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**THE HISTORY OF THE INFORMAL ENTERPRISES IN  
KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF THE JUA KALI SUB-SECTOR OF  
NAIROBI, 1899-1998**

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree to any other university.

*Felix Macharia Kiruthu*  
BY

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FDJ 2008/2000

This thesis has been submitted for the approval of University Supervisors.

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY IN THE SCHOOL OF  
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*The history of the  
informal enterprises*



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**Declaration**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

.....Date 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2006

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This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University Supervisors:

.....Date 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2006

Professor Eric Masinde Aseka

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### Dedication

This work is dedicated to the millions of people who struggle under a difficult situation to eke out an honest means of livelihood in the *jua kali* sector all over the African continent, particularly in Kenya.

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### Abbreviations

ADC	- Agricultural Development Corporation
AFC	- Agricultural Finance Corporation
CBS	- Central Bureau of Statistics
CIDA	- Canadian International Development Assistance
CMS	- Church Missionary Society
CODESRIA	- Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CSM	- Church of Scotland Mission
DANIDA	- Danish International Development Assistance
DARA	- Development and Reconstruction Authority
DFID	- Department of International Development
EAMR	- East African Mounted Rifles
EAS	- East African Standard
FES	- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
GNP	- Gross National Product
GTZ	- German Fund for International Development
IBEAC	- Imperial British East Africa Company
ICDC	- Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation
ILO	- International Labour Organisation
IMF	- International Monetary Fund
KANU	- Kenya African National Union
KCA	- Kikuyu Central Association
KEM	- Kikuyu, Embu and Meru
KEPP	- Kenya Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme
KICOMI	- Kisumu Cotton Mills
KIE	- Kenya Industrial Estates
KNA	- Kenya National Archives
KNAJKF	- Kenya National Association of Jua Kali Federation

KNJKO	- Kenya National Jua Kali Organization
KNTC	- Kenya National Trading Corporation
KPCU	- Kenya Planters Cooperative Union
KREP	- Kenya Rural Enterprise Programme
KTM	- Kenya Taitex Mills
LEGCO	- Legislative Council
LNC	- Local Native Council
MNAO	- Municipal Native Affairs Officer
NARC	- National Rainbow Coalition
NCCK	- National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organisation
NHC	- National Housing Corporation
NITD	- Native Industrial Training Depot
NYS	- National Youth Service
ODA	- Overseas Development Agency
PC	- Provincial Commissioner
POW	- Prisoners of War
PWD	- Public Works Department
SIDA	- Swedish International Development Agency
SME	- Small and Medium Enterprises
SSE	- Small Scale Enterprises
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	- United Nations Environmental Programme
UNIDO	- United Nations International Development Organisation
USAID	- United States Agency for International Development

### Abstract

The study examined the origin and the transformation of the *jua kali* sector of Nairobi from 1899 to 1998, and its consequences on the African communities in the town.

A case study research design based on qualitative procedures was adopted employing three types of data, namely: Archival data, oral interviews and library research. Among the *jua kali* sites identified and examined in the study included: Gikomba, Kamukunji, Ziwani, Kawangware, Kariobangi, Githurai and Roysambu. 90 knowledgeable informants on the history of Nairobi and *jua kali* sector were interviewed from 2001 to 2005. These included *jua kali* operators, Non- Governmental Organisations' personnel, civil servants, and Asian business people.

In order to analyse the complex relations in the *jua kali* sector of Nairobi, the study adopted an integrated theoretical approach comprising the dependency and underdevelopment approach, the articulation of modes of production and the concept of neo-patrimonialism.

It is argued here that the city of Nairobi emerged as a colonial urban centre along the Uganda railway and was, therefore, the product of international capitalism, which creates a global division of labour that consigns the periphery to primary production. The prime motive behind the construction of the Uganda Railway was to facilitate British colonial authority, and transportation of resources to the East Coast enroute to the metropole in London. As the colonial headquarters in Kenya, Nairobi was strategic to the British. It served as the administrative, commercial and transport centre for organising the drainage of resources and surplus to the metropole.

A number of Christian Missionaries, Asians and white settlers settled in the country, particularly near Nairobi, after the completion of the railway in 1901.

The three groups were by the First World War socialising the African communities to serve the colonial system, through western education, apprenticeship and wage labour. Moreover, the alienation of land, forced many Africans to migrate to the White settler farms, Nairobi and other urban centres, in search of wage labour. Those who failed to secure wage labour in Nairobi turned to hawking, prostitution and other marginal activities such as the brewing of illegal liquor.

It is further argued that although a number of Africans acquired artisanal skills from the government departments and mission schools by the inter war period, very few of them practised artisanal businesses in Nairobi. Rather, most of them acquired jobs in the formal sector. Therefore, the African pioneer *jua kali* artisans were those who acquired their skills informally from the Asian artisans.

The Second World War marked the increased exploitation of the Kenyan economy. Desperate for more labour, financial and agricultural resources to support the war effort, the British recruited more Africans into the war and even allowed for a small number of manufacturing enterprises to be set up in Nairobi. The war also led to an influx of Africans into Nairobi in search of wage-employment opportunities. Many of them turned to the informal sector particularly after the War. The demobilized soldiers and the African squatters evicted from white settler farms after the mechanization of agriculture also flocked into the city. Consequently, many Africans turned to petty theft, illegal brewing of liquor, and prostitution in Nairobi as a way of survival. Others turned to artisanal trades in Burma, Kariokor market and in the Nairobi African locations such as Kibera, Pumwani and Mathare. They engaged in carpentry, metal work, woodwork, bicycle and motor vehicle repair, as well as shoe repair. Evidently, these *jua kali* trades, were a direct consequence of the inadequate job opportunities in the waged sector of the economy.

Unhappy with the illegal activities of the African entrepreneurs, the colonial authorities in Nairobi resorted to constant harassment and arrests of the African street traders and artisans. This contrasted sharply with the granting of business premises and licenses to the African elite, viewed as loyalists by the rest in Nairobi. It is argued here that the harassment subjected to the unemployed Africans and *jua kali* artisans resulted in the emergence of the Mau Mau guerrilla movement in Nairobi. This could explain why the Mau Mau activity in Nairobi involved frequent murders and other forms of violence against the Europeans, Asians and the African loyalists who enjoyed colonial patronage.

At independence in 1963, the influx control measures against African movement into Nairobi were lifted. This in turn accelerated the influx of thousands of the ex-detainees and other Africans who had been repatriated from Nairobi during the Emergency. These were soon followed by thousands of school leavers who sought better employment opportunities and higher wages available in Nairobi. Evidently, the capitalist-oriented policies of the Kenyatta government privileged the small group of Western investors and African elite. Educated individuals in official positions acquired patronage resources, including the best arable land. Consequently, the landless resorted to the *jua kali* sector for a means of livelihood.

The Moi government inherited its predecessor's economic policies, at a time when the oil prices were high and the cash crops from Kenya were performing dismally at the international market. In the meantime, the international political environment also took a new dimension especially after the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1989. Multilateral and the bilateral donors began to enforce strict lending terms, including the Structural Adjustment Programmes, on the country. It is against this background that many Kenyans were pushed into the *jua kali* sector in the 1980s and 1990s. Although the Moi regime recognised the important role played by the sector in the face of the

economic crisis facing the formal sector of the economy, economic mismanagement due to political patronage worsened the economic situation of the *jua kali* operators. This was evident in the grabbing of *jua kali* plots and the subsequent demolition of their sheds by politicians and government officials. Conclusively, the *jua kali* sector produced several innovators and entrepreneurs but these could not succeed fully without the strategic and active support of the state.

### Glossary

- Ahoi* - Kikuyu term for the landless
- Ayas* - Kiswahili term for house girls
- Boda boda* - bicycle taxis
- Boma* - administrative camp
- Bui bui* - a dress worn by Muslim women covering the whole body including the face
- Busaa* - traditional brew made of fermented sorghum and maize flour
- Chang'aa* - Nubian gin
- Chuni* - a scarf worn by Indian women
- Chupa na debe* - informal traders who traded in used bottles and scrap metal
- Fundi* - Kiswahili term for an artisan
- Harambee* - Kiswahili term that means "pulling together"
- Jiko* - a locally made cooker that uses charcoal fuel
- Jua kali* - Kiswahili term that literally means hot sun, referring to the small-scale enterprises that mainly operate in the open.
- Kalasinga* - Sikhs
- Kameez* - a long dress worn by Indian women
- Karai* - a metallic container made by artisans
- Maendeleo* - Kiswahili term that means development
- Manambas* - touts
- Matatu* - the term used to refer to unlicensed taxis in Kenya. It is derived from the Kiswahili word "tatu" meaning three, as these taxis used to charge a modest bus fare of 30 cents in Nairobi in the early 1970s.
- Mitumba* - used apparel and shoes
- Mkokoteni* - Kiswahili word for a handcart
- Mswaki* - Kiswahili term for certain twigs traditionally used for
- Mungiki* - a politico-religious group that emphasizes Kikuyu cultural values

- Muratina* - Kikuyu traditional brew made by fermenting honey and sugarcane juice
- Nyitira njare* - Kikuyu name for a tin candle
- Posho* - maize meal
- Punjabi kurta* - buggy trousers worn by Indian women
- Rupee* - Indian currency
- Uji* - gruel made of maize meal
- Wapagazi* - Kiswahili term for sweepers

## Definition of Terms

### **Artisan:**

In this study, the ILO (2004) definition of an artisan has been adopted. It defines an artisan as a skilled workman or woman. By implication therefore artisans are skilled people in their own right, whether their skills are acquired through apprenticeship or through college education.

### **Dependency:**

The term dependency refers to the phenomenon whereby the less developed countries of the world rely on powerful economic interests and states that dominate the global financial and commodity markets (Leys, 1996:31). This situation makes such countries underdeveloped in the sense that their resources eventually benefit the more advanced parts of the world through unequal exchange.

### **Informal sector:**

The informal sector has been defined variously. On one hand, there are the protagonists of the operational definition, who identify the economic activities in the sector including: small scale, low level of technology and operations on the margins of legality, as the main characteristic features of the sector (ILO, 1972; Kay, 1982; Bayart, 1999). On the other hand, there are advocates of linkage, describing the economic activities in terms of the structural relationships within the overall economy. For such scholars, there is no informal sector as such. Rather, what exists are simply small – scale economic activities linked in a variety of ways to other large – scale ones (Kay, 1982:123).

In this study, the term informal sector is used in reference to all the small-scale business activities that operate without direct state regulation, although

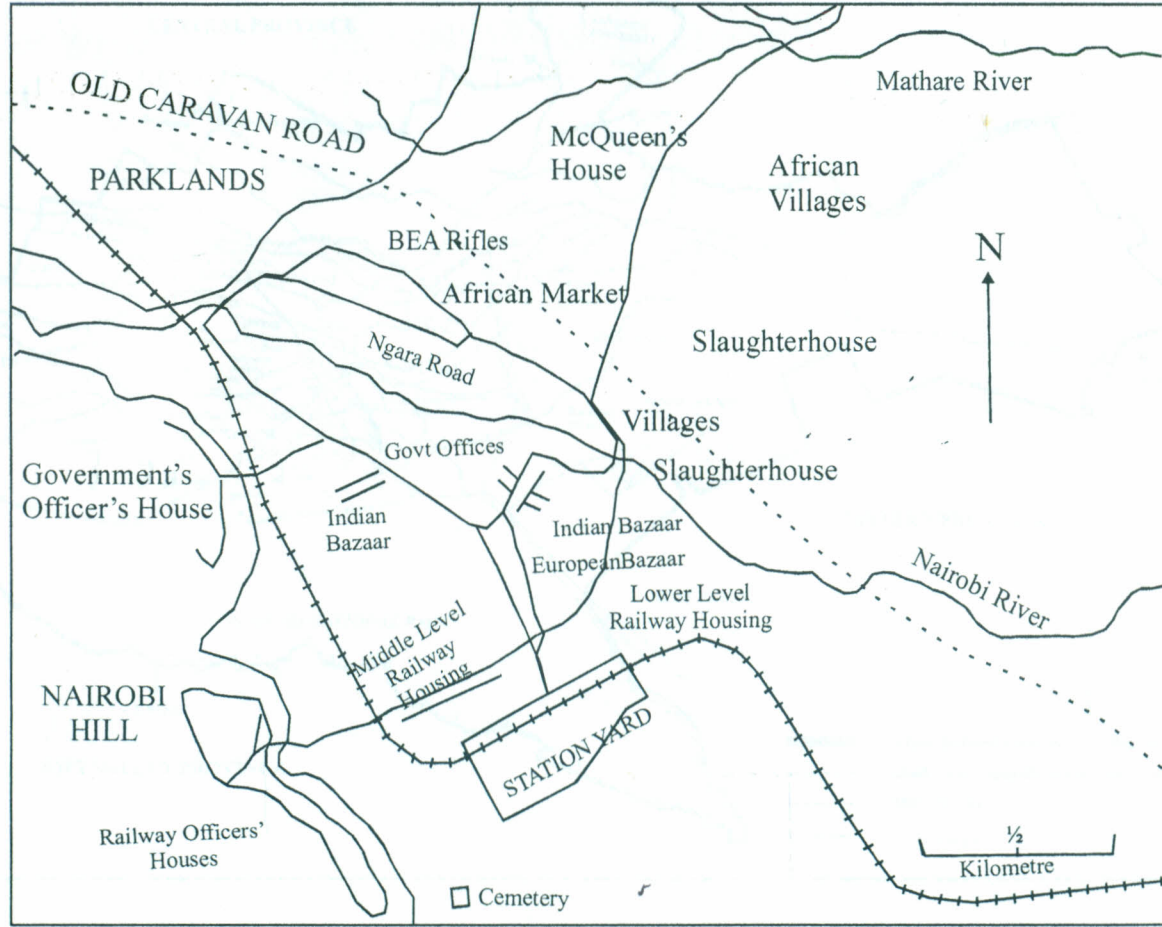
some have already received recognition from the government (Kinuthia, 1997). This definition takes cognisance that some of the operations in the sector are illicit such as prostitution, brewing and sale of illegal liquor, drug trafficking, robbery and banditry. Such activities are distinguished from other economic activities such as street vending, maize roasting, and shoe shining, in this study.

### **Jua Kali**

The term *jua kali* is a distinct Kenyan creation (Kinuthia, 1997; King, 1996). It is a Kiswahili term that literally means “hot sun”. In this study, the term is used to refer to self-employed artisans such as carpenters, metal fabricators, tin-smiths, motor vehicle and shoe repairers, who mainly operate in premises without a roof, in the open air. Viewed in this way, *jua kali* is a subset of the informal economy. The *jua kali* workers operate under difficult conditions including long hours of work, use of rudimentary and low level technology, lack of basic infrastructure such as water, electricity, and sanitation and little capital. The *jua kali* economy in Kenya is large and diversified. It involves not only production, but also trade and services (Kinyanjui; 2005).

### **Neo-patrimonialism**

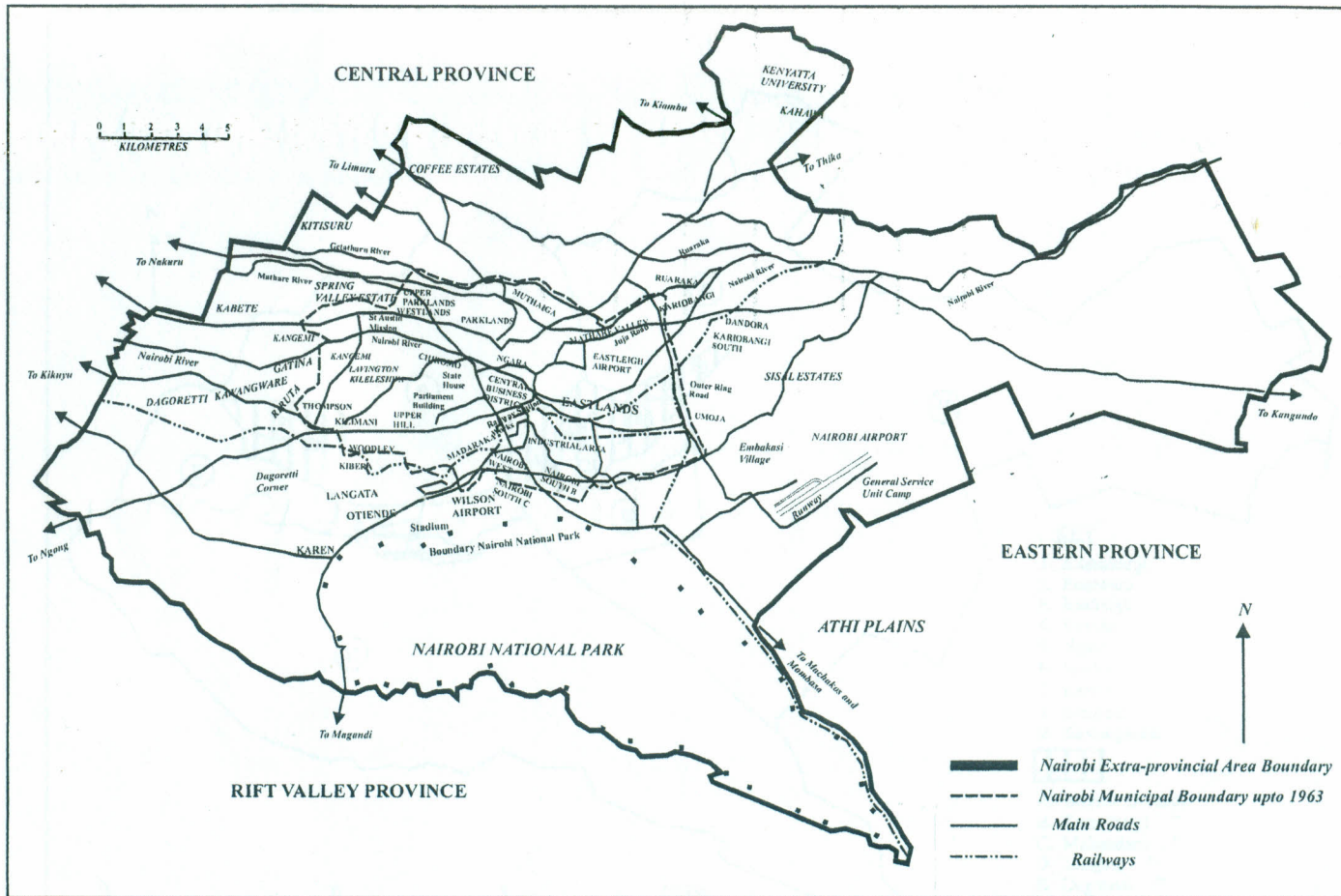
This is the patronage exercised by political leaders which involves granting largesse and other favours to party supporters, friends and relatives in return for political support, personal loyalty and service (Bayart, 1993). The prefix “neo” underscores the fact that personalization of power by political leaders is not a specific characteristic feature of the traditional political systems, but a phenomenon that exists in modern political systems.



Source: McVicar (1968)

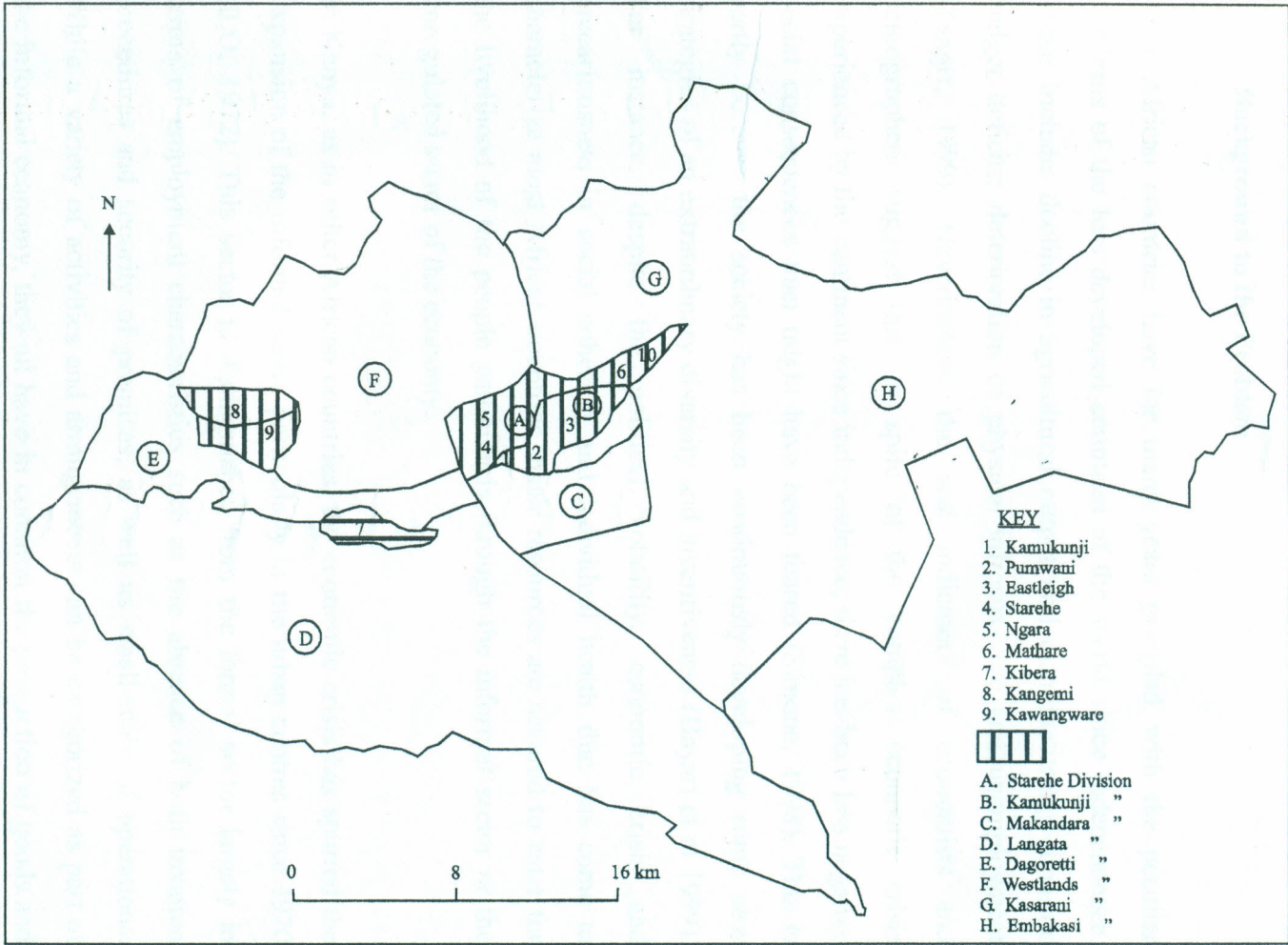
Map 1: Nairobi Area c. 1903

Source: Hake (1977)



Map 2: Nairobi Area c. 1975

Map 3: Jua Kali Sites in Nairobi c. 1996



Source: Government of Kenya (1996)

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Background to the Problem

Most African countries have for many years grappled with the peculiar problems of the less developed countries of the world since independence. These include: decline in agricultural output and manufacturing; domestic budget deficits; deterioration of physical infrastructure and unemployment (Tangri, 1999). Nevertheless, the real indicators of economists and demographers suggest that in spite of the complex economic crisis experienced by the continent since independence, there has been less negative social consequences than might have been feared (Simone, 1998). This is partly because the society has been continuously developing some new strategies of an extraordinary diversity and inventiveness (Bayart et al 1999). For instance, despite the political volatility, economic crisis and precariousness in social cohesion and individual health that has come to characterize most African countries, basic resources are secured to cater for the livelihood of the people particularly through the informal sector or the unregulated sector of the economy.

In Kenya, as in other African countries, the economic crisis has spurred the expansion of the informal sector particularly in the urban centres since 1970 (ILO, 1972). This sector is distinguished from the formal sector largely in terms of employment characteristics such as the absence of both taxation procedures and security of premises, as well as small-scale of operations. While a variety of activities and arrangements can be categorized as part of the informal economy, they all have in common the production of goods and services in unregulated manner (Esbenshades, 1998). Indeed, the more legally minded scholars point out that the informal sector is that part of the economy not embraced by existing laws. By definition therefore, the activities of the sector are illegal (Ng'ethe, 1989). This includes what Bayart et al (1999)

refers to as the real economies. Examples of such activities include prostitution, smuggling, drugs and arms trafficking.

Attempts have also been made to differentiate the informal sector from the small and medium enterprises. Masinde and Nzioki (1991) have argued that the informal sector refers to the self-employed workers who operate using simple hand tools and often without permanent business premises. In contrast, the small and medium enterprise is often seen as a small business that is already registered with the government authorities or licensed (Njoka, 2001). The term *jua kali* which is a Kiswahili term that literally means “hot sun” has been technically used in Kenya in reference to the small - scale artisanal and service enterprises (Kinuthia, 1997; King, 1996). Such enterprises usually operate in premises without a roof in the open air (Kinyanjui, 2005).

The importance of the *jua kali* sector in the economy cannot be overstated. First, it is evident that the sector has the capacity to withstand the serious economic crisis affecting the formal sector of the economy even in the face of donor fatigue as was the case in the 1980s and most of the 1990s. Second, the *jua kali* operators do not only acquire their training or apprenticeship locally, which is highly relevant to the local situation, but their training is also efficient in comparison to the conventional methods which place a lot of emphasis on certification.

Although there have been substantial investigations on the informal enterprise in Africa (King, 1996; Kinuthia, 1997; McCormick and Pedersen, 2001), large gaps remain in knowledge concerning many domains of the *jua kali* sector. This economy relies heavily on complex interactions between households, social networks, civil, public and private sectors. As a consequence, there is a great need for historically conscious studies on the sector in order to understand the operations and interrelationships of the *jua kali* enterprises. King and McGrath (1999), have decried the glaring absence of historical

studies on the sector in Africa. Similarly, King (1996), has challenged indigenous Kenyans to undertake research into the *jua kali* enterprise and particularly to recreate and examine the historical origins of the sector prior to 1964. This study is therefore a response to this challenge.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The existence of the informal sector is a fact of life in Kenya today. Yet, no historical study has been undertaken to investigate the evolution of the *jua kali* sub-sector, which employs millions of Kenyans. Understanding of this phenomenon is crucial in fostering the various forces that could enhance the economy. Moreover, the study becomes even more urgent as most of the unemployed populations in the urban centres have regained a means of livelihood in the sector since independence (Van Zwanenberg, 1972). This study therefore, examines the emergence, development and consequences of the *jua kali* sector in Kenya. In particular, it examines the genesis and the transformation of the *jua kali* sector of Nairobi, as well as the colonial and post-colonial government policies on the sector from 1899 to 1998, and their consequences. Further, it identifies the factors that have enabled the sector to survive into the post-colonial era as well as the problems it has encountered. Central to the investigation is a conscious effort to answer the following questions.

1. What are the factors that led to the emergence of the informal sector in Nairobi?
2. What is the source of the technological skills that have promoted the *jua kali* sector in Nairobi?
3. What were the policies enacted by the colonial government in Kenya with regard to the *jua kali* sector?

4. Are there policies that have been formulated by the Kenyan state with regard to the sector since independence, and how have they impacted on the sector?
5. Are there factors that have enhanced the sector's dynamism, resilience, and creativity up to the post-colonial times?
6. How has the sector impacted on the social, economic and political welfare of the city of Nairobi up to the post-colonial period?

## 1.2 Study Objectives

The study is based on the following objectives:

1. To examine the genesis of the informal sector, specifically the *jua kali* sector, in Nairobi, Kenya;
2. To analyse the sources of artisanal skills among the Africans and the historical development of the *jua kali* sector in Kenya during the colonial era;
3. To identify and examine the colonial government policies on the *jua kali* enterprise, and their consequences;
4. To analyse the policies promulgated by the Kenyan state on the sector since independence and their consequences;
5. To assess the factors that have enhanced the sector's dynamism, resilience and creativity up to the post-colonial times;
6. To examine the impact of the *jua kali* enterprise with regard to poverty alleviation in post-colonial Kenya.

## 1.3 Research Premises

The study is premised on the following research assumptions, that:

1. The economic exploitation of Kenya by the British during colonialism stimulated the informal enterprises among the Africans as a survival strategy;
2. Technological skills of the indigenous communities of Kenya

provided the basis on which the *jua kali* enterprise emerged and developed;

3. Discriminative colonial policies in Kenya inhibited the growth of the African *jua kali* industries into large-scale manufacturing enterprises;
4. Patronage politics in post-colonial Kenya has contributed to both lack of clear policies and procrastination with regard to the informal economy, and this has consequently led to the stagnation of *jua kali* enterprise;
5. The complex interactions between kinship and other social networks have enabled the *jua kali* sector to remain resilient since the colonial era.
6. *Jua kali* enterprise provides the basis for self-reliance and alleviation of poverty among the urban poor in post-colonial Kenya.

#### **1.4 Literature Review**

Although a lot of literature exists on the informal sector from different parts of the world, most of it is ahistorical (Elwood, 1988; de Soto, 1989; King, 1996). Thus, there is a great need for historical studies on the sector particularly in Kenya. The term informal sector was adopted and brought to prominence by the ILO's (1972) study on the Kenyan economy. The study identified a host of income-generating activities outside the relatively small-based urban formal sector. Informal sector is described as one that is characterized by activities that are unorganised. Such activities are reported to be dominated by recent migrants, the very young, the very old, and women who are unable to obtain regular employment in the formal sector.

According to ILO (1972), the informal sector enterprises are also characterized by ease of entry, small scale and labour intensive operation. Moreover, technology in the sector is adapted and skills are acquired outside the formal school system. These characteristics contrast with those of the

formal – sector in several respects, namely: difficult entry, frequent reliance on overseas resources; corporate ownership; large scale of operation; capital-intensive and often imported technology; formally acquired skills; and protected markets.

Although the observations made by the ILO report have been widely viewed as representing the facts about the informal sector, its conclusions with regard to this sector have left some yawning gaps that the current study has endeavoured to address. For example, the manner of intersection or articulation between the formal sector and the informal sector in terms of training and sourcing of materials was not addressed and was in fact seen to be non-existent. Second, the kinship and ethnic interrelations and their impact on the sector were also not adequately addressed. The ILO report (1972) is invaluable to the current study as it constitutes the main point of reference. Since 1972 when the ILO report was published, a lot of change has taken place in the sector, which needs to be analysed and made public.

Hart's study (1973), is another pioneer work on the informal sector. In one of the earliest uses of the term "informal sector", he provides a description of the income sources of the Frafra, an ethnic group resident in Nima, a slum area in Accra, Ghana and divides urban income opportunities into formal and informal. He asserts that informal opportunities can further be subdivided into legitimate and illegitimate opportunities. The legitimate opportunities would include primary and secondary activities such as farming and shoe making. Others include tertiary enterprises such as housing and transport, as well as petty trading. Among the activities that he categorized as illegitimate, include prostitution, stealing and drug pushing.

As Rempel (1974) points out, Hart's article is a description of informal activity in a community rather than in a sector of an economy. Therefore, he discusses a wide range of activities in the community some of which can

endanger the society. For instance, drug trafficking and robbery are clearly illicit. Hart's work is important for this study as it provides a good basis for comparison between the Ghanaian informal sector and the Kenyan informal sector. In our study, the aspect of historical change in the sector is examined.

Several studies have been undertaken on the informal sector in Latin America, which include (Web, 1975; Merrick, 1976; Castells and Portes, 1989; Hernando de Soto, 1989). Merrick (1976) and Webb (1975) have undertaken two major surveys on the urban informal sector in Brazil and Peru, respectively. In general, they posit that the sector is largely a provider of services with the major occupation groupings being shopkeepers, tailors, cobblers, launderers, and street sellers. The two researchers state that some of the distinguishing characteristics of the informal sector include age, education and sex. The majority of those in the sector are described as either the youth or the elderly, with women being the most dominant group. Moreover, the majority of the operators were found not to have completed primary education. In addition, Merrick's study gives the distinct impression that the informal sector serves as a secondary labour market. His estimate is that only 15 per cent of the workers in the sector at Belo Horizonte in Brazil are heads of households. He argues that this probably explains why the members of the middle age bracket are absent from the sector. Ironically, it is clear from the existing studies on Kenya including the ILO report of 1972, that some of those in the informal sector have good education including tertiary level certification unlike the situation in Brazil and Peru.

On the other hand, Castells and Portes (1989) perceive informality in Latin America as representing a politically generated category of small-scale enterprises that are deliberately detached from formal enterprises. In their view, such small-scale enterprises are run separately with the intention of avoiding labour and other state regulations that govern the conduct of the

formal sector. In this conception, the informal sector acts as a cheap sub-contractor to the formal sector by reducing its running costs.

Similarly, the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto (1989), argues that the growth of the informal sector is connected to "Mercantilism", a system whereby private capital is given preferential treatment by the state, such as monopoly over lucrative businesses in return for kickbacks to the politicians and the bureaucracy. He asserts that informal sector arises from the fact that those who miss out on such preferential arrangements by virtue of lack of political connections or lack of resources are forced to join the sector. He also emphasizes that the informal sector is internally highly stratified. For instance, the two categories of informal trading namely, street hawking and informal markets are viewed not as rigidly compartmentalized activities but rather as different levels of development of the same businesses. Thus, he views those who begin as street vendors as people who do so with the intentions of moving on to better economic activities such as shop retailing or even wholesaling enterprises. De Soto's views are relevant to the informal sector in Kenya in terms of providing a theoretical insight into the dynamics, resilience and other developments in the informal sector. For instance, there is evidence that those in the informal sector lack enough capital to venture into formal businesses. This is because the political class, which owns most of the capital in concert with multinational companies, heavily exploit the poor members of the community. Viewed in this way, the informal sector is the result of dependence and underdevelopment in the less developed countries.

Some studies on the informal sector have been carried out in Asia. They include Elwood (1988) and Madhu Singh (1996). Elwood (1988), has undertaken a pioneer study on the informal sector in Asia under the auspices of the IDRC and notes the scarcity of socio-economic studies on informal industries in Asia. The intent of the study was to find out the role of artisans in the economic development of the region. It therefore examines in detail the

large and heterogeneous groups of workers employed as artisans in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and Philippines. One of the conclusions of his study is that the rapid growth of exports and competition from factory products is forcing fundamental changes on the informal sector that traditionally has been responsible for creating millions of jobs.

In addition, he observes that there exists an official bias in favour of large industries. Government support agencies such as those that give credit tend to focus on the industries located in urban areas. Small producers get insufficient help such as occasional visits from the extension workers. Elwood tackles significant issues of relevance to this study. The challenges encountered by the informal artisans in Asia are similar to those affecting the Kenyan informal sector. Many of them suffer from demolition of structures and lack of credit.

Madhu Singh's (1996) empirical study, explores training and conditions of training among the small enterprises in three districts of New Delhi, namely Trinagar, Sangarpur and Utam Nagar. He uses eight informal enterprise activities namely, furniture making, metalwork, manufacturing, motor scooter repair, tailoring, the manufacture of plastic items, office supplies, pottery and printing. He identifies two broad categories of small enterprises in New Delhi. One of these categories is the small enterprise, which specifically supplies to the large enterprises. Unfortunately, such small enterprises become arms of the larger concerns, providing cheap labour to the large enterprises. The other category of enterprises produce goods and services for the local community using family labour. The issues raised in Madhu's study, such as the role of social relations in small-scale artisanal enterprises have an important bearing on Kenyan informal sector in regard to the training and employment of those in the sector.

In the African continent, some scholars have identified the informal sector as an important contributor to economic development. Oluranti (1986), examines the impact of the urban informal sector of Ibadan on income, employment generation, and skill formation. Using analytical methods drawn from the field of economics such as the use of employment and earning regression models as well as informal employment probability models, the study concludes that the informal sector workers compare favourably with their formal sector counterparts. In terms of skill development, the study posits that the system of apprenticeship is the most efficient mode of training in Ibadan. Indeed, 90% of the entrepreneurs in Ibadan were trained through this system.

Apart from highlighting the crucial contribution of the sector to employment, earnings and skill formation, the study establishes that the urban informal sector, may not diminish with time, but will remain a major element of the development in the urban market of Ibadan. In spite of its contribution to the scholarship, this is an economics study and not particular about the historical evolution of the informal sector in Ibadan. Nevertheless, the size of Ibadan in terms of population, which by 1988 was reported to be about 1.4 million people, compares well with the population of Nairobi at around the same period. At any rate, there is evidence that the informal sector currently employs most of the population in the two cities whose respective population has surpassed the 3 million mark (Oketch, 2005).

Yankson (1996) focuses on the small-scale aluminium industry in Ghana. He argues that like many other developing countries, Ghana in the 1980s pursued industrialization as a means of stimulating accelerated development and improving the standard of living of the population through the generation of employment and income-earning opportunities. Unfortunately, in the attempt to promote the growth of the industrial sector, the small-scale industrial sector did not receive adequate attention in spite of the fact that manufacturing sector in the country has always been dominated by small-scale establishments.

The study identifies a number of structural characteristics of the Ghanaian small-scale industry such as the use of locally made tools and machines which are similar to the characteristics of the informal sector in Kenya. For instance, most operators in Ghana start their enterprises with very small amounts of liquid capital and depend mainly on their own resources or help from relatives and friends to start their enterprises. The current study investigates these characteristics and analyses the factors that have enabled the artisans to become resilient even in the face of great economic and political problems.

A number of studies have also been conducted focusing on the small-scale enterprises in East Africa. One of these is Dorothy McCormick and Poul Pedersen (ed.) (1998). Coming from the specialisation of development studies, economics, sociology and geography, the authors tackle various themes pertaining to the small-scale enterprises in Africa, such as the alternative paradigms that explain the persistence of small enterprises in the less developed countries. For instance, the study observes that there exist a variation between the three East African countries in terms of the growth of small-scale enterprises, marked by more activity in Kenya. Similarly, Patrick Alila and Poul Pedersen (2001), explore the different aspects of micro enterprise development in East Africa in the 1990s. These two studies give a lot of insight into the wider environment within which micro-enterprise development has taken place in the region, including political and economic instability as well as poverty.

There are some case studies on the informal sector in Kenya specifically, most of which are either sociological studies or purely economic surveys that analyse this phenomenon in the contemporary period. Such studies include (Child, 1973; Rempel, 1975; Kaplinsky, 1976; and Killick, 1976). Child's (1973) empirical study on small-scale rural industry in Kenya establishes that informal industrial enterprises are typically small but provide a better than

average income for their owners. He concludes that, return rates on invested capital, exceeds that of the modern sector by a substantial margin.

In his view, capital invested in the informal sector contributes immensely to Gross National Product (GNP) and creates more employment opportunities than does an equivalent amount of capital investment in the modern sector. He asserts that the wages earned by informal sector workers compare tolerably well with working class incomes of the modern sector and wages in commercial agriculture. Out of these observations, he makes some policy recommendations in a bid to promote the sector. He calls for the removal of legal impediments, the provision of infrastructure for the informal sector, expansion of the small business extension services and the expansion of subsidized –on the – job training programmes for those in the informal sector. This study examines the urban informal sector, unlike Child whose focus was on informal sector development in the rural areas.

Rempel (1974), divides the informal sector into two classes namely, the potential (viable group) and the “community of the poor”. He says that the community of the poor views its conditions as temporary. In this group, therefore, are people who are in a hopeless situation as they find themselves unable to join the formal sector where they believe they rightly belong. Thus, their helplessness breeds an attitude or culture of poverty. He further states that the second group comprises those who consider their current condition permanent and consciously strive to improve their lot. He describes this group as having potential to develop due to their rejection of wage labour in the formal sector, and perceive their activities in the informal sector as sources of the necessary income to escape from poverty. Rempel concludes that this group needs a favourable and enabling environment providing protection and possibilities of expansion due to its great potential for employment generation and economic development. His findings are investigated in our study in order to establish whether this situation still obtains in the informal sector in Kenya

especially after the introduction of the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s.

Leys (1975) and the World Bank mission to Kenya (1975) are sceptical of the informal sector. The World Bank mission to Kenya (1975) perceives the informal sector as a residual employer of those rural urban migrants who fail to get jobs in the formal sector of the economy. Consequently, it argues that the development of the informal sector cannot be the basis of development for Kenya. It should be noted however, that whereas some of those in the sector include those who miss jobs in the formal sector, it does not necessarily follow that their activity in the informal sector is insignificant to the economic development of the country. Leys (1975), argues that the informal sector is primarily a product of the very intense exploitation of labour by the formal sector of the economy and it serves to provide the formal sector with goods and services at low prices. In the final analysis, he says, the role of the informal sector is to enable the formal sector to acquire high profits (1975:267). The allegations by Leys and the World Bank call for deeper research and theorization to ascertain the impact of the sector on Kenya. This is important especially because the role of the informal sector in the economy continues to generate controversy. Moreover, since the 1990s the World Bank has re-examined its attitude towards unemployment. Previously, both the IMF and World Bank policies were grounded on the presumption that markets by themselves lead to efficient outcomes in economic growth (Stiglitz, 2002).

Killick (1976) and Kaplinsky (1976), are concerned with the problems that plague the informal sector in Kenya, and seek solutions in a bid to make it viable and dynamic. Killick discusses the role of the sector in the context of the overall development strategy of the country and makes several observations. The first observation is that the sector was given a key role to play by the government's 1975-78 Development Plan because of the emphasis given to the concept of redistribution through growth. Second, he observes

that a discrepancy exists between the rates of modernization in Kenya and the rate of modern sector employment as illustrated by the growing number of the landless that was estimated to be over 400,000 by 1976. He concludes that the government's response to the ILO report (1972) initially appeared sympathetic but the latter's recommendations were grossly diluted by the government to the extent that no coherent policy seems to have been formulated on the informal sector.

Consequently, Killick makes a number of recommendations for promoting the sector. First, he points out that interconnections between the informal sector and the wider economy are so important and complex that a systems approach to the informal sector policy would be highly desirable. Second, he reiterates the importance of the urban-rural interconnections and observes that research and policy ought to be geared to both urban and rural areas. Finally, he concludes that policies on technology are likely to be of special importance to the future development of the informal sector. This is because technology can determine the extent to which the sector could become dynamic, contributing to rapid overall growth, or sterile. Thus, he calls for simple technologies that are labour-intensive and that require little in-puts of capital, feasible for very small-scale enterprises.

Kaplinsky (1976) sampled 65 bakeries in Kenya, accounting for approximately 96 per cent of the total flour consumed in Kenya for the commercial manufacture of bread, scones, cakes and biscuits. From this, he observes that bakeries using small locally made brick ovens are more profitable for Kenya than those using large imported ovens (1976:92). He concludes that a number of obstacles exist that inhibit the diffusion of appropriate technology in Kenya, notably the role of the state, cartelisation, market characteristics, and the emergence of an African capitalist class with different interests from that of the majority of Kenyans.

Some scholars have raised issues on the artisanal sub-sector in Kenya. King (1977) gives a general account of the development of the artisanal skills in Kenya up to 1970s. He argues that the missionaries and the colonial government started vocational primary schools for Africans at the early years of colonial rule. Most pupils in these schools were indentured to follow the basic trades of masonry and carpentry, although in some missions it was possible to offer courses such as teaching, nursing and catechism. The colonial government encouraged vocational education by giving grants – in – aid to only those schools offering vocational courses. One of the reasons why such courses were introduced within the school system in Kenya at this time was because of the absence of a good industrial structure, like in Britain where apprenticeship was based on the industrial sector. In colonial Kenya, the school tried to substitute for the firm (Ibid. p. 23). After school, the students proceeded to a central government school namely the Native Industrial Training Depot, Kabete.

He further asserts that the decision to apprentice Africans stemmed from the needs of the White Settlers and the government to procure cheap labour. The White Settlers were unhappy with the monopolies enjoyed by the Indian professionals who dominated virtually every skilled position. King argues that Indians were responsible for introducing to Kenya a technology that was intermediate between that of the large formal corporation and the traditional African crafts. This new technology involved a lot of improvisation in terms of the tools and the materials used. Although his work provides a general account on the basis of artisanal skills among the Africans in Kenya, the work underplays the skills of the indigenous communities.

Obilo (1989) focuses on employment potential of urban informal garages in Nairobi. From his research, he points out that such informal garages have great potential for employment. Some of the garages studied engaged an average of thirteen vehicle repairers daily. Such informal garages are

characterized by certain common factors such as conducting their activities in undeveloped plots, and operating from temporary structures. Most such garages are normally not registered by the government.

He concludes that motor vehicle repair engages more people than most other activities in the informal sector since motor vehicles have become an important means of transport both for industrial products as well as passenger transport in the growing urban centres, especially Nairobi. Such garages undertake various repairs and service activities, which give them a high potential for employment in comparison to the formal sector. Among the activities performed include, panel beating, engine repair, electrical repair and welding. Although Obilo's economic study is crucial to the understanding of the *jua kali* motor vehicle artisans, it does not deal with the historical evolution of this sub-sector. Also, the study does not focus on other artisanal *jua kali* activities such as carpentry, metal fabrication and shoe repair.

McCormick (1992)'s study on the informal sector in Nairobi focuses on the various small or tiny informal firms. She observes that most of them never expand beyond six workers and concludes that informal firms remain small because of the fear of risk. Since the socio-economic consequences of failure are very severe in Nairobi, entrepreneurs try to protect themselves from failure in four ways. First, such enterprises are run in rent-free quarters, mainly using family labour and little capital. Second, most of them manufacture standard products for a known market. Third, rather than expanding a single enterprise, most of them diversify income and assets. Finally, rather than transacting using their assets, such fixed assets like land are preserved free from debt. Such factors ensure that the *jua kali* firms remain small, thus militating against the formation of a dynamic manufacturing sector. Like Obilo (1989), McCormick's study is ahistorical. Hence despite her emphasis on the need for appropriate policies, there is need for historical data on the development of

these firms and the evolution of government policies, since the colonial period.

King (1996) undertook one of the most important studies on the *jua kali* sector in Kenya. He analyses the changes and developments in the sector between 1970 and 1995. The study traces what he calls pre-history of the informal sector in Kenya to the East African Royal Commission 1953-1955 and posits that it was this commission that highlighted the colonial government's contribution to the failure of the sector because of placing restrictions and regulations, which inhibited the advancement of Africans in colonial Kenya. Such obstacles ranged from lack of licenses and credit, to restrictions on the use and sale of land itself. This notwithstanding, he argues that from early 1970s a lot of developments have taken place in the Kenyan informal sector. For instance, Kenya has adopted her own policy papers on *jua kali* development.

Even more important, King has traced the life histories of the *jua kali* people in Nairobi from the early 1970s to the 1990s, showing some of their daily challenges. Moreover, he analyses some of the existing problems in the sector such as macro-economic reforms, which have been implemented through external conditionalities imposed on the Kenya government. He, therefore, underscores the need for more local researchers to contribute knowledge towards the sector, as most studies in the field, have been undertaken by foreigners. He states that:

The growth of a Kenyan capacity to monitor and analyse development in the sector has been affected consequently by this broader malaise affecting higher education research environments across sub-Saharan Africa. One result has been the absence of the major academic monographs by the Kenyan scholars on micro-enterprises, small-scale industry or the informal and *jua kali* sector in the last 20 years (King, 1996:10).

The study, responds to King's (1996) challenge for more Kenyans to research on small-scale enterprises and reconstruct the historical origins of the *jua kali* economy prior to independence.

Kinyanjui and Fowler (2004) on the other hand, examine the growth of K-Rep as a micro enterprise support agency over more than twenty years. They shed some useful light on some of the challenges encountered by the informal sector since independence, and some of the possible avenues of funding for those in the *jua kali* sector. The work highlights the twin aspects of commitment and good governance, as the two pillars that have enabled K-Rep to mature into an international Non-Governmental Organisation. Finally, the study emphasizes the intricate relations between good governance and success in *jua kali* operations.

A number of scholars have focused on colonial capitalism in Kenya. These include (Wolff, 1974; Van Zwanenberg, 1975; Langdon, 1977; and Kaplinsky, 1980). These scholars have applied the dependency and underdevelopment theories to analyse the political economy of Kenya since the advent of colonialism. Wolff (1974) and Van Zwanenburg (1975) agree that the British administrators were consistent in their actions, which aimed at advancing the interests of the white settlers and the British economy. This involved the exploitation of African labour with the consequent extraction of surpluses from the colony to the metropole. Langdon (1977) and Kaplinsky (1980) on the other hand, observe that the indigenous bourgeoisie that took power at independence has not transcended its comprador character. Rather, it is unproductive and incapable of spearheading a transition to real capitalist development. This is because of its complete dependence on foreign capital which it operates as an agent or subordinate partner.

Although the dependency school has made an important contribution to the theoretical analysis of the Kenyan political economy, the current study takes

cognisance of the deficiencies of this paradigm, which fails to provide the way out of underdevelopment and dependency. Moreover, the theory has been challenged by the orthodox Marxist scholars including Kitching (1980) and Nicolai Swainson (1980) who have illustrated that an indigenous capitalist class was developing in Kenya, and that its roots lay in the pre-colonial era. In the current study, the emergence of the informal sector is analysed using several theoretical paradigms in order to unravel the origin of the phenomenon in Kenya.

A number of historical studies have been undertaken on the political economy of Africa particularly in the post-independence era. Even though some of these studies do not focus on the *jua kali* sector specifically, they throw some light on the economic environment within which the informal sector flourishes in Africa. These include (Anyang' Nyong'o, 1988; Coughlin, 1988; Mkandawire, 1992; Himbara, 1994; and Aseka, 1996). Anyang' Nyong'o decries the nature of industrial development of Kenya from the colonial times to the 1980s which he refers to as import – substitution industrialization. He argues that such efforts have led to the creation of monopolies thereby impacting negatively on the process of industrialization. This is because the process is dominated by local subsidiaries of multinational corporations, which at times corrupt government officials in order to have an upper hand in economic issues. He contends that most manufacturers in Kenya are either subsidiaries of multinational corporations or Asian businessmen with global interests that often conflict with the national desire to build up local technological capacity. He therefore, points out the importance of the state in the process of industrialization: the nation state must have control over the process of development in order for domestic resources to be exploited for the benefit of the people. He concludes that the industrialisation of Kenya will depend on politically strong and nationalistic local entrepreneurs.

Coughlin (1988) echoes Nyong'o on the role of the state in the process of industrialization in Kenya. He examines the roofing and milk – packaging materials industries in Kenya and observes that Kenya uses the wrong materials in industrial production. For instance, clay tiles would be more beneficial to Kenya than corrugated iron sheets as this could create more jobs and save foreign exchange, as clay is available locally. Similarly, plastic sachets would be more viable for milk packaging industry than tetra-pack laminated paper cartons. He concludes that clarity of purpose and strong political will is needed in order for the right choices to be made to benefit industry in Kenya. In our study, the economic policies of the government are examined in relation to the *jua kali* industry.

Mkandawire (1992) argues that one of the outcomes of colonial rule in Africa was that African countries lagged behind in terms of industrialization. Unfortunately, the basic industrialization strategy pursued by most African countries was import substitution, which involved providing special incentives to industry. Such incentives included protected market, cheap credit, favourable exchange rates and subsidies for industries. All these efforts have not borne fruit. Industrialization in Africa has therefore, proved unsuccessful.

Mkandawire attributes this failure to a number of factors such as too much state intervention in the industrialization process in line with the Keynesian economics, which advocates state intervention to correct various market failures and continued dependence of African economies on the developed countries. Sadly, this has led to the take-over of fiscal and monetary roles of the state in Africa by international institutions. Third, the political class in most African countries set up industrial projects based on no economic rationale whatsoever. Finally, since at independence, there was scarcity of skilled manpower, most countries became over-reliant on expatriates in economic matters. Given that most so-called foreign advisors knew nothing

about the political economy of the countries they were supposed to advise, they ended up misadvising African governments.

Himbara (1994) undertook a study of the development of capitalism in Kenya starting from the pre-colonial up to the post-colonial era. His emphasis is on the importance of the Asians whom he credits for the development of commerce and industry particularly in Kenya. Consequently, he underplays the importance of the European and African entrepreneurs in the development of the economy. He contends that such a study does not require hair splitting theoretical arguments given that East African Indians were simply the first in the field, having played a merchant role in East African coastal trading enclaves for several centuries: Europeans and African businessmen could not match the Indians given their late entry into commerce and industry and their over reliance on the state apparatus for technical and financial support.

Himbara's study has a number of flaws. First, its objectivity is doubtful because no proper theoretical tools are used to analyse the basic hypotheses and assumptions. Second, it overlooks conclusions reached by other scholars such as Michael Cowen (1975) and Colin Leys (1975) who established that indigenous capitalism was already in progress especially in Central Kenya prior to the advent of colonialism. Moreover, there is ample evidence that Asians in Kenya have also benefited from state patronage, a factor that has greatly improved their fortunes in post-colonial Kenya. Consequently, there is great need to investigate the history of the informal sector since the colonial times in order to establish the roles played by different economic forces in Kenya.

Aseka (1996) analyses the problems encountered by the African countries in general during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and attributes problems such as poverty and poor backward technology to the globalisation process. He asserts that the Bretton Woods institutions namely the International Monetary Fund and the

World Bank were formed under the UN umbrella for the purpose of supervising the global economy. By so doing, the West and the USA have managed to maintain their expanding economic interests in the world. Thus, there exists a new global political economy in the current century within which international trade and foreign investment have become political tools for suppressing the less developed countries of the world. As such, African problems in the present and next century should, therefore be comprehended within the context of the continent's integration into this global economy.

He summarizes the causes of Africa's economic crises and attributes them to a complex mix of historical factors such as wasted resources, lack of skilled manpower, low trade, misguided policies, political upheavals, and sometimes, bad luck. Though his work does not focus on the small-scale enterprises, it nevertheless provides a clear macroscopic picture within which to perceive the crisis experienced by African countries in the 1990s.

The review of literature above, illustrates that the informal sector plays an important role in the employment of millions of people in the less developed parts of the world, including Kenya.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

In early 1950s, development theory was formulated by Western scholars to analyse the political and socio-economic realities of the time. Its main concern was how the economies of European colonies could be transformed and made more productive after the Second World War (Leys, 1996:5). The aim of the developmental theorists was to guide the colonial and ex-colonial states to accelerate their national economies in the international environment. The state was perceived to have a cardinal role in the process, given that it was supposed to be the agent of development. By the end of 1950s, however, the original optimism that development theory would yield rapid results began to wane. There was general disappointment with the theory especially in Asia

and Latin America where its critics felt that it was not only ahistorical but also lacked self criticism (Leys, 1996).

Modernization theory, which emerged in the early 1960s, was the American response to the failure of development theory. Modernization was spearheaded by sociologists and political scientists. Their basic argument was that in the transition from traditional to modern forms of social organization like those already completed in the industrialized west, the complex interactions between social change and economic development could be traced with some precision using structural-functional analysis as derived from Max Weber and Talcott Parsons. The modernization theorists viewed underdevelopment in the Third World as the result of internal shortcomings specific to underdeveloped societies in question. Lack of their development was perceived to be the result of pre-colonial rather than their colonial history (Berger, 1994). So, the modernization theories envisaged a situation whereby modern values could be diffused through education and technology transfer to the periphery.

Unfortunately, modernization theory did not seem to satisfy most scholars particularly in the so-called developing countries. By the late 1960s, the UN led mission to modernize the Third world was increasingly challenged by revolutionaries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Among the most ardent critics of the modernization paradigm included Andre Gunder Frank (1976), Walter Rodney (1976), and Samir Amin (1976). Using the concept of dependency and underdevelopment, they ably attacked modernization theory. The main criticism levelled against it was that its policies caused exploitation rather than the development of poor countries. These critics further argued that inflows from foreign investors to the developing countries led to greater extraction from poor countries. Thus, world trade was seen as perpetuating structures of underdevelopment and dependency in the Third World.

By the second half of the 1970s, dependency theory had also reached its hegemonic apex. Many scholars became sceptical about its usefulness. This was mainly because even though the situation of dependency was still in existence, the theory did not answer the question of how to eliminate the phenomenon. The theory maintained the orthodox view that economic growth through capitalism constitutes development. The neo Marxists who advanced this theory were permanently transfixed on economic determinism as if economics had the capacity to explain all the diverse aspects of humanity (Kisiang'ani, 2003:40). Furthermore, by the late 1970s emphasis on the corruption and authoritarianism of many Third World states shifted the blame for underdevelopment back on the Third World (Berger, 1994).

The demise of the dependency theory was followed by the emergence of new approaches. One of the alternative approaches that emerged to contest the relevance of the dependency theory was the Marxist theory of articulation of modes of production before the rise of a new wave of structuralism called post-structuralism. The question whether we live in post-modernity began to be posed in the 1980s, and postmodernism which employs post-structural approaches became the most central field for contemporary theoretical development (Savage and Warde, 1993). This new concept reverberated through many disciplines including philosophy, literature, aesthetics, media studies, and sociology.

The claim of post-modernism is that all things gain their meaning only in specific contexts and if abstracted from these and grounded by general principles, they become distorted. Some of the key features of post-modernism include a new radical scepticism about the role of scientific knowledge; a new concern with language rather than consciousness and aesthetics rather than morality. It is bellied by a distrust of all global totalising discourses and calls for enhanced reflexivity on the part of individuals about their identity and grounds for their conduct.

Post-modernism, therefore, is a general approach whose aim is to analyse the present realities. However, the very core of post-modern thinking that is characterized by its unity of critique without having a unity of theory renders the approach inadequate for the analysis of African political economy in general. For instance, even though various aspects of modern life have become common-place in Africa such as aircrafts, computers, television etc, we still have pre-capitalist elements side by side, which do not fit into the general idea of post-modernity and have not been theorized. As Kisiang'ani (2003:49) observes, post-modernism only becomes relevant to Africa with regard to questioning the universalising tendencies of Western civilization, but not at all with regard to addressing the unique experiences of the African people both before and after the colonial onslaught. In any case, a question still remains as to when African can be said to have become fully modern. Post-structuralism led to a revision in Marxism which led to new analytical Marxism and post-Marxism. The former is also referred to as rational choice, which became closely related to the new institutionalist economics which generated the notion of neo-patrimonialism.

In this study, an integrated approach deriving key concepts and approaches from various paradigms has been adopted. These include the dependency school, the articulation of modes of production, and the concept of neo-patrimonialism as expounded by Bayart (1993). Although the dependency and underdevelopment school has been faulted by critics on several grounds, (Leys, 1996), the paradigm has been found useful in the analysis of the Kenyan history. The dependency school identifies three obstacles that bedevil the development of capitalism in Kenya. These include; the structures of the colonial economy, monopoly of foreign capital and the use of state resources by the indigenous bourgeoisie to entrench its power in the political field (Leys, 1996).

Raphael Kaplinsky (1980), one of the proponents of the dependency school has argued that any peripheral country that lacks a large internal market faces absolute limits to capitalistic development, and there exists ample evidence to support this view. For instance, the Kenyan bourgeoisie has been too dependent on foreign capital since independence. In the 1980s, for example, the British and the US investments dominated the economy (Leys, 1996; Ochieng', 1989). Another proponent of the theory, Steven Langdon (1977) has observed that the indigenous bourgeoisie in Kenya is still incipient and has not transcended its comprador character (Ochieng', 1989). The local bourgeoisie is therefore viewed as dependent on foreign capital for which it works either as agents or junior partners. Kenyan economy is, therefore, seen as neo-colonial economy whose development is curtailed by continuous transfers of surpluses obtained locally to the various metropolises. Consequently, massive unemployment and widespread poverty are experienced among the ordinary people as a result of which they venture into the informal sector.

To the neo Marxists, the problems of the periphery of the world economy are not a tropical disease, but an integral part of the strength at the core of the world economy (Cooper, 1983). A worldwide division of labour relegates the periphery to primary production and urban centres are consigned to the task of organizing the drainage of commodities and surplus from farms and mines. Similarly, technical and social development in rural areas is frozen, while urban labour is pushed into a foreign-dominated sector that utilizes capital intensive technology. As a result, few jobs are created and this leads to the emergence of a marginal sector in the urban, squeezed between the overpopulated, backward countryside and stagnant employment in industry. The so-called marginals, get by as hawkers, prostitutes, casual labourers, or small-scale artisans (Cooper, 1983: 14). Thus, the continued migration of workers to town is seen as a response but not as a solution, to the dependence induced in rural Africa by the penetration of the world economy.

The dependency school, however, fails to provide an alternative development theory to bail Kenya out of this quagmire. In the first place, like other leftist paradigms, it has paid little attention to the problem of social transformation in places like Kenya where some indigenous capitalism evidently exists and whose origin dates back to the pre-colonial era (Cowen and Mac William, 1996). Moreover, there is evidence that although Kenya opted for a capitalist's economy from 1963 and embraced foreign investors, the interests of the indigenous bourgeoisie and those of the foreigners have never been harmonious (Ochieng' 1989; Berman, 1990). The dependency paradigm therefore suffers from a conceptual rigidity. The relations of the supposedly marginal workers in the informal sector with the formal sector of economy, is far more complex and fluid, than the theory suggests (Cooper, 1983: 15).

The Kenyan situation, which is characterized by the complex articulation of both indigenous non-capitalist social formations and metropolitan capital, cannot be adequately analysed using the dependency school alone. Consequently, the articulation of modes of production approach and the concept of neo-patrimonialism are adopted to fulfil these shortcomings. The articulation of modes production paradigm emerged in the 1970s as one of the radical approaches, which were critical of the dependency school. It emphasizes that some of the pre-capitalist modes of production in the periphery have proved highly resilient to the expansion of capitalism and have not disappeared as anticipated:

The problem of underdevelopment in the Third World is the result of a more protracted transition caused by the fact that the process of modernization and urban industrialization in the periphery are dependent for a long time on pre-capitalist modes of production in the country side which have articulated with an externally imposed capitalist mode of production (Berger, 1994:263).

According to this paradigm, the way in which the capitalist mode of production is articulated with pre-capitalist modes of production constitutes

the field of contradictions of the class struggles in the social formations where this articulation occurs. The rationale behind this articulation lies in the fact that capitalism needs to conserve the pre-capitalist modes of production at the same time as it dissolves them (Leys 1996:60). The strength of capitalism lies in the fact that it does not organize its own reproduction. While the daily reproduction of labour power necessarily takes place near the mine or factory, the social cost of those not actually on the job is absorbed by the surviving pre-capitalist forms of production in rural Africa (Cooper, 1983:9; Ndeda, 1991). The countryside is, therefore, the locus of reproduction in the city and this explains why since the colonial period, the African employees in the urban have managed to survive on low wages.

The articulation of modes of production approach is relevant to this study for several reasons. First, the state apparatus that was inherited from the colonial powers in Africa was taken over substantially unaltered. It supports an elite and a sub-elite that is relatively well paid (Arrighi, 1973). This elite, therefore, forms the political basis of the state. The effect is that the state policies understandably favour relatively high wages, which in turn encourage the maintenance of the policy of using capital intensive methods of production. The impact, according to Arrighi is growth without development so that the small modern sector offers relatively few opportunities of employment. The relatively highly paid elite largely spends its income on the products of the modern sector or imports. This in turn leads to balance of payment constraints, which inhibit growth in the modern sector. Thus, a large percentage of the population must eke their livelihood from the informal sector, through activities such as petty trading and repair work in urban centres.

Second, it is argued here that colonial capitalism led to the emergence of an urbanized group of Africans who owed their existence both to the pre-capitalist system of food production, as much as to wage labour. Those who could not secure wage labour turned to the informal sector including *jua kali*

to supplement what they got from the rural homes. In addition, pre-capitalist features such as ethnicity are believed to be powerful determinants of the development of *jua kali* activity in terms of acquisition of skills, capital and premises. Flows into and out of urban centres and links with rural homes are important elements of the dynamic, which shape *jua kali* sector. Moreover, much of the small-scale pre-industrial technology persists in the Nairobi *jua kali* sector, particularly in crafts such as iron smithing, carpentry, leatherwork and handicrafts. Indeed, entrepreneurs' social background and institutions, such as ethnicity, place of origin and being in the same area of trade, play important roles in the evolution of the *jua kali* economy (Kinyanjui, 1998).

Understanding the political dynamics influencing the state's economic decisions is crucial in the analysis of economic performance of the African countries. Hence, the concept of neo-patrimonialism is also adopted in the study. Following Marx Weber, social scientists generally refer to the political process in which government office is bestowed in return for political support and personal loyalty and service as patrimonialism (Gordon, 2001:75; Bayart, 1993). The essence of patrimonial rule is the personalization of power by a country's ruler. The neo-institutionalism of Douglas Worth is what reinforced the whole notion of neo-patrimonialism. From this new surge, emerged a new deployment. The merit of the neo-patrimonial model in the analysis of post-colonial African states is two-fold. First, it makes it possible to account for the undeniable fact that the private and public spheres overlap. Second, it helps to explain in which ways the operation of a political system is no longer entirely traditional, hence the weight of the prefix "neo" (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 9).

The African state is a neo-patrimonial entity, whose roots can be traced to the colonial past (Kinuthia, 1997). During the colonial period, economic and social disparities were created in a variety of ways. For instance, Africans living close to colonial administrative centres, European mercantile centres or plantations, port facilities as well as mission centres, had opportunities for

wage labour and Western education. Such circumstances not only created an embryonic political elite with tremendous advantages to gain office at independence but also left most other individuals and groups in a position of disadvantage (Gordon, 2001:75). The fact that the only mechanism for economic development and personal gain was the state itself greatly prompted the politicisation of ethnicity during the colonial era. This explains why local leaders were drawn into various nationalist movements with promises of personal office and assistance to their villages and regions at independence (Gordon, 2001:75). Thus, at independence, the ascendant leadership was easily identifiable by a group and region, and was perceived generally to bring instant economic and political power for particular ethnic groups or regions. This was partly aided by the fact that colonial rule thwarted local capitalism in its bid to boost metropolitan interests. The independent centres of economic and political power were severely limited. After political independence, only the new African state itself, through taxing and revenue creating powers, could accumulate finances. Those who controlled the state, therefore, not only controlled the political direction but also the only source of the accumulation of wealth (Bayart, 1993).

To maintain themselves in power, African leaders relied on the discretionary distribution of patronage and development of clientilistic ties to key individuals and groups (Bayart, 1993; Gordon, 2001). Thus, patron-client relations quickly became the main political feature of post-independent Africa. Key personalities wielding political clout were co-opted into government by appointment to important positions in the bureaucracy or in state-owned corporations (Tangri and Mc Williams, 1999). Other kinds of patronage used to bind support for regimes included the granting of export licenses, government contracts, monopolies over certain kinds of business, tax exemptions, the use of government houses and automobiles, and subsidy on university education (Gordon, 2001:74).

In Kenya, inappropriate economic decisions were made especially after independence, on the basis of political patronage, which could explain the bloated public service and the financing of unproductive, and inefficient government bodies or parastatals. For instance, the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) and the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) were created in 1963 and 1965 respectively to provide credit facilities and to facilitate the acquisition of former white settler farms to a small group of Africans after independence. The major beneficiaries of both the government loans and the former white settler farms were senior politicians and civil servants, through their political connections (Ikiara et al. 1993:95). Their acquisition of disproportionate chunks of the best arable land left many deserving Kenyans landless. Thus, many poor Kenyans were forced into the informal sector of the economy.

Similarly, in the city of Nairobi, rules and council regulations have been bent since independence as the new African leaders try to accommodate the wishes of their co-ethnics and political supporters. Nepotism that has characterized the central government especially the distribution of tenders and white-collar jobs is replicated in the local government. Even the allocation of plots, market spaces, licenses and kiosks have been characterized by the same interests of rewarding supporters, friends and co-ethnics. The concept of neo-patrimonialism is, therefore, useful in the analysis of the complexities at play within the informal sector including the allocation of space, demolitions of informal structures and the various policies promulgated by both the colonial and the post-colonial state in Kenya.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the adoption of an integrated theoretical approach is the best way of analysing the complex factors that have spurred the emergence and development of the informal sector in Kenya. The articulation of the modes of production paradigm is useful in the analysis of the persistence of the indigenous modes of production, side by side with the

capitalist mode of production. This phenomenon is characteristic of almost all economic activities during the pioneer years of colonialism. Moreover, the importance of kinship and other social networks has been common in the *jua kali* operations even after independence and is grounded on the indigenous modes of production. An example of this includes artisanal skills like iron smithing, woodwork and leatherwork.

The dependency and underdevelopment analysis is also invaluable as it helps to explain the relationship between the metropole and the periphery. The colony provided raw materials, cheap labour and market for the metropole. The peripheral urban centres like Nairobi were consigned to the task of organising the drainage of commodities and surplus from the periphery to the metropole. Finally, the neopatrimonialism approach helps us to explain the overlap between the public and the private spheres in post-colonial Africa. In this scenario, the political elite has been able to use its position of power to create and maintain clientilistic ties with its supporters. This has translated into the granting of urban spaces and licenses to co-ethnics and other supporters to the exclusion of other members of society. This has led to the expansion of the group of the urban poor, many of whom earn their livelihood in the informal sector.

### **1.6 Research Locale**

The city of Nairobi, which is the focus of our study, is the largest city in Eastern Africa. With a population of an estimated 3 million inhabitants (Central Bureau of Statistics 2001), Nairobi ranks among Africa's great cities. By 1999 when the last census in Kenya was conducted, the area occupied by the city was recorded as 696 square kilometres.

Geographically, the city of Nairobi, lies on the western edge of the Athi - Kapiti plains and the foot of the Eastern highlands. It is located 140 kilometres south of the equator and 480 kilometres from the Indian Ocean (Morgan,

1967). The city lies 1700 meters above sea level and therefore, it enjoys a cool and healthy climate. Indeed, seasonal variations in temperatures are small. This explains why many European settlers were comfortable in settling around Nairobi at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The birth of Nairobi came in 1899. The emergence of the city was not a historical accident. It was a product of the colonial planning for a railway line to tap the resources in the interior. It was, therefore, a product of colonial capitalist penetration and expansion, which the railway was symbolic of. This was occasioned by the construction of a railway depot and stores in Nairobi by the Uganda railway construction team. By 1900, a small permanent settlement was already thriving. The fact that the town became both an administrative and a collecting centre for the European settlers, helped to boost its importance (Macharia, 1997). From its nucleus around the railway station, the town expanded by a series of boundary changes. One such review of the town's boundary structure took place in 1928 under a local government commission led by Justice Feetham. The commission absorbed new municipality housing areas and peri-urban areas into a separate government administration called Nairobi Extra Provincial District (NEPD) (Obudho, 1975).

In 1947, the Master Plan for a colonial capital was prepared by a team of South African planners. The plan endorsed the colonial development of the city within the racial segregation policy. In March 1950, Nairobi was raised to the status of a city by a Royal Charter (Nairobi, Master Plan 1948). By this time the town had attracted many industries as the town continued to draw in foreign capital more effectively than the rest of East Africa (Zezeza, 1989). During the colonial period, few African women came to live in the urban areas, which were mainly the preserves of Europeans, Asians and African male migrants (Musyoki, et al 1993). The majority of the Africans who lived in the urban centres had to turn to the informal economy to sustain their

livelihood. After independence in 1963, many Africans found it easy to come to Nairobi to seek for salaried employment as a result of the lifting of colonial restrictions (King, 1996; Kinuthia, 1997).

Since independence, Nairobi has become the hub of Eastern Africa. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, the largest airport in the region and Wilson Airport, the busiest airport in Eastern Africa are located within the city, making Nairobi a major centre of transport and communications in East and Central Africa. In addition, Nairobi is also a tourism centre. The city enjoys the unique privilege of being the only city in the world with a game park within its boundaries. This in turn has attracted the investment of several world class hotels in the city. These include the Sarova chain of hotels and the Block hotels.

In 1976, the United Nations established the headquarters of one of her specialised organizations, United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), in Nairobi. HABITAT, another specialized agency of the United Nations, was established in the city in the 1990s. This makes Nairobi the only city in the least developed parts of the world to host a UN body. In addition to these UN agencies, Nairobi also hosts a number of diplomatic missions from all over the world.

The city is also the centre of education in the region. It hosts more than five national universities and other centres of higher learning. Moreover, Nairobi also hosts numerous large and small-scale industries that service East and Central Africa. The international firms include Coca Cola Bottlers, Unilever, East African Breweries, Standard Chartered Bank and Barclays Bank among others. Administratively, Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya, but also doubles as one of the eight provinces in the country. The number of unemployed persons by 1999 was recorded by the Central Bureau of Statistics to be 168,

663, while those categorized as economically inactive were 683699 (CBS, 2001).

### **1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

To examine both the colonial and post-colonial characteristics and the historical development of the *jua kali* sector, the study commences in 1899 when Nairobi emerged as an urban centre. The study ends in 1998, about three decades after Kenya attained political independence. The post-colonial period, spanning three decades, provides sufficient time for the analysis of the sector's developments with particular reference to policies promulgated by the post-independent government in Kenya. It is hoped that in this way, it will be possible to embark on the necessary intervention measures to make the sector viable. Due to the wide historical scope of the study, this work has not investigated the gender relations in the *jua kali* sector. This is a significant line of study that could be undertaken by later scholars in order to fully understand all the dynamics involved in the *jua kali* sector in Nairobi. In addition, this study is physically limited to the city of Nairobi, therefore, other cities in Kenya such as Mombasa and Kisumu may need to be investigated to analyse the developments in the *jua kali* sector since the colonial era given the varying locations. Such a venture would be crucial in providing a basis for comparison between the *jua kali* developments in Nairobi and other parts of the country.

### **1.8 Rationale and Significance of the Study**

Though several studies have been undertaken in Kenya by economists, educationists, geographers, sociologists and economists on the informal sector (Kaplinsky 1976; King 1977, 1996; and McCormick 1992), none has specifically addressed the historical development of the sector. Most researchers on this sector have not recognised its economic importance; some have been sceptical about the sector's potential for growth and income generation. Ndua and Ng'ethe (1994) and Noor Mohamed (1987),

contradictorily found that the sector did not have much potential for employment. Their analysis created a need for verification and establishment of the economic viability of the sector.

The city of Nairobi is particularly suited for such study because of a number of factors. First, the very concept of "*jua kali*" was originally developed in Kenya (King, 1996). Subsequently; Nairobi has provided a forum for research and policy discussion on the sector for over thirty years. Second, Nairobi has experienced a lot of activity in the sector because many of its population of over three million inhabitants earn their livelihood from the sector.

A study on the *Jua Kali* enterprise is particularly pertinent given the paucity of employment opportunities in Kenya. The sector accounts for a sizeable portion of the economy and therefore needs to be studied. It also appears to be the only existing avenue of gainful employment for the numerous unemployed youth with no openings in the already saturated public service and other fields in the formal sector (Karugu and Otiende, 1996:146). By March 2004, the number of those unemployed in Kenya stood at over 2 million or 14.6 percent of the labour force, with the youth accounting for 45 percent of the total. Moreover, the majority of the unemployed, though educated, lack the necessary skills to secure formal employment or even to start a viable business (Government of Kenya, 2004). The ILO Mission to Kenya, writing in 1972, described the sector as an important focus of economic development. It went ahead to recommend a number of government policies, which, it was hoped, would encourage the growth of the sector (Westley, 1976:2). In the 1980s the Kenyan government undertook its commitment to this sector, when it re-oriented the national schooling system of education. The idea behind this new 8-4-4 system was to encourage and enhance self-employment among the graduates from various levels within the education spectrum.

This study is urgent given the economic downturn in Kenya since the 1980s which led to the retrenchment of many people. The majority of those retrenched from the formal sector of the economy have regained a means of livelihood in the informal sector. It is projected that the sector has the capacity to create 120,000 new jobs each year. According to statistics, employment in the sector increased from 4.2 million people in 2000 to 5.6 million by 2003, 74.2 percent of Kenya's workforce. The sector also contributes up to 18.4 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per annum (Daily Nation 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005).

### 1.9 Research Design

The study adopted a case study research design based on qualitative procedures. It is, therefore, the result of the analysis of two types of evidence; primary and secondary evidence. The collection of primary evidence involved using purposive sampling procedures. Those identified for oral interviews included both men and women of between 30 and 80 years of age. They were selected on the basis of their knowledge of the history of Nairobi and *jua kali* operations by virtue of their long stay in the city. A total of 90 knowledgeable informants were interviewed. Among these included some colonial civil servants in Nairobi, second-hand clothes dealers, former and current motor vehicle repairers, tailors and food hawkers. In addition, some members of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that collaborate with the informal sector, and serving civil servants in the ministries that have dealt with the informal sector since independence, were also interviewed. These included: The Ministry of Education; Ministry of Labour; and the Office of the President. Such officers were particularly useful in explaining the government policy on the sector.

The researcher identified the informants in two ways. First, the researcher used the information from those in the *jua kali* sector such as *jua kali*

associations and the NGOs such as KEPP, K-Rep and Undugu Society. These not only helped to identify knowledgeable informants, but also to reach out to them. Those already interviewed helped us to contact other informants through "snow balling". They identified other knowledgeable persons, some of whom were far away from Nairobi, having retired from service and settled in places such as Meru, Nyeri, Homa Bay, and other places. To conduct the oral interviews, the researcher was assisted by five research assistants. A question guideline was used. This was favoured because of the open-ended questions which allowed for the accommodation of as many issues as possible. If the informant became repetitive in information given, it became obvious he had no more information to offer. The researcher and his assistants used pens, pencils, notebooks and a tape recorder during the field interview.

- x Direct observation was done on the physical facilities and the environment in which those in the informal sector conducted their activities. This assisted in comparing and contrasting data obtained from other sources. It gave an understanding of the linkages between the informal sector and the formal sector of the economy, and the relations between different sub-sectors of the informal sector. Among the *jua kali* sites visited included: Ziwani, Gikomba, Kamukunji, Kariobangi, Kaburini, Roy Sambu and Githurai. Another invaluable occurrence was the annual *jua kali* exhibitions at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in the years 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, which provided insight into the activities of the *jua kali* operators.
  
- x The documents in the Kenya National Archives comprised the second component of primary data. Relevant data was obtained from the annual reports, labour reports, intelligence reports and handing over reports of the various administrators in charge of Nairobi. The information provided the historical data on the developments and government policies on the informal enterprises especially during the colonial period. Another component of

primary data used in the study included the post-independent government documents, which comprised the Development plans, Sessional papers and other official documents. These were important in highlighting the official position regarding the informal sector especially in the post-colonial era.

Data were also obtained from secondary sources. These included books, videotapes, journals, theses and dissertations, seminars and conference papers as well as the Internet. These data were collected from several libraries, which included the Moi Library (KU), and Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library (UoN), The Institute of Development Studies, and the Marist International Centre Library and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Library, in Dakar, Senegal.

All the data was subjected to qualitative analysis. The tape-recorded data were transcribed, and all the data obtained from the various sources were categorized according to the sources, the sub-sector concerned and the historical period in question. In addition, the secondary data obtained from various sources were subjected to historical criticism in order to verify their validity. Data from various sources were then corroborated, by comparing it with other sources of information. Where the oral data conflicted from one informant to another, the archival and secondary sources were referred to, and vice versa. In addition, the researcher posed the same question to several informants especially when one informant gave contradictory information that required clarity. In this way, the researcher was able to acquire data that were reliable.

#### **1.10 Challenges Experienced During Fieldwork**

A number of problems were experienced during the study. For instance, many of the potential informants were initially unwilling to divulge information concerning their operations either due to ignorance, or due to fear that the

government would use the information to force them to pay taxes or pay for licenses. This was possibly because majority of the informal sector operators do not pay taxes and are not registered by relevant authorities. Their effort to conceal information meant that many were not prepared to reveal all the relevant details that were of great interest. On the other hand, some informal operators perceived giving an interview as a waste of time. One of the ironsmiths at Kamukunji insisted that all questions should be channelled to the officials of the Kamukunji *Jua Kali* Association and not to individual members of the association. Such experiences led to a waste of valuable time. However, these problems were overcome by frequent visits to the *jua kali* sites to create familiarity. Thus, the information concealed, by one informant would eventually be revealed by others. Due to the frequency of the visits, rapport was created and confidence established and that eased flow of information.

Another challenge faced in the urban spaces where some of the informal sector operators conduct their activity, is insecurity. However, this was solved, by working with the research assistants who were familiar with the people and some of the sites. One of the research assistants, Samuel Onyango was particularly useful in conducting oral interviews among such *jua kali* sites in Mlango Kubwa and Kawangware.

### **1.11 Structure of Thesis**

Chapter one, the general introduction of the study, encompasses the background to the problem; statement of the problem; research premises; objectives of the study; justification and significance of the study; literature review and a description of the research design adopted, as well as the theoretical framework within which the entire study is based.

Chapter two is a description of the location and the historical origins of Nairobi. It examines the process of colonization in Kenya, from 1895 to 1907 and the consequent emergence of Nairobi as an urban centre to service the needs of the colonial state. It provides the historical background upon which the entire study develops.

The third chapter of the study traces the emergence of the African artisanal skills in colonial Kenya up to the end of the First World War in 1918. The role of the Asians and Christian missionaries in imparting artisanal skills to Africans is analysed, as well as government departments in colonial Kenya particularly the gaol and the railway. The impact of the First World War on the Africans in Nairobi is also discussed, particularly in regard to the acquisition of artisanal skills among the Africans .

In the fourth chapter, the development of the African enterprises in Nairobi during the inter-war period is examined. The expansion of the African population is examined in relation to the establishment of jua kali enterprises in Nairobi, development of African artisanal skills and the challenges encountered.

Chapter five examines the expansion of the African enterprises in Nairobi from 1939 when the Second World War erupted to 1963, when Kenya attained political independence. The consequences of the War in Nairobi are discussed and particularly its impact on African entrepreneurship. Finally, the impact of the Mau Mau war and the State of Emergency on the African entrepreneurs in Nairobi is discussed.

Chapter six examines the development of African informal enterprises in postcolonial Kenya, from 1963 when Kenya attained political independence to 1978. The expansion of the artisanal sub-sector is analyzed against the economic and the political policies enacted by the Kenyatta government.

The seventh chapter discusses the development of the *jua kali* sector during the Moi era from 1978 to 1998. The policies formulated by the government with regard to the informal sector and their impact on the Africans in Nairobi are examined in the context of the Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions.

Finally, chapter eight the concluding chapter, analyzes the findings of the study and makes suggestions for possible areas of further research in order to promote the *jua kali* sector in Kenya.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **2.0 The Establishment of Colonial Rule in Kenya and its Impact on African Entrepreneurial Activity up to 1914**

Towns in colonial Kenya as in most other African countries in the Eastern Africa region were established mainly to serve the European imperial interests. This move inevitably impacted on the nature of the entrepreneurial activity not only among the Africans but also among the immigrant races, namely the European and Asian communities. This chapter has tackled the processes through which Kenya was integrated into Western capitalism and how the institutions of colonial economic and political control emerged. Second, the establishment of the colonial state as an agent of colonial capitalism in Kenya is analysed as well as the consequent emergence of Nairobi as the railway and administrative headquarters of the British East Africa Protectorate. Finally, the dynamics that led to the development of informal enterprises among Africans in colonial Nairobi, prior to the First World War are examined.

### **2.1 The Introduction of Colonialism: Early Attempts at Integrating the Pre-Colonial Economies into International Capitalism**

European imperialism along the Kenyan coast can be traced to the Portuguese period in the sixteenth century. At this time however, the Europeans were mainly interested in trade commodities like slaves, gold and ivory (Ochieng', 1992). In the nineteenth century, the British increasingly gained influence along the East African coast. The drive to amass African colonies at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century represented a change in Britain's overseas strategy, reflecting a shift in geopolitical tactics arising from her commercial decline. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, economic depression hit Britain, while at the same time other countries such as Germany and the United States of America posed new competition as a result of their rapid industrialization (Elkins, 2005). This new

industrialization shift led to renewed competition for colonies in Africa. In East Africa, British hegemony was extended with renewed vigour through Sultan Seyyid Said. The British position along the East African coast was eventually concluded after the East African Treaty of 1886 and the Anglo-German Agreement of 1890, which completed the parcelling of East Africa between Germany and Britain (Ghai, 2001). By the time Britain began her imperial activities in the region, the Arab and Swahili merchant capital had already made an impact in East Africa. Their commercial activities at the coast stimulated the long distance trade and reinforced the position of the Kamba and other communities who supplied ivory and other trade commodities from the interior.

The British like other European powers of this period, resorted to chartered company rule because they did not want to incur heavy expenses in running colonies. Consequently, a private company known as the British East Africa Company was formed in 1886 under the presidency of Sir William McKinnon. The other founders of the company were Sir Donald Stewart, Sir John Kirk, William Burdett Coutts, Robert Palmer Harding and George Mackenzie (Gregory, 1971). In the following year the company became the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), when it was given a royal charter by the British Government. This authorized the company not only to administer the British spheres of influence on behalf of the government but also to exploit such spheres in order to complete political and economic authority in British territories (Himbara, 1994).

The IBEAC Company was not unique in colonial Africa. There were other such powerful companies that were granted extra ordinary power in different parts of colonial Africa. The Royal Niger company played a similar role in West Africa (Ake, 1981), while the British South Africa Company (BSAC) of Cecil Rhodes was instrumental in the colonial subjugation of southern Africa. Although these colonial trading companies were given enormous political

power, this should not lead us to forget that the mission of these enterprises was the economic exploitation of Africa and not political power as such. At best, their political power was great as it was merely a means to economic power (Ake, 1981:48).

The IBEAC embarked on the work of establishing a chain of stations or forts starting from the coast. Mombasa became the headquarters of the company. These stations included Kismayu, Malindi, Lamu, Kibwezi and Machakos in Ukambani. It was from these initial stations that control was gradually extended into the interior. The company achieved its goals through the use of its private army, which consisted of Indian, Arab, and Sudanese troops under British officers. At the time of penetration inland the armed forces of the IBEAC, comprised 1120 such soldiers under British officers, divided between Mombasa, Machakos and Kismayu (Stichter, 1982). The IBEA Company also set up small posts along the caravan route to Uganda to provide food supplies and military protection. The company was therefore instrumental in linking the economy of the region to the world capitalist economy. It should be noted that all overland transport for the company and the early administration depended on human head portage (Berman, 1990). Porters were usually hired at Mombasa, where there existed about 1000 available porters by 1895. Caravans engaged these coastal workers in large numbers. Indeed, military expeditions could hire up to a thousand men.

Since most African communities were not ready to submit to colonial rule, military power had to be used against sections of nearly every group in the colony in the early days. Fortunately, for the British, some African sections among the Kamba, the Luyia section under Nabongo Mumia and some Maasai groups, chose to form alliances with the newcomers in the hope that they would get assistance against their local enemies. Unfortunately both collaborators and resisters such as sections of the Kamba, Gikuyu, Nandi, Gusii, and the Giriama had to pay the eventual price of submission that

entailed not only the surrender of territorial sovereignty but also provision of labour to the conquerors (Stichter, 1982). Colonization changed the pre-colonial patterns of commerce a great deal. Even the old caravan routes, were overshadowed by the new routes. In addition, old market places or centres were either expanded or fell into disuse altogether as new ones emerged at colonial military posts and administrative centres (Zezeza, 1989).

The African communities demonstrated their ability to take advantage of the new political and economic environment that was occasioned by the British domination over the country. At Machakos, the pioneer company station on the inland caravan route, the Akamba took advantage of the station by providing foodstuffs. Thus, the Akamba merchant position became even more assured due to their good relations with the British. Machakos, which was named after the Kamba merchant, Masaku, who had dominated trade in the region in the 1880s, eventually became the administrative capital of the whole region (Cowen and McWilliams, 1996). Some of the Akamba, therefore, were able to enter into wage labour quite early. Some became porters, guides, mail carriers, as well as labourers. The community was thus integrated into the international capitalism. However, the remuneration to the labourers in the form of wages reflected a high rate of exploitation of the indigenous economy. In other words, the imposition of colonial rule in Kenya entailed the process of westernisation and capitalistic penetration of African economies (Kisiang'ani, 2003:57).

Similarly, among the southern Kikuyu, who lived along the caravan route, commercial relations with the British followed a similar pattern to their relations with the Waswahili traders. A permanent station was, therefore, established at Dagoretti in 1890, before being shifted to Fort Smith in late 1891 (Stichter, 1982:7, Mackenzie, 1998). Unlike the Akamba, the Agikuyu viewed all newcomers with great suspicion including the Waswahili traders and the Europeans. The company, therefore spent most of its finances in

suppressing the resisting African communities. Consequently, the company was declared bankrupt in 1891. In 1894, Uganda was declared a British protectorate while British East Africa became a British protectorate in 1895. However, Britain showed how little interest she had in the East African Protectorate by putting it in the care of the British consul general in Zanzibar (Lonsdale, 1992:16). Soon after, the British government decided to construct a railway line from Mombasa to Lake Victoria. Apparently, the railroad was meant to facilitate access to Uganda (Werlin, 1974:37). It was called the Uganda Railway for it linked the inland territory of Uganda to the outside world (Elkins, 2005). Kenya was then portrayed as a land lacking in economic activities and almost a wasteland, in Victorian writings (Himbara, 1994).

Much of the land through which the Uganda railway-line was to pass seemed at the time to be sparsely populated, yet climatically conducive for White settlement (Ochieng', 1989). Kenyanchui (1989), argues that the official reasons for European settlement in Kenya have been exaggerated by the apologists for imperialism. The stated official reason was that European settlement was necessitated by the Uganda Railway. However, the gist of the matter is that during the European explorations, they came across fertile soils of the Kenyan highlands in addition to the rich wildlife, which they desired (Kisiang'ani, 2003; Kenyanchui, 1989:11).

After the Uganda Railway was completed, it was used to justify European settlement in Kenya. The Railway was started in Mombasa in 1896 and was completed in 1901, when the railhead reached Kisumu then known as Port Florence. For its time, the Uganda Railway stood as a remarkable feat of modern engineering (Elkins, 2005). Thousands of Indians were contracted to provide labour for its construction. The importance of Indian personnel was already appreciated in East Africa by this time. This is because Indians facilitated not only the conquest but also the opening up of the interior of East Africa during the pioneer years of the colonial rule. The Indian skilled labour

and traders were instrumental in the colonial administration in Kenya. In 1891, a Bohra family from Karachi led by Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee had established a company in Mombasa. Later, his company was contracted by the Uganda Railway and the colonial government to construct government buildings not only in Mombasa, but also in Nairobi (Patel, 1997). It is therefore evident that Asians enjoyed the patronage of the colonial government in the pioneer years. This inevitably facilitated their dominance in the field of commerce during the early period of colonialism. The Asian presence in colonial Kenya had important implications. Many Africans were to learn both commercial skills and artisanal skills from the Asian community (King, 1977; 1996).

By March 1897, the railway committee report indicated that the Uganda Railway had employed close to 1400 African men who had formed a porter service for the railway. Even at the coast, the Swahili and Mijikenda were not enthusiastic about working for the new colonials as the memory of their previous experiences with the Portuguese were still fresh on their minds (Seidenberg, 1985). As the railway progressed through Ukambani and Kikuyuland, the railway authorities began to experience serious labour shortages. The reasons for this unsatisfactory labour provision ranged from the fact that the railway authorities demanded for regular labour provision, to suspicion among the African labour force. With their self-sufficient farms, Africans preferred not to work for wages. African male farmers already had their own in-built labour force. For instance, when heavy agricultural work was to be done, numerous wives provided the labour free of charge (Seidenberg, 1985:14). Moreover, they were not used to the pattern of European working schedules and instead preferred a less rigid and flexible work pattern conducive to the African traditional activities.

In the aftermath of the completion of the railway line, there was need for the colony to repay the investment of \$6.5 million incurred in the building of the

railway. As cost overruns and horrific stories of man-eating lions appeared in the British press, the Uganda Railway came to take on a new name: the "Lunatic Express" (Elkins, 2005). Sir Charles Eliot who succeeded Sir Arthur Hardinge as Kenya's second Commissioner in 1900 was of the view that European agriculture would enable the colonial administration to run the colony through funds derived from settler agriculture. Consequently, Charles Eliot made eager invitations to willing European migrants to Kenya to occupy the land between Nairobi and Uganda. The settlers came from Britain, Canada, Australia and South Africa (Murunga, 2000). The British imperial interest in the region was to develop basic infrastructure to facilitate the export of food crops and raw materials to the metropole (Swainson, 1980). The provision of loans for railway development by the metropole served to stimulate production of British goods for colonial markets.

The establishment of the Uganda Railway laid the foundation for the exploitation and control of the colony by the British. The final and most violent phase of British conquest in British East Africa protectorate was aimed at occupying the highland core of modern Kenya. The British forces were tiny and were not well armed. Before the completion of the railway, the troops depended on local African manpower for auxiliary troops and porters. Thus, the British force could be described as an African force since there were more Africans than Europeans in the force. However, many of these Africans were from elsewhere, as the protectorate government mainly inherited the troops of the IBEAC, comprising Sudanese, Zanzibari, Waswahili and Indians. According to Lonsdale (1993), the new force signed up men who had been porters of the Zanzibar slave traders, Nyamwezi from the German mainland to the south, and the Manyema, ex-slaves from today's Congo, then King Leopard's Empire.

The development of Kenya into as a settler colony inevitably impacted on all other spheres of life. For instance, the agricultural Department regarded its

prime task as the stimulation of European farming. It was tacitly agreed between the settlers and the education Department that whatever developments would take place in the African reserves should not enrich Africans to the point where they would no longer need to service the European farms for wages (King, 1976). Kenya was, therefore, being developed for the benefit of the European community. The emergence of Nairobi as the headquarters of colonial rule in Kenya was also closely linked with the European interests in the region.

## 2.2 The Emergence of Nairobi

The name Nairobi is derived from the Maasai – “Enkare Nairobi” which means a place of cold water (Morgan, 1967). Prior to the coming of the Europeans, both the Kikuyu and the Maasai exchanged goods in Nairobi. Muriuki (1974) however, points out that Kikuyu trade, with the Maasai was monopolized by women. Before the British occupation, Nairobi was a “no man’s land”, as the region was occupied by the Maasai and the Kikuyu communities. The Maasai perhaps had more control over the area because as a pastoral society owning large herds of cattle they occupied the area for a longer period (Kinuthia, 1997). Writing in 1997, Robertson observes:

Before the foundation of the town of Nairobi in 1899, when the railway head of the Uganda railway reached a well-watered area of mixed clay and black cotton soils, the location was sparsely populated for the most part, especially at the lower elevations. Both settled and migratory population of peoples produced goods which were complimentary, thus, facilitating trade. The heart of this trade was the pervasive daily exchange of ordinary commodities like foodstuffs, utensils and material for clothing and weapons (1997a:25).

The first written description of Nairobi by the explorer Joseph Thompson in 1885 gives a vivid description of the Maasai trade with the Kikuyu; the Maasai exchanged sheep skins, and hides for grain, flour, vegetables and fruits from the kikuyu (Hake, 1977). Thus, contrary to stories about the chaotic situation in Africa prior to the European invasion, African communities

interacted very well among themselves in spite of the fact that local hostilities also existed from time to time.

Although most of the caravans of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries used the southern route from the coast passing through present-day Tanzania to interior lakes of East Africa, from 1850 a northern route that passed through Ngongo bagas became popular. Ngong near Nairobi, therefore, became an important stop over point, where the caravans could replenish their supplies. Another important centre was Fort Smith, which had been erected by Captain Eric Smith at Ndumbuini near Kabete in April 1891, where he stationed the IBEAC *askaris* enroute different destinations with the aim of pacifying the resisting African communities (Hake, 1977; Robertson, 1997).

The first European to spend any length of time in the wilderness that was to become Kenya's capital was certainly, James Martin, then a Uganda Railway employee, who camped for ten days in 1896 recruiting labour for earth works along the railroad. He was followed five months later by a Corporal Brodie, who in February 1897 was placed in charge of a transport depot in the Kikuyu forest in what is now Westlands area of the city (Best, 1979). In May 1897, he handed over the depot to Corporal, later Sergeant George Ellis of the Royal Engineers, who was to supervise the training of mules and draught oxen for most of the next eleven months. In 1898, Sergeant George Ellis built a transport camp in Nairobi. His prolonged residence in the area was to earn him the title of Nairobi's first citizen (Best, 1979). As already noted, the construction of the Uganda Railway was the main single factor that transformed Nairobi into a modern urban centre. Although Nairobi as a town was not favoured or approved by all the British officials, Sir Guilford Molesworth who was charged with the task of surveying the route which the railway-line was to follow - from the coast to Lake Victoria, made the following remarks:

Nairobi has, with great judgment, been selected as the site for the principal workshops. It is about 5,500 feet above the level of the

sea, which ensures a comparatively salubrious climate; there is ample space of level ground for all sorts of requirements, and excellent sites for the quarters of officers and subordinates. On higher ground above the station site, there is a fairly good supply of water but reservoirs and tanks will have to be constructed (Hill, 1971).

To the engineers building the Uganda Railway, Nairobi offered many advantages for a camp. Ahead of Nairobi lay much steeper slopes with the Rift Valley escarpment presenting great construction problems (Morgans, 1967). In addition, George Whitehouse the chief engineer of the Uganda Railway also significantly contributed towards making Nairobi an important centre along the railway-line when he made it, first a warehouse for railway construction materials and later the railway – headquarters in 1899 after the construction party reached Nairobi. Thus, Nairobi became the administrative headquarters of the railway (Werlin, 1974).

More developments followed in line with the needs of the railway builders. For instance, roads, bridges, houses, workshops, and water supply lines among other facilities were installed. The offices for the railway headquarters were put up in July 1899. Sir George Whitehouse, the railway engineer, also set up the location of the houses in the new town. He located houses for his European staff in the Lower Hill area (Hake, 1977). Definitely, this was done in line with the European colonial mentality of the day that the Europeans had to be settled in the high altitudes/areas in order to avoid the risk of contracting tropical diseases.

The railway workers' houses, which were known as landhies, were located on the plain at the foot of the hill. Most of the railway workers were Indian coolies – These were contracted labourers who were recruited because at the time most Africans in Kenya were unwilling to provide wage labour. It was therefore, necessary to import 31,983 Indian artisans, clerks, and labourers for the building of the Uganda Railway (Thornton, et al 1948:120). It is reported

that indigenous labour did not exceed 2600 labourers at any one time, during the construction of the railway-line (Patel, 1997).

Soon after the establishment of Nairobi as the headquarters of the railway, an Indian bazaar emerged. By 1900, Nairobi had a flourishing Indian bazaar situated between present Tom Mboya Street and River Road and was more of an Indian than a European township (Patel, 1997:38). For centuries, Indian traders had been established on the East African coast including Zanzibar since the days of Sultan Seyyid Said in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their arrival in Nairobi with the railway was therefore a natural logic in the expansion of merchant-capital. Merchant capital organizes the sphere of exchange and it uses what it finds extant. Majority of the pioneer Indians in Nairobi were not business people but belonged to the railway workforce (Rajan Patel, O. I., 17-06-02).

The first Indian bazaar in Nairobi belonged to Mr. Allidina Visram, who also had a number of other trading points or centres along the Uganda Railway. Indian investors such as Allidina Visram and A.M. Jevanjee invested in Nairobi on the assumption that the East African protectorate would develop as a colony of British India in which the subjects of the crown would be treated equally (Murunga, 2000). Unfortunately, on its completion, the European community began to discriminate against the Asians. The hostility that ensued between the European settlers and the Asians in Kenya was to characterize the political history of Kenya throughout the colonial era.

The railway headquarters in Nairobi therefore attracted many European and Asian traders, as well as Africans from different communities. For example, some Indian traders brought their businesses from the coast and shifted them to Nairobi. In addition, coastal traders, both men and women, of Arab and Swahili origins followed the railway workforce and camped in Nairobi. It should be noted that the petty Indian traders all over East Africa played a very

big role in promoting commerce. In Kenya, the Indian bazaars in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nyeri, Machakos and Nairobi, were developed into the principal centres of commerce. They introduced new goods to African communities some of whom took up itinerant trade. Such goods included blankets, lamps, clothes, etc., (Mangat, 1969:84).

The railway authorities in Nairobi found themselves with a lot of responsibility. They not only administered the operations of the railway line but also the growing community of Nairobi. This was further compounded by the large number of Asians, Arabs and African communities attracted by the new commercial opportunities presented by the establishment of Nairobi (Smart, 1950).

Sir Arthur Hardinge was from 1900 vested with powers to control the entire protectorate by the East African Order-in-Council. He became His Majesty's Commissioner over the East African Protectorate though his base was Zanzibar. The building of the Uganda Railway introduced a new and efficient mode of transportation, and therefore the small fort at Machakos was no longer strategically useful as the headquarters of Ukamba Province (King'oriah, 1980). Moreover, there arose a need to provide good administration to the community that was expanding fast around the railway station and grounds in Nairobi. Colonel John Ainsworth, the sub-commissioner of Ukamba Province was therefore directed by the foreign office, to transfer his provincial headquarters from Machakos to Nairobi (Hake, 1977). The same year that the Railway camp was opened, Colonel John Ainsworth, shifted his headquarters from Machakos, some forty miles to the Southeast to Nairobi in August 1899. With the arrival of the railway in Nairobi, Ainsworth selected a site to the North of the Nairobi River, near the present day Museum Hill, as his administrative headquarters. His coming to Nairobi created two growth nuclei in the town, the *boma* (administrative

camp), with its shopping centre in the Ngara area, and the railway complex, south of the Nairobi River swamp (King'oriah, 1980: 121).

The Europeans at Nairobi in the pioneer days consisted mainly of the senior railway staff and a few administrative officers, a number of whom had been taken over from the chartered British East Africa Company. There were also a number of business people. These included shipping agents, contractors, commercial people, big game hunters, and some military personnel. In fact, a battalion of the Kings African Rifles was stationed in Nairobi. The first European commercial concerns were those, which had establishments in Mombasa, such as George Stewart and Company, Huebner and Company, Smith Mackenzie and Company among others (Smart, 1950). All these establishments required both an African and Asian labour force to enable them to carry out their missions.

By 1901, the population of Nairobi had grown to about 8000 people (Hake, 1977). The conditions in the Indian bazaar in particular deteriorated as a result of this population influx. Many Africans were flocking into Nairobi, hand in hand with the Asians who were attracted to the emerging town. Hundreds of Europeans were also settling in Nairobi thereby creating a market and job opportunities. By April 1900, a Nairobi Township committee consisting of the sub-commissioner of Ukamba, two other officials, and three suitable residents – usually renowned merchants, had already been constituted. The establishment of the committee could be interpreted as an indicator of the challenge posed in the administration of the upcoming town of Nairobi (Mitullah and Kibwana, 1998).

In 1905, the Protectorate Commissioner, Sir Donald Stewart left Mombasa and established himself at the new centre of Nairobi, taking his residence in the former house of the Chief Railway Engineer. Nairobi not only became the railway capital but also the administrative capital of the whole protectorate.

All these developments made it an important political, social and economic centre in the protectorate. By 1906, the population of the town was discovered to be 13,500 contrary to the official estimate of 4,700 (Hake, 1977:36). The African factor in colonial Nairobi was important right from the pioneer times in that they comprised majority of the population in the town.

### 2.3 African Pioneers of Nairobi

As already indicated, a large number of African and Asian communities in early Nairobi earned their livelihood through offering labour to either the railway or the colonial administration. There were many others who depended on trade. Thus, the founding of the railway administrative headquarters in Nairobi also marked the emergence of informal sector activities in Nairobi especially among the Africans and the Asians.

Most jobs in Nairobi were taken up by Europeans in the higher administration. The Asians who had acquired some Western education, obtained jobs as accountants, artisans, clerks, police officers and teachers (Kinuthia, 1997). This was because Nairobi was created as a town mainly to serve the interests of the immigrant communities. As such, the pioneer Africans in Nairobi were men primarily recruited as soldiers, porters, *shamba* boys (gardeners) and cooks. This could be explained by the fact that Nairobi was not really an industrial town (Kinuthia, 1997) and therefore had a weak employment base, ultimately meaning that Africans turned to trading.

Whereas Mombasa townsmen included the wealthy Arab and Swahili merchants, bankers and landlords for most of the colonial period, in Nairobi the situation was different (Lonsdale, 2002:215). The first African townsmen, far from being capitalists, were mainly labourers. Business and landed property in Nairobi were in the hands of Indians like Allidina Visram and A.M. Jeevanjee, or Britons like Wood and Grogan. Africans filled the

essential roles of porters (*wapagazi*) and soldiers (*askari*). They were, initially hired by the Swahili traders and also by British officials and hunters. Some of them settled down to sell their labour or engage in local trade on their own account.

Among the Africans who pursued trade in Nairobi were the Somali community. McVicar (1968) confirms that by around 1900, Somalis had built houses on the northern side of the Nairobi River where Ngara Road is today. Apparently, the Somalis employed Kikuyu herdsman who lived near the junction of Ngara Road and Park Road (McVicar, 1968:8). There was no doubt that the Somali community sold milk to other African communities settled in Nairobi at the time (Parker, 1948). They were part and parcel of the informal African traders that emerged in Nairobi.

Kitching (1980), reports that up to 1900 most trading in livestock was conducted over comparatively short distances and mainly involving those peoples who lived on the borders of the open grasslands through which the nomads passed. However, between 1900-2 a major change took place when long-distance stock trade by groups of Isaak and Herti Somali began. These Somali traders seem to have served as soldiers, porters, or personal servants of the officials of the imperial British East Africa Company. They continued to occupy a similar position when these officials became colonial civil servants after the declaration of the East African Protectorate in 1895 (O.I., Mzee Akwabi, 21-12-02). During the early years of colonialism, these Somalis brought livestock from the then Northern Frontier District, now North Eastern Province to trade with the Kikuyu and the Maasai near Nairobi.

As agents of IBEAC and later of the protectorate officials, the Somalis were allowed to set up villages in the administrative headquarters of different districts. Many of them were also based in Nairobi. The Somali homes consisted of tiny nuclei of wattle and daub huts. They pastured their herds in

the grassland surrounding their settlements. In Nairobi, the Somalis pastured their livestock at a place called Mbagathi. Between 1900 and 1906, they appear to have begun butchery businesses. They provided not only meat but also milk to the population of Nairobi. By 1914, some of the Somali had opened butcheries in Dagoretti near Nairobi (O.I., Maina Macharia, 11-7-02).

Although the slaughtering of sheep and goats, and very occasionally of cattle, for meat had gone on in pre-colonial Kenya, this was done mainly for food or for ritual purposes (Kitching, 1980). However, the Somalis now began to slaughter animals in order to sell meat for money. The meat was not bartered as the Somalis dealt with urban-based customers. These were African porters, the first generation of African administrative staff, and some unskilled labourers who had access to the modern money. Most of these urban-based Africans were aliens. Some of them were from other countries like Wanyamwezi of Tanzania; the Baganda of Uganda and the Nubian soldiers from Sudan who had been drafted in to undertake necessary tasks in the incipient colonial structures of the period before local collaborators were available.

One of these groups of aliens that was settled by the colonial government in Nairobi was the Nubian. The Nubians came from Sudan, around the Nuba Mountains (*EAS*, 7-10-04). They were identified by the Egyptian ruler Emin Pasha and later by the British imperial government, as brave soldiers in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, they were enlisted by the British government to conquer the resisting African communities in the Sudan, Uganda Protectorate and in the British East African Protectorate (Kenya).

The Nubians were first settled in Kibera area in Nairobi in 1897 (Parker, 1948; *EAS*, 7-10-04). The name Kibera is derived from the Nubian term "Kibra" which means either a forest or a bushy area. This term was given to

their settlement area in Nairobi because the place was bushy and was full of vegetation as it lay next to the Ngong forest. The Nubians settled in Kibera were part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the King's African Rifles (KAR) (O.I., Mike Macharia 17-06-02). By 1900, the area had already been declared a military reserve. The area was surveyed in 1917 and subsequently gazetted in 1918 as a designated military reserve. The land covered 4,197.9 acres (*EAS*, 7-10-04). Being a military reserve under the direct control of the army authorities, anybody who wanted to settle in the area needed a special pass. One of the requirements was that one needed to have served in the army for at least twelve years. In spite of these requirements, a number of Africans such as the Agikuyu, Luo, Coastal communities and others settled in Kibera alongside the Nubians from the very outset. Some of these were their servants, wives and friends (O.I. Mike Macharia 17-6-02). This means that contrary to the expectations of the colonial authorities, many enterprising local African communities were able to secure homes in Kibera. Indeed, a lot of trade was conducted by local African with the Nubians, who needed to be provided with vegetables, meat, fruits and other provisions from other parts of the country.

McVicar (1968) also reports that clusters of mud-walled, thatch roofed houses existed near today's City Park, occupied by Kikuyu women who were either widowed or who had run away from their husbands. Porters from the coast, Congo, as well as Waswahili soldiers are reported to have filtered into these small settlements to move-in with, or build houses for their Kikuyu wives. The settlement was called "Ngambo" meaning the far side of the river or Pangani. It was one of the four villages to the northeast of the town centre and was actually the largest (Anderson, 2002:1410). Pangani was situated beside the Mathare River on the edge of the Karura forest. The history of Pangani dates back to the 1890s as it had served as a camp on the trading road from the coast for a long time. By 1902, the village had already developed as a lodging place for Africans working in Nairobi, or in transit between the coast and Uganda. The settlement retained strong coastal influences. For

instance, it contained three mosques in 1906 and buildings that reflected the Swahili design, marked by a squire-style. By 1920s, single African women had emerged as the prominent property owners in the village. They owned numerous lodging houses, and offered nightly accommodation not only to African travellers but also to the migrant workers (O.I., Theru Macharia, 16-7-02).

In addition to the settlement, McVicar reports of the existence of a market near the present junction of Ngara Road and Limuru Road, which was said to have started after the emergence of Nairobi. The Kikuyu brought maize, *posho* (maize meal) beans and potatoes to the market while the Maasai came with goats and cows. As we have already seen, trade was taking place between the Kikuyu and the Maasai in Nairobi, even prior to colonialism. However, after the establishment of Nairobi as the colonial capital these trading activities continued. Through the midwifery roles of the colonial state and merchant capital in mediating between the traditional economies and emerging colonial capitalism, a new drama of survival was being played out as traders acted in common with others, upon the new social environment to change not just the environment but also their social relations with others.

After the government stables and slaughterhouses were built near the present day Kariokor, a squatters' settlement grew up on the north bank of the Nairobi River below the present day Quarry Road. An African settlement that was established down stream was called Gikomba while the one near the cemetery was called "Kaburini", meaning burial place in Kiswahili. Some of the Kikuyus who lived in these villages were employed in the government stables. Others however purchased cattle heads and offal from the slaughter-house for use in making the soup which they sold to porters, many of whom occupied a site upstream. As one informant argued, informal enterprise in Nairobi emerged soon after the establishment of the town. Hence, informal sector

activity in Nairobi is as old as the town itself (O.I., Macharia Kinyori, 11-6-02).

African women also conducted trade in early Nairobi. The sale of foodstuff by women dates back to traditional African societies, where it was normal for women to sell surplus crops. This role of women was hardly disturbed by colonial interventions (Mitullah, 1991). Evidence points to the fact that there were more female African traders in early Nairobi than male Africans. For instance, one of the informants of McVicar (1968), Wa Mashuthi stated that women at Maskini village, near Pangani, sold firewood to other residents of Nairobi. The Maskini settlement occupied a strip of marshy land between the Mathare river and forest road, and was dominated by "up-country Africans" (Anderson, 2002).

Ngesa (1997) also observes that the arrival of the railway line in 1899 marked an important point in the development of African women's trading operations in Nairobi. She categorized women traders in Nairobi into two, namely, those who travelled to Nairobi from areas outside the town (Commuter traders) and resident traders who lived in Nairobi. It is argued here that such women deserve to be regarded as informal traders in the sense that their trade was not properly regulated by the colonial authorities. As more Africans opted for hawking instead of wage labour, the activity started to be controlled by the colonial government (Mitullah, 1991). Despite restrictions on hawking, especially on fruit and vegetables on the pretext of their being a health hazard, the number of hawkers continued to increase. By 1914, there were an estimated 2,000 hawkers (Parker, 1948).

Majority of the pioneer women traders in Nairobi were of Kikuyu and Kamba origin. These comprised women who had been uprooted from their families due to disease, starvation or domestic problems especially at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such women either took to trading or searching for employment

in the railway camp in Nairobi where they did jobs such as cleaning, washing, and sweeping the railway compound (Ngesa, 1997). Smart (1950:17), confirms this view and argues that many Africans had managed to co-exist on the fringes of railway employment during the initial days. However, after 1901, many opportunities for incidental employment disappeared, leading to a situation of unemployment at a time when there was a steady flow of Africans into the new township.

As indicated earlier, it is not women alone who were employed in Nairobi in the pioneer years. Some landless Kikuyu males (*ahoi*), and African men from other communities are also reported to have taken up wage employment in Nairobi. Since the pay either at the railway camp or in the colonial administration was very low, both men and women had to supplement their income through trade. The daily pay at the railway camp was usually 2 *annas*, and 15 *annas* were equivalent to a rupee, which in turn was exchanged for two shillings at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ngesa, 1997). In addition to money, the African workers at the railway camp were also provided with food, mainly *posho* (maize flour) (O.I., Bernard Gachugu, 26-12-02).

By 1902, some of the African women traders are reported to have devised a number of ways with which to earn a livelihood in Nairobi. Some prepared homemade Kikuyu liquor, which they then sold to Africans living in squatter settlements such as Pangani. Beer, therefore, became a commercial commodity and lost some of the social attributes pertaining to beer taking in pre-colonial African traditions. Since Africans in early Nairobi were limited in leisure activities, this was an important service (Ngesa, 1997). Many African women are reported to have foraged firewood from the surrounding bushes, which they sold to the African settlements. This was the only source of fuel available given that other alternative fuels such as charcoal and paraffin were unaffordable to the majority of Africans. White (1990), reports that Nandi women were also in Nairobi prior to the First World War. These women cut

wood near Muthaiga, which they sold at Mombasa village (White, 1990:41). Such women usually got more money than men. It should be noted that it is not the African residents alone that provided a market for firewood. Even the railway administration relied on wood fuel to run the engines and so did the Europeans for the warming of their houses. Indeed, a number of Asian traders were allocated plots and were subsequently licensed by the newly formed Nairobi municipal committee to trade in firewood (KNA/RN/4/52, 1906).

From 1902, the Nairobi Municipal Committee attempted to isolate African trading activities from those of the Asian community. For instance, the destruction of the original Indian bazaar which was burnt down as a result of a plague outbreak early that year, led to the relocation of the native market to the northern side of Nairobi river. This was done because the plague outbreak that killed between fifty and sixty people was blamed on poor sanitation and overcrowding ostensibly caused by Africans and Asians (KNA/PC/CP/A/8/1 1899-1914:4, KNA/MOH/A/1599, 1902:3). The Indian bazaar was consequently shifted to a new site between the government offices and the housing area for railway subordinates, known as landhies (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-02). Although the medical reports clearly showed that the bazaar was inadequately catered for in terms of sanitary services, the outbreak of plague was always blamed on the Africans and Asians who were accused of lacking hygiene. This was in spite of the fact that the town was located in an unhealthy location with no good drainage and proper sanitation (Ombongi, 2000). Ainsworth, the Ukamba Province sub-commissioner stated clearly that the problem of sanitation in Nairobi derived from the unhealthy site where it was located and the unplanned nature of its pioneer growth.

The new native market was built out of temporary materials in 1903, as the colonial authorities could not invest a lot of money for African benefit. Consequently, it was destroyed by wind and had to be rebuilt in 1906 (Onstad, 1990). It is noteworthy that by this time the municipal committee had begun

charging entry fee of one *anna* per stand per day (KNA/PC/CP/4/2/1, 1907:7). The native market apparently became the trading ground for African traders who brought produce from their farms in the countryside. Among the commodities brought in from the countryside included: sweet potatoes, bananas and homemade ghee among other things. These were exchanged for commodities sold by Asians e.g. blankets, beads, cloth, hoes, slashers, umbrellas, sugar, salt, flour and rice (Ngesa, 1997:42).

Some of the African traders, however, chose to hawk their goods in various parts of the town especially up to 1904. Such commuter traders were, however, confronted with a hawking fee of 3 rupees that was introduced in 1904. This fee was introduced in order to deter or discourage Africans from hawking in the township as well as to boost the council revenue. Nevertheless, an effective mechanism to stop hawkers from their operations was lacking. By 1913, Africans were still hawking illegally in various parts of the town. This can partly be explained by the fact that such African hawkers provided a very important service to the community living in Nairobi, especially in the absence of suitable services by the government-preferred traders among immigrant communities. Despite restrictions on hawking, especially on fruit and vegetables on the pretext of their being a health hazard, the number of hawkers continued to increase. By 1914, the number of hawkers was estimated to be 2,000 (Mitullah, 1991; Parker, 1948). One of the interesting features of African women traders that has persisted to date, is peer entrepreneurship. This enabled women hawkers to overcome the problems of fear and insecurity while moving from home to the market (Kinyanjui, 2004). Even today, women from the same locality arrange to go as a group to the market, either using the same vehicle or walking together to the market. By so doing they feel less threatened by muggers (Ibid., 2004:10).

In 1904, a prominent Asian trader – Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee established a market in Nairobi, popularly known as “Jeevanjee market” (Patel, 1997:42).

Jeevanjee invested RS 100,000 and built a market that was accessible to all. The market also provided an outlet for African agricultural produce. It should be noted that it was Jeevanjee who put up the early administrative offices in Nairobi, which included Ainsworth's house, pioneer government offices, staff quarters, and police lines. In return, Ainsworth gave Jeevanjee a lot of land in Nairobi, including the land on which the Indian Bazaar was established (Patel, 1997). The relationship between Jeevanjee and the state in the pioneer years of colonialism is an illustration of dualism in Kenya in that the weakness of the European settler capital provided an opportunity for Asian capital investment especially in Nairobi and Mombasa.

Informal economic activities in early Nairobi were not only confined to trade. Some of the African women in particular cultivated fallow land in Nairobi and traded in the produce at the railway camp and squatter villages. The increase of African traders in Nairobi continued unabated during the colonial period in spite of the great efforts instituted by the colonial authorities to limit their numbers. The sales of milk and English potatoes in the town are reported to have become even more important during the World War I (Robertson, 1997b). Development in cities therefore, had a great impact on the rural areas as they enabled the countryside to produce and organise itself in different ways. Indeed, increases in rural productivity allowed different kinds of consumption, and thus different kinds of social organization in the city (Simone, 2001). Ironically, those marginalized by colonial changes in the rural came to cities as places of refuge. This circuit frequently blurred clear divisions between the city and the country (Ibid., 20).

As already noted, the African women who ventured into Nairobi prior to the First World War went there to trade and even to practise prostitution, or both. The Indian bazaar became the centre of African activity. African women apparently rented rooms at the back of the bazaar where prostitution took place. An observer is quoted to have said thus about the Indian bazaar:

To the native generally speaking Nairobi means the Bazaar: The Bazaar exists in virtue of the native trade, the volume of which is enormous. There is daily influx of thousands of natives, of whom the greater number comes by road from Kiambu. (Robertson 1997b: 77).

In the early days of colonial Nairobi therefore, African women played an important role in providing the trade goods required not only by the Africans, Europeans and the Asian communities but also provided what White (1990) refers to as the comforts of home. These included lodging facilities for the males who worked in Nairobi, as well as food and sexual services. By 1904, some African women were selling sweet potatoes to Indian and Waswahili traders at Kabete. Trade in staples such as dried potatoes and beans also continued at the African markets, the new Indian trade centres as well as the railway stations. Some of the African traders also took their commodities to the White Settler farms and mission farms around Kiambu (KNA/DC/KBU/1/4 - Dagoretti handing over report 1912). Zeleza (1989), reports that African communities in Central Kenya grew potatoes for the Nairobi market as early as 1900.. From 1905 to 1918, the output of maize and beans is reported to have expanded massively. Unfortunately, the informal marketing channels used by the Africans militated against any reliable production of statistics (Zeleza, 1989).

Many Africans resorted to trade prior to the First World War. First, the land alienation by the colonial government for the benefit of European settlers denied many Africans of their means of livelihood. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 for instance declared that all land belonged to the British imperial government (Kenyanhui, 1992:114). Many settlers wanted to farm in Kiambu because the land was ideal for coffee growing. Although the white settlers initially acquired 640 acres of land per head, this was soon expanded to 1,000 acres. Lord Delamare, the pioneer settler leader in the early days of the colony, amassed some one hundred thousand acres of land in 1903 and another sixty thousand acres a few years later (Elkins, 2005:10). Moreover,

some acquired more land using the names of their children, wives and other relatives. As a consequence, many Africans and especially the Kikuyu of Kiambu had to vacate their land and look elsewhere for a source of livelihood. Some of the land was alienated for the Christian missions as well as for use by the government, for establishing *bomas* (Administrative encampments) (Sorrenson, 1967).

Second, from 1901, a hut tax was imposed and by 1904, and it was mandatory that this tax be paid only in cash. This forced both men and women not only to offer their labour on the white settler farms, but also to trade. This confirms Mitullah et al's (1998) assertion that the early colonial urban centres in Africa were not able to generate capital for themselves or for the nation. Instead, they siphoned resources out of the country. The colonial labour policy's objective was to ensure that Africans served their role in the colonial economy as suppliers of cheap labour. Africans therefore started migrating in search of wage employment in settler farms and in the urban centres, failure of which unemployment resulted (Njoka, 2001). The Kikuyu in particular found themselves hemmed in all sides: to the south, east and north were settler farms, to the west were the government controlled forest reserves of the Aberdares, and to the southeast was the expanding urban centre of Nairobi (Elkins, 2005: 14).

It should be noted, however, that taxation and land alienation were not the only "push" factors that made Africans to embark on trade especially in Nairobi. Many of them for example had to look for means of livelihood away from their homes due to domestic problems. Many women traders confided that one of the factors that made them leave their homes included either death of husband and consequent hostility from relatives, or repeated beatings by the husband especially in situation where the husband was a drunkard (Robertson, 1997b; White, 1990).

There is ample evidence to prove that the coming of the British Company rule in the 1890s increased tensions in the African political economy that saw some of the members leave their land to either look for wage labour in the White settler plantations or in the upcoming urban centres. In Kiambu region, a lot of conflict was reported between those involved in the caravan trade who wanted to expand agricultural land and those interested in livestock who needed to keep adequate grazing land nearby (Mackenzie, 1998). The latter included wealthier members with large numbers of *ahoi*. Thus as trading elders pushed for the extension of cultivated land in order to provision British expeditions and trading caravans, they caused great instability. Many *ahoi* were kicked out of the land. Some of these, both men and women, ended up in Nairobi. Moreover, the colonial government also adopted the strategy of forbidding Africans from growing the most profitable cash crops such as tea, coffee, sisal and pyrethrum so that Africans could provide wage labour for the white settlers (Elkins, 2005).

The argument here is that the unique situation of Nairobi contributed immensely to the transformation of the life of the African communities in Kenya particularly those in the vicinity of Nairobi such as the Akamba, Maasai and the Kikuyu and especially the Kikuyu of Kiambu. This is because the new town of Nairobi provided a host of opportunities not only for labour provision, but also for trade. However, those Africans who happened to be in the town and were not employed by the railway, or the colonial administration were viewed as surplus to city needs and were officially not catered for. They became the nucleus of the population of the illegal city [informal sector] (Mitullah et al, 1998:197).

The Africans in early Nairobi experienced a lot of problems whether they were labourers or itinerant traders. As we have already seen, the largest number of those who perished during plague outbreak were Africans, followed by Asians. In 1915, Dr. Cherret described the situation thus:

Low class Indians and native labourers live in unsanitary hovels, some made of mud and stone and other pieces of corrugated iron. No provision has been made to render these shanties damp-proof or rain-proof, nor has any attention been paid to ventilation, lighting or drainage and the water supply for drinking and other domestic purposes is often as not drawn from the foul Nairobi river or from one of its irrigation canals. Inside these miserable hovels as many people as possible are crowded together and this combined with the want of stamina in many cases of the occupants, indifferent food, and lack of clothing and variations of temperature must predispose to attacks of pneumonia" (KNA, PC/CP/4/2/1, Nairobi Municipality Annual Report, 1914-15:2).

The poor conditions of life were confirmed by colonial officers. By 1906, the houses in the bazaar were reported to have doubled up as residences, brothels and shops. There were 112 shops and a corresponding number of dwellings within the small Indian bazaar (KNA/PC/CP/4/2/1). These poor conditions in the bazaar, combined with the consequent emergence of criminal activities alongside genuine commercial activity among the Asian and African residents. Simone (1998) has observed that, as Africans were pushed to the periphery, their neighbourhoods were not even considered to be urban; but from the beginning, they became a structural part of colonial realities, infused with transformations of pre-colonial forms of livelihood and renovations of multiplex links to the hinterland and to the international circuits. Such neighbourhoods not only became places for the expression of discontent and resistance but also places of refuge for the poor.

The poor state of the Africans in Nairobi was partly blamed on the availability of surplus casual labour in the town. The council did not want to commit its revenue for African housing, neither the government departments (Anderson, 2002). The logic of capitalism preferred that these European establishments in Nairobi spent as little investments as possible for the welfare of the African community in order for the metropole to reap maximum benefits.

## 2.4 Summary

From the foregoing, it is evident that African communities in Kenya were quick to adapt to the new situation after Kenya became a British colony. Some of the communities such as the Akamba were already engaged in the long distance trade prior to the advent of colonialism and were quite used to undertaking trade with the Arabs and Waswahili at the coast.

During the reign of IBEAC in Kenya, African communities continued to interact with company officials at camps such as Fort Smith and Machakos. Pre-colonial modes of production were therefore articulated with the capitalist mode of production at different times during colonialism. However, at the beginning of the century prior to the First World War, merchant capital was the most powerful dynamic that impacted on African communities in Nairobi and its environs.

It may be argued that the informal trading activity in Nairobi developed because of the needs of the new camp as well as the need of the African communities then residing in Nairobi. Arguably, informal trade was not only confined to the African communities. McVicar (1968), states that in the Indian bazaar, a lot of informal activity took place. Houses were used indiscriminately as dwelling houses, shops, stores, laundries, wash houses, opium dens, bakeries, brothels and butchers' shops among other things. Although the European community was quick to condemn this kind of livelihood, it must be noted that it was a logical response from the Asians and Africans. In the face of onslaught from capitalist forces from the west, Africans demonstrated a high standard of creativity as illustrated by their itinerant trading activities.

Evidently, the informal sector was the creation of the articulation of modes of production. The survival of the pre-colonial modes of production is seen in

the perseverance of the African modes of trading in items that were familiar. They also engaged in a new mode of exchange, that of cash which was capitalist. The colonial government did not show resistance to this activity and in fact seemed to support African settlement in Nairobi. However, African artisanal skills do not seem to have been evident in the activities of early Nairobi. Possibly this was because this pioneer period was a time of settlement.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 The Colonial Transformation of African Artisanal Skills in Kenya, 1899-1918

The period between 1899 and 1918 witnessed the consolidation of colonial administration, the beginnings of settler agriculture and the incorporation of Africans into the wage labour economy in Kenya. This entailed not only the exploitation, but also the transformation of African skills to serve colonial interests. Agencies of colonial socialization included the mission church, the school, the colonial town and the market (Zezeza, 1989). The impact of African incorporation into the British colonial empire was experienced most profoundly during the First World War from 1914 to 1918.

In this chapter, the dynamics that led to the transformation of the indigenous artisanal skills in Nairobi during the pioneer years of British Colonial administration in the protectorate are examined. Second, the role of the Asians, Christian missions, European settlers and the colonial state in this transformation is also explored. Finally, the impact of the First World War on the African communities is discussed.

#### 3.1 Pioneer Colonial Artisans in Nairobi

By 1907, most of the British East African Protectorate (modern Kenya) had been put under British colonial rule. The next major task for the British administrators was to ensure that the protectorate supplied the raw materials required by the metropole. Earlier in 1905, the protectorate was transferred from the British Foreign Office to the colonial office (Zezeza, 1989). This move was hailed by the settlers as they perceived the new administration to be more friendly towards them, and more effective. The colonial state was then acting as an agency of imperialism in the service of international capitalism.

Kenya was developed as a settler colony right from the very outset, a factor that inevitably impacted on all other spheres of life. Even the missionaries who had claimed that their prime duty was to promote the welfare of Africans found themselves giving in to settler pressure, which demanded a supply of skilled and semi-skilled African labour. This meant that the African indigenous skills had to be adjusted to suit the needs of the White settler economy. In other words, colonial capitalism exploited the pre-capitalist modes of production in terms of the African labour and technological skill, which was now utilized for the benefit of colonial powers. The state forcibly seized land, livestock and other indigenous means of production (Zezeza, 1992). Under colonial capitalism, the state seems to have been set up to deliberately coerce, dominate and exploit Africans (Kisiang'ani, 2003).

The emergence of colonial artisans in Kenya is difficult to date with any precision (Kitching, 1981:19). Nevertheless, some of the technologies such as a tin-smithing are associated with the presence of the Indian craft communities in East Africa. The Indian merchants and artisans who spearheaded commerce in East Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were members of the traditional seafaring castes and sects from Kutch and the neighbouring districts of Surat, Porbunderm, Jamnagger and Bombay and they were commonly known as Hindi or Banyan (Mangat 1969:123; Seidenberg, 1985). Among the Hindu traders in Zanzibar included communities such as Vantias and Lohanwas, some Brahmins, as well as members of the lower castes who mainly operated as barbers, tailors and washer-men.

Among the Muslims, the Khoja, Bohra and Memon sects were most active in artisanal activity. The Bohra Muslims with whom tin technology is associated, antedated the advent of European colonialism in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the Bohras had practised on the Kenyan coast and Zanzibar for many years before the colonial period (King, 1977). With the coming of European colonialism, the Bohras were able to push up towards Nairobi and Machakos

by 1900. Thus, given the geographical spread of Indian skilled workers into small towns and centres during the colonial period, Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa were not the only urban spaces in Kenya where it was possible for Africans to acquire Asian artisanal skills. Some of the Asians followed the railway, while others followed the early military expeditions. Soon they opened shops at military posts and near the colonial administration *bomas* such as Forthall, Nyeri, Embu and Kisii (Zezeza, 1989). A number of Asians went even beyond the present day Kenya and established businesses in Kampala, Uganda, such as the famous merchant Allidina Visram. Some of them even established shops in the White settler farms to serve both the African squatters and labourers (Zarwan, 1977).

By 1903, a number of Africans had benefited from the Indian technology. The pioneer African artisans in Nairobi learnt their skills from these Asian pioneers (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-01). The indigenous African ironsmiths continued to operate hand in hand with the practitioners of this new Asian technology. Wandibba (1992), maintains that in general, traditional ironsmiths were respected by the rest of the African society long after the advent of colonialism. They produced many types of articles, which were needed in various aspects of life. These included weapons, agricultural implements, craft implements and implements for various domestic chores. Unfortunately, colonialism introduced new items that gradually replaced some of the traditional manufactures, and the Asians were again the main agents of this change as they brought imported knives, clothes, and hoes. These ultimately were disadvantageous to the African economy. Nevertheless, during these pioneer years of colonialism, the new Western products did not completely replace the traditional items. This could be explained by the existence of a duality during the colonial era, involving both the Western and the traditional modes of production. The Asians acted as agents of the Western mode of production. The Asian traders and artisans were integrated into colonial

imperialism much earlier than the Africans in Kenya and were used by the British to facilitate the colonization of the country.

During the construction of the Uganda Railway, about 5000 subordinate Indian workers were recruited in addition to the more than 31,000 coolies. These were supposed not only to help in the railway construction, but also in its running in a variety of capacities. It should be noted that although the Indians as a whole were referred to as coolies, technically a coolie was an unskilled labourer and many of the indentured Indians worked as professionals such as surveyors, clerks, masons, carpenters and draughtsmen (Gregory, 1971). In addition, a number of Indians came to East Africa on their own, mostly as traders, although some obtained employment on the Railway as petty contractors (Zarwan, 1977). In 1905, about 200 Indians were recruited for service in the Public Works Department (Gregory, 1971). The railway engineer, George Whitehouse is reported to have said in April 1898 that:

Masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, coolies are in constant request and there must be some 40 or 50 small contractors on the Railway with from 30 to 200 coolies each. (Mombasa Provincial Archives, shelf 665, file 11, quoted in Mangat, 1969:38).

One informant's grandfather came to Kenya in 1896, to work for the Uganda Railway (Tilak Raj Sharma, O.I., 23-4-03). The older Sharma had worked for the railways in India prior to his visiting Kenya. A European colleague divulged to him the good prospects that awaited him in Kenya. A few years later, Sharma brought his family from Jullundur City in Punjab to the British East Africa Protectorate (*Daily Nation*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2003).

An outstanding Indian merchant who ventured into the interior of present-day Kenya was A.M. Jeevanjee. He came to Kenya in 1886 after conducting successful business in India and Adelaide – Australia (Patel, 1997). Jeevanjee played an important role during the construction of the Uganda Railway. Seidenberg (1985), observes:

The supply of Indian unskilled workers as well as the master masons, iron mongers, tin smiths, lock smiths, carpenters and carvers was mainly organised by Jeevanjee and Company, Limited – the firm of Merchant Princes Alibhoy Mulla and Tayabali Jeevanjee (1985:14).

According to Robert G. Gregory (1971), A.M. Jeevanjee had very humble beginnings as a cart driver who was illiterate (Seidenberg, 1985:70). It was Jeevanjee who donated the gardens named after him to the Nairobi Municipality as a gift in 1906. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his firm undertook the construction of many buildings for the government in Mombasa, Kisumu and Nairobi. Majority of his employees were obviously the Indian artisans. In 1905, A.M. Jeevanjee built the Municipal market in Nairobi, which was described as the most-up-to-date structure of its kind in East Africa (Mangat, 1969:82; Patel, 1997). By 1913, Jeevanjee had applied to be permitted to construct an iron building in River Road containing 14 shops, 42 living rooms and 28 kitchens and bathrooms (KNA/RN/4/53:178).

Indian masons and building contractors constructed not only the schools, government offices but also the most imposing business and residential dwellings in colonial Kenya. The unique Kipande House at the junction between today's Loita Street and Kenyatta Avenue was also erected before the First World War by Gurdit Singh Nayar (Seidenberg, 1985). The Shia Ismaili Mosque on today's Moi Avenue Biashara Street junctions on the other hand, was constructed in the early 1920s (*Ibid.*). Asian building contractors also pioneered in the quarrying operations in Nairobi near Quarry Road and Eastleigh where the pioneer stone mines were to be found. In the process, they apprenticed many Africans in the building trades such as masonry and quarrying.

The importance of Asians in imparting technical skills to Africans in colonial Kenya cannot be over-emphasized. After the construction of the railway, some of the Indians went back to their country. However, others decided to

remain in Kenya earning their livelihood as artisans, carpenters and stone masons, but the great majority became traders many of whom opened small stores wherever there was an opportunity to trade. Many of those who remained in Kenya invited their friends and relatives to seek opportunities long after the construction of the railway line. Thus even after the completion of the railway, Indian indentured labourers arrived in East Africa to work on the European wheat and coffee plantations (Seidenberg, 1985). This probably explains the existence of large numbers of Asians in Kenya in spite of colonial efforts to curb their immigration (Himbara, 1994).

It is noteworthy that members of the Asian community were authorized to operate many businesses perhaps because they were valued highly by the colonial authority in the pioneer years. For example, the municipal council unanimously allowed two Indians to operate firewood-selling business on vacant plots in the Nairobi bazaar in 1906 (KNA/RN/4/52). Asians were also licensed to operate hides and skins businesses: on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1907 Sheikh Noor Din's application to erect a store for green hides in the municipal area was approved. It is probable that Asians did not only advance in artisanal and technical jobs but also in clerical jobs and other trades. (O.I., Charles Githaiga and Bernard Gachugu, 1-01-02). The colonial government however, valued them only in so far as they helped to advance the imperial interests.

The Asians dominated in the operation of rickshaws, which were the main modes of transport in early Nairobi and in most of the major East African towns where the terrain was flat. The use of the rickshaws was a tradition derived from the British in India where the use of the rickshaw was common prior to the advent of the motor vehicle. Until the 1920s, rickshaws pulled by people as well as *hamali* (two wheeled) carts pulled by horses and mules were the main means of transportation for people and goods (Seidenberg, 1985:50). The rickshaw owners then recruited male Africans to pull the rickshaw and ferry the passengers from one point to another especially in Nairobi. The

municipal authorities monitored the operation of rickshaws quite closely. For instance, all rickshaw boys had to be registered and a set of rules drafted for the purpose. Even the tariffs for rickshaws were clearly spelt out. The regulations stated, thus:

All owners of public rickshaws shall keep the rickshaw boys who are employed by them in respect of such rickshaws properly and decently clothed: and any owner who shall fail to comply with the terms of this section shall be deemed to have committed an offence and shall be liable to the penalties prescribed for breach of these rules (KNA/RN/52 -1906:119).

The rickshaws were initially repaired and maintained by Asian ironsmiths. Gradually, however, Asians introduced the use of rickshaw and bicycle technology to African communities in the major urban centres such as Nairobi and Mombasa. The carriages and rickshaws of the horse dealer Ali Khan provided the principal transport service in Nairobi at the time. In particular, most of the carriage and transport work of Norfolk Hotel was run by his company between 1904 and 1908 (Holderness, 1909).

Since the Asians dominated the artisanal sector, they also won government and municipal contracts where iron smithing technology was required. For instance, the Nairobi Municipal Committee reports that a Mr. Purtab Singh; an Asian was paid 25 rupees on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1907 on account of repairs to municipal bicycles (KNA/RN/52-1906:119). It is noteworthy that many Africans in Nairobi, particularly the rickshaw boys were in contact with the Asian ironsmiths who repaired the rickshaws and mule-pulled carts. It can be inferred therefore, that most such skills were learnt on the job from the Asians. Apparently, some Asians did not despise the Africans who lacked Western education. Unlike the Europeans who were selective, often employing the elite, Asians trained even the illiterate Africans in manual skills (O.I., Joseph Nyaga, 17-7-02)

Asian artisans assumed a position of significance also because of repair work for the many ox-drawn carts associated with early Nairobi. Right from the initial days, the ox-drawn carts transported the latrine-pails or buckets, which were in use in Nairobi. It was, therefore, necessary to provide means of access to the backs of all premises by the so-called sanitary lanes. Every night ox-drawn carts which were popularly known as "thunder-wagons", (probably because of the speed) in which they moved, went the rounds of all the houses and shops emptying the buckets. The carts were hauled by long-horned bullocks of the Ankole breed from Uganda. Such ox-drawn carts were repaired by the artisans, who also repaired the many rickshaws that were still in use. By 1926, certain individuals owned private rickshaws (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-03). Even as late as the 1930s, the ox-carts and rickshaws still operated in Nairobi. The commissioner of police complained in a letter to the Municipal Council on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1934 that the ox-carts were inadequately lighted at night, suggesting that the vehicles carry two lights, one in front and another in the rear (KNA/JW/2/48:336).

One of the acknowledged effects of the Indian enterprise in East Africa was the rapid entrenchment of the British imperial rule in Kenya. Specifically, they contributed to monetization or the widespread use of money (rupee). This in turn had the result of solving problems such as collection of taxes and payment of government employees. John Ainsworth, the sub-commissioner for Ukamba Province appreciated this role and is quoted as having said the following in 1905, concerning the Indians in Kenya:

Previous to 1889, the government kept stores of trade goods, and trade goods formed the entire medium of exchange with the natives. Strings of beads, lengthy rings of wire, looking glasses, umbrellas, bells and similar articles had at each place a regular standard value. With the opening of Indian bazaars, the government began to close down their stores, and payments began to be made in rupees and pice, and now station trade goods are unknown quantity (Mangat, 1969:61).

Asians were therefore crucial in the success of the British colonial rule in the country. They provided the necessary skilled labour to the European private enterprises that were established in the colony, as well as the government. It is the European agricultural and commercial sector that dominated the economy (Zarwan, 1977).

The British colonial government strongly resisted industrial developments in the colonies, which could have provided competition for her own manufactures. Moreover, industrialization was generally not favoured because it would have meant loss of revenue for import duties (Zwanenberg and King, 1975). The main concern among European investors was with the exploitation of mineral and food resources and with government-supported investment infrastructure, such as railways and roads. British safari firms, of which Newland and Tarlton were the largest, played an important role in introducing the Africans in Kenya to wage labour. In 1908 the firm organized a safari for the US President Theodore Roosevelt. During this safari, over 500 Africans porters were recruited and were all issued with blue jerseys, shorts and a pair of boots (Clayton and savage, 1974). European agricultural and commercial investments similarly enabled Africans to acquire technical skills in Nairobi e.g. Gailey and Roberts, Stephen Ellis and Company, Raphael Ltd and Machine Metalworks. These investments were the main agents of international capital in Kenya and their stranglehold of the economy has persisted to the post-colonial era. This confirms the dependent character of the Kenyan economy (Ochieng', 2004).

Gailey and Roberts dates back to 1904 when two young surveyors attached to the Uganda Railway, set up an office-cum-shop in Nairobi from which they conducted a business as surveyors and estate agents. They also sold and repaired agricultural equipment such as wheelbarrows, harnesses and farm implements which were in high demand among the White settler community in colonial Kenya (Gailey and Roberts and Roberts diary, 2001). One of the

branches of Gailey and Roberts was Nairobi Engineering Works. By 1908, the company had established workshops next to the Nairobi railway station headquarters that were equipped with machines and facilities such as steam engines lathes, slotting machines, drilling machines, grinding machines, power hammers, forges and brass foundry. By 1908, the company had employed four Europeans, nine Indian mechanics and seven Africans. Even though the Africans were mainly recruited to provide unskilled labour, it is quite possible that they also picked some technical skills informally from the company (O.I., George Mwicigi, 3-12-04).

Machine Metalworks, which was one of the oldest firms in British East Africa was also engaged in similar production. The proprietor was a Mr. Medicks who had arrived in British East Africa from England in 1904. Among the products turned out by the company included ridged or curved corrugated iron, metal tanks, baths, gutters and pipes of all types (Holderness, 1909). These products were important for the exploitation of the territory and great precautions were taken to ensure that other foreign nations did not penetrate the market (Zezeza, 1989). By shielding these imperial firms from foreign competition, the British government benefited while the colonial economy continued to suffer from such capital outflow. One of the disadvantages of the Western technology that was introduced in Africa in particular by such imperial firms was that the colony depended on the capitalist West for virtually all her technology (Ake, 1981:59). This put the colonial economy in a position analogous to that of a producer who has no instruments of labour. Such a producer finds himself at the mercy of those who provide the instruments of labour.

Not all the pioneer European companies engaged in the production of metallic products and machine services. The British East Africa Sawmill which operated from Limuru, and Government Road in Nairobi started operations at the end of 1905 near Limuru railway station and dealt with timber. Logs were

broken down at Limuru, resawn, and planed at Nairobi. The Limuru sawmill illustrates the great colonial exploitation of African natural resources. A large concession of forest was allocated by the colonial authorities on the Kikuyu escarpment exclusively for the company. It is worth noting that prior to the colonial period in Kenya, African communities could exploit the forestry and other natural resources, to manufacture various items to satisfy the needs of the society. This was no longer possible under colonialism as these same resources were given as grants to metropolitan interests at the expense of the Africans.

In Limuru, some 60-80, Africans were engaged by the British East African Sawmills while in Nairobi, there were 12 Africans and some Indian carpenters who worked for the company. The firm supplied sleepers to the Uganda Railway and many Africans acquired artisanal skills, mostly carpentry skills from the Asian employees of the firm. The firm supplied all forms of furniture to the European community of Nairobi. Similarly, when the pioneer motor vehicle garage was opened in Nairobi in 1913, Sexton Motor Garage, it is the Asian artisans who repaired vehicles although the garage was owned by Europeans (KNA/RN/4/1953:171).

The European settlers in Kenya also employed Asian artisans in their wheat farms, ranches and especially in the coffee plantations. Such artisans inevitably provided invaluable skills to the African workers on the job (King, 1996; O.I., George Mwicigi, 26-5-03). Mwicigi's father, Ndung'u Kagori, served several European settlers in the Thika region. In the process, he learnt driving and motor vehicles' repair among other skills. The settlers viewed the Asian artisans as a temporal solution to their technical labour requirements. Europeans in general hoped that Asian artisans would sooner than later be replaced with African artisans (King, 1977). The tendency for Europeans to desire the replacement of the Asian who had so far served the colonial government and the European community well in terms of artisanal skills is

rather curious. King (1977) explains this phenomenon in terms of the high cost incurred in the payment for their services. He argues that Europeans tried to manipulate the school system in order to produce African artisans as they wished to substitute what they hoped would be cheaper African artisans for the Indians who monopolized almost all skilled positions in the country (King, 1996:23-24).

A more probable reason for this European desire to replace the Asians with African artisans could have emanated from the settler politics of the day. The settler community in Kenya had begun to develop a phobia or fear for the fast growing Asian population and economic prosperity in Kenya, especially in Nairobi. Parker (1948), reports that as early as, 1908, the Nairobi chamber of commerce and industry was campaigning against Jeevanjee's monopoly of the market facility in Nairobi. The European demands for another market appear to have been motivated by envy of the profits Jeevanjee got from the market. The Nairobi chamber of commerce which was exclusively a European club wrote to the Nairobi Town Clerk in 1909, stating that they had no idea of assisting to perpetuate the system under which public bodies existed as tenants of private individuals (*EAS-19-5-1909*, quoted in Parker, 1948).

Conclusively, the European dislike for Asian traders could have emanated from their selfish desire to benefit from the services of Asian artisans for a while, after which Asians were to be replaced by the African artisans who could be exploited increasingly through unequal exchange. The persistent political intrigues between the European settlers and Indians over the question of land ownership in the white highlands obviously motivated the European community to scheme for the destruction of Asian prosperity. In spite of this hatred for Indians, it is evident that the success of the pioneer Indian enterprises was based on their hard work and business acumen. Even the Europeans who made negative remarks about them emphasized Indian qualities of industriousness, frugality and perseverance (Mangat, 1969:14).

Asians also became specialised artisans in the building sector. They introduced the art of modern construction in stone carpentry, masonry, engineering and road building. Asian electricians, plumbers, welders and painters were employed to construct government buildings, shops, schools and hospitals (O.I., Rajan Patel, and Tilak Sharma, 23-4-03). When the Municipal Council of Nairobi decided to relocate the Asian bazaar to the present Biashara Street area where two-thirds of the plots belonged to A.M. Jeevanjee, he began putting up shop-houses in 1906. The floor was spread with stones, while the roofs and walls were of corrugated iron sheets of gauge 24 (Patel, 1997:51). Many Africans were exposed to new skills in the bazaar.

The economic position held by Asians during colonialism created conflict between them and the European settlers in several ways. In 1908, the Nairobi East Township Company sold some plots to Asians exclusively. This was in the area later known as Eastleigh. It was a large area that included seven miles of frontage streets, though the drainage system was not properly constructed. This allocation was opposed by a section of the Europeans who were of the view that the municipal authorities were assisting the Asians to settle in neighbourhoods more suitable for Europeans in Nairobi. Europeans were generally of the view that the Indian artisans would soon be supplanted by the native artisans who were coming up (Parker, 1948:70). They decided to ask the colonial government in 1913 to allocate land for the Indian artisans close to the native locations as eventually they would be occupied by native artisans. A site was, therefore, identified for Asian artisans near Ngara Road to the northeast of the town. By this time, some Indian artisans were already spreading to today's River Road due to the overcrowding in the bazaar. By so doing, Asian artisans interacted with more African workmen many of whom acquired artisanal skills in the process, and also some commercial skills (O.I., Rajan Patel, 17-6-02)

The overcrowding existing in the Indian bazaar was a constant problem for the municipal authorities. However, the Europeans took advantage of this problem by spreading propaganda against the Indians, which linked race and sanitation problem in the bazaar (Murunga, 2002). By 1910 Europeans had moved away from Ngara, near the Nairobi River. They moved further westwards to Muthaiga almost four kilometres from their initial settlement. Asians on the other hand mainly occupied Ngara and Eastleigh areas by this time, which were considered less prestigious by the Europeans. However, the richer Indians were able to acquire land in today's Parklands area to the annoyance of the Europeans (Hake, 1977; Seidenberg, 1985).

Between 1911 and 1912, there was recurrence of plague in Nairobi. The root of the problem was attributed to the overpopulation found in the Indian Bazaar with its inadequate sanitation that provided a good breeding ground for rats. It was for this reason that Professor Simpson from South Africa was invited by the government to provide consultancy services on planning the town. Simpson proposed the complete removal of the bazaar to the north of Nairobi River. In practice, he advocated for the zoning and separation of different racial groups in the town. Simpson was advocating for a similar policy like that adopted by South Africa town authorities of the day (Mabin and Pannell, 1995).

In 1915, the municipal committee acting on the advice of the medical officer of health ordered Indian traders to relocate from the overcrowded bazaar. The result was a sudden increase in the so-called veranda trading in the River Road district. The poorer Asians experienced fierce competition for space in River Road even from some of the more successful African traders. Some of these traders, especially the women, were described as those of doubtful reputation (Smart, 1950:40).

The Europeans in Kenya capitalized on the haphazard way in which the Asian bazaar was constructed to argue that Indians were unhygienic and that on that account they should not own land in the white highlands. The pioneer Indian plots on which the traders lived and operated their businesses were generally over crowded and in lack of proper sanitation. The Europeans used this excuse to marginalize Indians from political participation and to impose racial segregation against the Asians and Africans. The phenomenon of urban segregation in colonial Africa is problematic. In most case studies of urban segregation in South Africa for instance, one comes across references to the "sanitation syndrome" (Maylam, 1995:24). This explains urban segregation in terms of moral panic and racial hysteria, as whites increasingly came to associate the black urban presence with squalor, disease and crime. In Nairobi, the "sanitation syndrome" was used to segregate against the African communities who were pushed to the African locations away from the European neighbourhoods. Asians were similarly subjected to racial segregation in the urban centres and in the white highlands.

The material interests appear to have weighed much more heavily in the drive to urban segregation. It has been shown for instance that although the numbers of people who died as a result of plague outbreak in Nairobi between 1900 and 1911 were few in comparison to those who died of other ailments such as malaria and pneumonia, more publicity was given to the former. Asian segregation therefore served a variety of material interests although it was often couched in the discourse of sanitation and disease (Maylam, 1995; Murunga, 2002). The underlying source of segregation against the Asians was more often the European resentment of Asian commercial competition. In June 1917, the editor of *The Leader of East Africa*, a local European weekly, illustrated the fear of Indian competition among the Europeans in Kenya. He observed:

European petty traders and artisans could not match the Indian skills. To begin with they cannot compete with the Indian at any of the ordinary trades and I do not think it would be a very

good thing to have them in the competition either with Indians or such Africans as have learnt a trade. Many have tried but no sooner or later you find them applying for permanent jobs as overseers and foremen in government departments, railways or P.W.D. (Public Works Department). Some have taken to drink after they have made a little money, others have suffered from "swollen head" and think that while they cannot turn out very much work than a good Indian, they should be paid at least three times as much (*The Leader*, quoted in Seidenberg, 1985:18)

By the First World War, therefore, it was clear that in addition to racial contempt, Europeans were scared of the Indian commercial competition. The serious economic depression that accompanied the war put the farms and businesses of the local Europeans at the great risk of bankruptcy (Wolff, 1974). Consequently, there was fear among them that they could be bought off by Asian merchants.

After the war, the imperial government openly supported the European settlers in their economic competition with the Asians. In 1919, two European settlers were nominated to the executive council, while Indian requests for better representation, were rejected adamantly by Governor Edward Northey. In 1923, the Devonshire White Paper concluded this Asian-European conflict when it declared that the interests of the Africans were supreme. It is interesting to note that the Europeans continued to enjoy more benefits at the expense of other races in spite of the Devonshire White Paper Declaration of 1923. The imperial interests of the British government therefore, continued to be protected at the expense of their Indian subjects.

The fact that a number of Africans acquired some technological skills from the Indians helped the colonial state to extract the resources from Kenya more efficiently. However, a number of contradictions were experienced in the process (Berman and Lonsdale, 1992). Instead of the Africans proving to be good and faithful workmen for instance in the white settlers farms, many of them preferred to be squatters. Those in the urban areas also sought to use

every opportunity to sustain themselves including hawking and engagement in other petty trades. Asians on the other hand, sought to entrench themselves in Nairobi not only economically, but also politically. As agents of the colonial government, Asians supplemented the efforts of the colonial government and the missionaries of encouraging the African communities to embrace the western technology such as the use of money, imported clothes and other western commodities. The Africans who acquired technical skills from Asian artisans were very useful in the exploitation of resources for the British colonial enterprise. Conclusively therefore, African pre-colonial skills and labour were exploited for the success of colonialism.

### **3.2 Christian Missions and the Transformation of African Artisans**

Formal training of Africans in artisanal skills in colonial Kenya, was initiated mainly by the Christian missions. Several Christian missions entered the country earlier than the colonial administration. They gave priority to the promotion of Western education and Christian evangelisation. They were unanimous that Christian civilization should be taught as part of the Christian faith (Anderson, 1977). Imbued with racial feelings of superiority, most whites considered spiritual, vocation and industrial education as best suited for Africans (Kisiang'ani, 2003:93).

The earliest efforts to train African labourers in Kenya to skilled and semi-skilled work began at the Church of Scotland Mission (C.S.M.) mission at Freretown near Mombasa, where in 1895, six carpenters and three metal workers were under instruction (Clayton and Savage, 1974). The Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) pioneered industrial training for local Africans beginning with low level courses in forestry, stone cutting and carpentry at the Kikuyu station as early as 1903 (Kitching, 1981). By 1906, a course in printing had been added to other already existing technical courses. Behind the introduction of these courses for Africans was the mission's need to

establish self-sufficient rural communities that could attract potential African converts (Anderson, 1977). The mission's example was quickly taken up by other missions as competition for adherents intensified. For instance, the African Inland Mission (AIM) at Kijabe began offering artisanal training quite early. Artisanal courses were introduced in 1907 at the station and by 1910 the mission was offering a wide range of artisanal courses including carpentry, stone masonry, saw-milling and plumbing (Kitching, 1981).

The Roman Catholic missions were not left behind in providing instructions in artisanal skills. The St. Austin's mission based just outside Nairobi began a 3 year apprenticeship scheme in carpentry and masonry in 1912. By the end of that year, the mission had 27 artisans in training. Such trainees are reported to have been getting 6 rupees each per month. In addition, they were also provided with food rations mainly *posho* (Kitching 1981; Tignor 1976).

The fact that such trainees were getting a token payment from the mission seems to indicate that their services were invaluable to the mission; in most cases, these vocational courses had a large practical component which involved construction of houses by mason trainees and making of furniture and other items by the carpentry trainees for use by the missionaries. Such work was profitable to the missions concerned, as well as to the Christian community (O.I., Wanjohi Muchugia, 7-12-02). Even the mission stations that were far from Nairobi such as the Consolata mission at Nyeri also imparted technical skills in their institutions. The mission established a station at Tetu in 1903, and in 1904, opened another station on the slopes of Nyeri Hill, named Mathari (Kiruthu, 1997). Here, the Africans were trained in artisanal skills such as saw milling, carpentry, bricklaying, and masonry. Other missions that were commencing artisanal training by the First World War included the Church Missionary Society at Maseno and Kabete, and the Friends Mission at Kaimosi.

Johnstone Kamau (Jomo Kenyatta), the first President of Kenya was one of the artisan trainees at CSM Kikuyu, where he learnt not only how to read and write but also carpentry skills by 1912 (Aseka, 1989). The lives of artisans like Kenyatta improved tremendously as a result of such training. Soon the colonial government decided to assist the missions in the work of promoting technical skills among the African community. By 1909, the government was giving a grant to the CSM towards the cost of equipment and teachers' salaries. As a result, the mission was able not only to expand but also to formalize training. In 1912, it started offering a three-year apprenticeship in carpentry, masonry, agriculture and hospital work. At Kikuyu station, the mission opened a new training workshop and the training programme was expanded to its other major station – Tumutumu in Nyeri District. By 1913, the mission had over 509 boys undergoing apprenticeship. It was quite obvious that the government offered grants in aid to the mission schools primarily for the creation of African apprenticeships. Indeed, no school could attract substantial grants unless it technicalized itself (King, 1977:22). Many of the trainees eventually ended up either in the white settler farms or in the urban centres (O.I., Charles Githaiga, 26-12-03).

Many Africans from the Kikuyu society enrolled in the mission schools by 1920. However, this was mainly because majority tended to come from that segment of Kikuyu society whose political and economic weakness made them vulnerable to control by other powerful persons such as white settlers (Tignor, 1976:128). One important factor in the region that motivated many parents to send children to school was lack of enough land. European missions in Kikuyuland acquired large pieces of land, which they used to entice Kikuyu families. The Consolata Fathers accumulated a 3,000 acre estate and another 607 acre in Nyeri District alone, and 649 acres near Limuru (Kiruthu, 1997). The Holy Ghost Fathers on the other hand had a 5,000 acre station at Mang'u near Thika and 374 acres just outside Nairobi. These mission estates housed many African families, especially from the Kikuyu community. This is

illustrated by the fact that by 1913 the CMS at Kabete had 37 African huts, while Thogoto had 253, Mang'u 224, and Kijabe 207 (Tignor, 1977:129). Thus, loss of land among many members of the Gikuyu community pushed many people to the urban centres and white settler farms to search for employment. Those who found themselves unemployed had to struggle to earn a means of livelihood by hawking foods in the town (O.I., Bernard Gachugu, 1-01-02).

It is worth noting that the formula used by the colonial government to award grants-in-aid in the 1920s was extremely important and greatly influenced the direction of education between 1926 and 1934 when a new grants-in-aid was established. The colonial government ensured that only those mission schools that apprenticed students to trades became eligible for grants. Such courses included: carpentry, masonry, agriculture, and teaching. The formula used to calculate these grants tended to promote deception both among the missions and their students. Since African students had to pursue a vocation in the mission schools in order to receive government support, some students indentured themselves and even undertook a vocational course even though they did not intend to practise such a trade after graduation (Tignor, 1976:21:4). Similarly, the missionary societies also inflated the salaries of their agents in order to get large government grants and later had the beneficiary donate parts of their salaries to the mission. It must be noted that the government was keen to promote these artisanal skills among the Africans in order to ensure efficient exploitation of the resources in the colony in line with the interests of British metropolitan economy.

The mission's participation in the provision of artisanal skills to Africans just like the Asians, was part of the articulation process. This involved the destruction of the skills not needed in the indigenous modes of production and taking what could benefit the colonial government. The missions, therefore, promoted the success of British colonialism in Kenya. They played an

important role in producing both a number of African artisans and a small group of elite to service the colonial economy and the colonial administration.

### 3.3 The Colonial Government and the Training of African Artisans

As already indicated, the colonial administration in Kenya was mainly concerned with the promotion of the colony's economic position, a task erroneously exclusively ascribed for the White settlers. Africans were perceived as providers of labour for the support of the White settlers' agriculture (Maxon, 1992). Even the grants-in-aid to mission school were meant to promote the white settlers economy (Tignor, 1976; King, 1977).

Several imperial institutions played an important role in the transformation of African artisans in Kenya prior to the First World War, both directly and indirectly. One such institution was the Uganda railway whose construction accelerated the acquisition of artisanal skills among the Africans in Kenya. Many Africans acquired artisanal skills from the Asian employees of the Uganda railway. A British official, major Pringles is reported to have stated the following in 1903:

The employment of Swahili, Kikuyus and other natives of Africa in the railway workshops as hammers-men, rivets and coolies is a pleasing feature but I think the employment of a small number of Africans as apprentices is desirable so that they may be trained to become artisans and eventually replace the skilled labour now obtained from India (Hill, 1971:239).

Major Pringles' ideas seem to have won the backing of the railway as by 1915, the number of African artisans working for the railway had risen to 183. These were operating in the main workshops, operating cranes, lathes and drills and riveting boilers. By 1918, practically all the trackmen, 16 drivers and shunters, over 170 firemen, 13 pump staff and 180 workshop apprentices were all African, and training of signallers had begun (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 98). In addition to the railway, the government also took a number of measures aimed at streamlining the education system. In 1908 for example,

Professor Nelson Frazer was appointed the education advisor to the protectorate. In the following year, he produced a report in which he stressed the need for tapping African talent through technical and industrial education (Osogo, 1971). This report was received positively by the government. The colonial government, therefore, took interest in the development of technical education in the colony seriously which they wanted to use in order to produce better workmen among the African communities. It was in line with this that the first government school was set up at Machakos in 1908, as Nairobi was then administratively part of the Ukamba Province.

The Machakos School, which was started by John Ainsworth started offering courses in masonry, carpentry, bricklaying and black smithing in 1913 (Kitching, 1981). The school enrolled Kamba boys exclusively aged between 16 and 17 years. They were paid 5 rupees a month but were not provided with food, because it was argued that they lived at home or with friends. The school was modelled on the Tuskegee Institute in the USA established by Booker T. Washington for African Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it had a strong technical bias and the philosophy of working with hands was emphasized as the ideal for Africans (Osogo, 1971). By 1914, the school had 26 apprentices indentured for 3 years. At the onset of the First World War, the technical classes were halted. Some of the boys graduated in their courses in March 1918, and a few found employment in government service.

It can be argued that the tendency of recruiting African artisans into non-artisanal careers played a big role in defeating the objective of providing such artisanal skills. Given the shortage of literate Africans who could be employed to service the settlers farms, colonial administration and other employers as clerks, Africans with technical skills found such positions more enticing and better rewarding than the artisan career (Bernard Gachugu O.I. 26-12-2001). As such, the practising artisans were usually the Africans who had trained on the job possibly under the Asian tutelage with little prospects for white-collar

jobs. Many such people combined the new aspects of western and oriental technology with the indigenous technology (O.I., Muita Muya, 18-4-03).

One other colonial institution in Kenya that ironically played a significant role in the provision of artisanal skills to Africans apart from the railway is the gaol (Kitching, 1981). This is in spite of other abuses meted out to African prisoners in the colonial prisons. Industrial classes commenced at the Nairobi gaol in April 1907 with a class of 22 learning tailoring, 24 learning mat-making, 10 apprenticed to a master-carpenter and unspecified number learning masonry (Ukamba Province Annual Report, 1908-9). By 1909, the Nairobi prison had 47 inmates learning tailoring, 24 learning mat-making, 14 in carpentry classes, 10 men learning masonry and 36 men apprenticed as tinsmiths. It is curious that the prison could produce such a good number of artisans, given that prisoners are generally associated with crime and other such unsocial behaviour. In 1912, the municipal committee even turned down the tender applications for the repair of the council carts. Instead, it was agreed that discharged African prisoners be engaged. These were carpenters and three smiths (KNA/RN/4/53:1908-1909).

During the colonial period, many Africans were arrested and subsequently imprisoned over petty matters. Some of the inmates were Africans who defied colonial chiefs, others evaded paying taxes, conscription into the colonial forces or labour recruitment. Karen Blixen narrates how her cook's former employer, threatened to have him conscripted during the First World War as a form of punishment (Hodges, 1999). The situation was made worse by the fact that the provincial administration depended entirely on chiefs, headmen, and councils of elders. These were responsible for raising labour, collecting taxes, keeping the district officers abreast of all the developments taking place in their areas of jurisdiction and keeping law and order (Hodges, 1999:37). Obviously, such leaders could and did misuse their powers, to arrest fellow Africans with whom they quarrelled over other issues. Perhaps this explains why the colonial prison produced a good number of artisans by the First

World War in 1914. The Nairobi gaol was not an exception. A quarterly for Ukamba province reports that on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1912, there were 636 prisoners in Kiambu jails of whom no less than 220 were receiving industrial training. The reformatory for boys at Kabete, near Nairobi which opened in 1909, is also reported to have been offering artisanal or industrial instruction to the African boys (Kitching, 1981; KNA/PC/CP/8/1 –1911-1912:19).

One of the agencies of such industrial instruction was the Asian artisan. It is no secret that the colonial gaols were manned by Asian warders and instructors throughout the colonial period. Given that such inmates usually filtered to their home locations after the prison sentence, it can be argued that such ex-prisoners probably helped to spread the artisanal skills in the rural areas, urban centres and in the settler farms where they continued to use the skills. In December 1912, the Nairobi Municipal Committee recommended that one Asian ironsmith and one discharged African carpenter be engaged permanently in employment (KNA/RN/4/45 –1911-1912:19). The Nairobi record book (1911-1912) also reports that there was considerable progress made in the prison industries in Nairobi by 1912 (KNA/PC/CP/8/1-1911-1912:19). In addition, there was a high demand among the local merchants, both Asian and European, for the services of the ex-convicts trained in trades such as tailoring, leatherwork and carpentry. This trend continued during the First World War.

### **3.4 The First World War and its Impact on the Development of African Artisanal Skills**

The First World War (1914 to 1918), greatly impacted on the development of not only Nairobi, but the entire country. It impacted heavily on the lives of the Africans in Nairobi, the headquarters of colonial administration in Kenya. The war was declared on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 (Hodges, 1999), and Nairobi became a major military base and centre of every operation. Prior to the war, the only regular military force stationed at Nairobi was the Kings African Rifles. Upon

the commencement of the war, volunteers from India, South Africa and England also came to Nairobi to offer their services to the British. Thus, various units of the British Empire gathered into the capital were eventually merged to create the East African Mounted Rifles (EAMR) (Hodges, 1999; Odinga, 1990).

Many Africans were also conscripted as carrier corps. This was done using various methods ranging from persuasion, to use of incentives and coercion (Odinga, 1990). The recruitment exercise mostly targeted the Kamba, Kikuyu and the Luo communities in Kenya who were put into the carrier corps. The first carrier depot was in Nairobi on the site of the present Kariakor Market which derived its name from the carrier corps depot or camp where the African carriers were stationed during the war (O.I., Arthur Mwangi, 30-3-02). It is interesting to note that there is a corresponding Kariakor in Mombasa, and a suburb in Dar es Salaam called Kariakor (Hodges, 1999:14). The carrier corps was a military unit just like any other military regiment, except that it was larger. However, very few of its members were put on normal military gear. The predominantly African carrier corps had no boots, or indeed little but a blanket and their main work was to ferry the luggage, food, weapons and other equipment needed by the British soldiers during the war.

All the young men who were medically fit from central Kenya, Ukambani, Nyanza provinces in the East African Protectorate; and from Uganda, had to pass through the Nairobi carrier depot. Nairobi depot also served as the centre of pay and registration system. It also hosted the hospital where research and other medical attention for carriers from British East Africa was coordinated (O.I., Gethi Gaita 24-12-03). In total, about 11,000 African men served in the King's African Rifles (KAR). These soldiers primarily came from Nyasaland, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, as well as men from the East African Protectorate i.e. British East Africa and Uganda and they were all stationed in Nairobi (White, 1990). Senior KAR officers were also stationed in Nairobi. These were

generally British soldiers, South Africans or Rhodesians. Nairobi therefore, became a small garrison town where many foreign troops who were relatively well paid were stationed. The wages earned by the carrier troops who were stationed at Kariakor were relatively substantial as well.

During the war, there were three categories of African carrier corps. The most prestigious cadre comprised of the uniformed machine-gun porters and stretcher bearers who were better paid. The second category was that of officers' servants who were also reasonably paid, with the construction labourers lying at the bottom of the ladder (Clayton and Savage, 1974). The work done by the latter ranged from port construction, railway repair, and camp and road construction. Many carrier corps provided labour in such military construction and inevitably acquired some skills. At the end of the war in 1918, those who acquired such skills eventually got employed either in the government departments, Christian missions, or in the white settler farms. Therefore, the serious labour demands during the war, enabled a number of Africans to acquire a number of new skills. After demobilization, many of the African carrier corps were reluctant to go back to the reserves and opted to live in Nairobi. A small camp for the destitute was therefore set up in the town to accommodate the large number of homeless people in town.

The colonial administration required African manpower with some level of skills in several fields such as bookkeepers, artisans, messengers and clerks (Ake, 1981). The Public Works Department (PWD), needed skilled artisans, and so did the postal corporation and the railway. A PWD Industrial Training Depot was opened in 1911, and by 1914, it was training 30 boys as carpenters (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 47). Although it is difficult to ascertain the number of Africans employed by these government departments by the First World War, Clayton and Savage (1974) state that by 1918 the government employed some 3,000-5,000 in the PWD and 7,000 on the railway. The private sector employed 110,000 (Kitching, 1980:19). Unfortunately, colonialism was only interested in exploiting the African labour and therefore

did not care about the personal welfare of the African labourers. Labour and unskilled labour in particular was regarded as simply one factor in the process of production.

Very little was provided to the labourers in terms of basic amenities (Zwanenberg, 1972). As Clayton and Savage (1974) has observed, the war worsened urban problems in Nairobi and Mombasa. With the installation of electricity in these towns between 1917 and 1918, many Africans were attracted there. Unfortunately, nothing was done to improve housing conditions by the Nairobi Municipal Committee. On one hand the colonial government had a low opinion of the African urban labourer as they conceptualised the movement of Africans from the rural areas as constituting a process of de-tribalization (Southall, 1969). This process was believed to be dangerous to the Africans unless it was done gradually. The colonial authorities were however aware that colonialism would not survive without the services of the Africans in the urban centres. Many Africans served in capacities such as cooks, house servants, *ayas* (children's nurses), gardeners and watchmen, among other occupations (Murunga, 2000). This can be situated within the logic of international capital whose interests was to exploit the colonial economies to the maximum. The result was that Africans continued to rely on their rural areas for sustenance because of wages that could not adequately keep them. Consequently, many of the structures of the pre-colonial era continued to survive. Even the small-scale pre-industrial technology continued to exist not only in the rural areas, but also in Nairobi up to the First World War. This was particularly prevalent in the African locations of Nairobi especially in fields like traditional medicine, and in crafts such as woodworking, iron smithing and leather work (O.I., Bernard Gachugu, I-1-02).

The training and employment of a select group created several contradictions in the colonial economy. The small group of elite took advantage of their

better economic position to accumulate land from fellow Africans thereby creating a small group of capitalists especially in Central Kenya. This process pushed the poorer sections of the community either to squatterdom in white settler farms or into wage labour. The category that missed such opportunities joined the petty traders in Nairobi and other larger towns in the country.

### 3.5 Summary

The exigencies of colonialism demanded that a group of the colonized peoples become proficient in western education and technological skills at least to some extent. While the Christian missionaries required African catechists, clerks and artisans, the white settlers and the colonial government required a better type of African workman. The interests of the latter contradicted with the interests of the African communities in Kenya, majority of whom wanted to acquire western education so that they could get access to the white-collar jobs. Consequently, very few of the mission- educated Africans ended up as artisans. Most of them were employed as clerks and messengers among the potential employers as there was a great shortage of literate African workers. As Kitching (1980) observes, very few African artisans had left wage employment to start on their own by 1918.

As already noted, it is those Africans who acquired the artisanal skills informally from either the Asians or the colonial gaol that ended up practicing their professions. For such people, the traditional artisanal skills went hand in hand with the new technology that they acquired from Western Europe and from Asians. This could be explained in terms of the interests of colonial capitalism. It needed to destroy some of the aspects of the pre-colonial modes of production, while preserving those aspects that were beneficial to colonialism. African labour, for instance, was crucial during the war, which threatened the success of British colonialism in East Africa.

It can be concluded that the colonial authorities developed patron-client relations particularly with those Africans who acquired mission education. These became a privileged elite right from the pioneer years, even before the First World War. Their fortunes improved with the development of colonialism in the country. Given that Nairobi as most other towns in the country was an administrative city that lacked extractive industries, majority of the Africans in the town as well as in the reserves were unskilled labourers. Those who missed out on wage employment but also lacked enough land to eke out a means of livelihood from, ended up in petty trading and other informal activities. This phenomenon obtains up to the present.

The First World War played a big role in the acquisition of artisanal skills among the Africans in Kenya. Many Africans were recruited in the military, railway and road construction. The war, therefore, led to the movement of many Africans into Nairobi where they became exposed to the Asian artisanal skills in quarries and construction sites.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 The Development of African Informal Enterprises in Nairobi, 1919-1939

The main goal of colonial capitalism was to exploit the resources in Kenya. This was demonstrated clearly in the period between 1919 after the First World War, and 1939, at the onset of the Second World War when the colonial state aggressively pressurised Africans to provide labour in the European farms and other enterprises. This period witnessed an expansion in wage employment, urbanization and the subsequent emergence of labour and political consciousness (Kanogo, 1989). The argument by dependency and underdevelopment scholars led by Raphael Kaplinsky (1980) and Steven Langdon (1977) that the main influence of the industrialized countries is a continuous process of surplus extraction was vindicated with regard to colonial Kenya in this period. This exploitation generated serious contradictions in the country. These were clearly expressed in the creation of several African political associations (Maxon, 1989).

In this chapter, the impact of the First World War and the post-war depression on the economic and social life of Africans in Nairobi, is examined. The economic and administrative functions of the town are also analysed in relation to the internal struggles for economic survival among the Africans, during the inter war period. It is argued here that Nairobi acted as an enclave that facilitated the exploitation of both human resources and economic resources from the Kenyan hinterland.

#### 4.1 Informal Sector in Nairobi in the Inter War Period

The influx of First World War soldiers to Nairobi had a drastic impact on the population. For example, whereas in 1914, the population of Nairobi was estimated to be 20,000 persons, by 1918, the population had risen to 21,565 (Odinga, 1990). Among the factors that increased the attractiveness of Nairobi

by 1917, was the electrification of the town (Clayton and Savage, 1974). One direct consequence of this rapid population increase was overcrowding in the African areas. Nevertheless, the War period was also time of prosperity especially for the business community on the account of the new wave of European and Indian immigration. By 1921, the Asian population alone had grown to 9000 (Hake, 1977).

During the period, Nairobi hosted men of all races seeking economic opportunities. These included the soldier-settlers and hundreds of demobilized African soldiers and carrier corps. Seidenberg (1985), observes that during this period the original group of upper class Europeans in Kenya became diluted as British soldiers on land bank assistance schemes arrived some of whom ventured to Kitale, and other parts of the Rift Valley. This population expansion further increased commercial opportunities not only for African farmers and artisans, but also for the Asian and European traders. For instance, the greatly swollen population of Nairobi during, and after the war led to increased demand for peasant production (Zezeza, 1989). In 1925, Sir Derek Erskine, a prominent European, settled in Nairobi and opened a retail grocery in Westlands (Seidenberg, 1985:122).

After the war, the Nairobi Municipal Committee became concerned especially with the large number of Africans in the town many of whom had no adequate housing. The municipal committee in particular wanted to have social control over this growing African population (Parker, 1948). Consequently, the committee made plans to acquire a military salvage camp and a hospital compound for the establishment of a native location. This new location came to be known as Pumwani. The plans to settle Africans in Pumwani were so hastily made that the location was supposed to be settled without waiting for the area to be properly drained. The town council in particular wanted to remove Africans from the African locations of Kileleshwa and Pangani in order to pave way for the increasing numbers of White settlers and Asians. Some of the accusations against these two locations, which the council used to

justify their removal included the brewing of native brews, which in turn increased drunkenness among the residents. The locations were also accused of being good hiding places for thieves (*EAS*, 28 August 1926). It can be argued that Africans were forced to venture into some of these trades like illegal brewing of liquor and prostitution due to lack of other means of earning money for their livelihood and for paying taxes.

One of the consequences of the presence of foreign troops in Nairobi was the upsurge of prostitution. Prior to the First World War, African women combined prostitution with other economic activities such as trading and cultivation. This seems to have changed after the First World War. Women in the town now abandoned all other work and took to full-time prostitution (White, 1990:43). It is from such women that a group of female property-owning women in African locations of Nairobi emerged. Many of these women are reported to have built four to eight room huts in which they lived and also collected rent from the African lodgers. By 1915, each of the African villages namely, Pangani, Kileleshwa and Maskini comprised of between 150 to 200 African huts (Anderson, 2002).

By the 1920s, prostitution had become a common money earning activity in Nairobi. This was confirmed by Dr. Carman, a medical doctor, who was in charge of the four special clinics established for Africans by Lady Grigg - the governor's wife. The chief function of the clinics was the control and treatment of venereal diseases (Carman, 1976). This situation was blamed on the existence of several brothels in the town after the war. The colonial police turned a blind eye on the brothels on the understanding that the women would be under regular medical supervision. One Nubian lady is reported to have been operating a thriving business in brothels and would bring her young ladies to the clinic in a string of private rickshaws (*Ibid.*, 1976:22).

According to Robertson (1997b), it would be unfair to blame the African women for practising prostitution without looking into the motives that drove

them to the vice. For one, new pressures on women were imposed by new labour obligations in the rural areas, as well as cultural constraints, which encouraged some women to escape control of the male patriarchy by entering or expanding trade during the war. Thus, even before the First World War, some went to Nairobi to trade, to practise prostitution or both (Robertson, 1997b: 77). Women prostitutes also rented rooms at the Indian bazaar where they serviced the large male population in Nairobi. White (1990) concludes that African women prostitutes were invaluable to the African and other males as they provided them not only with sexual needs, but also comfort, shelter and warm food. These were services that were rare for African male population of colonial Nairobi who were far from their families and whose income could not enable them to travel to the rural areas to stay with their families frequently. Arguably, the colonial state exploited the African labour force to the extent that African men could not afford to live with their families in the urban centres a factor that contributed to the underdevelopment of the African reserves. This was because the male labourers were given such low wages that they could not afford to remit savings. This exploitation benefited the metropole, as African labourers were underpaid in the urban centres. Consequently, their subsistence was catered for by the pre-colonial modes of production. Coincidentally, it led to a new class of African women who owned some property in Nairobi.

The population of Nairobi expanded tremendously during the war period. The chief Native commissioner estimated that by 1920, the population had hit 20,000 - mark (Van Zwanenberg, 1972). The prosperity that accompanied the immediate post-war period was short-lived. In 1921, a post war depression set in which contributed to a high level of unemployment among all the races in the town (Smart, 1950). *The group worst hit by this economic crisis were the Africans in the town.* During the 1920s, Nairobi town council minute books registered increasing numbers of complaints about illegal hawking by Africans (Onstad, 1990). Africans turned to hawking, as it was a better option

than all the other avenues they could exploit to earn their livelihood and pay taxes, which had been increased after the war from 10 to 16 shillings annually (Maxon, 1989). Thus, many of them took to the hawking of fruits and vegetables on the streets of Nairobi. Others relied on the sale of milk. Many of the Africans in Nairobi's native locations by the end of the First World War identified themselves with the town. They were forging new social and economic relations in the urban.

Many complaints were registered by the Municipal council against African informal traders in the 1930s. They were accused of hawking commodities even within the commercial area, contrary to the council by-laws (KNA/JW/2/48:222). As early as 1934, the municipal general purposes committee was requested to consider the possibility of having a squad of police seconded for the purpose of preventing this and other breaches of municipal by-laws. The council became so strict that even the newspaper vendors were required to wear badges. Ironically, during the inter-war period, some Asians and Europeans also took advantage of hawking. For example, Mrs. Hale, a European, is reported to have written to the council in 1934 requesting for the lowering of the fee charged to her African hawkers, whom she employed to hawk ice cream in the residential areas of Nairobi (KNA/JW/2/48:87). This is significant given that majority of the Europeans discouraged hawking arguing that African hawkers were unsanitary.

The Asians also conducted hawking of new clothes in residential areas especially among the Muslims whose women rarely ventured out (Onstad 1990). African hawkers sold food, fruits, vegetables, tea, roasted maize and traditional foods. Others hawked tobacco, second-hand clothes or *mitumba* and even flowers and handicrafts. The second hand clothes' traders initially acquired such clothes from the European and Asian communities who disposed used clothes that they no longer wanted (Onstad, 1990).

Eating houses and tea stalls were some of the informal businesses that were successfully established by African entrepreneurs in the inter war period. One such venture was established in 1934 on plot number 869/2 Race Course Road, belonging to messrs Stirling and Scott (KNA/JW/2/48:318). In spite of the services provided by such African entrepreneurs, their investments were never secure because the municipal authorities were always on the look out for any excuse to destroy the food kiosks. For example, in spite of the fact that such food vendors paid licenses to the council, the general purpose committee sat in August 1934 and resolved to reduce the number of food vendor's licenses following accusations that African traders and their customers were a nuisance to other residents (KNA/JW/2/48:68). It is important to note that although such food vendors paid an annual fee of twenty shillings for their licenses as well as two (2) shillings for a badge, harassment discouraged them from investing more in trade. It is little wonder then that majority of Africans in colonial Nairobi were keener to get white-collar jobs, than to venture into business (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 26-6-02).

Ironically, cleavages were also developing among the Africans in Nairobi. For instance, in 1936, the African licensed traders in Nairobi wrote severally to the Nairobi Town Clerk complaining against the activity of African hawkers (KNA/RN/1/59). Such licensed African traders were few and the majority were colonial employees such as headmen, messengers and policemen. It is evident that the colonial authorities had already begun to develop patron-client relations with the African elite during the inter-war period. The mission educated African employees in the public service were able to acquire trade licenses and many were also co-opted into the Local Native Councils. Many of them used their positions to enhance their businesses unlike the poor African hawkers. However, the contradiction was that not all the members of this African elite collaborated with European colonial authorities. Some, like Harry Thuku used their position to advance African political interests through

the East African Association that was proscribed by the colonial government in 1922 (Sifuna, 1990).

One of the commercial enterprises practised by Africans in Nairobi during the inter-war period was the sale of illegal liquor. Although the brewing of traditional beer can be traced back to the pre-colonial times, its sale only reached an alarming level during the inter-war period. This was because a new liquor and new way of making beer had been introduced which was simple and efficient for the brewing of the alcoholic beverage popularly known as the Nubian gin. This liquor intoxicated those who took even a small quantity. It therefore, became popular among Africans after its introduction by the Nubians at Kibera during the First World War. Africans found it advantageous as they needed to spend only a little money and they would get satisfaction of getting intoxicated equally fast (KNA/RN/1/59).

Dr. Carmen, the medical officer in charge of the Nairobi prison and Infectious Disease Hospital in 1926, reports that the African brews were so popular that they were brewed even within the precincts of the infectious diseases hospital by some African patients. The Nubian gin, was illegally brewed by patients themselves both for consumption, and for sale to fellow Africans. At the place where they brewed this liquor, a row of forty-gallon drums was found behind a clump of bushes (Carmen, 1976). The patients were making the liquor using their extra rations of *posho*, which they supplemented with some *posho* which they purchased using liquor sale profits. The *posho* was fermented during the week but the selling was done on Sundays, perhaps a day when they would be sure that the European medical staff would not notice their illegal commercial operations. It would appear that African staff in the hospital colluded with the patients (Carmen, 1976:71). When the medical officer in charge discovered these activities, all the patients involved were repatriated to their homes.

Two factors pushed the African entrepreneurs to resort to illegal brewing of liquor and other illicit activities in colonial Nairobi. First, the colonial regime prohibited Africans from consuming the bottled beer up to the 1950s mainly because of racial considerations. The bottled beer was clearly unaffordable to the Africans (O.I., Mathenge Muteithia, 22-1-02). Therefore, Africans had to consume the illegally brewed liquor. In any case, the European community was opposed to most of the entrepreneurial attempts by Africans in Nairobi, as they wanted Africans to provide cheap labour in the white settler estates and in the municipal council. In this situation, Africans had no choice but either to turn to illegal activities, or go back to the already overcrowded reserves.

#### **4.2 The Development of African Artisans During the Inter-War Period**

The colonial authorities in Kenya laid the basis for the development of the colony as a white settler economy supported by African labour. Three important new developments emerged concerning the training of African labour during this period. These were the establishment of the Natives Industrial Training Depot (NITD) at Kabete, and the Jeanes School, also at Kabete (Tignor, 1976:216). The third one was the establishment of Alliance School at Kikuyu.

The NITD was established as a result of settler pressure for more efficient training of African artisans, who could be employed on European estates and also in the towns. Under the director of education's guidance, students put up the first modest buildings. In 1923, the colonial government allocated some \$12000 loan to the school for the purposes of establishing better structures. Consequently, the schools' orientation was shifted towards training Africans who could serve in the European sectors of the economy. By 1928, the NITD was offering instructions in carpentry, joinery, masonry, bricklaying, black smithing, painting and even tailoring. The course took five years with the new students taking a general course for two years, and thereafter three years specializing in a vocation (O.I., Kinyua Muteithia, 22-2-02).

The technical departments of mission schools were also linked with NITD. The graduates from NITD and mission - technical schools were indentured by the government through signing master and servants contracts before the administration. The main idea behind this indenture in the 1920s was meant to make sure the students did not abscond from the technical career for more lucrative jobs before completing their training. Clerical and artisanal jobs were in high demand in the 1920s and there existed fears that Africans could be lured away from school and thereby abandon their training. This happened on several occasions in schools like the CSM Tumu Tumu (O.I., Kinyua Muteithia, 22-2-02).

In 1936, the colonial government estimate put those who had completed their training at NITD at 1050 students, 501 of these graduated as carpenters, 424 as masons, 72 as smiths, 238 as painters, and 15 as tailors (Tignor, 1976:217). It should be noted that whereas the blacksmiths and painters had little difficulty getting employment, the masons were encountering some difficulties getting employment. Similarly, of the 630 graduates of NITD in 1933, only 304 were in wage employment (Stichter, 1982). This reflects not only the lack of markets for skilled labour, which mainly needed all round handymen rather than specialized labour in the agricultural sector, but also the competition posed in the urban markets by the more skilled Asian artisans (Stichter, 1982).

The Jeanes School was an outgrowth of the Phelps Stokes Commission and was sponsored through a grant from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. It was opened in 1926 and its curriculum was adapted to the rural environment. The purpose of the school was to train students to oversee a group of bush schools upon graduation. It was envisaged that Jeanes School graduates could transform such schools and make them valuable centres of education for rural Kenya in terms of better sanitation, health, education as well as agricultural techniques. Contrary to the colonial government's expectations, the products

of the institution were not artisans as such. Rather, these also took up clerical careers (O.I., George Mwicigi, 3-12-04).

The Alliance High School on the other hand, was established by the Protestant missions in Kenya. In 1919, these missions had proposed to set up a missionary college that could give advanced training to Africans. Eventually, the school opened as a junior secondary day school in 1926. The candidates to Alliance were in possession of a school certificate of education. The course took three years, with the first two being spent in general education. The remaining year prepared the students for a vocation either in agriculture, teaching or commerce (Smith, 1973). Besides academic studies, students also learnt masonry, carpentry and other handicraft courses (O.I., George Mwicigi, 3-12-04). The Alliance School like the Jeanes School, was not training an African cadre that could end up as artisans. It was an elitist institution (Walter Rodney, 1972).

The development of education was skewed in favour of the Kikuyu community in the 1920s as illustrated by the fact that the new schools, namely NITD, Jeanes School and Alliance were established in Kikuyuland. Second, although these schools were open to all African communities, they tended to attract more Kikuyu students. Out of a total of 110 students at Alliance in 1933, 71 were Kikuyu (Tignor, 1976:19). Half of the government grants-in-aid in 1923 went to four Kikuyu schools i.e. CMS, Kabete and Kahuhia and CSM at Thogoto and Tumu Tumu. The Education Department estimated that over 12000 Kikuyu children were in school by 1928. This phenomenon could be explained in terms of prevailing economic situation. By 1920s, it became clear that the first school graduates acquired economic rewards of education. Since the Kikuyu were not endowed with herds such as those of the Akamba and the Maasai, their families began to look to education as an alternative to farming. In any case, the land of the community was becoming scarce due to Europeans land alienation, and natural population increases among the African communities.

The Kikuyu, therefore, took advantage of the steadily growing demand for African teachers, artisans, and clerks in the 1920s. One of the pioneers at the Alliance High School in 1929 was Stanley Njindo, the father of Kenneth Matiba, a former Kenyan minister and a leading member of the pro-democracy movement in the country during the 1990s (Matiba, 2000). Stanley Njindo's house in FortHall was a modern building with five bedrooms. He could afford a pressure lamp among other equipment in the 1930s (Matiba, 2000: 107). Demand for educated Africans during this period was also accentuated by the deliberate policy of the government and White settlers to recruit Africans rather than Asians for subordinate positions in the European controlled sectors of the economy (King, 1977). It can be argued that the mission schools provided a good opportunity for the colonial government to establish patron-client relations with the small group of African elite. Some of these were to access civil service employment (Gordon, 2001). The Public Works Department employed 5100 workers monthly in 1936, while the Medical Department and the Post Office respectively, trained and recruited a number of Africans (Stichter, 1982). Therefore, Africans with some educational qualifications stood high chances of getting employment.

The railway was the largest single employer of skilled labour in the country and under C.L.N. Felling the General Manager between 1922 to 1927, the railway administration began a deliberate attempt to train as many African artisans as possible. By 1923, it had trained 71 African signallers of whom 60 were still in employment. Others trained included 73 railway clerks, 8 African guards, 32 African engineers, and 165 firemen. Felling's goal was to train Africans so that they would takeover the skilled positions occupied by the Asians. According to Clayton and Savage:

The financial crisis of the war years led to an early cost-reducing Africanization programme in the Railway and other departments, a programme which dove-tailed neatly with European anti-Asian political feeling. A number of Asians assisted this process by resigning from the Railway probably

mostly because they could earn more in one or other form of self-employment. This led to a serious shortage of skilled men (Clayton and Savage, 1974: 98).

The number of skilled Africans rose dramatically from within the railway from 1093 in early 1922 to 2224 in 1925, as an increasing range of semi-skilled artisan work passed to Africans.

The Great Stock Market Crash in New York of 1929 also sent ripples to Kenya. Consequently, the colonial economy suffered severely leading to the retrenchment of skilled African workers from the railway in 1930. There is a high probability that those who were retrenched either set off for the rural areas where some continued to practice their skills, or continued to live in urban centres such as Nairobi. These provided the nucleus of the African informal artisans in these towns and in the rural areas (O.I., Bernard Gachugu, 16-12-01).

The adverse effects of the depression were felt in many other sectors of the African economy. For instance, in the countryside, the price of African exports including sesame, beans, hides, skins and ghee fell more drastically than those of European cash crops with the exception of maize, which largely dependent on the internal market (Kanogo, 1989). Unfortunately, the colonial government did not adjust the tax obligations of the Africans. Given that about 40,000 people lost their jobs between 1929 and 1932, it is obvious that the Depression had grave consequences on the African communities. Moreover, African wages were slashed from an average of 14 shillings to 8 shillings a month (ibid: p 116). Paradoxically most of the revenue collected was channelled into the settler sector. This explains why the urban informal sector continued to expand in Nairobi where many of the unemployed Africans flocked. The situation was exacerbated as hundreds of squatters were kicked out of the white settler farms due to the depression. Many of them

either went back to the reserves especially in Central Kenya or to the urban centres.

The depression therefore led to the proliferation of Africans in non-indigenous specializations like tailoring, carpentry and bicycle repair. The process started way back in the 1920s with Africans who had learnt skills by apprenticeship from Asians and from the pioneer graduates from government, mission schools and the Native Industrial Training Depot (Maleche, 2000:57). Wagner who conducted a survey of trade and exchange relations in Western Kenya in the 1930s, reported the emergence of a group of independent artisans practising non-traditional skills and working on their own behalf. He found twenty male artisans occupied as follows:

**Table 4.1 (a) African Artisans in Western Kenya**

Carpenters	10
Thatchers	3
Tailors	6
Cycle repairers	1

Source: G. Kitching (1980)

In a Christian village in Kimilili in Western Kenya, he also found another group of artisans comprising of:

**Table 4.1 (b) African Artisans in Kimilili**

Tailors	8
Carpenters	2
Owner of sawmill and timber workshop	1

Source: G. Kitching (1980)

Out of this survey, he concluded that the technical knowledge and skill required for these new activities was imparted by the industrial and handicraft departments of missions and government schools, and to a lesser extent by apprenticeship with Indians. In Kiambu area of Central Kenya, Kershaw (1997) reported that a few African *fundis* who repaired carts and yokes and installed roofs of kerosene tins, existed by the early 1920s. Building-construction as well as other artisanal jobs were done by domestic labour,

traditional craftsmen, makers of stools, ornaments, pots or basketry (Kershaw, 1997:121).

By the late 1920s, opportunities for African artisans and drivers had increased tremendously all over the country. The first motor vehicles in Kenya were introduced probably to serve military purposes during the First World War. Consequently, several vehicles began operating in the country, both private and official. Thus, motor-vehicle garages added to the existing Asian trades and many Africans came to benefit from such artisanal skills. In addition, many Africans learned important skills on the job, in the smaller Indian-owned commercial and industrial enterprises in construction, quarrying and tailoring. They later spread such skills not only to the reserves, but also to the European plantations among other African workers (O.I., Gethi Gaita, 24-12-03).

Semi-skilled and skilled jobs on the plantations had passed from the Indians to Africans by 1930s. Such African artisans learnt how to operate lorries that replaced ox-carts. In addition, as more and more Africans were employed, this meant more income for some families around Nairobi, especially in Kiambu where more semi-skilled and skilled work was created when lorries and drivers were needed to distribute manure and to take local produce to processing or buying centres. The greater wealth of larger landowners and successful African merchants meant more roofs and more buildings (Kershaw, 1997). This created employment for African artisans such as masons. *Fundis* made tables, chairs and beds as well as door and window frames for the African clerical staff and other better paid Africans. School uniforms also had to be made and tailors at the upcoming African markets were therefore kept busy (Kershaw, 1997:122). Many tailors operated on shop verandas, while others operated from their homes (O.I., Kanake Gathecha, 30-3-02).

Many buildings were made of wood and corrugated iron in Nairobi, up to the 1930s. This meant that both Asians and African artisans were required for

this work. But, such buildings were at the risk of catching fire quite easily. In 1926, for example, a serious fire in Nairobi gutted down several buildings (Carman, 1976). Perhaps it was due to such fire outbreaks that permanent stone structures began to be erected in Nairobi. Asian artisans who recruited many African casual labourers constructed such structures. Soon these Africans also informally acquired metal fabrication, masonry and carpentry skills. In the construction industry, many African masons, carpenters, painters and bricklayers eventually became self-employed, working on daily rates. A good African carpenter in Nairobi could earn between 80 to 100 shillings a month in 1937 (Stichter, 1982). Many artisans worked in the stone quarries as stone cutters and dressers, in Kahawa, Kayole and Eastleigh. In the 1930s there existed between 1000 to 1500 such workers in Nairobi (Stichter, 1982).

One pre-colonial industry that gained importance in Nairobi after First World War was the wood carving industry, among the Akamba, a traditional practice. Among their carvings included sets of salad-servers crowned by Maasai or Nandi heads; figurines of warriors carrying spears and shields; models of elephants and other animals (Kimambo, 1975:94). They carved spoons, stools, horn stoppers representing human bird heads, leopard models which were placed outside the house to scare away live ones, and occasionally calabashes were decorated with figures of animals.

According to several Kamba informants, a skilled carver, named Mutisya Munge, introduced the handicraft technology to their community (O.I. Amos Kiswili and Martin Makau, 15-9-01). Mutisya wa Munge was already renowned for carving fine ceremonial sticks even before 1914. Apparently, he served as a carrier corp during the First World War, where he is said to have interacted with the Zaramo community of Tanganyika and became conversant with their industry. Some scholars, however, maintain that this technology might have been passed onto the Akamba during the period prior to 1914 as illustrated by the fact that the Wazaramo and the Akamba began

interacting earlier than 1882, long before Africa was colonized by the European powers (Kimambo, 1975).

The Kamba carving industry was stimulated by the arrival of more Europeans in Kenya after the First World War. The carvers had a ready market, especially at Christmas when relatives in Europe expected gifts or something indigenous from Africa. Some Kamba handicraft experts conducted their industry at Wamunyu in Machakos, which is relatively a dry area. Woodcarving, therefore, proved to be more rewarding economically than agriculture. During the inter-war period, woodcarving industry was mainly a family affair (Kimambo, 1975). This meant that the art was passed on from father to son. Having accumulated enough articles they would then carry them to places where they could contact the European tourists who were quite few at the time. The authorities in Nairobi gave favourable consideration to Akamba handicraft sellers and licensed the handicraft traders to peddle their wares except within the commercial area in Nairobi. In 1936 the General Purposes Committee of Nairobi Municipal Council, approved the sale of handicrafts within the municipality at a fee of one shilling per month. This by-law was exclusively passed for the benefit of the Akamba handicraft dealers (KNA/JW/2/48:109). Akamba handicraft dealers paid a modest fee of one shilling per month, unlike those operating eating-houses who paid annual fee of twenty shillings. The Akamba carving industry was perhaps the only artisanal field that Africans in Nairobi pursued without encountering serious competition from Asian artisans.

In spite of the fact that a number of Africans had begun to graduate from the Native Industrial Training Depot and other institutions that offered them artisanal skills in the late 1920s, the artisanal sector in the colonial economy continued to be dominated by the Asians (King 1977). The Indian artisans earned a lot of praise from the emerging African politicians in the 1920s for their role in imparting technical skills to Africans. In July 1921, Harry Thuku observed that Africans:

By being in close contact with Indians in their everyday life obtain the opportunity of learning from them all kinds of skilled work, such as masonry, carpentry, turning, fitting etc. and their experience both in offices where they work side by side with Indians and in workshops in that they are guided and shown every sympathy" (Seidenberg, 1985:38).

The bearded and turbaned Sikhs (Kalasingas) were regarded as most helpful by the Africans in terms of imparting skills (Seidenberg, 1985, *Ibid.*; O.I., Kahama Mwari and Bernard Gachugu, 26-12-03). The Sikhs were popular with Africans for their interaction with their African workers both in the work place and in beer halls. Their willingness to perform manual and rigorous tasks impressed many Africans. At any rate, this did not apply to all the Indian *fundis*. Some abused the Africans and deliberately kept them from learning some trades (O.I., *Ibid.*)

In Nairobi, Asian businessmen began operating some small manufacturing factories as well as workshops in this period. The policy of the colonial government was against the promotion of industrialization in Kenya prior to 1939 (Ndege, 1992). Those Asians who tried to develop industries were limited by the multiple colonial laws that governed Nairobi. For instance, the medical officer of health (MOH), Nairobi, is reported to have complained about S.T. Thakore, of plot number 1536 Fort Hall Road, because he was producing soap and was consequently accused of exceeding the terms of the licence he had been granted in 1932 (KNA/JW/2/48:344). Some of the Asians were reported to have been successfully operating factories, for instance Mr. Jiwa Walji operated a vinegar factory at Swamp Road. Others included Mr. Narshidas and Company who operated a metal workshop on plot number 138/35 on Canal Road, and E.S. Pawa who converted a residential building into a soap-making factory and metal workshop (KNA/JW/2/48:97). Thus, while a few Africans were becoming fully-fledged artisans, the Asians were beginning small-scale manufacturing industries. The colonial government lacked commitment to promote industrial development. This had a number of

implications on the development of capitalism in Kenya. As Zeleza (1992) observes, the legitimacy of the colonial government rested on promoting and sustaining the capitalist mode of production in the colony and the imperialist interests of the metropole within the colony. Industries were, therefore, discouraged in the colony as they could compete for raw materials with the metropole.

The growth of Nairobi as the only major city in Kenya, therefore, did not occur by chance (Zwanenberg, 1972). The explanation lay in the lack of proper industrial development in the country. In 1927, the report from the Native Affairs Department categorised the 6,654 employees as servants of various kinds. 8,460 Africans were described as gangers or factory hands; while 6,000 Africans were categorized as engaged in non-productive occupations. This is an indication that very few Africans were engaged in the modern industries, hence only a few Africans managed to acquire industrial skills.

**Table 4.2: Results of African occupational census in Nairobi (1939)**

Domestic servants	8,457
Employees of Central Administration, Municipality or Railway	9,049
Skilled workers-tailors, bakers, messengers	4,756
Headmen, garage hands etc.	5,507
Total	27,769

Source: (Van Zwanenberg, 1972:170).

The statistics indicate that the number of workers engaged in "productive" rather than administrative duties or as domestic servants was comparatively small (Van Zwanenberg, 1972). A few industries initiated by the early Europeans and Asians included the railway workshops, which had a foundry, blacksmiths and machine shops, a soda water and brewery company, a bakery, the East African Standard printing press, Upland Bacon Factory, the Unga Flour Mills, timber and saw mills, tailors and safari equipment producers (Zwanenberg, 1972:170).

Artisanal skills' acquisition among Africans in colonial Kenya was mainly derived from the Asians. The Asian craft workers in building, wood, steel, car repair and other skills, found themselves operating in a different situation in Kenya, much more than in India where they originated. Thus, they were not able to restrict their skills as much as possible within their own communities and this enabled some Africans to benefit from their skills (King, 1977). By the end of the inter-war period, a good number of Africans had acquired training in crafts from Asians either directly or indirectly. These were over and above those who acquired training in the railway workshops, mission schools, NITD and the Public Works Department. But many such African artisans apprenticed by Asians experienced a number of peculiar problems. Henry Muoria the veteran Kikuyu writer worked as an artisan in Nairobi for only a short period in the 1920s, and soon left the job because of what he termed as Asian mistreatment.

Muoria first went to Nairobi in 1928 after acquiring some basic literacy and numeracy skills from the mission schools. This elementary education perhaps was instrumental in enabling him to secure a job in River Road by an Indian firm, which made corrugated water tanks and gutters. Such items were in high demand in the white settler coffee estates, which lay a few miles from Nairobi (Muoria, 1994). The firm also combined its water and gutter business with laying new water pipes to supply water to newly built houses. Muoria was an artisan's mate, this involved pulling through the roads of Nairobi a handcart full of iron pipes and other assorted items that were of use in the trade. Muoria's taxing and strenuous task was to transport such pipes to different parts of the town.

His experiences illustrate the kind of hardships encountered by African artisans in Nairobi during the colonial period. Most Africans faced two serious problems. First, their wages were miserable, given that they were living in an urban set up, where food and accommodation were expensive. Muoria reports that his wage package in the late 1920s was eight shillings per month, which was not only pitifully low, but also insufficient. Due to this miserable wage, Muoria shared accommodation with a fellow tribesman who worked as a plumber at Pangani. Sharing of houses was extremely common among the Africans who worked in Nairobi in those days. This explains why the official reports complained of great congestion in the African locations such as Pangani and other African locations in colonial Nairobi (Parker, 1948). Another problem that faced the majority of African artisans was mistreatment by the White and Asian employers and overseers, due to racial prejudice. Muoria reports that the last straw that caused him to quit his Asian employer was when he was slapped, after accidentally dropping a water tank from his handcart. The tank had apparently proved too heavy for him and fell on the ground as a result of which it got slightly damaged, hence earning him the wrath of his employer.

After abandoning Asian employment, Muoria joined the growing number of African traders who traded in vegetables at the municipal market previously known as Jeevanjee market, today's city market. However, on weekdays he attended school. It was in this way that he earned the qualifications required to get admission into the Railway Training School Nairobi, where he trained as a telegraphist. It should be noted a number of Asians did not freely associate with Africans especially before the Second World War, and this could explain why Muoria was mistreated in this way. Seidenberg (1983), attributes this situation to the strong religious and caste ties among most of the Asians. This was further reinforced by the entrenchment of colonial values in India and East Africa by the British (Seidenberg, 1983:7). The average Asian trader is said to have been steeped in Hindu notions of caste and European social Darwinist conceptions of human development inherited from the British. In general therefore, Asians looked upon the Africans as culturally inferior in much the same way the White man looked upon the Asian. In a sense, the Asians probably viewed the African as a member of the lowest level, of the lowest caste (Ibid).

In addition, strict adherence to the tenets of Islam and Hinduism also served to keep the two communities apart. Segregated schools, hotels, and residential areas by the colonial system further encouraged this racial separateness. Meetings between Africans and Asians generally took place only in the market place or the work place. When this happened, the Indian trader tended to be formal, businesslike, and frequently arrogant, in his behaviour toward the African (Seidenberg, 1983). African competition against the Asians could also have fomented this hostility. The 1918-1919 Railway Report, for instance, noted reluctance among Asians to teach Africans. Several hundred Asian railway workers staged a strike in December 1918, the belief that they were to be replaced by Africans being one of their major grievances (Clayton and Savage, 1974). The fact that some Asians treated Africans well while others mistreated them illustrates some of the contradictions existing in

colonial Nairobi. Asians were not homogeneous and this could explain why some went out of their way to train Africans in the artisanal skills and to support them politically against European oppression. Ironically, some Asians did all they could to prevent the Africans from learning certain trades even in the government institutions such as the railway. In such cases, Africans had to extract such skills from Asians by surreptitious observation (Stichter, 1982).

One of the important skills that Africans learnt from the Asians was tailoring. Many Africans worked in Indian-owned shops in Nairobi, initially as errand boys and later as tailors after acquiring the skills of tailoring. By 1926, the European community in Nairobi was becoming averse to the competition posed by Asian textile-dealers in Nairobi who employed African tailors. Consequently, the Nairobi chamber of commerce, which was an exclusive organization for the European community, began to agitate for the limiting of opening hours by the Asian textile traders in the bazaar. Kitching (1980) has also observed that by the 1920s, there was an increasing number of African tailors even in the rural areas. These often set up their sewing machines in the open air in front of shops or tearooms. Most of them had probably acquired their skills from Asians.

Africans took advantage of the new skills they acquired to set up a variety of small businesses. By the 1930s, African traders were making attempts to compete with the Indian traders even in the rural areas (Zwanenberg and King, 1975). Thousands of small-scale African traders brought goods to markets and to wholesalers from outlying areas. By 1924, African-owned shops existed in Fort Hall and along the Thika – Nyeri railway line. Similarly, African traders were also competing with Asian traders in Nyanza and Western Kenya (Seidenberg, 1985). African traders had three disadvantages as compared to Asians. First, they were inexperienced as compared to Asians who had more experience in this kind of trade. Second, African traders had no collateral to enable them obtain credit, while their Indian counterparts used

ninety-day credits from Indian wholesalers, and benefited from the credit of their communities. Finally, the colonial government also began to control and limit indigenous trade enterprise from the mid 1930s through the introduction of trade licenses (Zezeza, 1989). In 1938, for instance, when Kikuyu sawyers began selling timber to Nairobi at half the price charged by the mills, the European and Asian mill owners protested. African sawyers were, therefore, forbidden to sell timber to Nairobi traders (Robertson, 1997b: 90). Evidently, the colonial state supported the economic accumulation of the small group of Europeans in Kenya at the expense of the Africans. In the final analysis, this favouritism for Asian and European benefit impacted negatively on the entrepreneurial success of the African community in the colony.

By 1934, the Nairobi Traders Association, an exclusive organization of the European traders, was protesting against illicit hawking by Africans in the commercial areas of Nairobi. In addition the organization objected to the continued practice of owners of lorries purveying foodstuffs in the main streets of Nairobi. The traders were also unhappy with motor vehicle and rickshaw repairers whom they accused of obstructing public roads and footpaths in Nairobi (KNA/JW/2/48:145). Apart from motor vehicle mechanics, other groups of self employed Africans in Nairobi in 1930s included: tailors, barbers, cobblers and taxi drivers (Stichter, 1982). In the construction industry, many African carpenters, painters and bricklayers became self employed, working on daily rates. Others worked in the big stone quarries near Nairobi such as Kahawa, Njiru, Kiserian and Kayole where there were over 1500 African stone- cutters or masons. While most of these quarries were owned by Asian businessmen, a few were run by small African employers who took up sub- contracts from the Asians. These employed their own stone- cutters, unskilled quarry hands and dressers (O.I., Wanduta Muriithi, 9-1-03).

It must be noted that relations between Asians and Africans were not hostile all the time. Although the racial apartheid policy made the creation of strong unity between Africans and Asians difficult, some Asians through their own experiences under British rule sympathized with the African predicament (Seidenberg, 1985). One of the Asians who supported African political leaders in the period after the war was M.A. Desai. He not only enabled the grievances of Harry Thuku's East African Association to be published in the Asian owned media, *The East African Chronicles*, but also assisted in legal matters. The Asians also taught African communities in Kenya how to organise trade unions (Zezeza, 1989). In 1937, both the African and Asian members of the Labour Trade Union of East Africa staged a general strike of construction workers. Under Makhan Singh and Fred Kubai, the union embraced workers irrespective of their ethnic origins. Ironically, soon after the 1937 strike, African stone masons and the semi-skilled artisans employed by Indians in quarries outside Nairobi also went on strike against their employers and demanded for improved wages (Seidenberg, 1985:138-139). It is important to note that on May Day 1939, both African workers and Asians participated in the celebrations at the Desai Memorial Hall in Nairobi. The Kikuyu Central Association leaders featured prominently during these celebrations.

It is evident that the African locations acted as the locus of African life in colonial Nairobi. The artisanal skills employed here were a combination of the traditional skills, Asian skills and western technology. The construction of the houses in the location exploited the traditional skills using mud and daub. There was an element of usage of *debes*, nails and other modern equipment (Charles Githaiga, O.I. 26-12-01). The utensils used by Africans were also a blending of the traditional and the modern. For instance, some traditional pots were used although some modern *sufurias* were also becoming available. The same applied to the beddings as well as furniture. Traditional seats and beds were used. This illustrated the articulation of the precapitalist and capitalist

modes of production that resorted mainly in the destruction of some of the indigenous technologies. The technologies that were found to be useful by colonialism were retained. For instance, traditional technologies of constructing African huts were retained as they enabled the colonial employers to spend little on African housing, both in the urban centres and in the white settler farms.

In the meantime, Nairobi's African population continued to increase in the inter-war years. Whereas the town had an African population of 21000 in 1923, by 1939 the population had expanded to over 41000 (Anderson, 2002:144). The colonial government continued to demolish the African locations, which were regarded as not only an eye sore by the European administrators but also "unsanitary shacks". The principal target for demolition by the 1930s was Pangani, which was Nairobi's oldest and largest village. Although the demolition of Pangani had been planned to be done in 1919, this was not possible as the residents resisted relocation, to the new location of Pumwani, which the government wanted them to occupy. Africans found it difficult to relocate for several reasons. First, a survey conducted in March 1931 revealed that Pangani comprised of 312 houses, occupied by 3,177 inhabitants, 947 of whom were women (Anderson, 2002). Out of this population, no less than 146 of Pangani resident families had been living in the location for ten years and beyond. Therefore, Pangani had become their new home and they were very much attached to the location. Second, 233 residents earned their livelihood as lodging housekeepers. This meant that in the event that they moved from the location, their means of earning livelihood would have been greatly jeopardized. Finally, many of the residents of Pangani were Islamised. Hence they were not welcome to go and live in their rural areas among their people. Moreover, many of the African women residents of Pangani had escaped from the patriarchy control in the rural areas. The colonial taxes also acted as a disincentive for many Africans to go back to the reserves.

Naturally, Pangani was the centre of African economic, social and political activities. It was the home of many supporters of the East African Association of Harry Thuku. Abdala Tairara, Waiganjo and even Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru who provoked the African men to resist the detention of Harry Thuku at the Kings Way Police Station on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1922, were all residents of Pangani (Kahama Mwari and Bernard Gachugu, O.I., 26-12-01). African Locations like Pangani continued to expand because the African population increased in Nairobi during the inter war years but, it was not matched by an adequate provision of housing, or recreational or other social amenities. Housing was not only inadequate, but also squalid (Kanogo, 1989: 15). Wages were extremely low, while the unemployed Africans were subjected to frequent arrests. The situation was made even worse because of racial segregation against the Africans. This could explain the development of labour consciousness among the African residents during this period. During the 1930s, Pangani hosted the Kikuyu Central Association leaders who relocated their headquarters from Fort Hall to Nairobi (O.I., George Mwicigi, 27-2-05). In June 1939, the KCA leaders including Jesse Kariuki and George Ndegwa collaborated with the Asian trade unionist Makhan Singh in encouraging African railway apprentices in Nairobi to go on strike in order to pressurize the government to improve their conditions of labour. Like in the political field, a duality also existed among the Asian community in the way they related with African employees. These social relations were not homogeneous.

#### **4.3 Summary**

The African population in Nairobi expanded during the inter-war period. This was mainly due to the large number of people dislocated from their land due to land alienation for the White settlers and War recruitment during the First World War. The European-dominated Nairobi Municipal council regarded

Africans as having no right to a permanent place in the town: Africans were viewed as short-term labourers. One of the consequences of the colonial urban policy was the spread of urban poverty, squatting and lack of stable employment. Consequently, Africans in Nairobi embarked on illicit economic activities such as the hawking of food, illegal brewing of beer, as well as prostitution. Therefore, they were always at risk of being arrested and punished by the colonial authorities.

During the interwar period, a number of institutions were established by the colonial government to develop a cadre of African skilled workers who could help in the exploitation of the resources in the country. These were the NITD, the Jeanes School at Kabete and the Alliance High School at Kikuyu. Other government-owned institutions that contributed in development of technical skills included the railway and the PWD. Evidently, these were geared to produce skilled and semi-skilled labour that could assist the colonial government to run efficiently.

Zwanenberg (1972) offers a plausible explanation for the dismal development of an African artisanal class in Kenya, and Nairobi in particular. He contends that unlike industrial development in Western Europe, which occurred through urban centres of manufacture, in Kenya, development continued to occur in the white settler agricultural sector. Nairobi, he argues, grew up parasitically, as a colonial urban centre concerned in the main to provide the services for the running of white settler economy. It was a town whose main purpose was to provide administrative services, a transport system, and the commercial facilities needed by white settlers. The Africans who acquired Western education were, therefore, mainly recruited to perform clerical services rather than technical services. This explains why Africans such as Johnstone Kamau (Jomo Kenyatta) who had acquired technical skills at CSM Kikuyu, is later reported as having been employed as a meter reader by the Water Department of the Nairobi Municipal Council in the early 1920s. Henry Muoria also left

an artisanal career and opted to join the Railway Training School in order to pursue a white-collar job.

It can be concluded that in the period prior to the Second World War, the Asians dominated the artisanal sector in colonial Kenya. Africans, however, learnt valuable skills from such Asian artisans such as tailoring, masonry, and repairing motor vehicles. The majority of the African entrepreneurs in Nairobi were, however, informal traders and dealt with food commodities. One of the explanations for this trend is perhaps because this was the easiest form of trade to begin in terms of capital and technology. The frustrations experienced by such Africans in Nairobi contributed to the emergence of labour protests and nationalist associations. This trend gained momentum after the Second World War.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 African Informal Enterprises in Nairobi, 1939-1963

Scholars recognize the great impact of the Second World War on the African continent (Gordon, 2001). The experience of the African war veterans helped to promote nationalism all over Africa (Shiroya, 1992). The argument advanced by Ake (1981), that colonial imperialism planted the seed of African nationalism holds true in relation to the experiences of the African informal entrepreneurs of Nairobi between 1939 and 1963. The great exploitation subjected to the Africans during colonialism generated serious contradictions that eventually paved the way for political independence.

In this chapter, the effect of the Second World War on Kenya's politico-economy is examined. Second, the context of Nairobi during the war period in relation to the African informal enterprises is analysed. Finally, the interactions between the African informal sub-sector of Nairobi and the nationalist movement are discussed.

### 5.1 The Impact of the Second World War on Nairobi

During the Second World War, Kenya's economy was reorganized in order to assist the British war effort. All resources including manpower and materials were mobilized for the purposes of war (Zezeza, 1980:147). As the Sterling Area took formal shape in 1940, Kenya's production and trade became more tightly regulated. Its exports were subject to compulsory purchase and manufactured imports were strictly rationed (Hyde, 2002). The Second World War, therefore, marked an important stage in the economic development of Kenya. Prior to the Second World War, the British policy on industrialization in Kenya was against the establishment of manufacturing industries in the colonies, which were perceived to be sources of raw materials for British industries (Ogonda, 1992). It became clear during the war that British settlers

in East Africa would suffer from insufficient supplies of manufactured goods from Europe. This was because all ships in the international waters stood the risk of being sunk by the axis powers. Several new industries, therefore, began to be established in or near Nairobi during the war.

As already noted, British investors and financiers were not interested in encouraging industrial development in Kenya prior to the Second World War (Zwanenberg and King, 1975). After 1940, this conservative approach changed. In response to the new state of affairs, the Kenya Industrial Management Board was set up in Nairobi between 1940-1941. The board was meant to encourage the local manufacture of some goods formerly imported from Britain in order to avoid the risks of shipping. Eventually, the equipment and other facilities of this board, were acquired by the East African Industries Limited. The company was financed not only by the British Government, but also by one of the largest multinational-manufacturing giants, Unilever. Among the products initially manufactured by the company included, Sunlight, Lifebuoy, and Lux soaps, Omo washing powder, Kimbo cooking fat, as well as Blue Band margarine. Other industries started during the same period included City Breweries that was opened in (1944); Bata Tannery and Shoe Factory in Limuru (1940); The Metal Box Company in Thika (1948); and the East African Oxygen and Acetylene Company in Nairobi (1946). Many of the new companies were started either by Asians or Europeans, or were branches of international companies. It was from 1945 that development in small-scale, backyard industries expanded. Some of these were dealing with furniture works, carvings for tourists and even bottling plants.

Nairobi expanded faster than any other town in East Africa. The settlers in Kenya required a wide range of services and this had some implications on the African communities, who had to provide the unskilled labour that was required. Nairobi also acted as a collecting centre for exports where

commodities were graded, and as a distribution point for imports (Zwanenberg and King, 1975). International traders also had their headquarters in Nairobi. These European immigrants provided more job opportunities in Nairobi. In addition, the Europeans needed housing, infrastructure, and other municipal services, which together provided the stimulus for the inflow of people from the rural areas to the town (O.I., Charles Githaiga, 23-12-01).

During the war, a large number of troops arrived and Nairobi had to accommodate and feed this population. The town became the British War headquarters in East Africa and also became the base for communication. This meant that army camps expanded in size in the town and so did the army depot. Even makeshift buildings in the central area were now approved by municipal authorities subject to their removal at the end of war hostilities. This was in spite of the fact that earlier in the 1930s a vigilant town planning committee was becoming increasingly opposed to temporary buildings in the "brick, Stone and concrete areas" (Smart, 1950:61). The Second World War also greatly impacted on the African communities. African farmers, for instance, were urged to maximise production of food and other commodities to meet wartime needs regardless of the long-term consequences on soil fertility. This unfortunately, accelerated the physical deterioration of the reserves, besides encouraging individualism and social differentiation leading to the 1943 famine (Kingoriah, 1980; Hyde, 2002). This contributed immensely to the rising tide of African migrants in Nairobi.

## 5.2 The Socio-Economic Conditions of Africans in Nairobi During the Second World War

During the Second World War, there was an influx of Africans in search of trading opportunities and other forms of employment in Nairobi in addition to military employment. The war stimulated the increase in building and

construction industry, especially Public Works Department (Stichter, 1982). This created a population influx in Nairobi, which resulted in overcrowding, which was blamed for the 1941 plague outbreak. The seriousness of the poor conditions in the town is illustrated by lack of over 6000 bed spaces for African accommodation even after the fullest use had been made of the existing houses. Robertson (1997b: 105), states that many African women flocked to Nairobi with the heightened demand of the military presence offering opportunities. The vegetable and fruit trade from Kiambu boomed during World War II and pineapples became a cash crop for the first time in Kenya.

As a result of this expansion in African population, the accommodation situation by 1945 was so bad that it was described as a crisis (Parker, 1948). The council therefore decided to encourage employers to build houses for their employees something, which they initially discouraged. The Kenya Farmers Association was one of the employers that voiced concern over the problem of inadequate houses for their employees. They complained that their trained staff were taking discharge because they could no longer tolerate the conditions of housing.

The Nairobi Municipal Council responded to this crisis by erecting a temporary housing for Africans named Marurani during the War, which accommodated roughly 1200 Africans. By 1946, Pumwani is reported to have been housing 10,000 to 15,000 Africans (Ibid.). The crisis in housing not only led to a serious problem of overcrowding, but also to the creation of peri-urban settlements. Areas such as Kabete and Dagoretti were affected by this rapid urban expansion. Many Africans were opting to either walk, cycle, or use buses from those peri-urban areas every morning than to live in crowded conditions in the African locations.

The colonial authorities began to associate these peri-urban areas with criminal activity and violence. They were described by the municipal officials as centres of thieves, disorder, and drunkenness. A colonial official Wyn Harris, complained bitterly against the emergence of coffee stalls, lodging houses and houses of ill-fame, in such peri-urban areas (KNA/JW/2:160). The official argued that such areas were not in the reserves nor in the municipal area of jurisdiction and hence were under no proper control, as neither the traditional authority nor native land tenure were designed to deal with the problems arising from the close proximity of these areas to Nairobi. Thus, the question over what could be considered the legal urban space in Nairobi was contradicted by the fact that Africans were now evolving their own urban space in the areas neighbouring the legal urban space of Nairobi.

It is apparent that the colonial administration did not wish slums to be constructed in Nairobi. However, Africans were simply trying to eke out a livelihood and to maximize on the economic opportunities available. Many of the informal traders for example, found it impossible to rent houses in Nairobi. Yet, Nairobi was a favourable market for their commodities. Other African entrepreneurs were able to earn a living by renting out accommodation to fellow Africans in the African villages. Arguably, many Africans conducted genuine businesses including the sale of sheep heads and offal at the native market. However, colonial demands such as payment of taxes and other levies forced some to venture into trades branded illegal by the colonial authorities. The Native Affairs Officer reported in a meeting about some Ethiopian subjects resident in Nairobi many of whom were engaged in the manufacture and sale of Nubian gin, and other mal-practices (KNA/JW/2/18:92). This was also confirmed by Mike Macharia (O.I 17-6-02) who stated that in the 1940s, the Ethiopians were selling Nubian gin not only at Eastleigh but also at Gikomba area in Nairobi. It is evident that these traditional brews were on sale in all African locations.

African informal traders also served the war effort at a time when it was very difficult to acquire food commodities. It is for this reason that the General Purposes Committee of the Municipal Council addressed the question of hawking of eggs and potatoes in the town's commercial area in 1942. The committee acknowledged the difficulty of obtaining potatoes for use at the service club and other canteens especially for military requirements (KNA/JW/2/18:33). The importance of African traders was further vindicated when the commissioner for lands and settlement stated that military authorities ought to establish trading points at all camps at which native traders could deal with members of the forces. Consequently, municipal authorities authorized for such trading points to be established within boundaries of military camps so that they could be subjected to military control. A piece of land was subsequently set-aside for the purpose in the road reserve of Fourth Parklands Avenue covering twelve feet by eight feet (KNA/JW/2/18:33-35).

A high level of sophistication was demonstrated by some of the African traders. A number of them applied to the Municipal Council requesting to be allowed to run milk dairies. It is noted that most such applicants had some measure of formal education and the colonial authorities in turn were often comfortable dealing with them. There is evidence that some African civil servants also participated in commercial activity as it was easy for them to be awarded trading licenses. Other Africans who similarly benefited were the discharged soldiers. For instance, Aden bin Arab Shariff a Mswahili, appealed to the council for a license to sell tea near Eastleigh Aerodrome arguing that being a discharged soldier this was the only way for earning a means of livelihood (KNA/RN/1/60). Colchester, the Nairobi Municipal Native Affairs Officer showed his open bias against the ordinary hawkers in favour of the African elite who were keen on starting business in Nairobi. In the 1941 Annual Report, he stated thus:

The aim is to evolve a class which will, with little capital, be able to supply more people at lower prices ... the native hawker is usually a

Kikuyu from 60 to 70 miles away taking advantage of temporary booms to earn Shs. 25 to Shs. 30 a month by three or four hours work a day. He usually lives in the most overcrowded parts of Pumwani and rarely has his wife or family with him. What is desirable is a more stable figure living at a higher level of subsistence and more knowledgeable in his trade (Robertson, 1997b: 131).

The Native Affairs Officer further argued that hawkers ventured into Nairobi mainly because they earned more by hawking than by providing labour in the rural or even in urban centres. Colchester was therefore willing to license the more capitalised males who could afford to pay for fixed selling places, but not the itinerant male hawkers. It should be noted however, that by the 1940s, trading licenses had not only become a revenue producing measure for the municipal council but also a control measure. Thus, the African elite was also enjoying a measure of colonial patronage at the expense of other Africans. This is illustrated by the fact that on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1946, the Municipal African Affairs Officer recommended some Africans to be awarded licenses for tea hawking. The beneficiaries were either civil servants or members of the Local Native Councils. The beneficiaries included: Kamau Kagiri, Robert Wainaina – an employee of the Nairobi Municipal African Advisory Council, Reuben Njoroge – an employee of the African Welfare Committee, and Macharia Kibicho – a member of the local Native Council in Embu (KNA/RN/1/60). It is important to note that African elites were favoured over hundreds of applicants. After getting their licenses in 1946, both Robert Wainaina and Reuben Njoroge gave up their government jobs in order to operate their tea kiosks (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-01).

It is evident that the expansion of Nairobi's African population during this period was beginning to worry the government. In 1939 the population was estimated to be 41,000, and within two years it had increased to 70,000 (Robertson, 1997b: 131). This was in spite of the fact that majority of the hawkers and other African informal traders were not captured in the official records as there was fear, that serious repercussions would follow if the

officials became aware of their illegal activities. Such traders included the African women in Pumwani and other upcoming squatter villages. Some of them either engaged in prostitution, or in the illegal distilling of the Nubian gin, and other traditional brews. In addition, many African traders were not captured in the official statistics because of the fact that many traders especially the women hawkers trekked daily to Nairobi from their rural homes especially in Kiambu.

**Table 5.1: Population of African traders in Nairobi (1942)**

Occupation	Number
Itinerant hawker	470
Traders	255
Shopkeepers	145
Proprietors of eating houses	150
Skilled artisanal workers	280
Service workers among the self-employed African population of Nairobi	235

Source: Mary Parker (1948)—quoted in (Robertson, 1997b: 131).

In the years following the war, potential African businessmen flocked to Nairobi in large numbers. Many of them were demobilized soldiers who returned with some earnings. Municipal officers were therefore flooded with application forms from demobilized soldiers who wanted trade licenses (Onstad 1990:65). When the colonial administration limited the number of trade licenses for shops, Africans in the town demonstrated their ingenuity in entrepreneurship by investing in other ways. Most of them opened businesses in the streets where the expanded African population of the town provided tens of thousands of new customers. For example, in 1941, the numbers of licensed hawkers increased from 300 to over 500. This prompted the council authorities to reduce the number of licenses. The Africans who were affected responded by simply turning to illegal trading in the streets such as selling cooked food, and fruits.

By 1940, the colonial authorities in Nairobi sought to control especially the activities of African women in the town. For instance, the DC Nairobi wrote to the Town Clerk on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1945, instructing him not to issue any hawker's licenses to women. This prohibition was instigated by the Nairobi Native Advisory Council and by a joint tribal committee formed to advise the council on the control of women. The African elders sought to control women arguing that their influx in the town was likely to get them into trouble (KNA/RN/1/60). Thus, the male patriarchy in general, both European and African, sought to control African women, not only economically but also socially and politically in the urban areas. However, the women traders simply turned to illegal trading activities rather than stop the activity altogether. It is evident that the demands of the colonial economy generated serious contradictions of which the informal enterprises represented.

The African traders in Nairobi also operated illegal meat trade. This incensed the Muslim Butchers' Association which comprised Muslims of both Asian and African origin, to the extent that they complained against the unlicensed hawking of meat by African hawkers in the town who were not only supplying meat regularly to Africans and Asians, but also restaurants and hotels (KNA/RN/1/60). The smuggled meat came from Kibera, Ngong, Dagoretti and Kiambu (Isaac Mungara – O.I 6-6-03). Such complaints demonstrated that the African community of Nairobi was far from being homogeneous in its interests.

A catalogue of the items hawked by Africans in 'Nairobi in 1947 shows that about 300 hawking licenses were given to fruit and vegetables vendors. These constituted the backbone of African trading in Nairobi since the earliest days (Ngesa, 2000; Onstad, 1990). The majority of the licenses were given to *uji* or porridge sellers. *Uji* was gruel made by Africans using maize flour, sorghum flour and prepared by boiling such flour with water. This was a popular traditional drink as it was more filling than tea. Tea hawking licenses were

also awarded. The tea-kiosks in the urban areas became more than a place where tea was sold as they served other social functions. For instance, they became the rendezvous for private political and economic meetings, between the politicians and the ordinary people during most of the colonial period. If Africans met in other places, they risked being arrested. Atieno-Odhiambo (1995) and Ngunjiri (1973) have argued that such tea-kiosks also served as meeting places even in the rural areas between the political entrepreneurs and the local people. From such kiosks, the Africans were able to socialize and discuss the social and political issues of the day. This again illustrates the multiplicity of the uses of the urban spaces in Nairobi. In spite of the measures adopted by the colonial authorities to control the African activities in Nairobi, Africans were able to devise their own uses of the space for their benefit.

Another major category of hawkers were the clothes' hawkers. These were allocated 60 licenses by 1947 (Onstad, 1990:68). There were two types of clothes' hawkers, namely: African and Asian. Africans usually purchased old clothes from Asians and Europeans. These were usually the clothes that were no longer needed by the owners. Definitely, the hawkers bought them at a cheap price, because they were old clothes. Some of the African servants simply picked the old clothes from the employers waste pits and sold them to fellow Africans. One informant Gathecha Kanake (O.I. 30-4-02) confided that his first pair of shorts as a young boy was acquired from a mission's garbage pit. Robertson (1997b) also confirms that most women found in 21 markets in Kiambu in 1951 were wearing European type of clothing. Definitely, these were mainly second hand clothes. The rest were tailor-made locally using the clothing material supplied by Asian traders and the African veranda tailors (O.I., Gathecha Kanake, Op.Cit.).

The sale of used clothes in Africa became more common after the Second World War. A vast surplus of wearable used clothes and shoes especially from the army led to this situation. Most of these were mainly men's clothes, which

included overcoats and jackets (Hansen, 2000:10). In the 1950s, most charitable organizations in the West such as the Salvation Army became involved in the sale of used clothing to different parts of the world. Most of these clothes came to the charities in form of donations meant for the poor countries. It is noted that at times it became very difficult for Africans to sell such second-hand commodities (O.I George Mwichigi O.I 8-5-02). The informant narrated how Africans from the community around the GMS Kambui School snubbed the second-hand clothing traders after somebody made an allegation to the effect that the used shoes and clothes belonged to the dead soldiers who took part in the Second World War. Given that many people could not afford any other form of modern clothing they had no choice but to dress themselves and their families in such clothes. The mission churches also brought in such used clothes, which they sold to their followers at a cheap price as a way of encouraging them to appear more presentable. Some of these clothes also ended up in the hands of African traders (O.I., Charles Githaiga, 26-12-01).

Indians in Nairobi dominated in the hawking of new cloth, for which the council gave 60 licenses in 1947. Indian traders sold such clothes to the few rich Africans, or to fellow Asians. One of the commonest customers for such new clothes were the Indian *purdah* women (women in seclusion or confinement). These were Muslim women whose religion restricted to the precincts of the homes and so depended on Indian traders to peddle their wares. Such new clothes were made by tailors who operated from the Asian shops and verandas. Women deriving from northern India usually wore the Punjabi *Khurta* (baggy trousers) worn with *Kameez* (long dress) and *chuni* (scarf). Muslims, on the other hand, put on the *buibui*, which covered most of the body. It was only in the 1950s that Asian women's apparel began to change after the leader of the Ismaili community Sir Agha Khan, encouraged the women in the community to wear the western dress (Seidenberg, 1985). Almost all the textile materials were imported mainly from Britain. Kenya

was therefore fulfilling the British need of absorbing the metropolitan manufactures. The emergence of used clothes' trade is an indicator that Kenya had become a dumping ground for the goods no longer required in Europe. The colony was dependent on Britain for her manufactured goods. While this promoted industrialisation in the metropole, it reinforced dependency in the colonies.

Some Asians who were already in paid employment also applied for hawker licenses and an example is Motichand Shah who applied for a license to the District Commissioner, Nairobi on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1946. He explained that he worked for Bullow and Roys Company who paid him Kshs. 19 and 35 cents per month (KNA/RN/1/60). Since his salary was inadequate he sought to undertake hawking silk, woollen and cotton clothes after 5.00 p.m. Similarly, many Africans in employment also hawked their wares after work as a survival strategy.

Other licenses by the municipal authorities were mainly for the commodities normally purchased by the African community. For example, (90) licenses were released to African charcoal dealers. Charcoal was the main fuel used by Africans in Nairobi. The other source of fuel was firewood and a number of Africans were licensed to sell the commodity as well. There was no problem in acquiring charcoal and wood especially from the peri-urban areas as the areas near Nairobi were greatly forested. Handcarts and bicycles were used to ferry the charcoal and firewood from one point to another. An exotic commodity commonly used by Africans was tobacco and snuff and eighty licenses were granted. A number of Africans took snuff although Christian missions discouraged the practice (Isaac Mungara, O.I. 6-5-03). In addition to the habit of snuff taking, several Africans in Nairobi also smoked crude tobacco, as they could not afford to smoke cigarettes.

Some of the licenses granted in 1947 included eggs (10), and "*Mswakis*" sale (6). The latter were twigs cut from certain trees that were used traditionally as toothbrushes. One license was allocated for native medicines, which were used by Africans to treat the sick. The medical facilities provided by the colonial authorities were inadequate for the great numbers of Africans who had moved to Nairobi all the way up to the period after the Second World War (Odinga, 1990). Most Africans felt at ease dealing with the African medicine people who also fulfilled certain spiritual and cultural functions that the western forms of medicine could not provide (O.I. 26-12-01, Charles Githaiga and Kahama Mwari). Thus, even though only one license was allocated for the purpose in 1947, it can be concluded that many such traditional medicine people were operating in the African villages of Nairobi without a license. Evidently the colonial government did not want to interfere with African medicines first because the government did not have sufficient medical provisions. Secondly, traditional medicine made African labour contented in the urban and therefore it needed to be preserved. African medicine people therefore subsidized the colonial state by providing medication for the African labour force in the town.

In addition to the African commodity licenses, the municipal authorities also allocated licenses for betel nuts and grants and grams, which was the food for Asians. Four such licenses were allocated in 1947. Licenses for some commodities such as flowers and handicrafts were also generously allocated. For flowers alone, there were (23) licenses, and (20) for handicrafts. It is notable that even though the Europeans were so few, many licenses were awarded to serve them in line with the colonial policy of the day. The informal traders in Nairobi provided important services such as selling traditional liquor, tobacco and charcoal to fellow Africans that they could not get from elsewhere.

One interesting emergent feature since early colonial times was the specialization based on either ethnic or racial basis in Kenya. Parker (1948), maintains that the Asians in Kenya had already formed an association, for artisans known as Ramgarrhia Artisans Union. This Association was a social organization of Sikh (*Kalasinga*) carpenters into which members were born. It was originally a guild, which included both employers and employees. It is a small wonder then that most metal and wood artisans among the Asian community came from the Sikh community. The same situation obtains even today (O.I., Rajan Patel, 17-6-2).

African occupational groupings also tended to be on ethnic lines. The Kikuyu for example, were mostly traders. Their occupations included barbers, charcoal sellers, chicken and egg dealers. Muhuri Muchiri who later became a member of parliament for Embakasi division in post-colonial Nairobi is reported to have been a charcoal seller in Nairobi (O.I., Mathenge Mutethia, 12-2-02). The Meru on the other hand are reported to have specialized in snuff trade, while the Abaluhya and the Luo community are, reported to have been in great demand for all kinds of technical work, especially on the railway and the post office as well as in the colonial civil service. The Akamba are also reported as having made exemplary craftsmen, particularly in wood, iron and stone, as well as competent mechanics (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-01).

The factors that led to specialization in trades and crafts among different African communities during the colonial era are not very clear. One of the explanations as to why the Kikuyu community concentrated on trade would appear to have been a motivation arising from their close proximity to Nairobi. This encouraged those with entrepreneurial talent to peddle their items in Nairobi. Occupations such as trade and commerce did not tie down the traders to a permanent job and this was especially important among the Kikuyu of Kiambu and Murang'a (Fort Hall) who could commute from their homes to sell their wares in Nairobi. The Kikuyu overwhelmingly preferred to

work in Nairobi, which was near at hand and permitted frequent return to their *shambas*, even on weekends. They provided 55 per cent of Nairobi's workforce (Stichter, 1982).

On the other hand, the Akamba country lay a greater distance from Nairobi. In addition, some parts of the Akamba country were dry and unsuitable for farming. Thus, during the colonial times, they found it easier to look for wage labour and make handicrafts (O. I., Martin Makau and Amos Kiswili, 15-9-01). The Kipsigis and the Nandi had a reputation of making good mechanics and many of them were also employed as drivers. The Swahili were mainly employed as carpenters and in other artisanal trades in the construction industry (Stichter, 1982).

Given that the members of the Luo and the Abaluhya communities had to cover a long distance to Nairobi, they tended to stabilize more in their jobs during the colonial era. Moreover, the Luo were able to live with their families in Nairobi as they were not afraid of losing land in the reserves. This trend was further reinforced by the ethnic and kin connections that were used to identify trade and job opportunities among the African communities during the colonial era (Parkin, 1969). By the 1940s a number of African communities had formed their own vocational associations. These included: the Kikuyu barbers and charcoal dealers. Others were the chicken and egg sellers and the eating housekeepers. These associations formed some kind of chamber of commerce (Parker, 1948). Some of the associations were based on territorial residence. For example, the landlords of Pumwani set up a protective association called Pumwani Housing committee whereby the residential principle was invoked. However, among the Kikuyu barbers, the majority mainly came from Fort Hall while the charcoal dealers mainly came from Nyeri (Kahama Mwari O.I. - 26-12-01). The Luo predominated among the masons, stone dressers and other quarry workers. It is most likely that they

easily fitted into this specialization because of their experience of long contract services in railway ballast-breaking camps (Stichter, 1982).

Another business that gained prominence during the Second World War was the running of taxicabs. Motorised taxis replaced the rickshaws in Nairobi in the 1930s and were introduced by the Indians. One of the pioneers of this enterprise was Eboo Pirbai, an Ismaili who started as a taxi driver in the 1930s (O.I., Kahama Mwari, *Ibid.*; Seidenberg, 1985). This business again, was dominated by the Kikuyu. Such taxis greatly influenced the life of Africans in Nairobi. The large number of taxi cabs in Nairobi operated by Africans became a great source of concern for the superintendent to the extent that he even advocated for some by-laws to be formulated involving the amendment of motor vehicles licenses in order for the council to limit the number of taxi cabs allowed to ply for hire within the municipality (KNA/JW/2/18). Many accusations were levelled against the African taxi operators from time to time. Lady Delamare for instance, accused them of setting off without enough petrol only for the vehicles to be grounded halfway, thus inconveniencing the passengers. Further, the African taxicab operators were accused of overloading their vehicles leading to fatal accidents (KNA/JW/2:99). While these accusations might have been true, the colonial authorities never bothered to investigate why Africans engaged in such practices, which more often than not were motivated by poverty. The colonial policies were often blind to the African urban workers' concerns about issues of family viability and social reproduction. Africans were employing a number of strategies to ensure successful economic reproduction (Barnes, 1999).

One of the consequences of these unfavourable reports on taxicab operators was the strengthening of the municipal laws with regard to taxicab usage. African transport operators responded by writing to the municipal General Purposes Committee and complained against these stringent laws. Under the name of Taxi Owners Association, they complained in a letter against the

introduction of quarterly inspection of taxicabs. The letter was addressed to the General Purposes Committee and was discussed on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1943. The association argued that such inspection was not only unnecessary but also led to wastage of time and money. They strongly maintained that the existing number of 62 taxicabs should not be reduced. One of the main arguments against the quarterly inspections was that it resulted in the taxicabs being put out of service for about 10 days, which was a great economic loss for the owner (O.I., Kinyua Mathenge, 6-7-02). Whereas some African taxicab drivers were self-employed, most of them were employed on commission (Stichter, 1982; O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02). One of the taxicab drivers in Nairobi in the 1940s was Stanley Njindo, father of the Kenyan politician Kenneth Matiba. Between 1942 and 1943, Njindo's services as a teacher were terminated at the Kagumo Government African School. Consequently, he moved to Nairobi and bought an old Chevrolet car, which he used to instruct those who wanted to learn driving as well as normal taxi business (Matiba, 2000: 25). Such taxi drivers of Nairobi were vocal against the Municipal by-laws, which they regarded to be punitive throughout the 1940s. In October 1949, the Transport and Allied Workers Union (TAWU), the drivers union, called out 2,000 of their members for a month long strike to protest against such punitive by-laws (Hyde, 2002).

The increase in the operation of taxicabs and ex-army lorries by Africans during this period can be attributed to the effects of the Second World War. Shiroya (1992), argues that demobilized soldiers contributed to the large number of Africans owning vehicles. After the war, demobilized soldiers had accumulated some earnings, which they invested in taxicabs and other businesses, such as transport trucks. The British government was selling them as a way of disposing the army lorries used in the war. In any case, such trucks were already old and no longer useful to the British government (O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02).

As the returned soldiers sought to invest their wartime savings, a lot of struggle took place not only in the urban centres but also in the rural areas between them and the colonial chiefs. In the rural areas, the soldiers attempted to invest their savings in shops, tearooms, water mills, transport lorries and passenger buses and found themselves placed in direct competition with the chiefly and clerical elements in society. In addition, they found their interests conflicting with those of Asian traders whose primary line of accumulation had been collection of produce. Asians such as Govindji Karsanda Kana (Ogonji) had built their rural wealth by buying the grain produce and cotton at Ndere, Lwanda, and Nambale in Western Kenya during the inter-war period (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1995:30). Other African entrepreneurs such as Oginga Odinga, came up with the idea of the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation which sought to create an economic organisation as well as a national identity for the Luos.

A number of Africans were permanently settling in the town from the 1940s. Some African men-residents of Nairobi are reported to have been bringing their families to town during the time of food shortage in the reserves. Given their inadequate wages, many Africans are reported to have been carrying out subsidiary trades, such as the making of tin cups from rubbish collected in the town (KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:27). Others are reported to have been involved in the cultivation of the unused spaces in town in order to provide a means of livelihood for their families. Again, there were others who survived through machining clothing on contract, or brewing illicit beer, and possibly taking part in petty crime. The settlement of many Africans in the urban in this period could be explained in terms of the land crisis facing the African Reserves all over the country.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the Second World War resulted in the expansion of capitalism in Kenya. While the settlers emerged more capitalized, the Africans became even more pauperised as reflected in their

desperate efforts to eke out a means of livelihood in Nairobi. The structure of the economy in general was meant to facilitate the exploitation of the African resources by supplying the metropole with cheap raw materials and labour. This was best illustrated by the contents of a letter addressed to the Town Clerk – Nairobi, written by the Municipal Native Affairs Officer (MNAO), on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1944. The letter complained that African flower and vegetable growers from Kiambu were organizing direct sales of the commodities to their Asian and European customers. The MNAO wanted the African growers to sell the products through middlemen comprising Asian and European suppliers (KNA/RN/1/60). On the other hand, African flower growers wanted to sell directly to their customers, as they were unhappy with the low prices paid by the Asian and European middlemen.

### **5.3 The Development of African Artisans After World War II**

The demands of the military authorities during the war were very important in expanding the Kenyan industrial capacity (McWilliam, 1976). In addition to the Asian community that bequeathed artisanal skills to the Africans during the Second World War, the Italian prisoners of war played an important role. For instance, they largely contributed in the brick production and their most enduring monument was the construction of Nairobi-Naivasha highway (Ibid. 1976: 271). The Nairobi municipal engineer is reported to have requested for 25 Italian prisoners of war to be sent in order to help in the construction of 50 more native huts in Nairobi's Kariakor estate after the war (KNA/JW/2:162). King, (1977:145), also reports that in Nakuru, a few Luo and Luhya appear to have learnt some artisanal skills in Ngata workshop, a European concern that employed Indians, Italian POWs and Africans, and they turned out a large number of metal goods from the 1940s.

The importance of the Italian prisoners of war in training African artisans cannot be over-emphasized. It has been argued, for example, that Italians

found it easy to train the African artisans due to a number of factors. First, a large number of African labourers were acquainted with Consolata missionaries from Italy. Second, given that the Italians were prisoners, they sought to impress upon the African labourers that they were more humane as compared to the British settlers (Kiruthu, 1997:189). In addition, the Italian prisoners of war were not afraid of performing manual or dirty work. In their interest to train the Africans, they were a contrast to the Asians who jealously guarded their artisanal skills.

During the Second World War, the African soldiers acquired a number of skills hitherto unknown to them. These included knowledge of reading and writing in English, as literacy was a requirement among the soldiers in War. They also acquired skills such as driving, motor vehicle maintenance, metal and electrical work, signals works, cooking, clerical work and medical orderly work (Shiroya 1968:103). The large number of taxicabs also resulted in the creation of jobs for artisans as taxis required constant repairs. With more money flowing, many Africans were now using bicycles, which again required servicing (O.I., Kinyanjui Muteithia, 20-5-03). Many of the ex-soldiers utilized the various skills they learnt in the army to employ themselves rather than seek wage employment. Among these included Domenico and Beuttah who had large garages at Ruring'u in Nyeri. Damiano another ex-soldier owned a garage at Kamakwa market near Nyeri town (Kiruthu, 1997).

The Labour Bulletin Volume II (1948), states that there were many African skilled workers by 1948 in the country. The great immediate problem was how to utilize the labour to the utmost and to secure an adequate reward for their skill (Ibid. 1948). Another problem that was cited in the bulletin was the existence of a large number of so-called African skilled workers whose only qualification was a smattering of knowledge of their craft. The greatest demand for artisans by 1948 was in the crafts such as carpentry, masonry, bricklaying, plumbing and brick making. On the other hand, crafts such as

mechanics, electricians, black smithing, tin-smithing and fitting had no problem, as many craftsmen were quite favourably disposed towards them. On the basis of the bulletin report, it is possible to come up with two conclusions. First, Africans shied away from careers such as brick making and masonry as they associated them with manual labour. King (1977, op. cit.) has argued that since the early years of colonialism, Africans were provided with vocational education, which involved manual work, especially by the Christian missions. This education was looked down upon as being discriminative. Even the Africans who qualified to acquire this vocational or industrial education opted to go for clerical or other white-collar jobs whenever an opportunity cropped up. Second, it is possible that in the late 1940s technical positions in areas like tin-smithing and mechanics had been monopolized by Asians to the extent that Africans could not get any openings in such careers (King, 1996).

After the War, a few ex-soldiers benefited from the post-war colonial government programmes. For instance, the Kenya government set up The Development and Reconstruction Authority (DARA), which was set up in order to meet post-war conditions and problems of reconstruction (Shiroya, 1992:12). Egerton School of Agriculture was identified for the expansion of European training in agriculture. For the Africans, however, two options were suggested. One was to provide training of Africans in conjunction with the government of Tanganyika at Morogoro. The second solution was to use Kabete Technical and Trade school to train individuals who would hopefully establish private businesses in their home areas or get employment in firms. In four years, Kabete graduated 2,837 ex-service-men as blacksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, and tailors among others. At the same time, the Jeanes School Kabete was also identified for skilled Africans who were being prepared primarily for government employment. In four years, this institution trained 813 ex-soldiers, teachers, welfare workers, agricultural instructors, and health inspectors. The number of Africans that benefited from these training

opportunities was negligible as compared to the majority who had nowhere to go.

The calibre of people trained was not likely to settle for artisanal careers as they were relatively well educated in terms of formal education. As King (1996) has argued, the main process of indigenising skilled trades to Africans was done by Asians and this went on throughout since the 1930s without any public attention. Across the country, Africans were recruited to work in Indian workshops, initially to perform unskilled work, while the technical work was performed by Indians. Other Africans learnt such skills in the commercial and industrial Indian enterprises in construction, quarrying, tailoring and machinery repair on the job (Stichter, 1982). The aim of the Indians however, was not to train Africans in such skills. This was corroborated by oral informants, Bernard Gachugu, (O.I. 26-12-01) and Mathenge Muteithia (O.I. 2-02-02). Indeed, many informants narrated situations in which their Indian employers used to protect their craft secrets from African competition in the early years.

Gradually, Africans learnt the techniques used by Indians, in the making of oil lamps in the late 1930s and early 1940s (King, 1996). A number of Africans who acquired such skills are given as Muthatha Nduga from Embu who was working for an Indian tinsmith, and Mula at Tearoom, Nairobi, in 1938. Another African who similarly profited worked for an Indian named Libhai. It is evident that Africans did not so much learn from the Asians as extract the craft secret for themselves by diligent and surreptitious observation (Stichter, 1982). Joseph Nyaga from Kangema is also one of the pioneer African mechanics in Nairobi and was introduced to some Asian family (Sikhs) who were in the iron smithing industry. After the training, he set off on his own and worked at River Road, and Kaburini (Kariokor) (O.I., Joseph Nyaga, 18-6-02).

During the Second World War, there emerged the first large group of Africans who after learning skills in Asian employment moved out to set up their own enterprises (King, 1996:145). By 1944, there was a group of three or four related Kikuyu men from Murang'a who had opened their own business at the African location of Majengo, in Nairobi. The names of the three brothers are given as Macharia, Mwangi, and Gachehu – all of them sons of Gakung'u (Ibid.). By the 1940s, the tin smithing and metal fabrication skills had therefore spread to a number of Africans. African tinsmiths, for example, have been reported as beginning to sell to the Indian wholesalers, as well as to African traders up country at around this time. The fact that three tinsmiths who operated at Majengo were relatives further illustrates the main mode of skill transfusion from one kin to another. This could explain why most artisanal skills are dominated by people from the same locality, even at present (O.I., Joseph Nyaga, 18-6-02).

It is not only the Kikuyu alone who were engaged in these skills. There were also Kambas, Luos, Luhyas performing the same tasks especially at Shauri Moyo by the end of the war. Burma market, which was associated with the war veterans provided a crucial trade and artisanal centre for Africans from different ethnic groups in Nairobi in the late 1940s (O.I., Mike Macharia, 27-5-03). The market was established by veterans of the war partly through the remittances of returning soldiers who were denied business licences by the government (Hyde, 2002:242).

One interesting feature of the artisanal career in Nairobi, was its close relationship with the formal sector of the economy. For instance, the wartime requirements for canned food in Kenya produced a lot of scrap tin, which was recycled by the tinsmiths into oil lamps and other tin products. This inevitably eased the work of the tinsmiths. Rising car imports and the increase in the number of petrol stations after the Second World War, produced even more raw materials in terms of old tyres, drums and tins (Kings, 1996). The tin *debes* used for packing cooking oil were later used by Africans as raw

materials for roofing houses and making water containers in the African locations. Some of these found their way into the rural areas. For example, the commodities sold by men in Kiambu markets in 1951 are reported to have included both products from indigenous technologies and modern items. They included tin products, rubber sandals, second-hand clothes, tobacco products, sponge tree yeast for making sugar cane beer, calabashes, ropes, leatherwork, metal utensils, tools, furniture and livestock (Roberts 1997b: 109).

One of the methods employed to transfer this new technology from one African to the other appears to have been based on kinship network. Thus, an informal system of training emerged, which has continued up to now especially in tin-smithing and motor vehicle repair. Many of the learners acquired the skills after paying some money to the expert or even a goat (King, 1977, *op. cit.*). Some of the trainers were paid a little allowance to compensate them for their services. Others did not have to pay anything especially if they happened to be relatives (Joseph Nyaga, O.I. 18-6-02). It should be noted that the relationship between the African trainers and their trainees was based on some measure of reciprocity. This implies that whereas the trainee benefited from the skills they acquired, the trainer on the other hand benefited from the assistance in terms of labour provided by the trainees. In this sense therefore, the trainees functioned as the assistants to the master, and were therefore extremely useful (O.I., Jackson Manegene, 01-1-03).

It has been argued that a good proportion of the *jua kali* artisans at independence acquired their skills informally from African pioneers who began working in the trade in the 1940s and 1950s. Many of those who practised the skills in Nairobi were people who were trained on-the job either upcountry and later travelled to Nairobi, or people who were trained informally in Nairobi. This perhaps explains why different artisanal skills are dominated by people from specific communities in Kenya. After their initial training, a few members among the pioneers of a certain trade in the

community moved to Nairobi where they were joined by those who sought for that area of training, usually friends and relatives. This explains why many Luo people were specializing in motor body repairs, while the Kikuyu specialized in the mechanical repairs at the Burma market in the 1940s and 1950s (O.I., Mike Macharia, 18-6-02). During the colonial era, many such apprentices eventually got absorbed either by the government or the private sector after they gained enough competence in their trades (O.I., Jackson Manegene, 1-1-03).

During the war period, a number of developments in the African locations of Nairobi promoted the activities of the African artisans although the major beneficiaries were the more capitalized African traders who could afford to acquire trading licenses (Ibid.). The 1946 Annual Report on African affairs in Nairobi outlined the achievements of the council, including the opening of a new market at Shauri Moyo that comprised open air stalls. Four council shops were also built at Ziwani and eleven at Kaloleni. Among the facilities at Kaloleni included a bakery of bread (KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:14). These new facilities provided an opportunity for African artisans to conduct their activities. In these new facilities, many African tinsmiths, carpenters, motor vehicle repairers and shoe repairers conducted their trades. Although the cessation of military contracts led to the decline in some of the trades such as the number of freelance traders, the demand for workshops for various types of artisans was very high.

As already noted, one of the enterprises undertaken by Africans in colonial Nairobi was the Akamba wood carving industry. In the inter-war period, the industry was a family affair (Kimambo, 1975, *op. cit.*). It was during the Second World War that the industry was first given a boost. With the coming of many British soldiers in East Africa, street trading in Nairobi became very profitable. Certain Akamba dealers found it necessary to give up carving altogether and encourage others to do the carving, thereby introducing some sort of specialization to the industry. This again underscores the strong links

between urban and rural areas. Right from the colonial days the Akamba carvers of Wamunyu produced the handicrafts, which were sold in the Nairobi streets. After the Second World War, the demand for handicrafts increased further. This has been attributed to the increase in the number of tourists from the USA, where the economy was quite robust. The woodcarving sector became the preserve of the Kamba artisans (O.I., Amos Kiswili and Martin Makau, 15-9-01).

African women in Nairobi also engaged in some craftwork by the 1940s. Most of this craftwork was primarily concerned with the upgrading of the married women in the town, especially the wives of the African elite. The colonial authorities sought to foster a spirit of self-help and to employ women's leisure time in useful occupations, such as knitting, reading and home management skills (Barnes, 1999; KNA/JW/2/18:127). In Pumwani African location, a European Miss Wingfield Digby, was appointed by the Municipal Council in 1941. Her primary duties included the supervision of play centres for urban children, as well as the supervision of home craft education among African women. The skills taught in this education included: spinning, weaving, sewing, home decoration and dyeing. Other skills included cookery and home management (KNA/JW/2/18).

By 1942, the colonial government had become aware that many African women were getting involved in political activities particularly among the traders (O.I., Charles Githaiga, 1-1-02). The establishment of these home craft courses may have been an attempt to keep the women busy in order to avoid engagement in political activity. It has also been argued that homecraft was a natural activity initiated because of the outcry of the colonial women. They felt that if you trained a woman you would influence the entire family as the training of men had not been useful to the family. Some of the women later exploited these skills to earn good profits for their families (O.I., Theru Macharia, 27-5-03). The introduction of these craft courses for women

contrasts sharply with the police harassment of the African women hawkers in Nairobi during the same period (Achola, 2002). The government took a welfare approach in the assistance provided for African women, with little effort to promote their economic independence and growth (Njoka, 2001:145). According to Frederiksen (2002), for a period after the Second World War, social welfare officers were particularly active in the city. This was the international heyday of community development initiatives. These social welfare initiatives in the 1940s and the 1950s saw the establishment of two community halls at Pumwani and Kaloleni. In addition to the showing of films and organising for dances, the other activities in these social halls included regular evening classes in languages, home economics, spinning and weaving, as well as health and hygiene lessons (Frederiksen, 2002: 229).

Asian women in Nairobi also participated in a number of crafts and trades. When not cooking or preparing food for their families, they performed a variety of economic activities. These ranged from drying and spinning cotton to make mattresses and quilts for their beds, to the sewing and embroidery of clothes for their families. The poorer women from the Asian community participated in selling embroidery, beadwork, and other sewn products. In addition, they also prepared sweets, *samosas* and *bajjiahs* for sale to both fellow Asians and Africans (Seidenberg, 1985).

It can be concluded that informal activities were not racial – specific. Rather, throughout the colonial era, such activities were shaped mainly by the economic needs of the people. Whereas the richer Asians would have been embarrassed to conduct such activities, the poorer members of the community had no choice.

#### 5.4 The Challenges Facing African Entrepreneurs in Post World War II Era, up to 1952

The African informal artisans during the 1940s encountered a number of problems. One of the most serious problems facing the sector during this period was lack of security of tenure in the areas in which they operated. The council authorities did not provide any permanent site for the activities of the African artisans. Their Asian counterparts were lucky in that it was possible for them to hire workshops and acquire licenses. This fact meant that African artisans were open to all forms of mistreatment by the colonial authorities, especially by the Nairobi Municipal council. Nevertheless, perhaps a bigger threat to the informal artisans during the 1940s had to do with the political climate in the colony especially after 1945.

Nairobi, the capital of Kenya was a seedbed of political activity in the 1940s. While many squatters and peasants had prospered from the high commodity prices during the war, Kenya's urban population, particularly in Mombasa and Nairobi, lived on, or in many cases below, the official poverty line (Thrupp, 1987:8). Between 1941 and 1948, Nairobi's population grew by 17% each year. Many of these urban migrants after 1945 were former squatters who had been kicked off European farms, or Kikuyu *ahoi* (tenants) from Central Province, who had lost their small plots with the commoditisation of production and land. The internal pressures increased dramatically during the 1940s, when population growth in the Kikuyu reserves reached three per cent per annum, at the same moment the war-time commodities boom and remittances from soldiers in the King's African Rifles provided the additional income which financed a land scramble. Those who lost out in the scramble for land, sought refuge in Nairobi with friends or relatives, who had already been attracted by the high wages, which seemed to be offered. The Kikuyu came to dominate life in the capital's African locations, the informal sector and crime (Ibid.).

One of the problems encountered by the Africans in urban centres was the feeling of frustrations and isolation. The 1955 East African Royal Commission reports that one of the reasons of African discontent in urban areas was:

The isolation and frustration of African town-dwellers, who feel that they cannot by their own efforts raise themselves above the squalid conditions in which they live and that they are denied the rights and advantages which members of other races enjoy, which are the major causes of the crime, immorality and drunkenness which are rife in many East African towns (quoted in Werlin 1974:56).

Reports abound that catalogue the incidence of crime in the African locations within the urban centres in the second half of the 1940s. Even though the Africans are portrayed as being evil minded e.g. spivs and thieves, their pathetic living conditions played a big role in promoting criminal activity.

**Table 5.2: Population of Africans in Nairobi in 1946.**

	Kibera	Railway Employment	Employment Elsewhere	Total
Men	619	6366	40,058	47,043
Women	835	2233	3947	7,015
Children	721	3548	2473	6,742
Total	2175	12147	46,478	60,800

Source: KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:27

**Table 5.3: Analysis of the African Employment in the Nairobi Municipality in November 1946.**

	Registered Employees	Absent	Juvenile	Female	Men	Daily Paid Casuals	
						Women	Children
Public	26,054	746	260	483	428	9	2
Government	16,957		16	168	65		
Total	43,011	746	276	651	493	9	2

Source: KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:27

**Table 5.4: Criminal Activities in Some African Locations of Nairobi (1946)**

SHAURI MOYO		EASTLEIGH	
Offences against Property	532	Offences against Property	35
Offences against persons	26	Offences against persons	2
Offences under native liquor ordinance	130	Offences under native liquor ordinance	2
Offences under Municipal by-laws	215	Offences under Municipal by-laws	10
Offences against hawking	487	Offences against hawking	40
Offences against traffic ordinance	153	Offences against traffic ordinance	18

Source: KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:24

It is evident from tables 5.2 and 5.3 that the number of Africans in Nairobi clearly outpaced the job vacancies available in the town. Moreover, it is believed that the number of Africans captured in the official reports was much less than the actual number of Africans resident in Nairobi. Only about 60,000 jobs were available for approximately 110,000 Africans in Nairobi (Mitullah and Kibwana, 1998). This partly explains the high level of criminal activity in the African locations of Nairobi. It is noted that unauthorized hawking was categorized as a serious criminal offence. Yet, many Africans earned their livelihood in this way (O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02).

Although the Africans who resided in Nairobi experienced many challenges, which included police harassment, lack of housing and unemployment, they were able to come up with strategies of survival. At Kibera which was exclusively reserved for Africans of Sudanese origin, Africans from different communities in Kenya managed to settle among the Sudanese. Some made arrangements with their Sudanese friends to be registered as adopted sons or daughters (KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:5). These even adopted Muslim names in order to fit within the community of Kibera, and also took the surname of their adopted "parents" (Ibid.).

Others were employed by the Sudanese as domestic servants, water carriers, Shamba boys and herdsmen. Many of these also sought registration as *bona fide* Sudanese (Samuel Otieno, O.I, 18-6-02). Many of these pseudo-Sudanese are reported by the Superintendent of Kibera on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1947 as operating businesses in the estate such as butchery, retail shops, food kiosks and livestock selling using Sudanese names (KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2: Op.Cit.). Some of the ex-askaris living in Kibera were natives of Abyssinia, Congo, Tanganyika and Nyasaland. Consequently, Kibera provided a favourable hiding place for indigenous Africans as they enjoyed a certain level of immunity from harassment by the colonial police. As Kagwanja (2003) observes, a number of the Kikuyu, Ameru and Aembu resorted to Islam as a strategy of self-camouflage in the face of colonial repression in urban centres. Such are the Africans who settled in areas such as Kibera to avoid colonial harassment where activities such as brewing of Nubian gin and the letting of rooms were lucrative.

In the 1940s, Africans both in the urban areas and in the rural areas encountered a lot of challenges. Atieno-Odhiambo (1995:32), argues that the exclusion of Africans from goods and services enjoyed by Europeans was a signifying marker of this period. Europeans, Asians and Arabs subjected Africans in urban centres to colour bar. The African houseboys most acutely experienced this humiliation as they were called *shenzi* (primitive) by Europeans. African males suspected of venereal diseases were paraded so as to be seen on Bahati road Nairobi. The African households were also subjected to punitive raids in which Africans had to account for personal acquisitions because they were all regarded as potential thieves, who were circulating goods through the black market or second economy (Ibid.).

Class divisions among the Africans were also becoming apparent. As early as the 1940s, African shopkeepers joined in the effort to control hawkers. The African shopkeepers objected to competition from hawkers and even organized protests in order to pressurize the government to take action. From

April 1942, the United African Traders Association, which comprised mainly established African shopkeepers, wrote to the Nairobi Acting Town Clerk urging tighter restrictions on the granting of hawkers licenses arguing that, majority of hawkers obtained licenses to cloak various nefarious activities. The Nairobi Municipal Council officials were also concerned more with male hawkers since the 1940s because of the high population that resulted from their influx. Parker estimated that in 1942, there were 470 itinerant hawkers in Nairobi, 225 traders, 145 shopkeepers, 150 proprietors of eating-houses, 280 skilled artisanal workers, and 235 service workers among the self-employed African population of Nairobi (Parker, 1948). Women hawkers appear to have been omitted from these figures and so did the hundreds of hawkers who travelled to Nairobi daily from Fort Hall and Kiambu.

By 1952, when the Emergency was declared, both rural and urban traders had organized themselves to dispute various ordinances aimed at controlling their activities. Early attempts at organizing had started in early 1940s, but these were small scale. In 1942, there were cobblers and banana seller guilds with about 80 members each. By the late 1940s, large-scale organizations were emerging to protect traders' interests. The United African Traders Association protested the proposed 1949 veranda trading by-laws, which prohibited conducting business on the porches of houses except in Asian areas, and the anti-spiv measures. The Chairman, Kigundu wa Machira, met with the Town Clerk and Labour Officer and informed them that his organization had 4000 members in twenty branches, including mostly male-dominated occupations such as tailors, shoemakers, painters, charcoal sellers, tinsmiths, blacksmiths and vegetable dealers. Eventually, the Veranda Trading by-laws were dropped when the Solicitor General advised against the feasibility of outlawing this method of trade.

The power of organization among the African traders was also demonstrated in 1943, when an attempt to control the black market in eggs in Fort Hall District was made by the District Officer (Kitching, 1980). The D.O declared

a fixed minimum price for the sale of eggs meant for the Nairobi market and even attempted to restrict the selling of eggs in the district to a few agents, all of whom were Indian (Ibid., 1980:197). The LNC resisted fiercely and even granted its own monopoly in the egg business to an African company called *Agikuyu na Wanyina Wao*. Literally, it means "The Agikuyu and their mother's siblings". This monopoly was also hotly contested by three other Kikuyu owned companies that operated in the Nairobi Municipal Market. The above controversy illustrates the great commercial competition that existed between Indian and African traders, and even among fellow Africans. The African traders used their connections with the LNC to obtain a monopoly status. The patronage of government machinery therefore proved to be a great boon for the African traders.

The ability to organize African traders' associations reflected the changing nature of Nairobi's population. Whereas the African Native Affairs Official Colchester found most of the Nairobi traders to be rural residents who came in daily and left again in the early 1940s, by 1950 more Africans were established permanently in Nairobi and were staking their claims to existence there. In 1953, about 40% of Nairobi's African population had been there for at least five years. Some members of the United African Traders claimed to have been in business for over 15 years at the same location in Nairobi. Many had their families with them. Landless squatters turned back to Kiambu often joined the ranks of such traders. According to Furedi, squatter traders, as well as Nairobi petty traders were to be particularly active as leaders of the Land and Freedom Army (Furedi, 1989).

Many Africans lived in hiding due to the fear that if they were found in Nairobi without the required passes, the consequences would be very harsh including arrest and repatriation to the reserves (O.I. Kahama Mwari 26-12-01). In addition, there were many who commuted to town every day, and their true numbers were most likely never captured in the official reports. Many of the reasons that led to the arrest of Africans in Nairobi did not really

constitute a big crime. As table 5.4 shows, majority were arrested on the basis of the accusation that they were vagrants. In Pumwani, the largest of the African locations in Nairobi, 14 men slept in a room, and four to a bed, with the rest sleeping on the floor. Others slept in the open or under parked buses and along River Road verandas (Throup, 1987:171).

Africans in Nairobi were also constantly subjected to European paternalism, which greatly hampered potentially constructive aspects of African enterprise (Werlin, 1974: 56, KNA/JW/2/18:51). Obviously, Africans were unhappy about this paternalism. In the 1940s, the municipality operated canteens, beer shops as well as dairies and provided cheaper meals for public employees using the justification that Africans could not know how to protect themselves from exploitation by their fellow Africans who were running small kiosks. Such actions on the part of the municipal council inevitably harmed the economic interests of the African traders who had taken initiative to invest in teashops and dairies in the same African locations. As if to confirm their wish to destroy African informal brewers of liquor, the municipal council resolved in a meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1942 to adhere to its previous decision to retain the sole right to manufacture all native (African) intoxicating liquor (KNA/JW/2/18:51). The council had its own breweries in Pumwani that targeted African consumers. This was bound to create conflict between the African brewers and the council (O.I., Mike Macharia, 18-6-02). African milk sellers were also accused by the social welfare workers in 1946 of agitating against the trading activities of the council aimed at providing cheap and clean milk supply in the African locations (KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:22). The welfare officer argued that African milk hawkers supplied milk that was often adulterated.

Similarly, the African eating-house keepers (hoteliers) were also accused by the social welfare officer - a European, of being self-seekers for opposing the council scheme to establish a canteen for supplying meals to Africans at 30 cents. The social welfare officer claimed that African hoteliers would sell

similar quality of food at the exorbitant cost of 1 shilling. Moreover, the council also accused the African traders of being unhygienic in their food preparation.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the colonial authorities sought to control African enterprises using every means possible. Their argument about hygiene and exploitation of one group of Africans by another was used as an excuse to justify this control. Indeed, many African members of the Municipal Advisory Council favoured the council's withdrawal from milk, brewery and food canteen trade (KNA/PC/NBI/JW/6/2:14). It should be noted that even the African lodging housekeepers in Pumwani were against the council's policy of refusing to give permits to facilitate the construction of more African owned houses in the African locations. Commenting on similar control exercised by the local authorities in Durban – South Africa over the Africans in the 1930s, Mabin and Parnell (1995) state:

At the centre of leisure control were the liquor restrictions... Municipal liquor monopolies have provided the fiscal base for the institutions and mechanisms created to control the under classes (1995:31).

Like in Durban, the municipal brewery at Pumwani monopolised the sale of beer to the Africans. This monopoly was viewed as a form of worker control. Indeed, the municipal brewers could limit its alcohol content and so limit productivity losses from drunkenness. Even more important, the monopoly generated revenue to fund the management of the black under classes (Mabin, 1995, *Ibid.*). Enforcement of the monopoly required constant police raids on the producers and suppliers of the illicit liquor.

Another serious problem for the Africans especially in the urban centres was lack of social security. Given that Africans had no right to own property in town, it meant that majority of them had to go back to the rural areas, where the extended family would support them especially in case of disease or old age. Thus, colonial capitalism continued to thrive on exploitation of the

indigenous modes of production. The population of Africans in Nairobi by 1947 had risen to about 199,000. Coupled with the great resentment against government policies, the Africans began to turn to lawlessness. This was particularly evident in the areas dominated by the Kikuyu including Mathare valley, Pumwani and Shauri Moyo. There was now a tendency towards mob rule. At Marurani, police were driven off by Africans and their captives freed when they attempted to arrest illegal brewers of alcoholic beverages (Throup, 1987). A large number of Africans were forced to resort to illegal living arrangements and a large proportion was actually living outside the structures of colonial supervision (Burton, 1993). By 1947, the African locations had descended into "virtual gang rule" having been abandoned to the control of political militants and their allies among the Kikuyu dominated street gangs. As Elkins (2005) observes, popular discontent was taking place in depressed urban areas, particularly Nairobi, to which many of the dispossessed squatters and impoverished peasants from the reserves migrated in search of work:

The African residential areas in the city quickly became overcrowded, unemployment escalated and inflation skyrocketed. The so called informal economy – including hawking, beer brewing, and prostitution – offered many urban residents their only hope of survival (Elkins, 2005:24).

This situation could be attributed to the fact that between the 1940s and 1950s, trade controls were promulgated that focused on expanding legal market system. This was developed by the administration to increase both profits from the taxation of trade and to confine African trade to certain areas. As a result, a new category of regulation emerged, aimed at supporting the more prosperous traders, selling from fixed locations. The move amounted to an attempt by colonialists to promote loyalists' interests by giving them privileged access to infrastructure. They wanted to create a propertied entrepreneurial class (Robertson, 1997b: 119). This demonstrated that political patronage was exercised by the colonial government in favour of the elite. The latter were expected to reciprocate by supporting the government. The urban markets became the focal points for African political action, their crowded

spaces providing solidarity and anonymity. One of the factors that made the Land and Freedom Movement an urban phenomenon as well as rural one included – the fact that many Africans were discontented with trade infrastructure especially in Nairobi. Market space was in great demand, yet the colonial authorities were very keen on constriction of space through the application of strict regulations (Robertson, 1997b).

### **5.5 African Informal Enterprise During the State Of Emergency (1952-1960)**

Nairobi was characterized by African political conflict from the late 1930s, as increasing overcrowding and high unemployment sharpened social and economic differentials among the city's communities. Fears over crime against Asian and European property in the 1940s, and disorders in the African residential locations, culminated in the 1950s to the dreaded MAU MAU violence (Robertson, 1997b). Ironically, the Asian artisans and workers played an especially important role, particularly between the Second World War and the early 1950s, in widening the direction of industrial militancy towards the emergent African urban working class. For instance, Makhan Singh and other Kenya Asians forged ties with African labour leaders to bring militancy into the post-war anti-colonial movement (Cowen and McWilliams 1998:112).

Atieno-Odhiambo (1995:34), describes Nairobi as an "outcast" city in the 1940s. The Africans were living on the edge of criminality, striving to make a living on their wits and housing themselves in the slums e.g. Majengo and Kariobangi. These African locations were a republic all of their own at night. At Shauri Moyo, for example, the few policemen could not do much in an unlit location at night given their small number. In this way, linkage with Kikuyu countryside was maintained with oathing being administered even in the African locations in Nairobi. African taxicab drivers played a great role in this linkage between the rural and urban by ferrying the leadership of the

KAU and the Trade Unions in and outside Nairobi. Bildad Kaggia confessed to have strangled a "Traitor" in a taxi in 1951, (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1995:35). Among the urban poor who supported the Mau Mau included the unemployed, hawkers, *chupa na debe* collectors, thieves, prostitutes and beer sellers. This group formed a stratum that was available for political activism. It is noted that even African women were actively involved in political activism. Wangu Kariuki, one of the women traders was involved in such activism for over seven years (O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02).

After the Mombasa general workers strike of 1947, the colonial government began to take measures to prevent a similar strike occurrence in Nairobi (Hyde, 2002). Plans were, therefore, laid to move police troops and replacement of labour from other parts of the colony to Nairobi. In addition, the government tightened influx controls among the Africans and prohibited workers' strikes. These laws provoked widespread anger among the African workers of Nairobi, which was expressed during the mass meetings convened by the trade unions such as the East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC). These meetings were also attended by many informal traders who feared being cleared out of the city over the accusation that they were spivs and idlers (Hyde, 2002:241). Explaining some of the reasons why the informal traders of Nairobi supported the Nairobi general workers' strike in 1950, Maina Macharia is reported as having stated that:

A lot of the Second World War ex-soldiers became traders in second hand clothes in Burma market. Many people wore army- clothing, shirts, people in the informal economy, the unemployed. Many of the market's traders lived in Shauri Moyo and Majengo. Now because of the strike they have to close their stalls, now joined forces of the strikers (Hyde, 2002:242).

The elevation of Nairobi to a city also created more tension among the Africans in Nairobi. Together with other African workers of Nairobi, the informal traders and artisans were apprehensive that once Nairobi got the charter elevating it to a city on March 30<sup>th</sup> 1950, even the cost of living would

be much higher due to higher rates and license fees (O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02). Also, there were rumours that 32 square miles of Kiambu were to be hived off and added to the city. The Africans displaced, it was rumoured, were to be removed in order to make room for another 12,000 European settlers.

This fear among the informal traders was confirmed in 1951. As the colonial government made a greater effort to eliminate suspected criminals from the city, many genuine informal traders and artisans fell victim. In 1951, the structures at Shauri Moyo market, which were quite dilapidated, were required to accommodate traders evicted from verandas along River Road and Grogan Road (today's Kirinyaga Road). Consequently, in July 1952 there was an attack on the master of municipal market, which was then raided twice by the police to arrest illegal African traders. This was followed by a successful two-day boycott of vegetable supplies organized by the vegetable traders. The mayor of Nairobi was then forced to negotiate a settlement to stop the boycott (Robertson, 1997b).

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1952, the new governor to Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring arrived to succeed Sir Philip Mitchell. By this time, violence and insecurity not only in the capital Nairobi but all over the country was becoming widespread. Among the MAU MAU activities included attacks on settler property such as cattle and crop. Chiefs were attacked while agricultural instructors and police informers were locked in their huts and burnt to death (Throup, 1987:11). It is against this background that the new governor to Kenya declared a state of Emergency on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1952, following the assassination in Nairobi, of one of the loyal chiefs among the Kikuyu, Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u (Elkins, 2005).

The colonial state responded to the MAU MAU challenge of violence with firmer control and increasing coercion. Curfews were ruthlessly enforced in many African locations after dark, and Loyalist Home Guards patrolled the

streets of Nairobi. Any one seen out at night stood the risk of being shot without question. During the day, police and Home Guard patrols intercepted Africans on the streets, checking work permits and passbooks, searching for weapons and ammunition, with the Kikuyu being the main target (Robertson, 1997b; O.I., Mzee Akwabi, 21-12-02).

On 27<sup>th</sup> November 1952, Tom Mbotella a Nairobi African Advisory Council member popularly regarded as a collaborator, was assassinated near Burma market, which accommodated displaced traders from Shauri Moyo market, which was undergoing renovations involving permanent construction in stone. The colonial authorities were particularly unhappy as hundreds of African traders and market goers had passed Mbotella's body, which lay in a muddy pool of water for several hours until it was discovered by a European passer-by (Elkins, 2005). It was obvious that he was assassinated by the Mau Mau. As a result of the assassination, the police raided Burma, arrested all the traders, and took them to Kingsway police station for interrogation. Two hours later, a fire broke out at the market, widely believed to have been set by homeguards and the police which razed the market to the ground (O.I., Mike Macharia, 27-6-02). The informant, who was a school leaver in 1953, trained other Africans how to drive at Burma market. During the period, he used a vehicle belonging to Josephat Irungu, his employer but also joined the Mau Mau and fought for three years. Burma was one of the hotbed areas of Mau Mau war (O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02).

Another African market that provided a means of livelihood for African traders and artisans was the Kariokor market. It was also regarded by authorities to be a black spot and a gathering place, for thugs and spivs. The term spivs was an acronym for suspected persons and itinerant vagrants and many African traders were arrested on this excuse. In May 1953, the police raided Kariakor market and destroyed some 6,000 temporary market stalls at Shauri Moyo. Traders at Shauri Moyo and Duke Street also experienced

frequent police raids, arrests, and detentions. In 1954, both Kariokor and Shauri Moyo were eventually closed down completely.

The demolitions, closures and arrests were a response to other various violent incidents centring on markets and municipality owned shops by groups associated with the Mau Mau. The colonial officials argued that Mau Mau activists were carrying out a campaign of intimidation and had instituted a type of protection racket aimed at Asian and other non-Kikuyu shop-owners. Soon, Duke Street Market also burned down on 13 August 1954 and two home guards were killed at Kariokor on 21 January 1955. Although a demonstration was organized by loyalist traders against the murders, all Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (KEM) owned- shops were closed down for 3 months by the authorities as a result of the violence. Nevertheless, violence continued against municipality owned dairies and butcheries. The spate of militant activity alienated the non-Kikuyu elements in the Nairobi African population. Often exploited by Kikuyu landlords, who owned most of the accommodation in the African locations and subjected to the tyranny of the Kikuyu street gangs, the Abaluhya, Luo and migrant workers from the coast became disillusioned with the Kikuyu militants (Throup, 1985:421). This explains why in 1952 when the Emergency commenced, most of the non-Kikuyu African population adopted a neutral stand in Nairobi.

On April 24, 1954, Britain's military forces launched an ambitious operation, code named "Operation Anvil" to reclaim control over Nairobi by purging the city of nearly all Kikuyu living within its limits. Nearly 25,000 security force members under General George Erskine were involved in the operation, which involved cordoning off the city's African locations. The entire population of Nairobi was caught off-guard by this operation (Elkins, 2005). Prior to the commencement of Operation Anvil of April 1954, about 1000 Kikuyu per month were being expelled from Nairobi in line with the emergency regulations. During the operation, more than 37,000 of those

identified as KEM were removed from Nairobi, a deportation that fought a counter-wave of immigration fleeing villagization and starvation in Reserves (Hake, 1977:61). More than 6,000 women and children had been forcibly returned to the rural areas of Central Province where the majority of Nairobi's African labour force had been drawn from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peoples prior to 1952.

By the end of operation Anvil, the percentage of KEM members in Nairobi stood at only 25 per cent. The majority of traders were arrested and either detained or repatriated. The authorities were particularly concerned about traders not only supporting Mau Mau by complicity in acts of violence, but also reports of their funding it and banking for it. Among those arrested included the women traders of Nairobi such as Wangu Kinyori who was a fully-fledged member of the Mau Mau movement for over seven years (O.I., Mike Macharia, 17-6-02). As a result, Kikuyu domination in access to trading facilities and housing was lost. Most stalls at Shauri Moyo, Kariokor and Duke Street markets were vacated and re-allocated to non-KEM such as Abaluhya, Luo and Akamba. Most small-scale businesses at Kawangware also collapsed as they were run by the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities, evicted from Nairobi (Robertson, 1997b).

During the period of emergency, (1952-1960), the government placed a lot of restrictions on Africans in Nairobi. Movement restrictions were increased and enforced. The Emergency measures included impediment to illicit trade through curfews, confinement to strategic villages, confiscation of trucks, erection of barbed wire and ditches around villages, and clearance of vegetation around settlements (Robertson, 1997b: 116). When KAU leadership was arrested late in 1952, it left the leaders of the *Muhimu* (inner core) the only political organization in Nairobi. Their leaders such as Eliud Mutonyi continued collecting ammunition, arms, medical supplies and even recruitment of fighters (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1995:36). This urban leadership

had a parallel in settler farms where artisans became MAU MAU leaders. Over 120,000 Africans were detained in Kiambu alone in 1956, and many more confined to strategic villages. By 1955, over a million Kikuyu and Aembu had been forced into 854 villages with quarter acre plots to cultivate, on which loyalists were allowed to build square houses and suspected Mau Mau round huts. Even within the Mau Mau movement, African artisans played an important role in manufacturing homemade guns and other weapons (O.I., Muita Muya, 10-4-03).

Ironically, many people fled to Nairobi from Kikuyu land because of increasing landlessness, compulsory labour levies in the rural areas, starvation due to restriction on cultivation associated with villagization, and persecution when the chiefs used the Emergency to settle old scores (Robertson, 1997b). Despite this, the illicit marketing of produce into Nairobi continued though this was restricted to supplying Africans. It is interesting to note that the Emergency population movement restrictions which were principally aimed particularly at Agikuyu, Aembu and Ameru profited Africans who were closest to Nairobi by granting them superior access to markets. This aspect especially applied to fresh vegetable and fruit trade. In 1953, the Kiambu agricultural officer is reported as having complained of the large illicit banana trade to Nairobi. By 1958, when some of the Emergency controls were being lifted, a surplus of bananas flooded the mincing lane (now called Wakulima Wholesale Market) in Nairobi. Those farther from Nairobi like the Kikuyu of Nyeri, Aembu and Ameru found it difficult to manoeuvre their way back after they were repatriated to the reserves due to the colonial restrictions.

Parkin (1969), argues that the grounds given by the British for singling out the Kikuyu for detention, restriction and imprisonment during the Emergency period, was that the MAU MAU nationalist movement was led by the Kikuyu. During Operation Anvil of 1952-53, members of Kikuyu community were also removed from ethnically mixed housing estates and concentrated in

guarded areas of their own (O.I., Kinyua Muteithia, 12-2-02). Majority of the adult men belonging to the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities were detained in government camps in far off places like the notorious Manyani, Mwea and elsewhere. The Kamiti detention centre and Embakasi camps in Nairobi were also established to accommodate those suspected of being members of Mau Mau. These were considered by the detainees to be one of the worst camps. Under enormous pressure to complete the Embakasi airport, the detainees at Embakasi were overworked by the notorious British supervisors (O.I., David Gethi, 26-12-04). The only members who were not detained were those who had express permission from the government such as students and loyalists. In Kaloleni estate, which had been built for Africans in 1945 with the Kikuyu being the largest grouping on the estate before Operation Anvil, it is mainly the Luo who took over. To date the Luo are still the most populous group in the estate (O.I., Mike Macharia, 27-6-02)

One of the Kikuyu traders in Nairobi, Nderi Kagombe's experience illustrates the trouble encountered by the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru traders in Nairobi during the state of emergency:

The owner of two small shops that sold restaurant supplies in Nairobi's Bahati district, he was successful by the standards of the time, supplementing his income with a lucrative subletting business and managing to save some money at the same time as supporting his wife and children back in Nyeri. Like hundreds of thousands of others, he had also taken the Mau Mau oath, although his involvement was limited to helping to organise some supplies. Then he was picked up, and his world turned upside down (Elkins, 2005:157).

The declining fortunes of the Kikuyu self-employed contrasted with the rising fortunes of members of the Luo community. Parkin (1969), concludes that most of the self-employed Luos in Nairobi began to work on their own in city from about 1952. Thus, the fact that the Kikuyu were forcefully removed from Nairobi gave the Luo a much greater opportunity to trade or work in a self-employed capacity in Nairobi and other East African towns from which

the Kikuyu were forcefully evicted by the colonial government. The clientele of these by now increasing Luo informal traders, stall-holders and craftsmen extended beyond fellow Luo to include the Abaluhya groups that were under represented in Nairobi's trading, Kamba, as well as Kikuyu families whose men folk had been removed from the town (Parker, 1948). There is evidence from life histories of the African communities that a number of Kikuyu traders, who had been forced into detention, temporarily awarded guardianship of their enterprises to Luo friends. Some such traders went to the extent of encouraging marriages between their relatives and the Luo males so as to cement the partnership (Parkin, 1969).

During the second half of the 1950s, the Luo traders and other Luo-self-employed had a short period of ascendancy in African petty commerce and artisanal trades in Nairobi (Robertson, 1997b). Their main enterprises included trading in fish, which was obtained in Nyanza and transported all the way to Nairobi. Others were involved in tailoring. To these were now added other forms of commerce such as distribution of African foodstuffs and the purchase and resale of clothes and other materials. Members of the Luo ethnic group also tended to completely control the shoe repair and shoemaking trades in Kariokor, Shauri Moyo and Burma (Parkin, 1969). However, tinsmiths and bicycle repairers decreased as these trades were dominated by Kikuyu men. Similarly, the number of cooked food sellers declined, as well as fresh vegetable traders and sellers of traditional pots because these trades were mostly practised by the Kikuyu, now cleared out by Operation Anvil (Robertson, 1997b; O.I., Wanduta Muriithi, 9-1-03).

During the State of Emergence, some rehabilitation programmes were initiated by the colonial government. However, there was a bias in favour of men in the provision of vocational skills. For instance, even in the Mau Mau detention camp at Kamiti, vocational instructions for women largely focused on developing domestic skills, like proper hygiene, nutrition and mending

clothes. Male artisans (*fundis*) were given more privileges even in these camps (Elkins, 2005:230-231). Some homecraft classes and leisure time activities were introduced towards the end of the State of Emergency for the African women residing in Nairobi. The most significant measure undertaken by the government through the Department of Community Development was the establishment of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Club. The club got support from voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross and the East African Women's League (Elkins, 2005; Ibid.). The club was therefore used to encourage women to concentrate on home craft training and home economics, rather than assisting them to enter artisanal professions. The efforts made towards providing Africans with some vocational skills was an indicator that the colonial government could no longer afford to ignore the African Community.

### **5.6 The Decolonization Process in Kenya and its Impact on the Informal Enterprise up to 1963**

During the Emergency period, the influence of the settlers in colonial affairs in Kenya declined considerably (Ochieng', 1985). The colonial government realized that for genuine peace to prevail, Africans had to be involved in the administration of the country. The colonial regime saw the need to broaden the basis of collaboration at the national level to include Africans within the political and economic structures of the colonial society (Ogot, 1995:48). In line with this, a number of documents were prepared by the colonial government and perhaps the most important of these was the Report of the East African Royal Commission of 1955 (Werlin, 1974). The commission called for the improvement of African lives through provision of more training and educational opportunities and facilities, and to ease the colour bar.

Other important reports included the Swynnerton Plan of 1954, Report of the Carpenter Committee on African wages, and the Lindbury Commission. The

Swynnerton Plan called for the consolidation and the registration of African land, individual ownership, issue of title deeds and introduction of cash crops and extension services to revitalise production for better management (Kinyanjui and Fowler, 2004:25). Roger Swynnerton, who was an official in the Department of Agriculture, came up with a plan that provided funding and the rationale for the land consolidation programme (Ogot, 1995:48). The main objective was to create holdings, which would be large enough to keep the family self-sufficient in food and enable them to practice alternate husbandry and thus develop a cash income. Land reform was followed by the waiver of restrictions against African production of lucrative cash crops, such as coffee, tea, pyrethrum, hybrid maize and dairy products (Ibid.49).

The conditions imposed by the State of Emergency made the government see the need for reforms on the wage structure. The Kenya Labour Department also encouraged the formation of employer's organizations to help facilitate the growth of collective bargaining. Prior to the Mau Mau and the State of Emergency the official response to any union activity was to suppress it as effectively as possible (Burton, 1993). After the emergency, this attitude changed drastically. The formation of unions came to be seen as a positive measure as it could enhance collective bargaining as opposed to mass action. To this end, the Department assisted in the growth of the trade Union movement. It led to Africans such as Tom Mboya emerging as the undisputed leaders of the Trade Union movement.

The Lindbury Commission made some landmark changes in the civil service. For instance, for the first time it accepted the principle of equal pay for equal work. This in essence meant that government employees were to receive equal pay regardless of race. In addition to shifts in Official policy, the increasing industrialization of Nairobi's economy from the mid-1950s also had a considerable impact on the population (Atieno-Odhiambo, 2002). The European and Asian business people, as well as multinational companies were

investing in the secondary industries that produced footwear, textiles, alcohol, soap, cigarettes, canned foods, chemicals, aluminium, bicycles and bicycle tubes, and soft drinks. This industrialization was accompanied by the increased demand for both skilled and semi-skilled labour.

The new policies, created new and unforeseen problems. The land reform programme had one major weakness, which was contained in the repressive political objectives. It was seen as a programme that would complete the work of Emergency; to stabilize the middle class based on the loyalists as confiscated land was to be put into a common pool so as to render the rebels or terrorists landless (Ogot, 1995: 50). By 1956, 3,510 Africans had forfeited their land under the 1953 forfeiture of Lands Act. As Elkins (2005) observes:

Like all colonial policies during the Emergency, agricultural reform was highly politicised. The Emergency ushered in a state-directed class revolution in Central Province, one that was intimately linked to land access and loyalism. The Kikuyuland of the post-Mau Mau future would be a model of agricultural production, with former loyalists living on the large efficient parcels of land, and many former Mau Mau adherents serving as the landless, labourers either on the loyalists farms or in some yet to be defined industry. For their part, the loyalists took an active role in ensuring their own aggrandizement. In fact, colonial officials put their loyalist supporters in charge of the demarcation committees for land consolidation throughout the Kikuyu reserves. Practically, this meant that the loyalists were empowered to decide not only who got land in the Kikuyu reserves but also how much (Elkins, 2005: 266-267).

Colonial patrimonialism in favour of the loyalists, therefore, led to the creation of a large group of landless people in Central Kenya. Many of these were to set off for Nairobi and other urban centres after the State of Emergency, in search of a means of livelihood. Thus, the agricultural reforms that included land consolidation legally codified the land tenure inequalities of the pre-emergency era and exacerbated the land crisis in the country.

The Carpenter Report of 1954 proposed replacing the mass of irregular and poorly paid migrant workers with a smaller but permanent urban African population, receiving higher wages, which would allow them to establish and maintain their families in the towns. It was hoped that it would not only promote efficiency, but also mould a respectable working class, which would prove easier to control than the migrant workforce (Burton, 1993). This created a huge gap between rural wages and the wages paid to Africans in the urban centres. Consequently, more and more people began migrating to the urban centres, making the city even more overcrowded.

From late 1956, the authorities relaxed the strict regulations and trebled the number of passes for individuals and vehicles to trade in Nairobi, while allowing many African shops to re-open. In 1957 the colonial government allowed many Africans to return to Nairobi, and by the end of 1958, entry during daylight was unrestricted for pass-holders (Robertson, 1997b: 141, Hake, 1977:58). Such passes were mainly given to the loyalists who were also given special consideration for various commercial licenses. They were also the first to be granted permission to grow cash crops like tea and coffee (Elkins, 2005). By 1960, there were 18,000 unemployed African men living in Nairobi. The situation was exacerbated further by the influx of 50,000 more people between January and March of 1960. This influx partly grew because of the increasing landlessness provoked by the 1954 Swynnerton Plan, which facilitated the consolidation of land and land registration. By November 1960, there were an estimated 130,000 landless families in Kenya, many of them from Central Province (Robertson, 1997b).

Due to this African influx, hawking activity increased in Nairobi. At the mincing lane, revenue dropped in the face of boycott of the market by traders and hawkers. Less than half of the vegetables were now going to the market. Most of the produce was being hawked around Nairobi or sold directly to Asian wholesalers. Hawkers seeking selling space formed illegal markets at

Donholm Road, Bengal Road and Dagoretti Corner. Adding to the chaotic marketing conditions and violation of urban land use rules, were a number of urban farmers who were selling some of their produce (Robertson, 1997b; Werlin, 1974). The number of street boys in Nairobi who were dislocated from their homes during the State of Emergency escalated. Their plight touched one of the colonial officials, Geoffrey Griffins, to the extent that he began to take care of the Mau Mau orphans in 1959 (Daily Nation, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2005).

On the political front, the British colonial office also decided to introduce a number of reforms in order to contain the crisis. In 1960, the new colonial secretary, Ian Macleod, finally accepted the principle of African majority rule in Kenya within a span of three years. In February 1960, the British Prime Minister declared that a wind of change was blowing through the continent and that national policies had no choice but to recognize it (Ogot, 1995:54; Elkins, 2005). In the meantime, the first Lancaster House Conference was hosted between January and February 1960, after the elected African members to the Legislative Council boycotted the Lennox-Boyd Constitution. All the elected members were invited to Lancaster. The decisions taken at the Conference were very important for the political development of the country.

Upon coming back, most of the African members of the Legislative Council formed the Kenya African National Union (KANU). However, other elected members feared that KANU was too much urban-centred and under too much domination by the Luo and the Kikuyu, the two largest communities in Kenya. Led by Masinde Muliro, Ronald Ngala and Daniel Moi, they formed the Kenya African Democratic Union, which was a federation of the smaller communities in Kenya such as the Kalenjin, Maasai, Abaluhya, the coastal communities and the Somali. Whereas the main objective of KANU was to form a predominantly unitary African government, KADU wanted to ally with moderate European political parties and Asians, in order to form a multi-racial

government. The last Lancaster House Conference of 1962 settled the dispute between KANU and KADU. A compromise was reached that provided for a strong central government, but with a provision for regional or majimbo governments (Ochieng', 1985). When independence elections were held in May 1963, KANU emerged victorious and on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1963 Jomo Kenyatta the KANU president became the first Prime Minister.

### 5.7 Summary

The Africans in Kenya were profoundly affected by the Second World War. Nairobi, the capital became the headquarters of the military forces stationed in East Africa. This inevitably necessitated the expansion of the town in terms of buildings, roads, as well as work force. Many Africans acquired jobs in Nairobi during the war period.

The large presence of both local and foreign troops in Nairobi provided trading opportunities to African itinerant traders and artisans. However, cleavages began to emerge even within the African communities which highlighted the serious contradictions at play in the development of capitalism in Kenya. The more capitalized Africans including the public servants and traders began to come into conflict with the hawkers and other similarly disadvantaged African groups. This was because the African elite who enjoyed the patronage of the colonial government resisted the activities of African hawkers in Nairobi.

The most serious contradictions, however, pitted the colonial authorities in Nairobi and the African informal entrepreneurs. With the eviction of squatters from white settler farms and government forests especially in the Right Valley after the war, the frustration and desperation of Africans in Nairobi was accentuated. Most of the Africans who tried their hands in business suffered from direct competition from the municipal dairies, breweries and restaurants, which sought to eliminate informal enterprises in the city. The Second World

War also contributed significantly to the expansion of African artisans in Kenya. While some Africans acquired trades such as motor vehicle maintenance, carpentry and masonry during the war, others bought taxicabs and ex-military trucks after the war. Burma Market, for instance, was begun by war veterans. However, most of the Africans in Nairobi experienced a lot of frustration due to political repression and lack of enough economic opportunities. The Mau Mau uprising and the series of African workers' strikes in the post-war period can be understood against this background.

The contradictions obtaining in the development of capitalism in Kenya also pitted the African skilled labour and petite bourgeoisie against colonialism. For instance, during the State of Emergency, even the shops and other businesses at Burma, Kariakor and mincing lane belonging to the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru loyalists were closed down by the government. This was in spite of the fact that most capitalized Africans declared their loyalty to the government and identified the African rebels in their locations. The political changes that followed the nationalist war in the 1950s culminated in the constitutional conferences in London in 1960 and 1962 that paved the way for political independence in 1963.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **6.0 The Development of the Informal Sector During the Kenyatta Era, 1963-1978**

Kenya's colonial economy was shaped into a distinctive pattern by the long years of colonial rule and this was the situation at independence. The economy displayed characteristics typical of underdeveloped economy at the periphery, including the preponderance of foreign capital, the dominance of agriculture, limited development of industry, heavy reliance on export of primary products, imports of capital and manufactured consumer goods (Ochieng', 1995:83).

When the colonialists granted political independence in the 1960s, they left behind economies that were mainly in the hands of foreign owners. For instance, Western European trading firms dominated the import-export trade, while multinational subsidiaries controlled the extractive industries, manufacturing, construction and plantation sectors as well as the banks, insurance and financial institutions. The economy was controlled by immigrant communities such as Asians, Europeans and Lebanese. It should be noted that African entrepreneurial groups were weakly developed (Tangri, 1999). This economic dependency in Africa inevitably impacted on the political and economic developments after independence.

In this chapter, the factors that led to the rapid increase of informal activity in Nairobi after 1963 are examined, as well as the impact of these activities on the African community. The policies of the independent government of Kenya with regard to the informal sector and their impact on the Africans in Nairobi are also examined.

### **6.1 The Economic Situation in Kenya at Independence and the Government Policy Towards the Informal Sector.**

Inequality between different racial groups in Kenya had already been established within the economy during colonialism. Less than 4000 Europeans owned some three million hectares of the best arable land in Kenya (ILO 1972:86). In the urban centres, Europeans similarly dominated the best positions both in the public and private sectors of the economy. This situation of inequality greatly moulded the structure of the postcolonial economy. Ironically, the aspiration of the liberation movement in Kenya was to command property on the basis of universal human subjectivity without the constraint of race, tribe or any other source of cultural association (Cowen & McWilliams 1996:138).

The process of urbanization expanded tremendously shortly before and after the attainment of political independence because the thinking of the policy makers was that it was the urban areas where industries were located that provided benefits that would then trickle down to the rural areas (Alila, 2001). This, in the overall national development context, meant a top-down approach to development efforts. This was based on the erroneous view that development can only be successful if it is centrally planned and generated (Ibid., 2001:332). The main principles and strategies of Kenya's post-colonial development were contained in the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, which was entitled: "African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya". In the Sessional Paper, the independent Kenyan government stated clearly its political and economic philosophies. Throughout the sessional paper, the government stressed the maximisation of production as the only permanent solution to problems facing the country. Consequently, a policy was recommended through which growth was to be encouraged in those areas, and those groups and individuals, which were best placed to advance the national wealth (Burton 1993:20).

Kenya's economic policies were oriented heavily towards a capitalist economy. From the very outset, the independence government opted for a clear strategy of economic growth based on a determination to maintain existing ties with the other major industrial nations, including, Britain – the former colonial master (Ochieng', 1995). Of essence, this meant that the Kenyan government continued to rely on private ownership and market forces growth, rather than redistribution (Burton, 1993). This had serious implications for the country. First, foreign investors and multinational corporations came to wield influence over the economy and therefore the economic policies aided by the new African elite (Holmquist et al 1994). In addition, massive social inequality developed amongst the African population and great regional and sectoral disparities also evolved (Burton, 1993:20).

One of the factors why the foreigners gained a position of dominance in the economy was that the Kenyan Government encouraged foreign investment at the attainment of political independence. On taking over leadership in Kenya in 1963, Kenyatta assured the white settlers that their investment would be protected. The newly independent Kenyan government bought their land at market rates, using nearly £12.5 million in loans from the British government to finance the buyout (Elkins, 2005:362). This was followed by the Foreign Investment Protection Act of 1964, which provided a number of incentives to the foreign investors. The Act gave freedom to the foreign investors to repatriate profits, interest and repayments on foreign loan capital, and also the approved proportion of net proceeds of sale if the enterprises should decide to withdraw some of its investment. However, such firms were required to obtain "approved status" certificate from the Minister for Finance before benefiting from all such privileges (ILO, 1972:437).

The contradictory nature of the government policies after independence was reflected by the fact that the Kenyan leadership also wanted to reduce the dominance of foreigners in the Kenyan economy through the Africanization programme. This was to be done mainly through the mechanism of legislation

and licensing. The first such legislation was the Trade Licensing Act of 1967 (Ochieng', 1995). This excluded non-citizens from trading in rural and non-urban areas, and even went on to specify a list of goods, which were to be restricted to citizen-traders only. This legislation worked against Asian entrepreneurs even though they were *bona fide* Kenyan citizens (Himbara, 1994). The basic consumer goods affected by this legislation included textiles, soap and cement. The Kenya National Trading corporation (KNTC), which had been formed in 1965 to handle domestic import-export trade, was used extensively in the period after 1967 as an instrument to penetrate the wholesale and retail trade by the new African bourgeoisie. It is important to note that the sector was previously the preserve of the non-citizens, mainly the Europeans and to a lesser extent, Asian traders (Ben Nduru, O.I. 24-12-02). In the period between 1967 and 1968, 18000 Asians left the country and in 1969 when the Trade Licensing Act took effect, many Asian traders had their licences revoked as part of Kenyatta's government policy of promoting African enterprises, particularly in small towns and villages (Seidenberg, 1985:203).

Most indigenous Kenyans who acquired businesses through such legislative means did not fare well as they possessed neither sufficient business skills nor the financial resources to survive in the market place (Himbara, 1994:59). Moreover, predominantly Asian businessmen who either emigrated to other countries, or moved into other sectors of the economy such as manufacturing, finance and banking, insurance, tourism, and construction also disadvantaged African businessmen. This was because African entrepreneurs still needed the assistance of these non-African institutions, which still continued to be run by the Asians. In this way, the African traders soon found themselves giving way to Indians. The former Indian traders now turned industrialists gradually returned to reclaim the trading sector. Kenyan Asian capital survived the African onslaughts because it was needed by successive governments in Kenya. The same was true of the salaried Indian public servants. When

official harassment of Asian business threatened economic disruption and recession in the country early in 1969, the government stopped further harassment as this threatened to disrupt the economy (Cowen & McWilliams 1996:118).

In 1975, the Trade Licensing Act was amended to the effect that all goods manufactured in the country by foreign firms in Kenya must be distributed through the Kenya National Trading Corporation (KNTC) - appointed agents (Ochieng', 1995:86). However, such agents had to be citizens of Kenya. The result was that a substantial proportion of the wholesale trading profits to foreign corporations was cut, and in the same vein, a wide range of products was put under the control of African businessmen. Other important agencies that facilitated African capital acquisition included the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), the National Housing Corporation (NHC) and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC) (Kinyanjui and Fowler, 2004).

The ICDC was begun in 1964, and administered four main programmes. These included: The small Industrial Loans Scheme which capitalized small African entrepreneurs; the Commercial Loans Scheme which targeted more established African traders to expand their ventures; the Property Loans Scheme which assisted African potential investors to buy or construct commercial premises; and the Small Loans Scheme that financed Africans to buy shares in larger companies including the multinational corporations (see Himbara 1994; Ochieng', 1995). Another scheme established in 1967, was the Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE). Initially a subsidiary of ICDC, KIE's main objective was to support potential African industrialists by building sheds and enabling them to acquire machinery and other requisite equipment for their production needs. On the whole, between 1964 and 1972, more than 2,542 citizen – traders benefited from financial assistance through these ICDC programmes (Ochieng', 1995). These ranged from small retail traders, bar

owners, small transporters, building contractors, *jua-kali* manufacturers and others. The ICDC attempted to pursue two goals since its inception, namely; to promote the development of African businesses by extending credit to enterprises which were unable to acquire it through the commercial banks, and to operate as a commercial organization, meeting its running expenses through interest charged on loans (O.I., Ben Nduru, 24-12-02).

As already noted, although some African entrepreneurs succeeded in establishing prosperous enterprises, this was not the case for the majority of African entrepreneurs. The reason for this included lack of experience in business management as well as lack of integrity among some of the businessmen (Himbara, 1994). Other reasons for African failure ranged from clinging to African traditions, to lack of confidence. Marris and Somerset (1971), have argued that lack of higher learning not only isolates the African businessman but also denies him the sophistication of social contacts to handle confidently his relationships within the economic system. The African entrepreneurs are expected to share their incomes with other members of extended family and even to employ relatives whether such relatives are hard working or not (Himbara, 1994, Op.Cit.). The result of all this is that many African traders eventually ended up selling their businesses back to the Asian traders.

In the final analysis, Kenya's economy acquired some peculiar characteristics. For instance, it continued to be dominated by multinational corporations and other foreign investors who exported their surpluses out of the country. Second, the multinational companies utilized technology which in most cases was not appropriate for Kenya (Holmquist et al 1994). The industries were usually capital intensive and therefore they tended to strengthen the existing income inequalities, in addition to limiting labour employment (Ochieng', 1995). Thus, modern manufacturing did not succeed as expected. This explains why *jua kali* enterprises remained in operation. These survived due to

their creative responses to changing social, political and economic situation in the country (O.I., Njeri Kinyanjui, 18-2-05).

During the Kenyatta era, there was a marked expansion of the public service. Under his leadership, the system of loyalist patronage percolated all the way down to the local government (Elkins, 2005). Of the numerous vacancies created after the departure of the European personnel in the civil service, the most powerful ones such as Provincial Commissioners and District Commissioners were filled with his political supporters from Central Kenya. A number of high-ranking African civil servants engaged in business ventures, manufacturing and property ownership (Maxon, 1995; 120). Many Africans with senior ranks either in the civil service, military as well as African directors of subsidiaries of international firms in Kenya moved to acquire and operate large agricultural holdings in the Kenya highlands, which were formerly the preserve of the European settlers. Professionals, such as lawyers and doctors soon followed and straddled between their careers, farming and small businesses (Cowen and McWilliams, 1996). The civil servants became even more aggressive after 1971 when the Ndegwa Commission report sanctioned the engagement in business by public servants. Such people more often than not used the state apparatus to promote their class interests. However, this class consisted of a small fraction of the African population. Explaining this scenario Bayart et al (1999), argues that, the African elite is:

...aided by the existence of moral and political codes of behaviour, especially those of ethnicity, kinship and even religion, and of cultural representations, notably of the invisible, of trickery as a social value, of certain prestigious styles of life even of an aesthetic, whose capacity to legitimise certain types of behaviour is considerable (Bayart et al 1999:15).

The practice of straddling simultaneously between positions of power and positions of accumulation among the political elite in postcolonial Africa is at the heart of factional struggles in many African states. This is because

economic accumulation is based on political power. This could explain why by 1971, the programmes of providing loans to African entrepreneurs, industrialists and farmers through the ICDC, DFCK, KIE, AFC and ADC in Kenya had deviated from their original focus and started to serve senior civil servants, politicians and their allies (Kinyanjui and Fowler, 2004:30).

Another serious problem facing the Kenyan economy in the 1960s had to do with the agricultural sector, which was the mainstay of the economy. A major process of transfer and subdivision of large farms took place in the 1960s such as the Million Acre Scheme of 1961-71 (Ikiara, et al 1993). The settlement programmes, however, affected only about a quarter of the country's best land, only three per cent of total agricultural land in Kenya and only about a twentieth of the country's total population (Holmquist et al, 1994). Thus, the benefits of the land tenure reforms were not spread to the Kenyan common man. Indeed, they favoured specific ethnic groups at the expense of others, and particularly a section of the Kenyan elite. Moreover, much of the land accumulated by this post-independence elite has remained under capitalised and under-utilised for many years. Thus, neo patrimonialism can be blamed for creating a large population of people without a source of livelihood. Indeed, ownership of large-scale property was handed over from the European settler community by 1978, almost entirely to the post-independence elite.

Although great excitement accompanied the independence celebrations, life for ordinary Africans in Nairobi and Kenya in general was not spectacularly better than during the colonial period (Werlin, 1974). One of the realities that Africans encountered was the persistent problem of unemployment. Africans continued to lead the poorest standards of living when compared to the other races in Nairobi, 73 per cent of the African population occupied the Eastlands region of the town, while majority of the European were in the prime areas in the North and West of the commercial sections two decades after

independence. By 1<sup>st</sup> June 1964, over 200,000 Africans had registered as unemployed and in Nairobi alone about 40,000 registered.

The high number of unemployed people in Nairobi in the 1960s could be explained by several factors. First, the result of the 1962 census indicated that the population was growing at the high rate of 3 per cent annually which was one of the highest fertility rates in the world (Werlin, 1974; ILO, 1972). The situation was compounded by the fact that half of this population was under 16 years of age. Second, the lifting of the emergency restrictions in 1960 enabled many people to flock into the city, many of whom were landless especially among the Kikuyu community. It was against this background that the informal sector flourished in Nairobi. Thousands of these people could not be accommodated in the formal sector of the economy. Many others had to seek for accommodation in the informal settlements, which existed in Nairobi since the establishment of colonial rule. The expansion of such settlements took place at a fast rate after 1960. Anderson (1969:9) for instance, observes that the population of Mathare Valley increased tremendously between 1959 and 1963 when political pressure prevented the Nairobi City Council from fulfilling its plan of demolishing and clearing squatters in Mathare. In addition to the natural increase in population, there was an influx of Africans, mainly Kikuyus from different parts of Central Kenya to Mathare in 1962 (Jackson Manegene, O.I. – 25-12-02).

Consequently, of all the problems facing the City Council of Nairobi in the 1960s, squatter's issue was the most intractable (Werlin, 1974). Many Africans became squatters on land belonging to either the government or private individuals. It is estimated that the number of illegal squatters had grown to 10,000 by 1965. Given that most of these squatters could not get employment in the formal sector of the economy, majority of them turned to self-employment through activities such as hawking in the streets, maize roasting and as touts. According to the Nairobi town clerk, such people were

also behind the rise in crime in the 1960s. The first post-colonial regime viewed the increasing urban migrant population as a nuisance and a health hazard to city residents. This explains why Kenyatta's government advocated rural settlement.

The Nairobi City Council (NCC) responded to the problem of illegal squatting and hawking by clearing the squatter settlements. The squatters responded by erecting new structures almost immediately. There is clear evidence that the NCC lacked a coherent policy to deal with squatting and unauthorized hawking. For instance in 1960, the number of licenses issued to hawkers was increased to over 4,000 but the number of hawkers doubled the following year. This incensed the established African traders, who threatened to stop paying license fees to the council. By 1962, even the police department was complaining that it was unable to enforce regulations, as the number of hawkers in the city was overwhelming (Kinuthia, 1997). Harassing squatters, beer brewers, and prostitutes underlined the hegemony of the dominant class, whose orderly ways were perceived by the urban authorities to be legitimate, while the lower class life was rubbed in by the humiliation of police raids (Cooper, 1983: 8).

The situation in Nairobi was further complicated by contradictory policies between the Nairobi City Council and the government. For instance, when the government refused to increase the number of hawker's licenses in 1963, the newly elected African mayor of Nairobi, Charles Rubia, threatened to resign. The issue of informal trade was, therefore, exploited by politicians in order to gain political mileage. By 1963, the situation was so bad that even the Mayor conceded that something needed to be done about the high number of hawkers in the city. Consequently, the council decided to embark on "Operation clean-up" aided by 140 KANU youth wingers (Werlin, 1974:172). The government in Nairobi adopted a contradictory approach to the informal sector. On one hand, the government claimed that it would assist the destitute especially the widows while at the same time police were directed against hawkers with a

view to confining them to designated Open Air Markets (O.A.M) which were established from 1963. However, hawkers were keener on acquiring either permanent stalls or operating in strategic areas instead of being confined to the open-air markets (Kinuthia, 1997).

The erratic policies of Nairobi City Council and the Kenyan government rarely agreed (Southall and Wood, 1996). For instance, in November 1970, 49 shanty settlements in Mathare valley containing about 7,000 dwelling units accommodating over 40,000 people were demolished and the building materials confiscated to prevent the owners from rebuilding their structures (Werlin, 1974: Op. Cit.). This action was condemned especially by the then Member of Parliament for Mathare Dr. Munyua Waiyaki. The Council on the other hand insisted that the shanties had to be cleared. In the meantime, by 1969, there were over 700 roadside kiosks, which served tea and cooked meals under temporary shelters in the eastern parts of Nairobi and in the industrial areas (Anderson, 1969). The fact that these kiosks emerged next to the industrial areas of Nairobi highlights the close connection between the formal and the informal sector and the great contradictions existing between the two sectors of the economy. The industrial area comprises legal industries licensed by the government, yet it cannot operate smoothly without some services from the informal sector as many lower and middle income earners depend on such kiosks for food. The informal operators on the other hand depend on such food kiosks for their livelihood.

Explaining the above scenario, Simone (1998) has argued that certain tensions and disjunction have characterised post-colonial relationships in the urban. On the one hand, there are the efforts of independent states to constitute modern cities in reference to prevailing forms of western management, architecture, and urban production. On the other are efforts of urban majorities, largely disenfranchised and marginalized, to constitute modern African cities and compensate for the massive inadequacies in the state's ability to provide *basic*

urban services (1998: 16). In Nairobi, the food hawkers and other *jua kali* operators provided many basic services that the city council could not provide.

**Table 6.1 Estimated Number of Informal Sector Workers of Nairobi (1970)**

Nursemaids and domestic servants (non-relatives, unregistered, underpaid)	8,000
Breweries and outlets	8,000
Distillers and outlets	500
Professional prostitutes	4,000
Landlords of illegal houses	5,000
Artisans and trainees, scrap-metal, etc, collectors	2,500
Builders and building materials	1,600
Unregistered shamba cultivation for a living	2,000
Handcarts, porters, assistants	2,000
Unlicensed shopkeepers and Assistants	2,500
Licensed hawkers	1,500
Unlicensed hawkers	2,000
Wood-carvers, suppliers, salesmen, trainees, etc	1,000
Young boys (parking, water-carts, maize roasting, scavenging, etc.)	1,000
Car washing, casual and itinerant contractors etc.	1,000
Beggars, on streets and at doors	300
Barbers-open air	300
Pirate buses, taxis, etc	200
Traditional doctors and staff (waganga)	300
Entertainers	200
Gaming operators	200
Total	44,100

Source (Hake, 1977:195)

In 1971, the International Labour Organization's Employment Mission conducted some research in Kenya. Their report was published in 1972 and was entitled "Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya". The mission was responsible for popularising the concept of the informal sector. The ILO report of 1972 was a contrast to the prevailing attitudes with regard to the large number of Africans not working in the formal or modern sector of the economy. The Report stated categorically that those outside the modern sector were also working and

therefore, productive. The report advised the government to abandon the demolition of shanties and harassment by police for those in the sector (King, 1996). The mission also recommended for simplification of the trade licensing system and for enhancement of greater security of tenure for those in the informal sector.

The report also noted that the sector was also thriving in the rural areas. Indeed those holding modern-sector jobs in Kenya were not found to constitute the bulk of the urban work force after independence. A large portion of the work force comprised a stratum whose common trait was a hard and precarious living. Included in this group were petty producers and artisans, such as tailors and shoemakers. Others included apprentices to artisans, barbers, hairdressers, street hawkers, kiosk holders and casual labourers (Maxon, 1995:119). The ILO (1972) report heralded the use of informal sector support as an important tool in social employment policies (Pederson, 2001). The development of the sector was seen to be in line with the generally capitalistic policies of Kenya and also with attempts to indigenise the economy (Ibid. 2001:2).

The ILO report (1972), addressed some of the problems experienced by the informal sector. For instance, it was observed that in Kenya and other African countries, one of the main problems confronting the *jua kali* sector was that the government procedures permitted the licensing of only a few, yet many people were unemployed. One of the factors that promoted the sector was that commodities like cigarettes were sold in packets in the big shops. However, few ordinary smokers could afford to buy such large quantities. Similarly, most people in Nairobi could not afford to buy a bag of charcoal. Therefore, majority preferred to purchase the commodity in smaller quantities from the hawkers (O.I., Maina Macharia, 11-6-02).

It can be argued that there is a correlation between the informal sector and poverty in Africa. The migration of many jobseekers to the urban centres like

Nairobi, has led to the growth of peripheral settlements just outside the borders of the wealthy urban estates. These settlements supply goods and services not only to the populations of the poorer Nairobi residents, but also to the wealthy neighbourhoods (ILO Report 1972:503). The endless wars between the City Council of Nairobi and the hawkers, as well as the occupants of the slums could have been avoided in the 1960s and 1970s had the government and the City Council taken the problem of poverty seriously. The patrimonial style of administration that existed during the colonial era was perpetrated by the new regime. The few political supporters and relatives of the ruling elite were rewarded with large tracts of land, but not the low class of Nairobi who deserved such land to eke out a means of livelihood (Elkins, 2005).

Writing about the situation of land in Nairobi, a civil rights group stated:

In Kenya, the poor have no security where they live. In Nairobi, at least 65 percent of over three million people live in slums, making most of them *de facto* squatters. The little rooms they have put up can be demolished any time, day or night, with everything they own either destroyed or stolen. The poor are considered "illegal" in their own country, that is, without rights, because they do not have a title deed. How can one expect peace and development in large African cities like Nairobi where hundreds of thousands of squatters live in daily fear, insecurity and uncertainty? (Land caucus, October 1999-quoted in the Canadian Journal of Development Studies, Volume XXII, 2001:1056)

From the foregoing, it is obvious that a number of factors contributed to the expansion of the informal sector by the 1970s. The deterioration of the economy was worsened by a world-wide inflation that adversely affected the income of most Kenyans and by mismanagement by the state. This could explain why government critics like the member of parliament for Kinagop, Josiah Mwangi Kariuki won the support of the small peasants, the landless and the unemployed (Stichter, 1982). In 1975 when he was murdered in suspicious circumstances, the informal operators joined the University of Nairobi students in street riots in the city. J.M. Kariuki was viewed as a

beacon of hope for the under classes of Nairobi and other disadvantaged groups in Kenya, including the landless in the rural areas and the peasants.

## **6.2 Developments in the Artisanal Sub-Sector , 1963-1978**

During the 1960s, the artisanal sub-sector of Nairobi continued to thrive despite the economic problems facing the country. Several artisanal activities were predominant in the city. The male artisans were involved in activities such as motor vehicle repair, carpentry, shoe and watch repair, tailoring, masonry, carpentry, woodcarving and metal fabrication. Women, on the other hand, concentrated on tailoring, and hair-dressing. McVicar (1968), states that a number of African artisans were operating in Pumwani in the 1960s. He describes the activities of four young male Kikuyu partners in a scrap metal and bottle collection business who shared one room. The bottles and scrap metal were then sold to the Asians merchants. According to McVicar, the young men existed on *ugali* and worked for ten or twelve hours a day to earn Kshs. 4 or 5 profit (Ibid: 150). This underscores the fact that such workers were also productively engaged in economic activities even though this would not be captured in the official statistics of the employed workforce. The ILO study on Nairobi (1972), estimated that there were over 32000 persons employed in the informal sector of Nairobi by 1969 (ILO, 1972:54) and the majority of these were believed to be adult African males.

The African communities who had been removed from Nairobi during the period of Emergency began trickling back to the city during the 1960s. By 1963, the Kikuyu, Embu and Ameru had re-asserted their pre-eminence in the artisanal trade. Among the other African businesses thriving in Nairobi included food kiosks, and hawking of dried staples, fruits and vegetables. The close linkages between the rural and the urban was reflected in the way trade was carried out between Nairobi and the rural areas. For example, the urban areas supplied the rural areas with supplies not only of manufactured goods, but also services like mechanical repairs, dressmaking, tailoring and metal work. On the other hand the urban centres provided a crucial market for the

agricultural produce from the up-country peasants (O.I., Jackson Manegene, 24-12-02).

In the informal settlements like Mathare, Kitui and Kibera, a number of informal enterprises emerged. For example, Kitui village, which was destroyed in 1972, had a population of 800 people. The women in the village formed a Maendeleo club through which they made traditional Akamba jewellery, handicrafts, and basketry. Through the sale of such items, the club made almost US dollars 300 per month (Hake, 1977). Another informal settlement was the Mathare Valley: According to informants, during the Second World War, the area presently covered by Mathare Valley was nothing more than stone quarries where building stones used to be acquired by the Nairobi municipal authorities and building contractors. The building-stones were dug by African quarry workers (O.I., Gethi Gaita, 24-12-03). The steep cliffs in part of the valley area prove this witness (Hake, 1977:10). Settling in the area began around the early 1950s. However, these early villages were centres of the underground nationalist movement and acquired reputation for violence. The colonial government discovered bodies buried in mass graves during the MAU MAU uprising. After the declaration of Emergency in 1952, the settlement was destroyed by the colonial government and majority of the inhabitants was detained. On the lifting of the Emergency in January 1960, African squatters began to come back. These included ex-detainees and former Mathare residents.

In 1962, a large group of Kikuyus moved into Mathare Valley from Pangani. This was followed by another group of 102 families that moved into Mathare Valley from Eastleigh section VII to pave way for Pumwani settlement scheme in 1968. In the following year, another large group moved into the Valley after some sections of Kaburini settlement near Kariokor were burned down by the City Council (Anderson, 1969). The informal sector proved to be very important for the urban jobless and in particular, the squatter villages

such as Mathare. These villages operated like the reception centres for unskilled villagers. They provided cheap housing for them as well as employment opportunities. They also gave entrepreneurial skills and at the same time facilitated social support and wage-earning jobs provision due to the proximity to the city centre, and also due to the ease of getting cheap accommodation as compared to other parts of Nairobi (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 26-7-03).

In Mathare Valley, the *jua kali* artisans played a crucial role in providing artisanal services to the people. In a survey carried out in the valley in 1969 by a team of social workers, it was discovered that all the beds and mattresses found in the slum were of single-width type manufactured by African *fundis* (Anderson, 1969). The most sophisticated beds consisted of a woodenhead and footboard often decoratively shaped. The wooden frame supported a web of interlaced rubber stripes cut from discarded car tyres. Such beds were not only found in Mathare but also all over the countryside (O.I., Gethi Gaita, 24-12-03). The mattresses were also locally made. They comprised sisal fibres with a Hessian covering. The furniture used was also manufactured by African *fundis*, some of whom, operated in the Mathare area. The artisans also made wooden folding chairs, benches, and stools (Anderson, 1969: 37). According to the study, 72 per cent of the households in Mathare valley were using one or more charcoal stoves popularly known as (*Jiko*) by 1969. These *jikos* were exclusively produced by 'African artisans from scrap metal and old drums (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 26-7-03). The *jikos* were, and are still used by a very high proportion of Nairobi's population even today. Since charcoal produces carbon monoxide before it gets red hot, it is lit outside the room and put inside the house when the charcoal is glowing. After cooking, the *jiko* is again taken outside to cool down.

In addition to the *jiko*, the researchers also found that the "*karai*" was being used extensively. This is a multi-purpose shallow iron-bowl, which is

sometimes used as a washbasin, cooking utensil and for washing clothes. The "karai" is made of scrap metal and was found in 54 per cent of the rooms that were covered in the 1969 survey. Possibly the reason for the extensive use of the "jiko" and the "karai" in most of the African locations of Nairobi is that, majority of the inhabitants could not afford to buy gas cookers and maintain them. Moreover, the *jiko* and *karai* were readily available. These were made by artisans, many of whom resided in these locations. The "karai" is also found to be practical as it could be used for heating water either on the *jiko* or on the rural fire places that use wood fuel (O.I., John Maina and Tom Otieno, 19-12-02).

For lighting purposes, all the rooms in Mathare valley had either a wick or candle lamp that used kerosene. The most popular and cheapest type consisted of a reconstructed oilcan, which in 1969 cost only 50 cents. The Kikuyu name for these lamps is "*Nyitira njare*" which means "hold it for me while I make the bed (Ibid. 38). Only a few households had the more elaborate and expensive type of imported storm lantern with a glass shield and adjustable wick.

The artisans used discarded tyres to make beds, and discarded oil cans to make wick lamps. The utilization by the informal sector of discarded materials from the formal sector had a number of implications. First, many Africans demonstrated their genius and creativity in exploiting discarded materials such as old tyres, and oil cans, metals and bottles. Informal traders moved from one point to another collecting such discarded materials after which they sold them to those artisans who required the raw materials for making items such as beds, "karai", "jiko", and sandals among others. Second, Nairobi's *jua kali* sector established several linkages with the various sub-sectors: the metal artisans established linkages with the artisans dealing with wood and other materials. These linkages are important in understanding the dynamics in the sector. Third, the use of scrap such as car body frames, spare parts, tyres and tubes in the manufacture of new products helped to overcome capital scarcity

in Kenya. From such scrap, materials, several items were manufactured by the artisans. These included shoes, beds, charcoal stoves, pots and pans, and tin candles (ILO, 1972:493). This in turn helped the government to save on foreign exchange.

One interesting feature of the linkage between the informal sector and slum villages in Nairobi was the element of self-employment. Although majority of the people were not in wage employment in the 1960s and 1970s, they were self-employed in various capacities such as brewers of illicit beer; prostitutes; and as landlords. Many women sold food like cabbage, fruits, and groundnuts. Anderson (1969), indicates that majority of the inhabitants of Mathare valley who were engaged in wage employment were unskilled workers, such as labourers, watchmen, and domestic servants. The second largest category of inhabitants comprised artisans such as masons, carpenters, and mechanics. In addition, the research showed that over two-thirds of those in wage labour were Akamba, Luo and Abaluhya. This underscores the importance of ethnicity, friendship and other social relations in the operations of the informal sector in Kenya (Kinuthia, 1997).

Among the Kikuyu residents of Mathare Valley, less than one-third of the population was in wage employment by 1969 (Anderson, *Ibid*: 40). This raises some questions concerning the way in which the Kikuyu earned their livelihood. One of the informants attributed this to the fact that the Kikuyu were the pioneers in some parts of Mathare Valley and many of them were landlords. Others are said to have invested in bars and butcheries in the valley. Therefore, to say that such people were unemployed would not be correct (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-01). Although some of the pioneer houses were made out of paper, by the end of the 1970s, most houses in Mathare had corrugated iron roofs though with mud walls and occupants paid rent. The majority of women inhabitants were self-employed almost entirely within Mathare Valley. Some of them were brewers and hawkers and for that reason they were under constant police surveillance. Hake (1977), described the

economy of Mathare Valley in the 1970s as essentially a beer economy (1977:15). A large number of men were also self-employed. They profitably engaged in the illegal brewing of liquor. Therefore, even though majority of the residents comprised the poor, some of the residents were successful small-scale business people.

The pioneer villages in Mathare were strategically positioned to serve the city as a place where men could slip over the brow of the hill for a drink, and ideally located to serve members of the uniformed services from the nearby camps such as the Mathare Police Depot, the General Service Unit and the Kenya Air Force (Anderson, 1969). Among the popular brews included: *busaa* – fermented beer made from maize or millet; *muratina* – made out of honey and the Nubian gin popularly called *chang'aa* which was distilled near the Mathare River. The proceeds from beer were often used to construct more rental rooms by the landlords (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 26-7-03).

The developments that took place in Mathare Valley in the 1960s were replicated in other squatter villages such as Kibera and Kawangare. The former started originally as a military reserve administered by the Kings African Rifles in 1912. In 1933, Meru and Kikuyu herdsmen employed by Sudanese at Kibera are reported to have settled in the location and some of them even intermarried with them. After the state of Emergency in 1952, there was an influx of Africans from the western region of Kenya to replace the Kikuyu who were sent to the reserves and detention camps. Kibera was popular at this time because the Sudanese were spared strict Emergency regulations unlike other African locations perhaps because they had provided good services to the colonial government (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-01). Towards the end of the Emergency, a new wave of migration of landless Kikuyu was experienced in all areas of Nairobi, including Kibera. Just like Mathare, Kibera is strategically located near the industrial area of Nairobi where many residents work as casual labourers. African landlords similarly invested in rental rooms and illegal brewing of liquor (O.I., Samuel Onyango,

2-6-02). Evidently, majority of the residents of the slum villages in Nairobi lacked artisanal or professional training up to the 1970's.

### **6.3 Vocational Training after Independence**

As already noted, up to the 1960s, there was lack of proper training for artisans. This trend changed drastically after independence as the school-based system became more and more formalized (King, 1977, *op. cit.*). Towards the end of the 1960s, community development workers began to organize low-level courses in artisanal and housecraft skills. The informal modes of training continued hand in hand with the new mode of training. At independence, local communities wanted more and more children to acquire intermediate education, which was offered between class IV, and class VIII. This new trend meant that it was now impossible to provide compulsory examinable vocational instruction in the higher primary level because of several reasons. First, the parents wanted their children to acquire a more academic kind of education aimed at securing white-collar jobs for their children (Matiba, 2000). This coincided with the aspirations of most African children in Kenya who saw academic education as the only sure way of avoiding manual labour in the agricultural sector. Second, the number of children enrolled for upper primary education after 1960 was overwhelming given the available learning facilities. It was therefore impossible to offer vocational instruction efficiently (King, 1977). Rather than attempt to provide vocational education for a few, the Kenya Education Commission recommended for the withdrawal of agriculture as the separate distinct subject in the curriculum. The practical exams for trade subjects were also abandoned. The results of these new changes were felt soon after independence.

Barely two years after independence, there was a primary school leaver crisis. These school leavers had no marketable skills given that they were neither offered training in trades nor agricultural skills in upper primary. It was this realization that led several stakeholders to introduce a number of measures

aimed at solving the crisis. One of the measures adopted by the government since 1963 was the mooting of the National Youth Service Programmes (NYS). The primary school graduates were recruited to the institution free of charge. The recruits would undergo a three-month physical fitness and general education programme, after which they would qualify to join the NYS career training that incorporated vocational instruction in carpentry, masonry, motor vehicle and electrical welding, plumbing and tailoring (ILO, 2001). The candidates would then sit for government grade three tests. Therefore the NYS programme was formal and it was quite successful in placing the graduates into the private sector and public sector employment (King, 1977). Several graduates left the institution with the hope of getting employment rather than being self-employed. Most public enterprises, and the private sector employers were enthusiastic to recruit the NYS graduates due to their reputation for discipline, skills and hardwork.

One group that took the school leavers' problem seriously was the National Christian Council of Kenya (ILO, 2001). The concept of Youth polytechnics was mooted in the 1960s by the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK), which perceived this idea as a solution to the problem of education, particularly the unemployment situation among the primary school graduates. Initially referred to as village polytechnics, the youth polytechnics were targeting the rural youth, whom they intended to equip with skills that could be utilized in the local economy (ILO, 2001, *Ibid*). Other churches also stepped in to support the NCCCK. As already noted, the pioneer Christian missionaries initiated some technical schools all over the country. Some of these institutions like the Catholic sponsored Kaheti Rural Training Centre were transformed into Youth Polytechnics (O.I., Kahama Mwari, 26-12-2002).

From 1970, the government began to take over the running of the Youth Polytechnics from the NCCCK. The government paid the teachers of these

institutions and encouraged the managers to ensure that they worked towards self-sufficiency through engaging in productive activities that could generate enough funds for institutions' needs (O.I., Joseph Nyaga, 17-6-02). Most of the institutions were not able to raise money to sustain themselves. In addition, most of the youth were more eager to acquire training that would enable them to get formal employment. Thus, by the 1980s, the enrolment of these institutions had dropped to less than 8000, countrywide (ILO, 2001).

Several Harambee Institutes of Science and Technology were also started in the country from the 1970s (O.I., George Mwicigi, 12-7-02). These were started mainly as self-help projects by communities and were therefore funded through *harambee*. The institutes were founded with the aim of training school leavers in crafts in the hope that they would meet the growing demand for skilled manpower in the rural areas (ILO, 2001). It was anticipated that these institutes were to produce self-employable people at a higher level of skills and technology than the youth polytechnics. The institutes of technology failed to achieve some of the objectives for which they were created. For example, many were unable to start their own enterprises contrary to the expectations. This could be blamed on the skills trainees were given, which demanded capital-intensive equipment. This implied that for them to succeed, they required a lot of capital, which was unavailable.

By the 1980s, youth polytechnics which were regarded as the first-line institutions for skill acquisition and development had been neglected (Kinyanjui, 2003). Among the problems they encountered included: lack of equipment, material, instructors and incompetent managers. When the Structural Adjustment Programmes were initiated by the donor institutions in the 1980s, the youth polytechnics were the first casualties. The withdrawal of grants which followed also led to the compulsory retirement of instructors (personal conversation, Mary Kinyanjui, 5-7-05). Arguably, the provision of formal vocational education in Kenya since the colonial times has not been

successful in producing innovators despite the great effort made by different stakeholders. At any rate, this education enhanced and improved the youth's chances in employment but not self-employment. It was obvious that more skills were required among the students, over and above the technical skills in masonry, carpentry, metal fabrication and tailoring offered in youth polytechnics. Such skills include customer relations and marketing, as these were inadequately taught in formal vocational centres.

Many African immigrants into Nairobi after independence ended up as *jua kali* artisans. As King (1996) observes, there has been a lot of transformation among the *jua kali* workers operating at Gikomba and Kamukunji areas of Nairobi between 1970s and the 1990s. He states that the more common source of knowledge or skills for the African artisans and *jua kali fundis* were the smaller Indian firms that made an assortment of products using basic tools prior to 1970. However, Indians were quite contented with skilled workers from South Asia and would have preferred not to train the African skilled workers at all, if it were not for problems encountered in recruiting foreigners after independence (King, 1996).

During the 1970s, there were very few African artisans in the Gikomba/Kamukunji area, and the few artisans operated with a few tools (King, 1996; O.I., Mike Macharia, 18-6-02). Very few of these artisans had cutting, shearing and punching machines in the 1970s. Therefore, in this period, Asians in Kenya still monopolized the artisanal sub-sector in Nairobi, although African artisans were beginning to go on their own. The older experienced African artisans who had learnt the skills from Indians, mission schools and vocational government schools were now passing on the skills to the younger African men who were dropping out of school in ever increasing numbers. Through *jua kali* associations a number of artisans were able to acquire plots in Gikomba such as Paul Kairu (King 1977). Kairu acquired his plot from the city council of Nairobi by virtue of being a member of Gikomba industrial society (Ibid:58). This was a trade association that antedated the *jua*

*kali* associations encouraged by President Moi in the 1980s. Kairu apparently, was not able to develop the plot and therefore had to rent it to other artisans.

One of the unique features common among the African artisans in the post-colonial period has been the way they have shared tools and other facilities whether at Gikomba, Kariobangi or Kawangware. There has been a feeling of fraternity that has enabled them to share such facilities. This could be attributed to several reasons. First, it is difficult for one member to be self-sufficient with all the tools. Even if one would have all the tools he would still require the assistance of other members, for instance, to lift up some heavy materials or even to push heavy trucks when the need arises (O.I., Mathenge Muteithia, 22-1-02). In addition, the fact that all the artisans in one area are regarded as "birds of a feather" has contributed to this feeling of brotherhood. Another factor that has enhanced such fraternity among the artisans could be due to the respect accorded the older artisans, who are regarded as teachers. Moreover most of the artisans operating on one site have other relations emanating from the family, clan membership, or membership to the same area of origin.

One of the features of the *jua kali* sector up to the 1970s was the lack of proper mode of training. Availability of job opportunities in the formal sector for the trained artisans in the 1970s contributed significantly to this scenario. Big companies and government departments were keen on taking up young men with at least a secondary level of education, trained in artisanal skills. In fact the ILO Report (1972), found that even some government corporations were concerned about the high turnover of their skilled manpower to private companies. The East African Railways Corporation workshop management, for instance, complained of the high turnover of skilled labour: one third of the skilled technicians moved to other companies within 5 years of completion of their apprenticeship (ILO, 1972: 397). Part of the reasons for this turnover were the low wages paid in railway workshops by comparison with the wage

paid by commercial firms. This motivated many artisans to move elsewhere. Some of the manpower joined smaller repair workshops, particularly garages; carpenters joined the construction industry to the extent that the corporation stopped training carpenters. Such technicians constituted an important source of skills for the *jua kali* industry as a whole. However, very few of the college-trained graduates in the 1960s and early 1970s set up on their own (Meikelson, 1986).

In the *jua kali* sector, the apprenticeship system has been the major means of self-employment since independence. Apprentices provide a cheap source of labour and also provide a mechanism for the acquisition of skills for future operators (Yankson, 1996:69). Although a few young women enrolled as apprentices, almost all the apprentices in the *jua kali* sector were young males in the 1970s. Majority of these were primary school leavers, as secondary school dropouts comprised a small number (O.I., Samuel Onyango, 10-3-02).

There existed two styles of operations among the *jua kali* garages in Nairobi up to the 1970s. The first one and perhaps the most common involved a large space commonly used by several motor vehicle repairers, each with a number of apprentices or helpers. Some were fabricators who also repaired the vehicle body frames including services such as spray-painting. Others were mechanics specializing in automotive system, panel beating and paint spraying. Yet, others were electricians. In addition to these, there existed others whose main work was to supply the gas required for fabrication. All these operators usually had their customers who came to them directly for various motor vehicle services. A relationship of utmost trust was, therefore, important among the operators to ensure their survival (O.I., Tom Otieno, 19-6-02). As Kate Meagher (2002) observes: The issue is not whether a sector is regulated or not, but of the form of regulation as all markets are regulated. So the issue is the balance between formal regulation based, ultimately, on the state, and informal regulation based on personal relations such as those of kinship, friendship or co-ethnicity. Personal relations and cultures that may sustain

them may, under certain conditions, prove more efficient in regulating economic activities than do formal structures.

The second style of operation involved a garage owned by a single or a few operators. Most such operators either leased a plot of land or bought it for the purpose. These were usually experienced artisans in their own right. Such sole operators also had helpers and apprentices who helped them run their workshops. The senior apprentices helped to organize the other apprentices and also acted for them in their absence (Yankson, 1996, *Ibid.*). Such senior apprentices were people who helped their masters to maintain discipline among the artisans, in addition to allocating tasks to each apprentice. The senior apprentices were also the custodians of all the monies and tools that belonged to their masters (O.I., Tom Otieno, *Ibid.*).

Another characteristic of the *jua kali* sector in the 1970s was the close relationship between the artisans and the providers of auxiliary activities such as the spare part dealers, shopkeepers, restaurants and even hawkers. Food hawkers benefited a lot by selling food and fruits to the *jua kali* operators. The spare part shops supplied the required items for replacement, while the restaurants served as the resting places for customers while waiting for their vehicles to be served. This was found to be true of all the Kaburini, Ngara, Parklands and Kawangware O.I., Samuel Onyango, 2-5-02).

Most of these motor vehicle garages were located at vantage points for both the operators and their customers. For instance, some were located near petrol stations, which were strategic for a good number of motorists. Others were located next to the main highways so as to attract customers easily. It should be noted that shoe repairers, bicycle repairers as well as carpenters established their enterprises near the working class estates at vantage points since independence. By so doing, they enabled their clients to save on both transport costs and time that would have been incurred to get the services elsewhere (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 17-6-02).

One factor that greatly boosted the growth of the *jua kali* sector in the 1970s was the growth in the number of unlicensed taxis (*matatus*) in the country. The *matatu* is a mini-bus used as small-scale means of public transport in Kenya (Khayesi, 2001). The growth of *matatus* or unlicensed taxis appears to have taken place in response to the rapidly rising demand for cheap public transport in the country after independence. During this period, the restrictions on the movement of African population especially in Nairobi were lifted by the government. This inevitably generated a demand for means of transport, which was only partly met by Kenya Bus Service Limited, which had a monopoly over passenger transport services in Nairobi (ILO, 1972:490). Due to the monopoly enjoyed by the above company, transport costs were found to be beyond the reach of many Africans. In 1973, the *matatus* were given the right to operate through a presidential decree, which waived the licensing requirement for passenger vehicles less than 3.3 tonnes tare weight (Ogonda, 1992).

The term *matatu* is derived from the Kikuyu term “*mang’otore matatu*”, which means “thirty cents”, the then standard charge (O.I., Mike Macharia; Khayesi, 2001:69). In the 1970s therefore, the *matatu* industry became an important sector of the Kenyan economy. The industry provided employment both directly and indirectly to both institutions and individuals besides being an important cheap and public transport service provider in the country. Indirectly, the sector benefited motor vehicle assemblers, insurance companies, garages and petrol stations (Khayesi, 2001, *Ibid*).

Many of the *jua kali* mechanics have been sustained by the *matatu* industry since the 1970s. In every *jua kali* site that dealt with motor vehicle repair, there existed, a group of mechanics specializing mainly in either Nissan *matatus* or larger omnibuses service and repair (Tom Otieno, O.I. 16-6-3). This was found to be the case at Roysambu, Kariobangi, Ziwani, Kaburini and

other places in Nairobi. The industry employed spray painters, motor vehicle electricians, cushion makers, tyre repairers as well as electronics technicians who installed music in the vehicles. Also employed were artists who drew the pictures decorating most of the *matatus* in Nairobi especially between the 1980s and 2004, when the Minister for Transport, John Michuki stepped in to curb some of the decorations, by insisting on uniform colours and a yellow line. Besides these technical workers, the industry employed many other people in different ways, directly and indirectly (O.I., Pauline Nyambura, 1-1-2004).

Khayesi (2001) observes that the industry employs drivers, conductors and numerous stage workers (*manabas*). In addition to these workers, there are scores of other people associated in one way or the other with the industry. These include the car washers and the watchmen who take charge of the vehicles after work. Family, village and friendship relationships play a central role in the recruitment of drivers and conductors (Khayesi, 2001:79). Thus, advantage of family and social networks is exploited in the recruitment of the drivers and conductors, especially. The industry became particularly popular after legalisation in 1970 due to the ease in meeting employment qualifications. Some were employed in the sector as stage workers, a level that required little experience or any other forms of qualifications. It was possible for one to work as a driver if one possessed the requisite driving license, but also as a conductor or a stage worker when the driving job was not available. Similarly, such jobs could be combined with other activities such as farming and business. Thus, *matatu* workers engaged in what Mustapha (1992) refers to as multiple modes of production (Mustapha, 1992; Khayesi, 2001).

By the 1980s, the *matatu* industry had become a significant sector of the economy. The owners of the *matatus* formed an association known as the Matatu Vehicle Owners Association (MVOA), to control the operators of the sector and to press for their demands to the government (Khayesi, 2001:76).

The political and economic importance of the industry was identified by the Moi government, who disbanded the organization initially on the accusation that it was involved in political activism against his government (Ibid). As we shall see later, the formation of *Matatu* associations was to revive after the 1990s, alongside the creation of other *jua kali* associations. It should be noted that the industry is a classic example of what Simone (1998) refers to as the manifestation of civic irresponsibility. Some of the *Matatu* operators had by the late 1980s usurped not only the powers of the urban authorities in Kenya, but also the powers of the state. They began claiming some urban spaces and even charged taxes for use of the space even though they didn't own it. These groups of touts are known to charge drivers for picking and depositing passengers at certain locations. In Nairobi, these cartels had become so powerful by the 1990s that many *matatu* owners felt intimidated (O.I., John Kamotho, 10-5-02).

#### 6.4 Summary

In this chapter it has been noted that at independence in 1963, the newly independent government of Kenya was faced by a number of challenges. On one hand, it sought to come up with economic policies that could spur the growth of the country's economy. These included the encouragement of foreign investors. On the other hand, the government tried to solve the acute problems of landlessness and unemployment. The policies adopted by the government created serious contradictions that have characterised the post independence era to-date.

The encouragement of foreign investment pre-supposed guaranteeing ownership of land and other investments to the European settlers, Asians and other groups. Consequently, this did not lead to the redistribution of the country's resources so as to benefit millions of poor Kenyans. This explains why the land redistribution scheme in Kenya did not eliminate the problem of

unemployment, landlessness and poverty in general. In the final analysis, therefore, the trend that started during the colonial period, which involved the domination of the economy by the few rich continued. The new African elite in particular took advantage of the state apparatus to acquire hundreds of acres of land at the expense of the genuine poor. The small group of the Kenyan elite shared similar interests with the multinational investors of accumulating huge profits from the Kenyan economy. The political class was keen to negotiate political support of the former colonial master in exchange for foreign aid. Thus, the dependence of the country that was introduced during the colonial era continued to be perpetuated. The elite were relentless in the pursuit of personal gains as they were confident of getting more foreign aid and this had disastrous consequences for the economy in the long run.

The informal sector therefore developed fast during the 1960s and the 1970s, as it was the only avenue for providing a means of livelihood to the large group of the poor. Kinship and family social relations came in handy not only in securing accommodation, but also in the acquisition of skills and trading premises in Nairobi. The situation was compounded by the newfound freedom to migrate to the urban centres, the high birth rate and the slightly better wage rates available in Nairobi as compared to the countryside. Thus, the *jua kali* activities in Nairobi during the Kenyatta era should be viewed against this background. During the Kenyatta era (1963-1978), majority of those who ended up in the artisanal sub-sector among the *jua kali* operators were those whose educational background was poor having dropped out before the completion of secondary school education either due to poverty or other factors. This explains why most of their training was acquired through apprenticeship rather than through formal training.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7.0 The Development of the Informal Sector During the Moi Era, 1978-1998

One feature of the Kenyan economy during the postcolonial era is the accumulation of wealth in a small part of the modern sector. This was the consequence of the concentration of political power in a small section of the population. As the dependency theorists have noted, most of the leaders in the less developed world have acted as the compradors of the industrialized powers. This in turn has given rise to the development of an impoverished and economically deprived public.

The first post colonial government in Kenya continued with the capitalist policies inherited from the colonial government which privileged a small section of the population, including foreign investors, making no attempt to allocate resources more equitably. A similar pattern was adopted by the Moi government which allocated national resources on the basis of political loyalty rather than need. Moreover, the advent of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s ushered in a global capitalist economy that adversely affected the least developed countries. These policies were characterised by unrestricted trade, investment flows and the international activity of multinational firms. One of the impacts of these policies in Kenya was the weakening of state power. Consequently, the Moi regime intensified political patronage as a way of enhancing more social control over the country.

This chapter is concerned with the period 1978-1998 when the informal sector became a major source of employment in Kenya, as well as the constraints encountered by the *jua kali* sector in the period. Understanding why the relative importance of informal employment increased in this period is crucial for the formulation of government policy. The role of the state and donor prescribed policies in the growth of *jua kali* sector in this period are examined

with a view to establishing their impact on the political, social and economic life of the African communities in Nairobi.

### **7.1 The Economic Situation in Kenya at the Onset of the Moi Era**

By way of comparison between Kenyatta's and Moi's regime, Martin Godfrey (1996) has outlined the policies enunciated by Moi's regime on taking over power after the death of Jomo Kenyatta in 1978. These included attempts at land reform, as well as the possibility of a land tax, the abolition of fees and dues for schooling, directives to accelerate Kenyanization of personnel while increasing wage employment. He also initiated a drive against corruption, smuggling, and drunkenness (*Ibid*:14). Unfortunately, a decade later, there was no evidence that there was momentum behind these reforms.

According to Cowen and McWilliams (1996), the populist appeal used by the Moi regime emanated from his intention to dislodge the political and economic power, which was concentrated in the state form of the Kenyatta regime so that he could also entrench himself. In the period after 1978, the economy of Kenya encountered several challenges, which hampered the new regime's ability to use patronage (Holmquist et al, 1974). The economy was beset with problems of both external and internal origin (Maxon and Ndege, 1995). One of these problems emanated from the world economic crisis of the 1970s, the increase in crude oil prices in 1979 and the world recession that ensued (*Ibid*: 151; Oyugi, 2004).

Throughout the first decade of Moi's rule, Kenya's major exports suffered considerable price fluctuations with serious consequences on economic growth. Closely following the price fluctuations was the drought that recurred between 1979 and 1994. These factors brought food shortages and necessitated large imports of grain including the yellow maize, from the USA, thus further weakening the struggling economy. By the 1980s the food situation had developed into a major crisis occasioning the formation of long

queues both in rural and urban areas for access to the little that was available in the shops (Oyugi, 2004:25). According to Maxon and Ndege (1995), Kenya's Gross National Product (GNP) fell from US \$420 in 1980 to US \$330 in 1987. The result of these economic problems was that the government issued a number of sessional papers aimed at coping with this grave economic situation. Most of these sessional papers had to do with structural adjustment policies. For instance, one of the first, the Sessional Paper No. 14 of 1980 on Economic Prospects and Policies, aimed at scaling down development programmes in the light of the impact of the oil price rises. Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981 on National Food Policy sought to establish policies that could attain self-sufficiency in food production (Ibid.).

The 1980s was also bad for the coffee sector, which up to the mid 1980s was the single most important foreign exchange earner for the country (Ikiara, 1991). This was attributed to several factors. First, coffee suffered from a drastic fall in prices and this made it uneconomical for farmers. For instance, the price of un-roasted coffee fell from Kshs. 41.60 per kilogram in 1986 to Kshs. 38.60 in 1990. Another factor that led to the decline in coffee profits for producers was the suspension of the International Coffee Agreement. The impact of this was inevitably to destabilize coffee prices in the international markets. The most serious factor that adversely affected the coffee sector both in the 1980s and 1990s was politics of the industry's administration (Kanyinga, 1993). Evidently, since the latter half of the 1980s the government sought to have more control over the coffee sector and this was reflected in struggles both within the major producer body, the Kenya Planters' Cooperative Union (KPCU) and the state (Ibid: 82).

Another agricultural sub-sector dogged by serious problems during the 1980s and 1990s, was the sugar industry. Between the 1970s and 1980s, the industry experienced fairly rapid growth in the cultivated area, to the extent that Kenya became self-sufficient in the commodity for the first time ever (Ikiara, et. al

1993). After the 1980s, however, a decline in both the cultivated area and production ensued. This in turn rendered many people redundant. The farmers accused the government of being the major bottleneck militating against the solutions to the sector's problems for allowing the sugar millers and the Sugar Board of Kenya to delay payments for farmers. The main problem was the donor-imposed policies called SAPS that, forced the government to liberalize the sugar sector, whose consequences included the flooding of the market with cheaper sugar.

Decline in the international commodity prices aside, neo-patrimonial interests of the Kenyan state also contributed directly to the problems experienced in the sector in several ways. For instance, there is evidence that various cesses, levies and taxes were deducted, from the producers of Kenyan commodities like coffee and sugar, making these sectors unprofitable for farmers. Yet, the directors in the agricultural sector continued to earn high salaries. Apparently, the loss of market share and the specialization in the export of raw materials in Africa was aggravated by a sharp decline in the prices of the main export commodities. This fall was not compensated by any corresponding decline in the price of Africa's imports (Bayart et al 1999). Obviously, this contributed a lot to the decline of the Kenyan economy. At any rate, wealthy nations continued to protect their farmers through agricultural subsidies which made their products such as sugar, wheat and maize far much cheaper than the produce of other farmers in the international market. This in fact robbed the African continent an estimated \$2 billion annually (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2005).

Domestic difficulties also adversely affected the economy. For instance, the government policies led to the escalation of government expenditure, which in turn created budgetary deficits. Among the domestic factors that led to this situation included the high growth rate of the population; rise in defence spending, as well as increase in the public – sector employment which

followed the 1979 arrangement that led to the recruitment of more staff in line with the tripartite agreement between the government, trade unions and the private sector, aimed at combating unemployment (O.I., George Mwicigi, 4-3-05). Holmquist et al (1994) summarizes the problems facing the agricultural sector during Moi's regime:

Moi inserted ethnic cohorts and allies into key positions in the state, parastatals and Non Governmental Organizations that service the modern urban and large holder sectors, and sometimes market the coffee, tea and other crops of the larger holder and competitive sectors. But because of state intervention, the performance of several agricultural institutions was impaired and larger holder, and probably competitive, sector growth was compromised with negative ramifications throughout the economy (Holmquist et al, 1994:92).

It was in this environment that the donor bodies introduced the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). By the end of the 1980s, SAP had become an article of faith with the multi-lateral donor agencies especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with regard to third World economies. The SAP advocated by these international donors normally had the following conditions that aimed at helping the third world economies to recover: The devaluation of local currencies aimed at promoting exports, reduction of tariffs so as to facilitate exports through the elimination of price controls, encouragement of domestic savings; and reduction of government expenditure on social services and employment as well as privatisation of parastatals (Ikiara et al 1993).

A number of factors could explain why the international community began to impose SAPs on Kenya and other African countries in the 1980s. Weakened by the economic and financial crisis, which affected it since 1970s, the continent was devalued in the estimation of the great powers (Bayart et al 1999:2). The reasons for this include the end of the East-West rivalry of the Cold war and the beginning of peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The two conflicts enabled the African elite to gain substantial

political rent and also enhanced its importance to the European Union. The combination of this loss of diplomatic importance with an economic and financial crisis resulted in a stark erosion of effective sovereignty in almost all the states of the region, which were now subjected to increasingly rigorous conditionalities by both multilateral and bilateral donors, dubbed the Structural Adjustment Programme (Ibid, 1999:2).

The introduction of the World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs, beginning in 1980, had a far-reaching impact on Kenya. There were three aspects of SAPS that contributed to increase in conflicts over land and poverty. The first one was the first tracking of election-focused political pluralism. This led to the exchange of public land and assets for votes. The second one involved the privatisation of state assets, which put in place a justification for the corrupt allocation of urban and rural spaces; and third, reduction of government funding of health and education which consequently increased the level of poverty in the country (Brownhill, 2001). The sale of forestland became a big source of patronage for KANU, the ruling party in the 1980s. Plots of public land even in the urban centres were grabbed by government and ruling party operatives and sold cheaply to party favourites. These were promptly resold with the profits split between the officials and the ruling party's campaign fund (Africa Confidential, 14 September, 2001:2).

Urban dwellers, in particular, suffered higher levels of unemployment and a serious fall in their standards of living as a result of SAPs (Chabal et al 1999:121). The Kenyan public responded to the rising level of poverty in the country in several ways. First, in the mid 1980s, transport workers held several strikes, which paralysed regional trade. Autonomous action by transport workers meant that the state could not control the economy (Brownhill, 2001). The government eventually slapped a ban on unionisation in the transport sector. Second, the small-scale coffee farmers neglected their coffee trees and planted food crops for local consumption. This was because

the prices on the world market had fallen, and to protest against state corruption in the allocation of coffee incomes that enriched state managers and impoverished rural producers. This in turn devastated the economic situation in the country further and pushed more and more people into the informal sector.

### **7.2 The Government Policies on the Informal Sector in the 1980s.**

Although the Kenya government had previously stated its support for the informal sector following the ILO Report of 1972, no concrete evidence of this support materialized until in the 1980s. In 1983, a presidential committee on unemployment, commonly known as Wanjigi committee, highlighted the role of the informal sector in Kenya's economy. It also suggested that the Kenya government should establish an inter-ministerial body charged with developing the sector (Musyoka and Orodho, 1993). The government soon demonstrated some commitment to the sector. In November 1985, for instance, President Moi stopped at Kamukunji *jua kali* site which is one of the most industrialized *jua kali* centres in Kenya and promised sheds to shelter the *jua kali* artisans from the hot sun (King, 1996:1). He paid these artisans several visits between 1985 and 1986 and apart from promising them sheds he also promised them title deeds so that their work would go on without any interference.

Earlier in 1985, the government had introduced a major restructuring of education and training, with much greater emphasis on vocational, scientific and technological development (King, 1996: 13). This was followed in August 1985 by the launching of a presidential working party on education and manpower training for the next decade and beyond which focused on the skill base of the expanding population. In 1986, the government published a paper on Economic Management for Renewed Growth. This was a clear indication that the government was taking initiative to promote the informal sector beyond rhetoric. The paper paid tribute to the virtues of the sector, including

its ability to conserve foreign exchange, create jobs, develop skills and promote local entrepreneurship (Bigsten, et al, 2000:8).

As already noted, a combination of domestic and external factors made it difficult for the economy to expand fast so as to cater for the rapidly rising population. It is estimated that it was costing the modern sector approximately \$16000 sterling to create one single job. This meant that only a few people could get employment in the sector. The alternative therefore was to be found in the informal sector where it was easy to create jobs. Research had proved this sector usually relied on cheap raw materials and tools and one could enter even without any capital outlay, or formal training (ILO, 1972).

The Kenya government went beyond giving promises from 1985. For example, it advised the informal sector to form cooperatives through which they could obtain assistance in the form of loans, and in marketing of their products. The government also came up with the 1989-1993 plan that was dedicated to the development of small-scale and *jua kali* enterprises. In the same vein, the term *jua kali* was finally accepted into the planning document of the country. In some urban centres including Nairobi and Mombasa, the government constructed some *Jua Kali* sheds in collaboration with some non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This was meant to provide the operators with a central, organized and protected area to conduct their operations. In Nairobi, the Kariokor *jua kali* sheds were established to cater for motor vehicle mechanics, while the city market catered for women hawkers (Orodho, 1993).

In 1992, Kenya produced her first Sessional Paper on the *jua kali* sector entitled, Small Enterprise and Jua Kali Development. The paper underlined the problems encountered by the *jua kali* in Kenya e.g. lack of any indigenous role models for entrepreneurship in the country. At the same time, the government made recommendations on the specific actions to be made in order to promote the informal sector. In the Sessional Paper, it was

emphasized that the government's role should be catalytic and facilitative rather than interventionist, as this would pose fewer management challenges (Maundu, 1997). In addition to the government acknowledgement of the need for support towards the informal sector, the private sector and the international donor community also contributed enormously. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), assisted many small and large enterprises. SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency), DANIDA and GTZ were also involved in the financing of this development. Others included Oxfam, K-REP and ODA now DFID, as well as Action Aid, (O.I., Simon Gicheru, 26-12-04). It should be noted that by 1992, economic growth in the country had virtually stalled (Holmquist et al, 1994).

### **7.3 The Impact of Economic Liberalization on the Informal Sector up to 1998**

One of the consequences of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPS) in Africa was that it changed the attitudes of many governments towards the micro and small enterprises (Pederson, 2001). Among the main requirements of the SAPs, was the import liberalization strategy. This implied that the less developed countries under the SAPs had to open up their doors to trade with other nations, particularly through the removal of tariff barriers. This in turn was expected to generate more competitive and productive industrial growth as inefficient government – subsidized parastatals would be phased out or privatised (Fatton, 1992). Such corporations were expected to cease to respond to irrational demands of political patronage and to behave according to the rational laws of the market. The parastatals in Africa, and Kenya in particular were characterized by inefficiency for many years which could be traced back to the political environment in the continent at independence when African leaders established corporations as a way of entrenching themselves economically for the protection of their political positions. The parastatals became a prime arena for generating and maintaining a network of

patron-client relationships as well as for acquiring private wealth through corrupt practices (Ibid: 124). Patronage politics in Africa prevented the effective establishment and operation of state-run enterprises (Tangri, 1999 Op.Cit).

The multi-party elections in Kenya in 1992 like in Zambia, ushered in an era of liberalization (Hansen, Ibid: 87). This liberalization saw the privatisation of government parastatals alongside other structural adjustment programmes that resorted in students in public universities paying fees, while patients in public hospitals were required to pay in order to access medical services. One of the results of poorly formulated trade liberalization strategies since the 1980s was the flooding of domestic markets with imported goods. This was mainly because no policies to enhance domestic industries to produce some of these goods competitively were introduced simultaneously (Mkandawire, 1999:35). Moreover, the political elite in Kenya was aware of the important role played in African economies by the importation of goods, and it used this to its advantage. As Bayart et al (1999) observe:

Numerous studies on the informal economy have demonstrated the key role played in this sector by imported goods or inputs... imported goods are of crucial political and social importance. The management of imports, together with that of exports and of relations with the international financial institutions, gives access to one of the few available sites of accumulation of wealth and power (1999:4).

The economic liberalization in the 1990s, which was ushered in through the Structural Adjustment Programmes also led to new players in the market. Traders from all parts of the world now got access to the Kenyan market. The goods brought ranged from a wide variety of second-hand motor vehicles, toys and electronic watches, being sold in the streets. All manner of imported goods began to be sold to ordinary consumers by street vendors, some of whom worked on commission for formal firms. The SAPs created a good environment for transnational capital to have an advantaged position in Africa. This is because the SAPs insisted on instituting a level playing field.

By so doing they effectively excluded policies that would favour local capital against trans-national firms (Mkandawire, 1999).

The opening up of the economy since the 1980s affected the clothing industry as direct commercial importation of second hand clothing was allowed in most of the sub-Saharan African countries. The sad result of this importation was the closure of companies that used to deal with textile products. Many such firms in Kenya included the Kisumu Cotton Mills (Kicomi), Nanyuki Textiles and the Kenya Textile Mills (KTM). The firms encountered a myriad of problems, thanks to liberalization of the economy. First, they faced serious difficulties of importing raw materials and technology particularly from the western countries due to the low purchasing power of African countries. Second, locally produced textiles and garments were not only found to be expensive, but also of poor quality not only in the export market but also in the domestic market (Hansen, 2000:88-89). The leather industry was not spared either. Leather manufacturers such as Bulleys in Thika, the Bata Shoe Company in Limuru and Tiger Shoes in Nairobi also experienced a down turn due to the severe competition posed by the influx of foreign shoes, and competition of the informal shoemakers. These firms also retrenched their workers in an effort to survive. Those retrenched ended up in the informal sector in an attempt to sustain their livelihood.

While the textile companies were experiencing such herculean problems, inflation was at the same time eroding the purchasing power of the vast majority of the population. Indeed, the formal sector of the economy was shrinking partly due to the IMF and World Bank measures, which forced governments to reduce the size of public servants. In Kenya, it is not therefore surprising that many people flocked to the local markets once second-hand clothing began appearing in the markets in larger volumes from the mid 1980s. In Uganda many people similarly flocked to the Owino market that covers 25 acres, making it one of the largest bazaars of its kind in Africa (Sunday Nation, June 13, 2004).

Coincidentally, as Hansen (2000:100) argues, worldwide exports of used clothing from North America and Western Europe increased dramatically in the last two decades of the last millennium. The largest single source of such clothes were the garments' consumers in west who gave their used clothes to charitable organizations such as the Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, St. Vincent de Paul – all in the USA. In the United Kingdom and Europe in general such used clothes were donated to charitable organizations such as Oxfam, Terre Abbe Pierre, and Humana. Majority of people in Europe consumed a large volume of textile products. A case in point being the French people, who by the early 1990s were estimated to consume an average of 15 kg of textile per year (Hansen *Ibid*: 100). Such used clothes comprised not only garments but also, shoes, handbags, hats, belts, draperies and linens. The sale of used clothes to charities relieved consumers of unwanted clothing while at the same time enabling the charities to acquire funds for their activities. Although received as charity, the value of American second hand clothing exported to Africa was US dollars 59.3 million in 2002, according to the International Trade commission (Sunday Nation, June 13, 2004).

Until mid 1991, the used clothes business in Kenya was vulnerable to sudden losses from surprise police crackdowns. However, President Moi legalized the trade in 1991, which greatly boosted the used clothes trade. This trade was further given a boost by the competitive prices and wide availability of quality clothes at a time when the standards of quality of the clothes produced from the local textile firms were declining. For instance, in 1991, men's second-hand trousers sold for Kshs. 40, while women dresses went for between to Kshs. 40 to 50. This was at a time when prices of new clothes ranged between Kshs. 120-150 (McCormick 1996: 56). One of the results of the economic hardships experienced in the country during the Moi era was the popularity of the used clothes industry which had been previously taken for granted in the country. The sale of used clothes became a well-regulated industry, even earning recognition from the government authorities as they generated some

taxes or revenue for the government. Large-scale traders took advantage of this trade and began to ship some consignment in containers through the port of Mombasa. These were then sold to wholesalers. In Nairobi, most warehouses were established near the major markets where the retail trade of second-hand clothing was concentrated such as at Gikomba Market in Nairobi and in Uganda at Owino Market in Kampala (O.I., Maina Mwai, 1-1-03).

Most of the customers of used clothes were small-scale traders who could only afford one bale or two for their customers. The trade became elaborate in the sense that the customers had several choices. On one hand, one could pick the first class bales for which one had to pay more. In other words, there are various categories of bales (O.I., Maina Mwai, *Ibid*). Some traders moved from house to house selling a carefully selected brand of *mitumba*. Since the early 1990s, bales with specific items of underwear such as belts, bras, socks, lingerie, and even nightgowns and tracksuits have been available. So popular was this trade that in the seventh parliament in Kenya, the members of parliament were quoted as stating categorically that it was a big embarrassment for Kenyan women to wear used bras and underwear. But even then, the high level of poverty was acknowledged and was squarely blamed on this state of affairs (O.I., Mike Macharia, 16-6-02). According to statistics, poverty rose in Kenya during the 1990s. Three national surveys conducted by the Ministry of Planning in the 1990s on welfare levels, poverty and household characteristics showed that poverty increased sharply during the early 1990s, declined during the mid 1990s, and rose steadily since 1997 (Government of Kenya, 2004).

The importance of the used clothes and shoes business in Kenya since the 1980s cannot be overemphasized. First, the used clothes trade has provided job opportunities for thousands of Kenyans who previously had no source of employment. Second, the used clothes business provided a means of livelihood to retrenched from the public and the private sector. Over 60,000 public servants were retrenched by the government of Kenya between the year

2000 and 2001. Many more workers were retrenched by the private sector during the same period. Many of the retrenchees from the public and private sector created employment through the sale of such clothes (Peter Mbugua, O.I., 17-6-02).

The used clothes and shoes industry also opened up employment opportunities for many other people. Some of the operators of this trade were assistants hired either by business people who operated elsewhere, or by formal sector employees to sell used clothes for them. Other operators were the wives or other relatives of the owners of the businesses. Notably, by the 1980s, the small wage level in the formal sector impelled many formal sector workers to take up supplementary tasks that could earn them extra income. In Kenya, many secretaries in institutions carried out private jobs on the side; teachers conducted tuition in their free time; office messengers sold *mandazi* and used clothes hand in hand with their regular jobs. Thus, Mustapha (1992)'s concept of multiple modes of livelihood became a characteristic of the Kenyan society.

Prior to the late 1980s when the trade began to become popular, very few men in Nairobi bothered to operate in used clothes' trade. Therefore, while the wholesalers were often men, it is the women mainly who conducted the trade. By mid 1990s, there were many men who were rapidly engaging in the business. By the year 2000, there were more young men engaging in serious used clothes and shoes business than the young women especially in the Nairobi markets. This could be explained in terms of the serious problem of unemployment in the country by the year 2000. This situation compares very well with other African countries e.g. Zambia and Zimbabwe, among others (Hansen, Ibid, Gumbo et al, 1993). According to Hansen (2000), Some female traders in Zambia received start-up capital from their husbands while others saved from their household allowances. Loans were also occasionally arranged between kin. In Nairobi, kinship relations were also very important not only in getting the start-up capital, but also in getting access to market spaces either for used clothes' business or for any other business (Kinuthia,

1997). Social networks are therefore significant in the informal enterprise in general. Far from acting as obstacles to economic development, social networks are increasingly regarded as a source of social capital, capable of enhancing economic efficiency and growth independently of the state (Meagher, 2002).

As already noted, the used clothes trade stimulated a variety of auxiliary activities. Among these activities included the food vendors who provided the food requirements to the traders. Numerous young vendors circulated between stands selling water, cold drinks, fruits, ready-made foods, drinks, fruits, and snacks. Tailors played an important role in the used clothes' business. Quite often, they produced new items from discarded clothing. They repaired the torn clothes and made adjustments to make them fit requirements of the new owners. Contrary to the fears that had gripped most of the tailors after introduction of the *mitumba* industry, tailors continued to get customers mainly among the used clothes dealers. Some of the customers needed the adjustment of some of the large sized clothes (Hansen, 2000:177).

Women traders engaged in other activities as they waited for the business to improve. Some of them knitted or crocheted using the yarn they secured from torn or unpopular *mitumba* sweaters. Out of this yarn, they made baby blankets, jerseys, and socks. Others prepared their food such as cutting kales in readiness for supper. Some of the young men used either wheelbarrows or handcarts to transport bales of *mitumba* from the go downs to the market places and vice versa, for a fee. Some of these cart pushers and bicycle (*boda boda*) riders had contractual arrangements with the traders and were paid either on weekly or monthly basis for their services in markets such as Gikomba, the principal market of used clothes in Nairobi (O.I., Theru Macharia op. cit.).

The handcart (*mkokoteni*) has played an important role in Kenya's informal sector since the colonial times. A typical one has a flat bed body, built either

of a wooden or a metal frame or a mixture of the two materials, and fixed on top of the rear wheel axle of a worn-out automobile (Seierup, 2001). It has been used to transport a very large variety of items. The term *mkokoteni* is derived from the Kiswahili verb '*kokota*' which means to drag, pull along or draw (Ibid: 99). Its popularity in urban transport has been due to a combination of several factors. First, *mkokoteni* transport is relatively cheap as compared to lorry transport, and it enjoys great accessibility to the narrow alleys and paths in Kenya's urban centres. As a result *Mkokoteni* operators have become important means of intra urban transport. They have plied between the local markets and bus stations, as well as between the hardware shops, beer and soda depots, carpentry workshops and water points especially in the informal settlements of Nairobi for many years.

The owners of *Mkokoteni* would secure them at night and release them for rent in the morning up to the 1990s. In addition to these small transport service providers, there existed more capitalized transporters who used trucks and pick up vans to transport the bales from the go-downs, for instance from the industrial area of Nairobi, to the market places such as Gikomba market, Kangemi, Kawangware, Ngara (Nyayo Market) and other places since the 1980s. Another group of auxiliary activities included the hawking of hangers for displaying the clothes, plastic sheeting and wooden boards for the stands.

The used clothes' traders used several methods to attract customers to their stands. Some of them used radio cassettes to blare either gospel music or fashionable secular music in order to attract more customers. Others advertised their clothes by emphasizing their competitive prices and their good quality. Quite often, they used their sense of humour by making jokes to attract their prospective customers. In fact, their strategies of attracting customers were a great contrast to those of the metal artisans, carpenters as well as the motor vehicle repairers in Nairobi, who did not advertise their services in the same way.

With the liberalization of the Kenyan economy in the 1980s, second hand motor vehicles were also allowed into the country with little difficulty. The sale of used vehicles has since then constituted one of the country's most vibrant businesses (The Daily Nation, 27-9-03). The business involves numerous informal players and has been conducted in open yards. The *jua kali* motor vehicle repairers' have demonstrated their creativity by taking advantage of these vehicles. For instance, aware that most of the imported vehicles are considerably low and therefore ill suited for the Kenyan rough roads, a number of the artisans began making motor vehicle spacers (O.I., Samuel Onyango, 16-6-02).

The process of making *jua kali* spacers involves mixing sand with molasses waste and then moulding it into the required shape with molten aluminium (Kinyanju O.I., 8-2-05). The advantage of the *jua kali* spacers is that they are much cheaper than the industrially manufactured ones. The cost of such spacers range from a quarter to half the price of the imported ones. The innovation of such items is an indicator of the important contribution of the *jua kali* towards industrialisation in Kenya. The increase in second-hand motor vehicles has therefore been a major boost for the *jua kali* mechanics.

The arrival of ever- increasing and more modern vehicle models has forced the operators to update their knowledge consistently. This is because new ways of panel beating and spray-painting are required for the new designs some of which are of metallic colours, not available previously (O.I., Tom Otieno, 16-6-02). Other services include electrical wiring, tyre repair and mechanical repair. The new motor vehicles are different and the artisans have had to keep up with the new technologies. The formal sector, particularly the modern garages in the industrial area in Nairobi have played an important role in the training of *jua kali* mechanics in the new technology, indirectly. For instance, arrangements are made for those in formal employment to work in

the *jua kali* workshops on part-time basis during weekends and after-work on weekdays. In this way, the *jua kali* mechanics learn informally from those in formal employment in Toyota Kenya, Marshalls and other firms. *Jua kali* mechanics even arrange for some of their complicated jobs to be done in the formal garages which have more modern equipment, while simpler jobs are done at the *jua kali* sites (Samuel Onyango, O.I., 22-8-03). With time, the *jua kali* entrepreneurs have been able to improvise and modify some of the equipment needed in order to handle work in their garages.

The links between the *jua kali* and the formal sector of the economy were strongly established, especially in the motor vehicle industry by 1998. Indeed, the main workshops in Kirinyaga road and in the Industrial Area, which are Indian- dominated have maintained a lot of informal networks with the *jua kali* motor vehicle repairers. The Indian traders know many of the *jua kali* mechanics by name (O.I., Samuel Onyango, Ibid). Similarly, in the furniture making industry there has been a lot of linkages between the *jua kali* and the formal sector. Some of the high quality furniture sold in the formal sector has often been supplied by the *jua kali* thereby providing important interlinkages between the two sectors (Bigsten, et al, 2000; O.I., Joseph Kanyugo, 18-6-05). Many of the high class furniture such as beds, dining sets, sofa sets as well as caskets in the high class shops in Nairobi is manufactured by the *jua kali* artisans up to the present.

Moreover, there has existed several linkages between the more capitalised traders who travel to Asian countries such as Japan, Hong Kong and Dubai, and the hawkers since the 1990s. These merchants often brought commodities such as hats, t-shirts watches and toys in bulk (O.I., Simon Hugo, 22-8-2004). Some of these goods were loaned to the hawkers to sell in front of their shops. Unfortunately, most *jua kali* enterprises failed to survive long enough and build the necessary reputation with customers and supporting networks due to their unstable economic situation which would force them to keep on trying

new opportunities (Bigsten, et al, 2000:7). This trend has led to the coinage of the Kikuyu popular saying in reference to the *jua kali* operators that '*fundi mweka no kinyothi*' (the only reliable fundi is a barber) (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 16-5-03). This is because the great mobility of artisans inevitably inconveniences their clientele.

The creativity of those in *jua kali* industry is illustrated by the fact that *jua kali* machines have been improvised over the years to improve efficiency of the *jua kali* artisans many of whom have only primary education. Such machines include the mechanical press, vice, and the moulding press machine (King, 1996; Kinyanjui, 2005). Others have utilised fibreglass and other plastics to manufacture not only motor vehicle parts but also other items as well. Among the impressive products include motor vehicle bumpers made of fibre- glass, plastic bicycle pedals, filter covers, wheel- barrow handles and motor vehicle bushes (O.I., Joseph Njau, 22-6-03). Some of the artisans had by the 1990s begun specializing in the manufacture of specific products for the market such as the motor vehicle exhaustive systems and silencers, motor vehicle bushes, weighing scales and motor vehicle bumpers. A good percentage of such innovators were people who at one time or another, worked in the major workshops in Nairobi under the tutelage of qualified engineers.

One of the interesting characteristics in the sector in the 1990s was the ethnic based specialization. For instance, the motor vehicle body repair was dominated by the Akamba and the Luo artisans. The Kikuyu operators either provided services to these operators such as providing welding gas and electricity. The rest of the Kikuyu operators preferred the mechanical repair work and the electrical system repairs. Car-upholstery was also dominated by members of the Luo, Abaluya and Akamba communities (O.I., Samuel Onyango, 12-5-02).

The explanation given for specialization along ethnic lines is that the Kikuyu artisans usually shunned the more laborious work, preferring the activities that would give them quick money such as welding which is capital intensive, while the Luo preferred to secure jobs that demanded a lot of labourtime (O.I., Samuel Onyango, *Ibid*). Although this situation obtained in Nairobi, it would be important to find out whether the same trend exists in other parts of the country. Skills among the apprentices are acquired mainly through the observation of the master especially in metal fabrication, panel beating or motor vehicle repair, and bicycle repair sectors. Often, apprenticeship starts with assisting others and in due course, the apprentices learn about tools and work processes. Although the duration of apprenticeship varies from one master to another, some forms of training take longer on average. For example, whereas panel beating took about one to one and a half years, the motor vehicle repair took between two and three years. On the other hand, metal fabrication could take anything between 9 months to one and half years.

Some of the artisanal skills such as tailoring and carpentry involved the apprenticeship of people with some formal education usually of up to KCPE level. Nevertheless, there were no proper rules governing who was eligible for apprenticeship, and how long one could take up to the 1990s. Another skill that was acquired through apprenticeship since the 1960s was leather working and machine knitting. Although there has existed no formal examination for testing the skills acquisition, there are some informal ways of deciding whether training has been successfully concluded. Apprentices are considered to be competent as soon as they could manufacture some products and after gaining some experience (Daily Nation, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004).

Apprentices are treated like errand boys in the *jua kali* motor vehicle garages. Most of those apprenticed are often related with the master either through causal relationships such as friendship or through kinship (O.I., Tom Otieno, 19-6-02). However, some of the apprentices pay some negotiated amount of money to the owner of the businesses in order to be allowed to learn. One of

the most important qualities in apprenticeship has been the ability to establish social relations with other workers in an enterprise (Madhu 1996:185). This is because relations with other workers play a decisive part in the learning of skills. The researcher witnessed several incidents where the masters in an enterprise scolded the apprentices to the extent that some of the trainees dropped out of the trade. This was particularly common where artisans were apprenticed by relatives.

The phenomenon whereby an enterprise is run jointly by several members of one family has been common in the Nairobi *jua kali* sector. Tom Otieno, for example, has operated his tin smithing enterprise at Kamukunji with two of his brothers since 1970. While he makes metal boxes, one of his brothers paints them and another brother sells the ready boxes to customers (O.I., Tom Otieno, 19-6-02).

The working conditions for the majority of the informal workers were reported not to be conducive up to 1998. There was inadequate shelter for the metal workers and furniture makers. In addition, there was no piped water and clean toilets in the majority of these enterprises. The artisans however would not allow these difficulties to dampen their spirits. Quite often they were found singing and cracking jokes in the midst of clattering and hammering activity. Some of the artisans could even be described as "mobile artisans" as they travelled on foot from one estate to another in search of clients e.g. John Maina, (O.I., 19-6-02).

Like other players in the *jua kali* economy, the motor vehicle- repairers encountered a number of challenges. In December 2004, for instance, hundreds of artisans at Kariobangi were arrested by the police in a major operation. A number of stolen motor vehicles and other accessories were discovered during the police crackdown. Such factors create fear and a sense of insecurity among the potential customers. However, this problem is not

unique to the motor vehicle artisans as even the used clothes traders suffered from police intervention and harassment (O.I., Mwai Maina, 1-1-03). Some of this police and city council crackdown was done in order to arrest suspected thugs.

Another pertinent problem was the ever-present danger of eviction from their sites. Most of the *jua kali* sites in Nairobi and other parts of the country legally belong either to the councils or to individuals, especially wealthy investors. During the Moi era, 1978 to 2002, many unscrupulous politicians used their influence to grab public plots from the council some of which were occupied by the *jua kali* entrepreneurs (Kinuthia, 1997). Most of the *jua kali* operators were therefore evicted and often their used clothes, stalls and even motor vehicle workshops were set on fire.

One of the most brutal evictions of the informal settlements was that of the Muoroto slum village in 1990 that lay near the Machakos Country Bus Station. The 3,000 residents and traders in the urban slum village were traders and suppliers of cooked food to the Nairobi work force. Majority of the residents were women food sellers on the Nairobi streets. Such food retailers earned a decent living and linked rural subsistence farmers to the urban food markets (Brownhill, 2001). On 25 May 1990, officers of the Nairobi City Council:

...in an effort to clean up the city, attempted to demolish Muoroto. Police were called in but residents fought them off with stones. There ensued a three day, pitched battle between the police and the residents of Muoroto...The occupants of Muoroto, some of whom were elderly Mau Mau women, were finally evicted in an unannounced raid in October 1990. Several people were killed when the demolition crews flattened homes while their owners slept inside. In the fight that broke out, at least one city council guard was killed (Brownhill, 2001: 1057).

Soon after the demolitions, a senior KANU politician is believed to have grabbed the Muoroto land. After the clearance of the land by the city council bulldozers, the plot was sold to the Cooperative Society of the City Council of Nairobi by the politician (Macharia, 1996). Similarly, between 1990 and 1995, Gikomba traders who specialised in used clothes, carpentry and timber suffered from no less than ten fire outbreaks (O.I., Tom Anjere, 4-7-2005). Most of these were suspected to have been deliberately started in order to evict the traders (O.I., Khadija Ibrahim, 19-12-04). At Roysambu near Kasarani, the *jua kali* artisans were dispossessed of their site by land grabbers for two years between 1999 and 2001 (O.I., Samuel Onyango, 22-8-03). Such evictions often led to heavy losses in terms of destruction of the tools, stalls and even the setting of fire of the clients' vehicles under repair.

Similar evictions were also conducted in Westlands. In 1992 a Nairobi businessman claimed ownership of Westlands Market in Nairobi (Brownhill, 2001). The market comprised of small kiosks operated by a large group of small-scale traders many of whom lived in the Nairobi slum villages like Kawangware, Kangemi and Kibarage. Many of the kiosks and stalls in Westlands had a wide variety of businesses ranging from shoe repair, electronics, used clothes, rice selling as well as cut flower selling. **business people in the shopping centre especially shop owners** usually complained against the activities of the informal sector operators. Although the small traders defended their rights to occupy the market in court, they eventually lost the case and in April 1998 the market was flattened by the City Council.

The evictions of the *jua kali* traders contributed enormously to the rising of political tension in the country in the 1990s. This was characterised by stone-throwing and looting of property by the youths. It is important to note that after the Muoroto problems in May 1990, the residents of the slum villages in Nairobi formed an organisation called Muungano wa Wanavijiji (O.I. Khadija

Ibrahim, 19-12-04). Others joined a Kikuyu based religio-political movement founded by Ngonywa wa Gakonya in 1987, known as *Hema ya Ngai wi Muoyo* (the tent of the living God) (Kagwanja, 2003:33). Many of the youths belonging to the organisation participated in the Saba Saba riots (July 7<sup>th</sup> 1990 riots in Nairobi). These riots marked the climax of the social and economic disruption that characterised the pro-reform movement in Kenya against President Daniel Arap Moi. This could explain why the detention order that was served on the veteran politician, Kenneth Matiba on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1990, and on whose strength his confinement the same day was based, listed the incitement of the *jua kali* among other reasons for his detention (Matiba, 2000). He was accused of organizing and recruiting touts, *matatu* operators and musicians to incite and promote discontent, disaffection, ill will and hostility among the people of Kenya.

#### **7.4 The Development of Jua Kali Associations, 1980-1998**

Although African traders organized themselves well long before the post-colonial period in Kenya in terms of forming associations, a recurrence of this was experienced in the 1980s. This can be explained in terms of the government's backing among other factors. As we have seen, President Moi personally encouraged the artisans in 1985 to organize themselves into groups. Most of the artisans had great hope that there was a connection between group organization and acquiring free access to sheds, loans, title-deeds etc (King, 1996). Therefore, many of them were quick to take advantage of group organization.

This change in government attitude towards the *jua kali* sector can be explained partly as the result of external donor pressure and willingness to support the sector (Pederson, 2001). Most donors sought to support the *jua kali* directly rather than channel the aid through the government, which was already tainted with corruption allegations. Since the mid 1980s, donors seem

to have decided to channel a good percentage of development assistance to the country through non-state actors (Oyugi, 2004:25). Second, the rapid increase in the educational qualifications among *jua kali* operators by the 1980s also contributed to this new attitude. The traditional expectations of young people and their parents that formal education and training must lead to employment in formal sector were increasingly found to be unrealistic during the last two decades (King, 1996; Pederson, 2001). Finally, the massive retrenchments both in the public and private sector of the economy pushed many formal employees into the informal sector. These attracted political support to the sector (Pederson, 2001; Mkandawire, 1999).

Haan (1999), concurs that the majority of informal sector associations in Kenya and Ghana were formed in response to perceived opportunities for external assistance. In Kenya, 92% of the associations studied were found to be mainly active in welfare and social activities more than in commerce and production (Haan, 1999:161 and O.I., Samuel Onyango, 5-7-03). Commenting on the logic behind the establishment of *jua kali* associations in Kenya, Kinyanjui (2005), states that:

Although small businesses are beautiful, they do not have the powers for negotiating transactions or commanding markets like large corporations. They find power and strength in partnerships, networks and associations (Kinyanjui, 2005:23).

Some of the earliest *jua kali* groups to register with the Ministry of culture and social services in the 1980s included: Kamukunji Blacksmith and General metal works and Jua Kali Nyayo Garages Association – which later became Ziwani. Although in Nairobi such associations were registered on trade basis, in most of other parts of the country, such associations were formed generally at the constituency or district level without any distinction between the activities performed by members. From 1988 when the Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology was formed, it took over the responsibility of *jua kali* development. Indeed, the ministry issued identity cards for those who had registered with different *jua kali* groups.

Although *jua kali* Associations in Kenya were initially organized in informal or loose ways, they performed important functions which included helping each other financially in case of financial problems such as school fees problems, to pay for medical attention in case of sickness, confiscation of goods by authorities and at times laying marketing strategies for their goods. Between 1990-1992, these associations took a formal role, not only in the organizing of small-scale businessmen and women, but also in linking the artisans with the government and donors (Kinuthia, 1997:687). This explains why the national associations were deemed to be important not only by some of the *jua kali* members but also by the Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology.

The *jua kali* associations' performance varied from one association to another. Some made a lot of progress, while others existed only by name (O.I., Munga'ara Mwaura, 30-4-2004). Since 1980s, the Kamukunji Jua Kali Association has been regarded as the most progressive. The cluster is home to a group of 12 firms engaged in manufacturing wheelbarrows, metal boxes, *jikos*, *sufuria* and many other items including boilers for use in large kitchens such as in schools and hospitals. The group began manufacturing wheelbarrows from 1984 (McCormick, 1999: 140). Even though these wheelbarrows were mainly sold to the individuals who visited the *jua kali* site, the firms have since the 1990s come together to market the products jointly to the supermarkets and hardware shops (Ibid).

The Ziwani Jua Kali Association demonstrated a desire for more organized approach in business in the 1990s. The association officials realized that the cluster was losing customers due to a bad reputation such as rampant theft of vehicle spare parts due to the close proximity to a neighbourhood that harboured thugs. The association therefore went out of its way to present a better image to the motoring public through instilling discipline among members and by taking measures to curb thefts and sale of stolen vehicle parts

(Ibid.). Such clusters were useful as it is through them that many *jua kali* artisans in Kenya managed to secure land for their activity from the City Council since the 1960s (O.I., Joseph Nyaga, 18-6-02). Most of these groups often got temporary occupation licences as the government assumed that such enterprises were temporary in both spatial and structural forms (Kinuthia, 1987).

McCormick (1999), observes that workers in the small scale enterprises often operate in clusters, due to several reasons. First, joint action is common since the clusters are all made up of producers at the same stage of production. Secondly, most operators belong to associations. By bringing producers together, these associations set the stage for collaboration between and among members. Third, many of the operators double as traders and retailers of their own products. Finally, given that in Kenya traders and producers are often from different ethnic communities, problems of mistrust lead them to have horizontal joint action. Commenting on the textile *jua kali* industries, McCormick states that:

The most basic form of cooperation in garments markets involves borrowing and lending of basic tools, such as scissors or measuring tape, or of assisting one another in cases of machine breakdown or shortage of a specific raw material" (McCormick, 1999:137).

In addition, business people with more advanced equipment assisted others since the colonial times even though they often charged a fee for services. For instance, those with electric cutting shears, buttonholes etc provided services to their colleagues in need of the services. This was crucial in sustaining the newer artisans. (O.I., Samuel Onyango, 10-3-02).

Another important feature of production especially in motor vehicle repair workshops was the aspect of sub-contracting. This implied that a main contractor sub-contracted part of the work to others (McCormick, 1999). The reasons for this varied. In some cases, it was due to lack of capacity. In others, lack of specialized equipment, or the need to cut down on costs. In motor

vehicle repair industry, work-spaces were allocated on the basis of specialization. Kinyanjui (1997), found that in the Ziwani cluster, general mechanics were most numerous of the businesses in the 1990s, comprising (22.4%). They were followed by panel beaters (20.2%); spray painters (18.2%), motor vehicle wiring (18.2%) gas and electrical welders (8.1%). In addition to these specializations, there also existed cushion makers and upholstery makers, as well as tyre repairers. It should be noted that the same trend existed among the carpenters and ironsmiths in their relations with cushion makers and tailors.

Despite the government involvement in the informal enterprise in Kenya, the conditions under which this sector operates has often been greatly influenced by market mechanisms, social institutions such as the family and private societies. As already noted, many *jua kali* associations were formed in Nairobi especially in the 1980s. Whereas some were formed to cater for artisans, there were others whose membership cut across different occupations including barbers kiosk operators, hawkers, and used clothes sellers. It should be noted that the same situation prevailed in other places in Kenya. King (1996:25) reports that in Meru town, the *jua kali* association members initially comprised artisans only. However, the association soon opened its doors to doctors, lawyers and teachers, so that the artisans made up only 20 per cent of the total membership. This was done in a bid to capitalize on grants of land and loans from either the government or potential donors (O.I., Joseph Njau, 11-6-02). By 1990, some of the *jua kali* members were already agitating for the formation of a national *jua kali* association. Although it is not clear why such interest developed during this time, a number of factors could have motivated the members to agitate for such a national organization.

First, since 1985 a lot of support was granted to the *jua kali* groups by the government and donor agencies. President Moi built sheds for Kamukunji *jua kali* artisans who also benefited from land allocations (O.I., James Kairu, 19-

6-02). Arguably, those who wanted a national association were motivated by the need to woo more donors towards the sector, and perhaps to secure more support such as land for *jua kali* sites (Joseph Njau, O.I., 16-6-02). Thus associations were found to be advantageous to *jua kali* firms as they could enable them to collaborate when necessary, especially when dealing with national and international market related problems. Besides, clusters could enable the *jua kali* operators to lobby and influence policy in their favour (Kinyanjui, 1999).

Second, in 1990 the positive strategies towards the *jua kali* were put to test most dramatically not only in Nairobi, but also in other parts of the country (King, 1996, *Ibid.*). On May 25<sup>th</sup> 1990 the Muoroto slums in Nairobi which was located next to Machakos Bus Station was demolished brutally by the city commission earth moving equipment and *askaris*. Consequently, the hawkers and squatters of the demolished village and *jua kali* operators put up a spirited fight against the City Commission *askaris* that led to loss of life. Many of the informal sector operators therefore came to view a national association as the best remedy (O.I., Samuel Onyango, 5-7-03).

Although this demolition was denounced by opposition leaders, Law Society of Kenya and the Church leaders, such demolitions continued. In the last quarter of 1990s such brutal demolitions had been extended to other squatter villages including Kibagare, and Machakos Bus Station (Ikiara, 1991a: 316). The magnitude of the brutality and the manner of demolition discredited the declared government policy of making the informal sector play an enhanced role in the economy (*Ibid.*). The reason behind this brutality lay in the fact that commercialisation of land was enjoined to existing administrative prerogative that simply expanded mechanisms of private accumulation for the elite and reproduced clientele networks (Simone, 1998:39). In Nairobi, the land allocated by public authorities could be resold at vast mark-ups, which were shared with the political elite. The proponents of a national *jua kali*

association therefore probably felt that such an umbrella body could convince the government to take more positive steps towards the sector.

In February 1992, the Kenya National Jua Kali Federation (KNJKF) was established officially at the Kenya Polytechnic by some 300 individual primary *jua kali* associations. The launch was convened by the then Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology (Maundu, 1997). One of the leading founders was James Bwatuti who had been the Chairman of the Mombasa Jua Kali Association (King 1996: 34). According to the officials of the organization, its principle concern was to represent, protect and promote the economic interests and general welfare of its members. The federation was described as an apex body, which was basically non-political and non-profit making (Maundu, 1997). However, another rival existed by the name of the Kenya National Jua Kali Organization (KNJKO), with its headquarters in Eldoret. In fact, the latter appears to have been formed as early as October 1991. By February 1992, it had been duly registered with the Attorney General's Chambers. The KNJKO however, was outmanoeuvred by its competitor in the battle for legitimacy. Using support from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in early 1992, which saw the participation of two delegates from seven provinces in Kenya, KNJKF organised national elections. Although the KNJKO boycotted these elections, they still gave their competitors a measure of legitimacy to the point that KNJKF was recognized by the Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology (Kinuthia, 1997; King, 1996).

In the late 1990s, a World Bank project that aimed at upgrading the skills of the *jua kali* operators was started (O.I., Joseph Njau, 17-6-02). Few members benefited from this multi-million project because of several reasons. First, most of the *jua kali* operators were unable to take up the invitation to attend colleges and polytechnics consistently. Second, those charged with the task of publicising these opportunities were not aggressive. Consequently, few *jua kali* operators came to learn about the opportunity. Finally, corruption among

those responsible for running the programme led to the embezzlement of millions of shillings as fictitious lists of *jua kali* members were presented by the officers in collusion with the same corrupt college managers. A task force to investigate the misuse of donor funds intended for the support of the sector was established in May 2003, by the then Minister for Labour, Najib Balala (Daily Nation, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2003). The task force, which was chaired by the late Professor Katama Mkangi, proposed that the Labour Ministry and national association of *jua kali* members should be investigated for misuse of donor funds. It also recommended for the establishment of a national *jua kali* authority to replace the Kenya National Jua Kali Federation.

*Jua kali* members are not unanimous on the benefits of the national *jua kali* associations. Those who benefit from them perceive them to be very important, as they have helped members to acquire space in the sheds. Some believe that their marketing has improved as through the associations they have been concentrated in one area, which makes it easier for their customers to reach them (Ibid: 69). Nevertheless, the groups that have been against the national associations argue that they pay about Kshs. 50/= per month and an extra ten which go to the national body, and perceive this as a form of exploitation, especially those who have neither benefited from loans, space in sheds or any other way. Others argue that formal associations have been too politicised, and do not show concern for the needy members. Besides, they point out that the courses organised by the KNJKF were mainly non-technical in nature. Such courses have addressed things like bookkeeping, marketing and leadership. As such, they have benefited few *jua kali* artisans (O.I., Joseph Njau, 10-4-05). Most ordinary members have therefore been of the view that the officials favoured themselves in terms of space allocation and loans. This could explain why the KNJKF had a total membership of 350 Jua Kali Association by 1997, below the Federation's estimation of about 600 Jua Kali Associations across the country (Maundu, 1997)

There has been a tendency of official favouritism of the artisanal sector in Kenya as compared to the other categories of the informal sector particularly since the 1980s. For instance, the government and the donors have supported this category of the informal sector through several measures such through the organization of *Jua Kali* exhibitions, provision of infrastructure and funding technology development (McCormick, 1999). In Kenya, a *jua kali* exhibition has been organized every year since the 1990s to enable the small producers to exhibit their products for a national audience. In addition, the exhibitions have enabled the informal sector operators to establish contacts and get acquainted with other technologies and products (Haan, 1998:164). Some of these operators have managed to attend regional fairs in the Eastern African region. Notably, the KNJKF defines a *jua kali* operator as any one who is skilled in a specific craft or trade, and who operates her/his own small business. This excludes vegetable sellers, shoe shiners, newspaper vendors or any other unskilled services. This could explain why the government and the City Council of Nairobi have been more lenient with the artisanal sub sector. The food hawkers have suffered perhaps more than the other categories of the *jua kali* operators. Unfortunately, high-level exhibitions by the *jua kali* artisans have usually benefitted either the individuals and groups that are more economically stable, or the leaders of the KNJKF. The mainstream *jua kali* artisans cannot afford to attend such exhibitions.

One of the major challenges encountered by the *jua kali* operators since the 1980s has been the frequent shifting of ministerial responsibilities with regard to the sector. The funding of the sector has varied from time to time depending on the political clout of the minister in-charge. This explains why in the second half of the 1980s the Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology got a lot of financial and political support from the government under Professor Sam Ongeru. In subsequent years, the *jua kali* docket was housed in the Ministry of Science and Technology, as well as Trade and Industry. Currently, the sector is under the Ministry of Labour

(O.I., S. Gituma, 4-7-2005). This rapid migration of ministerial responsibilities affected the administrative structures, which became unstable and at times confusing. For instance, the Ministry of Local Government supervises the activities of the urban informal sector. In Nairobi, the City Council is responsible for the enforcement of regulations and by-laws pertaining to licenses, health, and occupational standards (O.I., Bob Keriago, 3-5-2004). The City Council is therefore responsible for the allocation of urban spaces to street vendors and other *jua kali* operators in Nairobi. This uncoordinated approach to the sector has rendered what would be a very productive sector somewhat unstable. Consequently, there has been more misery among the urban poor.

In the 1990s a different kind of association emerged that claimed the backing of many operators in the informal sector, known as the *mungiki*. The term *mungiki* is derived from Kikuyu language and it means, "we are the public". The term was therefore an assertion of the rights of a social class that felt acutely deprived and marginalized in a rapidly globalizing world (Kagwanja, 2003:29). Although the organization emerged as a religious group, the fact that it attracted the membership of hawkers, touts, *matatu* drivers and *jua kali* artisans cannot be denied (O.I., Njuguna Mburu and Stephen Ndirangu, 17-6-02). The members of the group contributed monthly dues of Kshs 10 and established control over several sectors of the economy. The group's national coordinator claimed in November 2001 that:

We, as *mungiki*, have 500 *matatus* operating in the various routes in this country. We have two buses. We have 1,230 taxicabs and we have 6,000 *mikokoteni* (handcarts). So we have all the reason to be involved in the *matatu* industry. Again about 90% of *matatu* drivers are *mungiki* people; 99% of the touts/conductors are *mungiki* members; 65% of *matatu* owners are *mungiki* members (EAS, 18 November 2001).

Although these claims could not be verified, it is true that before the government outlawed the organisation in 2003, many *matatu* operators had complained that *mungiki* members were extorting money from them.

Moreover, many street hawkers and several other *jua kali* operators confirmed that they were members of the *mungiki* group. Thus, it can again be concluded that there is a linkage between the *jua kali* economic activities, the situation of unemployment in Kenya and the lawlessness experienced in the urban centres since independence.

Ndura Waruinge the leader of the *mungiki* sect claimed that the organisation was created in 1991 during the tribal clashes at Molo in the Rift Valley. During the clashes the Kalenjin warriors evicted non-Kalenjin communities from the area. Researchers who sought to investigate this violence understood its logic as a new phenomenon of informal repression, a strategy adopted by the ruling elite to employ violence covertly to undermine political opposition, counter multiparty democracy, and regain the political initiative. The *mungiki* then started to fight for justice among the predominantly Kikuyu ethnic community who were the prime target of these evictions who felt that their rights had been violated (Sunday Nation, 15-5-2002).

Kagwanja (2003) observes that there are striking parallels between the *mungiki* and the Mau Mau. While the Mau Mau drew the bulk of its support from the evicted squatters in the colonial Rift Valley, *mungiki* drew its support from thousands of people displaced by ethnic clashes. Second, just as Mau Mau mobilized its support among the urban lumpenproletariat against colonial social and economic injustice, the *mungiki* also featured the poor such as the dispossessed and landless against oppressive landlords, corrupt urban land grabbers and the tyranny of the ruling elite (Anderson, 2002; Kagwanja, 2003:30). Some of the *mungiki* followers stated categorically that their movement would ensure that prime land, housing estates and other upmarket property in Nairobi would eventually revert to the ownership of the movement's followers (O.I., Stephen Ndirangu, 17-6-2002). The sect took issue with what it considered the criminalization of poverty as evident in the eviction of squatters from forestland, kiosk owners from upmarket estates and

hawkers from the streets of Nairobi (Daily Nation, 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2005). All this happened at a time when the rich grabbed public land with impunity especially during the Nyayo era, between 1978 and 2002.

A more critical look at *mungiki* reveals its anti-globalisation stance (Anderson, 2002). The movement was provoked by the social and economic effects of the restructuring and fiscal policies engendered by the forces of globalisation, and inefficiency and corruption of the ruling elite. These forces led to the formation of policies that resulted in mass urban unemployment, escalation of poverty and amplified intra and inter-ethnic exploitation and competition (Kagwanja 2003:30). It is no wonder then that *mungiki* drew the bulk of its following from the lower classes, mostly former street children, unemployed youths, hawkers, artisans, small traders in the the informal sector and the alarmingly growing army of the urban poor in Nairobi's slums of Githurai, Dandora, Korogocho, Kariobangi, Kawangware, Kibera, Mathare and Kangemi. Moreover, it also had a strong constituency among the landless, squatters and internally displaced persons (Ibid, 2003:34).

In August 1997, politically instigated clashes took place in the Coast Province especially Kwale, Kilifi and some parts of Mombasa Island. The clashes pitted the upcountry people against the coastal peoples. Consequently, hundreds of upcountry people such as the Akamba, Kikuyu, Luo and Abaluhya were dislocated from their homes and their property was either destroyed through arson, or looted. Several up-country people lost their lives including five police officers, while hundreds were maimed and women raped. The consequence of these clashes were catastrophic to the Kenyan economy, with the numbers of tourists dwindling drastically due to the negative international media reports concerning the high level of insecurity along the Kenyan coast. The woodcarvers and *jua kali* operators were adversely affected by this crisis and many people found themselves languishing in poverty (Sunday Nation, July 20-2003). Some of those displaced joined the *mungiki* sect in Nairobi.

The organisation also played a great role in the politically instigated slum riots in Nairobi in 2001. The slum dwellers in different parts of Nairobi then established associations to fight for more affordable rents. In the Kibera slum, which accommodates more than 700,000 people, the tenants defied landlords by asserting collective rights to housing plots. In October 2001, they got backing from President Moi and Raila Odinga who acknowledged the problems of landlords charging exorbitant rents for slum houses. In the stand off that ensued between the mainly Luo tenants and the landlords many people were injured. It should be noted that some of the landlords associated themselves with the *mungiki* while the tenants were supported by the Luo vigilante groups (O.I., Njuguna Mburu, 17-6-02).

Ironically, the organization received political backing from the state and was often used to intimidate the opposition political parties especially between 1997 and 2002 (O.I., Steve Ndirangu, 16-7-2004). Thus, illegitimate use of violence and economic delinquency was exploited by the state in order to entrench itself in power (Bayart et al 1999). Such violence was particularly couched as communal or criminal and attributed to traditional warrior bandsmen, ethnic militia, vigilantes, bandits or simply gangs of thugs (Kagwanja, 2003:26). It is obvious that poor and desperate groups of the youth are quite vulnerable to political manipulation by wealthy groups in the state for selfish purposes.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2002, a group of youth believed to be *mungiki* followers went on the rampage in Nairobi's Kariobangi Estate killings between 20 and 23 people (Anderson, 2002; Kagwanja, 2003). Apparently, the group was revenging against the killings of two of their members by another group known as the Talibans, which was mainly Luo dominated. It was obvious that this urban violence was politically instigated. Indeed, in the run up to the 2002 general elections, the *mungiki* leader Ndura Waruingi declared the

movement's support for KANU, the ruling party then (East African Standard, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2002).

It is, therefore, evident that the *jua kali* operations have greatly been influenced by the quality of governance in postcolonial Kenya. Poor political governance contributed to the misuse of public resources, which in turn adversely affected the lives of millions of the poor in the country, a huge percentage of which live in the urban slums. It was partly this sorry state of affairs that made the NARC administration to constitute a commission to investigate the grabbing of public land. The Ndung'u Land Commission, which was launched in July 2003, was charged with the task of investigating the irregular allocation of public land. The commission presented a report to the Minister for lands and Housing, Amos Kimunya in 2004 and recommended for the repossession of all the grabbed public property. This included over 1,000 houses and plots carved out of government compounds irregularly allocated to individuals. Others included public cemeteries, parks, forestland and other public property (Daily Nation, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2005).

### 7.5 Summary

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Moi regime in Kenya continued to pursue the economic policies began by his predecessor. These were characterised by dependence on donor funds and cash crop economy for the fiscal stability of the nation. Metropolitan capitalism established a process of integration with the domestic interests in the country. This was followed by financial and other forms of aid, which consolidated the articulation of the periphery to the centre. Unfortunately, the international political scene began to turn hostile hand in hand with the decline of the Eastern Block following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Consequently, the Moi government had no choice but to support the informal sector.

The Structural Adjustment Programme that was introduced by the donor bodies and nations from the 1980s created a large group of the unemployed in Kenya. These included those who were retrenched from the private and the public sectors of the economy. The SAPs also led to the liberalization of the Kenyan economy, which led to an influx of second-hand clothes, second-hand motor vehicles and other manufactured goods from all over the world. This liberalisation of trade enabled the political elite to accumulate even more wealth by bringing foreign goods into the Kenyan market. Moreover, the SAPS also led to the intensification of grabbing of public land and public institutions which were allocated to the political supporters of the Moi regime as a way of consolidating political patronage.

Ironically, liberalization also set the stage for self-employment among the second-hand clothes' dealers and street vendors. It is the industrialized countries of the world that benefited more from trade liberalization. As the dependency and underdevelopment scholars have argued, the phase of industrialization at the periphery of capitalist system does not lead to autonomous process of capitalist development, but to a further consolidation of underdevelopment.

A significant development especially among the artisanal *jua kali* operators was the entrance of more people with college qualifications as well as formal sector experience in the sector. This could explain some of the new developments in the sector in terms of better organisation including the formation of the *jua kali* associations. The rising level of poverty and desperation among some of the informal operators translated into the support for illicit groups such as the *mungiki* gang that terrorised Kenyans from the 1990s. The cost sharing policies in the health and the education sector contributed enormously to this desperation among the poor. The warm support given to pro-reform crusaders by the informal sector can therefore be explained from this perspective. Apart from the metal artisans, the rest of the

*jua kali* operators faced evictions and official harassment in the 1990s as the state attempted to acquire public utility plots to allocate to political supporters. This could be explained in terms of neo-patrimonialism, which led to the personalisation of political power by the Moi regime.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8.0 Conclusion

This study has examined the historical development of the *jua kali* sector in Nairobi from 1899 to 1998. The analysis has established that the emergence of Nairobi's *jua kali* sector is fundamentally bound up with colonisation of Kenya by the British government during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the advent of the British colonial rule in Kenya, pre-colonial economies were linked with the international economy through the agency of the Waswahili, Arab and Asian merchant capital. However, from the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the activities of these merchants were increasingly subordinated to that of the British by the IBEAC under sir William McKinnon. During this pioneer phase of colonialism the pre-colonial modes of production were found to be important for the British rule and therefore they were allowed to survive although they still faced competition from the capitalist modes of production. For instance, the IBEAC recruited African warriors to fight against fellow Africans who were resisting the colonial invasion. Prior to the construction of Uganda Railway, the traditional caravan routes also served the British invading force.

The declaration of a protectorate status over Kenya and the construction of the Uganda railway facilitated the incorporation of the country's economy into international capitalism more profoundly. This was an expensive undertaking for the British treasury. Consequently, the white settlers were encouraged to settle in Kenya and exploit the rich farmlands in the Kenyan highlands in a bid to exploit the resources and to enable the colony pay for the costs of the railway line construction. Once completed, the railway line facilitated the exploitation of the resources of the colony by the metropole.

The country was, therefore, developed as a white settler economy from the very outset, and a number of measures were adopted to enhance European agriculture. These included land alienation from the African communities, as well as the imposition of hut tax so as to pressurise Africans to provide labour for the white settlers. This was quite consistent with the interests of capitalism. As Cooper [1983] observes, a worldwide division of labour consigns the periphery to primary production for the purpose of supplying the metropole with the requisite raw materials for the industrial production.

Nairobi, therefore, emerged as an urban centre geared to serve the white settler economy as an administrative centre, collection centre and trade centre. This fitted well within the logic of capitalism. This is because the worldwide division of labour relegates the periphery to primary production and consigns its activities to the task of organising the drainage of commodities and surplus for onward transport to the ports for export to the metropole. The Africans who came to live in Nairobi especially in the pioneer days did not always participate in wage labour. Many of them resorted to self-employment by selling fruits, cabbages and cooked food to those in wage employment. As already noted, some of the enterprising Africans built huts in the upcoming slums such as Maskini, Kaburini, Pangani and Kileleshwa. This confirms the first research assumption of the study that, the economic exploitation of Kenya during colonialism stimulated the growth of African informal enterprises in Nairobi.

Asians also played an important role in the labour provision for the colonial Government and white settlers in Kenya. Together with the missionaries, they played the important role of imparting artisanal skills to the Africans not only in schools but also in the mission farms and white settler farms. These new skills were however combined with pre-colonial skills. This was evident in the construction of African huts in the pioneer African locations in Nairobi. This confirms that the success of capitalism was based on the fact that it did not

completely destroy the pre-capitalist modes of production. Rather, the indigenous skills had to combine with some western values for the maximum exploitation of the resources in the colonies for the benefit of the mother country. The Asians and the Christian missionaries were subordinated by the needs of international capitalism for which they worked as agents. For instance, while the missionaries encouraged Africans to learn literacy, the Asians used the African labour in building construction, quarrying and in other artisanal trades. This, therefore, disapproves the second research assumption of the study that attributes the technological skills in the *jua kali* sector specifically to the indigenous communities. However, it must be noted that a lot of indigenous technologies were utilised in Nairobi's *jua kali* sector from the very outset. The Akamba handicraft dealers, women potters, weavers of baskets as well as medicine people used their indigenous skills. As Stichter (1982) confirms, capitalism does not destroy completely the pre-capitalist modes of production. Rather, it destroys what it does not need while preserving what it requires for its survival. This explains why both pre-colonial and western technologies existed in Nairobi during the colonial period.

Throughout the colonial era, Africans in Nairobi were regarded by the British as spivs and thieves with the exception of the small group of African elite, the product of mission schools that emerged soon after the First World War. Given that few industries were established in the capital meant that only a few Africans could be employed on a permanent basis. This was consistent with the character of peripheral capitalism as it suffers from a variety of distortions. This could explain why even the wage earning Africans were unable to sustain their families in the urban centres. The social cost of those not actually on the job was absorbed by the pre capitalist forms of production for the benefit of the capitalist production in the city. This was advantageous for the colonial capitalism in Kenya as it facilitated the payment of very low wages to the employees. This situation in turn militated against the emergence of a strong

group of African capitalists. This analysis therefore confirms the third research assumption of the study that attributes the failure of *jua kali* sector to transform into large manufacturing enterprises, to the discriminative colonial policies. There is evidence that some Africans turned to hawking in the streets, while others resorted to what Bayart (1999) refers to as the real economies due to this discrimination and exploitation. These included prostitution, illegal brewing of liquor, and black marketeering, among other illicit activities. It is such African inhabitants of Nairobi that gave massive support to Harry Thuku's East African Association in the 1920's and the Kikuyu Central Association. In the main, their grievances in the urban were economic, although they also articulated the grievances of those in the reserves where the reproduction of those in the urban took place.

During the Second World War, Kenya's economy was restructured to meet the British war effort. Consequently, more Africans in Nairobi experienced the exploitative nature of colonialism. For instance, squatters who were evicted from the Rift Valley white settler farms and the demobilized ex-soldiers who participated in the Second World War experienced widespread frustrations in their attempts to open businesses in town. The introduction of the municipality run dairies, butcheries, restaurants and breweries in particular competed against African kiosks and other enterprises. African entrepreneurs were against the paternalistic behaviour of the municipal authorities, which sought to drive them out of business. Moreover, it was obvious that certain categories of Africans enjoyed European patronage. These included African members of the Legislative Council (Legco) and some civil servants. The Mau Mau uprising of 1952 could therefore be understood against this background of African frustration both in the rural and in the urban centres. This could also explain why the African urban *jua kali* sites such as Burma and Kariokor were the hotbed of the Mau Mau political struggle in Kenya and why some African loyalists such as James Mbotella were murdered in these urban markets.

As political independence approached in the 1960's, the political environment in the country improved considerably. Many Africans flocked into the city, taking advantage of the relaxed city regulations following the lifting of the Emergency regulations. There was an influx of primary school leavers and ex-detainees in search of employment. These eventually provided the bulk of the informal sector operators in Nairobi. The political and economic policies advanced by Kenyatta's government from 1963 contributed considerably to the worsening of the employment crises in Nairobi. This confirms the fourth assumption of the study. The political elite formulated patronage-based policies that enabled the European settlers and African loyalists to retain their vast farms, and to retain a position of privilege in the economy. Under this arrangement, it is only the small group of white settlers and African elite that managed to accumulate the best arable farms in the country. Conversely, only a small proportion of the land was available for redistribution to millions of the landless Africans. Patronage politics therefore contributed to lack of viable economic policies during the Kenyatta era. Moreover, political patronage was used by the African elite to access loans from the banks with which to accumulate personal fortunes. This situation led to large numbers of landless and unemployed Kenyans after independence. Many of these settled in the slums of Nairobi such as Mathare, Kariobangi, Kangemi and Kawangware among other slums where they were subjected to eviction and other forms of harassment due to their economic activities e.g. prostitution and the brewing of illegal brews.

During president Moi's tenure from 1978, Kenya went through a decade of rapid socio-economic deterioration. Owing to the failure of the development of an autonomous process of capitalism, the international debt increased. This was exacerbated by drought and a severe drop in the price of coffee in the international market. Consequently, the government was forced to negotiate with the IMF and the World Bank for financial support. Unfortunately, the

reforms recommended by the Bretton Wood institutions led to more unemployment from the 1980's. The conditionalities imposed by the two institutions under the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) included retrenchment of public servants as a way of cutting down government spending. Those retrenched from service joined the hundreds of thousands of the unemployed in Nairobi and subsequently joined the *jua kali*. This confirms the fourth research premises of the study that *jua kali* enterprises have provided a means of alleviation of poverty among the urban poor in Kenya. Ironically the SAPs also recommended for the liberalization of trade. This in turn enabled the more capitalised traders, both local and foreign to import goods from elsewhere and flood the Kenyan market. The argument by the underdevelopment and dependence theorists that trade between the metropole and less developed countries is inimical to the development of the less developed countries was therefore vindicated in Kenya. The new imports led to closure of textile and shoe firms in Kenya, among other firms. The employees were sent home, and many of them eventually joined the informal sector. During this period, the worsening economic situation created a severe political tension. The Moi regime sought to forestall the political tension by rewarding political supporters of the ruling party with public property. These included public buildings and plots especially in the urban centres. Thus, neo-patrimonialism could explain the motive behind the demolitions of Muoroto and other slums in the 1990s.

Those in the *jua kali* encountered a lot of constraints since the colonial era. These constraints could be categorized as legal and economic. Since their operations were regarded as illegal by the government, their operations were subjected to demolitions, arrests and confiscation of goods. The sector suffered from lack of economic resources due to lukewarm support from the government. Indeed, the sectors dynamism and creativity was possible only due to the support provided by kinsmen, family and other social relations, not only in the provision of capital and space but also skills. This underlines the

crucial role-played by what Meagher (2002), refers to as social capital. Most of the non-governmental organisations and banks avoided giving loans to the *jua kali* sector as its operators lacked collateral. More support was therefore accorded to the better capitalised medium scale enterprises as these appeared to have more potential for growth. Moreover, patronage politics posed a serious challenge to the *jua kali* sector especially because the poor did not wield much influence in the politics.

From the analysis, it can be concluded that it is not possible to conceptualise economic development in Kenya without examining the role of the state. Under the monolithic KANU regime of president Daniel Arap Moi, Kenya developed a highly centralised political system in which the ruling party assumed supremacy over the parliament and civil service. The sad result of this scenario was that the resources in the country were often used for political patronage. Rational decision-making was often sacrificed for political expediency. For instance, experienced manpower was sidelined in the appointments of senior government officers in institutions, in favour of the more politically correct individuals. Such senior appointments were used for political patronage. Similarly, there was a continuous shifting of ministerial responsibilities. The number of ministries also kept on varying, as well as their importance. In the 1980's, for instance, Professor Sam Ongeru headed the Ministry of Technical Training and Technology, which supervised the *jua kali* sector successfully. In the 1990s, the portfolio of *jua kali* development went to the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology. These frequent transfers of ministers and other senior officers made it difficult for the policies to be implemented effectively. As Chabal and Daloz (1999) observe, patrimonialism implies an instrumentally profitable lack of distinction between the civic and personal spheres. The ruler allocates personal office to his clients on the basis of patronage rather than on the basis of professionalism and competence.

In Nairobi, the situation was further compounded by the fact that the responsibilities of several ministries overlapped. For instance, the Ministry of Local Government and the Nairobi City Council were responsible for the enforcement of regulations and byelaws affecting urban matters such as business licenses, allocation of *jua kali* sites and regulation of health and occupational standards. On the other hand, the Ministry of Lands had jurisdiction over land ownership. Unfortunately, the *jua kali* operations were affected by this overlap of ministerial responsibilities. It was not uncommon therefore, for the City Council to allocate land to *jua kali* operators, only for the title deed to be given to politically-connected private developers.

Researchers have a social responsibility, and this includes not only identifying the problems bedevilling the society but also suggesting solutions. It is suggested that a constant review of government policy on the *jua kali*, particularly the artisanal sub-sector should be done. Among other things, the policy should look into the possibility of introducing lower customs duty for raw materials used by the sector. In addition, provision of proper infrastructure such as water, electricity, roads, and sewage should be done urgently. Majority of the *jua kali* sites not only suffer from lack of basic infrastructure, but are also highly insecure. These conditions discourage visits of potential customers, and also militate against maximum productivity among the *jua kali* artisans.

Second, it is important for some policies to be formulated in regard to land provision for those in the *jua kali* sector. Land should be set-aside in the urban centres for their use. Such working sites should be properly designed and planned. Moreover, they should be properly gazetted to avoid land grabbing by well-connected individuals, and also to prevent squabbles over ownership, between different groups of artisans. This is crucial as it could provide stability among the *jua kali* operators. As Bigsten et al (2000) observes, the reputation and personality of an individual entrepreneur is vital for customer

confidence. Most of the operators never operate in one place long enough to build the necessary reputation with customers and other supporting networks mainly due to lack of security of working sites and premises.

From the foregoing analysis, it is important for training institutions such as the polytechnics, schools, colleges and universities, to encourage the youth not to have a low opinion of the informal sector and artisanal skills. The *jua kali* products should also be patented by the government so that those who work hard and invent products can reap rewards. *or licenses*

Finally, poor economic governance, due to political patronage has also been found to be the key impediment to economic and social development in the country (Government of Kenya, 2004). Corruption which is a major manifestation of poor economic governance has undermined the growth potential of the *jua kali* sector in Nairobi in the post-colonial era. Therefore, better governance is required in order to restore confidence in all sectors of the economy. As Simon (1998) observes, the idea is for African cities to do more with less resources. Better management will create the conditions for the emergence of resourcefulness. It is therefore, recommended that studies similar to the current study be conducted on the other major urban centres in Kenya such as Mombasa and Kisumu. In addition, a historical study could be done to investigate the linkages between the informal sector and the system of governance in the country.

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Note: Age is estimated.

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26. James Kairu; 50 years; interviewed in May 2002 at Kamukunji, Nairobi.
27. James Maina Macharia; 45 years; interviewed in June and July 2002 at Ofafa Maringo, Nairobi.
28. James Nyaga; 46 years; interviewed in December 2003 at Kahawa, Nairobi.

29. James Waithaka; 72 years; interviewed in June 2002 at Bahati Estate, Nairobi.
30. John Kamau Karangu; 50 years; interviewed in June 2001 at Kariobangi, Nairobi.
31. John Kamotho; 43 years; interviewed in March 2002 and December 2003 at Kahawa, Nairobi.
32. John Kinene; 50 years; interviewed in July 2003 at Kahawa, Nairobi.
33. John Maina Ndegwa; 60 years; interviewed in February 2003 at Kenyatta University.
34. John Maina; 50 years; interviewed in June and December 2002 at Gikomba Market, Nairobi.
35. John Ndehi; 58 years; interviewed in February 2003 at Kenyatta University.
36. John Obondo; 45 years; interviewed in June 2002 at Kamukunji, Nairobi.
37. John Nduati; 42 years; interviewed in June 2002 at Kahawa, Nairobi.
38. John Wafula; 45 years; interviewed in June 2001 at Roysambu, Nairobi.
39. Joseph Hinga; 55 years; interviewed in June 2002 at Kahawa, Nairobi.
40. Joseph Kanyugo; 81 years; interviewed in June 2004 at Ruiru.
41. Joseph Ngururi; 45 years; interviewed in September 2002 at Roysambu, Nairobi.
42. Joseph Nyaga; 72 years; interviewed in June and July 2002 at Jogoo Road, Nairobi.
43. Joseph Okoth Odhiambo; 44 years; interviewed in June 2003 at Homa Bay.
44. Josiah Kudha Oluoch; 60 years; interviewed in July 2003 at Baba Dogo, Nairobi.

45. Joyce Muniu (Chairperson, Jitegemee Rice Traders Association Pumwani.); 60 years; interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005 at Kamukunji, Nairobi.
46. Kagwa Mutahi; 70 years; interviewed in January 2002 at Kaheti, Nyeri.
47. Kamau Munene; 45 years; interviewed in November 2003 at Westlands, Nairobi.
48. Kanake Gatheca; 55 years; interviewed in May 2001 at Thika.
49. Karanja Nderitu; 50 years; interviewed in May 2002 at Githurai, Nairobi.
50. Kepha Ondieki; 57 years; interviewed in April 2002 at Ruiru.
51. Khadija Ibrahim; 60 years; interviewed in November 2004 at Kenyatta University, Nairobi.
52. Kinyanjui Muteithia; 60 years; interviewed in June 2003 at Nyeri Town.
53. Kinyua Muteithia; 78 years; interviewed in January 2002 at Kahawa, Nairobi.
54. Lawrence Mangula; 46 years; interviewed in December 2003 at Kasarani, Nairobi.
55. Maina Mwai; 42 years; interviewed in December 2004 at Thika.
56. Martin Makau; 50 years; interviewed in September 2002 at KICC, Nairobi.
57. Mary Kinyanjui; 45 years; interviewed in December 2004 and February 2005 at the University of Nairobi.
58. Mathenge Muteithia; 75 years; interviewed in January 2002 at Nkubu, Meru.
59. Mathew Mate Somba; 46 years; interviewed in September 2001 at KICC, Nairobi.
60. Maurice Okwaro; 45 years; interviewed in December 2003 at Githurai, Nairobi.

61. Mike Macharia; 66 years; interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2002 at Bahati, Nairobi.
62. Mwangi Njenga; 45 years; interviewed in May 2002 Bahati, Nairobi.
63. Njuguna Mburu; 65 years; interviewed in June 2002 and July 2002 at Githurai, Nairobi.
64. Patrick Mulamba Wesonga; 40 years; interviewed in August 2003 at Kamiti Road, Nairobi.
65. Paul Ndung'u Warutere; 50 years; interviewed in December 2003 at Ruiru.
66. Pauline Nyambura; 40 years; interviewed in December 2003 and January 2004 at Naru Moru.
67. Peter Mbugua Ngecha; 55 years; interviewed in June 2002 at Bahati, Nairobi.
68. Phillip Mwaura Ndung'u; 45 years; interviewed in August 2003 at Kasarani, Nairobi.
69. Rajan Patel; 56 years; interviewed in June 2002 at Tea Room, Nairobi.
70. Rogers Mumo; 60 years; interviewed in July 2003 at Roysambu, Nairobi.
71. Samuel Onyango Manyala; 45 years; interviewed in May 2002 and December 2003 at Mombasa Road, Nairobi.
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73. Simon Gituma; 50 years; interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005 at Pumwani, Nairobi.
74. Simon Hugo; 42 years; interviewed in August 2004 at Ngara, Nairobi.
75. Simon Njau; 40 years; interviewed in December 2003 at Kahawa, Nairobi.
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77. Stephen Ndirangu; 40 years; interviewed in July 2004 at Kahawa, Nairobi.

78. Sylvester Barasa; 45 years; interviewed in July 2003 at Roysambu, Nairobi.
79. Theru Macharia; 60 years; interviewed in July 2002 at Bahati, Nairobi.
80. Thomas Otieno; 40 years; interviewed in June and December 2002 at Kamukunji, Nairobi.
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**APPENDIX****Question Guideline****PART A**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Street/Road \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Racial Group \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B****Data on Colonial Period**

Was there an informal sector in colonial Kenya?

If yes, what factors led to the development of this sector?

What activities were performed by those in the sector?

Of what age were the participants?

In which places were these activities conducted?

What was the colonial government's attitude towards the sector?

Were these activities gender specific?

Where did the participants acquire the skills they required to perform their activities?

Where did such participants stay?

Were there some new crafts that emerged during colonialism? If yes, what raw materials were used?

Where were the skills to make these new crafts acquired?

What problems did such artisans encounter?

Did the First World War have an impact on the informal sector?

If yes, what was the impact?

Did the other races in Kenya such as the Europeans and Asians participate in the informal sector?

If yes, how did they participate?

Did the Second World War have any effect on the informal sector in Kenya?

If yes, how was the sector affected by the freedom struggle?

How did granting of independence in 1963 affect the sector.

## PART C

### Post Colonial Data

For how long have you been in *jua kali* enterprise?

How did you learn your current skills?

- Village polytechnic
- Secondary
- Institute of Technology
- Apprenticed in Companies
- Apprenticed in other *jua kali* premises

How long was your training?

What are the major problems that you have encountered in this occupation?

Did you join any other occupation prior to joining *jua kali*?

If yes, what made you join the sector?

What specific activities do you engage in?

Do you keep records of the items you sell or repair?

Is the business solely yours or are you in partnership with others?

What type of facilities are available in your premises?

- Water

- Electricity
- Telephone
- None

Under what type of structure is the enterprise operating? (Open air, wood structure, corrugated iron sheet, and permanent workshop?)

Is the structure rented or fully owned by you? If not, specify.

Why have you established the enterprise at its present site?

How much capital did you have while establishing your enterprise and what were your initial tools?

Where did you get this capital?

What are your main raw materials?

Who are your main clients or customers?

Where do you and your assistants live?

Do you live with your family? If not why?

Are there some institutions either governmental or non-governmental that have come to your assistance?

If yes, specify the type of assistance.

Would you take up paid employment and leave *jua kali* sector?

What measures would you want the government to undertake in order to boost *jua kali* enterprise?

Have you joined any *jua kali* association or cooperative? If yes, how have you benefited from such membership?

## **PART D**

### **Questions for Government Officials and Non-Governmental Organization Officials**

For how long have you worked with the informal sector?

What kind of assistance do you give to those in the sector?

How do you identify those who are needy?

What are the common problems encountered by the sector participants?

What areas do you recommend for emphasis by the sector participants?

How can the sector be revitalized?

Do the sector participants cooperate with the Government officials and Non-Governmental Organizations?

How do you evaluate the performance of those in the sector?

What efforts are you making to make the sector viable?

What measures do you take on the members of the sector who default in loan repayment?

How do the government regulations affect the sector with regard to land ownership and licensing procedures?

How do you sensitize the sector participants on how to manage their enterprise?