

KENYA, EAST AFRICA: AN ASPECT OF POPULATION GEOGRAPHY

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During and after the Second World War, the nations of the Western World showed an increasing awareness of underdeveloped areas as potential sources of agricultural and mineral production as well as possible sites for future migrations from Europe. One of the potential sites for European population is the British Colony and Protectorate of Kenya in Africa. The European population of Kenya increased from 528 in 1901 to 29,660 in 1948, the date of the latest census. Here, political, environmental, and economic factors have been favorable for the development of European settlement.

One of the principal factors aiding and encouraging the development of European settlement in Kenya has been government policy (Fig. 1). The first governmental encouragement for European immigration to Kenya was in 1904, when a representative of the Government of Kenya went to South Africa to advertise the potentialities of the highlands for European settlement. Other governmentally sponsored settlement schemes were inaugurated after both World Wars in an effort to encourage additional European settlement, particularly from Great Britain. The present government-sponsored, Soldier Settlement Scheme provides training, low interest loans from the Land Bank, and

direct grants for the purchase of capital farming equipment, to prospective settlers. Additional aid to European agricultural settlement is provided by government-sponsored agricultural research, maize and wheat subsidies, and government-sponsored marketing schemes.

Perhaps the most significant political factor in the growth and distribution of European settlement in Kenya was the establishment of the boundaries of the White Highlands in 1939. No land can be excised within the White Highlands without the approval of the Highlands Board, which in effect means that only Europeans can own agricultural land therein. In 1948, there was a total of 7,945,038 acres reserved for European settlement. This also includes the areas of unalienated Crown Land reserved for future European settlement, notably in the southern portion of the Rift Valley and to the east and north of Nairobi. The former two areas are lower, warmer, and drier than the more densely settled rural portion of the highlands, while north of Nairobi, beyond Nanyuki, railroad facilities are lacking. Settlement is not possible on the steeper slopes and higher elevations (Mt. Kenya, Aberdare Range, Mau Escarpment, and upper slopes of Mt. Elgon) which, in 1939, were classified as Forest Reserve, where neither Euro-

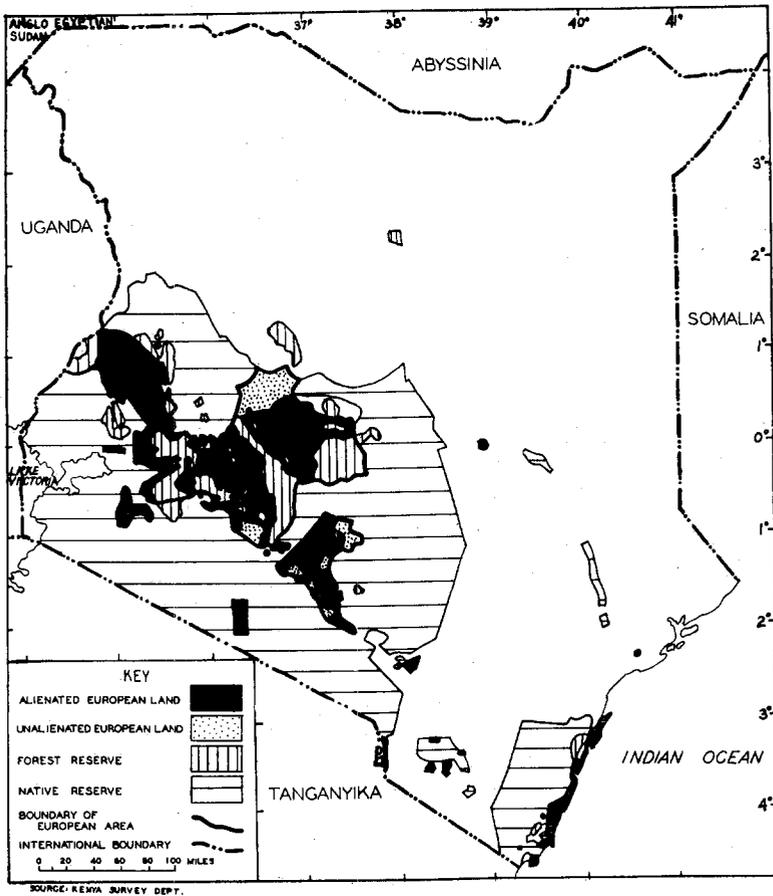


FIG. 1.—Classification of land in Kenya, 1947.

peans nor Africans can alienate land. The Native Reserves, wherein are found lower elevations, higher temperatures, less adequate rainfall, tsetse fly, and more limited transportation facilities, are also unavailable for European settlement due to governmental restrictions.

Six major European settlements can be differentiated where the size and nature of European settlement are reflections of a combination of political, environmental, and economic factors (Fig. 2). Throughout

Kenya the majority of Europeans is situated in the southwestern portion of the territory with two notable exceptions, the ports of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean and Kisumu on Lake Victoria.

The most important European settlement in Kenya is in the southwest, in the White Highlands, which include the Rift Valley and the adjacent highlands between Mt. Kenya on the east and Mt. Elgon on the west. Such environmental factors as moderate temperatures, adequate rain-

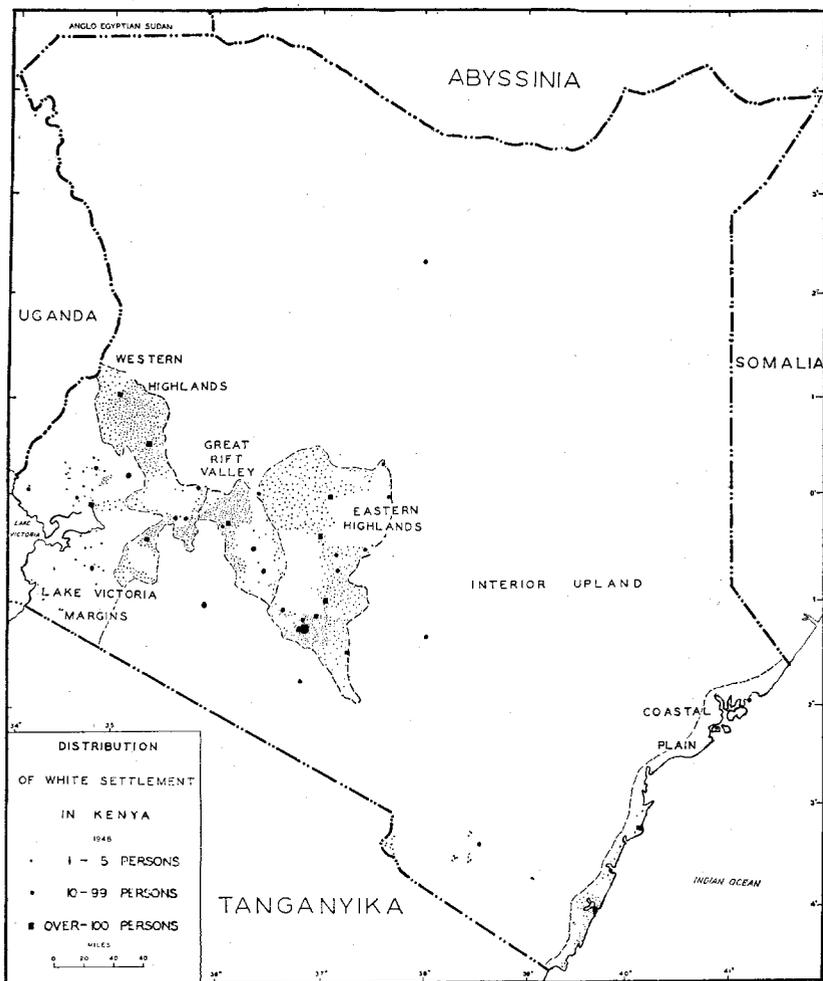


FIG. 2.—Distribution of white settlement in Kenya, 1948.

fall, relatively level local relief, and fertile soils, have been favorable for the development of white settlement and 86.3% of the total European population is situated there. Three major European settlement regions have developed within the White Highlands; the two largest groups of Europeans are located in the Eastern Highlands and Western High-

lands adjacent to the Rift Valley, while the smaller European group is situated in the Rift Valley itself.

The Eastern Highlands, where the largest European settlement in the White Highlands is situated, consists of a lava plateau located between the Aberdare Range, which is the eastern escarpment of the Rift Valley, and Mt. Kenya. Elevations

range upwards from 3,500 feet above sea level. The vegetation and climate, which vary locally with altitude and exposure, include: 1) *Acacia* tall-grass savanna in the warmer and drier sectors below the 5,000-foot contour; 2) the Temperate Rainforest in the cooler and moister sectors between 5,000 and 8,000 feet above sea level; and 3) above the 8,000-foot contour the vegetation includes bamboo, mountain meadow, and tundra. The best agricultural soils are in the relatively densely populated southern portion centering on Nairobi, 5,495 feet above sea level. Here the volcanic parent rock has weathered into a bright red friable loam over 15 feet in depth. There is a relatively evenly distributed annual rainfall between 40 and 50 inches, and annual temperatures range between 65° and 72° F. Nairobi, the capital and largest city in Kenya, is the principal administrative, commercial, and missionary center within the territory. To the north, south, and east of Nairobi, the rainfall is neither abundant nor prolonged, the principal soils are calcareous black clays, and the density of the European population is less. To the west, the steep slopes of the Aberdare Range have limited the development of European settlement.

The second principal concentration of European population in the White Highlands is found west of the Rift Valley in the Western Highlands where elevations range from 3,000 to 14,178 feet above sea level. The majority of Europeans is situated on the comparatively level Uasin Gishu Plateau between 6,000 and 8,000 feet, where the rainfall,

temperatures, and soils are similar to those in the vicinity of Nairobi. South of the Uasin Gishu Plateau, the relief is more pronounced, and the European settlements are smaller and farther apart.

The smallest European settlement within the White Highlands is situated in the Rift Valley. The only significant concentration of Europeans is found in the more humid western portion of the Rift Valley near the base of the Mau Escarpment in an area of orographic rainfall. The steep escarpment of the Aberdare Range to the east rises abruptly above the relatively level surface and shields the eastern portion of the Rift Valley from the rain-bearing easterly winds. The *Acacia* tall-grass vegetation and non-calcareous plains soils reflect the drier conditions in most of the Rift Valley, in contrast to the more humid adjacent highland regions. A series of interior basins, the majority of which contain saline lakes, is an additional indication of the relatively sub-humid conditions within most of the Rift Valley.

In 1948, 23.9% of the 13,979 gainfully employed Europeans in Kenya were engaged in agriculture and stock breeding, 20.6% in public service, 11.4% in wholesale and retail trade, and 11.0% in professional occupations. The majority of the European agriculturists are either permanent immigrants to Kenya or they are children or grandchildren of the early "pioneer" agriculturists. The other occupational groups are predominantly temporary settlers coming to Kenya under a limited contract. In contrast to the remainder of Kenya, the Euro-

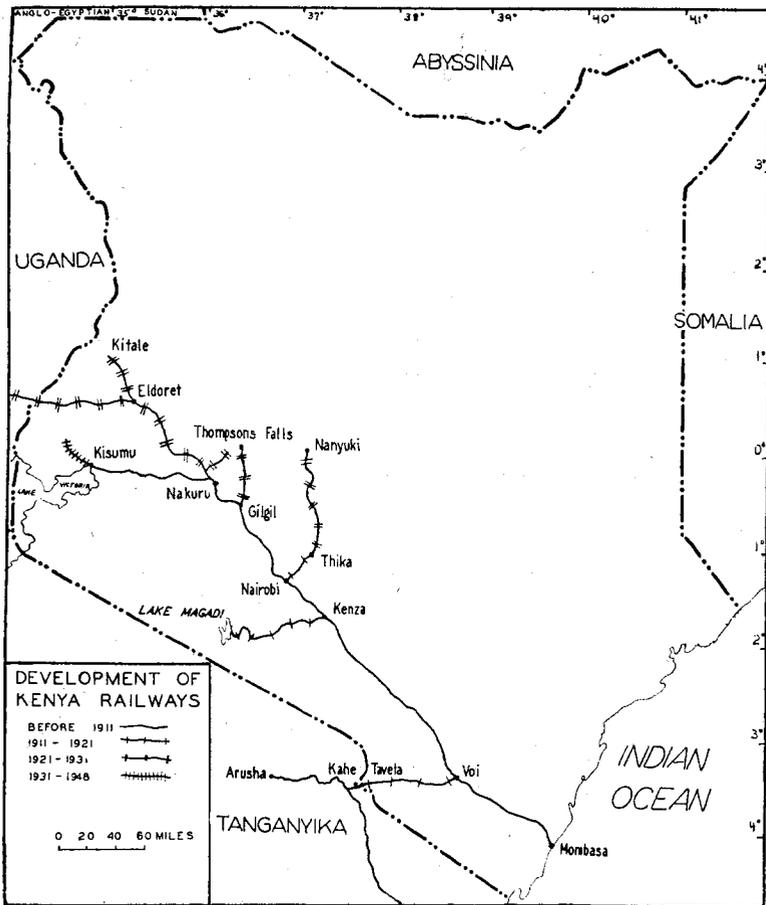


FIG. 3.—Development of Kenya railways.

pean population in the White Highlands is relatively permanent in nature, particularly that part engaged in agriculture and stock breeding. Among the European-grown agricultural crops, maize is the principal crop with a large domestic demand for livestock feed and human food. This crop is produced primarily in the humid portions of the White Highlands below 7,500 feet. Both livestock and wheat production have increased in the past 20 years due

to government-sponsored research and disease control schemes. Coffee, pyrethrum, and tea production is confined primarily to the moister portions of the White Highlands, while sisal, which requires a drier environment, is raised in the lower portion of the White Highlands.

The development of permanent European settlement and economic activity in the White Highlands has been closely related to the presence of scheduled railway facilities (Fig.

3) which have decreased the isolation of the area and enabled the production of commodities which can be exported economically. In 1901, when the railway line was completed between the ports of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean and Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria, the majority of Europeans was situated in the vicinity of Mombasa. Shortly after the completion of the railway, the number of Europeans increased in the White Highlands, notably near Nairobi and Nakuru, which soon became the principal sites of European settlement in Kenya. Subsequent extensions of the railway in the White Highlands were followed by changes in the distribution as well as by increases in the size of the European settlement in the White Highlands. At present, all of the major urban concentrations are provided with scheduled transportation facilities which extend to adjacent territories as well as to the port of Mombasa.

To the east, in the Coastal Plain bordering the shores of the Indian Ocean, the environmental factors have been relatively unattractive for the development of a large or permanent European population (Fig. 2). The soils are predominantly loose sand; the temperatures are hot (above 68° F.) every month of the year due to the low elevations at this latitude; and the occurrence and amount of rainfall vary from high humidity in the southern portion to aridity in the north where continuous drought prevails for over three months of the year. The principal site of European population in this region is at the port of Mombasa (2,027 Europeans) which is one of

the best ports on the east coast of Africa and the terminus of the Kenya and Uganda Railway. Within the port of Mombasa, European activity is predominantly commercial and administrative, whereas outside of Mombasa the comparatively small European population consists largely of plantation managers or public servants on limited contract. Sisal, the principal commercial crop produced here, involves huge capital investments, and its production is controlled primarily by large corporations rather than by individual producers.

In the Lake Victoria Margins in the western portion of the territory, the only important European settlements are at the port of Kisumu and the Kakamega gold fields. The days of the Kakamega gold rush by many European gold prospectors and miners stopped about 1935, and today the gold mining operations are controlled by large companies employing a limited number of Europeans on contract. The constantly hot temperature (above 68° F.), the high daily humidity due to the proximity of Lake Victoria, and the relatively infertile and easily leached, red-earth soils, formed on gneiss and granite, have not favored the development of white settlement. Relatively few Europeans have been attracted to the region, aside from those engaged in the mining and commercial activities related to the port of Kisumu.

The arid Interior Uplands is the largest (90% of Kenya) and least attractive region for the development of permanent white settlement. The majority of Europeans in this region are temporary settlers en-

gaged in either governmental or missionary service, aside from the relatively few Europeans temporarily employed as managers and technicians to direct mineral exploitation at the Lake Magadi Soda Mines. In the Interior Uplands the prevailing Acacia desert-grass savanna vegetation as well as the desert soils reflect the aridity of the region. Rainfall is sparse and unreliable, partly because of the distance from the Indian Ocean, and partly because the elevations, which range between 1,000 and 4,000 feet above sea level, are not high enough to modify temperatures and thereby lower evaporation sufficiently to permit effective rainfall. Moreover, the widespread distribution of the tsetse fly in this entire region has limited the development of European livestock production.

Thus, in the Coastal Plain, Lake Victoria Margin, and Interior Upland Regions, European settlement is small, scattered, and largely temporary in nature. None of these regions is likely to become the site of significant European settlement in the future. Unless new mineral reserves are discovered, or more effective methods of utilizing the existing water resources are developed, or the existing governmental policy concerning African interest is changed markedly, the European settlement of Kenya in the future will continue to follow the present patterns of distribution. The probable future increases in the size of the European population will result in denser settlement within the area reserved for Europeans, which is located primarily in the White Highlands.