Age, Prayer and Politics in Tiriki, Kenya

PLATE 1. Hezron Mushenye, Chief of Tiriki

AGE, PRAYER AND
POLITICS IN
TIRIKI, KENYA

WALTER H. SANGREE

*Published on behalf of the
East African Institute of Social Research*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON NEW YORK NAIROBI

1966

Oxford University Press, Ely House, London W.1

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI LAHORE DACCA
CAPE TOWN SALISBURY NAIROBI IBADAN
KUALA LUMPUR HONG KONG TOKYO

© East African Institute of Social Research 1966

*Printed in Great Britain
at The Pitman Press, Bath*

Xu

Basaxulu Badilijī

Foreword

THIS is the fourth in a series of studies¹ of contemporary patterns of leadership in East African Society—studies carried out by members and associates of the East African Institute of Social Research, at Makerere College in the University of East Africa.

The inspiration for these studies came originally from Dr. A. I. Richards who, as Director of the Institute from 1950 to 1956, saw the need to investigate the various ways in which Africans were responding to the political opportunities offered by the increasing devolution of authority from colonial administrations to institutions of local self-government and to the entrepreneurial opportunities offered by the increasing involvement of the region in a world economy. When the studies were first projected in 1952–3, complete political independence for the East African territories seemed a distant prospect. The trend, however, was clear and it is largely due to Dr. Richards' foresight that we now have a record, for at least some East African areas, of those political and economic developments at the 'grass-roots' level which must form the essential basis for effective independence—an independence which has come much more quickly than anyone could have predicted.

Dr. Richards and her associates had already, during 1950–52, carried out a series of studies of 'tribal' government and politics in a number of Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika societies. A generous grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York made it possible to extend the work by carrying out a more detailed interdisciplinary study of African leadership in two contrasting local areas. The areas chosen for further study were the Kingdom of Buganda, which forms the central province of Uganda, and the Nyanza Province of Kenya—areas markedly different both in traditional society and culture and in colonial

¹ The others are: D. Anthony Low and R. Cranford Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900–1955* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

Hugh Fearn, *An African Economy: a Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903–1953* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

Lloyd A. Fallers (ed.), *The King's Men: Leadership and Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

experience. Buganda is a great traditional kingdom with more than a million subjects, while Nyanza is an area of extreme ethnic and political fragmentation. During the colonial period, the British Protectorate government of Uganda had been concerned primarily to foster African development through the encouragement of peasant agricultural production and the modernization of traditional political institutions. The government of Kenya Colony, on the other hand, had encouraged European settlement; consequently African participation in development has been channelled, to a much greater extent than in Uganda, through European enterprises. Political development has received less governmental attention. Careful studies of African political leadership and economic enterprise in these two contrasting areas would, it was hoped, provide some notion of the major ranges of variation throughout the region as a whole.

Previous volumes in this series have reported the results of studies carried out in both Buganda and Nyanza—some by members of the Institute staff and others by scholars who, like Dr. Sangree, had financial support from other sources but who chose to join in the common enterprise, participating in the discussions held at the semi-annual conferences of the Institute and publishing their results in the present series. Their contributions, as readers of the series will readily appreciate and as the writer, as Director of the Leadership Project can testify, has been an essential one.

In addition to its excellent account of Tiriki society and culture, Dr. Sangree's volume is particularly notable for the light it throws on two important institutional complexes: the independent Christian sects and the system of age grades. His sensitive account, based upon careful observation, of the life of the independent sects adds greatly to our understanding of the role of these groups in the development of a distinctively African Christian piety, capable of speaking to Africans in a familiar idiom and addressing itself to their peculiar religious problems in a manner which the mission churches have found it difficult to do. Together with the work of Welbourn and Taylor¹, it

¹ F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels; a Study of some Independent Churches* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1961).

John U. Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda: an Attempt at Understanding* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1958).

gives us some appreciation of the kind of Christianity which will form a vital part of the life of the new independent states. Dr. Sangree's account of the age grade system is perhaps even more valuable, for, while such institutions have received much attention from anthropologists, his is the first serious attempt to consider their influence in a contemporary East African society. His analysis of how these and other institutions, both indigenous and recently introduced, interact to produce the contemporary type of Tiriki leader makes this book a particularly valuable and appropriate contribution to the present series.

LLOYD FALLERS
Chicago 1962

Preface

THE material for this book was gathered by my wife and myself during a period of sixteen months spent in Tiriki, Nyanza Province, Kenya, between December, 1954 and June, 1956. From December, 1954 to March, 1955, we stayed at the government rest house at Hamisi, Tiriki Location Centre, and for the remainder of the time we lived at the homestead of Mr. Elisha Shibenge at Jebdulu, Tiriki, in the house that had just been built for his eldest son, Moses Simani. Mr. Simani, then a secondary school teacher at Kaimosi Mission, found it more convenient to live in one of the houses supplied by the Mission for its teachers; thus we had the good fortune to be able to reside in an African homestead, where English was not understood, for most of our stay in Tiriki.

The Tiriki dialect (*ludiliji*, *lu-* *-diliji*) was the language through which we carried out most of our investigations. Not only was the learning and use of the vernacular desirable on methodological grounds, but also it was a necessity because Tiriki with command of English were too busy as school teachers or in other occupations to be able to give us much of their time.

I do not wish to convey the impression that either of us became fluent speakers of the Tiriki dialect; our grammar remained shabby, and our grasp of Tiriki rhetoric and much of the more esoteric vocabulary remained painfully weak even to the last months.

During the second half of the field work I employed Mr. Johnston T. B. Aligula as a full time assistant, and he proved invaluable in helping us record and understand data. With only four years of formal schooling, Mr. Aligula's knowledge of English was negligible, but he could read and write both the Tiriki vernacular and Kiswahili; most helpful were his excellent memory and his extraordinary intelligence. In the last months of field work he accompanied us during much of our visiting, observing, and interviewing. In addition he spent countless hours, not only interviewing and writing texts on his own, but also helping to reconstruct, explain and amplify

various incidents and details of Tiriki life that either we had observed or experienced with him or that we later recounted to him.

In accordance with the tradition of anthropological research workers in East Africa, informants were never paid for giving information; the method of informal visiting and participation in community and tribal activities, both everyday and festive, was used in obtaining most of the data presented in this book. We administered questionnaires to a sample of Tiriki governmental and church leaders and took a fairly elaborate census of two Tiriki sub-communities, one in southwest and one in north-central Tiriki. Paid Tiriki assistants were used in obtaining about half of the census data.

Readers may question the appropriateness of remaining in one community for so long and never taking up residence in a second African homestead in a different community. However, the tribe's small size and the network of roads which allows easy access to any homestead in Tiriki from Jebdulu in two hours' time or less by car and by foot, made residence in one community possible while maintaining easy access to people from every corner of the tribal territory. Even during the wet months—March to June, and August and September—the roads are rarely so muddy as to be impassable for more than a few hours a day. Indeed, a good deal of visiting was done in homesteads in all parts of Tiriki. In addition, the census data obtained in two communities in different parts of the tribe (one census was taken in the Jebdulu area) served as a basis for judging how typical the detailed information obtained during our thirteen months' residence in one Tiriki community was.

It is impossible to express adequately our heart-felt gratitude to the many people in Tiriki who freely extended their hospitality to us and excused our countless errors of speech and manners. Many of these people devoted much time to instructing us in their language and their past history and to showing us patiently how to live in their present.

Chief Hezron Mushenye welcomed us warmly and treated us with great consideration from the time we first visited the tribe. He saw in our project the possibility of furthering his plans to record Tiriki history for posterity; nevertheless, he maintained a policy of non-interference towards our research efforts. At

the same time, he was most generous in his counsel and aid whenever we approached him. Without exception other members of Chief Hezron's administrative staff followed his example of minimal interference combined with friendly and generous support whenever we sought help.

Much of the credit for what is of merit in this book must go to the Tiriki elders, not only those officially selected by Chief Hezron to be members of the Tiriki Historical Committee, but many others as well. Although I refrain from mentioning them by name here, I nevertheless record my deep gratitude towards each of the several dozen elders who devoted considerable time and effort to furthering my knowledge and understanding of their tribal customs and traditions. Tiriki elders do not spend much time with young adults without a purpose, and I hope this book and papers yet to come in some measure satisfy the desire and expectation of these elder men that the tribe's history and traditions may be recorded for posterity.

Among the younger Tiriki, outside of the contemporary tribal bureaucracy, I am particularly indebted to Mr. Elisha Shibenge, Mr. Elisha Amaganga, Mr. Moses Simani, Mr. Johnston Aligula, Mr. Sosanes Imbadu, Mr. James Abdulla, and Mr. Daudi Rono for their extensive aid, counsel and warm friendship.

Dr. Laura Bohannan, whose stay among the Wanga overlapped with ours in Tiriki, was an invaluable friend and morale-booster during the trying early days, and a fount of both sage and subtle advice.

Members of the British Administration in Nyanza Province and North Nyanza District were consistently helpful, patient, hospitable, and most generous with their time and equipment, even though generally overburdened by their regular administrative responsibilities. They were also, without exception, extremely careful not to interfere with our research efforts or to suggest in any way that we were there as government agents. Special appreciation for their aid and hospitality is due to: Mr. C. H. Williams, Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza; Mr. E. J. A. Leslie and Mr. Thomas Watts, District Commissioners, North Nyanza; Mr. John Rowlin and Mr. Roger Hosking, District Officers, North Nyanza.

Members of all the missions in Tiriki and neighbouring tribes

were generous both in giving us information and in extending their hospitality to us. Special thanks are due to Mr. Fred Reeve, Mr. Kenneth Goom and Father Rostron. My wife and I remember most warmly the friendship of Dr. and Mrs. Horst Rothe, and Mr. and Mrs. Onni Rauha.

The entire field trip, including three months spent in other parts of East Africa and nearly a month in England, was financed by a grant from the United States Educational Commission in the United Kingdom (the 'Fulbright Program'). The adroit guidance and friendly interest of the Institute's Directors, Dr. Audrey I. Richards, and Dr. Lloyd A. Fallers accompanied my wife and me throughout the entire field project; a large share of the credit for its formulation and success is theirs.

My wife shares my gratitude and indebtedness to the entire staff of the East African Institute of Social Research for making their facilities available to us. The periods of rest, the conferences, the write-up time, and the relaxed conviviality that we enjoyed during several sojourns there were a most welcome antidote to the rather rigorous and intense periods of field work in Tiriki.

Both the quantity and accuracy of the field data recorded on the Tiriki were greatly augmented by my wife's efforts. She was of considerable assistance to me in devising research schemes and techniques while in the field. In addition, I am most grateful to her for the countless insights and penetrating criticisms, many borne of her first hand knowledge of the Tiriki data, which she has given me while writing up this material.

I am very grateful to Professor Fred Eggan for his counsel and support while I was writing the Ph.D. dissertation from which this monograph was largely derived, and to Dr. Lloyd A. Fallers and Dr. D. J. Stenning, for their careful editing of both the preliminary and final drafts.

I had the good fortune to be able to revisit Tiriki for two weeks in June, 1961, using travel funds made available to me by the Non-Western Program of the University of Rochester, which was supported by the Carnegie Corporation. Chief Hezron of Tiriki organized a special committee to read over and correct a draft of the monograph that I took with me at that time. The committee's suggestions have been incorporated into this final

version. The draft which the committee read contained essentially all the material in this final version with the exception of the four biographical sketches of Tiriki leaders presented in Chapter IX (pp. 254-78). Members of the Committee have expressed their desire to be acknowledged in the Preface. They are: Elisha Amaganga, Benjeman Amaje, Joshua Anusu, Japetha Inyanya, R. Meshack Isiaho, Guiele Jegenou, Ezekiel Shibira and Ruben Shiguri. This work is an indication of the enormous interest of the Tiriki, both as individuals and as a tribal group, in preserving a knowledge of their history and customs for posterity. Remembrance of individuals, families, clans, and age groups, is a theme, indeed a sacred value, in Tiriki culture.

This book is an anthropological monograph, not an attempt to conform to or fulfil the Tiriki notions of what aspects of their history and customs they would prefer to have permanently recorded; and the aforementioned committee members both realize and accept this. Their desire and efforts, however, to help me 'get things straight' (*xumanya bulunji*) and those of many other Tiriki we met and worked with in 1954-56, have helped immeasurably in the preparation of this study.

To Gladys Murch I am grateful for help with proof reading, and to Felice Harris I am grateful for aid with both proof reading and indexing.

WALTER H. SANGREE

Note on the Use and Spelling of Vernacular Terms

I have included a number of Tiriki words and quotations in the text as an aid both to comparative studies and to documentation. No standardized orthography exists for the Tiriki vernacular. It is common for Tiriki to use the orthography worked out by The Friends Mission for the Maragoli when writing the Tiriki language, but with every Tiriki using his own modifications. These modifications are in large part engendered by the fact that the predominant Tiriki dialect differs considerably from the Maragoli dialect, in both phonology and morphology. Indeed, the Tiriki dialect is very similar to the dialect of Idaxo and Isuxa, which also lacks a standardized orthography of its own. There is some interest among the Tiriki in establishing a Tiriki orthography, and the Tiriki tribal historical committee asked my wife and me to devise a standardized Tiriki spelling for them.

A preliminary phonemic analysis of the predominant Tiriki dialect reveals that the currently used Tiriki variations of the Maragoli orthography fail to distinguish between two frequently occurring Tiriki phonemes, /l/ and /r/ (/l/ as in *luhya*—'meeting place', and /r/ as in *ruhya*—'little meeting place'). Other inadequacies also exist, such as frequent confusion of the /h/ and /x/ phonemes (/h/ as in *hasi*—'low', and /x/ as in *xase*—'often, frequently'). Therefore I devised my own orthography, which assigns discrete symbols to all the Tiriki phonemes revealed by my analysis, with the following exceptions:

Phonemic distinction of pitch, as exemplified by *shidélù*—'basket', and *shidélú*—'chin', is not indicated. Pitch contrast, although regularly indicating grammatical differences, as in verb tense, is crucial in establishing lexical differences in very few instances. I know of only one such pair of forms in addition to the example given above.

Since Tiriki phonemes, /s/ and /h/ never occur immediately adjacent to each other, graphic *sh* has been used to indicate the phoneme /ʃ/ in this paper.

For reasons of orthographic convenience, length, as exemplified by *mabele*—‘millet’, and *mabeele*—‘milk’, has been indicated in all cases by a doubling of the vowel.

The orthography, then, makes use of the following symbols:

1. *Vowel*

i, e, a, o, u, ii, ee, aa, oo, uu; m, n; y, w.

2. *Consonant* (arranged alphabetically)

b, g, h, j, r, s, (sh), x, z; (k, t, in some Swahili, Nandi and English loan words).

The convention has been followed in this paper of italicizing all vernacular words, with the exception of proper names. My own orthography is used in writing the Tiriki vernacular, except in those cases where the Tiriki themselves, in writing loan words and foreign names, generally employ the conventional spelling of the donor language. Tiriki is predominantly a prefixing language, with the class and number of the nouns, most modifications of the verb, &c., being indicated by changes in prefix. I have followed the practice when introducing a vernacular word for the first time, of inserting the appropriate form of the vernacular word after the given English equivalent. In the case of nouns, the singular and plural prefixes are given, followed by the noun stem; in the case of verbs, simply the infinitive prefix and verb stem are given. For example:

The people (*bandu mu- ba- -ndu*); they know (*xu- manya*).

The usual singular-plural pair of prefixes does not exist or is never used with some nouns. When this is true, the noun is followed simply by the prefix and then the stem. For example:

Eleusine gruel (*busela, bu- -sela*); milk (*mabeele, ma- -beelee*).

When Terik (the language of a neighbouring non-Bantu people) words of ritual or social significance to the Tiriki are quoted, only the singular form is given unless otherwise noted, because the Terik plural forms are not commonly used by the Tiriki.

After its first appearance, a noun is simply written with the appropriate prefix and a verb is written in the infinitive form without a dash between the infinitive prefix and the stem. For example:

The people (*bandu*); they know (*xumanya*).

When vernacular phrases or quotations of two or more words are given, no special indication of the stems or prefixes is made. For example:

The people know (*bandu bamanyanga*); the people, they know! (*bandu, bamanya!*).

Most Tiriki do not voice the initial vowel characteristic of so many prefixes in Abaluyia dialects. For example, most Tiriki speakers say, '*bandu*'—'people', rather than the '*abandu*' characteristic of dialects further to the north; similarly the Tiriki generally contract 'Abaluyia' to 'Baluyia' in common parlance.

Contents

Foreword by Lloyd A. Fallers	vii
Preface	xi
Note on the Use and Spelling of Vernacular Terms	xvii
Introduction	xxix

PART ONE

TRADITIONAL TIRIKI SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE NATURE OF COLONIAL ADMINIS- TRATIVE AND MISSION CONTACT

I	Tiriki Clans: Their Structure and Function	3
II	Tiriki Age Groups and Age Grades	48
III	The Traditional Tiriki Territorial Organization	83
IV	The Development of the Contemporary Tiriki Tribal Administration	98
V	The Spread and Acceptance of Christianity in Tiriki: A Brief History of Tiriki Factionalism	120

PART TWO

CONTEMPORARY TIRIKI SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

VI	Christianity, The Supernatural, and the Seculariza- tion of Authority	153
VII	Christian Church Separatism in North Nyanza and Tiriki	170
VIII	The Tiriki Authority Structure	224
IX	The Contemporary Tiriki Leader	237
X	Changing Tiriki Social Structure: Summary and Conclusions	281
	Bibliography	288
	Glossary	291
	Appendix I	295
	Appendix II	297
	Appendix III	299
	Appendix IV	301
	Index	302

Plates

[Frontispiece and between pages 104 and 105]

1. Hezron Mushenye, Chief of Tiriki *frontispiece*
2. Young girl and her infant charge
3. Magozwe, Tiriki elder, making rope
4. Elders offering beer and making supplications at homestead ancestral shrine
5. Children playing with an improvised wheelbarrow
6. Children playing a pebble game, *Majina*, similar to Jacks
7. Tiriki initiates, Kaimosi, Tiriki
(*photograph by Onni Rauha*)
8. Tiriki-Idaxo soccer match
9. Homestead at harvest time
10. Eastern Tiriki homestead
11. Sunday morning loungers
12. Cattle market frequented by Tiriki
13. Tiriki blacksmith
14. Working blacksmith's bellows
15. Elders and litigants locating a disputed boundary
16. Isugudi drummers
17. Tiriki women preparing field for planting
18. Young children removing maize kernels from the cobs
19. Girls cooking maize porridge (*bushuma*)
20. Serim market
21. Serim market
22. Basket maker
23. Buying sugar at a local shop
24. A Tiriki Israel congregation on the march
25. Hymn singing members of a Tiriki Israel church congregation
26. Men and women leaders of the Tiriki Israel church
27. At beer, elder group
28. Beer drink, younger men
29. A meeting of the Tiriki Historical Committee and onlookers

30. Elder divining with a rubbing or friction stick
(*Lusejele*)
31. Tea House and bus stop, Jebdulu market. Jebdulu elders, in the background, chatting prior to hearing local disputes
32. Tiriki Location Advisory Council and Roger Hoskings, District Officer

FIGURES

1. Tiriki Age Groups	69
2. Tiriki Administrative Units (1955)	111
3. Tiriki Administrative Units: Relationship between a Tiriki sub-location and its constituent communities	112
4. Clan composition of a Tiriki community	113

MAPS

Kenya: Nyanza Province	xxvi
Tiriki Location	xxvii

Introduction

THIS is an account of Tiriki social structure and of the main currents of change and social innovation that have arisen in Tiriki over the last fifty years, primarily as a result of European contact. The study focuses on the manner in which the indigenous Tiriki social organization, particularly in its age groups, has set the stage for the tribe's acceptance and utilization of the European-introduced church groups and tribal bureaucracy. Little attempt is made in this study to generalize about the nature and significance of age groups and Christian church organizations among other African peoples; instead the book remains essentially a case study of how five structural elements, three indigenous and two of European origin, have together served to maintain social order among the Tiriki during a period of rapid social change.

The General Problem, and the Selection of a Tribe for Study

It was my original intention to make an analysis of the significance of both the mission and 'breakaway' Christian church groups among the Tiriki. A number of considerations, both theoretical and practical, led to the decision to study church groups and to choose the Tiriki for intensive investigation. It will be seen, however, that once the study was under way its original focus was somewhat modified in order to be more in keeping with the problems that actual field research revealed to be of central significance in the contemporary Tiriki social scene.

The reading of two monographs first aroused my interest in analysing the significance of church congregations, both mission-affiliated and independent, among Bantu tribes. One of these was Bengt Sundkler's *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*.¹ In this book Sundkler describes the growth, development and proliferation of southern Bantu Christian church movements which have severed ties with their Protestant mother missions. As well as giving an overall picture of this phenomenon in South Africa,

¹ Bengt C. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948).

Sundkler examines in some detail the history and growth of several sects in Zululand, and points out how some of the traditional magico-religious and political power roles are now reappearing in not greatly altered form as power positions in these new church groups. Sundkler hypothesizes that the principal social significance of the African church groups is to be found in the outlet they afford for African leadership. His view is that the restrictions on leadership roles in mission churches, in tribal and national politics—indeed in almost every sphere—underlie the rise of all these Christian splinter groups. The second study was Lloyd A. Fallers' *Bantu Bureaucracy*.¹ In this book Fallers documents the nature of the role conflicts experienced by local chiefs working for the British Colonial Administration in Busoga, Uganda. Stated briefly, his analysis traces how conflict arises through the often mutually incompatible demands put upon Soga chiefs by particularistic and functionally diffuse kinship and clan obligations on the one hand, and universalistic and functionally specific bureaucratic tasks on the other.

When one takes the analytic orientation adopted by Fallers for his Soga chiefs and uses it to evaluate the descriptive data from Sundkler's book on separatist African churches, a clearcut pattern emerges. These churches exhibit hierarchical organizational structures that tend in the early stages to be particularistic and functionally diffuse, but their organization increasingly approaches the bureaucratic model as the churches become more established. This suggests that the growth of such sects is very likely to occur at least partly independent of efforts by Europeans to suppress African church leadership.

Most Bantu-speaking peoples of East and South Africa place a high value on power hierarchies. They structure a great many of their social activities around the explicit establishment of ranked social relationships. The establishment and maintenance of such hierarchies is generally brought about through various kinds of age grading, and also in many tribes through ranking of different clan or lineage groups. In contrast to groups such as the American eastern woodlands or plains Indians, or some of the Nilo-hamitic herdspeople of East Africa, the majority of Bantu-speaking peoples do not traditionally place a high value

¹ Lloyd A. Fallers, *Bantu Bureaucracy* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., no date).

on the individual's independence of choice and action. Seldom does one find formally structured situations in which the individual is expected to look to himself rather than to others (either peers or superiors or subordinates) for guidance in making an important decision or for moral strength. Where such an individualistic orientation exists, it generally runs counter to the establishment of new administrative hierarchies. Most Bantu tribes, since they are relatively unaffected by such values, have little difficulty in adjusting to new power hierarchies. Generally speaking they have one major hurdle to jump in accepting and integrating a bureaucratic political framework into their indigenous social systems: the hurdle described by Fallers, that is to say, the conflict between their kin and clan-centered particularistic, functionally diffuse power relationships, and the universalistic, functionally specific demands of bureaucratic government. Protestant church groups, especially those unencumbered by strict missionary supervision, provide a ready-made framework within which a leader can fulfil some of the particularistic relationships traditionally expected of men in authority, while at the same time, with the aid of Christian ritual and symbols, increasingly eliciting more universalistic and functionally specific relationships in those areas where social, economic and political patterns have been most modified and broadened by European contact.

Any one of several Bantu Abaluyia tribes in the southern half of North Nyanza District of Kenya offered the following set of conditions, making them quite suitable for testing the hypothesis that Protestant sects, both mission-affiliated and independent, may fill a transitional political need among Bantu tribes.

First, the tribes of the region have been heavily missionized by a variety of Protestant sects. Not only have these missions been very busy evangelizing, but also, ever since their arrival in 1902, they have provided the majority of the educational and medical services available in the area.

Second, as a result of this mission activity, Christian churches, both mission-affiliated and independent, are found in abundance in this region.

Third, the tribes in the area are undergoing rapid economic,

political and social change. A fast-growing population and limited land resources are making the people more and more dependent on income from wage labour in East African urban centers, on European farms, and in European homes.

Fourth, the British administration, particularly since the Second World War, has been initiating and fostering an increasingly comprehensive system of African bureaucratic administration within the tribes of North Nyanza, to supplement and supersede the weakening indigenous political forms.

The first three conditions are roughly comparable to those found in Zululand and among the other South African tribes on which Sundkler based his study, though to be sure, the contact and ensuing disruption of traditional tribal ways has gone on for much longer in South Africa. As regards the fourth point, however, there has clearly been more suppression of African leadership and political activity in South Africa. This difference supports the hypothesis that something other than the mere absence of permitted leadership roles and suppression of political activity underlies the growth of separatist churches. These separatist churches supply a transitional organizational framework more universalistic than those usually found in traditional tribal systems.

Thus tribes are to be found in North Nyanza that present a general set of conditions germane to the problem to be investigated. It seemed to me that a careful description and analysis of how any one of these southern Abaluyia tribes was responding to these conditions promised to be both comparable and supplementary to data gathered by Sundkler in his analysis of independent South African Bantu churches.

In spite of the Mau Mau rebellion among the Kikuyu 150 miles or more to the east, the modicum of social stability and European-African congeniality necessary for successful field work existed all over North Nyanza in 1954. Among the southern tribes, however, the Tiriki proved by far the most cordial towards my offer to come and study their history. Thus, other pertinent factors apparently being equal, I chose Tiriki for intensive study.

My work among the Tiriki made it clear that the Christian churches, both mission affiliated and independent, were facilitating the tribe's acceptance of the relatively impersonal

bureaucratic tribal leadership being fostered by the British administration. It became apparent, however, that the indigenous age group organization was also playing a vital contemporary role in facilitating the operation of the tribal bureaucracy. Indeed, this age group organization, which the Tiriki (and only the Tiriki among the North Nyanza Abaluyia tribes) borrowed almost without modification from a neighbouring Nilo-hamitic Nandi-speaking tribe, supplied Tiriki with an indigenous social structure in which relatively universalistic and functionally specific administrative-type social roles were firmly established before the advent of the Europeans. Thus, it turned out that the Tiriki are something less than an ideal tribe to study in order to test notions about the manner in which church organizations expedite the transition to more bureaucratic-type power relationships. They are of great interest, however, because of the ongoing significance of their age-graded group organization. Indeed here is a tribe where the manifest flexibility and viability of the indigenous social organization in the face of rapid social change and extensive British administrative innovations can be in large measure traced to its age-graded age group organization.¹

Probably the Tiriki age group organization would not in itself have proved a viable base upon which to build the contemporary bureaucratic tribal organization. The age groups, however, augmented on the one hand by a lineage-based predilection for power hierarchies, and buttressed on the other hand by auxiliary organizational hierarchies supplied by the missionary-introduced Christian church groups, have indeed remained the ongoing organizational theme of the tribe. Today the age groups continue to underlie much of the success of the new tribal bureaucracy.

Historical Sources on the Tiriki

Günter Wagner, in several field trips to North Nyanza between 1934 and 1938 (the area was then known as North Kavirondo) amassed a great deal of data on the twenty-two

¹ See S. N. Eisenstadt, *From Generation to Generation* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), for probably the most comprehensive survey and analysis of age groups and age grouping to date.

tribes then forming the district.¹ Much of his material has since been published in a series of articles and monographs, the most important and comprehensive being his two-volume, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*.² Although Wagner makes a number of specific references to the Tiriki in his writings, most of his published material deals with the Maragoli people who live just west of the Tiriki, and with the Vugusu, who are situated in the north of the district. Enough general cultural similarity exists between all the tribes of North Nyanza for the material gathered by Wagner to provide a fair picture of traditional Tiriki material culture, and many aspects of Tiriki social custom. Also Wagner's descriptions of economic conditions and missionary and British administrative activities give a fair base for evaluating how general conditions have changed in the district during the last twenty years. A further work which has proved of great value to me because of the Tiriki's particularly strong Nilo-hamitic connexions is J. G. Peristiany's, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*.³

My wife and I were given access to district and provincial government files in Kakamega and Kisumu, and we also had an opportunity to go over records of the Friends African Mission, Kaimosi. These files and records proved of considerable value, especially in reconstructing the early days of European contact.

The first three chapters of this study, which describe the indigenous social organization, are of necessity a reconstruction of the past based to a great extent on the recollections of contemporary tribal elders, and on their evaluations of how contemporary customs and activities were manifest and carried out when they were young. The first Tiriki contact with Europeans did not occur until the latter portion of the 1890's; thus, it falls within the life span of members of the most senior living Tiriki age group (Jiminigayi) in 1956 when the field investigations for this study were completed. Indeed contemporary elders'

¹ See Günter Wagner's, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 21, for a list of the North Kavirondo tribes in 1938.

² *Ibid.*; Günter Wagner, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). See the bibliography (p. 456) for a more complete listing of Wagner's writings on the Abaluyia tribes.

³ J. G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1939).

eyewitness accounts, reinforced by their memories of what they had been told by their elders when they were young, extend back into the era preceding European contact.

Tiriki: the Place and the People

The Tiriki are one of more than 17 Bantu-speaking tribes living in the North Nyanza and Elgon Nyanza Districts of Nyanza Province, Kenya Colony. In recent years, as a part of a growing sense of cultural and political identity, they have started calling themselves collectively, the 'Abaluyia'. The Abaluyia peoples in effect form a Bantu linguistic and cultural sub-area where closely related dialects are spoken and a large core of common customs and values are shared. Today they have emerged as a distinctive political bloc in Kenya politics. The Abaluyia tribes, probably numbering altogether more than half a million people (1956), live in an area of approximately 2,700 square miles that extends roughly from the equator north to the southern slopes of Mount Elgon, west to the Uganda border, and east to the Nandi escarpment. The area is predominantly very fertile and well watered, and the average altitude of about five thousand feet results in a moderate climate.¹

Although the ruling clan of the Wanga tribe was beginning to establish military and political dominance over a number of Abaluyia tribes just before the arrival of the British, the Abaluyia tribes remain today, as traditionally, essentially a group of politically discrete tribes that recognize many common bonds of kinship, language and custom. Their sense of similarity and community is enhanced by their being surrounded on almost all sides by Nilotic and Nilo-hamitic peoples.

The Tiriki people (*badiliji*, *mu-ba-diliji*) live in the southeastern portion of North Nyanza District. Tiriki Location, the contemporary homeland of the Tiriki as legally constituted by the Kenya government, is about twenty miles long. Running southwest to northeast, the location is shaped roughly like a dumbbell; about three miles wide in the southwest, it narrows to less than a mile in width near the centre, and then grows to

¹ Wagner, Vol. I., *op. cit.*, pp. 3-15. Wagner, in the first volume of *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*, gives an excellent general geographic description of North Nyanza District.

over five miles in width in the relatively sparsely-populated and partially forested northeastern section. Of Tiriki Location's total area of just over seventy square miles, almost seventeen square miles in the northeast are uninhabited government-protected forest reserve, while Kaimosi Mission, in the north-central region, holds over one and one-half square miles of land. In the remaining fifty-three square miles, about 40,000 Tiriki make their homes. This brings the average population density in the inhabited part of the location close to 750 people per square mile. Overpopulation is the most pressing reason for the Abaluyia peoples' ever-growing practice of seeking employment in regions outside of North Nyanza. As the population increases so does the absolute dependency on wages from jobs in East African urban centres and on European farms. Today probably over half of the Tiriki adult males are 'off-tribe' (*mulugulu*) at any given time, for the most part performing wage labour. Mostly it is the men between the ages of about eighteen and forty who seek wage labour off-tribe; consequently, the tribal population appears to the visitor to consist almost entirely of women, children, and old men.

When I first saw the Tiriki countryside it struck me as being ideal material for a Peter Breughel landscape. Here was a bucolic beehive; the women were the workers, and the men were the drones. Women do the agriculture in Tiriki. On a morning women are to be seen everywhere; women balancing water-filled kerosene tins on their heads as they climb homewards from valley streams, little groups of women hoeing the fields, women spreading maize kernels or beans to dry on huge flat-topped granite boulders that protrude at frequent intervals from the cultivated land, women carrying loads of firewood back from the forest on their heads. Children are also much in evidence. Little boys brandishing sticks, some naked and some wearing dirty torn shirts, chase cattle out of maize fields back to the path and road edges where they are permitted to graze. Smaller children, both male and female, race around in little groups in the occasional grassy spots, often playing soccer with a green mango or some other improvised ball—even while carrying their infant charges on their left hips.

Generally the men do not become a conspicuous part of the scene until around noon. At that time the tribal elders leave the

community meeting grounds, where they have passed the morning chatting and hearing cases brought before them for settlement. For the next hour or so they can frequently be seen sauntering along the pathways on their way to the nearest beer drink. Typical clothing for the Tiriki elder is an ancient army greatcoat worn over equally ancient shorts, and generally two hats—one pushed down on top of the other. One can always spot an elder on the lookout for beer, for in his right hand he will be clutching an immense wooden sheath, seven or eight feet long which encases a beer drinking tube, and under his left arm he will be carrying a battered four-legged stool. The beer pots are the centre of the elders' social life. It is while seated around a communal pot in a banana patch and sipping beer through long tubes that the elders exchange gossip, recollect the exploits of dead comrades, and discuss and, in effect, often settle, disputes of one sort or another even before they are presented to them for arbitration in the community courts. Around mid-afternoon, when the elders' beer drinks are already well under way, the younger men who are not off-tribe working collect around beer pots of their own, or settle in the back rooms of local African stores (*liduka*, *li-ma-duka*) to drink European beer or illegally-brewed distilled liquor (*iwalagi*, *i-zi-walagi*). Most of this younger set consists of men home 'on leave' from jobs off-tribe and men who hold salaried positions in the administration. During the weeks following the semi-annual harvest, when there is plenty of grain with which to make beer, drinks are virtually an everyday occurrence; from evening until after dark it is common to hear, if not to see, old men chatting as they saunter home after a lively drink. In the words of the Tiriki elders, 'It's a tough world' (*shibala shidinyu*) on those days when a beer drink cannot be found within walking distance.

Throughout most of the day one or another askari (tribal policeman or messenger) or headman can be seen pedalling his bicycle along the main road that runs the length of the Location on his way to or from the location centre at Hamisi. Occasionally an overcrowded bus travelling between Kisumu and Eldoret grinds by, covering all it passes with dust. From any high spot several primary schools are usually visible; they are often located on hilltops, and they are also easily recognizable from a distance because the long rectangular shape of the

thatched school buildings contrasts with the thatched conical roofs of the ordinary round huts generally found in homesteads. Children in rows doing calisthenics frequently grace the schoolgrounds.

On Sundays many of the schools, which are run by the missions, are used as churches. Women make up three-quarters or more of most church congregations. After the Sunday morning services processions form at the school-church grounds and then stream over the country paths under the midday sun on their way to banana grove 'memorial services', singing and drumming syncopated songs of salvation.

The daily scene varies little from one part of the tribe to the next, but as one goes towards the northeast the country grows less crowded, the huts are progressively farther apart, and the rusticity is more pronounced. The hills and valleys are less precipitous, and there are fewer granite outcroppings; imported Australian Eucalyptus trees more often break the eye's sweep, and large tracts of dense hardwood rain forest, protected by the Friends African Mission and the African District Council, preserve a picture of what most of northeastern Tiriki must have looked like at the turn of the century when the last elephant was seen roaming the area.

Tiriki Social Structure

The Tiriki indigenous social structure may be likened to a rope of three strands; clans (*zimbamba*, *lu- zim- -bamba*), age groups (*maxula*, *li- ma- -xula*), and territorial units (*zisomo*, *lu- zi- -somo*). These three strands, although no longer in themselves sufficient to maintain the social order, combine with the recently developed Christian religious groups and tribal bureaucracy to form the five principal elements of contemporary Tiriki social structure.

Clanship, of secondary political significance both traditionally and today, is nevertheless the traditional organizational arena in which a large number of significant social relationships were carried out, and the bulk of the tribe's cultural heritage preserved. Clan organization supplied the underlying framework for the tribe's principal religious and economic values, and family organization can best be thought of as an integral aspect of Tiriki clan structure. Even today, with the formal religious

and much of the economic significance of the clans gone, family allegiances and responsibilities are frequently expressed in terms of clanship; clan exogamy remains, and a man's sense of personal identity continues to be strongly linked with clan membership.

The Tiriki age group organization affects, directly or indirectly, most of the major kinds of social activity in Tiriki. The social groupings, rankings, statuses and roles it institutes are manifest in everything from the largest tribal and sub-tribal activities to everyday intra-familial relationships. Yet the Tiriki avow (and all the evidence I could muster supports their opinion) that the age group organization is not an indigenous part of their Bantu heritage; rather it is something they received from the culturally and linguistically alien Terik. The Nilo-hamitic Terik are herdspeople, a Nandi offshoot, and they were the prior inhabitants of the area now inhabited largely by the Bantu Tiriki. A few Terik have chosen to this day to remain in the region rather than take refuge in nearby Nandiland, but they are now outnumbered by the Tiriki, probably by more than ten to one. The Terik were the people who first permitted straggling remnants of Abaluyia lineages to settle in the region, and they insisted that these newcomers be initiated into Terik age groups. These age groups soon supplied the principal political and ritual basis for Tiriki corporate action. Attitudes and sentiments fostered by the age group organization continue to be very significant. For example, they underlie much of the Tiriki elder's ongoing hostility towards Protestant missionary evangelical efforts, and they also facilitate the smooth functioning of the contemporary British-instituted tribal bureaucracy.

Most traditional judicial, military and ritual activity was organized in large measure on the basis of community and sub-tribal territorial groupings that were clearly related to the age group organization. These indigenous community and sub-tribal groupings have considerably facilitated the acceptance and smooth operation of the contemporary tribal bureaucracy's hierarchy of territorially delimited administrative units. The centralized Tiriki tribal bureaucracy, and to a less extent Christianity, were both imposed upon the Tiriki by Europeans, but the manner in which these two social additions were accepted and the way they have worked to fulfil emergent social

needs has been conditioned in large measure by the indigenous social structure—particularly the age group organization.

Part I of this monograph (Chapters I–V) gives a description of the traditional Tiriki social structure, and a brief analytic history of the development of the British fostered tribal administration and the spread of Christianity. Part II (Chapters VI–X) examines various aspects of contemporary Tiriki social organization and analyses the manner in which aspects of the traditional social structure have in part conditioned its development.