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## An Examination on the Contribution of the Kenya-Uganda Railway to the Development of Eldama Ravine Town in the Colonial Period, 1895-1963

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper reveals the facts that surround foundations of urbanization and city development in colonial Kenya. With pre and pasts events of historical reviews, there are specific examples from Eldama Ravine that shows contribution of Kenya-Uganda railway towards colonial growth. The article describes the reasons, pattern, and consequences of colonial rail road in the town under study. The main objective of the paper was to investigate the contribution of the Kenya-Uganda railway towards development of Eldama Ravine town during colonial period (1895 -1963). The paper gives a brief summary of the main features of Kenya's colonial times in the region. It then explores the work of white settlers within Kenya's context and analyses the impact of colonial conquest in relation to building of the famous Kenya-Uganda railway with the imposition of colonial and local administrative boundaries. The study examined further that there are significant lasting impacts of colonial rail in terms of economic development of the town. The major argument advanced here was the progression of development in Kenya caused by construction of railway in determined by the colonial and post-colonial activities on social economic processes. The study adopted descriptive and fact-finding approach, literature review and deduction of archival and documentary resources, supplemented by historical evidence from case studies. The article traced, analyzed and described the historic path of development events during colonial period in Eldama Ravine, Kenya since the inception of Kenya-Uganda railway in 1895, and runs through the various planning episodes of 1895 to 1963.*

**Keywords:** Colonization, white settlers, protectorate, Mkoloni, modernization, independence, settlement schemes, white highlands.

### **1. Introduction**

There are lots of evidence about the scope and forces of urban path of development from colonized countries in 18th to 19th century. Railway construction connecting major cities was a key factor that sprung up development in East Africa. Railroad construction in colonial Kenya provided a natural experimentation to study the emergence and persistence of development in Kenyan history. Archival data in colonial towns in late 18th and early 19th centuries, exhibits that colonial rail causally determined the location of European settlers, which in turn decided the location of the main city of the country before independence. Building of railroads declined after independence, yet expansion of cities continued as indicators of colonial effect. Early appearance of white settlers served as a mechanism to harmonize investments in the colonial and post-independence period, yielding signals on how rail construction influenced development.

Colonial administration in Kenya Economic development has fashioned the world into what it is today. This includes early empires, such as the Roman Empire, which extended across Europe before colonial period from the Mediterranean and Northern Africa and into the Middle East and ruled until its declined in the 18th to 19th centuries which gave rise to other empires. British Empire was the largest empire in the world with its height having colonized the Africa in the 19th centuries. The British Kingdom, throughout its regime of expansion is believed to have been the contributor of development of major towns in Kenya.

### **2. Research Methodology**

The study adopted qualitative research method particularly ex-post fact to design a historical study. The research methodology mapped and reconstructed the past to the present. This approach eliminates the possibility that participants were influenced by awareness of what is being tested. The occurrence is not manipulated as it has already happened. The

design was used to describe history and development of Eldama Ravine Town. Data Collection was done using both primary and secondary sources. Interview method, Observation Methods and Documentary Analysis were adopted. In order to get to concise descriptive data, the researcher study old records which contain information on the growth and development of Eldama Ravine Town at colonial period and Independence period from the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. Archival materials that were examined included Eldama Ravine District monthly and annual reports and land records from the ministry of land and settlement. Secondary data was collected from published works including "Makers of History" series written by various Kenyan Scholars. Documentary sources formed an important component of the study. The works included books, journals, articles, seminars, conference papers, thesis and Newspapers.

Secondly, the study employed a historical research method. In this type of investigation, the researcher depended largely on available data about past events and activities on which he couldn't exercise any control. Consequently, the conclusion was based upon logical analysis and inferences in terms of consistency and usefulness. Finally, data was analyzed to provide a detailed description of the case, identifying emerging themes, sub themes, categories and interpretation of the findings. After a satisfactory collection of both primary and secondary data, all the main ideas were entered into the first set of forms of analysis, the process of data reduction commenced. The process involved recording of useful and relevant data-selected from the first set into a new set. Then after a through revision of recorded data, sorting followed to ensure that all necessary facts were incorporated.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The Kenyan situation, compared to the rest of Africa, the Berlin Conference in 1884/85, gave a milestone in colonial establishment. The Berlin Congress split the African continent among the major European countries with an interest in colonization, including: Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium. After the completion of the conference, Africa was divided for colonization due to abundance in resources. Queen Victoria from Great Britain ruled the most expansive territory in East Africa. England had the greatest land power in the world, ruling over 25% of the earth's land masses. Colonies had to cater for the cost of supporting the operations with labour material, military protection and financial resources which emanated at a great price for running the colonial administrations from the new explorations in Africa.

In order to continue and establish their colonies, Mkoloni had to explore the famous white highlands with plenty of resources. Eventually despite resistance from various community groups, the whites collaborated with the local community which assured them access to East African soil to seek highlands rich in farming for cattle, coffee, mining while trading with Arab's. Demarcation of colonial boundaries led to the establishment of a large territorial entity for the whites. These territories arbitrarily brought together many independent communities into one territorial entity called Settlement schemes. The colonial state, found it a productive task wielding these communities into one scheme for easier control in their colonial activities. Indeed, it took major communities who had gathered in small villages to realize that they were under white-man's authority. 'Mkoloni' as he referred by locals explored different territories. At this point they started to locate areas where colonies were to be established on highlands areas thus the emergence of the name white Lands. As colonial boundaries divided single communities into settlement schemes, these boundaries encouraged positive ethnicity as different communities competed for colonial resources. The establishment of colonial boundaries also led to administrative structures in many schemes. As a result, colonial state employed authoritarian force to hold Kenya's diverse communities together. Eldama ravine being one of the white-lands that had attracted the white settlers due to its resources like fertile land, natural forest and physical features motivated the white man to settle and exercise his agricultural activities. The railway systems of tropical Africa were products initially of the colonial period, being inaugurated around the turn of the 19th century and progressing slowly, primarily built inward from the ports, without connections to adjacent countries. They were built partly for economic reasons, partly to facilitate export of minerals and agricultural products.

Colonial roads in colonial days, transport facilities and infrastructure were generally considered to be one of the most important factors that influenced the pattern of economy activities in any area under colonial rule. At first roads were complementary to the rail for they were preferably the only means of connecting major areas in the region at short distances. The colonial government sought to expand the roads by investing in railway transport. The existing roads were of poor quality until the 1870's. For instance, the construction of the road Nairobi to Nakuru tarmac only started in 1945 previously was only murram road which provided poor means of transport especially during rainy seasons. Roads later became less preferred over long distances transport. Even if no railway had been built yet, roads were certainly the only way to economic boom at the moment.

During the 1870's and 1880's, trade and communications between the coast and the interior depended almost entirely upon human porter age over rough and poorly maintained roadways. There was some attempt by the Colonial administration to clear existing trade routes and construct new roads on which officials could access territories using cars. Chiefs were granted annual remunerations on condition that they mobilized communal labour for road clearance, with an additional allowance of £2 per mile being allowed for work carried out. Such conditions placed serious constraints on trade. Head loading required considerable amounts of labour and its costs were relatively high. Over many years caravan horses and carriers were the only means of transport and this had been accepted as major animal transport. When corporate farming activity commenced in the interior, transport problems were even more acute. The main objective was to build a rail to connect the major colonial regions from Mombasa to Kampala.

This could not have been achieved through bare road. To compare the respective impacts of railway and roads in cost, Railway was the only way to connect all the colonial administration centers. Building of Kenya -Uganda Railway. The

very reason why the British came to Kenya was not, in fact, to settle in Kenya. They had three major reasons. Firstly, and foremost was to reach the fabulous kingdom of Buganda, whose wealth was legendary extensive mainly towards Egypt and on the Nile. Secondly, to end slave trade which was rampant in East African soil and lastly, they had to interconnect the white settler's ranches that concentrated on agricultural produce. To do this they planned to build a railway from Mombasa to Kampala, which obviously required crossing Kenya.

First surveys for the railway route was conducted by the Imperial British East Africa Corporation (IBEAC), a Royal Charter Company tasked with the administration of the British protectorate in East Africa. Railway construction by private companies have been supported by colonial with a common feature of transport innovation in the British Empire during the decade of the nineteenth century, but by the early 1700's the rail system was rolled out in Europe as means of transport. The Imperial British East Africa Company that formed the core of their administration in Kenya the first section of the railway was started in 1895 and the entire railway—from coastal Mombasa, the administrative center of the East African Protectorate, to Kisumu on Lake Victoria.

The railway adventurers were looking for free grants of land along the proposed routes, with rights to trade, and to cultivate. In fact, the proposals were seen as part of the exploration. In 1897, railway construction reached of Rift valley where railway lines, were constructed to link other towns like Nakuru, Eldama ravine, Elburgon and Molo as it proceeded to Kisumu. These areas were rich in agricultural products like cotton, coffee, tea and pyrethrum. The railways opened up the interior to white farmers, missionaries and administrators, and various colonial government programs. The railroad improved the economic power of the country, and made trade relations very beneficial for the countries involved. During the construction of the railway the British government imported more than 32,000 laborers from British, India and parts of Africa to offer manual and skilled labour.

Once the main railway was completed in 1901, there was need to connect to white lands where colonial administrators had settled to facilitate transportation of farm produce. In 1915, Sub section of Railway interconnecting Nakuru town and Eldama Ravine was built. Due to flourishing trade in the town, Arab Traders and other white settlers moved into the region. The railway infrastructure prompted the colonial administration to expand the region that included building of social amenities center and other administrative services to the settlers. Indeed, the first colonial provincial administration officers were employees of Imperial British East Africa Company who relocated from Nakuru town to Eldama ravine town. At the beginning, their roles as provincial administrators were primarily to promote peace and order while recruiting local labour to work in the white farms. Consequence of railway line in Eldama Ravine. The construction of the railway proved useful in transportation of industrial and agricultural goods by removing the need for human transport of goods. The railway allowed heavy equipment to be transported with ease. By this time the main form of transport in the interior was ox-drawn wagon and human transport. The Kenya-Ugandan railroad established the general urban pattern in Kenya.

The railway line acted as the main transport system and was joined by marram roads superseding the old caravan ones. The rail led to distribution of urban centers at key points along the main route reflected by the influence of rail construction and local economic factors in the initial urban growth. Agriculture and specifically the establishment of export crops was the engine of Eldama ravine development. For farming, Cash crops like Coffee which originated from Ethiopia and become the premier export to Europe. The crop was only introduced by missionaries in 1893. It took 30 years before coffee was widely grown by Europeans, making Kenya a large exporter as early as 1930. Kenya developed major coffee-growing regions in the high plateaus around Mt. Kenya, Kisii, Nyanza, Bungoma, and Nakuru, Eldama ravine, Kericho, Ruwenzori Mountains and Aberd are Ranges. These areas were restricted to European settlers on a 999-year lease. Eldama Ravine region was known as the White Highlands due to its favorable climate in production.

There was a scheme to attract new settlers' after construction of the railway line past Eldama Ravine. This was followed by a steady stream of new settlers during the 1920's. By the 1930's, European farmers made up only a small proportion of the white population; the majority of local laborers were employed in a range of services to support the settlers. Demand for African labour grew as they supplied the dominant portion of agricultural labour while discriminatory practices against Africans prevented farmland ownership in the Highlands. "Native Reserves" grew in close proximity to the large European landowners. The 1934 Kenya Land Commission endorsed the white settlement schemes which made the locals migrant peasants' "squatters" on European farms in exchange for land tenure through an African labour system. Till early 1950's, Eldama ravine farms were kept for commercial agriculture in Kenya. Data on European agricultural production available on an annual basis from 1910 showed that early agricultural Censuses recorded that railway was a major boost for agricultural activities in the region. The first Agricultural production in the region included cotton in Pekera scheme in Baringo in 1935.

It is noted that the only railway built to serve an area of African settlement that from Nakuru to Baringo, has had no greater effect on the location of economic activities than those in other parts of the country Focusing on economic activities in Kenya, Indian labourers (workers on contract) settled at Eldama Ravine town after the construction of the railway line in 1903. Their settlement was meant to engage the local communities in farming and irrigating the areas around the Pekera irrigation scheme while engaging in trade. The settlement at Pekera, however, gradually made progress by 1908 when 1000 acres were put under the cultivation and production of cotton, onions and rice. Most of the Asian indentured workers stayed behind after the end of the railway construction exercise. In fact, they worked for the railway company, while others became market gardeners, itinerant traders, carpenters and masons. Indian railway workers were integrated with the local people at Eldama ravine.

Additionally, there was existence of Sudanese foreigners who assisted in rail construction, were employed as guards being the most loyal people in colonial government<sup>28</sup>. The Nubians, after railway construction they were

converted as home laborious and guards in colonial homes. These people were excluded from the middle and senior ranks of the colonial government. They eventually worked on farming and Ranches as they became a commercial middlemen and professional traders in the region.

Eldama Ravine urban planning Building of the Kenya-Uganda railway passing through the town made the white settlers establish a good administration center in early 1900. The whites and the locals collaborated in various activities that made development a feasible goal in colonial times. The first planning of the town was done in 1912, the population of the township in Eldama Ravine numbered about 2,850 and the area covered by the plan was about 1,400 acres. The urban town had a population of 1234 in 1905 and therefore was considerably larger than that of the Nakuru town. The figure for the actual population of the Township throughout this given period has very little meaning in view of the fact that the main local community concentration was movement to urban areas in search for labour and employment in colonial ranches. The Township boundary covered 100 hectares with the resident population consisted of representative categories such as local communities, few Arabs and the Nubians who worked on railway stations under the Frederick Lugard's army and the Swahilis formed the least in numbers at the time. In 1912, Ernst May and other planners in East Africa believed that natives had a desire for colonial administrators to settle permanently. Therefore, there was need for physical planning of the town. Eldama ravine went through a lot of planning under the British commissioner of lands the H.T Dyerfriba A.M.T.P.I town planning advisor. In March 1912, the director of surveys and social services issued a policy paper No: KNA/CT/30/111 setting out the guidelines for the establishment of Modern town planning. He states that on adoption of the plan, the first road was constructed joining Lembus and Eldama ravine - the road ran east from Railway line to a point near the White man's plantation premises to facilitate ferrying of goods from the plantation to the Railway stores. This was followed by Maji Mazuri road – one that ran at right angles to this one northward past the market place. The third road (present-day Moi's road) was later constructed that ran past the colonial offices (the present-day D.O's office). Later, however, the Ravine Road was built at one end and the lower end was reserved high way connecting Baringo region. Chief's offices around areas of Eldama ravine CBD, Law Courts areas around the present County Offices, are a direct result of the 1912 planning scheme which formed the basis for the layout of that central part of Eldama ravine, most of which still stands today but due to review of the planning by county government, excerpts for some buildings that were demolished and the sites rebuilt, within the subsequent years. Others include cereal stores that were built by colonial administration which are still used to date by Kenya railway as a collection point for farm produce and other trade goods. From 1912, onwards, Eldama Ravine became a significant town, and was considered a control Centre for economic development in the colonial administration in Rift Valley. Thus, it was necessary to accommodate new residential, office and commercial functions within the Township. Planning in this colonial era was explicitly more concerned with the view taken of the ideal urban planning should try to bring about. Economic urban planning shows that ultimate project in planning in British colonial era was as a result of railway infrastructure in many colonial towns in Kenya.

Like in most of British territories in Kenya, aesthetic values were achieved through central aim of planning and these played a role in the creation and transformation of Kenyan urban landscape. Earlier White settler's ideas of planning were superseded by health concerns, and this was at the most critical time, when European powers were seeking methods of exercising control of colonies. In 1922, Frederick Lugard and collaborated with the early missionaries and built the first health care facility in the region. This was steered by the fact that laborers felt sick in the line of duty and there was any health care to treat the laborers who works in whites' plantations. At that time, malaria and cold were the common diseases in the region. Health concerns were the major development projects in the region as early settlers needed an acceptable living environment which also gave rise to environmental sanitation measures and the establishment of rudimentary local government, throughout the colonies.

Due to the fact that diseases in highlands regions were communicable and dictated a need for colonial sanitation. The late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century was also a period of rapid advance in tropical medicine, malaria was by far the most serious threat to Europeans living in Kenya. Colonial health facilities were built when colonial administrations were struggling to keep soldiers and administrators alive in a difficult environment though the local communities were used to native medicine. The new currents thoughts about urban planning flourished in these years which included schools, administrative offices and police stations.

#### 4. Summary

The paper aimed at examining the contribution of the Kenya-Uganda railway towards development of Eldama Ravine town during colonial period (1895 -1963). The paper, therefore answered the question 'how did Kenya-Uganda railway influence the emergence of Eldama ravine town by 1910' Historical link to the colonial city have attributed to arrival and settlement of the white. Indeed, the article shows that Eldama ravine town owes its history to pre-colonial time when Koitalel Arap Samoei prophesied on the existence of the town after the emergence of a moving snake (Railway). The initial name for the town was Sinende which was initially a dwelling place for Maasai. The presence of British administration in Eldama ravine enhanced the emergence of Kisii town.

#### 5. Conclusion

Eldama Ravine town had lots of relevance from colonial time to the present. The area had relevance to the communities that dwelled in the region during and after rail construction. As demonstrated by the construction of the railway line, there was a change in economic and technological advancement of the town steered by the colonial administration. The key factors that influenced growth of Eldama ravine town included settlement of colonial administration, investment in agriculture, rail infrastructure, role of local community who acted as labours. It was

established that Railway transport speedily laid a foundation upon which colonial rule was achieved and improved accessibility of Eldama Ravine. While colonial structures were established, town

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