alienation in colonial Kenya was justified on grounds that Africans never made maximum use of land as much of it was not occupied. It was, thus, annexed and given to white settlers who would make good economic use of it. On the side of labour, colonial administrator argued that when Africans went out of their reserves to work on European farms and other government projects, their intelligence would be improved. This was in theory but in practice, African labour benefitted the colonial state and European capitalists (white settlers and industrialists)

Enforcement of tax laws was to a great extent very successful in forcing African men from South Nyanza to search for paid work. In 1914, for example, wage labour attracted “nearly 4000 men” who were sent to work outside the [South Kavirondo/Nyanza] district during the twelve months, nearly all on long contracts for three to six months. Many were sent to work with the Public Works Department on Harbor and Water Works at the Coast, on fuel cutting for the Railway, on irrigation works in the Maasai Reserve, Railway building at Magadi, and some on cotton and fiber’s farms. Others were sent to Kericho and Kisumu (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2).

The introduction of tax was a double-edged sword. While taxation forced African men to go outside South Nyanza for paid work, it also encouraged lawlessness as some men simply resorted to stealing money with which to pay taxes. It is no wonder, then, that there was an increase in not only the theft of money itself, but also in the trade of stolen cattle. This was the case since trade was made open and free movement in the district which made stealing easier and more often. The Kavirondo now went beyond their borders and took the cattle to Kisumu and Lumbwa or exchanged with the Maasai. Even the imposing of heavy fines on cattle thieves did not lead in noticeable decrease in the crime as noted by the District Commissioner in 1914: “A large number of cases of theft of stock were reported during the year, many occurring in Kisii Township” (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2). Thus, taxation laws served to secure African labour while, at the same time, increasing the workload for the Kenya police to deal with cases of theft of money and cattle.

4. The role of the Kenya police in safeguarding trading centers in South Nyanza

The Police Force was not only established to enforce law and order but to safeguard the economic interests in the colony. Since townships and trading centers played a key role in promoting trade through the extraction of agricultural production surplus for export to Europe, the police were mandated to safeguard trading interests in townships and trading centers. Townships and trading centers were also important because they provided residences, not only for Europeans, but also to the Indian traders and other cadre of civil servants. Native reserves were thus left for the residence of natives. The Kenya Police Force was before 1943 mandated to safeguard areas settled by the white population and trading centers at the expense of native reserves where the majority of Africans were domiciled (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Kenya Police Department Annual Report, 1943). Urban spaces were home to a lot of wealth including money and trade items.

By 1914, South Nyanza boasted of several trading centers which included Kisii Township, Homa Bay Township, and Rangwe Township, Kendu Trading center, Oyugis Trading center, Migori Trading center, Karungu Township and Riana Trading center. These centers were mainly occupied by Indian traders. Other areas which, by 1914, had not been upgraded into townships or trading centers were home to Indian traders. These included Suna, Mbita, North Mugirango, and Awach (Kenya National

Archives, DC/KSI/1/2). Others not mentioned are Isibania, Mabera, Nyamtiro, Gesusu and Nyakoe among others. The security of Indians in such centers was guaranteed by the police. This is bearing in mind that African residents of South Nyanza had been in the habit of breaking into the shops of Indians and stealing their wares and money.

It must be remembered that there were also European traders in South Nyanza who needed to be safeguarded by the Police. This is in spite of the fact that unlike Indian traders, European traders were allowed to carry guns with them. Apart from protecting Indian shops against burglary and theft, the Police also accompanied the Indian Traders on their trading missions. In most cases the Indian traders would accompany European Officers, usually in the company of the police. Goods under police escort were transported from Kisumu into South Kavirondo and back to Kisumu sometimes to Kindu for shipment (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2).

Most crimes in urban centers were committed at night and the police relied heavily on patrols to deal with criminals in urban areas. Police training in patrols is a tradition method which began in 1929 at the Police Training College in Nairobi where most of the police recruits were trained. The Police Commissioner noted in his Annual report of 1929 that “practical instruction in street and night patrol duties is now given to recruits towards the conclusion of their training by attaching them to the Nairobi Unit for the purpose of augmenting the street and night patrols of the capital (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Police Department Annual Report, 1929, p.9).

Night patrols were very important because, according to Commissioner of Police, the police guarded the public who sleep by night. During the day, the public was more or less its own policeman (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Kenya Police Department Annual Report, 1926, p. 27). Places which benefitted mostly from night patrols were urban areas where many cases occurred in which housebreakers were caught red-handed by vigilance of these patrols (The Kenya Police Annual Report, 1926, p. 27). In essence, night patrols scared nocturnal criminal who had to think twice before he wanders abroad with criminal intention. In fact arrests by night patrols in settled and urban areas, other than in Nairobi, during the year numbered 462.

Apart from protecting business or economic interests in townships and trading centers, the Police Force had other security issues to be keen about such as regular fracas between the Police and the Nubian population. Such fracas would be caused by the arrest for theft of one of the leading Nubians (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Yearly Report, 1914). Urban areas were the sites where trade in illegal brew, as well as heavy drinking was rampant. The police had to deal with such crimes as well.

4.1 Accompanying the District commissioner to resolve disputes

The most important role that the Kenya police played in South Nyanza was to accompany the District Commissioner while on his tour of the district to resolve disputes and inspect government development projects. More troubling was the rise of boundary disputes in South Nyanza. Whereas boundary disputes were a common feature that defined relations between ethnic and sub-ethnic groups living in South Nyanza District throughout the colonial period, such incidents increased during the war period. However, the police in the District accompanied the District Commissioner to settle these disputes. Some of the boundary disputes which were solved, in 1917 for example, are (1) the boundary between Kaniamwa and Waudha, (2) Boundary between North Mogirango and Gitutu, (3) boundary between Gitutu and Mogusero and (4) the boundary between South Mogirango and Wanjare, and (5), the previous case between the Headmen Maina and Malunga’s in Gitutu. The trouble was caused by Malunga’s people cultivating outside their boundary (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1917).

The establishment of ethnic boundaries helped in curbing inter-ethnic cross border spillover, which in some cases encouraged cattle thefts. Cross border cattle thefts generated a lot of lawlessness and disorder. However, the demarcation of these boundaries was not an end in itself. The period between 1918 and 1939 witnessed a lot of boundary disputes in which the DCs were called in to resolve. These boundary disputes also involved the Kenya Police who had to accompany the DC, for instance, the boundary between Kabondo and North Mogirango. In October 1924 a serious fight occurred on the boundary between North Mogirango and Kabondo and both parties were punished. It was also reported by the DC during the same time that by March 1923 there were still several *bomas* of Lango

people on the North Mogirango side of the line in spite of the fact that repeated orders for their removal had been issued. These *bomas* were burnt out and the Lango were charged for disobeying orders (Kenya National Archives, DP/17/320).

Apart from dealing with location boundaries during the inter-war period, the DCs were also responsible for inter-tribal boundaries. In 1932, for example, the DC reported that at the request of the DC, Narok, a boundary trench was dug between Gelegele and Nyabitunwa. The work was done by Kisii who were paid by the Maasai at half railway digging rates. These boundaries were jealously guarded by Kisii who ensured that the Maasai were kept on their side of the boundary.

4.2 Economic Roles of the Police Force

During inter-war period besides social roles, the Police Force played a vital role economically. The theory stated that the colonial state major intention was to control all activities in the society (Azarya, 1988). The colonial authority major aim was to enhance national prestige, to guarantee access to African raw materials and markets for European industrial goods, and to control strategic concerns such as waterways. In addition colonization also offered Europeans chances for employment, adventure, Christian endeavor, and personal gains. All these endeavors succeeded by coercive means through police force operations (Sharkey, 2013). In Kenya, like other British colonies, the State was one of the chief instruments for the creation and sustenance of colonialism in South Nyanza.

4.3 The Police Role in Famine and Epidemics

After the war, despite economic decline, more attention was turned to development and progress in the district, unluckily famine and epidemic followed hard on the heels of war (1918-1919). In the months of November and December the influenza epidemic swept through the Reserves, disorganizing everything and causing the death of about five thousands natives made people to abandon the Kisii Boma (station). It was then followed by famine, anthrax, smallpox, chickenpox and foot and mouth disease for animals which affected the Kavirondo, Luo, and Kuria communities appealed to the government for help (KNA, DC/KSI/1/3, SKDAR, 1918- 1919). Since one of the colonists' intentions was to look for markets for their industrial goods, they exploited the opportunity to supply maize for sell and levy some rates for medicine and medical services to expand health facilities, and run the colony. Due to security reasons and the intensity of the region to covered, the police assisted in the selling and supply of maize, and those with medical training served as medical officers besides giving escort (Ogora, 18th August, 2018, O.I).

4.4 The Police in Escorts

The police were instrumental in escorting colonial administrators in development agenda in the district. For instance when the District was visited by His Excellency the Governor, accompanied by the Acting PC, Nyanza, and by other officers. The party had arrived from Maasai Reserves to Kisii, where a large gathering of chiefs, headmasters and others assembled to be encouraged on increased production of economic product, purchase by natives of improved Agriculture implements such as hoe, construction and maintenance of roads and maintenance of Authority of Native Councils (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2 South Kavirondo District Annual Report 1913- 1923). Later follow ups were made including part of the Government Border locations accompanied by the DC. This was to ascertain the success of the effort made to induce the natives to purchase imported goods or articles like clothing, enamelware, hoes among others (Nyambega, 28th August, 2015, O.I).

4.5 The Police in Labour Recruitment

The British authority and settlement in South Nyanza required labour supply. The power and responsibility to recruit labourers was bestowed on chiefs and headmen (Cokumu, 2012). The labourers were employed to fetch money to pay taxes that were used for paying labourers and running of the colony and its administrators. It was not an easy task to get them. The police assisted chiefs and headmen to mobilize people through force and transported them to Gethen and Thousans at Kisii for further distribution (Ntabo, 25th August, 2015, O.I).

4.6 Police in Transport

In as much work as the police supervised labourers. They also got involved in the improvement of transport which hastened trade for the better of the colony's economy. They worked with Public Works Department in the whole Country, Harbor and Water Works at the coast on fuel cutting for the railway, on irrigation works in Maasai Reserves, on Railway building at Magadi and a few on cotton and fiber plantations. The police, because they were junks of all traders were used to construct roads, bridges and culverts a long these roads to ease movement in the region. For examples, the bridge on Kuja river in south Mugirango on the Kisii- Suna road, Mogusi river in Gitutu on the Kisii- Kendu road, Riana river in Kabwoch on Kitere-Marinde road plus the small permanent bridges constructed over the stream, Kisii-Kendu road, Suna –Kitere road, Kisii- Migori (Suna), Migori-Kuria (Butende), Karungu-Homa Bay, Hama Bay-Kendu, Native Reserve Roads and Bridges and Pontoons. Maintenance work was carried on native tracks and was paid for out of local native council funds of approximately sh.7985/84. used on road gauge and the purchase of culverts. Establishment of a Police post at Lumbwa-Kisii boarder led to a new road been constructed over the hills behind police post No:3 and to the decline on stock theft (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2, SKDAR, 1913- 1923; KNA, DC/KSI/1/3, SKDAR, 1924-1932).

As a result of the war, trade was much upset and restricted and it was not easy to tell how long it was to last. Trading centers suffered from lack of business and markets were closed down for sim-sim because of bad results. But the presence of police posts and building of roads linking various parts of South Nyanza led to decrease of cattle theft thus encouraged people to engage in trade. The police assisted the DC to induce natives to ride and buy bicycles which they did willing at a higher price to ease their movement. Those with large numbers of livestock sold owing to the high price instead of dying of diseases. The savings were used for buying imported goods such as clothes iron-hoe, beads, knives, blankets and livestock (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2, SKDAR, 1913-1923; DC/KSI/1/3, SKDAR, 1924-1932).

The police had the role to guard and Township patrols, outpost duties at trading centers and escorts. They offered security to urban residents most of whom were traders and holders of the economy. They had established businesses in different towns. For example, Mr. Gethin and Thousands who had a small mill installed had prospered. He had large amount of wheat and mill at Kisii, could grind and transport flour. Some of the flour was consumed by natives and the rest transported to Kendu for further shipment to Kisumu. In addition, the police started involving their families in trade to subsidize their little income. The Nubian police were the first people to start making *kaimati* in Kisii, They also kept and traded in livestock (Nyabera, 4th January, 2015, O.I).

4.7 The Police in Agriculture

The police force in South Nyanza played a very vital role in the development of agriculture in the district after the World War I caused economic depression. The police engaged in tilling land and planted crops such as maize, simsim, potatoes, kales and bananas (Ramadhan, 16th August, 2015, O.I). Due to the bulk of their work, they controlled and supervised employed prisoners in cultivating their own food supplies. A good work accomplished by convict labour was the construction of water furrow one and half miles in length by which the water of stream was brought into the station and served not only the prison shambas, in time of drought, but also saved much labour in transport of water for washing purposes. The water furrows were directed to a big piece of shamba which was planted enough food for the prisoners to minimize risk of loss through drought and reduce expenditure for the prisoners for other development. And here the police were the role model. They started the work and left the rest for the prisoners as they supervised. The station improved forty acres of land, cleared of bush and part of it ploughed and planted French Grass. A large moving machine was planned for to be economical than use of hand (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2, SKDAR) 1913-1923

The police assisted administrators to encourage people of South Nyanza to cultivate their land. They helped in distributing seeds to farmers. The Gusii who were at first problematic willingly impressed European economy, they went out to work, the crops in the reserve were good and there was no particular incidence of cattle disease. Introduced and improved methods of agriculture by the introduction of ploughs and harrows; drainage and cultivation of swamps distribution of good seed and afforestation of Reserves yielded enough crops used for home consumption and also those for export purposes kept people of South Nyanza happy and contented though the Kisii were more prosperous than other communities who mostly depended on livestock KNA, DC/KSI/1/3, SKDAAR, 1923-1932).

5. Challenges faced by the Kenya Police in South Nyanza

There were many issues that required the attention of the Police Force to deal with but the prevailing circumstances did not allow any consistent increase in the number of the force or improving the training of the force then in existence. Worse still, South Nyanza continued to suffer from inadequate number of government administrators, especially Assistant District Commissioners, under whom the police functioned. For instance, when Mr. C.E. Spencer was transferred to the North Kavirondo District on November 9th the district had two Assistant District Commissioners, Messrs. Fazan and Evans. Fazan who had only been in the District for 3 weeks and as Mr. Evans was assigned for transport work wholly to Kendu, the District Commissioner remained almost alone. On November 30th Mr. J.A.G. Elliot Asst. District Commissioner, arrived from Kericho (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, 1913).

Economic pressures imposed on the Kenya Police Force during the inter-war period saw a few of them indulge in bribe-taking as noted by the District Commissioner in his annual report of 1918 (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). Whereas many parts of Kenya enjoyed an increased police staffing, South Nyanza was not one of the areas. In fact, the police strength in 1919 was less than that in 1914. In 1919, there were 35 police officers in South Nyanza compared to 40 officers in 1914 (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). The reason why this was the case is because areas which witnessed an increase in police numbers are those which had a sizeable number of European populations, mainly in white settlement areas. The presence of European population, especially white settlers determined the size and strength of the police force in any given area. For example, in 1925, there were 31 Police Stations and 57 Police Outposts staffed by detachments; while 16 units of the Force were in settled areas and 21 in the Native Reserves (Foran, 1962, p. 65).

The police played an important role in enforcing law and order among the Gusii and their neighbors. However, they were not without blame. In 1931, for example, the District Commissioner for South Kavirondo noted that discipline has been good except among some Wakamba *askaris*(police) who indulged in drunkenness (Kenya National Archives, DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1931).

6. Conclusion

The Kenya police Force was established to perform certain functions in favour of the colonial establishment. To a great extent, the police served the interests, political and economic, of the ruling political elite and the dominant economic class. To start with, the police force was instrumental in the pacification of African populations which showed resistant towards the establishment of the colonial rule in South Nyanza. They also helped to establish a harmonious co-existence between the various ethnic communities which resided in South Nyanza. They achieved this by helping to minimize incidents of cattle thefts among and between ethnic communities. The colonial government was keen at ending cattle thefts because it promoted interethnic wars which disrupted normal government functions of exploiting African areas. Wars would, for example, prevent the free flow of farm produce from African areas as well as disrupt Africans from engaging in productive economic activities such as farming. Another sector in which the Kenya police helped both Africans and the colonial state was with regard to regulating excessive consumption of alcohol and bhang smoking. Many crimes were, such as murder, committed under the influence of alcohol and bhang. In addition, alcohol and bhang made people lazy and unproductive in their areas of work. So on the face value, the police would be seen as promoting cohesive co-existence among Africans for the benefit of Africans while in the deeper sense of things, they encouraged exploitation of Africans. Of course Africans benefitted from the service of the Kenya police as wars between ethnic communities would lead to death and disruption of normal life in South Nyanza. Even though the government knew that the police would help restore law and order among warring communities in South Nyanza, it failed to provide adequate funds which would have enabled the employment of an adequate number of police officers.

7. Recommendation

On recommendation and further research: From the discussion and conclusion above, however, this research is not an end to itself; it is open to criticism and further findings even into the post-colonial

period to date. Further, research should be conducted on the history administration and of the evolution of urban centres in the colonial period in South Nyanza.

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Oral Interviews

- James Beka, (106 years old) of Nyakoe village of Kisii County, interviewed on 22nd August, 2015.
- John Mburu, (79 years old) of Mwata village of Kisii County, interviewed on 24th August, 2015.
- Marwa Ogora, (75 years old) of Mchebe, Masaba village of Migori county interview done on 18th August, 2015.
- Nyambega, (83 years old) of Getare village, Kisii county interviewed on 28th August, 2015.
- David Ntabo (75 years old) of Riana, Kisii County interviewed on 25th August, 2015.
- Edward Nyabera (72 years old) of Kehancha, Migori County interviewed on 4th January, 2015
- Al Haji Ramadhan (50 years old) of Daraja Mbili kisii county interviewed on 16th August, 2015