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## A History of Social Exclusion and Poverty of the Thagichu of Igembe Sub - County, Meru County from 1907 to 1962

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### **Abstract:**

*This study is on social exclusion and poverty of the Thagichu of Igembe Sub - County, Meru County in Kenya from 1907 to 1962. The study traces the history of social exclusion of the Thagichu from the colonial epoch of the years 1907 to 1962. Kenyan Government strategies towards alleviation of social exclusion and poverty between 2013 and 2015 are also explored. The study was guided by the theories of Underdevelopment, Materialistic Conception of History and Social Darwinism. The study employed the descriptive research design. Data was collected from oral, archival and secondary sources. A total of 50 people were purposively sampled and interviewed. Data from oral sources was corroborated with data from archival and secondary sources. The major findings of this research are that the Thagichu have been socially excluded by the colonial Government. This exclusion was noted in inadequate infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals and lack of access to social services like banks compared to other areas of Meru County. The study also established that the government has come up with strategies that could help in tackling social exclusion and poverty of the Thagichu. Such strategies are building more educational facilities, provision of free primary and day secondary education, adult and continuing education, non-formal education and provision of educational funds through the constituency development fund and Affirmative Action Social Development Fund. Other strategies aimed at poverty alleviation are establishment of road networks, land adjudication, presence of NGOs, provision of formal employment, Health facilities, growth of an urban centre and Provision of electricity. This study has contributed to the Thagichu historiography.*

**Keywords:** Social exclusion, Poverty and Thagichu.

### **1. Introduction**

This paper discusses social exclusion and poverty of the Thagichu of Igembe Sub - County, Meru County in Kenya from 1907 to 1962. The Thagichu are a group of people inhabiting the lower section of Igembe South Sub County of Meru County. Originally this group lived among the Tharaka who presently live in Tharaka Nithi County but in 1907 new colonial boundaries moved them from their original location. The Thagichu group is currently found in lower Igembe in Meru County (Mwaniki (2005). An account by Kirimi (2010) states that the Thagichu group that is found in Meru County is believed to have settled in their present day homeland before the Igembe and Tigania communities. During migration and settlement of the Eastern Bantus, this group was left behind and settled in lower Igembe as their kinsmen proceeded to their present day settlements. This is evidenced by the names they use for their villages thus Kiguma, Mukurimba, Tumutumu, Kianda, Iruma and Kiolu. These names refer to places elsewhere in Kenya; this implies that the Thagichu have relations with people living in places with similar names as their villages. In addition, this points to a conglomeration of different cultures. For example, Tumutumu and Kianda in Gikuyu land implying there could be a relation of the Thagichu in Kikuyu land. This study ascertained that the Thagichu of Igembe South Sub- County settled in their present day homeland directly from their original homeland Mbwa. (Kirimi, 2010) argues that though they are believed to be part of the Igembe community, they stand out as a distinct ethnic group and their numbers are less compared to the other Igembe population. They also live in the marginalised area of Igembe. Their language has extensive Kamba, Kikuyu and Kiambu borrowings. The area is also generally underdeveloped.

According to Ndenge (2008) overall poverty, also referred to as absolute poverty in Kenya declined from 52.2% in 1997 to about 46.0% in 2005/6. However, significant variation in poverty still exists among Kenya's geo-political areas. During this period, the

proportion of people falling below poverty line improved from 52.2% to 46.6%. In other words, slightly less than half of the country's population was living below poverty line. Ndenge (2008) also indicates that in Kenya inequality measured using Gini - Coefficient is at 0.445. The report also indicates that social exclusion in Meru County is at 0.348 while that of Igembe South is at 0.373. It is also evident that 34 – 44% of Igembe South people are living below poverty line most of them being in the marginalised Thagichu areas. The overall contribution of the Thagichu to national poverty is 0.4 to 0.6 %. The number of poor people per square kilometer is 9 – 51. In terms of poverty reduction rate that of the Thagichu by 2013 stood at – (negative) 23.4% (Ndenge, 2008).

Despite numerous efforts towards poverty alleviation more and more Kenyans are falling below the poverty line. It is against this background that a historical investigation of social Exclusion and Poverty among the Thagichu was examined. Government intervention strategies towards poverty alleviation of the Thagichu have also been explored.

### *1.1. Social Exclusion of the Thagichu between 1907 to 1962*

Information in KNA 1907- 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919 and 1920 reported that during this period general development of the Ameru was low. This was caused by frequent draught, famine and diseases especially cholera. An account given by oral respondents among the Thagichu noted that this period saw the ban in raiding activities which was especially a source of animals for various functions for example circumcision, annual festivals and marriage ceremonies. Asked whether raiding was not detrimental to development, the oral respondents argued that though it was not a good practice, the ban came after their animals had been driven off by the Maasai and did not get a chance to revenge.

According to reports in KNA/MRU (1907-1920), because of the slow pace of development, the Government of the East African protectorate undertook road construction in order to open up the district of Meru for easy administration and economic development. Between 1907 and 1911 a road was constructed over the top of Nyambene range to Maua. This road gave a short route from the Boma to the trading centre in Igembe. In 1912, the main Meru Embu road was cleared. The Boma to Tharaka road was also cleared. A new road was cut to Tigania in 1913 and another was in progress to Tharaka. In 1914, the roads through Nyambene were widened and repaired in view of His Excellency's projected visit. The Tharaka road was completed forty miles from Meru Township. In 1915, the Meru Boma road was slightly enlarged at the south western corner by clearing of bush. The road through the Swahili and Indian quarters was widened to 100ft. in 1916; the road from Maua to Antubetwe via Akachiu was completed. Next was a wagon road from Meru to the Lewa swamp which was improved in 1917. During the same year the Embu-Meru road was regraded and widened. A new road from Maua to Antunene was made to connect the trading market centres. A twelve mile Meru – Muthara road was also made. In 1918 essential road repairs were carried out under difficulties. No re-alignments were made owing to famine. In 1919, a new road was begun between Maua and Muthara by Mr. S.V. Cook. In 1920 all roads were kept up by the administration. Funds were supplied by the P.W.D for the Meru -Embu road. All other roads were maintained by blic labour. It is worth noting that no road construction took place through Thagichu area despite its economic potential being close to Meru national park.

Between January 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> 1925 Mr. M.R.R. Ridal was in charge of Meru District as District Commissioner. He was assisted by Mr. A.G. Cornell as assistant District Commissioner between January 1<sup>st</sup> 1924 and August 31<sup>st</sup> 1925. Captain victor McKeag took over up to December, 31<sup>st</sup> 1925. The outstanding feature of the year was the establishment of the Meru Native Council on July 9<sup>th</sup> 1925 by H.E. acting Governor. The Local Native Council had European and native representation. The Council had funds to the extent of Ksh 20651 and passed resolutions which were sanctioned by H.E. in council to affect the construction a rice hulling and maize gridding mill, the establishment of a creamery for ghee making and the erection and furnishing of a council house (KNA/MRU, 1924-1925).

The council also passed a resolution to raise £.375 by a levy on a portion of the adult male population for the purpose of building eight outpatient dispensaries in the District. These dispensaries were built in Meru town, Mikinduri, Maua, Lare, Muthara, Nkubu Igoji and Tharaka. A survey of the Thagichu area did not show any signs of either of the above (KNA/MRU, 1924-1925).

According to KNA/MRU/1926, a Meru District Education committee was nominated and the district was gazetted as a school area under the education ordinance of 1926. The Local Native Council however, did not nominate native members to the education committee. Seven Mission stations were established in the district under the denominations of the united Methodist Mission who were given a five-acre plot and the Gitoro Roman Catholic Mission. These were paying rent of KShs.10 per annum for the five acres local Native Council fund. Trading centres were also established. Six were occupied by 1926 and two centres were sanctioned. The lists of trading centres in the District by 1926 were as shown in table 1 and figure 1:

<b>Township</b>	<b>No. of Plots occupied</b>
Meru	31
Mikinduri	8
Maua	8
Larii	3
Nkubu	1
Muthara	1
Tharaka	0
Kariene	0

Dhaicu	0
Kathauni	4} These were occupied
Ntiroba	4} later in the year

Table 1: Lists of Trading Centres in Meru District in 1926  
Source: KNA/MRU/1926

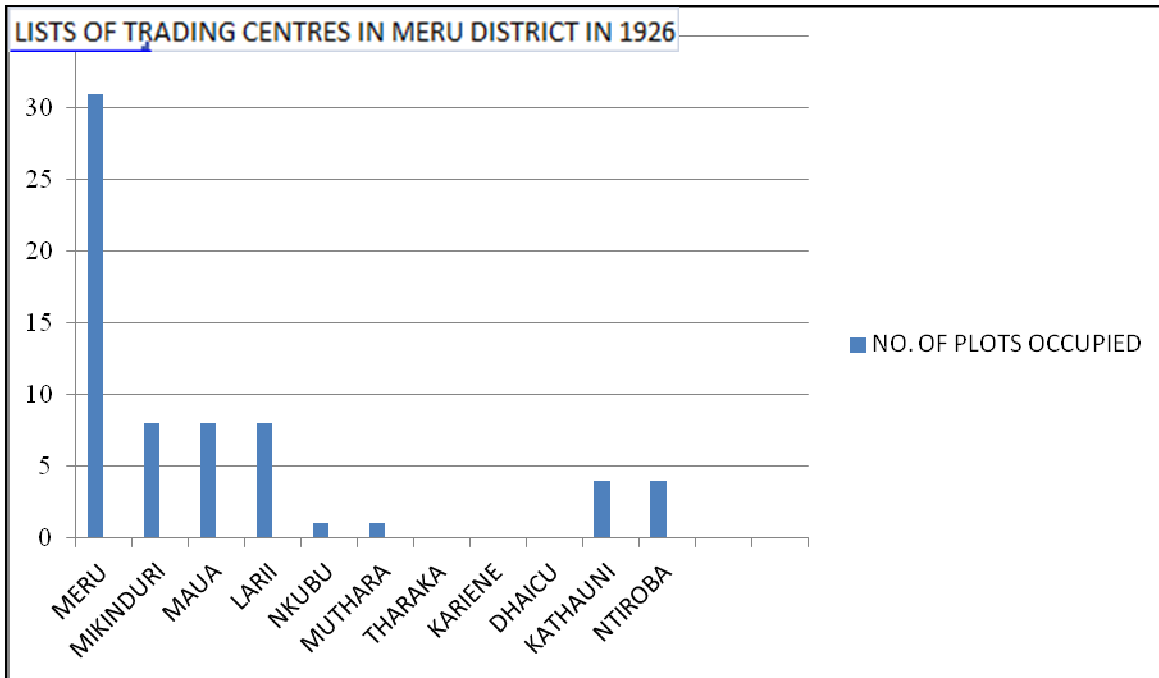


Figure 1: Lists of Trading Centres in Meru District in 1926

It is important to note that by the time the researcher was conducting research among the Thagichu that is in 2015, the area boasted of only one Market Centre. This according to the researcher is an indication of slow rate of development compared to the rest of Igembe. A survey conducted by the researcher in Igembe revealed that many areas are well served with roads and there are many market centres either functioning as Miraa depots or trading centres for other goods. Examples of these centres are Kimongolo, Njoune, Antubetwe and Kiegoi

The public roads in the district were Maara-Meru 25-mile road, Moraine River to Meru 18 miles and a reserve road via Muthara and a reserve road to Tharaka. The officer in charge reported that a road could be constructed via Kiorimba and Kirima Kieru Thagichu areas save for rocky nature of the land.

During the last five months of 1926, that is from August 1926, attempts were made to bring the people of Tharaka into the line with progress realized by other 'tribes' in four ways. The four ways were re-opening of their Kiama (Council of elders) which had been in abeyance for some years; the registration of all adult males; the employment of 200 at Meru during the month of December and the appointment of four tribal retainers.

During the same year, it was hoped that their counterparts, the Thagichu who had remained in their primitive state would be encouraged to develop but owing to their isolation and infertility of their soil, it would not be easy for them or the administration to bring out such development (KNA/MRU/1926). The report went further to state that there was a ready response to suggestions to improve them by Mr. Booth, the senior agricultural supervisor. But for any effort to be successful, constant supervision would be necessary and it had not been possible in the past. It was unfortunate that Mr. Booth, the senior agricultural supervisor had no time to visit the Thagichu (KNA/MRU/1926).

Further exclusion was noted as the area was not opened up as compared to other areas in Meru District. For example, two new reserve roads were built during the latter half of the year. Owing to the rough terrain and hills at Kiorimba (Area occupied by the Thagichu), one road followed the right bank of Thangatha River from the Garbatula road. This road connected with the Tharaka road and Grand falls camp. The other road followed the old track through Katheri up to Kithirune within a quarter of a mile to the forest. It ran up to Iraru River to connect Igoji and point in the Maara River. During the same period agriculture demonstration centres were started at Meru, Igoji, Katheri and Mikinduri (KNA/MRU/1926). This leaves the researcher with no doubt that the Thagichu were intentionally left out of the development agenda by the colonial government in Kenya.

The situation remained the same until 1940 when Mr. H.E. Lambert became District Commissioner. This was the period of the Second World War. The report given by the Colonial government in (KNA/MRU/1940) shows how the various Meru sub-ethnic groups pledged their royalty to the crown. For example, early in the year, the Njuri decided to present a number of bulls to the government as a token of royalty and to assist in the war effort. Meru sub-group contributed bulls as shown in table 2 and figure 2:

Area		Number of Bulls	Percentage (%)
Meru	-	256	11.85%
Mikinduri	-	186	8.6%
Tigania	-	172	8.0%
Igoji	-	213	9.9%
Tharaka	-	169	7.82%
Maua	-	200	9.25%
Nkubu	-	183	8.5%
Muthara	-	230	10.6%
Thaicu	-	0	0%
Mwimbi	-	189	8.75%
Muthambi	-	160	7.4%

Table 2: Ameru contribution of bulls towards World War 1 effort  
Source: (KNA/MRU/1940)

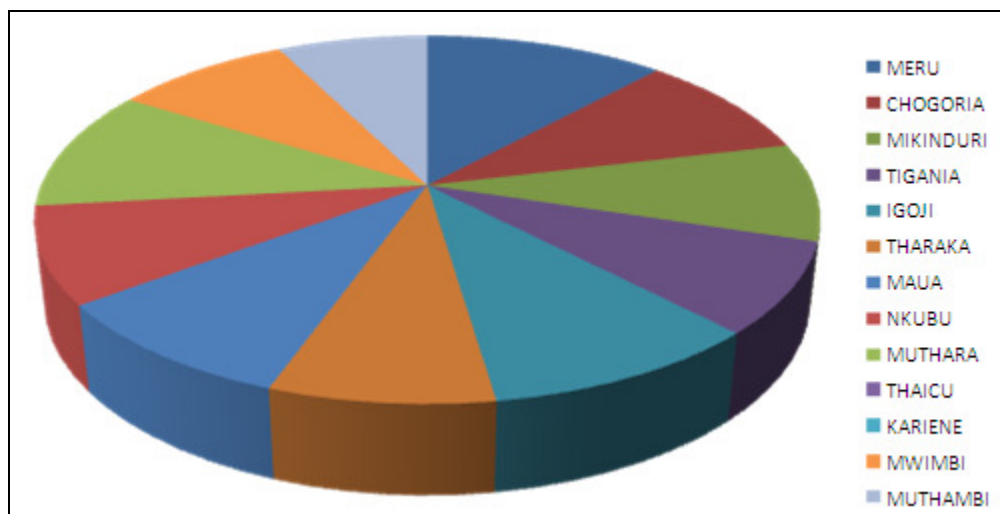


Figure 2: Ameru contribution of bulls towards World War 1 effort

The researcher got interested to understand why the Thagichu never contributed to the war effort. The oral respondents claimed that since the government had sidelined them as far as social, political and economic development was concerned, then there was no point in assisting. The oral respondents added that their failure to support in the war effort led to further social exclusion. For example, in the same period, there were changes in the judicial system. The Agambi (spokes men) were to be drawn from all the Ameru sub-ethnic groups - councils of elders. Their council of elders (Kiama gia Nkomango) however was not requested to give any of their members. They therefore remained unrepresented until 1951. From this discussion the deduction of the researcher was that lack of royalty towards the colonial government by the Thagichu led to further exclusion of the Thagichu and consequently poverty.

During the same period many traditional Meru practices were banned by the religious groups such as the Catholic Missionaries. For instance, father Boken instructed the teachers of the catholic schools that Catholics are not permitted to enter the Njuri religion, if a Catholic Christian enters a Njuri religion, he is to be excommunicated; if a pupil in a Catholic School enters the Njuri religion, he is expelled from school and if he lives in a Mission plot he must be removed from there at once; that every member is hereby authorized to drive out and keep out of School anybody who enters the Njuri. Other African practices were also banned such as witchcraft and anybody found practicing witchcraft would be deposed if in leadership positions KNA/MRU/1940 Chief M'Itimitu of Njea location was in charge of Igembe and Daicho areas. He was discovered in practices favouring of those of the old witchcraft society known as the Athi. Investigations showed that in fact he had taken a leading part in resuscitating the Society in a small area near his home. He was deposed on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1940 (KNA/MRU/1940),

The conduct of affairs was then in the hands of the leading Mugambi (Matugu and a headman M'Itobi who was later gazetted chief as from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1940 (KNA/MRU/1940). The researcher concluded that the deviant behavior of the Thagichu could have partly contributed to social exclusion by the Colonial government.

During the same year a KNA/MRU/1940 report indicated that the Colonial government undertook to recondition hills and especially those of Tigania and Igembe. The Thagichu Kiorimba area was also in the plan. The particulars of land labeling of shambas and planting of various varieties of live wash tops were as shown in table 3 and figure 3:

Area	Shambas Labelled	Shambas Planted	Acreage
Tigania	1257	1232	525½
Igembe	97	92	20
Thagichu	0	0	0

Table 3: Shambas labelled and planted with wash tops in Meru in 1940  
Source: (KNA/MRU/1940)

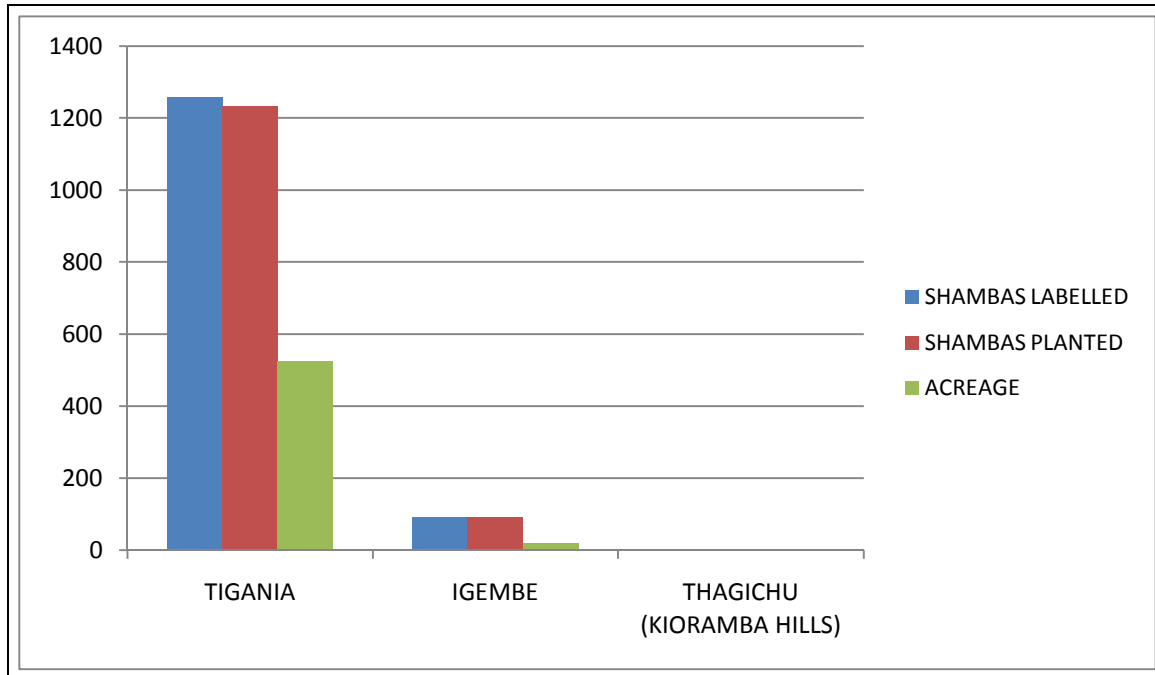


Figure 3: Shambas labelled and planted with wash tops in Meru in 1940

The officer in charge of aeroculture reported that the leveling of Thagichu Kiorimba area would require heavier machinery than they had. This meant that The Thagichu Kiorimba area was left out of the plan.

KNA/MRU/1940 also reported that as far as health care was concerned by 1940 dispensaries had been built in following areas – Isiolo, Kaongo, Nkubu, Kanyakine, Chuka, Kirindini, Magumoni, Muthara, Miathene, Mikinduri, Lare, Athi, Mitunguu and Tharaka. A number of trade centre's and markets were also established in the following areas; Mutuati, Lare, Maua, Mikinduri, Kianjai, Kangeta, Gakoromone, Nkubu, Kaongo, Burindaja, Marimankari, Chuka, Mariani, Itugururu, Magutuni, Mitunguu, Githongo and Kiirua.

In 1937 V. LM McKeag was the District Commissioner of Meru (KNA/MRU/1937). He initiated several development projects in the area. For example, he established public hospitals at Maua and Chogoria run by the Scotland Mission. Townships and trade centres were established in Igoji, Mutunguu, Nkubu, Chuka, Tharaka and Marimankari, among others. Markets were established at Lare, Maua, Mikinduri, Kianjai, Kangeta, Meru Boma, Nkubu, Igoji, Kanyakine, Kaongo, Chiakariga, Mweria, Marimankari, Chuka, Mariani, Itugururu (KNA/MRU/1937). A report by 20/10/1937 indicated that several areas were well served with roads *but the Thagichu/Igembe section of necessity remained closed for the rest of the year but from the point of view of both tourist traffic and export of produce should be opened at the first opportunity* (KNA/MRU/1937). There was a policy to improve agriculture. Owing to drought conditions Cotton was suggested as a crop for the Lower Igembe Thagichu area. R. Oats, a European marketing officer however cited harsh climatic conditions as a hindrance for crop production in the area (KNA/MR/1937).

According to KNA/MR/1938, Colonial Government annual report of 1932 by Mr. Hopkins, 1933 and 1934 by Mr. Lambert and the 1938 report by Mr. Hopkins suggested that the Colonial Government found it difficult to implement its policies among societies that were deeply entrenched in traditional beliefs and practices. They noted that the Thagichu people were handicapped by their belief in witchcraft. This information was further supported by oral respondents who stated that any occurrence was seen as being caused by their supernatural beings. They therefore saw the coming of foreigners in their land as a punishment by angered spirits. That is why according to eighty-year-old Samuel Njuki, the Thagichu could not entertain the Whiteman in their land.

According to DC/ MRU/1944, despite the war atmosphere, the Meru region was earning a lot from exports. The colonial Government feared that this could lead to economic independence of the Ameru. A letter written by H. E Lambert read like this:

It would be interesting to know what the Meru derive from;

a) Exports out of their country of various products



b) Exports of labour, that is, imports of wages that they did not have in pre Government days. Is this say about 100,000 dollars in a good year and would all this be spent on new wants that they did not have before? That is, does this new factor of trade in the world outside the reserve have any effect on the numbers of stock? If the money earnings of the Ameru from production and labour are spent on imported livestock then the acquisition of wealth can only be another word for overstocking but I imagine this is not so and that money earnings and new wants roughly balance so that if the old slaughter system were applied in full stock, numbers would be kept static. If so it follows that to fine a man cash is; a) to prevent him from satisfying new wants which we have taught him to have and b) to reduce his purchasing power by the amount of the fine whereas the forfeit of an ox for slaughter would not do either of these things. My point is that the native keeps his money and his cattle for two separate purposes. His cattle are more closely bound up with his membership of the community and when he offends against the community he should to the "community chest" from his cattle stakes and not from his money stakes which he represents his wherewithal to better himself.

In 1944, according to Bernard M' Rioba there was serious destocking in the Meru region. According to all accounts though the destocking policy was a district wide policy the Thagichu area was more affected. Information in KNA/DC/MRU/1944 recorded the destocking as shown on table 4 and figure 4:

Area	Number of Animals	Percentage (%)
Meru	230	8.95
Chogoria	198	7.7
Mikinduri	160	6.2
Tigania	102	4.0
Igoji	204	7.9
Tharaka	196	7.6
Maua	200	7.8
Nkubu	156	6.1
Muthara	240	9.34
Thaicu	396	15.4
Kariene	108	4.2
Mwimbi	200	7.8
Muthambi	180	7.0

Table 4: Number of Animals Curled to Curb the Rate of Foreign Exchange Earnings in Meru Region in 1944  
Source: KNA/ DC /MRU /1944

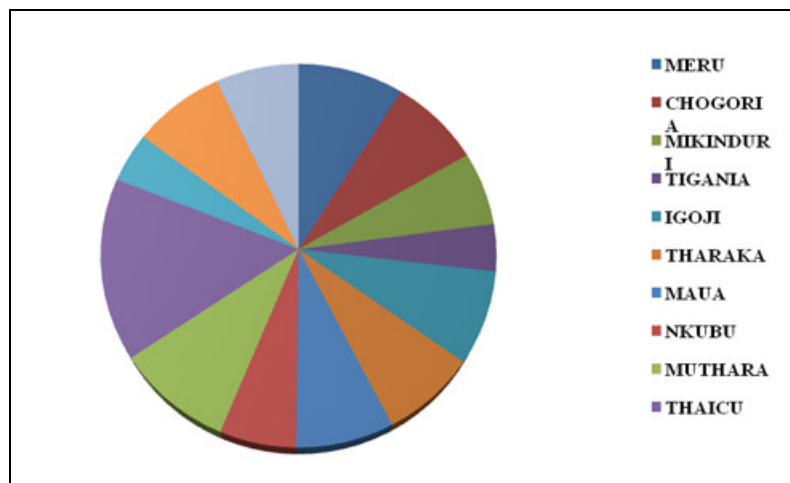


Figure 4: Number of Animals Curled to Curb the Rate of Foreign Exchange Earnings in Meru Region in 1944

In 1945, Mr. C.M. Johnston took over as District Commissioner. The D.O. was P.E. Walters from 1/1/46 – 8/5/46 and for the rest of the year H.C.F Wilks became D.O. Their main concern was the opening up of the Meru areas. They therefore came up with policies in transport and communication several roads were constructed. Mr. F.J. Bolding was in charge of this during the year. In spite of the exceptionally heavy rains during the month of October which resulted in Landslides on the Embu-Meru and Meru-Kianjai roads, as well as two wash-ways, many permanent culverts were installed. The Meru-Chogoria upper roads were reopened to traffic after Mutonga and Iraru bridges had been rebuilt. A bridge on the Ura River in Maua-Mikinduri road and a new cutting on the main Meru – Nanyuki road was made to do away with an awkward corner at Gunga lake. Though there was a plan to connect the environs of Maua to the town, the Thagichu area proved too rocky for any meaningful road constructor (KNA/MRU/1946).

A 1950 report in KNA/MRU/1950 indicated that there was an epidemic of typhoid in the Thaicu area which resulted in several deaths. The epidemic was made worse due to the absence of a health centre nearby. The oral respondents indicated that typhoid was not the only problem experienced this year. They had a rat attack. They narrated how the rats would eat all their food and even carry babies. The researcher here concluded that the typhoid and cholera could have been caused by sharing food with rats. As reported earlier, the Thaicu were deep-rooted in witchcraft. The rat menace according to oral respondents was finished by a diviner as mentioned earlier.

A KNA/MRU/1952 report indicated that in 1952, relations of the Meru and Embu remained cordial. There were signs of dissatisfaction with the infiltration of so many Akamba in the Lower areas of Tharaka and Thaicu. As stated earlier, the Thaicu are bilingual and a common language spoken there is Kikamba. This probably explains why the Thaicu language has a lot of Kamba borrowing. In an earlier report in KNA/MRU/1951, Tom Mbotela visited the Igembe/Thagichu area to espouse the cause of a number of Machakos Wakamba in the area. It was alleged that these people were being forcibly evicted but in fact no action had been taken apart from prosecutions for nonpayment of poll tax and disobedience of orders for soil conservation but it was evident that the Thagichu of this area wished to be rid of them. The Kamba in the question also appeared to be strengthening their claim to remain in the area by flouting the Local Indigenous authority. A large number remained and occupy the area known as Kiguma in Thagichu according to oral respondents. This information is supported by Parsons (2012) who notes that the peoples of colonial Kenya had options of deciding how to identify themselves. For example, parsons noted that when Kikuyu migrants settled in the Meru reserves, the first larger group did so legally by choosing to become Meru. This was also the case of the Kamba who settled in Thagichu. According to oral history however, the failure by the colonial government to protect the Thagichu land from occupation by other communities meant that the area was segregated. This was especially because the Kikuyu who settled in other parts of Meru such as Timau area were ordered to vacate that land by the same government.

In agriculture, it was noted that the Tharaka and Thagichu areas of Igembe performed poorly. These areas for years reaped no crops. Despite the harsh climatic conditions, these areas were not considered for production by irrigation. The government instead built good roads to Kathita below Makandune to open up the area for irrigation (KNA/MRU/1952). Public health hospitals were also inequitably distributed. For example, the Consolata Catholic Mission hospital was built at Nkubu, in today's Imenti South Sub-County. Though it was noted by Dr. Avery Jones and Mr. Furlong that there was a bacteria disease (spirillum) in Igembe, no efforts towards establishment of a health Centre in Lower Igembe Thagichu area was made.

KNA/MRU/1957 – 1962 reported that after four years' emergency conditions with its restrictions and attendants' hardships, the Meru people settled down in 1957 to a year of economic prosperity unequalled in the recorded history of the 'tribe'. The progressive relation of restrictions led to the satisfaction of the people as a whole, whose main desire was a resumption of normal peaceful conditions in the district. The D.C. noted that in terms of wealth and education, Meru District is a land of contrast. That from North to South, the eastern half of the district is inhabited by a relatively poor and backward people whilst those in the fertile land and Coffee Rich Western region enjoy a prosperity equal to that found anywhere in Central Province. Efforts to raise the standard of living and education of the eastern half of the population continued in 1957 not only for the sake of eradicating an undesirable state of affairs but in order to reward a people whose royalty during the emergency had been of high order. The people of Igembe were reported to have remained loyal throughout the difficult days of the emergency and a large number were Meru Guards. (KNA/MRU/1957).

However, Oathing between 1952 and 1954 was reported among a section of Igembe subdivision in 1956. This was in Njia. Further oathing ceremonies took place in April, August and December of 1957 in Thagichu area adjacent to Maua. Proposed plans for extension of a settlement Scheme in this area was therefore rejected.

Land consolidation and opening up of areas for settlement was popular during this period. The Meru D.C. in 1957 J.A. Cumber initiated the opening of airfields in Kiirua, Mitunguu, Itukururu and Liliamba. Improvements in farming methods were noted in Kiirua, Naari and Kimbo (KNA/MRU/1957). A soil conservation programme was launched in Meru. Low percentage of land was however, conserved in Tharaka, Tigania and Igembe/Thagichu area with the latter having the Lowest as shown in table 5. As discussed earlier lack of royalty and support for the colonial government made the Thagichu to suffer social exclusion. This according to the researcher was even worse at a time like the 1952 emergency period in Kenya when the colonial government was engaged in war with the Mau Mau resistance movement.

DIVISION	LOCATION	PERCENTAGE	CONSERVED
Nyambene	Igembe/Thagichu	33	35
Nyambene	Tigania	56	60
North Imenti	Miiriga Mieru	7	75
North Imenti	Abothuguci	88	90
South Imenti	Nkuene	93	93
South Imenti	Igoji	92	93
South Imenti	Tharaka	43	43
Nithi	Mwimbi/ Muthambi	84	86
Nithi	Karigani	84	85
Nithi	Magumoni	79	79

Table 5: Land under conservation in Meru in 1957

Source: KNA/MRU/1957

Other developments included soil conservation which was to be achieved through grazing control. Despite the problem of Water, grazing control was not imposed in the northern zone in eradication of animal diseases like Trypanosomiasis in the Eastern half of the district. In distribution of schools J.A. Cumber (D C) noted that with the exception of Igembe/Thagichu area and Tharaka, Schools were spread evenly throughout the district.

During the same year; 1957 the colonial government realised the problems that were facing the colony and protectorate of Kenya. According to GOK (1957) the colonial government aimed at expanding Kenya's economy and developing the country's production. The plan covered economic and social development including; agriculture, education, medical services, housing, industrial and commercial expansion, closer administration in the African areas, roads, aerodromes, buildings, community development and forestry.

### *1.2. Government Intervention Strategies towards Alleviation of Social Exclusion and Poverty in the Thagichu Area*

After the 2013 general elections in Kenya the County Government of Meru, was established. The Meru County government came up with the first Meru County Government Integrated Development plan 2013 – 2017 (Meru County Government, 2013). The first item in the plan was establishing the Human Development Index (HDI) in the County. This was measured using Human Development Indicators such as life expectancy, years of schooling, access to water and the general standards of living in the region. The HDI mean score for Meru region was 0.5622 compared to Nairobi's 0.6533 and the national score is 0.505. The HDI for Meru region ranks above the national score meaning that Meru region contributes positively towards the overall national score. When research was conducted among the Thagichu in 2016, the oldest respondent's age was estimated at 105 years and generally the area had elderly people making the research to conclude that life expectancy is high. When research was being conducted, the researcher noted that some Miraa farms were being irrigated and oral respondents confirmed that a water project had been started in the area by Ripples International, an NGO aimed at empowering women, children and the youth.

The colonial and post colonial government had made enormous efforts in improving infrastructure such as road networks, financial institutions, education facilities, health facilities, markets and housing in Meru. By 2013, Meru County was well served with roads with the most famous tarmac road being the Embu-Meru-Maua road. By the time this research was being conducted, plans were underway to construct the Maua – Kimongolo –Thagichu road. This information was given by oral respondents and confirmed by the sub-county Development officer. As stated in the location of the study, the Thagichu area borders Meru National park. Development of this road will mean that the park can be accessed through the Thagichu area. This will also boost the economy of the Thagichu as tourists pass through their land in transit to the park. The oral respondents appeared enthusiastic arguing that they will be able to revive their traditional industries. It was the view of the researcher that Kenya's devolution as required by the constitution of Kenya (2010) could be a recipe for emancipating the Thagichu from social exclusion. According to Nyanjom (2011), Kenya's constitution 2010 declares equity to be an underlying principle of governance in the country.

The County has a high agricultural potential which has attracted various commercial banks and other financial institutions. The number of commercial banks by 2013 were sixteen, eight microfinance institutions, four village banks and a number of Sacco's. The Thagichu area from observation and also from the oral respondents has no financial institutions. Oral respondents also had no idea whether any institutions were to be established. When the researcher inquired on where they bank their money, one oral interviewee was quick in responding that they cannot travel to Maua Town to bank their money because money is needed any time and one may not get it when in need. They all agreed that money is kept safely in their houses. This led the interviewer to conclude that the Thagichu are living in the past and they have not embraced change.

The Meru county government has established several education institutions like primary/secondary schools, polytechnics, colleges and universities. There are 972 Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD), 647 primary schools and 192 constituency development funds have enabled the construction of various mixed day secondary schools. The Thagichu area has benefited from this as there is Kindani Day Secondary school according to the respondents and from observation. The Sub - County education office also confirmed that plans are underway to construct another day school in the Thagichu area. (Meru County Integrated Development plan, 2013 – 2017). This according to the researcher is a step towards inclusion of the Thagichu in development by the Meru County Government.

Land ownership still remains an issue as the area has no title deeds. A report from the sub-county land adjudication office indicated that the government is committed to ensuring that title deeds are issued to all land owners. This is on realizing that the residents are not investing fully in their land because of the fear that adjudication could place them in different areas, as mentioned earlier. The adjudication office in the County indicated that land adjudication is in the process. The oral respondents also confirmed that the process has started and they could very soon get title deeds for their lands, which could be an end to the worries of displacement. Such kind of adjudication could probably improve the Thagichu's standard of living since they would till their land and build permanent houses without worrying about displacement.

The major steps that have been taken by the current government towards social inclusion according to oral respondents is the presence of non-governmental organizations in the area. One such NGO is the JICA which has initiated water project in the area though the project is yet to be completed. The Sub-County Development officer also reported that the Ripples international has encouraged formation of self help groups in the area. Such a community self help group is Kiguma Tujiiue self help group. These community self help groups have been legally registered and are very useful in that they have been able to get some water to the area and improve welfare of members through merry go rounds and financial aid by the NGOs. Youth groups are also being organized due to the introduction of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund according to one of the Young respondents Mary Mukwairu.



The importance of salaried employment cannot be underscored. According to Forstater (2001) unemployment has its costs; first, it has tremendous social and economic benefits to both the unemployed and society as a whole, second it harms individuals, families, neighborhood villages and communities. Forstater also discusses the three aspects of employment thus the income aspect, where employment provides income security for the employed; the production aspect, where employment results in increased production of goods and services and the recognition aspect where the employed person is engaged in a worthwhile activity. Forstater (2001) adds that when members of a community are employed at productive jobs, the person employed has income and recognition and the community gets better and more goods and services. In addition, there are not only the initial benefits of job and income security and more and better public and community services, but also numerous indirect benefits thus the economic and social multipliers on the economic side, the initial job and income growth associated with employment translates into increased spending and rising incomes throughout the community. The social multipliers concern the benefits to individuals, families, neighborhoods and communities of decreased crime, drugs and family disruption and increased and strengthened security, education, health care for the infirm and the elderly and environmental protection.

In the 2013, the Government of Kenya realized the importance of job creation. According to All Africa Global media (2014), the Government prioritized infrastructure development to spur growth and job creation in all sections of Kenya's economy. A national employment policy was developed. The Ministry of labour, social and security services cited youth unemployment as a risk factor in the Country whose causal factor was the slow pace of growth of the Country's economy (GOK, 2013). As a result, policies and programmes for employment creation were developed among them infrastructural development. County governments were consequently required to create employment opportunities and come up with policies that were all inclusive. The county governments were encouraged to employ those who qualify especially women, Minority groups and persons with disability. In 2013, guided by this policy, the Meru County Government employed one assistant chief from the Thagichu area and one teacher has also been absorbed by the government. This means that the problem of social exclusion of the Thagichu may soon come to an end according to the researcher.

The central Government of Kenya realized that Health and nutrition plays a key role in development through ensuring a healthy population. Disease prevention and health promotion ensures a healthy environment for the public. This should be of high quality, affordable and accessible to the general population countrywide. This has been achieved as the oral respondents from Thagichu contended that health services are now getting closer to them. A dispensary was built and completed in August 2014 at Kilili market known as Kilili Dispensary. The researcher interviewed a health worker who reported that for the purposes of disease prevention, there is a door to door campaign as well as staging mobile clinics in the area for disease treatment. The most common diseases according to the health worker are malaria which has forced the county government to distribute free mosquito nets because of its high prevalence, occasional cholera outbreaks resulting from poor sanitation, skin diseases, intestinal worms, and respiratory diseases. The health worker concluded by saying that HIV/AIDS has also found its way in the Thagichu area with serious consequences as the people are attributing it to witchcraft thereby failing to seek medical attention (GOK, 2013). The researcher observes that such attitudes show that more sensitization is needed in the Thagichu area to liberate them from such outdated beliefs so that they can catch up with modern health practices to avoid spread of diseases. Probably more health centres are crucial for such sensitization to take effect.

It is important to note that, growth of urban centres is a good indicator of economic and social development. To the County Government of Meru, establishment of urban centres could enhance trade and thus raise the standards of living for those living in such areas. The number of market centres in Meru is rising and currently there are forty-nine market centres in Meru County. The sub-county Development officer for Igembe south sub county reported that money has been set aside to develop a market centre at the Thagichu area at Ntherone and plans are underway to improve the existing Kilili market Centre. The oral respondents appeared pleased with this as they will have markets to sell their farm produce. This according to the researcher is a big step towards inclusion. Education is often used as a vehicle for economic development. That is why according to the policy framework for education (2012), the government launched the Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in Kenya though reports indicate that there are still some pockets within Kenyan Communities which have remained unreached for a host of reasons, including economic, cultural, social, geographical environmental and political. More than fifty years after Kenya's independence illiteracy still remains a problem in Kenya. That is why the Government of Kenya realizes the important role played by adult and continuing Education (ACE) and Non-formal education (NFE) as a vehicle for transformation and empowerment of individuals. ACE and NFE offers opportunities for those outside the formal school system to benefit from education (GoK, 2012). For this reason, these programmes are in place in several areas including the Thagichu where the researcher recorded that there are 5 Primary Schools offering Free Primary Education in Thagichu area. According to oral respondents, since the introduction of Free Primary education, the enrolment in the schools has gone up. The oral respondents also contended that Adult and continuing Education is on going in the area. Specifically, they have a Centre at Kiguma Ciiri, one of the seven villages of the Thagichu.

The Government of Kenya and specifically the Meru County Government is encouraging its residents to construct more permanent houses. This is in the wake of many natural calamities like whirlwind which blows and carries the roofing materials. This information was given by the sub-chief of the Thagichu area. Since the government cannot construct houses for individuals in the area, they have started by constructing permanent school structures. This according to the researcher is an indication that the Government is coming up with all inclusive policies for the whole County.

A minority or a marginalized community is taken to mean a traditional community that, out of a need or desire to preserve its unique culture and identity from assimilation, has remained outside the integrated social economic life of Kenya as a whole or an indigenous

community that has retained and maintained a traditional lifestyle and livelihood based on the hunter or gatherer economy, or pastoral persons and communities whether they are a nomadic or a settled community that because of its relative geographic isolation has experienced only, marginal participation in the integrated social and economic life of Kenya as a whole. The same clause defines a marginalized group as a group of people who, because of laws or practices before, on, or after the effective date, were or are disadvantaged by discrimination (The constitution of Kenya, 2010).

From the aforementioned discussions, the Thagichu community in Igembe Sub-County which is found in Meru County fits in the definition provided in the constitution of Kenya 2010 as the community has been socially excluded from the rest of Igembe and Meru Community from 1907 to 2012 and are also a minority in Meru given their small numbers as described by Kirimi (2010) and also by GoK (2009) in chapter one. Their ethnic identity where the researcher found out that they are not Igembe though living with them also makes them fit in this definition. From the oral interviews the researcher concluded that the Thagichu are a small 'tribe' living within a big 'tribe', that is Meru, making it fit within the definition of the minority.

The constitution of Kenya 2010 provides that the state should put in place affirmative action programmes designed to ensure that minorities and marginalized groups participate and are represented in governance and other spheres of life; are provided special opportunities in education and economic fields, are provided special opportunities for access to education, develop their cultural values, languages and practices and have reasonable access to water, health services and infrastructure (Article 56 of the constitution of Kenya, 2010)

The constitution further establishes an equalization fund which is intended to provide basic services including water, roads, health facilities and electricity to marginalized areas to the extent of the extent necessary to the quality of those services in those areas to the level generally enjoyed by the rest of the nation, so far as possible. (Article 204 of the constitution of Kenya, 2010)

Other strategies of inclusion are: - provision of electricity especially rural electrification meant to uplift the living standards of people living in the rural areas.

Electricity is the backbone of socio-economic development in any country and is associated with the provision of numerous services to people which directly enhances their quality of life. Kenya has, keeping these needs in mind, established the Rural Electrification authority (REA) under Section 66 of the Energy Act 2006 (No. 12 of 2006) with a vision to provide clean and green electricity to all rural areas in the Country. Since its inception a decade ago, it has spearheaded electricity connections to 22 percent of households and public facilities. The electricity connections have further been speeded up by the presidential decree on reduction of the cost of electricity connection from 35,000 to 15,000 from 27/5/2015. When research was being conducted among the Thagichu, a few households had benefited from this decree and had electricity. The oral respondents praised the government for the presence of electricity in their area. (Climate Energy, 2013)

One of the greatest achievements Perhaps of the government of Kenya towards poverty alleviation is the introduction of the constituency Development fund which was created by the Constituencies Development Fund Act of 2003 with the primary objective of addressing poverty at the grassroots level by dedicating 2.5% of the government ordinary revenue to grassroots development and the reduction of poverty. The fund is managed by the Constituencies Development Fund Board (CDFB). In January 2013, the CDF Act of 2003 was repealed and replaced with the CDF Act of 2013 that is aligned to the constitution of Kenya 2010 ([www.cdf.go.ke/al](http://www.cdf.go.ke/al)). In the Thagichu area, oral respondents noted that CDF has funded the construction of Kilili Day Secondary School. The students who were interviewed from the area also confirmed that they are funded by the CDF to pay fees though they said the funding was minimal, that is 3000 Ksh per funding. They however conceded that there is fairness in fund allocation in the all county making the researcher conclude that the Thagichu are being included in the Meru County Government development plan especially in education.

The Affirmative Action Social Development fund which was enacted through the legal Notice No.24 of the Public Finance Management Act of 2012 and published on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 is another equalizer fund by the government of Kenya that has benefited the Thagichu community. This fund was established with the Primary objective of empowering Affirmative Action groups and in particular out of School Youth, Orphans, Children of Child headed families and special needs children through bursaries and scholarships to access education opportunities (Kenya constitution, 2010). At the time research was being conducted some youth had received bursaries from this fund. This information was obtained from the oral respondents and also sub-county education office.

## 2. Conclusion

The study established that the arrival of Europeans in the land was met with conflicts from the elders and warriors. From an examination of social exclusion and poverty of the Thagichu, the study concluded that the Thagichu have been socially excluded by the colonial government from 1907- 1962, socially, politically, and economically.

Government intervention strategies towards alleviation of social exclusion and poverty include the improved effort in provision of education by building more educational facilities, provision of free primary and day secondary education, adult and continuing education and non-formal education and provision of educational funds through the constituency development fund.

The study also established that the government has made enormous efforts in improving infrastructure in the area such as road networks for example the Maua-Kimongolo-Thagichu road. Other areas are land adjudication which is in progress, presence of NGOs like JICA and Ripples International which are encouraging formation and funding of self help groups in the study area. Absorption of the Thagichu members in government service was also noted as there is a sub-chief in the area and a TSC teacher. Health facilities have also been provided for example Kilili dispensary and growth of an urban centre in the same area. Construction of more permanent houses is also encouraged and efforts toward s this area also noted. Provision of electricity is in progress and a few

homesteads have electricity in Thagichu area. Youths are getting organized into groups and are benefiting from the Affirmative Action Social Development Fund.

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