

ANALYSIS OF SETTLERS CONQUEST STRATEGY : CASE OF KENYA IN *THE RIVER BETWEEN OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O*

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Abstract : The article attempts to analyse the strategy of settlers conquest of Kenya, namely how they subdued Kikuyu people (the largest ethnic group in the country). It further examines the subtlety through which British settlers showed their interest for this country and interfered in its rule. Some policies for the so called well-being of indigenous were set up, very often against their own will and customs.

As a result, Kikuyu religion, culture and system of education were severely put to the proof and phagocytosed for British establishment. Unfortunately, indigenous hardly withstood to such invasion and underwent the desideratum of those settlers. Sociocriticism is the theory used for this article.

Keywords: colonization, Kenya, resistance, culture, school.

Résumé :

L'article tente d'analyser la stratégie de conquête du Kenya par les colons, à savoir comment ils ont soumis le peuple Kikuyu (le plus grand groupe ethnique du pays). Il examine en outre la subtilité avec laquelle les colons britanniques ont montré leur intérêt pour ce pays et ont interféré dans sa gestion. Certaines politiques pour le soi-disant bien-être des indigènes ont été mises en place, très souvent contre leur propre volonté et leurs coutumes.

En conséquence, la religion, la culture et le système d'éducation kikuyu ont été sévèrement mis à l'épreuve et phagocytés en faveur de l'establishment britannique. Malheureusement, les indigènes n'ont guère résisté à une telle invasion et ont subi le desideratum de ces colons. La sociocritique est la théorie utilisée pour cet article.

Mots clés : colonisation, Kenya, résistance, culture, école.

Introduction

The idea of colonizing foreign lands for profit, resources, land and power is an old conception among continents and countries. For centuries, western countries have adopted a policy of expansion and conquest of new territories. After the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), those countries, including France,

England, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Belgium, have raced to extend their colonial reach to Africa. " To the colonial powers, Africa was a land of immense space and rich with natural resources and agricultural potential, (McConnell, 2005:1)"

Thus, Kenya found itself in the line of sight of England because of its attractiveness. In fact, "European settlers acquired huge landholding, establishing the basis of large-scale commercial agriculture. In Kenya the fertile White Highlands were designated for their exclusive use" (Meredith 7).

So, what was the strategy set up by settlers to subjugate kenyan people ? This thorny question brings about others. How did settlers manage to have profit of kenya wealth ? what is the impact of settlers actions upon kenyan population today ?

Through the concepts of religion, culture and school ; an attempt of answer will be given.

1. Religion

"Religion" can be defined as a manner of worshipping a deity, or God, with a set of basic beliefs and practices, such as special feast days and forms of worship. Religion includes traditions, rituals, and usually sacred texts ,like the Hebrew Bible" (URAM 2013 :2). "Religion involves a number of gods, or deities."(*The world book encyclopedia*, 1990, 16:196-197). Those gods and this particular God are worshipped and feared by his stalwarts. In the case of Kikuyu people, they had various gods they worshipped with pride before settlers arrival.

" His people worshipped Murungu, Mwenenyaga, Ngai. The unerring white man had called the Gikuyu god the prince of darkness, (Ngugi, 1965 :23". Those gods were the bulwarks of those indigenious in all predicaments. They could rely on them for the fulfillment of all kind of prayers.

"Religion...in Africa, if it is involved in everything, is also confused with everything: with laws and received customs, feasts, rejoicing, mourning, work and business, events, and accidents of life. it is even difficult at times to distinguish it in practice from medicine, science, superstition, and magic. That is why there is no word to indicate

religion in general; it is included under the general expression 'customs' – what is received from the ancestors, what has always been believed and done, the practices which must be observed to maintain the family, the village, the tribe, and whose neglect would bring about certain misfortunes – as we have often seen. (Mulago, 1991, p.127)."

Their faith in whose gods was not questionable as they were considered as the creator and provider of all things. Whatever the situation (happy or unhappy) it is necessary to resort to religion or gods in order to be fulfilled or have comfort. Religion practice is to remind human being that they are very limited and they will have their blooming through a deep involvement in it. If they cut themselves from religion, their perdition will be certain.

Nevertheless, that strong belief in those gods was discredited by settlers who set up a smear campaign in order to lead Kikuyu to abandon their faith in their traditional gods. Settlers claimed that those gods belonged to darkness ; in other words, they were devilish and bum.

It should be noted that the early missionaries generally brainwashed the African persons to an extent of making them creatures of inferior or less gods (...) a bitter history that the people of Kenya still harbor in their mind. (Theuri, 2013 :2)

Such a fierce criticism against Kikuyu gods continued for a long time. At last, they succeeded to put doubt in kikuyu gods and even led some villagers to be mistrustful in their beliefs.

Taking profit of their success on the criticism of kikuyu gods, missionaries focussed on some rites of kikuyu society. Thus, circumcision became a potential target in the implementation of their mission. "The missionaries do not like the circumcision of girls (...) Jesus told (...) it was wrong and sinful, (Ngugi, 1965 :25)" Circumcision will be considered as an antichrist ceremony that villagers will need to abandon, but having a normal relationship with Jesus. Apart from spiritual aspect, circumcision could have bad outcome upon human being as Bossio notified it for men : "Adverse self-reported outcomes associated with foreskin removal in adulthood include impaired erectile functioning, orgasm difficulties, decreased masturbatory functioning (loss in pleasure and

increase in difficulty), an increase in penile pain, a loss of penile sensitivity with age, and lower subjective ratings of penile sensitivity" (2014 :2847-64).

Therefore, it was forbidden and not recommended to all kikuyu people. The supporters and adherents of circumcision were wrongly stigmatized or not. So, circumcision became insignificant and rejected whereas "Circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life (Ngugi, 1965:37)". Missionaries and settlers attacked the soul of kikuyu through the condemnation of circumcision. They targeted at the *Kiama* since it was the depository and watchman of that initiation ritual ; the impact upon the society will be so outstanding that there will be different clans with clear positions. "... but the white man had come to Siriana, and Joshua and Kabonyi had been converted. They had abandoned the ways of the ridges and followed the new faith, (*Ibid*, 7/8) ".

With their denigration of Kikuyu ways, Missionaries had been of a great support of settlers. Their predication got an acceptable echo towards some indigenous. Those one rejected their previous beliefs and hugged christianity. Christianity appeared as the only recourse due to their contact with missionaries. Thus, Christianity will better women conditions in Kenya, specially the converted wives because they will have the possibility to attend school " Those who had converted to Christianity were also known as "*Athomi*" (the educated or learned ones). Their female counter-parts who pioneered education in Meru were educated at Kaaga Girls Mission School, which was known as "*Mambere*" meaning (advancement through western education) (Gerrishon, 2016 :22)" and even in case those wives became widow, they could continue a normal life without being obliged to become a spouse of their husband 's brother : "the Church of England would not allow the brother of a deceased family member to have sexual relations with the deceased's wife, a practice the Church regarded as polygamy but a normal practice in traditional Kikuyu culture (McConnell, 2005-6 :32)". In consideration of thoses advantages and more, those indigenous started believing their salvation in the new faith and through such impacts proved that

missionaries were really determined in their mission. In fact, their determination was favoured by some reasons.

The early missionaries targeted Kikuyu region (...) because of the openness and hospitality of the Kikuyu. (...) in Kikuyuland the pioneer missionaries would establish young churches with the purpose of recruiting Africans for the greater goal,
(James, 1226 :10)

Kikuyu land became a central place for the conquest of souls in the whole Kenya. As the Kikuyu people were warmhearted and hospitable, gospel grew exponentially. The main goal was to africanize gospel promotion. In other words, new converted kikuyu would have great functions in the churches so that they could announce Jesus to their fellow people. Such a strategy consisted of presenting the hell and the paradise, and insisted on people to choose paradise that is the greater goal. In doing so, fear caught up traditionalist villagers and radicalness spread in the mouth of new converted villagers. Finally, an almost irreconcilable path set up among the two sides.

Joshua (...) had been the first to be converted to the new faith. He was then a young man in the newly established Mission. He feared the revenge of the hills ; the anger of his friends, betrayed. (...) the new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly. (...) he turned to and felt the deep presence of the one God,
(Ngugi, 1965 :28/29)

Up to now, the new converted turned to Jesus for their salvation and finally abandoned the ways of the *Kiama*. But in the same time, they were charged with betrayal by the other villagers. The new converted started to not believe themselves in security anymore, so the new religion established a distrustful climate with the two opposed clans.

Each group seemed more arrogant and more confident of itself than ever. Joshua preached with more vigour than ever and his followers sang damnation to the pagan openly and defiantly. Joshua was identified as the enemy of the tribe. He was with Siriana, with the white settlers. For now, it was said that Siriana missionaries had been sent to prepare the way for the settlers, (*Ibid*, 110)

The rift between indigenous and new converted had become so wide that the complicity between settlers and missionaries was well perceptible. As

Missionaries sent their followers to preach, those ones treated the recalcitrant indigenous of pagans and good to the hell. The new converted seemed to have a good cooperation with settlers and did not complain about all their misbehaviours. Christianity broke the existing cohesion between villagers, therefore villagers could not talk to a single voice any more. With such an attitude, christianity set up a part of Kikuyu land in lethargy and appeared as facilitator of settlers' settlement.

2. Culture

Culture refers to the total way of life of any society ...“To most anthropologists, “culture encompasses the learned behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, values and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population”, (C.R. and M. Ember, 1990:171). It turns out that all human beings are born in a particular place where ways and us influence his decisions, attitudes and even life. The values of such a population are very sacred and preserved through a careful transmission from generation to generation. As far as Kikuyu people were concerned, one aspect of their pride culture was their medicine which could cure a lot of diseases.

The bark of that tree is good for a fresh wound.
The roots of this plant are good. When your stomach bites
you, you boil them in water. Drink the liquid
And sometimes it would be a warning against that tree,
whose fruit is full of poison ,(Ngugi, 1965:14)

Kikuyu people had got the secret of the richness of plants. They could handle them to their will and cure the ill persons without no one need. They were able to take up a lot of challenges about health of their fellow citizen. They were self-sufficient and could even cure a poisoned person. But the case of Muthoni showed the limits of kikuyu medicine, so much that she was sent to settlers hospitals at last.

Muthoni should go to hospital.'
Where? The aunt asked rather hopefully.
'Siriana Mission hospital.'
For a few days Muthoni's aunt resisted the suggestion.
(...)
On the day Muthoni was taken to the hospital, (*Ibid*, 50)

After the rite of circumcision, Muthoni was not well and all the attempts of experienced healers'women failed. With despair, they accepted to bring her to settlers hospital in order to be saved. In doing so, they admitted the superiority of settlers medicine upon kikuyu ones. Such action let many kikuyu puzzled and impelled them towards missionaries hospitals for their healthy needs up to now. Those native kikuyu started to be sympathetic about settlers medicine and adhere to their ideology without any discernment.

Besides health field, settlers tackled the economy of kikuyu people. They promoted and set up taxpaying in Kenya in order to reduce the purchasing power of villagers. Such a policy spread in the whole place without people knew what taxes really meant.

There were rumours that Government Post would soon be built at Makuyu and that the hills would be built from there. (...) white men had announced that people in these regions would begin paying taxes to a government in Nairobi. People shrugged their shoulders, not knowing what a tax was. Nevertheless, they blamed Joshua for his interference. (*Ibid*, 31)

This strategy aimed to strip indigenous from their finance and led them to have a towering love for money. Thus, each indigenous would curl upon himself and care about only his matter. This state of things would impact the struggle for mass interests and favour individuality in the thought and attitude of villagers. On the one hand, we have the new converted who seemed to not be concerned with the imposition of tax and on the other hand, we have the rest of villagers who were incapable of reaction about that drastic change. "A government post was being built on the ridge next to Makuyu. And it was now clear that people would have to pay taxes, (*Ibid*, 58)". The reality of tax imposition broke solidarity

and the spirit of gratuitousness which existed among villagers. The daily life of indigenous was then to achieve paying tax to settlers.

Consequently, to force africans out of subsistence, the settlers resorted to economic as well as non-economic mechanisms. non-economic mechanisms involved mainly administrative ones, such as taxation, labour registration cards or passes, labour conscription ; economic mechanisms involved mainly squatter- and hired labour. Both types conveyed on the transformation of african subsistence, by making money aquisition a universal necessity. (Peter, 1978 :56)

Such settlers strategy affected the capacity of resistance of kikuyu people in so much as a substantial part of their income was to pay taxes. An example of the many taxes imposed to them was the Hut tax.

This hut tax was a way used by the Protectorate government to find new sources of revenue; and it consisted of two rupees which were payable annually by the occupier of any hut. This introduction of monetary economy and hut tax, plus the land alienations of Kikuyuland, forced most men to leave their homes in search of employment. In turn, the mission stations offered employment opportunities and, as a result, some converted to Christianity as away of guaranteeing themselves a job. (Karanja, 1999 :52)

The hut tax combined with the land alienation impoverished and ruined the greatest majority of Kikuyuland inhabitants. It seriously affected their economy and purchasing power. The priority for them was then the quest for means of survival and not resistance. Those ones moved in towns for better opportunities.

We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased for the native...(and) it is on this that the supply of labour and the price of labour depend. To raise the rate of wages would not increase but would diminish the supply of labour. a rise in the rate of wages would enable the hut and poll tax of a family, sub-tribe or tribe to be earned by fewer external workers. (Peter, 1978 :56)

As the settlers were the owners of many land squares and masters of flourishing companies, they only gave opportunities to the new converted and neglected the other villagers. Thus, the new converted were able to pay their taxes easily. That is why, most of converted Kikuyu did not complain about the introduction of taxes. In conclusion, settlers proved that their medicine was better than kikuyu

ones so that many indigenous adopted the missionary hospital for their health and settlers also set up tax on kikuyu land which made fragile the organisation of indigenous people.

3. School

School is component of education which means “the systematic instruction, schooling or rearing given to the young (and, by implication, to adults) in preparation for the work of life. Also the whole course of scholastic instruction which a person has received (Little et al., 1968:584). This instruction includes a lot of advantages for children. School permits them to be balanced to face the new challenges of their environment. In fact, education should lead to make wise choices and to take advantageous decisions for their community. That is why many children from kikuyu land were authorized to attend western school. “Many boys from the hills and beyond, from Kiambu and Murunga, came there for a portion of the white man’s magic. Ngugi, 1965:21) ” Indigenous children were there to acquire white people knowledge in order to counter their cultural and technological superiority. Indigenous aimed at discovering British settlers’ science and later fight them back with more means and a better strategy. Unfortunately, this expected boomrang did not take place as settlers were smarter than indigenous.

The children of those who defied the laws of the church and continued their tribal customs would have to leave Siriana. And no child of a pagan would again be allowed into school unless the child was a refugee. Even then the child would have to renounce circumcision, (Ibid, 60)

No child of a non-christian had been given permission to acquire a portion of the white’s man magic. Settlers had a discriminatory policy which chased out pagan children and only accepted Christian indigenous ones. It was a punishment method against the faithful to the custom or those who played a double dealing between the old ways and new faith. In fact, settlers promoted their school as a better place to learn and acquire some capacities and then demanded some

compromise agreements to traditional indigenous. So, school became the privilege of converted sons and descendants.

Moreover, local school of indigenous had been closed or placed under the authority of settlers as we can see in the following lines.

It was after the declaration of a state of emergency over Kenya in 1952 that all the schools run by patriotic nationalists were taken over by the colonial regime and were placed under District Education Boards chaired by Englishmen. English became the language of my formal education: In Kenya, English. became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. (Ngugi, 1994:11)

Settlers prevented the emergence of indigenous proper means of training. They were feared of all values that would be taught there. In fact, liberty, independence and human rights would be spread in the mind of indigenous. The closing or taking over of indigenous local schools aimed to thwart all velleity of uprising and develop a system of unique thought. For that, they imposed english as the single language in which to teach. All learners were therefore obliged to acquire knowledge in the language of the colonizers. Such a learning policy was disastrous for the whole indigenous people.

For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised. (*Ibid*, 16)

School crowned the superiority of settlers' culture upon indigenous one. It brought the ways of settlers to have better consideration and be valued compared to indigenous one. The negligence of the manners and custom of Kikuyu people in the learning process led the kikuyu children to have preference for settlers' politics. School broke all the resistances chains against colonisers and tackled the different domains of kikuyu existence and put into lethargy the children. In short, school set up a single vision to children and killed all critical minds of learners. Thus, they accepted the received teaching even if it was a falsification of the history. It was a mental domination upon indigenous children so that they could

not react. Such state of things stemmed from the colonizers learning institutions. "The colonial system produced the kind of education which nurtured subservience, self-hatred, and mutual suspicion. It produced a people uprooted from the masses, (Ngugi, 1972: 14)."

School turned to train people in disconnecting them from their realities. School discredited the wealth of their origin and led them for having no care and consideration for their illiterate parents and fellow citizens. Therefore, Kikuyu scholars seemed not to have the same viewpoint with their people and step by step a distrustful wall raised among them. Those scholars did not perceive the interest of fighting their common cause anymore. School brought them to reflect and act for settlers' interest. This is all the more true that Cheick Hamidou Kane did not tell the contrary.

On the Black Continent, one began to understand that their real power resided not at all in the cannons of the first morning but in what followed the cannons. Therefore behind the cannons was the new school. The new school had the nature of both the cannon and the magnet. From the cannon it took the efficiency of a fighting weapon. But better than the cannon it made the conquest permanent. The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul.
(Cheikh, 1987: 60).

School and canon contributed to the conquest of the black continent, but school effect became permanent upon people. It set up a kind of indoctrination which put colonized person in ecstasy. This one does not see the exploitation of his people, but the feats of settlers science. To that point, he has got the settlers mentality and is only a white person with a black skin. With school establishment and perpetuation, colonial resistance turned down by intensity and finally led to the acceptance of settlers propaganda by indigenous.

Conclusion

Started in the beginning of the XIX century, the invasion and conquest of Kenya by British settlers occurred thanks to a methodological planning. Such planning spread out through a well established calendar. First, they led them to

gulp all kinds of teaching through religion ; then, they attacked the culture of Kikuyu and finally they controlled their system of education. British settlers achieved to deprive native indigenuous of their system of defence and easily took profit of Kenya's plenty resources. Settlers imposed themselves in the most important and flourishing sectors of economic activities of the country. Their current domination of the kenya economy is the result of a very long policy, from which kenyan will sweat enough to break free.

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