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The Impact of Christianity by Friend's Missionaries among the Tiriki People

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Abstract

This article aimed to describe the impact of Christianity on the culture and traditions of the Tiriki people in Hamisi Constituency, Vihiga County. Tiriki community refers to the Bantu people who came to the western part of Kenya and intermarried with the Kalenjin community staying there by then. The investigating will be based on the keywords in the title of this article and shortly discussing the important the growth of Christianity in Hamisi Constituency, Vihiga County. The article further looks into the growth of the church and describes the impact of Christianity on Tiriki people in terms of Christianity, education, socio-politics, and health. Here I shall consider my discussions on the history of Friends Missions in the area since the earlier nineteenth century. As far as Friends missionaries are concerned, it recognizes the activities done by the Friends Missionaries in terms of positive and negative development force introduced by Christianity while noting several things that improved the lives of the people, such as health facilities and education. On the other hand, Christianity led to the downgrade of the African customs and culture, which it saw as pagan and evil; the religion also led to social problems. Some of the social problems caused by Christianity was a complete change to the lifestyles and introduction of new ways of living that caused cultural clash among the community. The missionary work was to evangelize and spread the gospel of God among the Tiriki people in the western part of Kenya.

Keywords: *Friends Mission Church, Tiriki, Western Kenya, Impact*

1.0 Introduction

The development and growth of Christianity within the Tiriki Community started in 1902, as part of the World Missionary Conference report, which suggested that “the possibility of completing the evangelization of the non- Christian world within a generation” (Barret 1970:39). In the same measure, some Christian scholars have talked about the spread of Christianity in the southwards part of the world. Christianity development and growth has been of great achievement since the establishment of Christianity (Barret 1970:39). Gifford suggests that “Guinea (Conakry) under Sekou Toure’s (1961-1984) took a very harsh line towards Christian missions; at the time of Sekou Toure’s death in 1984, only some churches were tolerated by the community of establishment such as the Tiriki people”. Gifford (1994:517)

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explains, “By 1991, however, while there were a few missionaries, there were more communities that needed evangelism.” Walls, a former missionary in Sierra Leone and Professor Emeritus of the study of Christianity in the non-western world at the University of Edinburgh, views the twentieth century as the most remarkable of the Christian centuries since the first” (walls 2000:17). However, it is believed that the missionaries came to Africa to spread the word of God, but in effect, the church expanded alongside the Western colonial enterprises.

The colonial government readily welcomed the missionaries, and spheres of religious demonstration influences were encouraged and adhered to pacify the natives so that the colonial company could exploit the natural resources. Thus, looking at it from this point of view as Kaimosi in Tiriki was “the place of the Lord’s choosing - the place he had promised to show us” as Edgar Hole wrote back to America on 1st October 1902. The three pioneer missionaries saw a thriving enterprise in the tropical hardwood forest at Kaimosi ripe and ready for harvest, the land was incredibly fertile, the climate just right and the people inconsequential. Katongole (2001:178-179) suggests that the missionary enterprises’ expansion occurred in regard to the many obstacles. Katongole (2001:179) highlights that Kwame Bidiako thus: “In our time there have been many allusions to the marginalization of Africa, following the end of the cold war...Christian theology and Christian religious scholarship generally.” The missionaries introduced Christianity in this part of the country. Christian teaching was, therefore, the main and the only source of education. The Bible was being translated into the local language for this purpose. People became very excited to read some Bible stories and write simple sentences in vernacular. It was exciting to communicate through letters and write sentences conveying some message to another person. It was very common for a young man to be called to read or write a letter for an older person. A church was built, Christian services were regularly held therein, and a few Tiriki people were converted to Christianity. It is said that by 1914 the number of the church membership was about forty-three members in Friends Church in Tiriki. “According to 1990 estimates, 41 percent of Africa’s 550 million people were Christians. The percentage is much higher in western part of Kenya. Most of the Christian’s records were confirmed that Sub-Saharan Africa is majorly Christian.

1.1 Research Problem

Missionary activities of Friends Church originated from the outreach of the Friends Missionaries in 1902, which was established in Kaimosi. The Friends Church Missionary’s activities expansion in its earliest stage involved converts from the community. The activities and practices that Mark Shaw mentions in African Christianity are some of the emergences of churches and their main reasons for the establishment. The missionaries of Friends Church established a new religion, education, industries, health care facilities, and agricultural training centers. Even though the Friends Church has been in the area for more than one hundred years, the Tiriki people have not seen the benefits of establishing the Friends Church mission in Kaimosi. The researcher wants to discover why John Parratt observes that churches in Africa within their theological backgrounds and Christian practices. (Parratti, 1997). Researcher seeks to establish why many Tiriki people rejected or defied the influence of the Friends Church missionaries. This paper seeks to establish the impact of Christianity by Friends Missionaries among the Tiriki people.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

This research was based on Conflict Functionalism Theory. This theory is a sociological perspective that investigates ways to explain a social element of a cultural pattern in terms of

its consequences for different elements and the system as a whole. It is often regarded as the dominant influence on the development of this theory for the argument that social organization exists solely to ensure specific social needs. In functionalism, the community is considered a system of interrelated elements in which no part can be understood in isolation. Change in any party is observed as a particular way of imbalance, resulting in the change in other parts of the system and reorganization. Looking into how social systems restore equilibrium, functionalists tend to use shared values of generally accepted standards of desirability as a central concept. Based on this theory, disorder mainly occurs because of conflict between the elements or parts of society; therefore, balance and peace must be in motion. That social conflict generates new coalitions and alliances; they facilitate the release of tension and frustration and enable the social system to adjust.

2.1 Literature Review

Missionary Outreach Initiatives

The missionary activities at Kaimosi can be well described through their influence on education, health, Christianity, and economic impact.

Education

Based on the Sang'ale (2005:21-54) observation was that, starting with education, it should be noted that by 1924 three new developments took place in education in Kenya. Christianity, as a place where the name of true God is mentioned and as an institution shaping lives of the people, has made an important impact in the beginning of the word of God and proceeds to ensure the development and growth of formal education in Kaimosi. Daun (2000:37) explains that: "It is shown that religious factors count as much as (and sometimes more than) economic factors, first in the quantitative expansion of education and then in the decline." For the purpose of Christianity to make important developments in its evangelization process, the Tiriki people's education and increase in numbers had to improve in most cases. The education necessitated in the Tiriki community was mandatory to the Christian converts based on Christian Friends missionaries. The Friends Church and Protestant Assembly of God churches, in particular, were supporting the development of education due to the emphasis on the need for all converts to read the scripture. Woodberry & Shah (2004:53) note: "Lutheran Pietists first promulgated the ideal of universal literacy, and literacy campaigns spread rapidly through the Protestant world."

However, the issues of education were also part of the corporate institution. Based on Nomazana (1998:45), Livingstone believed that "Christianity would provide principles for moral guidance, while legitimate commerce and education would encourage Africans to produce their own goods from their fertile soil to trade with Europeans." For those people who were in business also were influenced by Western missionaries to advocate for education. Based on the collaboration in Kenya during the period of the nineteenth century, Urch (1971:251) writes: "The traders and missionaries believed an educated population to be a precondition for the spread of commerce and Christianity; the first European educational ventures were a direct product of their activities." Daun (2000:37) sees a different way in the ways of the two friends in the initiation and growth of formal education in Kaimosi, the role of Friends missionaries in Kaimosi looked to be influenced by a great commitment and sense of true worship to the Almighty God; their emphasis to mass education, therefore, more than the

private sector. (Frankema 2012:2). Education levels were higher in the western part, where Christianity was more of taken into consideration. (cf. Daun 2000:49).

This is among the reasons why the colonial administrative authorities neither did not accept nor accepted the role of Friends missionaries in structuring the education process. Urch (1971:254) narrates that: “The governor appointed an advisory board composed of government officials, commercial men, representatives of the missions, and members of the settlers’ associations to assist the director.” The Friends Missionaries were, therefore, mostly concerned in the formal education of Africans in the western part of Kenya. Urch reports that Mr. Orr organized African education into three categories, the first of which was called “General Education.” Other categories were “Industrial Education” and “Education of Sons of Chiefs and Headsmen” (Urch 1971:253 -255). General Education was the role played by the Friends missionary churches and “was to be primarily concerned with reading and writing with a view to proselytize and to train African teachers” (Urch 1971:253-255).

Despite the fact that missionaries did their best in education, not everything was good about the missionary’s activities: by 1938, after some time, the Friends Missionaries were no longer involved with the education issues put forth by the colonial administration. This idea was not well accepted by the colonial and education administrators, especially after the study showed that most of those educated in Kaimosi Friends mission schools were mainly taught how to read and write. In most African countries, this made the administrators select a commission to find out about African education, and this commission was able to know that many people - newly arrived settlers as well as Africans - were not able to understand well the process of the mission education. Therefore, resulted in the need for government schools that did not offer religious activities. The Friends Church missionaries said that education had to be facilitated with religion, given the moral aspect of Christian provided education. The Friends Church Missionaries also considered themselves as the shield of Africans’ human rights and were concerned with the people who suggested that mission education was a way of ensuring that the colonies could not efficiently steal from the people of Africa (Urch 1971:234-255).

The colonial administration tried to marginalize the church from educational issues, but it failed because the importance and influence of the church’s activities on education in Kaimosi were by no means so important. Considering the impact of the emerging churches on education, Gifford explains: “[they] have a long and important history in Africa, and their contribution to health and education is well known. This continues, even intensifies. One estimate gives 64 percent of all Kenya’s education institutions as church-based. Some governments like Zambia’s have even made efforts to reverse the nationalization of education which occurred after independence” (Gifford 2008:276-277). Faced with the education crisis of separating and bringing other communities in kaimosi, some people were considered to be part of the educational system. The government used some of the failures of the missionary churches to take schools from them, only to provide education to the converts with simple education that was made to ensure that they read the scriptures. (Pieterse 2001:47). Pieterse demonstrates the sayings of the Most Reverend Trevor Huddleston in the words to Desmond Tutu’s book *Crying in the wilderness: the struggle for justice in South Africa*, with reference to Dr. Verwoerd’s words: “Education for the native exists to equip him for certain forms of labor. There are green pastures in which he has no right to graze” (Tutu 1990: v). “It is understood that those people who have good and proper church education would be nostalgic for that education in a country dominated by hostile, apartheid ideology. Tom Manthata, who spoke against apartheid and leadership, mostly refused the methods the apartheid government in South Africa was looking

at church missionary schools' system in the 1950s" (Nolan 2000:26-27). Christians were part of African education which helped to ensure better education.

Gifford (2008:276) suggests that: "In Kenya, at the time of writing there are seven public universities, but private ones now outnumber them, nearly all Christian (mostly, but not exclusively mainline). In Uganda, there are now four public universities and 18 recognized private universities. Of these 18, eleven are Christian institutions." In South Africa, one of the first influential institutions of higher learning was, based on Hinchliff, Lovedale. In 1863, Lovedale was practicing and training printers, bookbinders, teachers, missionaries, and other activities (Hinchliff 1968:86-87). Regarding Hinchliff (1968: 86-87), Lovedale provided general education for black and white pupils, education that was aimed at ensuring that the pupils better understood one another. In other words, this institution also promoted one of the most important of all values: good human relations.

The colonial administration did not support the churches needed to ensure that their converts were well educated and skilled. Regarding Woodberry & Shah (2004:50-52): "The laypeople who ran religious organizations affiliated with these churches learned leadership skills, built wide geographical networks, and accumulated other resources helpful in organizing non-governmental organizations and social movements." The Friends churches saw education as of more importance in the development and growth of the church. It is important to know that, due to those times of the earlier historical moments, non-government sponsored educational centers were above the "gender limits" in their emphasis on educating converts in Kaimosi. Woodberry & Shah (2004:52) highlights that: "Nonstate churches were especially prominent in training women, then commonly excluded from much of life outside the home." This was certainly prompted by the missionaries' belief in the equal value of all human beings (see Woodberry & Shah 2004:51-53). Indeed, it showed that church education was important to most people's minds to bring social changes and ideals. Woodberry & Shah (2004:53) suggests that: "Research also shows a consistent association of education with democracy. Mass education fosters democracy by increasing exposure to democratic ideals, promoting economic growth and the rise of a middle class, and dispersing influence beyond a small elite."

Introduction of Modern Health Services

Africa is known to be a place of many different kinds of diseases and epidemics. In Africa, good health is needed as equal to life (Moir 2002:21; Osei 2003:168), whereby health is amongst the most needed facilities in Africa. Medical advances made these needed facilities a reality in Kaimosi. Ross 1955:163-164) refers to the main advantages of the missionaries to introduce health care and medical science. "Christian missions have been almost everywhere the introducer of western medical, surgical and public health methods and the pioneer trainer of Africans in these skills" Missionaries ensured that hospitals and other health facilities were constructed in their area of missionary activities (Mkandawire 2009:63). As a matter of fact, the African health facilities changed for good: there was a decline in child and maternal mortality rates and an increase in life expectancy. The missionaries first established a dispensary and Dr. Elisha Blackburn was the first medical doctor to come to Kaimosi in 1903. In fact, he was the first resident doctor in Western Kenya. Then, treatment was carried on in a grass hut dispensary. The supply of medicines was limited, and hospital equipment was crude. The number of patients was very few, for Africans were very superstitious of European treatment. Later, the dispensary grew into a mission hospital after a brick house was built. Government officials and railway employees in Kisumu frequently came to Kaimosi for

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medical treatment. Sang'ale (2005:15-69) highlights the work of Dr. Blackburn, who made long trips on a bicycle to treat other Europeans in Western Kenya. Originally the facilities were for workers and their families and those who had been converted to Christianity, but later it was open to the public. Late in 1916, after the departure of Dr. Elisha Blackburn's family, Dr. Archie and Mira Bond arrived to take charge of the medical program. Dr. Bond remained at this station until 1951.

Sang'ale (2005:15-69) suggested that the Hospital became very famous and was serving a large area of western Kenya. The Kaimosi maternity wing was fully utilized. Pupils and students from the school received medical treatment free of charge. Dr. Bond was known all over the Western part of the country. In recognition of his services, some Tiriki families called their children "Bande" after Dr. Bond. The next medical doctor remembered by the community is a German doctor by the name of Horst Rothe from 1949 to 1958. He was popularly known as Dr. Horst Rothe, locally known as Dr. Rotee or Malodwa, and is remembered for his surgical skills and was referred to as 'malodwa'. That is the doctor who liked operating patients with a big knife.

Today, HIV Infection and Aids, including covid-19, have changed the lives of the people in Africa. Van Klinken (2010:446) suggests that in the present-day sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV epidemic is one of the most disruptive social experiences on the continent". Nonetheless, some people trust the church's ability to help, especially as a result of the church's teaching influence, which specifically warns against indulging in risky behaviors" "He also describes the church in the footsteps of African theologians, as the body of Christ, and claims: "As a metaphor for the church, the body of Christ suggests an interconnectedness of churches and Christians globally. Even further, in its Trinitarian dimension, the body of Christ counts for an interrelatedness of humanity and creation."

Industrial and Agricultural Development

The first three Americans who arrived at Kaimosi in August 1902, and within three months using African labor, they had cleared eight acres of land and had planted wheat, millet, potatoes, and garden vegetables. They had purchased two oxen, two milk cows with calves, fourteen sheep, four goats, and sixty chickens. Sang'ale (2005:20-50) suggested that: "they erected an African type of house to start with. The American Quakers' next project was to construct a dam to harness the water of river Gologoli to provide power to drive a sawmill and power to grind grain into posho for a meal. Arthur Chilson, who was a mechanic, carried this out, and the dam was completed in 1904. The first thing was to build a road from Kisumu to Kaimosi. This was done by manual hand labor. Some parts of the mills were hand-carried by porters. The heavy machines were carried by ox cart. The mill was in operation by the middle of 1905. At first, porters and laborers came from Uganda, but local people quickly replaced them. The posho mill was set, and the sawmill was in operation before long. In a few years, millions of feet of lumber came from this sawmill. Some timber was sold locally, and most exported. Water driven sawmill was established, and lumbering was carried out extensively. Huge tropical hardwood trees were felled, brought to the sawmill, and sawed into timber for sale. In addition to the sawmill, a posho Mill was also established. Brick-making became a major occupation in the industrial department, and before the end of 1908, brick houses were being erected at Kaimosi. Bricks for permanent houses at Vihiga and Lirhandu were made at Kaimosi. A school was established in 1921 under the leadership of Fred Hoyt to train African craftsmen. The first intake was of twenty-five young men who had attained standard three or

four years of education.” Sang’ale (2005:20-67) said that: “Before long furniture was being made at the workshop and sold to hotels and private homes. After three years of training, Hoyt trained craftsmen were in great demand. Government officials recognized the value of this type of education, and in time to come it was included in the primary school syllabus whereby a pupil came out as a Jua Kali artisan having been trained as a carpenter, a tailor, practical agriculture, and bricklaying.

3.0 Research Methodology

This research adopted the survey approach in collecting the data. The research was carried out in Hamisi Sub-County in Vihiga County. The population for this study constituted the District Youth Leaders, Pastors, Parish Youth Leaders, and Youth of Friends Church in Tiriki. Forty-four church leaders and 156 church members were sampled from the total population as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Target Population

Target Group	Sub-county	No. of Respondents	Total Population
Church Leaders	A	6	10
	B	6	10
	C	6	10
	D	6	10
	E	6	10
	F	6	10
Total		36	60
Church Leaders	A	34	15,000
	B	33	4,000
	C	33	2,000
	D	33	6,000
	E	33	8,000
	F	34	7,000
Total		200	42,000

4.0 Results and Discussion

The study sought to determine the extent to which the establishment of the Friends church mission affected the people of Tiriki. The responses were on a 5-point scale: 1-No extent; 2-Little extent; 3-Moderate extent; 4-Large extent; 5-Very large extent. The mean obtained from the collected data, was interpreted as follows: <1.5 = No extent; $1.5 < 2.5$ = Little extent; between $2.5 < 3.5$ = Moderate extent; between $3.5 < 4.5$ = Large extent and ≥ 4.5 Very large extent. The findings of the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of the Impact and establishment of the Friend Mission Church among the Tiriki People

Ranking	The Impact and Establishment of Friends Church	Mean	Std deviation
1	Introduction of education	3.8	0.71
2	Introduction of agriculture and industrialization	3.8	0.71
3	Social Change	3.33	1.16
4	Introduction of Christianity	3.3	0.88
5	African Traditional religion	3.03	0.67
6	Indigenous churches and African nationalism	3.0	1.02
7	Social and political issues	2.8	1.09
8	Desires for Africans to the leadership of the Church	2.33	1.21
9	Introduction of health services	2.1	1.24

Source: Research Data (2021)

The study revealed that education and industrialization were the most applied approaches to a large extent by the Friends Church Missionaries in Hamisi sub-county with a mean score of 3.8 each and a standard deviation of 0.71 each. Other methods were used, but to a limited extent in Hamisi sub-County. They had a mean of 2.1 and 2.33, respectively, with a standard deviation of 1.24 and 1.21.

Influence of African Independent Churches on the People of Tiriki

In addition, the study sought to determine the influence of African independent churches in the expansion of Christianity among the Tiriki and the impact of those churches on Tiriki cultural practices. The responses were given on a 5-point scale: 1-No extent; 2-Little extent; 3-Moderate extent; 4-Large extent; 5-Very large extent. The mean obtained from the collected data, was interpreted as follows: <1.5 = No extent; $1.5 < 2.5$ = little extent; $2.5 < 3.5$ = Moderate extent; $3.5 < 4.5$ = Large extent and ≥ 4.5 Very large extent. The findings of the study are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Influence of the African Independent churches on the People of Tiriki

Influence	Mean	Std deviation
Establishment of African churches	3.43	0.82
Re-introduction of African songs and dancing	2.8	1.03
The emergency of prophetic terms and seeing into the future	2.96	1.09
A mixture of African customs and norms in religion	3.7	0.95
Increase in the number of the converts to those local churches	3.9	0.88
Preaching in the mother tongue and among other traditional ways	3.43	1.01
Africans become church leaders and lay leaders	3.3	0.65
Increase in evangelism and preaching of the gospel	3.03	0.76
Spread of religion into other areas apart from the stations	2.66	0.88

Source: Research Data (2021)

The study revealed that Friends Church Missionaries experienced the following challenges in Hamisi Sub-County to a large extent: High rate of Tiriki people changes due to poor approach and coordination of the Friends Missionaries activities and consideration with a mean of 3.9 and 3.7 respectively. They had a standard deviation score of 0.88 and 0.95, respectively. Lack of knowledge assumption and improper operations of the Friends Missionaries activities regardless of the local people were identified as the least experienced challenges among the Friends Churches in Hamisi Sub-County, with a mean score of 2.66 and 2.8, respectively. Their standard deviation score was 0.88 and 1.03, respectively.

Friends Church Missionary Participation in the Transformation of Tiriki Culture

The study sought to identify how the Friends Church sought to improve and participate in the impact and establishment of the missionary activities, implementation, practices, and techniques contributed to service contributed by the Church administration. The responses were 5-point scale where: 1-No extent; 2-Little extent; 3-Moderate extent; 4-Large extent; 5-Very large extent. The mean obtained from the collected data, was interpreted as follows: <1.5 = No extent; $1.5 < 2.5$ = Little extent; $2.5 < 3.5$ = Moderate extent; $3.5 < 4.5$ = Large extent and ≥ 4.5 Very large extent. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4:

Table 4: Social Change

Social Change	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cultural change among the people of Tiriki	3.67	0.84
African prophets of Tiriki	3.83	0.69
Indigenous Churches and African Nationalism	3.9	0.99
Bible translation into other local languages apart from the Tiriki one	3.73	0.87
Quest for Self- expression and freedom from western missionary Tutelage	4	0.64
Tiriki Religious factors	3.77	0.89
Resistance causes	3.93	0.86
Social Change	3.86	0.97
Education	3.86	1.04
Healthy services	4	0.74
Evangelism	3.76	0.57
Industrialization	3.77	0.63
Agriculture and Development	3.96	0.71

Source: Research Data (2021)

The study revealed that all service delivery elements were influenced by the implementation of inventory management practices and approaches to a large extent among the hotels in Nairobi, with the following elements scoring highest: Ability to make prompt and effective reservations, Prompt room service, Ability of employees to confidently confirm customer requests due to availability of information and Rooms are ready as promised and customers get value for money with a mean score of 4, 4, 3.96 & 3.93 respectively and a standard deviation score of 0.64, 0.74, 0.71 & 0.86 respectively. The following elements had the lowest mean score, a clean restaurant, rooms, bedding & staff uniforms, and Availability of comfortable furniture and fixtures in the hotel, with a mean score of 3.67 & 3.73, respectively. The Friends Church mission level elements' Impact was further clustered into four service level attributes economically, socially, politically, and training. The results are presented in Table 5:

Table 5: The Impact of the Friends Church on the Tiriki People

Impact of the Friends Church Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economically	3.78	0.85
Socially	3.90	0.79
Politically	3.91	0.92
Training	3.83	0.64

Source: Research Data (2021)

The study revealed that all service delivery attributes were influenced by the implementation of economic change in the social, political, and training practices and approaches to a large extent among the Friends Church in Hamisi Sub-County.

Conclusion

The missionaries' role was to spread the word of God and alongside the work of God, they came up with other activities that totally changed the lifestyle of the Tiriki people. The changes were more of a challenge to the community of the Tiriki people that did not demonstrate the true nature and value of Christianity in terms of spreading the gospel itself but a change of cultural practices and tradition to the modern ways of lifestyle. The symbolic of these changes was the replacement of African traditions values and norms with the European lifestyle of introducing new way of doing things in the society. The age of change had finally come to the Tiriki land, as discussed. The age of the Tiriki independence as a community was finally over, and the era of other new cultural aspects was the norm of new lifestyle consolidation had begun. The introduction of new methods of farming, new way of worship, formal education, new methods of treatment and more other changes in their cultural background.

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