

THE EUROPEAN POPULATION OF NYASALAND

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Although significant European penetration of Tropical Africa began less than a century ago, today Europeans are widely distributed throughout the area. Relatively large numbers of Europeans are found in Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Angola, Kenya, Tanganyika, and the Belgian Congo. The majority of the Europeans who have gone to tropical Africa during the past century have remained there for a limited period of time in such occupations as traders, missionaries, administrators, and miners. Only since the beginning of the 20th century has there been an increasing number of Europeans who, accompanied by their families, have entered tropical Africa with the intention of establishing permanent residences. The presence of mineral resources has been one of the principal, and certainly the most dramatic, factors attracting Europeans to various sections of tropical Africa. The majority of the Europeans who have entered tropical Africa in connection with mineral exploitation, however, have remained for only a limited period of time.

The primary basis for a more permanent type of European settlement in tropical Africa has been agriculture. The location of land with a potential for agricultural development has, of course, been restricted by environmental conditions. In contrast to valuable mineral deposits, land with a promising agricultural potential has attracted European

settlement to a much smaller extent. For example, within the territory of Nyasaland, there are four highland regions which are suitable for European agricultural development and settlement; but in spite of this the European population has remained small, with most of the Europeans confined to a single highland region in the south. The small size and uneven distribution of the European population elsewhere in Nyasaland reflect a variety of factors which include isolation and inaccessibility in terms of existing transportation facilities, lack of valuable mineral resources and, until recently, a lack of government encouragement and sponsorship of settlement.

Size and composition of the European population.—Lake Nyasa was discovered by David Livingstone in 1859, but only a few missionaries and government officials entered the area before Nyasaland was made a British Protectorate in 1891. When the first official census was taken in 1911, there were 766 Europeans. The European population of Nyasaland increased at a relatively slow rate until the end of the Second World War.

Table 1 indicates the changes in the number of Europeans. Northern Rhodesia has an abundance of rich mineral deposits; Table 1 illustrates the effect that mineral resources can exert on the development of European population. Kenya is more of an agricultural settlement, and, although the European

TABLE 1.—Total European Population

Year	Nyasaland	Northern Rhodesia	Kenya
1911.....	766 ¹	1,497 ¹	3,175 ¹
1921.....	1,431 ¹	3,634 ¹	9,651 ¹
1931.....	1,975 ¹	13,846 ¹	16,812 ¹
1945.....	1,948 ¹	20,142 ²	23,033 ²
1950.....	4,000 ²	36,000 ²	29,660 ²

¹ Official European census.² Official European estimate.

population continued to increase, it was at a slower rate than in Northern Rhodesia. In the relatively prosperous decade between 1921 and 1931 the European population of Northern Rhodesia increased almost four times, Kenya's population nearly doubled, but the increase in Nyasaland was relatively small. It was only after 1945 that a relatively large increase in Nyasaland's European population occurred as the result of a government-sponsored development plan and official encouragement of European immigration. The 1956 census estimated that the European population of Nyasaland was 6,730, in contrast to Northern Rhodesia's 64,810 Europeans.

The composition of the European population in Nyasaland, in terms of the number of males, females, and ages, changed considerably during the period of European settlement. The 1921 European census of Nyasaland indicated a total European population of 1,431, of whom 68.3% (977) were males and 31.7% (454) were females. Furthermore, 14.8% (212) were children under the age of 20. It could be concluded that such a population structure was typical of a pioneer society wherein European adult males predominated.

By 1945, the date of the latest available European Census of Nyasaland, the number of Europeans was 1,948, with equal numbers of females and males between the ages of 25 and 65. The paucity of children under the age of twenty noted in 1921 and 1945 was due to the fact that most European families sent their children back to their country of origin. (mainly to Great Britain) for further education. According to the 1956 census, there were 3,710 European males and 3,020 females.

The occupational composition of the gainfully employed Europeans in Nyasaland has remained stable. In 1911 the two largest occupational groups were services, which accounted for 56% of the working population, and agriculture, which accounted for 19% of the workers. In 1950, 58% of the European workers were engaged in services and 22% in agriculture.

Distribution of Europeans.—The European population is unevenly distributed in Nyasaland wherein most of the Europeans have always been located in the Shire Highland (Figs. 1 and 2). In addition to the Shire Highland there are three other areas in Nyasaland which are favorable for European agricultural set-

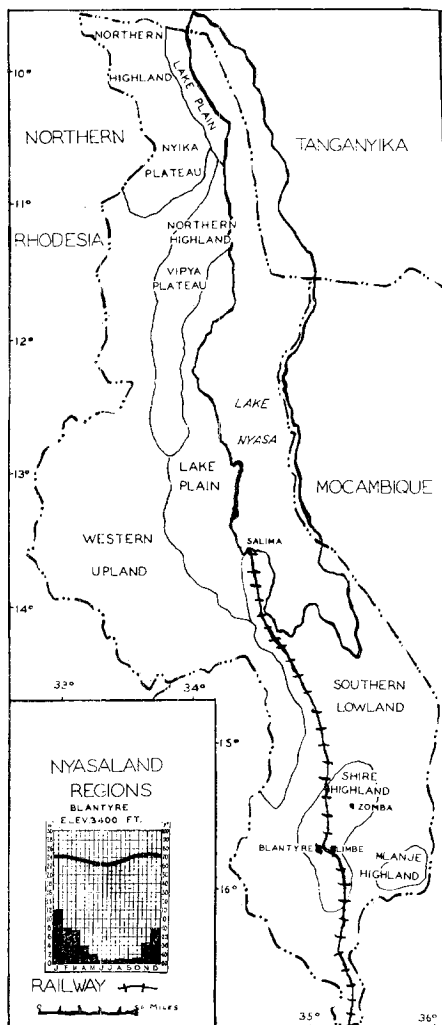


FIG. 1.—Regions of Nyasaland.

tlement: the Western Upland, the Mlanje Highland, and the Northern Highlands. Within each of these areas there is arable land, moderate temperature, and adequate rainfall. On the other hand, in the low-lying Lake Plain, temperatures are high and rainfall is heavy; in the South-

ern Lowland rainfall is sparse and temperatures are high.

In the Shire Highland the arable land is more than 3,500 feet above sea level with moderate temperatures, extremely fertile soils, and an annual rainfall between 40 and 50 inches. The Shire Highland was the first region of European settlement, primarily because of its accessibility via the Shire and Zembezi rivers. The first railroad penetrated the Shire Highland in 1908 when a line was completed between Blantyre and Port Herald on the Shire River. In 1935 the Zembezi River Bridge was opened and through railroad service was established with the Indian Ocean port of Beira in Portuguese East Africa.

The 1911 European Census, just three years after the completion of the railroad, indicated that 55% of the total European population was located in the Shire Highland. In 1945 (Fig. 2) 62.5% of the 1,948 Europeans were in this region along with the three urban centers of Blantyre, Limbe, and Zomba (the administrative capital).

The most extensive and diversified European agricultural activity has developed in the Shire Highland. In 1922, the principal crops grown by Europeans were tobacco and cotton, more than 10,000 acres each (Fig. 3). Other important crops of the Europeans at that time, in order of acreage, were maize, legumes, and timber. By 1940 the agricultural emphasis had changed; cotton was no longer produced and there had been a considerable decrease in the tobacco acreage. Timber and tea have become the two principal European-produced crops in the Shire High-

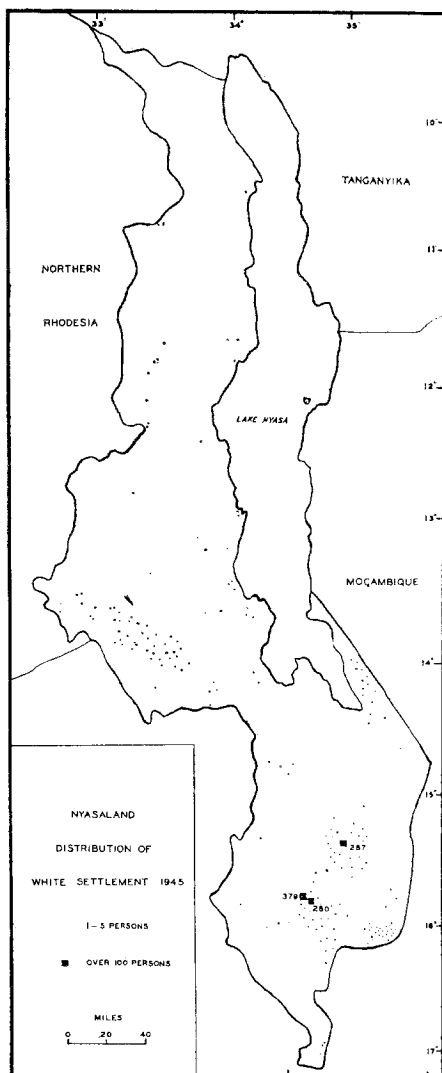


FIG. 2.—Nyasaland: Distribution of white settlement in 1945.

land with about 10,000 acres in each crop. Tea greatly increased in importance, and now the Shire Highland is the principal tea-producing region with over 11 million pounds of tea in 1956. Timber production has remained important, while tung

and sisal production have increased.

The second largest group of Europeans (427 in 1945) is in the Western Upland Region. The development of highways between 1932 and 1945 modified the isolation of this region. Here elevations range between 3,000 and 5,000 feet above sea level and the annual rainfall is smaller than in the Shire Highland. Tobacco has been the principal crop in this region, but oil crops (tung and groundnuts) have recently assumed significance.

A small concentration of Europeans (143 in 1945) is located in the isolated Mlanje Highland Region. Within this region there are areas of fertile loam soils and rainfall of about 110 inches annually. Tea has been the major crop produced; in 1956 the Mlanje tea estates produced more than 9,000,000 pounds of tea. Timber has become the crop of second importance, followed by tobacco.

The Northern Highlands Region consists of the Vipya and Nyika plateaus where elevations range between 6,000 and 8,000 feet above sea level. There are only a few Europeans in this area due in part to its isolation by distance and the lack of transportation facilities. Tea production was introduced to this area in 1956 and rubber is produced near the base of the Vipya Plateau where there is an evenly distributed annual rainfall of between 70 and 100 inches.

Agricultural production and exports.—The foreign trade of Nyasaland has been based upon the development of agricultural production. Because many agricultural efforts have been experimental and

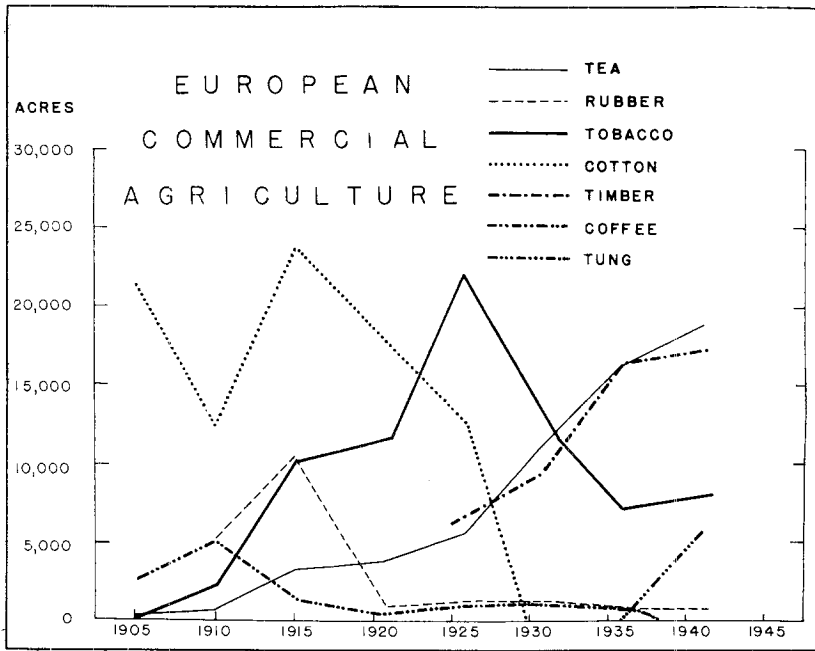


FIG. 3.—European commercial agriculture.

because of price fluctuations in world markets, the importance of various crops has changed and the acreages of most crops have fluctuated considerably. Tea production has steadily expanded and tobacco acreage has increased steadily since 1937. Tobacco, grown primarily in the Western Upland and Shire Highland regions, is the most valuable export crop and in 1956 tobacco exports were worth more than £3,000,000. Tea, produced primarily in the Shire and Mlanje highlands, is the second most important export crop. The value of tea exports in 1956 was £2,900,000. Cotton, once the principal crop of Nyasaland, is no longer produced by Europeans, and coffee and rubber failed to materialize as important crops. Three relatively

new crops which have gained significance are timber, tung, and sisal.

The future.—The European population of Nyasaland will probably increase slowly and primarily in connection with increased agricultural development. With extension and expansion of highway transportation facilities, the European population will probably be somewhat more widely distributed, but the general distribution patterns will remain essentially the same. But promising ore with a high uranium content has recently been discovered in Nyasaland. If this, or future discoveries, should prove the presence of valuable mineral reserves, there could be significant increases in the number and distribution of Europeans in Nyasaland.