

**THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE EVOLUTION AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF ELDORET TOWN, KENYA, 1903 - 2003**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my late father Peter Odera Onyango who exemplified faith, diligence, focus and tenacity in his life pursuits in the face of many odds and inculcated the same values in me.

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## ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret town from 1903 to 2003. The main focus of the study was to analyse the role of economic factors responsible for the emergence and development of Eldoret town during the colonial and the post-colonial period. With continued agglomeration in Eldoret town, an urgent need arises to scrutinize the role of economic factors responsible for its evolution so as to deepen the understanding of how to approach the numerous existing and emerging challenges. This research was guided by five objectives namely: to trace the evolution of Eldoret town up to 1912; to analyze the economic advancements in Eldoret during World War I up to the onset of the Great Depression; to investigate the economic transformation of Eldoret during the Great Depression up to the end of World War II; to assess the economic progress of Eldoret in the post-World War II period up to independence; and to examine economic drivers for change in Eldoret's post-independence era. To achieve these objectives, two theoretical postulates were employed namely: The 'colonial city' paradigm and the modernization theory. The research was informed by both primary and secondary sources. Archival material and oral interviews constituted the core primary sources. In particular, colonial administrative reports, Uasin Gishu District Annual Reports, colonial and post-colonial photo collections, Eldoret's post-colonial investment manuals, newspaper cuttings and development reports were collected and analyzed. Secondary sources also helped to contextualize and deepen the understanding of respective global historical milestones. The sources included books, journal articles, dissertations, and unpublished documents. The oral informants' accounts provided critical information about the economic transformation of Eldoret town. The target population was the four hundred thousand inhabitants of Eldoret town from which a sample population of thirty persons with vast knowledge of the town's history was chosen using purposive and snowballing technique. Data was analyzed using qualitative method. It was compiled thematically and reported chronologically in descriptive texts and direct quotations. The study established that the evolution of Eldoret town can be attributed to Sir Charles Eliot's invitation of settlers into the East African Protectorate. The settlers were induced by the news concerning much game and shooting at lions, camel, rhinoceros, and every kind of game. Cheap fertile land which supported settler farming was the prime reason for Eldoret's emergence. The settlers' agricultural activities triggered the development of banking, transport (road, rail, and air), trade, education, water, and housing that significantly influenced the evolution and development of Eldoret town. The study further established that the sequence of events occasioned by the Great Depression of the 1930s necessitated state protection of settler estate production in a bid to rescue it from the brink of collapse thus securing Eldoret's positive economic trajectory. Finally, the research established that there were intensified economic activities in the colony arising from the need to meet war demands during World War II that further boosted the transformation of Eldoret town. In the post-independence period, Eldoret's economic drivers for change included: industrialization, transport, agriculture, housing, hospitality, the informal sector, and sports. The study concluded that agriculture played a pivotal role in Eldoret's emergence and development. Other factors such as transport, trade, education, water, housing, informal sector, among others were peripheral to it. The research recommended that the contribution of political and social factors, and the extent to which the Kakamega gold mining contributed to the evolution of Eldoret town, should elicit further research.

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ASK</b>	– Agricultural Society of Kenya
<b>BEA</b>	– British East Africa
<b>C.P.C</b>	– Corn Production Company
<b>D.C</b>	– District Commissioner
<b>E.A.M.R</b>	– East African Majesty’s Rifle
<b>EATEC</b>	– East African Tanning Extract Company
<b>EEC</b>	– European Economic Community
<b>EPZ</b>	– Export Processing Zone
<b>FC</b>	– Football Club
<b>GDP</b>	– Gross Domestic Product
<b>GPO</b>	– General Post Office
<b>HM</b>	– His Majesty
<b>I.P.C</b>	– Investment Promotion Council
<b>IATA</b>	– International Air Transport Association
<b>ICDC</b>	– Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation
<b>ILO</b>	– International Labour Organization
<b>JKIA</b>	– Jomo Kenyatta International Airport
<b>KAA</b>	– Kenya Airports Authority
<b>KAR</b>	– Kings Africa Rifles
<b>KCC</b>	– Kenya Co-operative Creameries
<b>KIE</b>	– Kenya Industrial Estates
<b>KTDA</b>	– Kenya Tea Development Authority
<b>LBEA</b>	– Leader of British East Africa (a colonial newspaper)
<b>M.O</b>	– Medical Officer

<b>MGI</b>	– McKinsey Global Institute
<b>MGI</b>	– Migration Governance Indicators
<b>NACOSTI</b>	– National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovation
<b>NCB</b>	– National Cereals Board
<b>P.C</b>	– Provincial Commissioner
<b>PWD</b>	– Public Works Department
<b>UK</b>	– United Kingdom
<b>UN HABITAT</b>	– United Nations Human Settlements Program
<b>UNIDO</b>	– United Nation Industrial Development Organization
<b>USA</b>	– United States of America
<b>VP</b>	– Vice President
<b>WB</b>	– World Bank



**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

<b>Kalenjin</b>	A large group of highland Nilotic speakers who inhabit the <b>GREAT</b> Rift Valley.
<b>Evolution</b>	The process of gradual change from simple to complex form.
<b>Urbanize</b>	To necessitate characteristics that transform a setting into a centralized dwelling with a town orientation.
<b>City</b>	A relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of heterogeneous individuals of at least 100,000 people.
<b>Transformation</b>	A marked change in form, nature, or appearance.
<b>Development</b>	A process that creates growth, positive change, or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic components.
<b>Town</b>	Any compact settlement with a population of 2000 and above inhabitants (According to the 1948 census)

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Overview

This chapter covers background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research assumptions, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, theoretical framework, and literature review. It lays the ground for analysis of the historical transformation of Eldoret settlement into an urban centre with key focus being economic factors responsible for the town's evolution.

#### 1.1.1 Background of the Study

The historical beginnings of Eldoret town can be traced logically to the early years of Kenya's colonial encounter. It is one of the colonial urban centres that were established at the onset of the twentieth century. Eldoret emerged as a colonial administrative centre in Kenya's Uasin Gishu District that was part of the White Highlands.<sup>1</sup> According to Kenya Urbanization Review, 'urban economic growth has been established around population centers and productive agricultural regions.'<sup>2</sup> This assertion stands to justify the European choice of Uasin Gishu Plateau as a centre that would later evolve into present-day Eldoret town. It also glorifies economic factors as the *conditio sine qua non* of any town's emergence.

Lying to the North of Mau Summit is an extensive tableland known as the Uasin Gishu Plateau. Except for a few wandering families of Masai, the greater part of this Plateau was uninhabited.<sup>3</sup> According to Ross, the Marakwet and the Elgeyo occupied the North and the East sides. On the extreme West was the Nandi community. Before

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<sup>1</sup> Ndege, P (2005), *Afrikaner Identity Politics and the Growth of Eldoret Town, 1903-1939*, 2

<sup>2</sup> Kenya Urbanization Review, (2016), 15

<sup>3</sup>Ross, W. (1927) *Kenya from Within*, 238

1907<sup>4</sup>, the Colonial Government decided upon the suitability of this vacant plateau for allotments for European occupation.<sup>5</sup>

It was three or four years after the first settlements took place before allotments began on the Plateau. Ross further states that Government preparations were more advanced in Uasin Gishu Plateau than had been the case in the early days of settlement further down country. This was because of the location of the town in the fertile highlands in the North Rift. One farm, No. 64 in the allotment, was reserved for a government station, which subsequently became known as Eldoret. The farm was situated about half-way between Nairobi and Kampala, the capital cities of Kenya and Uganda respectively.<sup>6</sup>

Afrikaners moved into Kenya and settled in Uasin Gishu District in groups and as followers of certain prominent leaders.<sup>7</sup> The first to settle in 1903 was W.J. von Breda who was followed in 1904 by his own brothers Dirk and Piet.<sup>8</sup> The arrival of Von Breda in 1903 is what marked the genesis of what would become Eldoret town. It is therefore the starting point of this study.

These pioneer settlers were followed by A. Fraans Arnoldi and his family in 1905. In 1908, Jan van Rensberg led between 58 and 60 families, the largest number of Afrikaner immigrants into the area at the time. He was followed by Engelbretch-Bothma in 1909. Then came C.J Cloete, the only prominent individual from the Orange Free State, who emigrated with ten families in 1911. The Afrikaner leaders

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<sup>4</sup> It was in 1903 when the three Van Breda brothers were each allocated 10,000 acres on the plateau. McGregor Ross simply puts it as 'before 1907.'

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Groen, G (1974), *The Boers in Kenya*, 46-50.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

and the large families that followed them were allocated large tracts of lands, often close to one another.<sup>9</sup>

The establishment of Eldoret town was very much influenced by the Afrikaner settlers. The fact that it was only after their settlement in the Uasin Gishu Plateau and demands for security that the administration set up a police camp in the area, makes them a huge influence in the foundation of Eldoret town.<sup>10</sup> As soon as they were joined by English and British South Africans, the Afrikaner settlers demanded postal services.

The Postmaster-General established a post office on farm 64, a farm that had been purchased by Willie van Aardt, who then sold it back to the government. Much of it was rocky and unsuitable for agricultural use. It was this place that was chosen by Corbett, the District Commissioner, as the site for the establishment of the administrative centre of the district. In 1908, Corbett gave Van Aardt a contract to build the District Commissioner's house, offices, a store, and a clerk's house. Thereafter, the centre became known as 64 until 14<sup>th</sup> November 1912 when it was declared a township and the name changed to Eldoret.<sup>11</sup>

The Standard Bank of South Africa was established in 1912, the Eldoret flour mill (1914), the Equator Sawmill which was thereafter established after the World War I at Kaptagat, a short distance from Eldoret town. All these point to the rapid expansion of Eldoret that catalyzed the process of its evolution from a hastily erected shantytown to a municipality with tarmacked roads and flagged pavements. Modern buildings and the services and amenities that characterize modern civilization began to be provided.

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<sup>9</sup>Ndege, P (2005), *Afrikaner Identity Politics and the Growth of Eldoret Town, 1903-1939*, 2

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 29

The industries that gradually developed in the town were mainly those which served or depended upon predominantly farming community. The most important of these were: flour milling, extract tanning from the bark of the black wattle tree and the manufacture of dairy produce. It became an important centre for handling and marketing agricultural produce. But why did all these happen? This question sets in motion an inquiry into the role of economic factors responsible for the evolution and development of what is now rated as the fastest growing town in Kenya.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Economic development is the motive force behind urbanization. Despite this fact, little has been done to analyze the role of economic factors in the development of urban centres in Eldoret town. With continued agglomeration in the town, an urgent need arises to scrutinize the role of economic factors responsible for its evolution and development to deepen the understanding of how to approach the numerous existing and emerging challenges such as unemployment, urban poverty, slums, high crime rate, prostitution, and other social evils. In addition, cities are essentially the points of articulation of an economic system. The understanding of a country's economic system would then necessitate keen interest in the study of the historical economic milestones that have made urban centres what they are today. Moreover, If Eldoret town is not well understood in terms of this economic scrutiny, its future may only remain a matter of conjecture. This in the end will make it difficult for the town to achieve proper economic development that caters for its ever-bulging population.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To trace the emergence of Eldoret town between 1903 and 1912.
2. To analyze the economic advancements in Eldoret during World War I up to the onset of the Great Depression, 1913 to 1929.

3. To investigate the economic transformation of Eldoret during the Great Depression up to the end of World War II, 1930 to 1945.
4. To assess the economic progress of Eldoret in the post-World War II period up to independence, 1945 to 1963.
5. To examine the economic drivers for change in Eldoret's post-independence era, 1963-2003.

#### **1.4 Research Assumptions**

1. Early settler agriculture, hunting activities and early colonial trade efforts contributed to the emergence of Eldoret in the period leading to the town's declaration in 1912.
2. The period between World War I and onset of the Great Depression witnessed positive development in Eldoret town.
3. Despite the Great Depression and World War II, there was further development in Eldoret town.
4. The British colonial policy shift impacted positively on Eldoret's economic trajectory in the period between World War II and Kenya's attainment of independence.
5. The post-independence period saw more intensive economic progress in Eldoret town.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How did early settler agriculture, hunting activities and early colonial trade efforts contribute to the emergence of Eldoret in the period leading to the town's declaration in 1912?

2. To what extent did the period between World War I and onset of the Great Depression witness development in Eldoret town?
3. How did the Great Depression and World War II affect development in Eldoret town?
4. How much did the British colonial policy shift impact on Eldoret's economic trajectory in the period between World War II and Kenya's attainment of independence?
5. Did Eldoret town experience more intensive economic progress in the post-independence period?

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

The steadily rising number of urban dwellers in Kenya generally, and Eldoret in particular, calls for a focus on addressing the economic concerns of these urbanites. This continued agglomeration seems to have no end in sight<sup>12</sup> and therefore presents an opportunity for all shades of economic researchers, including economic historians, to investigate the role of strategic factors in providing concrete solutions to the glaring urban challenges, particularly economic. This study deploys insights on possible ways of solving Eldoret's current and future economic problems.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The experiences of many developing countries suggest that urbanization posed many social and economic problems forcing governments to devote considerable resources in tackling these problems.<sup>13</sup> Problems such as unemployment, urban poverty, insecurity, slums, prostitution, traffic congestion; among others have made urban studies even more relevant. Most urban problems are economic related since

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<sup>12</sup> UN (2014) World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 revision.

<sup>13</sup>Narayan, L (2014) Urbanization and Development, *International Journal of Research (IJR)*, Vol-1, Issue-8, September 2014, 13

urbanization is a human invention for man's survival. This struggle to survive gives birth to uncontrolled agglomeration, which then triggers the challenges mentioned above. This study is thus significant in affording a better understanding of the economic 'pull' factors that necessitated the emergence and expansion of Eldoret town with a view to developing interventions that address its current and future problems.

In addition, the study makes a significant contribution to Kenya's urban historiography. The absence of such an approach to urban biography of Eldoret makes this study even more relevant. It also provides an avenue through which society gets to appreciate the role of strategic economic installations and indeed other economic factors in Eldoret.

Many urban studies tend to narrow down on specific themes such as slums, trade, transport, industry, informal sector, among others. Such studies fail to tie together all these aspects within a historical context of their origin and even the interacting local and external economic conditions.<sup>14</sup> This in turn leads to a lopsided historiography, which does not comprehensively, and adequately, render a wholesome economic approach to urban historiography. The study attempts a comprehensive economic historiographic analysis of Eldoret town. It focused directly on the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret town.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study constitutes a detailed analysis of the economic factors responsible for the evolution and development of Eldoret town, 1903-2003. These factors include agriculture, colonial hunting, transport and communication, trade, industrialization,

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<sup>14</sup>Murunga, (1998), *The Evolution of Mumias Settlement into an Urban Centre to circa 1940*, 24



housing, informal sector, among others. Some social factors such as education, health and sports have been partly discussed to the extent that they were linked to economic development of Eldoret town. Education and health in the post-colonial period have however been excluded.

The arrival of Von Breda in 1903 is here considered as the genesis of what would later become Eldoret town. It is therefore the starting point of this study. This study was chronologically limited to the period between 1903 and 2003. It covers up to the year 2003 which is viewed as the culmination of an epoch and the start of another. It was the end of President Moi's era whose role in Eldoret's evolution was remarkable. This qualifies it as a major transitional stage in the economic life of Eldoret town. The study has, however, not involved an analysis of Moi's direct contribution to the economy of Eldoret.

The study was also limited to the initial Uasin Gishu district with Eldoret town as the core of the study. It also analyzed the early Afrikaner settlement, British and other European influx, and the resultant economic expansion. The impact of the World Wars and the Great Depression on the evolution of Eldoret were also scrutinized. The study also discussed the drivers for economic change in Eldoret's post-independence period.

### **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework assists researchers in situating and contextualizing formal theories into their studies as a guide.<sup>15</sup> It provides a common worldview or lens from which to support one's thinking about the problem and analysis of data.<sup>16</sup> This study

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<sup>15</sup> Ravitch, S., & Carl, N.M. (2016). *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Grant and Osanloo (2014), *Understanding, Selecting, and Integrating a Theoretical framework in Dissertation Research: Creating the Blueprint for your "House"*, 13

is anchored on two theoretical postulates: modernization theory and the colonial city model.

Modernization approach tends to see development as a process of change towards social, economic, and political conditions prevalent in the industrialized west. As Africans flocked into towns in great numbers, the modernization theorists suggested that they were entering the mainstream of history. The fact that the African was becoming an urbanite was an affirmation of modernity. One of the more famous exponents of modernization was Walt. W. Rostow, an economist who posited an evolutionary track for countries to follow to become modern, high consumption societies.<sup>17</sup>

The modernization approach was based on the Parsonian functionalist epistemology which conceptualizes social systems as the institutionalization of a set of core values into norms and rules which through the process of internalization and social control regulate social behaviour. This school perceived African societies as developing from simple traditional societies to complex (western-like) levels of social organization with colonialism being the major driving force.<sup>18</sup> The growth of cities and the urbanization of the world is one of the most impressive facts of modern times.<sup>19</sup>

The modernization theory marries with the perspective of the white colonialist regime which strengthened and popularized the idea of converging at one point, creating conditions for the white community and later Indians to establish businesses. Gradually African labourers began to flock to Eldoret settlement for employment in European enterprises. The administrative functions in the town also compelled people

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<sup>17</sup> Ekbladh, D. (2013) *Modernization Theory*, 4

<sup>18</sup> Olumwullah, A.L., (1989), *The Struggle for an Urban Home: Some Theoretical Considerations and an Agenda for Research*, 4

<sup>19</sup> Wirth, L., (1938), *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, 5

to seek for crucial services, in effect, ultimately fulfilling the European modernization dream.

The major criticism against the modernization approach is that it assumes that third world countries must follow the same developmental path that has been followed by the capitalist west in order to solve their economic problems and attain the urban city status. Furthermore, this approach underplays the disruptive role of colonialism and imperialism on Africa and third world societies. It places colonial, racial and class structures outside the realm of investigation, examining only individual responses to an implacable and unquestioned entity.<sup>20</sup>

The dichotomy between primitive and statist pre-colonial Africa; and developed and dynamic colonial and post-colonial Africa, was a product of Western Eurocentric writings. Social science disciplines like Anthropology have largely employed this epistemological duality to explain events in Africa. Thus, modernity is posed as a product of Western civilizations while the traditional is the characteristic of pre-colonial Africa. Consequently, traditional is equated to statism (underdevelopment) while modernity is equated to dynamism (civilization). The implication of this is that the development of colonialism put Africa in history and one of the main agents of modernization was urbanization.<sup>21</sup> However, Africa has its own modernity since there are many transformations and this fact was conveniently overlooked by Southhall.<sup>22</sup>

Having been introduced in Africa as a concept, modernization momentum persisted long after independence as a Europeanization policy and there are no signs of its decline. As such, the trajectory of Eldoret's growth took a path fashioned along the

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<sup>20</sup> Cooper, F. (1983), *Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labour in Africa* in F. Cooper, (ed.), *The Struggle for the City; Migrant Labour, Capital, and the State in Africa*, 15g

<sup>21</sup> Southhall, A. (1988) *Small Urban Centres in Rural Development: Studies What Else is Development other than Helping your own Home Town?*, in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 31, No. 3., 5

<sup>22</sup> Murunga, (1998), *The Evolution of Mumias Settlement into an Urban Centre to circa 1940*, 26

modernization route already set in motion by the colonial regime. This pattern of modernization is the subject of such a historical, economic analysis of Eldoret's evolution in this research endeavor.

The 'colonial city' is another widespread concept used both within and beyond the African continent to refer to the city under colonial rule. It may be defined as "a city of external dependence with an indigenous population". Proponents of this paradigm include: Coquery and Freund. Coquery opines that most of the case studies are silent on the processual impacts of imperialism taken as about the same everywhere as an implacable entity on local social urban change.<sup>23</sup>

According to her, 'colonial city' may refer to a particular moment during which colonialism was portrayed as a power demarcating, racializing, and ordering urban space. The overemphasis on colonial control, segregation schemes, and the 'sanitation syndrome' has indisputably played a role in the development of the colonial city paradigm. A large body of literature has helped to shape the understanding that all European powers used (hygiene/sanitation) policies to enforce a clearer division between Europeans and Africans.<sup>24</sup>

However, this was also a late nineteenth century world phenomenon related to heightened European racial consciousness and therefore, more than just a strictly colonial practice. This overemphasis on the perspective of the colonizers rather than the colonized has led to inconclusive typologies common to many syntheses of Africa's urban past which tend to divide between the essentially African and the essentially colonial city.

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<sup>23</sup>Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. (1991), The Process of Urbanization in Africa, *African Studies Review*, vol. 34, No. 1, 15

<sup>24</sup> Freund, B. (2007) *The African City*, 25

The cities were established in cases where European settlers were numerous enough to establish business and residential communities that broke radically with the world around. Such communities were absolutely central to the colonial purpose. Eldoret was one of those pure colonial inventions carefully crafted to fulfil their purpose.<sup>25</sup> From the late nineteenth century, segregation became the colonial watchword throughout the continent. As already mentioned, this urban segregation was typically linked with panics about epidemics and the need to keep the new ruling class of the colony healthy through isolation from contact with the bulk of natives. In that sense, Freund posits that it was not merely as a result of the establishment of racial theories of superiority that urban centres were established.

An early example goes back to the devastation of malaria on the sugar-growing island of Mauritius in 1866-68. As a result, the state created the rail system that allowed the white population of Port Louis to leave the city every day for the apparently more salubrious and higher Plaines Wilhelms, admittedly not on a racially defined basis. It was reported that the pestilence carried off one-seventh of the population, including a particularly high portion of the remaining ex-slave population and their children, who had lived in town after leaving the sugar plantations following emancipation.<sup>26</sup>

The British Colonial Office Medical Advisory Committee, in 1911, put it as follows,

*“It has been proved that the separation of the European from the natives is one of the most efficient means of protection against disease endemic amongst native races”.*<sup>27</sup>

Another 1914 report from Kenya on “sanitary matters” called for racial segregation as essential urban policy barring all but the “highest class Indians” from the white town and, as a matter of course, using these as a barrier between White settlers and

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<sup>25</sup> Economic purpose was the major driving force behind colonial urbanization.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 78

<sup>27</sup> The British Colonial Office Medical Advisory Committee Report, (1911), 2

migrant African unskilled workers.<sup>28</sup> This was the genesis of urban inequalities. Such inequalities have persisted to date in many Kenyan Urban centres including Eldoret<sup>29</sup>. The colonial city operated along segregationist lines, hence promoting economic inequalities.

Settlers dreamt of entirely reconstructing the landscape, recentered around their needs and desires and taking America or Australia as idealized models. Racial segregation in its heyday was made also into a moral imperative: White peril episodes in the history of colonial Rhodesia expressed settler anxieties about contacts between white women and black men at the domestic level.<sup>30</sup> This dream was actualized in the establishment of urban centres which emerged initially as European areas but would later be transformed into ‘free-for-all’ economic centres.

The colonial ordering of urban space was incomplete as the colonial powers lacked the resources to enforce segregation ordinances while many Africans circumvented colonial regulations even in the stricter eastern and southern African colonial regimes. Gradually, the African people penetrated European neighbourhoods, creating the African elite class and strong economic competitors of the white community. This study delved into establishing how, and the point at which, Eldoret became largely Africanized.

### **1.10 Review of Related Literature**

An in-depth inquiry into the historical origin and development of Eldoret, and indeed any urban centre of colonial origin raises certain fundamental research questions that are critical for the problematization of economic factors that contributed to urban

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<sup>28</sup> The British Colonial Office Medical Advisory Committee Report, (1914), 5

<sup>29</sup> Urban inequalities is not the key focus of this study. Some studies can be conducted on the same

<sup>30</sup> Freund, B. (2007) *The African City*, 78

growth in Kenya. These questions include the following: How does the emergence of an urban centre relate to agricultural developments in its locality? What contribution do other economic factors make in the emergence of an urban centre? What was the economic rationale for the emergence of urban centres in the interior of colonial Kenya? These questions, among others, have generated a corpus of literature whose review is clustered under the following sub-themes:

### **1.10.1 How the Emergence of an Urban Centre Relates to Agricultural Developments in its Locality**

As a process, urbanization may be said to have commenced with the Neolithic Revolution in food production, some ten thousand years ago. The mastery over food production freed a number of persons from direct subsistence activities and created a basis for a more complex division of labour, the concentration in one place, and the emergence of new forms of social inequality.<sup>31</sup> Ever since, food production has remained a key factor in the location and growth of any urban centre. Agriculture was a critical factor in the establishment of Eldoret town whose agricultural hinterland influenced its genesis, evolution, and subsequent development.

Coquery argues that the availability of food surplus presupposed a relationship between urbanization and agriculture; it required both the fertility of the soil and an available technology for exploiting this fertility. This postulated the existence of a group able to preside over the allocation of resources, crucial to the process of urbanization.<sup>32</sup> Her views fit in the case of Eldoret to the extent that agriculture was at the very centre of the settlers' migration and settlement into Kenya. In fact, Eldoret is

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<sup>31</sup> Ogot B.A (2016) *Kisumu 1901-2001, From an Inland Port to First Millenium City*, 3

<sup>32</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. (1991), The Process of Urbanization in Africa, *African Studies Review*, vol. 34, No. 1, 20

an agricultural town *par excellence*. The colonial authorities constituted the group that presided over resource allocation, primarily, land.

The limited number of the towns in Kenya, their small size and their location derives from peculiar economic factors especially agriculture. Before the establishment of the colonial administration, there were no towns in any recognizable sense in the interior of Kenya. This is because there was no economic basis for urban settlements since the prevailing subsistence agriculture and stock herding did not give rise to any permanent trading centres.

Morgan on his part argues that the White Highlands were a principal attraction for commercial settlements. They were areas where a fully developed cash economy was being introduced by European settlement, presenting opportunities for selling a wide range of goods such as groceries, agricultural equipment and for purchasing produce for export and for sale to the incipient towns. In addition, an immigrant trading community would feel more secure in such areas than in the tribal districts. However, some Asian, or sometimes Somali or Arab traders penetrated the most remote areas.<sup>33</sup>

According to Morgan, it was not purely economic factors that were responsible for the growth of towns. The European community was one familiar with the urban way of life, and a club and a small hotel helped to swell the local trading centre.<sup>34</sup> This assertion by Morgan is a true reflection of what took place in farm 64, later renamed Eldoret. The town was a European idea, imported to the White Highlands, specifically Uasin Gishu Plateau. True to Morgan's word, a club, and a small hotel (Pioneer Hotel) were established adjoining the Standard Bank of South Africa.

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<sup>33</sup> Morgan, W.T. (1968) *Urbanization in Kenya: Origins and Trends*; Transactions of the Institute of British Geographer No. 46 (Mar. 1969), pp. 1967-1978.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



Cities can only exist where a surplus of energy (food and fuel) is available to support a large non-agricultural population.<sup>35</sup> As such, the location of an urban centre is, first and foremost, a function of the quantity of surplus energy available, which in turn is jointly determined by agricultural productivity and transport costs. When the European folk brought their urban idea to Uasin Gishu Plateau, the location was meticulously decided based on the hinterland's agricultural productivity and the transport linkage through the railway line to the East African coast for export.<sup>36</sup>

Historically, the amount of food that could be produced in a given region was the primary determinant of the surplus available to support an urban population in that region.<sup>37</sup> However, advancements in transport technology ultimately made it possible to import food from other regions, rendering the potential amount of surplus that urban populations could theoretically acquire a dual function of local productivity and transport costs. This duality has a suitable application in the case of Eldoret where the railway line was connected in the 1920s to move surplus from the interior to the coast.

Globally, the state of agricultural productivity at any given time determines the absolute amount of surplus available to support the world's population. Transport costs, on the other hand, determine the extent to which surplus can be moved from more-productive to less-productive regions. Increasing agricultural output in the pre-modern era was driven largely by bringing more land under cultivation.<sup>38</sup> His hypothesis is that countries with greater agricultural potential and naturally lower transportation costs began urbanizing earlier than those with limited agricultural potential and higher trade costs.

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<sup>35</sup> Lowry, I.S. (1990) *World Urbanization in Perspective*, 150.

<sup>36</sup> This was not the case in the initial period though. The railway was extended to Eldoret from Londiani in 1924.

<sup>37</sup> Fox, S. (2012) *Urbanization as a Global Historical Process: Theory and Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa*; 285-310

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

The economic activities of the settlers centred largely on agriculture which was initially carried out on a subsistence level. After the violent elimination of competition from African peasants they turned towards supplying the internal market. A final stage was reached by producing cash crops exclusively for the world market. Typical transport routes were focused on the evacuation of agricultural produce from the African interior to the port towns, many of which were also capitals, while western imports were brought into Africa along these routes.<sup>39</sup> This is a clear description of what took place in Uasin Gishu thereby giving rise to the emergence of Eldoret town. It became inevitable to develop a centre that would become the point of articulating that agricultural mode of production.

#### **1.10.2 Contribution of other economic factors to the emergence and development of urban centres**

Winters says that urbanization involves emphasis on economic and commercial aspects. According to him, one of the key advantages of living in an urban centre is the market potential of the population; that there is a much greater variety of shopping opportunities as compared to rural areas. This tends to result in lower prices and longer shopping hours. Most cities have shopping malls and big box centres with many different stores that stay open for long hours that often include food, recreation, entertainment, and cultural activities to attract customers. In addition, the presence of a public transport system, water and sewerage services, a greater variety of educational and recreation facilities are some of the attractions to the urban centres.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Biermann, W. and Kossler, R. (1980), *The Settler Mode of Production: The Rhodesian Case*, 106-116.

<sup>40</sup> Winters, J., (2015), *Urbanization, Natural Amenities, and Subjective Well-Being: Evidence from U.S. Countries*, 6

Cities are the dominant centres of economic activity and jobs and continue to attract most foreign investment.<sup>41</sup> According to him, the explanation of urbanization is largely an explanation of economic activity. They maintained that cities would not grow unless there were productive things for people to do in them. In this sense, Eldoret was established as a centre of agriculture and agribusiness.

Akin Mabogunje states that cities are essentially the points of articulation of an economic system. He argues that it is ideal therefore for every economic system to generate its own “appropriate system of cities”.<sup>42</sup> The choice of Eldoret as a town centre, as such, can be understood as having been intended to be a point of articulation of the colonial economic system. In this regard, Eldoret became an unavoidable product of this economic system generation. However, this does not mean that urbanization automatically leads to economic development. Some less developed countries have achieved levels of urbanization that are pretty much close to those of the advanced economies.

The abilities of cities to promote development depends on the structure and operation of the capitalist world economy.<sup>43</sup> This is unlike Mabogunje’s line of thinking which centred on the fact that cities are centres of innovation, industrialization, and modernization which, according to him, played a major role in the cities’ economic development.

Freund says that the expanding capitalist European world led to urban growth in Africa, growth of a kind that was linked to a more general commercialization of society. According to him, the towns that developed in consequence could be

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<sup>41</sup> Tolley, G.S. & Thomas, V. (1987) *The Economics of Urbanization and Urban Policies in Developing Countries*; A world Bank Symposium Conference held in 1983, 11

<sup>42</sup> Mabogunje, A.L. (1968) *Urbanization in Nigeria*, 11

<sup>43</sup> Winters, J., (2015), *Urbanization, Natural Amenities, and Subjective Well-Being: Evidence from U.S. Countries*, 8

described as exploitative; that they lived off trade and state formations that systematically extracted wealth from pastoralists and peasants.<sup>44</sup> Freund's assertion suits the case of Eldoret as far as the exploitative motive is concerned. The extraction of African labour in the surrounding farms and the pastoralists complementary contribution completed the exploitation circuit that eventually gave rise to the emergence and growth of Eldoret town.

As much as it is true that wealth in Africa began to be commercialized on a larger scale and that it is through providing the sites for the processing, transport, and administration of that commerce that urban growth largely took place; this was simultaneously exploitative and stimulating according to Freund. To him, it was only in towns that capitalism could be engendered, organized, and administered even in the raw state in which it was forming in Africa.

Urbanization tends to affect every aspect of existence. It exercises its pervasive influence not only within the urban milieu strictly defined but also in the rural hinterland. The quest for services such as water, electricity, clean environment, food, educational and health facilities, security, among others, make urban centres areas of such huge influence. The attraction of the rural dwellers to the urban centres provides the much-needed urban labour force and a huge market that enable trade to thrive.<sup>45</sup> This is what progressively leads to bulging urban population and urbanization in general and Eldoret was not an exception.

Cities are engines of economic development and industrialization. According to him, cities can generate regional development and trigger rural-urban migration, an important population dynamic. They point out that some studies in urban geography

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<sup>44</sup> Freund, B. (2007) *The African City*, 79

<sup>45</sup> Henderson, V. (2006), *The Urbanization Process and Economic Growth: The so-what Question*, 34

“...saw towns and cities as adaptations to natural physical circumstances. Attributes of settlements were interpreted as responses to local sites, regional resources, and the opportunities and constraints surrounding them.” As such, the key focus was how topography and other physical attributes influence the layout of streets and neighbourhoods as well as the direction of their growth.<sup>46</sup> The choice of Eldoret as a town site could very well fit in the views advanced by Knox and McCarthy. The infertile nature of farm 64 which later became Eldoret town influenced its choice as a town centre given that the surrounding area was an exclusive agricultural zone.

No country in the world has been able to develop without the growth of its cities.<sup>47</sup> This growth is understood in this study as economic growth. The confluence of capital, people and space unleashes the benefits of agglomeration, with greater social and economic interactions, creating a fertile environment for innovation in ideas, technologies, and processes.<sup>48</sup>

The 2009 World Development Report on Reshaping Economic Geography identifies higher densities, shorter distances, and lower divisions as the variables underpinning the economic success of cities. The African Development Bank’s Urban Development Strategy identifies the large and diversified pool of labour, the greater local market, easier access to suppliers and specialized services, lower information and transaction costs, more diversified contact networks, and an environment that encourages innovation among the variables that increase the potential productivity of cities.<sup>49</sup> The factors highlighted in the two reports were relevant to colonial urbanization in the lens of the settlers and the entire global capitalist system.

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<sup>46</sup> Fox, S. (2012) *Urbanization as a Global Historical Process: Theory and Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa*, 23

<sup>47</sup> World Bank Report, (2009), 7

<sup>48</sup> Granoff, L., (2014), *Urbanization and Economic Development: Private Sector Linkages*, 12

<sup>49</sup> *Urban Development Strategy*, Africa Development Bank

Additionally, cities are gateways to international markets and agents for domestic production and consumption.<sup>50</sup> They produce and consume not only for, and from themselves, but also for, and from the international market. Moreover, city residents tend to spend significantly more than rural ones. For instance, in 2010, China's urban residents spent 3.6 times more capital than their rural counterparts. Every rural resident moving into cities cumulatively hugely increases consumption hence greater markets and investment opportunities.<sup>51</sup>

Urbanization and GDP per capita tend to move in close sync as countries develop.<sup>52</sup> As such, developed countries with high GDP have relatively high proportions of their population living in urban areas and vice versa.<sup>53</sup> This further strengthens the view that urbanization has a symbiotic relationship with economic development. Cross country studies also demonstrate that higher levels of urbanization are associated with higher per capita incomes.<sup>54</sup> Their view is premised on the fact that urban locations are economically advantageous for both people and enterprises.

Economies of scale offer both efficiency and consumption advantages to urban economies, manifested in several ways. Process industries such as chemicals, steel, and automobiles, operate more effectively at higher volumes, a factor which has traditionally made them be established in urban areas. Economies of scale in input markets affect a wide range of industries. In addition, specialized services such as accounting, tax advice, and intellectual property management are generally easier to obtain in large cities.

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<sup>50</sup> World Bank, (2009)

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) (2010) 'India's Urban Awakening'.

<sup>53</sup> Henderson, V. (2006), *The Urbanization Process and Economic Growth: The so-what Question*.

<sup>54</sup> Mc Gee, T.G (1971) *The Urbanization Process in the Third World; Explorations in search of a theory*,

Specialization among input producers may also allow cost reductions, making local purchasers of their inputs more productive. Public services such as hospitals require a critical mass of consumers to make them economically viable. The density of urban areas increases the range of such amenities.<sup>55</sup> It became inevitable for certain amenities to be established in Eldoret town. They included schools, hospitals, and religious centres to cater for the early European settlers and later, the Africans.

Externalities of scale in manufacturing and services attract firms and workers in cities. This is because firms' production costs decrease with the size of their own industry through scale externalities such as better local infrastructure, within-industry knowledge, and information spillovers.<sup>56</sup> The assertions advanced by Henderson explain the reason for the construction of the railway line, the Londiani-Eldoret road and other infrastructural works that are examined later in this study. Such were meant to reduce production costs in Eldoret town.

These positive externalities explain the advantages of 'agglomeration', firms locating near each other as a positive aspect of urbanization.<sup>57</sup> They benefit from being close to other firms in either the same or related product lines and in locations with good access to domestic and international markets. This would eventually contribute to the establishment of an industrial zone in Eldoret town.

Henderson maintains that higher levels of urbanization as measured by the percentage of total national population that lives in urban areas, is associated with increased income per capita. The level of urbanization and income per capita are highly correlated, and much of the variation is explained by differences in definitions of

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<sup>55</sup> Spence, et al. (ed) (2009), *Urbanization and Growth*, 15

<sup>56</sup> Henderson, V. (2006), *The Urbanization Process and Economic Growth: The so-what Question*, 59

<sup>57</sup> Lipton, M. in *Development and the Rural-Urban Divide* J. Harris, M. Moore, Eds.

‘urban’ across countries.<sup>58</sup> As such, the increased income per capita further leads to increased urbanization. This is further proof of the symbiotic manner in which urbanization and economic growth positively influence one another.

The continued increase in the share of the population living in urban areas in recent decades has been welcomed by many economists who view urbanization as a positive achievement on the path towards health and prosperity. Such economists maintain that urbanization underpins and enhances economic growth and therefore increases wealth of nations in the long run.<sup>59</sup> Their view is that the agglomeration of diffuse populations into urban areas will generally increase output per capita, very large or rapidly growing urban areas can, on the other hand, have offsetting negative effects through crowding and environmental degradation, and by overwhelming city administrations’ capacities.

They advise that policy regarding urban development should weigh carefully the positive and negative spillovers of urbanization, with a presumption that urbanization is a policy for promoting economic growth. They conclude that there is no evidence that the level of urbanization affects the rate of economic growth. Their findings weaken the rationale for either encouraging or discouraging urbanization as part of a strategy for economic growth.

Lipton on his part opines that urban dwellers exert political pressure forcing central governments to provide direct investment in urban industries, and by a more generous provision of public services such as health and education. As such, central governments encourage urbanization by keeping agricultural prices low thereby

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Bloom, D. E. (et al.) (2008), *Urbanization and the wealth of Nations; Program on the Global Demography of Aging*.



pushing the disadvantaged rural folk to the industries.<sup>60</sup> Such has been the scenario in Kenya, and Eldoret wasn't an exception.

Cities as locations of concentrated economic activities offer large and diversified labour pools and are in closer proximity to customers and suppliers.<sup>61</sup> Cities also offer increased opportunities for division of labour and make intra-industry specialization more likely.<sup>62</sup> Firms may not only profit from horizontal and vertical spillovers but are also able to respond to market demand changes more effectively. In addition, relatively cheaper transport combines with the proximity to customers and suppliers to reduce the costs of trade.

Aggregation of educated and creative people in one place enables cities to incubate new ideas and technologies and may lead to efficient growth by potentiating the full social returns to increased human capital. However, in the face of all these attractive urban advantages, the implied optimal level of urban population share is unclear. According to Bloom (2008), as urban areas become more densely populated, changes in urban population share may have no effect on productivity growth. Would raising the level of urban population share in a country promote economic growth and a higher level of income? Bloom says no. None of his empirical tests provide support for the view that urban population share has a causal effect on the level of income. Although urbanization is part of the process of economic development, it does not appear to have an independent influence on economic growth even when primacy factors are considered.

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<sup>60</sup> Lipton, M. in *Development and the Rural-Urban Divide* J. Harris, M. Moore, Eds.

<sup>61</sup> Hall, R., and Ciccone (1996) *American Economic Review* 86,54.

<sup>62</sup> Becker, R., and Henderson, J.V., in *The Economics of Cities*, J.M. Huriot, J.F. Thisse, Eds.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, natural disasters, such as extended droughts and floods, have destroyed the economic basis of rural life in several regions in the developing world and induced major population flows toward cities in countries like Angola, Ethiopia, and Mauritania.<sup>63</sup> This study also sought to establish if such factors contributed to the growth of Eldoret town. Even in the absence of natural disasters, economic conditions in the countryside, sometimes brought about by policies that favour city dwellers such as low prices of agricultural produce, can push rural residents to cities that, in the long run, offer them little in terms of economic sustenance. In such cases, cities may not be economic “success stories” despite experiencing rapid population growth. The result is a level of poverty and squalor that may sometimes be worse than rural poverty levels.

It is thus clear from the review of the literature in this section that urbanization was (and still is) supported by availability of food surplus which made the White Highlands a principal attraction for commercial settlements. Economic and commercial aspects such as a greater variety of shopping opportunities, industrialization and employment opportunities further strengthened the economic motive of urbanization. In addition, it was only in towns that capitalism could be engendered, organized, and administered, making them the nerve centres of incorporation into the capitalist world economy. All these factors harmonized with those economic factors that contributed to the rise and development of Eldoret as an urban centre, but which have not been critically analyzed from a historical perspective.

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<sup>63</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2007)

### 1.10.3 Urbanization and Economic Development in Kenya

The process of urbanization in Kenya can be directly attributed to non-African settlers (whites and Asians). This is particularly true in the central highlands region which accounts for over 80% of Kenya's urban centres. According to the 1948 population census, an urban centre was defined as any compact settlement with a population of 2000 and above inhabitants. On this basis, there were only 17 urban centres in Kenya and Eldoret was among them with a population of 8193 people.<sup>64</sup>

The colonial period introduced a new type of economic, social, and political development in Kenya. The economy of the country was dominated by non-African settlers who were concentrated mainly in the central highlands and/or in the gazetted administrative bomas.<sup>65</sup> Obudho further argues that colonization imposed a deliberately segregated economic, political, and socio-cultural climate in which the Europeans dominated the country, the Indians and the Asians were the "middlemen", and the Africans were overworked in low-paying jobs in ethnic areas. Until political independence in 1963, the urban centres were regarded rather as bases for administrative and commercial activities than as centres for permanent African settlement and participation.

Urbanization in Kenya was as a result of imperial capitalism and the story of the railway line is also the story of urbanization in Kenya. A quick elaboration of Kenya's main towns leaves no doubts about the significance of the railway and its influence upon urban development, which was later to open the way for migration and urbanization. Indeed, all the major urban centres in Kenya such as Nairobi, Mombasa,

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<sup>64</sup> Obudho, R.A (ed.) (1981) *Urbanization and Development Planning in Kenya*.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Nakuru, Eldoret, Kisumu, Nyeri, Nanyuki and Thika are all located by the railway line.<sup>66</sup>

The second cause of urban development in Kenya was that the colonial administrators were taken to the interior to establish the effectiveness of administration to the natives, and this led to the second level of urban centres. Administration also went hand in hand with missionary work. In addition, new administration centres became points for collection of raw materials, taxes and control of labour market which was a primary concern of the colonial system in Kenya and many other colonized African countries. Examples of these towns in Kenya are: Kakamega, Murang'a, Nandi Hills, Kapsabet, Kabarnet, Kitui, Kisii, Siaya, Kapenguria and Kilifi. After independence in 1963, the restriction of the Africans migrating freely to urban areas was lifted and this led to rapid urbanization increasing the urban population and labour force in the main towns of Nairobi and Mombasa as well as other secondary ones that have since been established.

A number of studies have been conducted on urbanization in Kenya some of which discuss themes relevant to understanding the history of Eldoret town. However, there is no study that attempts a systematic and chronological analysis of the evolution of Eldoret into an urban centre particularly economic analysis envisaged in this study. In fact, interest in reconstructing many of the urban history of Kenya's urban areas has been very minimal, leaving the work to other disciplines like geography, anthropology, and sociology. This review is therefore designed to illustrate this prevailing gap and implicitly assert the significance of undertaking the study of

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<sup>66</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and Rose A. Obudho (1992). *The Colonial Urban Development Through Space and Time*, in W.R Ochieng' and R.A Maxon, (eds.), *An Economic History of Africa*.

economic factors that influenced the growth of Eldoret town. In particular, these are barren years in terms of economic urban study of Eldoret.

Kenya has seen positive economic growth in tandem with increasing rates of urbanization, but the country has not yet experienced an economic transformation. Urbanization has the potential to improve economic opportunities and living conditions for all Kenyans. There is a strong positive relationship between urbanization and economic growth. Since most of the rural poor live relatively close to the largest urban centers, promoting internal mobility—through better transport links, public goods, access to credit, and land tenure—holds promise to reduce rural poverty.<sup>67</sup>

Murunga attempts to trace and explain the nature and location of Mumias settlement prior to any external non-African interference. He also analyses the establishment of colonial Indian and European commercial interests in Mumias and examines their impact in the environs of the centre.<sup>68</sup> His ideas are useful to this study to the extent that it is a bold and scholarly effort in reconstructing the history of a Kenyan urban centre with a significant historical value and affords the history of Mumias a sound intellectual approach.

However, Murunga's study ends in 1940 and therefore explores less of the few years prior to independence and post-independence factors responsible for the expansion of Mumias town. It is necessary for wider and deeper analysis to be carried out regarding the period since the exit of the colonial authorities from Mumias and indeed the rest of Kenya's former seats of colonial power. He also ventures remotely and scantily

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<sup>67</sup> World Bank 2015

<sup>68</sup> Murunga, G.R. (1998), *The Evolution of Mumias Settlement into an Urban Centre to Circa 1940*.

into the eventual establishment of Kakamega town and not at all did he attempt to explore into the development of the town.

Oyugi in his study titled ‘The Evolution of Kakamega Settlement into an Urban Centre between 1920 to 2010’, explained the meaning of the term Kakamega, the impact of European colonial administrators’ shift from Mumias to Kakamega in 1920. He also analyzed the place of the Indian merchant capital that expanded trade in Kakamega with the establishment of the first grass thatched Indian shop in 1903. Kakamega, which was initially referred to Sheywe rose to become an economic melting pot in Western Kenya.<sup>69</sup>

He also explores the discovery of gold at Rosterman, and the attendant increased European influx into the town followed by the exodus after gold exhaustion in late 1930s. In his study, there is a mention of the comparative stagnation of Kakamega town compared to ‘its age mate towns such as Eldoret’.<sup>70</sup> This only alludes to a relative greater intensity of economic progress in Eldoret town from the early colonial times. This study opened a lacuna for further scrutiny of the economic factors behind the rise of Eldoret town.

Colonial urbanization was the product of special kinds of political economies, societies and cultures and cannot be separated from the process based on colonial accumulation and domestic consumption which produced it.<sup>71</sup> The origins, growth, and development of Eldoret town, a colonial town *par excellence*, largely vindicate Coquery-Vidrovitch’s analysis.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Oyugi, J. O. (2015), *The Evolution of Kakamega into an Urban Centre, 1920-2010*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. (1991), *The Process of Urbanization in Africa*, 52

<sup>72</sup> Ndege, P (2005), *Afrikaner Identity Politics and the Growth of Eldoret Town, 1903-1939*.

Ndege concentrates on the Afrikaner identity politics and links it with the growth of Eldoret town between 1903-1939.<sup>73</sup> This is a useful academic endeavor that gives a good ground on which to launch a formidable historical account of the economic biography of Eldoret town. However, the study gives little focus on African agency and as such leaves room for further enquiry about the historical role of Africans on the growth of Eldoret town during the pre and post 1939 period to 2003 which this study discusses at length. It also does not mention much to do with the role of educational institutions in the town as well as developments in the residential areas. The booming athletic economy of Eldoret is also not mentioned. The airport, pipeline, stadiums<sup>74</sup>, roads, railways, industries etc. are also omitted. They become fertile grounds for further research.

The rise, development, and transformation of a settlement into an urban centre in Kenya has not been adequately studied historically.<sup>75</sup> Existing literature on urban growth have been studied by geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists. Relevant as these disciplinary approaches may be, their accounts are conveyed non-historically and strictly in behavioural, structural, and demographic terms.<sup>76</sup>

The Uasin Gishu Plateau formed part of Kenya's former white highlands. Afrikaners and other white settlers would find Uasin Gishu suitable for livestock keeping and wheat farming because of the abundance of land and labour, which were viewed as idle. Poverty and inadequate infrastructure, particularly rail transport before 1925, forced the majority of Afrikaners to engage in primitive accumulation based on

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Or stadia

<sup>75</sup> Murunga, (1998), *The Evolution of Mumias Settlement into an Urban Centre to circa 1940*, 2

<sup>76</sup> Aseka, E.M (1990) *Urbanization*, in W.R Ochieng' (ed) *Themes in Kenyan History*, 44

monoculture and squatter labour.<sup>77</sup> The agrarian environment led to the emergence of Eldoret town as a service, commercial and administrative center in quite the same way as many other towns in Kenya.<sup>78</sup>

According to Ndege, even the grievances and interests of the white settlers centered around issues such as land, labour, transportation and other agricultural infrastructure and inputs; and only secondarily on the nature of the services and facilities that were established in Eldoret.<sup>79</sup> This assertion rightfully glorifies the economic motive responsible for the establishment of Eldoret town. Fox on his part supports this view by saying that economic development is the motive force behind urbanization.<sup>80</sup>

Ndege also examines the recruitment of local Nandi and Keiyo into wage and squatter labour, an idea which he says, meant that they mostly stayed on farms like their white masters. It was not until the 1930s that the pressure of depression and changes in colonial labour policy led to a reduction of squatter labourers and to their (gradual) influx into Eldoret town. The establishment of Eldoret town was very much influenced by Afrikaner settlers. It was only after their settlement in the Uasin Gishu Plateau and demands for security that the administration set up a police camp in the area.<sup>81</sup>

Soon after being joined by English and British South Africans, the Afrikaner settlers demanded postal services. The underlying factor in the establishment of the camp and the post office was the success of settler farming and the justifiable number of Europeans residing in the Plateau. The Postmaster General established a post office

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<sup>77</sup> Youe, C. "Settler Capital and the Assault on the Squatter Peasantry in Kenya's Uasin Gishu District, 1942-63, *African Affairs*, vol. 87, No. 348" Jul. 1988, pp. 393-418

<sup>78</sup> Obudho, R.A (ed.) (1981) *Urbanization and Development Planning in Kenya*.

<sup>79</sup> Ndege, P (2005), *Afrikaner Identity Politics and the Growth of Eldoret Town, 1903-1939*.

<sup>80</sup> Fox, S. (2012) Urbanization as a Global Historical Process: Theory and Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa; *Population & Development Review* 38 (2): 285-310 (June 2012)

<sup>81</sup> Ndege, P (2005), *Afrikaner Identity Politics and the Growth of Eldoret Town, 1903-1939*.



on farm 64. This farm, according to Ndege, had been purchased by Willie van Aardt then who sold it back to the government. Much of it was rocky and unsuitable for agricultural use. It was this place that was chosen by Corbett, the DC, at the site for the establishment of the administrative center.<sup>82</sup>

In the new Kenyan capital of Nairobi, founded on the line of rail in the centre on the new colony in 1899, massive suburban tracts were laid out with three-lined boulevards and no expectation of public transport whatsoever. This was an English Garden City in the tropics for the privileged.<sup>83</sup> This early description of Nairobi demonstrates and proves the level of manipulation and economic seclusion that the colonialists visited upon the colonized peoples.

In due time, white (and to a lesser extent Indian) properties speculators were able to make substantial profits from the sale of privatized land. All these took place in the backdrop of African quarters emerging near the center as an afterthought wretched and unplanned. According to Freund, the African area consisted of small purpose-built rooms intended to serve single workers on the most Spartan of models.

The early history of Nairobi is marked by poor African neighborhoods getting flattened and removed when they were seen as inconvenient. Areas initially demarcated for Africans in Nairobi, although characterized mainly by neglect were simply demolished as the city centre expanded and land was required for “significant purposes”.<sup>84</sup> The economic aspiration of the white community had little regard for the African people. The city was meant for no other race but the whites and a few Indians.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Freund, B. (2007) *The African City*, 79

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 81

It was basically an economic center whose main drive was to satisfy the economic desire of the white people.

From the foregoing review of relevant literature, it is clear that there has been no adequate treatment of the role of economic factors in the emergence and development of Eldoret town in a scholarly manner. This has therefore necessitated a systematic study of the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret into an urban centre from 1903 up to 2003.

### **1.11 The Research Methodology**

This sub-section focuses on research design, sampling procedures, target population, research instruments, data collection and data analysis. It basically explains the totality of how the study was conducted.

#### **1.11.1 Research Design**

The research design used in this study was historical research design which involves collecting, verifying, and synthesizing evidence from the past to establish facts that defend or refute the hypotheses. Historical research design uses primary sources, secondary sources, and lots of qualitative data sources such as diaries, official records, reports etc. The authenticity of such sources had to be ascertained through corroboration. Such corroboration was through comparison of various sources, observation, and oral interviews.

#### **1.11.2 Sampling Procedures**

Purposive sampling method was considered appropriate in conducting this study. In this method, the researcher purposely targets a group of people believed to be knowledgeable for the study. This is then followed by selecting information rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied. The history of Eldoret

town is best told by knowledgeable persons whose long life and keen mind make them an invaluable resource and asset for the study.

The snowball or chain sampling was particularly considered as being quite appropriate. Snowball sampling begins with a few people or cases and then gradually increases the sample size as new contacts are mentioned by the people you started out with.<sup>85</sup> This method was preferred by the researcher as being adequate in a study involving past events such as this one and that only a fraction of relevant materials is available or accessible. The sample population comprised 30 people with considerable knowledge of the history of Eldoret town drawn from across Eldoret town and its outskirts. These respondents were purposively chosen from among town residents comprising of farmers, administrators (serving and retired), *jua kali* workers, and businesspeople.

### **1.11.3 Target Population**

Eldoret comprises of a population of over 400,000 people according to 2019 census. The town is the county headquarters of Uasin Gishu County. It is the fifth largest town after Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru. **Figure 1** below is a map showing location of Eldoret town (circled in red) and **Figure 2** is a map of Eldoret Municipality which is the study area.

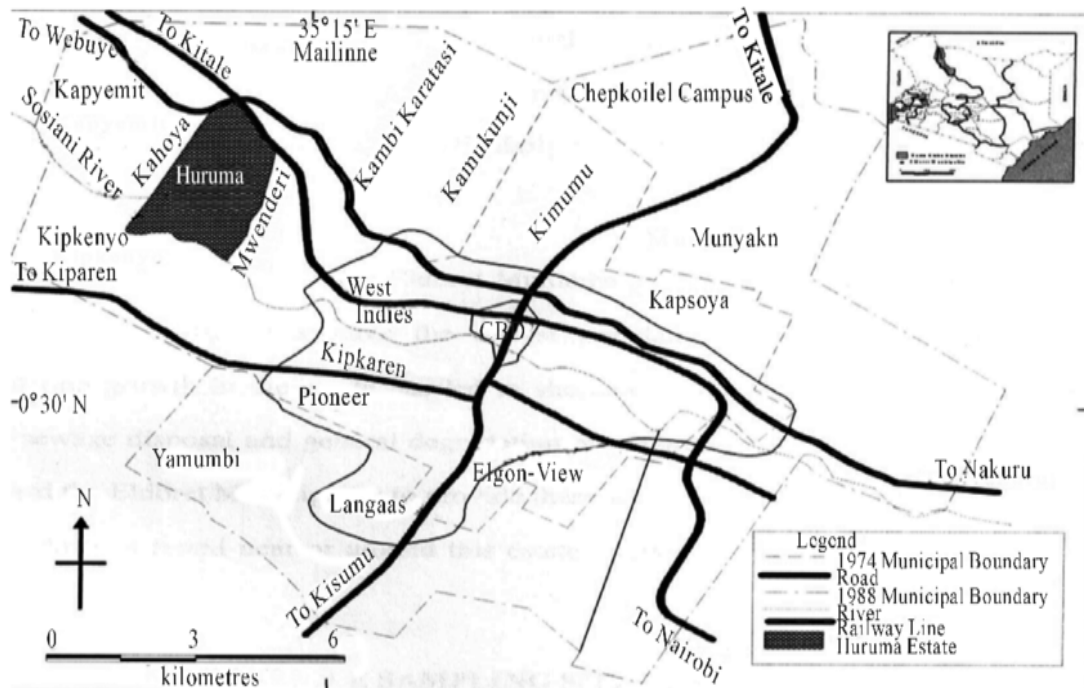
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<sup>85</sup> Kombo D. K and Tromp D.L.A (2006) *Proposal and Thesis writing: An Introduction*, 83



**Figure 1: Map showing location of Eldoret town (circled)**

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net>



**Figure 2: Map Showing Eldoret Municipality**

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net>

#### **1.11.4 Research Instruments**

There were three major instruments for data collection. These included: in-depth interviews, voice recorders and observation. Interviews were conducted hand in hand with a voice recorder. The voice recorder captured the responses of the interviewees for later analysis. Each respondent's recorded answers were coded for accuracy. Observation was instrumental in document verification as well as corroboration of every evidence.

#### **1.11.5 Data Collection**

A research permit was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) before embarking on the study. NACOSTI is a government institution based in Nairobi whose mandate is to issue research permit before any official research is conducted. This bestows legitimacy to the researcher whenever they visit any place of research interest.

This study relied on two complimentary sources: written and oral sources. These constituted primary and secondary sources of data. Primary written documents were collected mainly from the archives. These include the Kenya National Archives, County archives in Nakuru and archives belonging to individuals, groups, and institutions. From the Kenya National Archives, documents such as Uasin Gishu District Annual Reports, Political Record Books, handing over reports, intelligence reports, native affairs reports, agricultural reports, personal letters, and diaries were sought. These are firsthand records from participants or observers that have been passed down for posterity.

Oral interviews were conducted both face to face and over the phone. The respondents were purposively selected, and new contacts were established through snowball

technique. They were both male and female. In total, thirty respondents were interviewed ranging from businesspeople, *jua kali* workers, retirees, administrators, scholars, and farmers. Their responses were analyzed both thematically and chronologically. In some cases, interpreters were involved since some respondents could speak neither English nor Kiswahili. The age variance was between thirty-two to eighty-eight years.

To administer the interviews effectively, a personal visit to the knowledgeable informants was made. The researcher then availed the research permit and an introductory letter to the respondents and then explained the purpose of the research. Some respondents displayed a reasonable mastery of Eldoret's history despite their relatively young age, especially recent history. Such were incorporated as oral informants.

Data from the interviews were scrutinized and analyzed chronologically and thematically to establish links with respective research objectives that they address. The analyses were fragmented as follows: early years prior to town declaration in 1912, economic developments between 1913 and 1929, advancements during the great depression up to end of World War II (1930-1945); post-war economic progress of Eldoret up to 1963; and finally, economic drivers for change in the post-independence era (1963 to 2003). The five sub-divisions were in some cases further divided into themes or even shorter historical epochs. The information derived from oral interviewees were analyzed on the basis of common and non-common assertions and clustered according to themes and periods in question.

The researcher also visited the county commissioner's office for information on population as well as administrative boundaries and related issues. In addition, the

county office was also visited for information dealing with their key functions and progress made over time within the town<sup>86</sup>. Arrangements were made for authorization by the Governor's office for such information to be availed to the researcher.

Secondary data were used to broaden the scope of the explanations and conclusions drawn from the research. They included mainly written sources like books, journals, unpublished theses, seminar papers, periodicals among others. These were extracted from libraries like the Margaret Thatcher Library of Moi University, Masinde Muliro University Library, and online sources. The written materials from these libraries constituted important secondary data for purposes of contextualization and deepening the understanding of important historical national and international events.

#### **1.11.6 Ethical Considerations**

Upon being informed about the research topic and the need for their contribution, respondents were requested for permission to state their names and age. All of them voluntarily did so and did not raise any identity fears. However, a few respondents chose to give only one name, perhaps for confidentiality reasons. Names used in this study appear as were given by respondents.

#### **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter provided the background against which an analysis of the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret town was launched. A review of diverse literature has established that there is no study that attempts a systematic and chronological analysis of the evolution of Eldoret into an urban centre, particularly the kind of economic analysis envisaged in this study. It therefore

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<sup>86</sup> Focus was of this study was on the defunct Municipal Council. It did not scrutinize county achievements.

illustrated a prevailing gap and categorically asserted the significance of undertaking the study of the role of economic factors that influenced the growth of Eldoret town since inception. In addition, the chapter explained the research methodology and the theoretical constructs employed in this study. The next chapter provides a launching pad of this century biographical economic analysis of the role of economic factors that influenced the evolution and development of Eldoret town. It explores the evolution of Eldoret town up to the town's declaration in 1912.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EVOLUTION OF ELDORET TOWN UPTO 1912

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the early history of Eldoret before European arrival. It describes the existence of the Sirikwa community in the Uasin Gishu Plateau and how they paved way for the Maasai and the latter's subsequent disturbance by the Nandi following a grueling battle at Kipkarren (place of spears). Also described is the arrival of the pioneer Europeans, the von Breda brothers, the early European land matters, early agricultural overtures and the game and hunting activities on the plateau. Then followed the proclamation of Eldoret town in the official gazette of 14 November 1912, the erection of a police station, administrative offices, and officials' houses. The origin and meaning of the name Eldoret are also explained. Finally, the establishment of early European and Indian business activities and the establishment of Standard Bank of South Africa in 1912 winds up the chapter.

The cumulative picture that emerges in the chapter is that the evolution of Eldoret can be attributed to Sir Charles Eliot's invitation of settlers into the East African Protectorate. The settlers were induced by the news concerning 'much game and shooting at lions, camel, rhinoceros...and every kind of game.'<sup>1</sup>Cheap fertile land which supported settler farming was the prime reason for Eldoret's emergence. The ensuing trading activities and the establishment of the Standard Bank of South Africa further placed the town on a sure evolution path.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Nico Postma, The Leader of British East Africa, August 20, 1910, 3.

## 2.2 The Peopling of Uasin Gishu Plateau before European Arrival (Up to 1903)

In the lore of the Kalenjin and Maasai, the area that would later become Eldoret, was occupied by a pastoral people, the Sirikwa<sup>2</sup>, described by both communities as “the people who were here before us”<sup>3</sup>. They were the ‘original people’ in Uasin Gishu.<sup>4</sup>Uasin Gishu are Maasai words meaning ‘stream of cattle’.<sup>5</sup> The Plateau was originally known as *Guasu Ngishu*. Evidence of Maasai smelting in the past to make spearheads could still be spotted on the Plateau by 1963, especially at Mvita Estate, Kaptagat.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Political Record Book, Part One titled ‘Natives’ 1927-1930<sup>7</sup>, the earliest known occupation of the Uasin Gishu appears to have been by a little community called the Sirikwa. It states that very little is known of the community, who seem to have been assimilated by the Maasai and the Nandi, but evidence of their occupation is to be seen in the shape of the remains of their cattle bomas and what appear to have been dwellings. The bomas and dwellings alike were of loose packed stone, circular in shape, having a concave surface inside.<sup>8</sup> They were scattered across the expanse of Uasin Gishu from Ziwa<sup>9</sup> to Mosoriot.

“From the fact that in many cases, trees were found growing in the centre of the walls, the bomas were first lined with poles planted into the ground, and the stones packed up around them. It is possible that these poles may have been supports to a roof, but this is merely a conjecture. It is estimated that the last of this community were

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<sup>2</sup> David Kipkurgat Meto, 82 years, oral informant interviewed on 14 November 2020.

<sup>3</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 7

<sup>4</sup>Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant interviewed on 19 August 2020.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Kipketer Tarrus, 78 years, oral informant interviewed on 15 November 2020.

<sup>6</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 35

<sup>7</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1 Political Record File, Part 1 titled ‘Natives’ (Undated but appears to have been written during the colonial period) – Gives a vivid description of the early happenings in the Uasin Gishu plateau.

<sup>8</sup> David Kipkurgat Meto, 82 years, oral informant interviewed on 14 November 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Pius Kemboi, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

known on the plateau something over 100 years before the Europeans arrived.”<sup>10</sup>

These people are believed to have used irrigation in their agricultural efforts. The remains of a canal could still be seen on van Aardt’s farm during the early colonial period. Some of the oldest Nandi interrogated by the writer of the Political Record Book<sup>11</sup>, stated that they remembered their fathers talking about the community, and that they believe their language was of the Nandi groups, as the communities understood one another, and even intermarried. This writer opines that they were Nilotic people, an opinion supported by Mr. Casalis du Pury, who devoted much time to the study of these people.<sup>12</sup>

The Nandi people maintained that these people were much like themselves in habits and customs, owning varying numbers of cattle and sheep, and cultivating only small patches of grain, mostly *wimbi* (millet).<sup>13</sup>The Nandi legend has it that the Sirikwa were first disturbed by the Sikalai, or Masai Wandorobo from Laikipia. They are said to have commenced by raids on their cattle, and eventually to have organized a concerted onslaught resulting in the flight of the Sirikwa.<sup>14</sup>David, Kipkurgat Meto, an oral informant, however, says that it is not known if the Sirikwa belonged to the Maasai or the Kalenjin community. According to him, the Sirikwa migrated to Congo. This is supported by another respondent, Samuel Kipketer Tarus.<sup>15</sup>

A different account says some of the Sirikwa groups fled into Nandi, and intermarried with the community, as evidenced by the fact that during the early colonial period, there were found men bearing the name Arap Sirikwa, meaning, the son of Sirikwa.

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<sup>10</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1 Political Record File, Part 1 titled ‘Natives’, 1

<sup>11</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1 Political Record File, Part 2 titled European Occupation

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> David KipkurgatMeto, 82 years, oral informant interviewed on 14 November 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel KipketerTarrus, 78 years, oral informant interviewed on 15 November 2020.

<sup>15</sup>Meto and Tarrus, aged 82 and 78 respectively, maintain that the Sirikwa’s real identity could not be established although they had a distinct culture.

The biggest band of the vanquished Sirikwa community is believed to have fled south, and perhaps formed the origin of the Watendi community of South Kavirondo district (later became South Nyanza district) in Migori area. This belief was however denied by the elders of the community, who instead suggested that the Sirikwa may have fled into Tanganyika.<sup>16</sup>

The Tanganyika flight hypothesis is supported by one of the informants<sup>17</sup> who traces her roots to the Sirikwa. According to her, remnants of the Sirikwa are still found around Kesses where they are referred to as the Kapsirikwa. The informant maintains that most of the Sirikwa people are in Tanzania while others were assimilated by the Nandi<sup>18</sup> and Maasai. Another group of the Kapsirikwa is also found around Lessos.<sup>19</sup>

The Sirikwa community is said to have had some fairly advanced form of religion, which amongst other rites, included bathing in a sacred bath, and being thus spiritually cleansed, at certain periods or on certain occasions. There was evidence of some such bath in a stream near Kaptagat forest, where a square bath had been hewn from the solid rock.<sup>20</sup> Other stories stated that the bath was used in connection with circumcision ceremonies.<sup>21</sup>

The archaeological evidence indicates that from about AD 1200, the Central Rift and Western Highlands of Kenya were relatively densely inhabited by a group (or groups) of people who practiced both cereal cultivation and pastoralism. They made occasional use of metals and created distinctive roulette-decorated pottery. These people are principally known from their characteristic settlement sites, commonly

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<sup>16</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 Ross J.S, *Weekly news of 29<sup>th</sup> March 1968* in “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 41

<sup>17</sup> Leah Jepchumba, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on .

<sup>18</sup> Prisca Tanui, 53 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Leah Jepchumba, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>20</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, Part 1 – Native.,3

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

known as 'Sirikwa holes or hollows'. These comprise a shallow depression, sometimes reinforced at the edges by stone revetments, around which habitation structures were built. There are a number of indicators that the central depression was semi-fortified cattle *boma*, with people living in connected huts around the exterior.<sup>22</sup>

The Sirikwa were generally reputed to have had some higher form of religion than was found to exist amongst any of the other communities of Kenya. They were described as being of very light colour, similar to the lightest skinned Arabs.<sup>23</sup> The light complexion of the community is still evident among the Kapsirikwa of Kesses and Lessos. However, the Arab skin complexion connection is in dispute. Another respondent described the Sirikwa as being of “ordinary African light skin”.<sup>24</sup>

The Sirikwa were said to have lived largely on the fruit of the wild olive, as clusters of these trees were usually found near old dwellings, believed to have sprung up from kernels of fruit consumed. After the evacuation of the Sirikwa, the Sikalai appear to have settled with the captured stock until the Purko Masai<sup>25</sup> proper of Laikipia learnt that their serfs, the Wandorobo Sikalai had acquired the wealth, and sent bands to investigate. The Purko warriors appear to have attacked the Sikalai and forced them North toward Mount Elgon where they managed to hide some of their stock.<sup>26</sup>

The Purko did not remain but returned to their relations in Laikipia. Numbers of the Sikalai filtered through into Kitosh country, while others appear to have remained in Elgon, intermarrying with the Sebei. These people appear later to have invented for themselves the tribal name of '*I Gonyo*, while those who migrated to Kitosh later

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<sup>22</sup>Lane, Paul J. (4 July 2013). Mitchell, Peter; Lane, Paul J (eds.). *The Archaeology of Pastoralism and Stock-Keeping in East Africa. The Oxford Handbook of African Archaeology.* p. 728.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Leah Jepchumba, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> The community is referred to as Masai or Maasai as it appears in many documents.

<sup>26</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, Part 1 – Natives, 4

became known as Uasin Gishu Masai, merely the abbreviated term “Uasin Gishu”. The Maasai eventually moved from Uasin Gishu to Narok but were proud to be referred to as Uasin Gishu Masai.<sup>27</sup>

A further batch of these people fled into Nandi and settled in the location that was controlled by Arap Kitongo, near Lessos. These people retained their community name of Sikalai. From this time on, until the Europeans began to visit the Plateau on shooting safaris, the open lands remained largely unoccupied and only provided hunting grounds for surrounding communities. The ‘I Gonyo and Suk used the Trans Nzoia for grazing, while the Elgeyo ventured on the top of the escarpment with their herds. According to Ross as seen in the excerpt below, some Masai were present on the Plateau when Europeans started streaming in. Except for a few wandering families of Masai, the greater part of the Uasin Gishu Plateau remained uninhabited.<sup>28</sup>

During 1904-1906 when shooting safaris visited the Uasin Gishu, they frequently met with bands of Nandi roaming through the plateau, hunting, or raiding.<sup>29</sup> According to the Political Record Book 1927-30, the Plateau was an empty field for bands of the Nandi to conduct two main economic activities: Hunting and raiding. These are two practices that form the basic economic foundation upon which Europeans commenced massive, radical economic transformation. As such, the document above mentions Nandi presence on the Plateau.

Furthermore, an unnamed army officer, writing in 1905, but quoted in a 1968 publication, recounts pitching his tent on the Uasin Gishu plateau and discovering that a small encampment of the (Maasai) Wandorobo were quite close. But they were

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<sup>27</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 Political Record Book, Natives, 1927-1930, 3

<sup>28</sup> Ross, M (1927), Kenya from Within, p.42 This confirms Maasai presence on the Plateau.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 4.

depicted as being shy hunters who vanished upon realizing that there was a camp of white people around.<sup>30</sup>

It is therefore logically possible to deduce that the two communities concurrently existed on the Uasin Gishu Plateau: The Maasai (which included a group known as Masai Wandorobo) and the Nandi. The Plateau is further described as a vast grass land where “cooking usually had to be done on a fire of dried cattle dung”<sup>31</sup>. The ‘treeless expanse’ nature of the plateau is portrayed in plate 1 below:



**Plate 1: An ox wagon crossing the Uasin Gishu Plateau**  
**Source: *Kenya National Archives***

According to McGregor Ross, the fact that immense areas, entirely suitable for grazing purposes were not made use of, is to be attributed to the reign of terror

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<sup>30</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64 Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968)”, 17

<sup>31</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Tomorrow (1968), .42

exercised by the Maasai community which held vast tracts of country open for European penetration because they kept these areas from being occupied and used.<sup>32</sup> The Maasai were the forerunners of the Nandi in the Uasin Gishu Plateau.<sup>33</sup> In that sense, they preserved the Plateau, albeit unintentionally for the European settler farmers and hunting enthusiasts.

### **2.3 Early Europeans on the Uasin Gishu Plateau**

When Sir Charles Eliot became Commissioner of British East Africa (BEA) in 1901, he consistently encouraged the migration of European settlers into what became known as the “Highlands”. Not only did he encourage resident South Africans such as Robert Chamberlain and A.S. Flemmer to lead settlers to the Protectorate, but he also sent his collector of Customs, A. Marsden, to South Africa to promote his immigration schemes.<sup>34</sup>

The invitation to settle in East Africa came at a moment in South Africa when the end of the Anglo-Boer War and the withdrawal of British troops from the area had caused a serious depression. Economic recovery was hindered by the devastation caused by Kitchener’s counter-insurgency warfare.<sup>35</sup>

The African Standard of 1904 reported that things were going from bad to worse in South Africa and it would be necessary for distressed people to look for “fresh fields and pasture new”. These people must go somewhere. They had been ruined through the war and starvation stared certain people in the face. They had to seek new fields to make a living.<sup>36</sup> Certain British elements of South African societies were amenable to

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<sup>32</sup> Ross (1927), *Kenya From Within*, 238

<sup>33</sup> Kibiri John Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Ross, M.G. (1968), *Kenya from Within*, London, Frank Cass, and Co., 64

<sup>35</sup> G.H.C Le May (1965), *British Supremacy in South Africa; 1899-1907*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 158.

<sup>36</sup> African Standard, July 30, 1904, 2.



Eliot's blandishments, and, by the end of 1903, there was a steady stream of settlers from the "South", as it was called, to the Port of Mombasa.<sup>37</sup>

The base motive for the northward trek was materialistic, having been enticed by Eliot. However, some South Africans entertained the thought about migrating because of British political domination of their territory. Leaders of the two largest treks to BEA, the van Rensbergs and the Cloetes, sold their prosperous farms in South Africa and attempted to produce their farms on the Uasin Gishu Plateau.<sup>38</sup>

Members of this trek were motivated by several factors, some of which were like those of the earlier treks. All wanted land. Some years after the trek, Ds. Aucamp paraphrased Van Rensburg: "The reason for the trek was to acquire more land for my children." The same reason was given by Mr. C.J. Roets in 1969, who accompanied the Van Rensburg trek as a young man. The promise of as much land as each farmer could legitimately farm was the primary motive for his family's migration.<sup>39</sup>

However, some were enticed by the diversity of game on the Plateau:

I came to this land not because I thought this country better than Transvaal, but because I had heard about much game and shooting at lions, camel, rhinoceros, sea-cows (hippopotami), elephants and every kind of game, which offered an inducement.<sup>40</sup>

Their first stop, having been German East Africa, presented unprecedented challenges ranging from land shortage to compulsory use of German language in public schools. Despite cheapness of land (one rupee per hectare) in German East Africa, only twenty-five of one hundred families had found suitable land. The remainder were

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<sup>37</sup> M.P.K Sorrenson (1968), *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*; London, Oxford University Press, 61-68

<sup>38</sup> Groen, G. (1974), *Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-1969*, 5

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 49

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Nico Postma, The Leader of British East Africa, August 20, 1910, 3

landless. Consequently, during 1906, ten families returned to South Africa and thirty-three moved to British East Africa.<sup>41</sup>

It should be noted that the earliest application by Europeans for land in the Uasin Gishu Plateau was made in 1903 by W.F. Van Breda on behalf of himself and his two brothers. The application was made as he states:

Having been told by private individuals and Government officials of the wonderful Uasin Gishu Plateau, and especially about Sergoit Rock, at the foot of which there was a lake with four big rivers running into it<sup>42</sup> and one running out, the three brothers arrived at Mombasa from South Africa in February 1904. The applications for 10,000 acres of land each having been provisionally approved, they proceeded to the Plateau to make their selection. They entrained to Londiani and then trekked to Eldama Ravine where they were supplied with porters and guides by Mr. Foaker who was then District Commissioner there.<sup>43</sup>

From Ravine, they followed the old Sclaters Road to near Lessos, from which place Sergoit Rock was visible. Seeing the rock, they cut back to the Elgeyo escarpment Forest line, and continued towards Sergoit. Arriving there, they proceeded to make their selection of land, and followed the Sergoit river upstream to where it emerged from the forest and chose their land between that stream and the Sosiani.<sup>44</sup> All this movement was on foot. The sheer determination to reach the Plateau was not to be deterred by the dangers and perils on the way. The economic motivation was strong. This group of agriculturalists penetrated the interior without any roads. Their hope for economic break through, both for themselves and their kin, was dependent on the government's provision of security, land, and transport services.

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<sup>41</sup> Groen, G. (1974), *Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-1969*, 8

<sup>42</sup> Political Record Book, *European Occupation, 1927-30*, 1

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

After selection, they returned to Nairobi via Kaptumu and Kibigori, and obtained their occupation permits on 22 March 1904.<sup>45</sup> This was the first grant of land on the Uasin Gishu Plateau to Europeans. According to a different document, Piet Van Breda, a licensed surveyor, and his two brothers, one of whom was later murdered by the Elgeyo, were the first Afrikaner pioneers on the plateau.<sup>46</sup>

It is said settlement began in 1903 when the van Breda brothers squatted on land near Sergoit and visiting Zionists described them as dwelling in three mud huts with dried skins as windows, living off game and owning 10 cattle and 10 donkeys herded by a Kavirondo boy in a small, cleared space round the homestead. The brothers received by gift 10,000 acres each on the Plateau. The Arnoldi brothers, Engelbrechts and Van Rensbergs came later.<sup>47</sup>

When in Nairobi, the Breda brothers heard of the contemplated Zionist Commission which was to visit the Plateau, and report on its suitability for a Zionist settlement. They therefore hurried back to their land, so that if the Commission eventuated, it would find them in occupation. In May or June of that year (1904), the Zionist Commission visited the Plateau accompanied by Major Gibbon of the foreign office.<sup>48</sup>

The party visited the Van Breda's holding. It appears that the commission quickly made up their minds because as early in 1905 prospective settlers were again viewing the land. Later in that year, the plateau was closed for inspection owing to trouble with the Nandi. The Von Breda also left their holding during this period (about April 1905) as one of the brothers was attacked while out walking. His ear was amputated by a simi and had been left for dead. They decided that it would be wise to retreat for a while. They accordingly dug a hole in their shack and buried all the stuff they could not carry and then returned to Nairobi.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/2/1/1 Political Record Book, European Occupation, 1927-30, 1

<sup>46</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>48</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, 1927-30, European Occupation., 1

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

On arrival there, Sir Donald Stewart sent for one of the brothers and endeavored to persuade him to give up their holdings on the Plateau and accept land elsewhere nearer the railway, but they were not to be deterred and decided to wait until it was safe to reoccupy. During the wait, one of the brothers went to South Africa and there met Major Arnoldi, who was so impressed with the report of the Plateau that he came immediately to East Africa and put an application for land on the Uasin Gishu. He returned to South Africa and there saw Mr. J.A.J, Van Rensburg who in turn came to inspect the country in 1906. He was favourably impressed, for he returned to South Africa and spent the next two years organizing the trek which was known as the “Rensberg trek.”<sup>50</sup> This, they did with their wagons overland.<sup>51</sup>

The first settlers to occupy this area in any number were mainly the Dutch from South Africa.<sup>52</sup> This party of Boers came from the districts of Ermelo Bethal, Standerton, and Middleburg of the Transvaal, and numbered about two hundred and forty people. They entrained for Delagoa Bay, and there chartered the German steamer “Windhuk” and embarked on 1 July, 1908 bringing with them 40 odd ox-wagons, carts horses, dogs, cats and even poultry. After disembarking, the party entrained for Nakuru where they camped pending the allotment of land.<sup>53</sup>

This was duly arranged by Mr. Van Rensburg, and the trek resumed for the Plateau in September 1908, and appear to have made good progress as they reached the Van Breda’s holding on the banks of the Sergoit river on 14 October. From here, they went out on horseback and made their individual selections, and eventually obtained leases in May 1909 under the “Rapid allotment scheme.”<sup>54</sup>

About the same time, Mr. Cloete, another Boer gentleman came to this district, chartering his own ship, and brought with him a large stock of horses, sheep and

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>51</sup> Ross, M (1927) Kenya from Within, 239

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Groen, G. (1974), Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-1969, 34

<sup>54</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, 1927-1930, European Occupation, 2

Africander cattle. However, by 1919, of all the stock imported, there only remained a very small herd of the Africander cattle, less actually than had been originally imported.<sup>55</sup> This was due to a disease outbreak.

In 1906, the first shooting parties came up to the Plateau and Trans-Nzoia, Mr. A.C Hoey being one of the principal organizers operating from Ravine. Col. Swinton-Home who was shooting up there in that year wrote that, "...the whole country was teeming with game of all sorts, with many herds of good tusker elephants and of the lesser game, thousands of *cobuscob* roamed in the Nzoia valley. The only natives to be found were wandering Wandorobo and Suk, later on the slopes of Elgon, and the former along to the thick bush and forest lands, where they followed all wounded game hit by the shooting safaris. The Uasin Gishu Masai were on the slopes of Elgon."<sup>56</sup>

A large trek of Afrikaans from South Africa came to the Uasin Gishu Plateau in 1908<sup>57</sup> and shortly afterwards, British settlers arrived at which time the place was teeming with game.<sup>58</sup> This document doesn't specify the details of who the British settlers were. However, the Political Record Book 1927-1930, details the fact that the early Boer settlers were followed in 1908-10 by Messrs. Hoey brothers, Scally Cripps Brothers, Wreford Smith, Lovemore, Mundell, Toulson, Harvey J. Anderson, Russel Carr, and others.

Within a few years after the settlement of the Uasin Gishu, there was a British Community on the Plateau which nearly equaled that of the Afrikaners. The census of 1911 reported 448 Europeans, but the residents claimed that 700 would be a more realistic number.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>57</sup> Ross, M (1927), Kenya From Within, 239

<sup>58</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968)

<sup>59</sup> KNA, DC/UG/2/1 Political Record File, "Settlers"

In 1908, Mr. N.E.F. Corbett, District Commissioner trekked up to the Plateau with Inspector Tanner of the East Africa Police, and first camped for a short time on the West branch of the Sosiani river, the vicinity of McDonald Brothers' farm (Mr. Tanner was later transferred to Uganda where he died of black water).



**Plate 2: The Klapprott family in 1911**

**Source:** *Kenya National Archives*

At the end of the year, Administrative Headquarters were moved to farm 84<sup>60</sup>. Mr Corbett, finding that he was not central at farm 84, later chose farm 64 as his headquarters which had been “thrown in” by W. Van Aardt as useless for farming purposes. The first building erected in “64”<sup>61</sup> was a Post Office completed in 1910.<sup>62</sup> The Governor, Sir Percy Girouard decided to make “64” an administrative centre for

<sup>60</sup> Farm 84 was adjoining Kapsaret Forest Station

<sup>61</sup> Eldoret was referred to as “64” soon after the farm was chosen as a central location for a post office.

<sup>62</sup> The 1910 Post Office building continued to be used until 1920 when the new building was erected.

both the Uasin Gishu and Trans-Nzoia Districts.<sup>63</sup> Why was farm 64 chosen? There are two theories around this choice: The Post Office was opened on the worst land in the district, which was farm “64” –hence the name “64”- though some have it that it was because Eldoret was 64 miles from the railhead, Londiani.<sup>64</sup>

The other view is that Mr. Gosling who was the Postmaster General ‘made a safari’ to the area in 1907 to establish a post office. After touring the area and studying the position of the farms not yet taken up for development, he chose farm 64 as a central place for a district Post Office.<sup>65</sup> This account raises the twin aspects of centrality of farm 64 and the fact that the farm had remained undeveloped. The reason for failure to develop farm 64 was because it was stony and infertile in nature.<sup>66</sup>

Willie Van Aardt relinquished the ownership of farm 64 as he considered the land unsuitable for farming. The Post Office built of random rubble by him on the site near the Motor Mart, was opened at the end of 1910. When the building was completed, the history of Eldoret begins.<sup>67</sup> This assertion is anchored on the completion of the Post Office building as the starting point in the history of Eldoret. The other view places the starting point of Eldoret’s history in 1903 when the first settlers, the three Van Breda brothers, arrived. This view would consider the arrival of these foreigners as marking the beginning of mass arrivals that necessitate the birthing of Eldoret town. If the establishment of the first public building in Eldoret is considered as the genesis of a town centre, then 1910 would be considered the most appropriate starting point.

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<sup>63</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>66</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, 1927-1930, European Occupation, 8

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 8. According to this statement, the official starting point of the history of Eldoret should be 1910 with the construction of the Post Office.

The first Postmaster was J. Kamp. Messrs. Smith (Wreford) and Mundell ran a shop in the same building. The first mails came by runner from Kibigori via Kapsabet and telegrams were dispatched by Heliograph (operated by the Uganda police) to Kaptumo hill and thence to Kapsabet and Muhoroni.<sup>68</sup>

W. Van Aardt was given a contract by Mr. Corbett to erect a District Commissioner's house, offices, store, and Clerk's house costing £167 for the lot. The buildings were completed, and the District Commissioner moved to Eldor<sup>69</sup> in 1911. An area of 13 farms was reserved for government purposes. It was a total of 32,585 acres. In addition to 3 outspan areas of a total of 2,236 acres, the grand total was 34,821 acres. The major portion of this was originally reserved to ascertain the best position for a township. The Farm 64, of 2,922 acres was the most centrally situated and everything pointed to the block being the best available for a central township.<sup>70</sup>

By 1911, there were no Africans living on the plateau as described below:

AS THERE ARE NO AFRICANS LIVING ON THE PLATEAU, all labour has to be imported, chiefly I believe, from Kavirondo. It is difficult to retain labour as boys were always running away complaining of the cold. It is intended to import several Elgeyo families with limited stock as I saw several Elgeyo who have become good agricultural labourers.<sup>71</sup>

Emphasis seems to be laid on the fact that no Africans dwelt on the plateau. This is depicted by the use of capital letters in the extract above. It is a clear testimony to the fact the Europeanization of the white highlands was meticulously carried out. Nobody ever imagined remotely that one day the town would be Africanized. The Nandi

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<sup>68</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986)

<sup>69</sup> Eldoret was still known to all natives and many Europeans as "64". The term originated from the fact that the old L.O. number of the farm was 64, and it was also situated 64 miles from the railway-Londiani.

<sup>70</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64 Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968)", 5

<sup>71</sup> A.C. Tannahill (1921) The Plateau as it was 21 years ago (1911), An Economic Survey by the Land Ranger.



natives were least involved as labourers since the bulk of labourers were imported chiefly from Kavirondo.<sup>72</sup> The latter habitually escaped citing the cold temperatures in Eldoret. The challenges faced by these early settlers are summed up in the following excerpt from Groen's 1974 thesis:

The first settlers on the Uasin Gishu found life difficult during the early years. Their greatest difficulties were those common to most settlement frontiers: virgin soil which needed considerable work before it became productive; no housing; few merchants (initially only Asian itinerant merchants); and no reliable transportation and communication with the outside world. Despite these problems there was much optimism in the community. They were satisfied with the climate and the soil.<sup>73</sup>



**Plate 3: Ethel and Dorothy at their home in 1912**  
 Source: *Kenya National Archives*

#### **2.4 Game and Hunting Life in the Uasin Gishu Plateau**

Prior to the advent of white settlement, the Plateau, which then included the Trans Nzoia was a veritable hunters paradise.<sup>74</sup> Large herds of game abounded everywhere

<sup>72</sup> The exact parts of Kavirondo was not specified.

<sup>73</sup> Groen, G. (1974), *Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-1969*, 64

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Rono, oral informant interviewed on 5 September 2020.

including hartebeest, topi, bob, oribi, eland, giraffe, reedbuck, lion, and untold numbers of zebra. Elephants frequently ventured out of the forests especially further on the slopes of Elgon. Buffaloes were numerous on the east as well. However, their numbers were largely diminished about 1920 when rinderpest broke out amongst them. The same disease attacked the bushbuck in that area.<sup>75</sup>

The antelope were undoubtedly a boom to the early settlers as they supplied all their meat requirements. Their numbers thus gradually reduced as settlements advanced, and therefore did not interfere with agriculture to any appreciable extent. Not so the zebra whose numbers appeared to increase as they were of no use, and probably owing to the fact that their natural enemies, the beasts of prey, sought hunting grounds further removed from human occupation. The zebra became such a menace to crops, especially wheat, that in 1924, Government was approached for assistance in their extermination.<sup>76</sup>

According to A.C Tannahill, a land ranger, writing in 1932, but reflecting on the situation in Eldoret in 1911, 'there were vast quantities of game on the plateau. They included: Jackson's hartebeest, zebra, oribi, duiker, reedbuck, a few elands, waterbuck, lion and occasional rhino, hippo in the Nzoia, giraffe, with periodic visits of elephant, buffalo; among others.' He further opined that there should be no difficulty in controlling the game damaging crops as the Plateau was surrounded by tribes who lived on game, and there was little or no influx of fresh game.<sup>77</sup>

Tannahill's account reflects the traditional way of life of the Africans. They basically survived on game, hence the reported little or no influx of fresh game into the Plateau.

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<sup>75</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 6

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 8

The Plateau was insulated from further infiltration by wildlife, thanks to the hunting activities of the African communities. This way of life was to be gradually eliminated as the strong forces of modernization, marked by the expansion of this hitherto tiny settlement (64), advanced.

The colonial city idea was crafted in the minds of the white settlers to pluck the Africans from this 'backward life' (traditional lifestyle) that was the norm around the plateau. With time, their quest for modernization would increasingly get entrenched to exterminate the traditional for the modern. The forces of legitimate currency trade and modern agriculture were most certainly going to transform life in this area that was hitherto described as 'wind-swept and teeming with game'.<sup>78</sup>

The colonel further describes the Uasin Gishu as a "delightful rolling grass country." One evening in December 1905, he shot an old sing-sing waterbuck and a Jackson's hartebeest. He also describes spotting a rhinoceros who deliberately went and hid himself in some long grass when he heard the Colonel's group safari. So, the colonel went and routed him out just for the fun of seeing him scamper over the plains. "I also saw several of that small blue duiker (*aequatoriolis*), some zebra, topi and a fine warthog."<sup>79</sup>

On 11 December 1905, the colonel, during his ten miles on the plateau, counted 2 rhino, 2 hyena, 1 cheetah, 28 oribi, 7 bohor reedbuck, 5 giraffe, 27 warthog, 244 Jackson's hartebeest, 86 grant's gazelle and 410 zebras.<sup>80</sup> The scene depicted by the colonel vindicates the earlier description that the plateau was 'teeming with game.' James Miregwa, an oral informant, confirms this description of the plateau. According

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<sup>78</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, 1927-1930, European Occupation, 3

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, .26

to him, hunting was a major factor in the attraction of the white population since it was both a sport and a diet supplement.<sup>81</sup>

At Eldoret, above the Pioneer Hotel, was a mass of zebra and they broke down any wire fences put up. The D.C., Mr Schofield, gave two shillings for every zebra tail handed in. People came with handfuls. The vultures and hyenas could not cope with the carcasses and the place stank. The government gave a free issue of 20,000 rounds of ammunition, and engaged three *ex-askari* who were issued with rifles, and a systematic campaign was commenced against zebras.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, a lot of game was reduced during the First World War (1914-18) when it was shot to feed the prisoners and the soldiers.<sup>83</sup>

John Willie Hosking, a former PC on his end spoke of his hunt at Moiben as Kampi ya Simba (Lion camp). In the early days, he saw pugmarks in the cement of a building under construction. Later he shot a lion at one corner of the building; he looked round saw him in another place and shot again and then shot at another. He did this seven times, in the morning he found seven dead lions. From December 1908 to June 1909, thirty-seven lions had been shot, an illustration of the European community's efforts to tame this region.<sup>84</sup> A whooping 7000 zebras were shot by the settlers as they were such a menace; government provided ammunition.

The destruction caused in the wake of urban evolution in Eldoret was thus unquantifiable. The sheer number of game destroyed portrays the ugly side of urbanization. Massive environmental degradation that usually accompanies urbanization is beyond imagination. Eldoret was not an exception. Despite the fact

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<sup>81</sup> Pius Kemboi, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>82</sup> "64" Eldoret yesterday, and Today (1968), 24

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>84</sup> Groen, G. (1974), *Afrikaners in Kenya, 1903-1969*, 64

that the land was considered as poor and stony, it was a good haven for a diversity of wildlife. The same were useful for supplementing the people's diet as both Africans and Europeans hunted the game for meat. Though lions were a threat to domestic stock, the presence of other wild game prevented starvation from visiting the homes of many of the Afrikaners during the first few years.<sup>85</sup>

Sparrow Robert, who was brought up in Eldoret, told of how the trains only traveled in the daytime when they didn't have to depend on oil lamps because they were afraid of game on the line which could cause derailment. Further description by Mr A. C. Hoey underscores the fact that the game were a constant menace. Zebra breaking down every fence and lion and wild animals raiding the cattle. The Nandi squatters were also ever anxious to leave their reserve to escape tribal controls and find better grazing for their cattle.<sup>86</sup>

The warriors were "fine fellows with the most indomitable courage". There were many lions-spearing expeditions when the Nandi would surround a lion and gradually close in, completely encircling it. The lion would invariably charge and a Nandi Moran with a spear held ahead, and spears poised to strike, would rise to his full height, let out a war-cry and take the lion on his shield. He would then thrush hard with his spear. In a fraction of a second, the other warriors closed and riddled the lion with spear thrusts. Roberts recalled that nearly every good kill was accompanied by a warrior being mauled by the lion. A typical lion hunt, comprising of the warriors and interested white men, would always include medical aid, such as bandages and disinfectants etc.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 65

<sup>86</sup> KNA, MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 13

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 14

One of their best hunts, according to Roberts, was when Theodore Roosevelt<sup>88</sup> was out on a shooting trip.

We were fortunate in rounding up a good black-maned lion, and there he lay at bay under a small thorn tree right out in open country. The Nandi really excelled themselves chanting their war songs in a low voice while the circle got smaller and smaller. Then there were the grand charges by the lion followed by the flashing of spears. Then came the triumphant song of victory as each warrior, shoulder to shoulder and twirling their spears in the air, danced round the dead lion with the most enchanting tunes of their various war songs.<sup>89</sup>

The fact that Uasin Gishu plateau was teeming with game made it an attraction for hunters and shooting gamers. The early settlers on the plateau got their new regular food by shooting the game. An incident is even reported where a child lay on the ears of an elephant. The document says that it was Rex Kirk, a former Eldoret Land and estate agent and auctioneer. He was photographed as a baby of six weeks on his 'elephant ear cradle'.<sup>90</sup> This 'creativity' could point to the level of game destruction that was witnessed in the wake of European arrival. It also indicates the sheer amount of game on the plateau.

## **2.5 The Interplay between Early Settler Agricultural Overtures and Eldoret's Emergence**

Eldoret town started as a result of vociferous protests at a Farmers' Association meeting at Sergoit that Uasin Gishu district was not getting the attention its importance deserved.<sup>91</sup> The Association's concern was that the district was neglected despite its high agricultural potential. The settlers' agricultural trial and error overtures developed and climaxed into the evolution of Eldoret town.

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<sup>88</sup> Theodore Roosevelt was the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the USA. He served between 1901-1909. He loved hunting as a sport.

<sup>89</sup> KNA, MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today., 8

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

The need for a central shopping centre for supplies was a demand that could not be wished away. The level of urbanization back in Europe and South Africa could not let the settlers go for anything less than a replica of their version of civilization, ‘a country of a type to which they were well accustomed’.<sup>92</sup> The idea of a township was therefore carefully crafted and meticulously enforced in line with European ideals, urbanization being part of the elaborate Europeanization policy. However, it was preceded by agricultural experiments leading to successes and numerous setbacks.

It is said settlement began in 1903 when the van Breda brothers squatted on land near Sergoit and visiting Zionists described them as dwelling in three mud huts with dried skins as windows, living off game and owning 10 cattle and 10 donkeys herded by a Kavirondo boy in a small, cleared space round the homestead. The brothers received by gift 10,000 acres each in the plateau. The Arnold Brothers, Engelbrechts and van Rensburgs came later.<sup>93</sup>

The brothers came with stock of 100 horses, 120 cattle, 800 sheep and 8 wagons, plus luggage and other requisites. Disease killed off most of this stock. The Cloete family took the train from Mombasa to Londiani and went to Eldoret by ox-wagon, taking six days. They farmed at Eldoret up to 1960s.<sup>94</sup>

The Van Bredas paved the way for a long thread of settlers. Cloete<sup>95</sup> arrived in Mombasa with cattle, sheep, and horses. Rotich, an Elgeyo taken on by his father in 1910, worked for them until at least 1960. When the first settlers arrived on the plateau, everyone had to have £500 in cash or stock, wagons etc. to that amount. A short while after they had taken up their farms, a Land officer was sent from Nairobi to investigate their financial positions. He arrived on the first farm where several farmers awaited him, and that particular farmer showed his stock, implements etc.

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<sup>92</sup> Ross, M (1927), *Kenya From Within*, 239

<sup>93</sup> MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 10

<sup>94</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, 1927-1930, European Occupation, 8

<sup>95</sup> Cloete arrived at three years of age. His father was C.J. Cloete who died of gastric fever in 1912. It is the son who told the story recorded in MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today.

Before the land officer left for the next farm, he was delayed on purpose and given a drink. Meanwhile, the stock were driven to the next farm. This was repeated many times when finally, the land officer discovered the trick.<sup>96</sup>

Farming was based on capital availability. Each farmer was expected to be in a position to acquire inputs and generally have maximum capacity to utilize their land. This was the motive behind the inspection. All produce was exported, and supplies and machinery imported over the notorious Londiani road by means of ox wagons. E. L Steyn senior, a farmer on the plateau, ploughed with a team of six oxen broadcasting the seed himself by hand from an old buckskin; his threshing machine would thresh 50 to 100 bags on a farm at a time and buy this from the farmer there and then, no middleman, restricts, regulations or red tape to reduce profits.<sup>97</sup>

In those early days, only millet was grown by the indigenous population. It was Mr. De Waal and other Pioneers who gave them seed brought from South Africa. John De Waal, son to De Waal senior mentioned above, is believed to be the first to plant wheat.<sup>98</sup> According to A. C. Hoey, Mr Cloete was a prominent Afrikaner<sup>99</sup> of great charm who had the enterprise and the means to bring up from South Africa a large number of horses, mares, and available herd of Afrikaner cattle, but diseases took their toll and very considerable losses were incurred and it was soon proved that no imported stock could survive in the district without efficient dipping and fencing.

Colonel Swinton Home arrived about this time and brought in pedigree cattle and sheep although heavy and disastrous losses followed. It was to those early efforts of courage and initiative that others were able to follow and benefit from the experience

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<sup>96</sup> MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 16

<sup>97</sup> MSS/125/2 Early European Settlement, 5

<sup>98</sup> MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 22

<sup>99</sup> A former name for an Afrikaner as found in colonial records.



so dearly bought.<sup>100</sup>Swinton Home was largely responsible for the foundation of the Plateau Farmers Association in 1912. He was their first delegate to the convention of associations and for the organization of the first agricultural show at Eldoret in 1913.

For many years, Swintone-Home was a VP<sup>101</sup> of what became the Royal Agricultural Society of Kenya, and he played a leading part in the building of the present Eldoret show ground later in 1924 and in extending the society's action to the plateau and the Trans Nzoia<sup>102</sup>. He witnessed the start of most aspects of the plateau's development from a virtually empty waste of raw Africa. He was present at the meeting in 1912 when Sir Percy Girourd then Governor of East Africa protectorate named the new township and farm 64, Eldoret.

When Mundel Mc Nab J. arrived at the place where Eldoret now stands, there were "only a few British and Dutch residents in the vicinity engaged in primitive farming, hunting etc." Mr. and Mrs. Lesley arrived in 64 and bought two farms. In 1912, he chartered a small German vessel to bring up some of his stock; 100 merino sheep, 20 pure bred cows and bulls, 17 horses, 7 dogs, 10 young chicken, 2 kittens, his two daughters and a nephew and his wife. After the wagons arrived by goods train from Mombasa, he proceeded by wagons to the plateau.

At one time, before the Caesar's war, 80,000 sheep graded up from Suk sheep by the use of marine rams, were owned by about 80 sheep farmers on the plateau. However, in three years, they were nearly all dead.<sup>103</sup> Coffee was first planted at Soi in 1911 but it was always a marginalized crop. Maize, wheat, and dairy products could not stand the cost of transport.

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<sup>100</sup>Swintone-Home's obituary dated 29 April 1960.

<sup>101</sup> Vice President

<sup>102</sup> MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 21

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 40

It was the relative success of these nascent settler agricultural overtures that gave the settlers a voice to demand for a centre that would later become Eldoret town. They piled pressure on the government demanding for services, a collection point for their produce as well as a central source of inputs. As a result, a post office, a police post, and some trading activities were established thus laying the foundation of Eldoret town.

## **2.6 Proclamation of Eldoret Town**

In 1912, Sir Percy Girouard, Governor of the Protectorate visited Eldoret, and a public luncheon was held in the store and Post Office.<sup>104</sup>The assembly was on a large paw (greater bustard). It was during this visit that the Governor named the town “Eldoret”, which up till then had been known as “64”. Some were in favour of it being named “Sosiani” after the river that runs through Eldoret. Others wished it called Eldare, the name of the same river higher upstream, and Sir Percy hearing this latter liked it better than Sosiani, but decided to add the “t” making it sound more like the Nandi names Kapsabet, Kapsaret, etc. On the day Governor Percy Girouard named the town, a great gathering of farmers took place, and many slept under their wagons in the “wind-swept treeless plain.”

It was decided to name the place Eldoret- a Masai word “Eldare” meaning a stony river, for the river was very stony, and a “t” was added to make it Eldoret, in keeping with many Nandi place names ending in this way. On 14<sup>th</sup> November 1912, the township was officially announced.<sup>105</sup>

The new town was proclaimed “Eldoret” in the official gazette of 14 November 1912 with acreage of 2,770. Its commerce consisted of a row of offices and shops constructed of stones laid in mud, and the ‘bank’ was built of mud and wattle around the spot where a heavy safe had been dropped off an ox-wagon. A packaging case

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<sup>104</sup> The post office later became veterinary office.

<sup>105</sup> MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1963?), 1.

counter and extravagantly ornate brass sign were added, and the Standard Bank opened its doors.<sup>106</sup>

The Standard Bank of South Africa opened its first branch in Kenya at Eldoret in 1912.<sup>107</sup>The building was an unimposing mud and wattle affair with veranda and a tin roof. Jim Shaw, a Scotsman, was appointed manager with his two bank staff, secretary and a book keeper/cashier. He had previous banking experience in South Africa. When the bank's large safe was delivered to Eldoret by an oxcart, it was offloaded at the wrong end of the only building in town. Too heavy to move again, the bank had to be built around it.<sup>108</sup>The bank's directors in South Africa were oblivious of the fact that their new branch had opened in a room adjoining a bar with wild west atmosphere called the Rat Pit<sup>109</sup>. Still, it had its advantages, for the social life of Eldoret revolved around the bar. Customers often cashed their cheques at the bank and went next door to spend their money.

Shaw lived in a simple *rondavel* (round hut) at the back of the bank and took his bath each morning behind the bank's counter. Afterwards, he would go next door in his pyjamas and slippers to have breakfast at the Rat pit while tin bath was removed and the bank cleared in readiness for its first customer of the day. From these modest beginnings, the town grew quite rapidly and the bank prospered.<sup>110</sup> The Standard Bank would later become a leading bank in Kenya.

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<sup>106</sup> Municipality of Eldoret, A Guide to Investment (1964), 2

<sup>107</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986),13

<sup>108</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 22

<sup>109</sup>The wattle and daub building was nicknamed "Rat Pit"

<sup>110</sup> Shaw was moved to Nairobi in 1920 upon getting promoted to become manager of the bank's new Nairobi branch.



**Plate 4: Standard Bank of South Africa in 1912**

**Source:** Kenya National Archives

A Mr. Vincent was granted the first overdraft on the Plateau; an amount of Rs. 100/-. He, the Banker, and others proceeded to celebrate the occasion and next morning found that he needed a further overdraft of like amount.<sup>111</sup> This simple event marked a major turning point in the financial history of Eldoret. The confidence of credit availability and safe keeping of money gave new hope to the numerous settlers who definitely required those services. The pioneer bank paved way for many banks that would dot the town in the coming years. The financial evolution of Eldoret town was therefore set in motion.

Upon the declaration of Eldoret Township, development went ahead with a police Station, administrative offices and officials' houses being erected. Next to the Post

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 7

Office, a large mud and wattle building emerged and the builders, Selby and Robinson who were local farmers, sold this to Wreford Smith and McNab Mundell, and when subdivided, it was a hotel, bar, and general store.

Two Asians, Noor Mohammed and Dhanji Madhauji had already started trading. Being that economic activities cannot thrive in an atmosphere of insecurity and fear, a police station was built.<sup>112</sup> The commencement of commercial activities by the two Asians in Eldoret was a watershed in the economic transformation of Eldoret town. As Freund puts it, the towns that developed in consequence of the expanding capitalist European world ‘lived off trade’ and ‘state formations were meant to systematically extract wealth from pastoralists and peasants.’<sup>113</sup> Urbanization involves emphasis on economic and commercial aspects. The history of commercial exchange in Eldoret opened a new chapter in the radical transformation that would ensue in Eldoret town and set in motion the main motive of urbanization, the economic motive.



**Plate 5: Eldoret in 1914**

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<sup>112</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 3

<sup>113</sup> Freund, B. (2007) *The African City*, London, Cambridge University Press.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to establish the original inhabitants of the Uasin Gishu Plateau; the nature of the Plateau in the early days and finally the arrival of European settlers and how they influenced Eldoret town establishment and declaration in November 1912. It has emerged that it was the Sirikwa community who were then first disturbed by the Sikalai, or Maasai Wandorobo from Laikipia. They are said to have commenced by raids on their cattle, and eventually to have organized a concerted onslaught resulting in the flight of the Sirikwa. Some are said to have fled into Nandi and intermarried with the community. In addition, the place was teeming with diverse game and was a hunting spot for both the African communities and the white men on hunting expeditions. The presence of wild game prevented starvation from visiting the homes of both the African communities and the Europeans, particularly the Afrikaners.

The allocation of land to the first three European brothers, the Van Bredas marked the genesis of a chain of European settlers who arrived in the “64” (Sisibo)<sup>114</sup> as the place came to be known. The settlers required, and therefore demanded for, administrative and commercial services. Furthermore, the opening of the Post Office in 1910 greatly improved the communication system in and out of the “64”. In addition, the declaration and gazettelement of Eldoret town in November 1912 created a new air of economic prosperity. The commencement of trade by the two Asians Noor Mohammed and Dhanji Madhauji; and the establishment of the Standard Bank of South Africa provided additional impetus that spurred the economic evolution of the hitherto ‘vast grassland teeming with game’; Eldoret. The next chapter details further

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<sup>114</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, an oral informant interviewed on 23 July, 2020 says the local Nandi community pronunciation of “64” was ‘*sisibo*’ and therefore referred to the new centre as such.

developments in Eldoret town by examining economic advancements in Eldoret during World War I up to the onset of the great depression, that is 1913 to 1929.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENTS IN ELDORET DURING WORLD WAR I**  
**UPTO THE ONSET OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, 1913 - 1929**

**3.0 Introduction**

This chapter sets out to scrutinize the economic advancements in Eldoret between 1913 and 1929. It describes the economic evolution of Eldoret town within the context of historical events unfolding in this momentous period. It is argued in the chapter that during this period, Eldoret's growth was European centred, aiming at benefitting the settler economy. The chapter shows how the First World War shattered the British economy, negatively affecting settler economic aspirations, thereby disrupting Eldoret's pace of economic growth.

The year 1913 had twin significance. Not only did it follow Eldoret's declaration as a town, it also preceded the outbreak of the First World War. The drums of war were already beating, and the economies of the world were potentially headed for interruptions of monumental proportions. Indeed, the disruptions and the destructions witnessed in the wake of that war significantly changed the economic trajectory of the entire world.

When the war ended in 1918, there came a period of economic boom that was briefly interrupted by the minor slump of 1921-22 paving way for further prosperity which lasted until 1929 when the Great Depression hit the world. The economic shockwaves were felt across the world including the colonies, Kenya inclusive. Eldoret felt the heat too. That notwithstanding, there were sustained efforts to keep afloat the colonial economy.



### **3.1 Eldoret Between 1913 and 1929**

Being that all urban growth is predicated upon material bases of political and economic necessity,<sup>1</sup> Eldoret was developed as a social response to economic necessity within particular political set ups. Like all other colonial urban centres, its establishment was a result of externally oriented economic development, not indigenous forces.<sup>2</sup>The external forces determined every step of growth and development in Eldoret town in the period between 1913 and 1929. Such developments revolved around the key sectors of transport and communications, agriculture, the extension of the railway, educational facilities, administrative and commercial infrastructure as described below.

### **3.2 Transport and Communication**

The first few years following Eldoret town's declaration were a watershed in the evolution of the town despite the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Several monumental developments took place in the transport and communication sector. For instance, in 1913, the first motorcar was driven into Eldoret by Sexton,<sup>3</sup> and later in the year, a friction diesel car by Major A.T. Cole.<sup>4</sup> About the same time, Claude Wright rode a motor bike from Londiani to Eldoret in 3 ½ hours, and great were the celebrations in the 'Wobber's Woost', as the wattle and daub building was christened<sup>5</sup>. The arrival of the first motorized transport vessels marked a significant

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<sup>1</sup> Aseka, E.M in Themes in Kenyan History (ed) Ochieng' R.W (1990), 45

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 53

<sup>3</sup> Groen, G (1974), The Afrikaners in Kenya, 89. He says that the first automobile had to be hauled out of the 'red sea' and other well-known mud holes on the road, the 'red sea' being one of the mud holes on Londiani-Eldoret road.

<sup>4</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1911-1916

<sup>5</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 6

turning point in the economic transformation of Eldoret town. It expedited movement of both people and goods and triggered more intense economic activities in the town.<sup>6</sup>

Improved transport infrastructure is one of the “scale externalities” in the improvement of trade in any urban centre.<sup>7</sup> In Eldoret, the advent of the motorcar and the motorcycle marked the beginning of Eldoret town’s transport revolution that subsequently stimulated trade. It was after this great stride that bituminization of roads commenced in Eldoret. The ensuing transformation in the road transport sector was unprecedented. The introduction of motor transport activated increased European influx in Eldoret since improved transport was, and still remains, a significant pull factor in urbanization.<sup>8</sup>

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Col. G.A Swintone-Home<sup>9</sup> was appointed commandant, and some 200 British and Dutch volunteered forming two squadrons of the East African Majesty Rifles (E.A.M.R) with their own officers. Later, more officers followed. In a way suggesting the slow manner in which the motor vehicle arrival impacted on transport, the commandant states,

It is only just to say that one third of the total early volunteers came from Uasin Gishu District, and practically every man brought with him a horse or mule. Later, the District produced the majority of the wagons with their teams used in the early days of the war....<sup>10</sup>

In 1914, C.E. Whitelock instituted the trotting ox cart mail and passenger service between Eldoret and Londiani. Though passenger cars between Londiani and Eldoret commenced running soon after the war during the dry months, the ox-cart service was

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<sup>6</sup> John Kibiri, 75 years, oral informant, interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Henderson, V. (2006), *The Urbanization Process and Economic Growth: The so-what Question.*, 47-71.

<sup>8</sup> Hassan Musumba, 68 years, oral informant, interviewed on July 16,2020

<sup>9</sup> Swinton-Home was one of the outstanding pioneers of the Plateau, was responsible for foundation of the Plateau Farmers’ Association and for the organization of the first Agricultural Show at Eldoret in 1913.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

the only mail service to the plateau until 1922, when Messrs. T.J. O'Shea & Co. obtained a contract for the transport of mails by car from Kisumu. This continued until the railhead reached the plateau.<sup>11</sup>

The transport sector, which had been dogged with extremely poor road transport conditions, now acquired renewed hope. With some vehicles available for sale, the road network was not going to remain the same. Some radical transformation in this crucial sector was definitely turning around the speed of movement of both people and goods. Wagons were to die a natural death as a means of transport as the motor vehicle emerged as the new mode of transport. Agricultural produce and products would then be transported faster, hence, a general boost to agribusiness. The six weeks travel duration between Londiani and Eldoret had lingered as a source of constant discussion and complaint.<sup>12</sup> There were instances in which the riders needed six weeks to travel the sixty-four miles from Londiani station to 'Sixty-Four' or Eldoret. The settlers complained to Girouard during his visit but received no action.<sup>13</sup>

In early 1913, new sections of the Londiani-Eldoret road had been built but were so poorly constructed that travelers used some old sections by preference. The road was so narrow that two wagons could not get by each other comfortably.<sup>14</sup> By mid-1913, no repairs had been made and a crisis occurred when supplies on the Plateau were running low and the warehouses in Londiani were overflowing. Twenty-six ox-wagons were stuck along the first seven miles of the road.<sup>15</sup> The construction on the Londiani-Eldoret road was stopped for a while according to the 1914/15 Annual

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<sup>11</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913-1914, 6

<sup>12</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism in Eldoret, 1986, 12

<sup>13</sup> Groen, G (1974), The Afrikaners in Kenya, 87

<sup>14</sup> Letter to the editor, LBEA, 19 October, 1912

<sup>15</sup> Groen, G (1974), The Afrikaners in Kenya, 89

Report.<sup>16</sup> This caused some apprehension given the great expectation among the settlers who had exerted considerable pressure on the government for its construction.

An amateur main road was constructed through the middle of Eldoret town in 1913/14 and a drift made over the Sergoit papyrus swamp. The first road in the middle of Eldoret town was a clear indication that Eldoret was undergoing determined transformation. The road gave a new lease of life to the town and created an air of optimism for the European settlers all across Uasin Gishu District.<sup>17</sup>

By 1917, the main street had been covered with stone and murrum, a bridge and a water course had been constructed. A number of trees were also planted. The Public Works Department (PWD) were also building a new stone bridge over the river.<sup>18</sup> Such progress in the transport sector were strides and milestones towards economic transformation in Eldoret town. With regard to posts and telegraph, the services were usually provided punctually though at times, the same were delayed due to rains, on a few occasions.<sup>19</sup>

There was an atmosphere of a border town in the Wild West, but little progress was seen for some years due to poor communication.<sup>20</sup> The 64 miles to railhead at Londiani or Kibigori entailed a journey over wild terrain and through rivers by ox-wagon, horse or on foot.<sup>21</sup> Life was described as primitive, farming a matter of trial and error, and social activities centred around the homestead or the Pioneer Hotel.<sup>22</sup> The transformation of the transport sector would potentially spur a forward leap towards economic evolution in Eldoret.

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<sup>16</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu Annual Report 1914/15, 8

<sup>17</sup>KNA/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 25

<sup>18</sup> KNA/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1916/17, 13

<sup>19</sup> KNA/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 16

<sup>20</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism, 13

<sup>21</sup> John Kibiri, 75 years, oral informant, interviewed on 16 July, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 4

The extension of the railway to the Uasin Gishu attracted the attention of the officials and unofficials alike after World War I. One railway official pointed to the economic need as follows:

The early construction of the line is a matter of the greatest importance to the development of this large European settlement...The cost of transport by road is prohibitive to competition with other parts of the country more favorably situated as regard railway communications.<sup>23</sup>

### **3.3 The Farmers' Grumble, Railway and Agriculture**

By 1914, the European population on the plateau was 836 (including children).<sup>24</sup> The agricultural nature of the town's outskirts became a huge influence in determining its location<sup>25</sup>. The settlers literally demanded for services and security<sup>26</sup> stationed in Eldoret owing to its centrality. The projected railway line by then was quite an idea to look forward to. Agricultural production was low, and farmers began to grumble. The Uasin Gishu was often considered by people in more fortunately situated districts as "a useless colony of grumblers who were not doing any work and whose only topic of conversation was the Londiani to Eldoret road and the projected railway".<sup>27</sup>

The argument for or against the railway was a matter at the heart of many conversations. The counter argument was that 'a large farming district which had not succeeded in providing *posho* for its own needs, to say nothing of export, had no right to be asking for a railway.' The settlers would justifiably not "put down" extensive crops for which they could not find a local sale as the heavy cost of transport alone over 60 to 100 miles of road to the railway was absolutely prohibitive. It would not

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<sup>23</sup> Groen, G (1974), *The Afrikaners in Kenya*, 121.

<sup>24</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu Annual Report 1913/1914, 7

<sup>25</sup> Prisca Tanui, 53 years, an oral informant, interviewed on 22 July 22,2020.

<sup>26</sup> The Europeans and administrators experienced a sense of insecurity. In early 1914, the DC asked for more police for the district. He noted that he had 1500 square miles to patrol with 230 occupied farms with stock, "surrounded by natives whose natural sport seems to be theft from white people." KNA, DC/UG/1/1, UG District Annual Report, 1913.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Rono, 78 years, oral informant, interviewed on 5 September,2020.

pay. There was a growing feeling that with the coming of the railway, and the amount of additional land laid down for cultivation, production levels would most certainly increase.

The doubts first as to the sanctioning of a railway and now as to its route have been, and still are holding the country back. However, during the past 18 months, the visit of H.E the Governor, the sympathetic and tactful attitude of the General Manager of the Railway, the actual start of the survey and the recent news of the big loan have all had a reassuring effect.<sup>28</sup>

People were still waiting for certainty as to the route before “letting themselves go”<sup>29</sup>.

This was especially noticeable in Eldoret where people would naturally not go to expense in building and development until they were certain that Eldoret itself would be the big centre of this big agricultural District, and not some other place, for “there must be a big town on the plateau, and it must inevitably spring up on the railway.”<sup>30</sup>

Barabara Tanui<sup>31</sup> concurs that settler agriculture was the major factor that underpinned infrastructural developments in Eldoret town. In essence, the colonial state in Kenya was structurally and ideologically bound to the fate of the settlers.<sup>32</sup>

There was a determined and tenacious resolve to establish a big centre in the “big agricultural district”. The idea that such a significant district would have an urban centre was not debatable. The discussion surrounded its location. It was not about whether, but where, the big centre would be established. The refusal of the colonial government to spend a penny piece in Eldoret was universally put down to uncertainty as to whether the railway was coming to Eldoret or not, and whether Eldoret was to be the final selection of the administrative centre. The issue of Eldoret being an administrative centre was therefore not settled by 1914. The uncertainty had

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<sup>28</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 UG District Annual Report 1913/1914, 15

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Rono, 78 years, oral informant, interviewed on 5 September, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> KNA, DC/UG/1/1 UG District Annual Report 1913/1914, 16

<sup>31</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, an oral informant, and a former Eldoret Municipal Council employee between 1962-1967, interviewed on 17 August, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Berman, B (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 136

“held back the growth of the Town.”<sup>33</sup> It was due to the persistent protests by the settlers in Eldoret that the railway eventually was connected to the town. The uncertainty involving the railway route and that of Eldoret’s choice as an administrative centre, contributed to the government’s lack of enthusiasm to spend money on Eldoret town projects.

Uasin Gishu District was considered remote and would only rise after improvements of transport infrastructure. Otherwise, it risked being left in the cold, economically speaking. The 1913-14 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report chronicled that the colonial government failed to make a single road, bridge, drain, house, or office in Eldoret during that year. There were no quarters for Postmaster and the two telegraphers, no money to get even huts built for postal employees.<sup>34</sup> Such remarks pointed to the fact that Eldoret was a neglected town considered as surrounded by “wild native tribes of stock thieves around.”<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the war was already taking a toll on the anticipated progress in Eldoret as it did shake the entire British Empire.

Because of their need for services, the Uasin Gishu settlers’ estrangement from Nairobi was detrimental to their economic development.<sup>36</sup> The Plateau residents contended that no development could occur until transportation facilities were improved between their area and the rest of the Protectorate.<sup>37</sup> They wanted a rail line to their district<sup>38</sup> but while they waited for it, they pressured the administration to improve their road system. The only road to the Plateau, the Londiani road, was a

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<sup>33</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant, interviewed on 16 July,2020.

<sup>34</sup> KNA, DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913//14, 23

<sup>35</sup> Political Record Book, (1927-1930), “Natives”, 3

<sup>36</sup> David Kipkurgat Meto, 82 years, oral informant, interviewed on 14 November,2020.

<sup>37</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant, interviewed on 5 August,2020.

<sup>38</sup> KNA, DC/UG/1/1/ UG District Annual Report, 1913/14, 15

source of constant discussion and complaint.<sup>39</sup> It was neither properly constructed nor maintained and could not handle heavy traffic, particularly during rainy season.<sup>40</sup>

In a nutshell, the condition of the new town was nothing to write home about. There were only 30 black policemen and 3 white, to patrol and protect 3 or 4000 square miles of country, with 1000 white people and the Africans (whom they referred to as “wild” and stock thieves) all around. There were no quarters or office for the veterinary offices. In addition, there were no respectable government offices, courthouse, and quarters for the Town Magistrate and the District Commissioner.<sup>41</sup> The absence of good infrastructure to open up the District was an impediment to economic development in the entire area.<sup>42</sup> Eldoret was economically choking and suffocating due to this inaccessibility.

The Standard Bank of South Africa had already constructed a large and expensive brick building. Several other costly buildings had also gone up. Some considerable pressure of a wide and not parochial nature would be brought to bear if the settlers’ reasonable expectations were disappointed.<sup>43</sup> The town of Eldoret was viewed as a source of revenue from rents of plots, the “non-native” poll tax, and revenue from game and gun licenses, among others. It was thus depicted as paying their share and therefore deserving full government attention in terms of development and especially good transport system.<sup>44</sup> The principle of revenue coming back in expenditure was raised in the 1913/14 report thus,

A new principle of expenditure has...been adopted in other parts of the country, viz that a portion of revenue derived from any district, is put back into the development of that district. The Uasin Gishu must,

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<sup>39</sup> Groen, G (1974), *The Afrikaners in Kenya*, 89

<sup>40</sup> Letter to the editor, LBEA, 19 October, 1912

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>42</sup> KNA/ DC/UG/1/1, Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1913, 8

<sup>43</sup> Onesmus, 67 years, oral informant, interviewed on 16 July 16, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1913/14, 11



in revenue derived from rents of farms, compare respectably with other agricultural centres.<sup>45</sup>

The statement above depicts the fact that agriculture played a huge role in the evolution of Eldoret town. It was portrayed as “a pathetic contrast with any government station in any African centre.” It would soon behove the government to bow to the pressure exerted by the tax-paying settlers of the plateau and the entire farming district of Uasin Gishu. Consequently, considerable, and significant development would have to be channelled to Eldoret town, the nerve centre of Uasin Gishu District economy.

### **3.3.1 Eldoret’s Early Development**

In 1913, there were between 50 and 80 sheep farmers on the plateau owning approximately 70,000 sheep, bred from Suk and Kamasia stock crossed with merino. Within a few years, the numbers were reduced to about 5000 despite continuous dipping and dozing. There were also some 250 horses which were soon infected with ulcerative lymphangitis<sup>46</sup> and died, so the stock industry did not receive any impetus in the early stages.<sup>47</sup>

In 1913, there was the first Uasin Gishu District Agricultural show, with the moving spirit being Major G. Swinton-Home,<sup>48</sup> who was probably influenced by the knowledge that the plateau required advertising. The few outsiders who came up to the show were impressed and surprised and would perhaps change the prevailing perception that no good thing could come out of Uasin Gishu. The show was a success though it was unfortunate that the cattle classes had to be out owing to

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<sup>45</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, (1927-1930), “Natives”, 3

<sup>46</sup> Also referred to as pigeon fever. It is a bacterial infection of the lymphatic vessels of the skin in horses, cattle, sheep, and goats.

<sup>47</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book, (1927-1930), “Natives”, 3

<sup>48</sup> Swinton-Home was one of the outstanding pioneers of the plateau. He made a great contribution to the start and the building of the European enterprise and settlement in the countryside. He died in 1960 at the age of 85 according to the Kenya Weekly News of 29 April, 1960.

disease. The Director of Agriculture visited the show for one day; the Chief Veterinary Officer held a big meeting on the dipping questions; the Inspector General of Police came, saw and 'issued a not too flattering report on the good working in Uasin Gishu.'<sup>49</sup>

In 1914, the Chief of the Economic products Division toured the Plateau and gave a lecture in Eldoret.<sup>50</sup> This particular visit showed that Eldoret had begun to attract government attention with the main purpose being to uplift it as the major urban centre in the region and the epicentre of Uasin Gishu's agricultural economy. Somehow, the farmers' grumble was being acted upon.

During the early days of the development of the Plateau, all produce was exported, and supplies and machinery imported over the notorious Londiani road, by means of ox-wagons. This road got into such an atrocious state during the rains that it was reported that oxen drowned in the yoke in some of the immense mud holes on the road. Its condition can be gauged from the fact that wagons often took six weeks to complete the journey of 64 miles.<sup>51</sup>

The Population of Eldoret in 1914 was so small that it was out of proportion to its future prospects. There were 30 white people, 10 Goans, 40 Indians 220 Africans.<sup>52</sup> The numbers were however considered to be quite deceptive as the town was almost full of visitors from outlying farms, and safaris passing through.

Earlier on in 1912, the LBEA reporter from the Plateau confidently declared: "I believe it is the most densely populated district in the Colony, for out of the 250 farms, nearly everyone is occupied, in fact many are now waiting . . . for the other

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<sup>49</sup> Why Eldoret, A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 15

<sup>50</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913-1914, 11

<sup>51</sup> Groen, G (1974), The Afrikaners in Kenya, 89

<sup>52</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913-1914, 12

part (the Trans-Nzoia district) to be surveyed."<sup>53</sup> In fact, there were 1220 residents on the Plateau in 1913.<sup>54</sup>

The importance of Eldoret could not be gauged by its population's but could rather be looked at as the centre of a big District of many white people. In that sense, the idea of a town was viewed as serving the wider European population's economic interests. It was an avenue for their economic exchange and a privileged place of colonization where change and westernization occurred. It was not merely a geographical site, rather, it was a privileged locus of interpenetration and mediation where change was necessary for people to manage their survival and future. This was certainly an unceasing process to adjust and combine internal social structures with external ones.

As stated earlier, the mainstream of city conception and planning was initially the privilege of the colonizers. That explains why the 1913-14 report focuses on the 1000 Europeans in Uasin Gishu District and ignoring African presence and their future connections to the town. The report also reaffirms the notion that the town was established to take care of European interests.

By 1914, the town had been surveyed and laid out on paper, and blocks of business and residential plots had been sold. The owners had only a year left within which to fulfil conditions so that by 1915, the place should have grown to several times its size. The people, however, were hanging back because of the uncertainty of the railway route. In spite of that, there were five large European stores in Eldoret town. There

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<sup>53</sup> LBEA, March 30, 9

<sup>54</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 UG District Annual Report, 1913, 9

was also a new hotel nearing completion and was projected to challenge comparison with any hotel in the country.<sup>55</sup>

The bazaar boasted of three completed shops, one being a furniture shop. Two residences were starting and an eating and lodging house had just been completed. All those had been held up for months owing to the tiresome and cumbrous regulations for passing the plans, involving plans going to Nairobi<sup>56</sup> and Naivasha then afterwards having to be passed by the medical officer in Eldoret. The total journeys took two or three months and were a great discouragement to intending builders. Reform was however being instituted in that matter.<sup>57</sup>

The 1913/14 report further pointed out the need to put up public latrines for Africans as “large safaris were continually passing through and the town was most insanitary during such a visit.”<sup>58</sup> The march to a better town was on and economic prospects were poised to get better. Eldoret was a place where the number of travellers passing through was “large”. Population size is a major factor in the economic expansion of any urban centre in the world. The need to set up public latrines was not only for sanitary reasons, but also one that stood to handle more travellers stopping by in Eldoret. In the process, certain businesses would be stimulated.

A large 100 feet road was constructed in Eldoret, and other smaller roads made and levelled while a good number of trees had been planted in the place, in avenues in 1914. An improvement had certainly been manifested during the year owing to the increased activity of the medical staff which had gained by the arrival of the sub assistant surgeon Kesar Chand. The 1913-14 report depicts a growing town where the

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<sup>55</sup> This was later to be the Pioneer Hotel.

<sup>56</sup> Land Office and Chief Sanitation Officer were both stationed in Nairobi but had to approve the plans.

<sup>57</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913-1914, 16

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 17

money allowed for expenditure would soon be inadequate owing to the growing needs of the town.<sup>59</sup>

The land on which the Indian bazaar stood had been levelled, a road made, and trees planted on either side. There was not much trade done yet in the bazaar. The report stipulates that an attempt was going to be made to start an African market there though, but it was not apparent where the people were coming from to sell. A trial was however going to be made. The willingness of the Africans to embrace the town and engage in trade was doubtful. However, the white community had begun to contemplate the fact that the local African population could make some contribution in the field of trade.<sup>60</sup>

The 1913/14 Uasin Gishu Annual Report was the first official indication of possible African access to Eldoret town for business purposes. Initially, the town was entirely an exclusive European area save for a few Africans who served as European servants.<sup>61</sup> It became necessary that the hitherto ‘colonial city’ be opened up for African access. In a sense, the seed of Africanization of Eldoret town was already planted. Eldoret would gradually transition to an African town in decades. It would also become difficult to successfully check the momentum of African settlement within and around Eldoret town.

### **3.4 The Rise of Education Facilities in Eldoret, 1913-1919**

The Central School was started in 1913 with the wood and iron classrooms later known as the “lower school” being erected.<sup>62</sup> This school signified the hope for the future economic trajectory of Eldoret town. The role of education in the economy is

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>61</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, an oral informant, interviewed on 17 August, 2020.

<sup>62</sup> KNA/UG/I/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 11

so vital that without it, reasonable modernization would quite easily lose its grip on progress. To augment the progress in the education sector, in 1917, the first boarding school was established in Eldoret.<sup>63</sup>

The Uasin Gishu had three educational systems for Europeans by 1918: English government-supported farm schools; English Eldoret Central School; and Afrikaans private schools. These three systems operated concurrently until 1930. In all three systems, Afrikaner children dominated: the private or parochial schools and the government-supported farm schools 'were exclusively Boer and the Eldoret Central School was about three-fourths Boer in 1919.<sup>64</sup>

From time to time, small farm schools were inaugurated as their need became apparent. These acted as preliminary schools for pupils who would eventually enter the central school, Eldoret. By 1914, education had been a great disappointment. It was hoped that education would have been firmly established on the plateau by the starting of the central school at Eldoret with its headmaster as supervisor of all the schools in the plateau. The delay was beginning to be a serious matter as young children were growing up and getting past the age when they should have begun their education. Many complaints were being made by people to the effect that education was the most important question among the whites.<sup>65</sup>

It was pathetic to the white population to see their young children growing up uneducated and worse than that, living amongst the African employees of their parents. They considered this an avenue to retrogression and backwardness towards what they termed "African barbarism".<sup>66</sup> The farm schools were doing useful work among the poor class, but there were other people who wanted something better and who were yet debarred by the expense from sending their children to Nairobi. Moreover, there was no room for more children at Nairobi. This lack of education for

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<sup>63</sup> Groen, G (1974), *The Afrikaners in Kenya*, 71

<sup>64</sup> The Education Commission of the East African Protectorate Report, 1919, pp. 43-45

<sup>65</sup> 1913/14 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 18

<sup>66</sup> Ross, M (1927), *Kenya from Within*, 123

the European child was aggravated by poor transport system. The general view was that a year or two was a serious thing in a child's life; the delay of a year or two while waiting for railway and roads, houses or offices was comparatively unimportant. So, whatever else is postponed, the school ought not to be.<sup>67</sup>

It was on such fundamental premises that certain drastic measures were to be taken. For instance, the Eldoret School was required to be finally taken in hand and finished and the headmaster established without further delay. The government school at Eldoret was opened in February 1914 with Miss Rait as teacher and with 18 children. The farm school at 41 under Miss F. Cloete had 19 children and the farm school at Wheeler's drift under Miss Cloete had 23 children. There were numbers of children to whom no education could be given as there was no grant for a teacher.<sup>68</sup>

The central school was flourishing under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Humphreys. In April 1916, there was one classroom with desks for 16 pupils and another one with desks for 40 pupils. There was also a dormitory for 10 girl boarders and three rooms for staff with the usual officers. In April 1917, there was expansion of the dormitory to take in 8 more girl boarders, dining room, two bedrooms for staff, one pupil's boot room and one bathroom.<sup>69</sup>

As mentioned earlier, farm schools were established. However, the school at Van der Merwe's was closed down in 1915 owing to insufficient pupils. The schools in some localities had been unable to register the number of pupils required to obtain government aid. Several private schools were assisted with books by the Government.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 58

<sup>68</sup> KNA/ Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1913/14, 19

<sup>69</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1915/16, 11

A good example was Wheeler's drift school which had 20 pupils, one mistress and standards 1 to 4 and infants.<sup>70</sup>

The new boarding school at Eldoret was completed in 1919.<sup>71</sup> There were two Dutch church schools at Jourdaans Sergoit and Van Maltitzs drift with an attendance of 26 and 23 respectively. The farm schools were six in number. The headmaster of the central school Eldoret was also the organizer of education on the Uasin Gishu plateau and in the Trans Nzoia. His work consisted of management of the central school, teaching standard VI and VII, equipping new farm schools and supplying, advising, and examining existing schools of which there were four.<sup>72</sup>

### **3.5 Establishment of Magistrate's Court and Prison**

By 1914, the Town Magistrates Court was operational and at such times as circumstances demanded, cases were tried in the District Commissioner's court. A large number of convictions of Africans had occurred in cases of breaches of pass laws, it being considered to prosecute the law vigorously in order to prevent Africans wandering about over European farms without identification. There were also numerous cases between employers and African employees, and a large number of such had been arbitrated upon and settled without being taken to court.<sup>73</sup>

The Native Councils settled all cases which did not come to the notice of the District Commissioner, the elders showing a disposition to trust their own law in preference to that of the white man. It had been impossible to supervise the African tribunals from Eldoret. No appeals had been made from their decisions to the District Commissioner. Injustice tended to exist in the inter-tribal matters since the African law and custom,

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<sup>70</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1917/18, 16

<sup>71</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual report 1918/19, 14

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 10



having developed for centuries of experience was best adapted to the African's character, without interference from the government. Cases of murder or cruelty were however an exception.<sup>74</sup>

In 1914, there was a case where a murderer was handed to the D.C and committed to High Court and condemned to death. Two other people had been handed over by the council for trial, the cases being murder and grievous harm.<sup>75</sup> As such, there was evidence of judicial presence and authority taking shape. The European judicial system was complemented with African traditional judicial mechanisms. The idea was to prevent congestion of colonial government courts while also allowing the African elders to exercise their judicial authority.

The number of people pursuing different cases in Eldoret, judicial officers and their attendant structures made some economic contribution as far as market and jobs were concerned.<sup>76</sup> The confidence that would arise out of the judicial pursuits would potentially balloon the number of litigants. Such huge population attractions to Eldoret courts did portend increased economic exchanges in the town.

A new prison was opened in the beginning of the year 1913.<sup>77</sup> It was 'quite a satisfactory building, though not beautiful of aspect.' The increase in the number of prisoners was also attributed to energetic police action in arresting Africans for coming into the Plateau (Eldoret) without passes.<sup>78</sup> The reason for regulating the movement of Africans into the Plateau was to ensure compliance with the land laws and other attendant laws that were put in place to ensure maximum production by the

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<sup>74</sup> Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 14

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>76</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, oral informant, interviewed on 16 July,2020.

<sup>77</sup> KNA, UG/DC/1/1 UG District Annual Report 1913/14, 14

<sup>78</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, an oral informant, interviewed on 16 July,2020. He says the arrest of Africans found in Eldoret without passes involved severe corporal punishment before being charged. According to him, Africans were flogged.

settlers. Labour supply was one of the major reasons for this restriction. Others were racial segregation, hygiene factors<sup>79</sup> and European sense of entitlement in the white highlands.

Three visiting Justices had been appointed from the ranks of the settlers. This expedited cases and contributed to enhanced justice and judicial system. The prisoners were considered to appreciate their privileges of good and regular food, work attention and a comparatively palatial building to live in.<sup>80</sup> The supply of food to the prisoners was an economic opening both for the farmers and the suppliers. Other prison supplies were equally of economic benefit to certain traders. Both the court and the prison were of benefit to the traders and farmers as they provided a critical clientele to the businesses.

The developments in Eldoret's judiciary were a huge contribution to the economy of the town. The earnings of workers in this sector improved money circulation in Eldoret.<sup>81</sup> This they did by paying for rent, water, roads, electricity connections and other goods, all of which were critical to the overall economic transformation of Eldoret town. Being the only centre in Uasin Gishu where people sought adjudication of their cases, Eldoret was a constant attraction to many litigants.<sup>82</sup>

### **3.6 Trade Advancements in Eldoret, 1913-1919**

Experiment having been made in brick making and amongst builders around Eldoret, the notion was, "every man his own brick maker." The soil was said to be suitable. As a result, five fine brick buildings had been erected in Eldoret with local bricks. The building industry was considered busy and was expected to keep booming the

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<sup>79</sup> It was argued that Africans would contaminate the Europeans with various diseases.

<sup>80</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/1914, 8

<sup>81</sup> Samwel Kipketer Tarus, 78 years, oral informant, interviewed on 15 November, 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant, interviewed on 17 August, 2020.

following year 1915 when all the plots sold at the sale the previous year and earlier got developed as ordered. There were two or three professional builders, and the town was permanently full of Indian *fundis*. There was only one tailor in the town and a dhobi had also started a business. A European butcher had also set up at Ortleppville; the Somali butcher also carried on in Eldoret.<sup>83</sup>

Due to lack of transport facilities in 1913, exports from Uasin Gishu District were nil.<sup>84</sup> This was expected to change with the coming of the railway. In the meantime, Uasin Gishu District remained a sleeping giant economically. The purpose for which the settlers came was being suffocated by the lack of an efficient transport link between Eldoret and the railhead in Londiani. There was reported an abnormal rainfall which caused much damage to roads.<sup>85</sup> There was therefore much work to be done to fix the mess in the coming year since road damages stood on the way of the envisaged economic advancement in Eldoret town.<sup>86</sup>

In 1913, Messrs. Hoey and Frith erected a bar and billiard room in burnt brick. This building was never used for the purpose for which it was built but accommodated the District Commissioner and staff for many years, until new offices were built in 1924. Its construction had begun 14 years before in 1912. This delay could be easily attributable to the disruptions of the war. In addition, Mr. Ortlepp erected the Pioneer Hotel, which was taken over and run by C.E Whitelock.<sup>87</sup>

There were only three large European stores in Eldoret, all of which had done well. One of the pioneer firms of Smith Mundell and Company sold their business to Nandi Trading Syndicate having had some temporary difficulties. There were also two

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<sup>83</sup> Political Record Book, 1927-1930, 5

<sup>84</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 17

<sup>85</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1916/17, 18

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 16

Indian shops in the bazaar and one furniture firm under Goan management. The Indian community was largely a business lot since they were not given access to the fertile white highlands. They also never appeared to show any farming interests.<sup>88</sup> Isaiah Kandie<sup>89</sup> however refutes this claim saying that some few Indians engaged in farming in Uasin Gishu District.

Transport was the means of livelihood of a large portion of the Dutch. During the rains, wagon transport was unreliable and dear owing to bad roads. Due to lack of transport or its expense the farmer did not find it worthwhile to put sufficient areas under cultivation to produce grain for export. Indeed, transport was a chief difficulty in Eldoret by 1914.<sup>90</sup>

There were openings for capital in Eldoret which was bound to become a large place someday. The 1913/14 annual report captured this vision of a future large town. Two hotels and one lodging eating house having been put up there, there were openings for bakeries and butcheries, soda manufactories, laundries and even a dairy.<sup>91</sup> However, Eldoret was still in its early days and people were disinclined to take risk until more certainty existed. There were openings in other parts of the plateau for rest houses and one farmer-cum-trader had already done much to ensure that his farm with its store, rest house, projected church, hospital, and club would be a central position and stopping place for travellers.<sup>92</sup>

There were three European stores, a branch of the Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd, and one European eating house but there was no sleeping accommodation as the land behind the eating house where it was intended to be built was government property

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, an oral informant, interviewed on 16 July, 2020.

<sup>90</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 11

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

which would not be auctioned during the war. The war had a profound effect on economic and government activities as the report indicates that ‘trade suffered significantly during the war.’<sup>93</sup>

By 1914, the Sosiani Hotel Ltd. was almost complete. The auctioneers and estate agents were: Messrs. Godfrey Hopwood and Murrel. There were about 8 general merchant companies. The motor garage was run by Messrs. Godfrey Hopwoods and Murrel. Agricultural machinery agents were: Messrs. Slingsby and Mundell and the Nandi Trading Syndicate.<sup>94</sup> In 1916/17, there were still 3 European stores, 2 butcheries, 4 Indian stores and one Goan store.<sup>95</sup> The hotels included: The Pioneer Hotel, The Eldoret Bar and Restaurant, and the Sosiani Hotel Ltd which was incomplete and not used yet.<sup>96</sup>

### **3.7 Impact of Early Developments on the Growth of Eldoret Town**

The 1913 maiden Uasin Gishu Agricultural Show demystified the notion that no good thing could come out of Uasin Gishu. Its impact on advertising the plateau significantly influenced the growth of Eldoret. Secondly, the visit by the Chief of the Economic Products Division to Eldoret in 1914 encouraged traders and their clientele in a move that motivated trade ventures in the town.

The attempts to improve the road infrastructure in Eldoret were quite significant as well since it stood to open up the town for business. With the exports from Uasin Gishu District being nil in 1913, the grumble generated from the farmers would later stir the government into action, hence improving the road network in Eldoret.

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<sup>93</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1914/15, 6

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1917/18, 11

<sup>96</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1918/19, 8

In addition, the genesis of preliminary education in Eldoret between 1913 and 1919 was yet another panacea to the economic woes of the town. It was indeed a relief to the European residents whose increasing worries potentially stood to suffocate the economic prospects of Eldoret town. The Central School and the new boarding school at Eldoret both fulfilled this need and brought calm among the settlers with regard to education. The new prison that was opened in 1913 and the Magistrate's Court which became operational in 1914 both increased the flow of people into Eldoret. The litigants, judicial officers and the attendant facilities contributed positively to the economic expansion that was taking shape in Eldoret town during these nascent years.

Communication played a significant role in the economic transformation of Eldoret town. Agricultural and business activities as well as personal and administrative communications benefited from the mail services that were introduced in Eldoret.<sup>97</sup> Telegraphic services improved things even further. The overall impact on the economy of Eldoret was remarkable. Eldoret became a communication centre as the main Post Office was housed there. The employees in that sector added to the number of people in the town and expanded the town's purchasing power as well as expansion of housing facilities.

Communication shortened time-distance in Kenya<sup>98</sup>. After the establishment of the telegraphic services, Her/His Majesty's Commissioner in Kenya could then send an urgent message to London and receive a reply within eight or nine hours. Earlier, no such reply could be expected for seven or eight months. Improved communication indeed opened up Kenya for the world in general and internally for commerce and trade.

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<sup>97</sup> KNA, Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1916/17, 14

<sup>98</sup> Ochieng', W.R and Maxon, M.R, (eds.) An economic History of Kenya, 1992, 131.

### **3.8 Economic Advancements in Eldoret between 1920 and 1929**

#### **3.8.1 Soldier Settlement**

Following the establishment of the Ex-soldiers' Settlement Scheme in 1919, the number of settlers was also substantially increased. Some of these soldiers settled in Trans-Nzoia, in the neighbourhood of Uasin Gishu and were in a suitable position to benefit from Eldoret's markets. The soldiers engaged in enterprises which promised quick returns such as dairying, pig production and growing of maize and flax though flax became the ruin of many.<sup>99</sup>

The Soviet Union and Belgium were the two main countries exporting flax and because of the dislocation of their economies during 1919 and 1920, the price of the crop rose from about £ 100 to £ 590 a ton. It became profitable to grow flax and many of the ex-soldier-settlers were lured to the industry with the disastrous result that they were financially crippled in 1921 when the price of the crop fell as the 1920-21 slump set in. One of the remedial steps taken by the government aimed at stimulating the farmers' economic recovery was to encourage the growing of maize. The farmers found that maize grew easily in the highlands and a good foreign market ensured a small but regular profit. This profit was instrumental in maintaining not only the colonial economy at large, but also the immediate locality whose focal point was Eldoret town.

The other steps which the government took to deal with the slump included the raising of import duties by the Tariff Amendment Ordinance of 1923 which enabled the producers of wheat, and dairy produce to sell their produce within East Africa in the face of foreign competition, the easing of farmers' production and marketing problems, and the prohibition of African involvement in cash-crop economy in order

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 132

to siphon labour directly to European farms. Railway freights were also cut to a bare minimum. With these incentives, settler agriculture rode out the storm.<sup>100</sup>

By 1920, Britain had not only lost her position as the most industrialized state in the West but was being successfully phased out of her European markets. She even found it difficult to retain her imperial markets. Thus, after the war, Britain embarked on a policy of strengthening her own industries and trade. This policy involved the opening up of colonial Africa's vast resources which would enable Britain to control the source of raw materials and the market for her exports. Consequently, the economic policy of the inter-war period required that colonial development be restricted to forms of production which would not compete with British manufactured goods.<sup>101</sup>

To ensure this harmony, a Joint East African Board was set up by the Colonial Office to represent those sections of the British Community which were actively interested in agricultural, commercial, financial, and industrial developments of East Africa. It comprised all major British firms with East Africa interests. The Board was to confer with the Colonial Office on matters fostering the development and prosperity of the East African colonies.<sup>102</sup>

The major implication of this economic policy for Kenya was that only tropical and semi tropical raw materials were to be produced. The idea was to make Britain less dependent on foreign countries for the supply of these raw materials. The settlers were encouraged to grow coffee, cotton, sisal, wheat, maize, and flax. These products were in short supply in Britain which was inevitably affecting British industrial output.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 122

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Berman, B (Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya), 120



The task of economic reconstruction began immediately after the War. The settlers returned to their farms full of hope and faith in the future, determined to meet the demands of the open market. Most of them had to make a fresh start since whatever progress they had made had been wiped out by four years of absence during the war. They were assisted in their new investments by the commercial banks which readily granted overdrafts.<sup>104</sup>

The East African Protectorate acquired the formal institutions of Crown Colony Government in 1920 when, with active settler encouragement, the territory was formally annexed as the Colony and the Protectorate of Kenya.<sup>105</sup> This change of name had no constitutional significance but allowed the government to raise a loan of £ 5 million in London in order to improve Mombasa harbour and extend the railway into Uganda through European areas in the western highlands.<sup>106</sup> In essence, it was this change of name that enabled Eldoret to have railway connection. It therefore deserves a special mention in the chronicles of economic history of Eldoret town.

The interwar decades brought important developments in the colonial state in Kenya. First, there was the consolidation of a particular coercive state apparatus operated by an intensively paternalistic Provincial Administration. Second, the period saw a simultaneous growth of the state apparatus under the growing pressure and influence from settlers actually to gain effective control of the state.<sup>107</sup> In addition, there was a 'brief post war economic boom and collapse of 1919-22, as the capitalist metropolises attempted to restore previous patterns of production and international trade.'<sup>108</sup> At the end of 1920, the post-war boom collapsed; besides, most people of whatever colour,

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<sup>104</sup>Fage J.D and Oliver R., *The Cambridge history of Africa, Vol. 7, From 1905-1940*, (1997), 76

<sup>105</sup>Berman, B (*Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*), 120

<sup>106</sup>Fage J.D and Oliver R., *The Cambridge history of Africa, Vol. 7, From 1905-1940*, (1997), 77

<sup>107</sup>Berman, B. (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination*, 120

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*

suffered losses as a result of the conversion of East African currency from Indian rupee to Sterling.<sup>109</sup>

The recession of 1921-2 stimulated state intervention to insulate settler production from the disruption of market forces and began the creation of state protected monopolies for the production and marketing of particular crops.<sup>110</sup> The intensification of trade after 1922 had a boomerang effect on urbanization in Eldoret, it being an essential locus of economic exchange. During the same period, African reserves were drained of manpower and ravaged by disease, and with the prewar patterns of developing peasant commodity production severely disrupted, official efforts at economic recovery focused on the extension of white settlement and the rapid restoration and expansion of settler export production. This period saw increased influx of settlers into the now Crown Colony and the Soldier Settlement Scheme was aggressively effected. In essence, 'the middle of 1920's were the best years in European farming in Kenya.'<sup>111</sup>

Under the Soldier Settlement Scheme of 1919 which opened 2.8 million acres of additional land, further efforts were made to limit speculation by requiring that settlers reside in the colony, occupy their farms for a stipulated period, and not dispose their leases until the original purchase price was paid.<sup>112</sup> This scheme resulted in the addition of some 500 families to the white community; while efforts to aid impoverished settler families during the Depression were intended as much to keep them in the colony as to restore their economic viabilities.<sup>113</sup> These numbers were crucial for the economic advancement of Eldoret since the economic activities

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<sup>109</sup> Fage J.D and Oliver R., *The Cambridge history of Africa, Vol. 7, From 1905-1940*, (1997), 77

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 129

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 679

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Zawanenberg, V (?), *The European Economy in Kenya*, 22-26

and the collective political unity of the settlers in Uasin Gishu is what would soon yield the railway extension to Eldoret in 1924.

In 1920, a Nairobi businessman affirmed the economic need for the railroad since “the prosperity of Eldoret depends, as it has always done, on the question of transport facilities.”<sup>114</sup> The businessman also referred to the stigma which the area had attracted because of its location. Uasin Gishu and Trans-Nzoia were more or less correctly regarded as uncivilized virgin backblocks of Kenya. This notion was turned by the proposal to build the railway which focused public attention upon the Plateau.<sup>115</sup>

The railhead, once at Londiani was connected to Eldoret in 1924. Eldoret was on the main line, linking it with the port of Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru in Kenya and Tororo, Jinja, Kampala and Kasese in Uganda. In addition to the main line services, there was a direct rail line to Kitale – an important and thriving agricultural area some 100km from Eldoret and connecting services throughout the whole of East Africa, including Dar-es-Salaam and throughout to the southern highlands of Tanzania.<sup>116</sup>

The town was provided with extensive railway facilities in the form of a major goods depot and a large railway served industrial area capable of considerable expansion. Regular train services, both passenger and goods, ran between Nairobi and Eldoret and beyond Eldoret to Uganda border.<sup>117</sup> This main railway trunkline connected all the important towns of Kenya through branch lines serving other parts of the country.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Anonymous businessman mentioned in Groen’s book, *The Afrikaners in Kenya*, 122

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 121

<sup>116</sup> Municipality of Eldoret, *A Guide to Investment* (1964), 11

<sup>117</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant, interviewed on 17 August, 2020.

<sup>118</sup> “64” Eldoret Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (1968), 25

When the railway arrived, Tuesday became Farmers' Day in Eldoret when people came in to collect the mail which had been brought by the weekly train the previous day. Later, two trains were run a week and Friday became the day when farmers congregated in the central lounge and elsewhere to discuss the weather, the crops, and the shortcomings of the government.<sup>119</sup> When work began on the Kitale line in 1924, meetings were held in Eldoret to protest against the rumoured plan for a junction north of the town. In that event, Eldoret was chosen as the junction station.<sup>120</sup> By 1926, the two towns were in direct communication by rail.<sup>121</sup>

The principal economic effect of rail transport was to link Kenya with the international economy by enormously reducing inland transport costs.<sup>122</sup> In that sense, railway system was instrumental in opening up the country for development. This network stretched from Mombasa on the east Coast, to Malaba on the border with Uganda. A branch line connected Nakuru with the town of Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria. Other branch lines linked Voi with Taveta on the border of Tanzania; Konza to Lake Magadi – a source of considerable deposits of Soda Ash; Nairobi to Nanyuki on the slopes of Mt. Kenya; Gilgil to Nyahururu; Rongai to Solai; Eldoret to Kitale and Kisumu with Butere. The railway had indeed opened up Eldoret to the greater region of East Africa.<sup>123</sup>

The central engineering workshops, set up in 1899 to service the then Ugandan Railways as it worked its way towards Lake Victoria, had been the backbone of success for the Kenya Railways and its forerunners. The workshops which stretched over 54 acres, located on the fringe of Nairobi's Industrial Area, represented one of

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> KNA, Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1924

<sup>121</sup> KNA, Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1926

<sup>122</sup> Ochieng', W.R and Maxon, M.R, (eds.) An economic History of Kenya, 1992, 129

<sup>123</sup> "64" Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism, 1986, 26

the largest industrial undertakings in Kenya. General overhaul, repairs, rehabilitation of locomotives and rolling stock and manufacture of spare parts all formed the central role of this self-contained and fully integrated workshop.<sup>124</sup>

The traffic growth had provided a strong impetus for Kenya Railways to expand. Demand for services extended beyond Kenya's borders. Commodities transported by Kenya Railways contributed in a major way to the economy of neighbouring countries. The ripple effect was felt locally.<sup>125</sup> Eldoret town was thus placed on the economic map of East Africa, thanks to the railway and the Uasin Gishu agricultural potential.

Furthermore, the development of inland container depots within the country provided East African Railways with yet another traffic demand to be met. The railway had a primary task of transporting goods and passengers.<sup>126</sup> Improvements by way of computerization of wagon movements and telecommunications later speeded up the work and eased communications throughout the network. There was a further proposal to develop the line to the mineral rich and fertile agricultural region of Kerio-Valley. This was expected to further boost the economic fortunes of Eldoret.<sup>127</sup>

The period between 1921 and 1930 saw the extension of the rail branch lines to Eldoret, Solai, Kitale, Nyahururu, Nanyuki and Butere. As a result of the extension of the railway network, virtually all the European communities in the country were then located at a distance not greater than 40km away from the railhead.<sup>128</sup> The railway thus, was meant to provide every possible economic advantage to the Europeans in the Kenyan Colony. In spite of that, Eldoret town benefited from the improved

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<sup>124</sup> Municipality of Eldoret, *A Guide to Investment* (1964), 11

<sup>125</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant, interviewed on 17 August, 2020.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Kurgat, 59 years, oral informant, interviewed on 10 July 10, 2020.

<sup>127</sup> *Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism* (1986), 5

<sup>128</sup> Ochieng', W.R and Maxon, M.R, (eds.) *An economic History of Kenya*, 1992, 139.

exchange of commodities and movement of people that followed the widening of the railway network. This in turn made the cost of commodities to go down significantly because of increased volume and diversity of trade goods. As a result, the railway injected life into the economy of what was once an empty vast grassland teeming with game.<sup>129</sup>

Heavy commodities and vehicles were transported more securely than before this expansion took place. The level of exchange that was witnessed kept several people in business hence creating a lot of income and job opportunities. Consequently, Eldoret expanded steadily as more goods landed in its market. All the necessary building materials, non-food and food items found easy access to the town's bulging number of consumers. Assorted farm implements found their way into the breadbasket of Kenya,<sup>130</sup> through the railway.<sup>131</sup> In this respect, Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet were all able to benefit from this widened network.

According to Hoey, with the advent of the railway to Eldoret, life underwent many changes, motorcars started to appear, and many felt that life was really becoming rather a whirl.<sup>132</sup> Hoey talks of an incident where he came up the road from Londiani when transport arrangements had improved enormously by having a '*ghari*' pulled by only four oxen.<sup>133</sup>

Mr. Beard, the first Eldoret Mayor told how he and his wife arrived in Kenya on the last day of January 1920 and came up to Eldoret on 1st January 1925 in their Model T. Ford from Nairobi. They took a whole day to go to Nakuru (About 170km) and another day to Eldoret (about 150km). The road down the escarpment was very dangerous with boulders and rocks all over the place. They were scared stiff of going too fast and used the brakes so much that they were often red hot. When the brakes were out, he used reverse gear

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<sup>129</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 16

<sup>130</sup> North Rift is often referred to as the breadbasket of Kenya.

<sup>131</sup> Kurgat Paul, 59 years, an oral informant, interviewed on July 10, 2020.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> KNA, MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 14

which was possible on that model. Many people had gone over the edge of the escarpment. At the bottom, a stream flowed across the road – splash point! Many picnicked under the lovely thorn trees there. Every few miles there were notices put up “water for thirsty cars” where springs were found to fill up.<sup>134</sup>

The improvement of road infrastructure would prove a formidable factor in the improvement of communication in the region. Improved transport is a *conditio sine qua non* in the connection of communication systems.<sup>135</sup>

The year 1929 saw the town being elevated to the standard of Municipal Board.<sup>136</sup> This was significant development since it enabled rates to be levied to help meet the cost of the town’s budget. The first budget was assisted by a government grant of £3,000. The total sum did not allow for drastic developments but in spite of that, the Councilors went on to make many improvements.<sup>137</sup>

Before 1929, difficulties were experienced in providing township services to keep pace with the rapid commercial developments. Responsibility for town services lay with the District Commissioner, helped by a Township Committee which had no legal authority and no means of collecting funds. This curtailed the town’s growth capacity as funds were really limited.<sup>138</sup>

The new town experienced remarkable changes as various buildings continued to spring up. Supplies, which had initially been accessed by train through the railhead at Londiani, could be more readily accessed. Capital stood to find access to the far-flung markets in the East African region, thanks to the Eldoret railway connection in 1924.

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<sup>134</sup> KNA, MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968) P. 21

<sup>135</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant, interviewed on 17 August 2020.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. The information was corroborated in another document: Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 2

<sup>137</sup> Eldoret Municipality, A Guide to Investment 1964, 5

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

With regard to developments in the aviation sector, Mr. Carberry flew the first aeroplane to Eldoret in 1928 and landed on the polo ground.<sup>139</sup> A very good landing ground was thereafter constructed, and many planes began to make use of it. In 1932, the aerodrome was taken over by the Municipal Board and licensed for all types of aircraft.<sup>140</sup>

The air transport sector became a key driver of Eldoret's economy as it attracted the new settler arrivals. It became yet another panacea to the obnoxious transport challenges that characterized the Londiani-Eldoret stretch and the slow railway alternative. From 1928 onwards, Eldoret received constant and regular flights. This sector created job opportunities and also generated revenue to the Municipality. In addition, it provided the much-needed travel speed for a section of settlers, traders, and colonial government authorities. However, 'air and water transport played relatively minor roles in the overall pattern of Kenya during the colonial period compared to rail and road transport'.<sup>141</sup>

### **3.8.2 Entertainment, Sports, and Housing**

In 1919, the Eldoret club was formed in the district and proceeded to erect club buildings and tennis courts. Prior to this, the only tennis court in town was attached to the District Commissioner's house and S.W.J Schoefield who had also served as a DC for many years, threw it open to many residents and his open-handed hospitality in entertaining players after games was well known throughout the country.<sup>142</sup> This venture boosted economic fortunes of the town as more people tramped to Eldoret, either as employees, or players and fans. Late in 1922, a small golf club was laid out within the precincts of the occupied area of the town. This club formed the nucleus of

<sup>139</sup>KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/7Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1928, 5

<sup>140</sup> KNA, MSS/125/1 Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1968), 21

<sup>141</sup> Ochieng', W.R and Maxon, M.R, (eds.) An economic History of Kenya, 1992, 133.

<sup>142</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1917/18, 23



members for the new club which was commenced in 1923 and the course laid out on Kapsoya estate about two miles from town centre. Eldoret then could boast one of the best nine-hole golf courses in east Africa.<sup>143</sup>

A junior tennis club had also been commenced and land adjoining the European Hall in Ortleppville. In 1927, Mrs. Ortlepp erected the aforementioned hall, which served many useful purposes such as dances, amateur theatricals and public meetings became the house of a permanent cinematograph exhibition.<sup>144</sup> A polo club also existed at Sergoit. The first racecourse was laid out on land (approximately) near what later became the railway station and go-down plots. This was moved in 1922 to Kapsoya on land behind what later became the Masonic Lodge. A permanent site eventually acquired about four miles from Town along the Kapsabet road, and a very attractive course was then in existence.<sup>145</sup>

Following the developments of the Eldoret club, tennis court, golf club, Eldoret sports culture was born. The visit by the Prince of Wales catalysed the sports economic trajectory which continued to gather momentum thereafter. These sports attractions have always played a significant part in boosting economies of urban centres. Eldoret benefited from such initiatives and from then on, more people began to frequent these leisure spots. The playing fields for hockey, soccer, and rugby sections of the Eldoret sports club were presented to the club by Elgonview Lands.<sup>146</sup>

By 1914, there were still no regular quarters provided for the Asst. District Commissioner, sub-Asst. surgeon or Magistrate's clerk. The housing situation in

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<sup>143</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism, 1986, 22

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/3Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1916/1917, 4

Eldoret was pathetic, but that was expected of a new centre or town.<sup>147</sup>The nascent years of Eldoret were of such low quality housing that rondavels were commonplace.

The government buildings were rated as the shoddiest in the town and considered bad example to private people intending to build. A wing was added to the DC's office at a cost of £100.<sup>148</sup> The bazaar consisted of four shops belonging to Indians and Goanese, and a butcher's shop belonging to a Somali. On farm 80, there were many buildings inhabited by Europeans, Indians and Africans all crowded onto a small place called Ortleppville.<sup>149</sup> There was no sanitary provision made and disastrous results were expected due to the drainage to the Sosiani River. The same river Sosiani was the source of water alongside rainwater.<sup>150</sup>

Quite a number of residential houses were springing up and as a result of private enterprises, the town was rapidly growing. A hut was also erected for use by the District Surgeon. The Principal Medical Officer had at last been prevailed upon to commence erecting half a house for the Sub Assistant Surgeon.<sup>151</sup> The PWD also made a small addition to the DC's house.<sup>152</sup>Furthermore, the Postmaster General had at last been prevailed upon to erect quarters for his African clerks.<sup>153</sup>

The only African location was earmarked to be the railway station. In any case, the town was not meant for the Africans.<sup>154</sup> They were treated as visitors to the Plateau who had to obtain passes before being allowed access.<sup>155</sup> All servant quarters, Gaol lines, porters lines had been entirely rebuilt by labour of prisoners and station hands.

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<sup>147</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/1Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1913/14, 25

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>149</sup> KNA/MSS/125 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), p.26

<sup>150</sup> KNA, PC/RVP/2/8/6 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1919-20

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>152</sup>KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/3Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1916/17, 13

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant, interviewed on 17 August,2020.

<sup>155</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant, interviewed on 16 July,2020.

Thirty eight new huts, 16 feet in diameter with walls made of stone and mud one foot thick had been completed by 1917. The huts were expected to last for 10 years.<sup>156</sup>

There were three European stores, two butcheries, 4 Indian stores and one Goan store in 1916/1917.<sup>157</sup> In 1917/18, ‘a certain number of European residences were built in the Township and its neighbourhood’.<sup>158</sup> The nature of these residences was not specified in the report. However, they were of ‘European standard’. In spite of that, it was a concern that building materials and skilled labour were scarce. There was a house famine for all classes of community, European, Asiatic and Native. Scarcity of skilled labour and of building materials had hindered the erection of business premises and private residences.<sup>159</sup>

There was a decline of growth in the housing sector as depicted in the excerpt above. The period of the First World War significantly hampered strategic economic programs in the entire British empire. However, the same report expressed optimism that there were signs that ‘such buildings will be commenced in future.’<sup>160</sup> This optimism was based on the fact that the war would soon end, and economic normalcy would return.

In 1919-1920, there was recorded an urgent need for an African location to be laid out. The only accommodation for Africans visiting Eldoret town was in the lines of the Public Works Department employees, the station hands lines, or the servant quarters of private houses. The site for the African location fell within the railway area. A new one was to be identified.<sup>161</sup> There was the influx of the African

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<sup>156</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1916/17, 8

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>158</sup> KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/4 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1917-1918, 12

<sup>159</sup> KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/6 Uasin Gishu Annual Report, 1919-20, 17

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

population which began gradually but was expected to bulge with time. It is on this premise that an African location was to be found.<sup>162</sup> The forces of modernization, which found expression in urbanization, were exercising their strength on the hitherto empty grassland. The hunting and raiding African community slowly became employees in a Europeanized modern setting.

Some of the houses already put up by 1920 included: the central school, the police station, the office of the superintendent of police, the Gaol, the old Gaol (then used as a store, and not very convenient or safe), a wood and iron house occupied by the senior Assistant District Commissioner, a brick house for the Inspector of Police and a new Post Office, completed in December 1919. The District Commissioner's house was built of stone and thatched. It was described as 'a fairly good house in bad repair.' It was built in the neutral zone and would need to be removed.<sup>163</sup>

Other housing units listed as being in Eldoret included: a wood and iron house (for clerical staff), a small brick house (for the Police Clerk), the D.C's old office of stone and thatch became newly occupied by the Overseer Public Works Department as a house and office. The old Post Office, built with rough stone and C.I roof, had no ceiling and but was to be used as temporary offices for the Veterinary Department. The Medical Officer occupied a wood and iron house while the hospital was under construction. However, there were two small buildings including a dispensary on the hospital grounds.<sup>164</sup>The Eldoret Hotel<sup>165</sup>was completed and eventually opened in about 1926.

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<sup>162</sup>Samuel Kipketer Tarrus, 78 years, interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> The Eldoret Hotel was initially known as the Sosiani hotel.

### 3.9 Health and Establishment of Water Supply, 1919-1929

The Road Board was much hampered by the scarcity and price of food stuffs and to shortage of labour caused by the epidemics of smallpox and influenza among the Africans. Doctor Heard, the district surgeon died of influenza while on voyage to England, leaving assistant surgeon Chand to take charge of the district. There had been severe epidemics of dysentery, smallpox and influenza among the Africans and a severe epidemic of influenza among the European population causing among the latter 27 deaths.<sup>166</sup> The African casualty was not stated, a common intentionality in the colonial reports.

The government then dispatched Doctor Radford and two motor cars to the medical assistants of the plateau and the public expressed deep sense of gratitude to the DC. A total of 1558 people were vaccinated and revaccinated. The year 1918/19 was one of drought and famine. As such, it posed economic challenges to the settlers and a ripple effect was felt in Eldoret town, including the health sector.<sup>167</sup>

The central role of the health sector propelled the zeal that culminated in the establishment of The Eldoret Hospital which was commenced in 1919. Prior to that, the district had been served by two stone rondavels erected in 1917 where patients lay up making their own arrangements for food and nursing. Dr Heard was the only practitioner on the plateau during the early days and did much sterling work travelling many miles by day and night to answer calls for his assistance.<sup>168</sup>

In 1919, Dr M.C Wetherell was posted to Eldoret as government M.O (Medical Officer). He was a medical farm owner in the district but fulfilled part of his obligations in connections with the conditions attached to the farm by practising in

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> KNA/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1918/19, 7

<sup>168</sup> KNA/UG/2/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1919/1920, 8

Eldoret where there was no other doctor.<sup>169</sup> The hospital, originally a government institution, was handed over to the residents of the district as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1923 and was administered by a committee.<sup>170</sup>

A scheme of medical insurance was inaugurated whereby subscribers of £3 per annum were admitted to the hospital at a fee of Kshs.15 per day whereas non-residents paid Kshs.30 per day exclusive of medical attendance. A medical superintendent was retained for the first six months of working under this new regime but was later dispensed with and any practitioner in the district attended his own patients. In 1927, the hospital was incorporated as accompany (limited by guarantee) and its management was carried on by a board of governors who appointed a house and finance committee. This form of management continued for quite a while.

Dr Pope took over from Dr MC Wetherell in 1920 as MO and was later relieved by Dr J. Forbes as district surgeon. In September 1927, building was commenced on the new Native Civil Hospital which up till then had been served by five brick huts in the compound of the European Hospital and had no independent dispensary and theatre. These ones were remedied in the new hospital. The European hospital was considerably enlarged in 1930 by the addition of several wards and an excellent up to date operation theatre. Eldoret was now admirably served by able physicians and surgeons in the person of Drs Fauche, Dondas, and Forbes.<sup>171</sup>

Dr Marshall took up a medical farm in Moiben area in 1927 and served that portion of the district.<sup>172</sup> About 1925, a sanitary inspector was posted to Eldoret under the supervision of the medical officer of Health, Nakuru. In 1928, Dr McPhal Cambel

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 13

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>172</sup> KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/7 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1927, 15

took over the plateau and Trans Nzoia as medical officer of Health and did great work in improving the general health conditions.<sup>173</sup> Eldoret town, according to political record file (1927-1930) was then considered to be one of, if not, the healthiest town in Kenya.<sup>174</sup>

Water resources development and management was key to the growth, sustainable development, and the general evolution of Eldoret town. It therefore became a priority area for Eldoret to invest in water development and management. Eldoret, since inception, had always relied on river water for its domestic needs. This was supplied by a vendor. For drinking purposes, the town was dependent on the supply of rain which 'it were idle to pretend is sufficient'.<sup>175</sup> The 1919/20 annual report depicted the water situation in Eldoret thus: 'The only water supply is from rainwater tanks and Eldare (Sosiani) River.'<sup>176</sup>

It was not until 1928 that a piped water supply from the Sosiani River was installed by the Railways from about 8 miles away and was later taken over by the new Municipal Board. The PWD achieved this milestone which however "deprived Mrs. Eddy of her business of carting water in an ox cart from the Sosiani for sale to township residents".<sup>177</sup> Initially, the source of water was tanks which were used to harvest rainwater.

The sanitary conditions were imperfect, and the water supply obtained from the Sosiani River was impure in the early days before 1928.<sup>178</sup> From then on, there was sustained water provision in Eldoret. This sector not only provided revenue to the

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<sup>173</sup> Political Record Book, 1927-1930, 8

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1916-1917, 11

<sup>176</sup> KNA/PC/RVP/2/8/6 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1919-20, 15

<sup>177</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 43

<sup>178</sup> Uasin Gishu Annual Report, 1914/1915, 21

town council, but also created employment opportunities. It also raised the standard of living in Eldoret town.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to scrutinize the economic factors responsible for Eldoret town's evolution and development between 1913 and 1929. It has emerged that 'the period between the First World War and the depression onset was one of controlled urbanization in Kenya, and Eldoret mirrored that control.'<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, it was also a watershed in the urban transformation in Eldoret. The chapter has revealed that it was during this period that the spatial organization of Eldoret town was developed and consolidated in both time and space. It further established that important developments took place in the following sectors: transport and communication such as arrival of the motorcar and motorcycle in Eldoret in 1913, construction of the first road in town in 1913/14; construction of Eldoret-Kapsabet road, Eldoret-Kacheliba road and Eldoret-Londiani road built after 1920. There was also the railway which was extended from Londiani in 1924. Other developments were the telephone and telegraph connections.

The chapter further demonstrated that there was improvement in the banking sector which included establishment of the second bank, Barclays Bank in 1920. In the agriculture sector, there was the first agricultural show in 1913 and expansion of agricultural production which was triggered by the railway arrival in 1924. In addition, piped water (from River Sosiani) was installed in 1928 by the Railways from 8 miles away. This improvement marked the beginning of improved sanitation and improved health in Eldoret town.

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<sup>179</sup> Ochieng' (1992), 147



Other developments included establishment of the Magistrate's court, prison, educational institutions, and health facilities. An aerodrome was also established in Eldoret in 1928. There were also developments in the housing sector as well as trade advancements that included butcheries, 4 Indian stores and Goan store, a motor garage. There were hotels such as The Pioneer Hotel, The Sosiani Hotel and The Eldoret Bar and Restaurant. The next chapter details further evolutionary developments in Eldoret from the onset of the Great Depression (1929) to the end of World War II in 1945.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**THE GREAT DEPRESSION, WORLD WAR II AND THE**  
**TRANSFORMATION OF ELDORET, 1930 TO 1945**

**4.0 Introduction**

This chapter traces the transformation of Eldoret town within the context of two events: one happening in the 1930s, and the other occurring in the 1940s. The first of these events was the Great Depression that began in October 1929 which also coincided with a drought and a plague of locusts in Kenya<sup>1</sup>. These two phenomena adversely affected the economy of the Kenyan colony. The Great Depression was characterized by the collapse of the New York Stock Market in late 1929 that generated shockwaves of deflation which soon swept the world into what became christened as the Great Depression. Consequently, commodity prices began to drop at alarming speed.<sup>2</sup>

The chapter highlights the fact that the colonial state took deliberate measures to protect settler estate production to rescue it from the brink of collapse.<sup>3</sup> It reveals how this period saw the expansion and bureaucratization of state management of the economy and the consolidation of settler production and marketing monopolies. The chapter argues that the interventions put in place in the wake of the ravaging Great Depression enabled Eldoret town to continue its pace of economic development despite the shockwaves.

Farmers were quickly cushioned through bulk-purchase policy that encouraged increased agricultural production in Uasin Gishu whose nerve centre, Eldoret town,

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<sup>1</sup> Much of Kenya suffered both drought and a locust invasion in 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Ochieng', W.R (1986), *A History of Kenya*, 57

<sup>3</sup> Berman, B (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 129

reflected the positive developments expressed in the town's diverse projects that shall be discussed here.

The Second event which would also fundamentally influence the transformation of Eldoret was World War II whose onset, paradoxically, brought with it almost twenty years of rapid growth in the estate sector of Kenya and a related expansion of commerce and secondary industry. The trends within the political economy and state already visible during the 1930s were accelerated and intensified over the next two decades.<sup>4</sup>

Settler agriculture expanded rapidly in scale and profitability and settler estates began to move towards more fully capitalist forms of production; investing extensively in capital equipment and attempting to create a completely wage-dependent rural proletariat. Underlying these developments was a crucial change in the relationship with the metropole. This initially involved a substantial tightening of the links between colony and metropole within the existing structures of imperialism as part of a deliberate effort to use the colonies to meet urgent wartime supply needs.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4.1 Impact of the Great Depression and World War II on the Transformation of Eldoret**

The collapse of the world's commodity markets in 1930<sup>6</sup> resulted in the demand for agricultural products shrinking and their prices falling. Countries imposed tariffs on trade and allowed only minimal foreign imports.<sup>7</sup> Every nation tried to export more and import less with the consequence that there were vast quantities of unsold

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 256

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Fage J.D and Oliver R., *The Cambridge history of Africa*, Vol. 7, From 1905-1940, (1997), 687

<sup>7</sup> Ochieng', W.R (1986), *A History of Kenya*, 58

products. Most acutely affected by the depression were countries that depended on agriculture as the mainstay of their economy.<sup>8</sup>

The emerging unavoidable fundamental issue during the Great Depression was state protection of settler estate production to rescue it from the brink of collapse.<sup>9</sup> This period saw the expansion and bureaucratization of state management of the economy and the consolidation of settler production and marketing monopolies. By the end of the decade, significant sectors of the state apparatus had effectively become instruments of settler interests.<sup>10</sup>

The state became an agent of settler class power. It therefore put settlers on a pedestal that ensured their economic dominance.<sup>11</sup> The interventions put in place in the wake of the ravaging Great Depression enabled Eldoret town to continue its pace of economic development despite the shockwaves. Farmers were quickly cushioned through bulk-purchase policy that encouraged increased agricultural production in Uasin Gishu. Grain growers were the most adversely affected by this fall in prices. They were particularly confronted with the prospect not merely of being unable to sell their produce at a price which would allow them a reasonable margin of profit but of being unable to realize any profit at all. All branches of agricultural industry were similarly affected in varying degrees. Nor was there any prospect of improvement in the immediate future.<sup>12</sup>

Progressively throughout the year 1930, various measures were taken to relieve the burden which had been imposed on the agricultural industry, both by economic

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Berman, B (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 129

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Colonial Reports-No. 1562, Colony, and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the year 1930, 6

depression and by abnormally heavy rainfall, which retarded harvesting, transport, and preparation for export of crops during the earlier months of the year.<sup>13</sup> It became inevitable and necessary to afford some measure of financial assistance to the agricultural industry.

The measures were outlined in the 1930 'Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report'. A review of the whole question of the conditions of agricultural credits operating in the Colony resulted in the enactment of the Agricultural Advances Ordinance on 31st May, 1930. Consequently, two categories of boards were appointed, namely: Central Board and Local Boards. The former was entrusted with the sole authority for making advances while the latter played an advisory role in various centres.<sup>14</sup>

Provision was made for the sum of £100,000 to be available for these advances and by the end of the year some £68,000 had been advanced in various forms. Furthermore, it was considered advisable to carry over the sum of £32,000 remaining to enable further advances to be made in 1931. This measure had a steadying effect on what threatened to become a very serious situation.<sup>15</sup>

Further emergency measures to assist the maize and wheat industries took the form of a refund of four-fifths of the Grading and Inspection Charges made on the 1929-1930 crops of maize and wheat, and a remission by the Kenya and Uganda Railways of four-fifths of the Port Storage Charges on those crops. By July, market prices of grain had dropped to a parity of approximately Shs.5/55 and Shs.9/- per 200 lb, bag of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13

maize and wheat respectively and to Shs.2/20 per 180 lb. bag of barley. The resulting collapse in grain markets created a serious crisis.<sup>16</sup>

In these circumstances, further assistance to the agricultural industry became imperative. A committee was appointed to enquire into the situation and as a result of its recommendations, it was decided to appropriate the sum of £35,000 from the colony's surplus balances, to enable a refund to be made of the whole or part of the railway rates and port charges in respect of maize, wheat, and barley harvested late in 1929 and early in 1930, and exported during 1930.<sup>17</sup>

The assistance afforded by Government to the agricultural industry during 1930 and the opening months of 1931 are tabulated in **table 1** below:

**Table 1: Assistance by Government to the Agricultural Industry in 1930 and Early 1931**

	£
Freight rate reductions to the Cereal Industry (recoverable)	33,830
Waiving of Conditioning Charges ...	15,071
Subsidy to Maize Industry	81,000
Advances under Agricultural Advances Ordinance (recoverable)	100,000
Reduction in freight and storage charges— Kenya and Uganda Railways	33,380
Harbours	23,434
	<b>Total <u>£286,165</u></b>

*Source: Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the Year 1930, 6*

**Table 1** above shows that there were deliberate practical steps that were taken to cushion farmers in the Kenyan Colony from the ravages of the Great Depression. The pace of progress in Eldoret town attained sufficient insulation as public projects were sustained. Eldoret's hinterland which relied significantly on maize and wheat was sufficiently catered for. The history of Eldoret's economic evolution and development

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,7

during the Great Depression is intertwined with the colonial state interventionist measures contained in table 1 above.

Another measure involved creation of a Land and Agricultural Bank in Kenya. Its objective was to afford a means for making available for farmers long term loans on first mortgage of land and this received the consideration of Government for some years. The depressed conditions prevailing in 1930 rendered the creation of such a Bank more than ever desirable, and, with the permission of the Secretary of State, the Land Bank Bill was passed by Legislative Council in November 1930, before receiving his final approval. The Land Bank, with a capital of £240,000, began operations in July 1931.<sup>18</sup>

During the year (1931), a Land and Agricultural Bank under the control of Government was formed, with a capital of £240,000. The Bank makes advances to farmers over periods varying from 10 to 30 years on first mortgage security. On 31st December 1931, the Bank had made advances totaling £32,300.<sup>19</sup>

On the part of European farmers' initiative, as a result of the low prices for crops, they paid increasing attention to livestock farming. Though development in this direction was hampered by lack of sufficient financial resources, considerable progress was made. This could be viewed as a survival mechanism crafted by farmers without necessarily involving any official government intervention. Thus, animal products sold by Europeans during the depression years are indicated in **table 2** below:

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Colonial Reports-No. 1606, Colony, and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the year 1931,41

**Table 2: Animal Products Sold by European Farmers, 1929-1934**

	<i>Milk (whole).</i>	<i>Cream.</i>	<i>Butterfat.</i>	<i>Butter.</i>	<i>Cheese.</i>	<i>Ghee.</i>	<i>Wool,</i>
	<i>gal.</i>	<i>gal.</i>	<i>lb.</i>	<i>lb.</i>	<i>lb.</i>	<i>lb.</i>	<i>lb.</i>
1933-34	939,434	85,678	754,808	307,349	140,633	35,708	931,330
1932-33	1,138,743	73,387	923,042	350,405	155,525	47,110	721,542
1931-32	1,018,868	77,063	675,910	285,320	111,682	96,471	813,662
1930-31	1,101,704	145,796	614,790	312,694	131,168	114,527	654,846
*1929-30	1,027,376	287,657	(a)	371,675	108,876	116,117	893,258
*1928-29	791,452	212,914	(a)	290,905	145,609	65,216	939,619

\*In respect of the period 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July

(a) Included in "Cream"

*Source: Colonial Reports-No. 1688, Colony, and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the year 1933, 17*

From **table 2** above, sufficient evidence is provided of farmers' attention shifting to livestock farming. Of particular interest is the sustained million-mark sale of gallons of whole milk during the depression years. As mentioned in chapter three, settler agriculture was the major factor that underpinned developments in Eldoret town.<sup>20</sup> The steady sale of milk during this period provided a boost to the economy of this big centre in the "big agricultural district".<sup>21</sup>

With respect to one of the most dominant crops in Uasin Gishu, a Maize Conference was convened in December to enquire into the State of the maize industry and to seek means for assisting the industry during the period of depression. The Report of this Conference, and the measures which resulted from it were affected within the year 1931. In effect, assistance was given to the producers of the 1930 crop, in general, by means of a repayable subsidy on exports averaging Shs. 1/63 per bag.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, an oral informant, and a former Eldoret Municipal Council employee between 1962-1967, interviewed on 17 August, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> KNA, DC/UG/1/1 UG District Annual Report 1913/1914, 16

<sup>22</sup> Colonial Reports-No. 1562, Colony, and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the year 1930, 14



During the year 1930, it became increasingly evident that some reorganization in the wheat and flour industry would be necessary to ensure that producers should share, in ratio to the amount of their production, the loss entailed by the Colony's production being in excess of its requirements, and the fact that the export price for wheat was considerably less than that for wheat sold for local consumption. The Sale of Wheat Ordinance was passed and a Board was created in December to effect this object. This Board confirmed draft Rules under the Ordinance and the wheat" pool was formed.<sup>23</sup>

The efficacy of these interventionist measures can be assessed and appraised as successful as evidenced in the following extract from the "Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report of 1930". It stated that, 'despite a progressive fall throughout the year in commodity prices, the total value of Kenya produce exported in 1930 exceeded that of any previous year'.<sup>24</sup> The momentum of development projects was maintained in the face of a difficult economic crisis under which the entire world was reeling.

Given that urban centres are the loci of economic articulation, settler dominance in the midst of numerous state interventions enhanced Europeanization of Eldoret town further in the 1930s. Virtually all policies were directed towards improving the economic conditions of the white population.<sup>25</sup> Africans were relegated to a secondary status and their interests came after those of the settlers.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from enhanced agricultural activities, a windfall arrived in the Kenyan Colony with the discovery of huge deposits of gold in Kakamega. This discovery of gold

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>26</sup> Nelson Buses, 67 years, interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020

became a blessing to the banks in Eldoret town for it was the banks that bought gold from the traders. This stimulated the town's agricultural economy and boosted diverse sectors, hence contributing to the town's development.

#### **4.2 The Role of the Kakamega Gold Rush in the Economic Development of Eldoret**

The Kakamega gold rush which started in 1930 provided an economic relief to the hard-up Uasin Gishu settlers who had felt the heat of the Great Depression. Gold had been found in this area by missionaries as early as 1904 but was not mined systematically until Mr. Louis A. Johnson began panning in 1928. He formed the Eldoret Mining Syndicate in 1931 and began large scale mining. Other mining companies moved in shortly thereafter, but the area remained open to small scale mining by individuals for the next few years.<sup>27</sup>

Many Eldoret businesspeople rushed to take out prospecting licenses and brought in bottles filled with alluvial gold to sell to the local banks in Eldoret.<sup>28</sup> This singular piece of good fortune became an economic blessing to Eldoret town. The banks and their customers took every advantage of this 'golden opportunity'. The gold mine at Rosterman in Kakamega had attracted a considerably large number of European prospectors whose appetite for wealth was rewarding both to themselves and the entire colonial establishment.<sup>29</sup> Many of the prospectors were Afrikaners.<sup>30</sup>

It was estimated that about 15 per cent of the male Afrikaner population joined the rush to these gold fields. Though most found this an illusory escape from poverty, a few did very well. Some farmers acquired sufficient capital to permit them to buy

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<sup>27</sup>East African Series Pamphlets "Advance, Kenya," The Mining World and Engineering Record, August 5, 1933, pp. 153-59.

<sup>28</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today, 23

<sup>29</sup>Oyugi (2015) The Evolution of Kakamega into an Urban Centre between 1920 and 2010, 54

<sup>30</sup> Groen, G (1974), The Afrikaners in Kenya, 140

farms and equipment. However, these gold fields did not make a significant impact on the Afrikaner community.<sup>31</sup>

“The abandonment of the gold standard by Britain in 1931 and by the USA in 1933 caused the price of gold to rise by two-thirds between 1931-1935. This stimulated the exploitation of East Africa’s scattered deposits and by 1938, gold was the second largest export from both Kenya and Tanganyika.”<sup>32</sup>

The excerpt above vividly explains the enthusiasm behind the Kakamega gold-rush whose deposits ended up in Eldoret banks. The banks were in any case conduits through which the gold was channeled to external markets. However, the precise extent of economic contribution of the Kakamega gold fields to the development of Eldoret town seems scantily documented or explored in the available records. Be that as it may, the profits certainly ended up boosting different sectors of Eldoret’s economy such as banks, agriculture, housing, education, trade, transport, and communication, among others.<sup>33</sup>

Between 1931 and 1934, a prolonged drought combined with falling prices to have the value of exports decline. By 1940, they had risen to nearly £4 million, but this recovery was largely due to new commodities. Coffee had remained the principal export, but in 1938-40, it was closely followed by gold. The 1940 gold export estimates from reef mining in different parts of Kavirondo was worth £650,000, though already, the volume was beginning to decline.<sup>34</sup> The gold deposits in Kakamega’s Rosterman mining site were depleted in 1936 and the underground tunnels that stretched several kilometers from Rosterman in Kakamega “all the way to Sigalagala” were abandoned and the Europeans moved out in droves.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Groen, G (1974), *The Afrikaners in Kenya*, 141.

<sup>32</sup> Fage J.D and Oliver R., *The Cambridge history of Africa*, Vol. 7, From 1905-1940, (1997), 687

<sup>33</sup> Hassan Musumba, 68 years, interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 692

<sup>35</sup> Oyugi, J (2015), *The Evolution of Kakamega Settlement into an Urban Centre, 1920-2010*, 54

Following the outbreak of war in 1939, certain members of the staff in the Kenyan colonial administration were called up for military service. According to the Uasin Gishu District Annual Report for 1939, the disruption arising from this war certainly punctured the momentum of economic growth in Eldoret.<sup>36</sup> However, certain interventions and colonial policy shifts enabled the colonies to overcome their difficulties. In light of these interventions, the war did not unleash its full weight of disruption in Eldoret. No wonder, the 1939 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report says, 'in spite of this<sup>37</sup>, services have been maintained satisfactorily.'<sup>38</sup>

In essence, agricultural production in the Kenyan colony underwent fundamental transformation during World War II. One of the interventions during World War II was that the institutional structures of production and market control were developed and extended down to the district level; and direct contract buying arrangements with the metropole assured producers of a market for whatever they could grow. Initially, the settlers had been informed by the metropolitan authorities that the allocation of shipping space to the colony was not justified. Soon after, however, the scale and urgency of Britain's wartime commodity needs led to fundamental change in the situation.

Kenya's products and its productive capacity assumed a direct and immediate importance for the metropole, not so much initially for British consumption requirements but rather for the supply of Allied Forces in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean basin.<sup>39</sup> By 1941, the pre-war system of commodity trade by private mercantile capital had been swept aside and replaced by monopoly state trading by

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<sup>36</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/14 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1939, 7

<sup>37</sup> Although certain members of the staff in the Kenyan colonial administration were called up for military service, services were still offered satisfactorily.

<sup>38</sup> Berman, B (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 129

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 258

central ministries of the United Kingdom government. This took the form of bulk-purchase contracts for unprocessed primary commodities. By the end of the war, almost all of the exports of Britain's colonial empire were being purchased by government departments in London.<sup>40</sup>

In due course, bulk-purchase was proclaimed as an intrinsic part of colonial development, providing producers with an assured market and stable prices. In fact, the bulk-purchase system often provided Britain with supplies of commodities such as cotton, cocoa, palm oil and coffee at below world market prices, a move which permitted increased profits on products processed from them and even their profitable unprocessed re-export at the higher world prices. State monopoly trading thus acted to increase the exploitation of the colonies by the UK and both to reinforce existing patterns of primary commodity production and intensify the dependence of the colonies on the metropole.<sup>41</sup>

The necessary corollary of bulk purchase was organized production and bulk selling at the opposite end of the transactions. In Kenya, as well as throughout the colonies of British East Africa, the local state apparatus established marketing boards and other public agencies that set producer prices and quotas to meet the forward purchase contracts negotiated with the metropole. This was organized in Kenya by local production committees established in the settled districts under the Increased Production of Crops Ordinance (1942). These established quotas for wheat, maize, oats, barley, pyrethrum, rice, and vegetables.<sup>42</sup>

To encourage increased production, another state intervention was that the state set prices that guaranteed to the farmer a minimum return in the case of crop failure. For such commodities as coffee, tea, pyrethrum and sisal, producers were guaranteed

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<sup>40</sup> Charlotte, L (1956), *Bulk-Buying from the Colonies*, 1-7

<sup>41</sup> Berman, B (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 258

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

prices through contracts with the Ministry of Food in Britain.<sup>43</sup> For the first time, the settler producers were in the position of being able to sell everything they could produce at guaranteed profitable prices.<sup>44</sup>

Apart from the policy of bulk-purchase, the other major policy mechanism was provided by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 and its post-war extensions. These supplied metropolitan public capital to colonial governments for public investments that would stimulate the development of primary production within existing structures as well as provide British industry with needed orders for steel, cement, rolling stock, and electrical equipment. It was on this premise that several enabling public projects were instituted especially road and water projects.

Furthermore, colonial imports of goods from the dollar zone were to be reduced through investments in production by metropolitan industrial capital within the protected colonial enclaves.<sup>45</sup> The key instruments in pursuit of the objective were the Colonial Development Corporate and the Infrastructure Investment policies and industrial colonial states.<sup>46</sup> All conventional economic indicators showed general and often lusty growth during this period. The gross domestic product of the colony, estimated to have been £24.3 million, of which only 49.8 per cent represented recorded market transactions in the monetary sector of the economy, was £60.7 million in 1946, with 64 per cent in the monetary sector.<sup>47</sup>

The intensified economic activities in the colonies arising from the need to meet war demands had a positive ripple effect on the transformation of Eldoret town.

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<sup>43</sup> Brown, L (1968), 'Agricultural change in Kenya, 1945-1960', Food Research Institute Bulletin 8 (1), 72

<sup>44</sup> Berman, B (1990), Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya, 258

<sup>45</sup> Swainson, N (1987) 'Foreign Corporates', 133-4

<sup>46</sup> Berman, B (1990), Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya, 260

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 262

Heightened development was witnessed in the health sector, roads infrastructure, trade, agriculture, and water provision. The increased influx of Europeans into Kenya during the period of World War II ‘generated a steadily rising demand for social services and public investment particularly transportation, communications, energy supplies and water resources.’<sup>48</sup>

In Uasin Gishu, in 1941, stock farmers increased their production resulting in the supplies to the creamery going up.<sup>49</sup> There was also a big increase in pig breeding with satisfactory results. The pyrethrum industry was also ‘once more in a healthy position.’ The purchase of agricultural implements for extended production beneficially affected the three hardware firms in the town.<sup>50</sup> In 1942, production in all farming activities was greatly increased and the Scheme for the provision of working oxen for farmers through the Supply Board Meat Control Buyer (Capt. Latcher) ‘was also working well.’<sup>51</sup> These remarkable increases in agricultural production reflected the goings-on in the global scene where the urgency of Britain’s wartime commodity needs inevitably led to fundamental change in the agricultural situation in Kenya.<sup>52</sup>

The European population in the Kenyan colony grew from 22,800 in 1939 to 29,700 in 1948, and many ended up in Uasin Gishu and Eldoret in particular. The general population of Eldoret grew from 3,147 in 1941 to 4,459 in 1943<sup>53</sup>, signifying increased attraction to Eldoret. That would not be possible and sustainable without the necessary and commensurate economic development. The Asiatic population increased by approximately 260 largely due to influx of artisan labour working at the Prisoners of War Camp. African population also increased by approximately 700 over

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 290

<sup>49</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941, 10

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1942, 7

<sup>52</sup> Berman, B (1990), *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 261

<sup>53</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/18 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1943, 2

the previous year 1940.<sup>54</sup> This had a positive impact on trade activities as shall be discussed in one of the ensuing sub-sections.

During the war, a substantial number of factories were established in the major African cities to process locally produced materials that hitherto had been imported in their finished state from Europe.<sup>55</sup> There is little evidence pointing to the establishment of any such factories until after 1945 (other than the flax industry) in Eldoret but the relatively quick access of the same from Nairobi, made it a lot easier for the town to receive locally processed goods. This was facilitated by the railway connection between Eldoret and Nairobi.

As discussed in chapter three, Eldoret was on the main line, linking it with the port of Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru in Kenya and Tororo, Jinja, Kampala and Kasese in Uganda. In addition to the main line services, there was a direct rail line to Kitale – an important and thriving agricultural area some 100km from Eldoret and connecting services throughout the whole of East Africa, including Dar-es-Salaam and throughout to the southern highlands of Tanzania.<sup>56</sup>

The policy of industrialization during this period of World War II was one that improved trade in the colony and Eldoret's economy was a beneficiary.

### **4.3 Improvements in the Health Sector from the Depression to the End of World War II**

The health sector was not spared the shock that came with the Great Depression. However, it was quickly salvaged by the interventions in the agriculture sector that kept the settlers afloat during this trying period. Health services were a compelling

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<sup>54</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/15 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1940, 2

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Municipality of Eldoret, A Guide to Investment (1964), 11



necessity both during the depression and the period leading to World War II. This arose from the steady influx of Europeans into the Kenyan colony as witnessed in the figures provided earlier.

In 1933, when the government medical officer of Health was taken away, Dr Forbes, the district surgeon combined the duties of both departments. A senior sanitary inspector was in charge of the Public Health Department. Dr Heard resigned the post of District Surgeon during the year 1933, but by special request of the Provincial Medical Officer, consented to carry on until the end of March.<sup>57</sup>

The 1933 Uasin Gishu District Annual report singles out Europeans as being able to get medical attention from Eldoret during the week when Dr Heard was not available, and Africans suffering from serious diseases or accidents could also be looked after instead of having to undergo the painful journey to Kapsabet on a stretcher. This was however eased by Sub Assistant Surgeon Kesar Chand who was stationed in Eldoret under Dr Heard orders. No money had been voted for the erection or upkeep of isolation huts and ordinary hospital huts but 2 huts for ordinary cases had been erected with station labour.<sup>58</sup>

It emerges from the above extract that Eldoret was a place with huts mixed with some brick houses. The huts were for African isolation or hospitals. African movement to Eldoret increasingly for medical attention lends credence to their penetration that continued to gain momentum in Eldoret. Moreover, the gradual transition from African traditional medicine to European modern medicine was on. This would in turn lead to expansion of hospital facilities, increased personnel and also enhanced African and European attraction to Eldoret.

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<sup>57</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/8 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1933, 10

<sup>58</sup> KNA/DC/UG/2/1/1 Political Record Book (1927-1930), 9

The Africans on their part were badly in need of some kind of hospital accommodation. Anyone brought to Eldoret seriously ill had a poor chance. The healthcare capacity was glaringly wanting. The economy of the town was in jeopardy due to this weakness. The plateau seemed to be peculiarly susceptible to infectious diseases as there had been outbreaks in the early years such as smallpox, mumps, and cerebrospinal meningitis. The patients in the first named outbreak, were placed in a large hut which afterwards had to be burnt. These outbreaks, however, had occurred in the early years after the declaration of Eldoret town.<sup>59</sup> But the problems bedevilling the health sector in early 1930s could partly be attributed to the 'financial stress'<sup>60</sup> of that epoch<sup>61</sup> and this in turn contributed to slowing down the economic trajectory of this important North Rift urban centre.

Owing to the difficulty and expense of obtaining poles from a distance by station hands, the Medical Department, not having realized their responsibility in the matter, the D.C ceased building any more temporary huts for contagious cases, and patients were then placed in tents which could be disinfected afterwards. There were no adequate medical funds for small expenses such as food for patients.<sup>62</sup> In 1938, the Eldoret European Hospital was connected to the Insurance Scheme,<sup>63</sup> a strategy that sought to protect settler health interests and improve their lot. Health insurance is proven to have far reaching effects on the economy since it protects the most crucial resource in wealth creation, the human resource. The white community was well aware of that fact and had to jealously guard their access to health through this scheme.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>60</sup> Colonial Reports-No. 1562, Colony, and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the year 1930, 19

<sup>61</sup> Specifically, the Great Depression

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>63</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/13 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1938, 8

#### 4.4 The Birth of Athletics in Eldoret

Despite the Depression, social life went on in Eldoret town, a sign of the relative economic health of the Kenyan Colony. It revealed the economic capacity of the dwellers whose contributions enabled sports activities to continue. In January 1930, the Uasin Gishu African Sports Association came into being with wholehearted support of the Europeans who did much to help by giving liberally to its funds.<sup>64</sup> This association is what turned around the sports history of Uasin Gishu and would later make a positive mark on the economy of Eldoret town.

The first Athletics Sports meeting was held on the Eldoret show ground on the occasion of H.M. Birthday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1930. The meeting was described as an unqualified success. There were about 200 Europeans and 3000 African spectators present, while all events had more than sufficient competitors.<sup>65</sup> The sheer number of spectators and participants in the event marked the beginning of what would later evolve into a formidable economic venture. The embers of athletics were lit during that 1930 event. It was the launching pad of what would, in the coming years, contribute remarkably to the economic transformation of Eldoret town. The whole wide world would later feel the might of the athletics champions of Eldoret.

Given that environmental factors<sup>66</sup> were favourable as to have phenomenal positive effect on the performance of Eldoret athletes, the idea of holding the first athletic event in 1930, would later turn out to have been a visionary undertaking. It set the ground for an intensive economic venture that would later promote the housing and hospitality sector through investments of the world-class athletes in Eldoret town and its environs.

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<sup>64</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 21g

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Eldoret lies at an altitude of around 7,000ft (2,100 meters) on a plateau above the Rift Valley

#### 4.5 The Road Sector in Eldoret, 1930-1945

Improvement of road network always received constant attention to aid in the transmission of raw materials as well as movement of people during and after the Great Depression. The same applied to the period of World War II. Roads were crucial to the very essence of colonial domination and its central agenda, extraction of raw materials. Both the Depression and World War II lowered the pace of road development in the colony, for instance, there was ‘vigorous action taken to reduce expenditure as far as possible, in order to offset the anticipated shortfall in the receipt of revenue’ in the year 1930.<sup>67</sup> However, given the interventions by the colonial government that promoted bulk-purchase during the two events and the intensified need for raw materials during World War II, the road sector was kept on a steady path of improvement except for a season when there was failure to “keep up the previous excellent standard due to shortage of labour in 1940.”<sup>68</sup> Even so, Uasin Gishu Roads were still described as ‘better than most other district roads’.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the Depression, in 1933, electric street lighting was installed in the business, and some parts of the residential areas. However, it was later in the year found to be too expensive and the lighting in the residential area was cut off, and certain lights in the business area were left on all night in order to assist the police. A fire brigade of volunteers was also formed in the same year, with the Telegraph Engineer, Mr Sinclair, as the Fire Master. A building to house the hoses and chemical

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<sup>67</sup>Colonial Reports-No. 1562, Colony, and Protectorate of Kenya Annual General Report for the year 1930, 8

<sup>68</sup> 1940 The road foremen were absent on military duties.

<sup>69</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/15 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report

extinguishers was built opposite the Police Station<sup>70</sup> **Plate 6** shows police officers going about their security duties in Eldoret in 1933.



**Plate 6: Police Officers on Patrol in Eldoret in 1933**

**Source:** *Kenya National Archives*

In 1934, the total number of hard surfaced and re-surfaced roads in the Uasin Gishu District amounted to 15 miles while murrum was stacked along the roads ready for spreading for an additional 15 miles. The delay was caused by failure of the rains. In addition, numerous culverts were installed in the district and ox-wagon roads were repaired and realigned, where required.<sup>71</sup> The development of this sector appeared to be hampered only by natural factors and not human obstacles. The colonial

<sup>70</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/8 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1933, 6

<sup>71</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/9 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1934, 10

government was determined to provide services to Eldoret town, but which in any case, were skewed to favour the minority white population.

By 1938, the roads controlled by the Council consisted of 104 miles of main trunk roads and 413 miles of District Roads and all roads were maintained in good condition.<sup>72</sup> These figures did not change in the 1939 report. However, there was some expenditure on district road maintenance and improvements, thus £4160 and £2789 respectively.<sup>73</sup>

In 1940, road improvement was held up by two factors: lack of stones and absence of foremen who had left for military service.<sup>74</sup> However, further extensions of Bitumen treatment were made. The hard surfacing of the main Trunk Road outside the African location was also completed and a new bridge over the Kipkarren River was as well constructed.<sup>75</sup> The World War II economic disruption did not spare the road sector of Eldoret town. In spite of that, the scheduled improvement program was duly completed. In addition, Council also executed special improvement work on certain main trunk roads within Eldoret town.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, considerable progress was made with the hard surfacing and asphaltting work with great benefit to the town. Traffic islands were installed with marked effect on traffic control at key points.<sup>77</sup> The alignment of the trunk road out of Eldoret to Uganda, leading through the Location was started and partially tarmacked in 1942. This would enable Railway sidings to be put in across the old main road to serve the rapidly expanding plots.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/13 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1938, 9

<sup>73</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/14 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1939, 9

<sup>74</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941

<sup>75</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/15 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1940

<sup>76</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941, 4

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1942, 15

In 1943, the district roads were described as worse than they were in the past. This was due to heavy military and production traffic.<sup>79</sup> The Royal Engineers and the 10<sup>th</sup> Non-Divisional Group were stationed in Eldoret, and the Prisoners of War Camp was started in Eldoret in 1941.<sup>80</sup> Military presence in Eldoret, coupled with increased agricultural production created increased traffic that took a toll on the roads in 1943. Despite that, the silver lining was that production was enhanced by the two factors.

In a nutshell, the transformation of Eldoret's road network, both within the town and those that connected it to other areas, continued steadily between 1929 and 1945. The role of road infrastructure as a thread that holds all other sectors cannot be gainsaid. The colonial authorities recognized too well that without a good road network, economic development is impossible.<sup>81</sup> For that reason, they did not spare every effort to improve the road network in Eldoret for the success and benefit of their quest for raw materials especially since Africa's importance as a source of raw materials for the Allied armies was greatly increased by the fall of South-East Asia to the Japanese in 1941-42.<sup>82</sup>

#### **4.6 Housing, Trade, Water Provision in Eldoret Town, 1929-1945**

The bulging population of Eldoret especially during World War II brought with it improved trade. The tenacious effort to develop Eldoret town was a constant attraction for people of all races. The Indian influx specifically was partly due to the need for artisans during World War II.<sup>83</sup> There was also increased interest in African affairs as the war progressed and the British policy shifted towards empowering the African people. The Local Governing Bodies developed a genuine desire to accept

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<sup>79</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/18 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1943, 7

<sup>80</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941, 10

<sup>81</sup> John Sambu, 64 years, interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>82</sup> Shillington, K (1989) History of Africa, 370

<sup>83</sup> The Indian artisans worked in the Prisoners of War Camp which was established in 1941 in Eldoret town.

more responsibility and to take an increasing interest in African affairs.<sup>84</sup> This notion was asserted by the Municipal Board's appointment of a committee to study the requirements of Eldoret town and to prepare a scheme for future development. The Board then applied for financial assistance from the Colonial Development Fund for the erection of permanent African housing to alleviate the crowding.<sup>85</sup>

The Indian Association of Eldoret also made an application on the District Council in 1934. However, this application was opposed by the District Council which considered that there were not sufficient Indians in the district to warrant such an appointment.<sup>86</sup> The 1936 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, however, indicates that the Indians' most remarkable contribution to the economy was 'the establishment of *duka*-based' enterprises throughout the protectorate including Eldoret town.<sup>87</sup>

In 1935, the Municipal Boundaries were extended during the year to bring in an addition to Elgon View Estate and a part of land bordering the Native Location.<sup>88</sup> As it were, the African population lived on the fringes of the town under poor conditions. There was a department in charge of African location whose achievement for the year 1935 was that an additional 10 rooms were provided with a profit of the year amounting to £ 187.<sup>89</sup> Such improvements meant increased trading activities, for instance, the Brewery brought in a profit amounting to £344 while the Water Department also registered a profit of £118.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/18 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1943, 12

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/15 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1940, 11

<sup>87</sup> Ochieng', W.R (1986), *A History of Kenya*, 54

<sup>88</sup> KNA/PC/RVP.2/8/10 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1935, 6

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*



**Table 3** below depicts comparative population increase in Eldoret between 1936 and 1939.

**Table 3: Population of Eldoret in 1936 and 1939**

<b>Nationalities</b>	<b>1936</b>	<b>1939</b>
Europeans	360	439
Indians	772	1165
Goans	108	108
Africans	1,814	2,564
Others (including Somalis)	72	75

*(Source: Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1936, 4 & Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1939, 6)*

The **Table 3** above shows that there were more Africans in Eldoret Township than the other races or groups combined in 1936.<sup>91</sup> This steady rise in the number of Africans indicated that an African take-over of Eldoret was gradually gaining a foothold.<sup>92</sup> It was also a pointer to the expansion of Eldoret town both in terms of population and size. These are two aspects that constitute the fundamental basis of a town's development.

A major shift on African access to the white highlands (settled areas) took place in 1936 through a legislation affecting Africans applicable to settled areas. The Government Notice No. 450 of July 1936 gave up the scheme in which 'a man keeps the same Registration Number all his life.' This change was attributed to 'reasons of economy.'<sup>93</sup> There was a shift towards Africanization in the post-depression years.

During World War II, the Prisoners of War Camp was situated in Eldoret and several other military units of which a section were settled at the Kenya Girls High School in 1941. This resulted in good trade for the business houses in Eldoret. In addition, the purchase of agricultural implements for extended production beneficially affected the

<sup>91</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/14 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1939, 6

<sup>92</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>93</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/11 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1936, 4

three hardware firms in the town.<sup>94</sup> In 1943, the Municipal Board purchased Eldoret West Estate comprising six hundred and thirty acres in the vicinity of the African location for further Town development.<sup>95</sup>

Due to the boom that World War II generated in the demand for the products of its African colonies,<sup>96</sup> agricultural production in Uasin Gishu, Eldoret's hinterland, was significantly improved. For instance, despite the negative impact of unseasonable rain and incidence of rust, eight thousand extra acres of land were planted to wheat in the 1941 season making a total of 44,900 under wheat and the acreage planted to flax was greatly extended with Flax Factories working to capacity.<sup>97</sup> Wheat plantation acreage increased to 70,000 in 1943 with the harvest being described as "splendid" and attributed largely to influence from "above".<sup>98</sup> All these agricultural improvements had a ripple effect on the economic growth of Eldoret town.

The presence of several Military Units and the Prisoners of War Camp increased spending capacity with a result that trade has been good. Prices for agricultural commodities promised to give a reasonable return for the hard work put in to maintain and extend acreages under cultivation.<sup>99</sup>

On water provision, despite the outbreak of World War II, the water sector continued to expand in a bid to accommodate the increasingly bulging population in Eldoret town. For instance, in 1939, a new water storage reservoir was completed and was in operation.<sup>100</sup> It had been projected the previous year that the expansion would enable the railway to be supplied from the Municipal supplies.<sup>101</sup> That level of commitment was a pointer to the central role that this centre of a big farming settlement was

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<sup>94</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941, 10

<sup>95</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/18 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1943, 13

<sup>96</sup> Fage, J.D and Oliver R., *The Cambridge history of Africa*, Vol. 7, From 1905-1940, (1997), 21

<sup>97</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941, 6

<sup>98</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/18 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1943, 11

<sup>99</sup> KNA/PC/RVP2/8/16 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1941, 1

<sup>100</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/14 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1939, 7

<sup>101</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/13 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1939, 7

playing in the economic matrix of the settlers and indeed, the entire British colonial establishment. In 1940, new tanks were completed that enabled the ‘greatly increased’ water consumption to be met.<sup>102</sup>

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter traced the transformation of Eldoret town within the context of two events: one happening in the 1930s, and the other occurring in the 1940s. The first of these events was the Great Depression that began in October 1929 and the other was World War II which commenced in 1939 and ended in 1945. It established that the sequence of events occasioned by the Great Depression of the 1930s necessitated state protection of settler estate production to rescue it from the brink of collapse. This period saw the expansion and bureaucratization of state management of the economy and the consolidation of settler production and marketing monopolies.

It emerged that the interventions put in place during the 1930s enhanced agricultural activities, thus enabled the settler economy to survive. The chapter also revealed that a windfall arrived in the Kenyan Colony with the discovery of huge deposits of gold in Kakamega. This became a blessing to the banks in Eldoret town for it was the banks that bought gold from the traders, further stimulating the town’s agricultural economy, thereby boosting diverse sectors in Eldoret.

In addition, the chapter underscored the fact that agricultural production in the Kenyan colony underwent fundamental transformation during World War II. Eldoret being an agricultural town was most fortunate as it experienced sustained and extended expansion of its economy. During World War II, the institutional structures of production and market control were developed and extended down to the district

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<sup>102</sup> KNA/RVP2/8/15 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1940, 3

level; and direct contract buying arrangements with the metropole assured producers of a market for whatever they could grow. Initially, the settlers had been informed by the metropolitan authorities that the allocation of shipping space to the colony was not justified. Soon after, however, the scale and urgency of Britain's wartime commodity needs led to fundamental change in the situation.

Moreover, during the war, a substantial number of factories were established in the major African cities to process locally produced materials that hitherto had been imported in their finished state from Europe.<sup>103</sup> There is little evidence pointing to the establishment of any such factories (other than the flax industry) in Eldoret but the relatively quick access of products from Nairobi made it a lot easier for the town to receive such supplies given the railway connection of 1924.

The chapter concluded that there were intensified economic activities in the colony arising from the need to meet war demands, hence impacting on the transformation of Eldoret town. Heightened development was consequently witnessed in housing, health, roads, trade, agriculture, and water sectors. It was the increased influx of Europeans into Kenya during the period of World War II that generated a steadily rising demand for social services and public investment in the areas mentioned.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ELDORET IN THE POST WAR PERIOD, 1945-1963

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on economic developments in Eldoret in the period between Post-World War II (1945) and Kenya's attainment of independence in 1963. It highlights the marked repercussions of the War on the economy of Britain and how this triggered drastic policy changes whose ramifications revolutionized the colonial structure in its entirety. The chapter argues that the British government played a more active role in bolstering investment in colonial areas after World War II to speed up economic recovery from the ravages of the Second World War. This took the form of channeling government resources into colonial primary and industrial production.<sup>1</sup> The social sector (water, health, education), trade, roads, and agriculture in Eldoret and its hinterland were consequently improved as will be discussed in this chapter.

#### 5.1 The Colonial Policy Shift in Post-World War II Era and its Impact on Eldoret Town

After the Second World War, the British lost their former first position as the world's leading political and industrial giant. This drop would affect their future political and economic performance in the world. The most fundamental change was that America and the Soviet Union had emerged from the Second World War as the two major super-powers. Britain's dominant position as a capital exporter was gradually taken over by the United States. The dominance of the United States capital in the world economy was to have long term effects on Britain at the political and economic level.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ochieng', W.R (1986), A History of Kenya, 122

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 126

With British capital no longer strong enough to compete with American capital on a world level, it was logical that British *laissez-faire* capitalism should give way to a higher level of state intervention in the British economy. In response to such conditions, the Socialist Labour Government embarked on a series of nationalizations of major British industries between 1946 and 1950.<sup>3</sup> The existence of many colonial territories controlled by Britain was clearly an impediment to the long-term expansion of the capitalist mode of production. In this respect, it is significant that the United States continually pressed Britain to grant independence or self-government to its colonial territories.<sup>4</sup>

In conformity with its new economic and political circumstances, after the Second World War, the British government was to play a more active role in bolstering investment in colonial areas. Indeed, this was the basis of the emergence of a new British 'development policy' towards colonial territories after 1945.<sup>5</sup> This policy shift was triggered by certain war economic outcomes.

Like the majority of European countries, Britain emerged from the Second World War with a shattered economy. Her foreign investments worth £1,118 million had been sold off to pay for imports. About 15.9 million tons of British shipping worth about £ 700 million had been sunk during the war. The damage to housing caused by bombing and rockets came to about £1,500 million. The British machinery and equipment had not been repaired adequately during the war and almost £ 900 million of depreciation had to be covered by new investments. On top of these factors, British forces in Egypt and India during the Second World War had been financed by loans

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<sup>3</sup>Swainson, N. (1980), *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya 1918-1971*, 41

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Ochieng', W.R (1986), *A History of Kenya*, 122

raised on the spot and the debts which had arisen in this way amounted to £3,355 million.<sup>6</sup>

The British Government was clearly aware that one method of speeding up economic recovery from the ravages of the Second World War was to channel government resources into colonial primary and industrial production. Consequently, the growth of factories in the towns meant an increase in the number of Africans living under unpleasant conditions in these places and Eldoret was no exception.

In 1948, Eldoret had 8,193 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> According to Ochieng' (1986), it was one of the towns with the economic settler enclave of the so-called White Highlands where branches of multinational firms were established to cater for import-export trade.<sup>8</sup> Eldoret's development after 1945 is therefore best assessed in the context of British policy shift and dovetailed within such monumental drift of colonial development ideology.

World War II hit Eldoret town hard with a decrease of African squatter personnel on some farms where the owner 'is on active service'. Even after hostilities ceased, development remained slow due to shortage of materials. However, as supplies improved, Eldoret experienced a boom that lasted through the next decade. New buildings sprang up overnight and intensive development of farms took place with the aid of Government rehabilitation and development loans. The increase in wheat production and livestock by the farmers enabled the exploitation of the Uganda market for milk, meat, and poultry. The hydro-electric scheme on the Selby Falls was begun to meet increased demand, and the Municipal Board sought loans for large-scale improvements to the water supply and the installation of main sewerage.<sup>9</sup>

The above extract from the Eldoret Municipality magazine of 1964 paints a vivid picture of the economic situation in Eldoret after World War II. It reflects the British colonial policy shift and its rapid implementation. There is evidence pointing to the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 60

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 54

<sup>9</sup> Municipality of Eldoret, A Guide to Investment, 1964

positive development trajectory taken in the wake of cessation of World War II hostilities.

By 1949, there was a 'general increase in the population and business of Eldoret and the Uasin Gishu' which was reflected in 'an increased volume of work in the Courts on the civil side.'<sup>10</sup> In addition, the same year was reported to have had trade increasing steadily.<sup>11</sup> The 1951 Uasin Gishu District Annual report on the other hand highlighted the fact that Eldoret would develop rapidly in importance during the next decade<sup>12</sup> and members of the Board were cognizant of this fact. As such, a new valuation roll was laid before the Board in August 1951 with its new figure being £518,000 as compared to the 1947 figure which was £188,000.<sup>13</sup>

However, the declaration of a state of emergency throughout the colony in October 1952 created a setback that overshadowed all other events according to the annual report of that year.<sup>14</sup> That notwithstanding, although Mau Mau activities were widespread in forest areas, Uasin Gishu District was 'very fortunate in that there were no incidents of violence.'<sup>15</sup> In the forest areas, the Emergency was responsible for the slowing down of production<sup>16</sup> in that there was exodus of Kikuyus from the forest areas of Uasin Gishu, some to central province and others to serve prison sentences having been accused of oath taking offences.<sup>17</sup>

Generally, Mau Mau insurgency was viewed as a struggle between the government and the Kikuyu. However, the government's failure to stamp out the movement

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<sup>10</sup> KNA/UG/PUB.24/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1949, 2

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>12</sup> This was informed by the positive development indicators of the new policy shift.

<sup>13</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 4

<sup>14</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1952, 1

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 13

<sup>17</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 6



quickly and effectively resulted in ‘considerable loss of prestige.’<sup>18</sup> Despite the Emergency, the 1964 Municipality of Eldoret Magazine reported that, ‘the face of Eldoret was changing and enhanced civic pride was in evidence by improved cleanliness, tarmac roads, public gardens, and the provision of social services.’<sup>19</sup> The Town Hall was built in 1956 and in January 1958, the town was elevated to Municipal Council status. The first Mayor, J. Wolston-Beard, was elected and in November 1959, the Governor of Kenya presented the town with its Charter and Mace.<sup>20</sup>

### **5.2 Road Infrastructural Developments in Eldoret, 1945-1963**

Through official loans and grants to the Colony in the postwar period, the state financed infrastructure which would encourage the inflow of new British capital. The level of direct aid increased in the colony after the war as did the flow of loan capital through commercial agencies. For instance, many loans for the colonial territories were raised on the London market, assisted by Barclays Overseas Development Corporation. Between 1950 and 1952, these loans, destined to East African territories, averaged £17 million per annum.<sup>21</sup>

The grants mentioned above were mainly used by the local administration for infrastructure and services such as roads, railways, housing, education, and health services. These grants and loans were supplemented by inflows of purely private finance capital from Britain and it is significant that of a total of £77.7 million borrowed by British East African dependencies on the London market between 1945 and the end of 1952, some £48.6 million, or two thirds, went into British East

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<sup>18</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1952, 1

<sup>19</sup> Municipality of Eldoret, A Guide to Investment, 1964

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Swainson, (1980), 111

Africa.<sup>22</sup> It is on this premise that a number of public projects were undertaken in the postwar period in the Kenyan Colony and Eldoret town in particular.

For instance, the main Nairobi/Uganda road was improved in the Eldoret/Turbo section in 1954. At the end of that year, a new section of the road approaching Eldoret from the south was completed to cut out many twists and turns in entering the Municipality, and to enable traffic to pass through the town without having to go through the busiest of the shopping streets.<sup>23</sup>

In 1956, bituminization continued albeit slowly, but the program contained a stretch of tarmac in the Indian residential area, followed by the bituminization of the main Nairobi/Kampala road “as it passes through the Municipality...from as far as St. Matthews Church corner.”<sup>24</sup> In addition, work continued in the new alignment of the main Nairobi/Uganda road in the Turbo/Broderick Falls Section. The P.W.D was also responsible for the maintenance of 150 miles of main trunk road in the Uasin Gishu District.<sup>25</sup> The construction of the 21 miles was completed in early 1957.<sup>26</sup> **Plate 7** shows the state of road infrastructure in Eldoret town’s Central Business District in 1958.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 14

<sup>24</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956, 12

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1957, 15



**Plate 7: Eldoret in 1958**

Source: Kenya National Archives

A bituminized road joining Eldoret and Kitale was completed in early 1963.<sup>27</sup> Communications west of Eldoret had been in a dreadful state prior to completion where a road could then stretch beyond Eldoret for 9 miles to the Leseru turn off from which a bituminized road “built to a lower specification now stretches most of the way to Kitale.” Farmers had only one topic of conversation prior to this completion - roads.

### **5.3 Agricultural Developments in the Post-War Period and European Exodus**

The postwar years in Kenya Colony witnessed a rapid expansion of both agricultural and industrial production. This process was accompanied by a comparative decline in European agriculture as a proportion of total output. For instance, by 1954, for the first time in the history of the Colony, the gross national product attributed to

<sup>27</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1963, 7

manufacturing industry was greater than that attributed to European agriculture.<sup>28</sup> Agriculture was always the mainstay of Eldoret's, and by extension, Uasin Gishu economy. After 1945, the main crop was wheat. 'Any fall in the price of wheat would have considerable repercussions on the farming community in the Uasin Gishu.'<sup>29</sup> The 1951 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report aptly put it that 'the yardstick by which the prosperity of the Uasin Gishu district is measured at the end of any rains is still the size of the wheat crop.'<sup>30</sup>

There was a bid to work on a reduction in the cost of production of crops partly occasioned by the 'increases in costs of machinery spares.'<sup>31</sup> The price of wheat went up again in 1949 to 43/- per 200 lbs. and this became a great help to Uasin Gishu farmers.<sup>32</sup> There was also a trend towards stock farming that was gaining impetus. Pig farming was on the increase as farmers were growing considerable quantities of feed for the pigs' use.<sup>33</sup> The acreage under wattle rose to £62,500 in 1952, which was six-sevenths of the acreage for the colony. This was to the advantage of EATEC Company which had sustained its production momentum since inception. This happened as the sisal boom came to an end with an acute drop to £95 a ton bringing the crop back to the position of 'being just economic.'<sup>34</sup>

While there was a rapid expansion of both agricultural and industrial production in 1954, there was a comparative decline in European agriculture as a proportion of total output. This was followed by a move to intensify the development of African agriculture in Kenya through a document called the Swynnerton plan. This plan was

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<sup>28</sup> Swainson, (1980), 109

<sup>29</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1950, 10 The wheat yield estimate for 1950 was approximately 300,000 bags over the whole of the Uasin Gishu.

<sup>30</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 1

<sup>31</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1949, 5

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1952, 4

to have a profound effect on the rise of an African bourgeoisie whose trade ventures positively impacted on investment and expansion of Eldoret town that set in motion the economic Africanization of the town.

The Swynnerton Plan was drawn in late 1953 by Mr. R.J.M. Swynnerton, an assistant Director of Agriculture. It aimed at intensifying the development of African agriculture in Kenya. The document, launched in 1954 was titled '*A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*'.<sup>35</sup> It involved consolidating land fragments into single holdings and issuing registered freehold titles to individuals. The larger leaseholders would be able to borrow from the commercial banks, or from the government, on the security of their titles. The implications were that able, energetic or rich Africans would be able to acquire more land while bad or poor farmers would get less, thereby creating a landed and a landless classes.<sup>36</sup> The latter began to look to independence to solve their problems and to an African government for new land for subsistence on the settled areas while the former was bestowed with a stake in the colonial political economy to 'prevent his possible alliance with subversive rural elements'.<sup>37</sup>

Land tenure reform led not only to consolidation of existing land units, but also to security of tenure by giving the process legal backing through the issue of title certificates. This was envisaged to stimulate the growth of a rural middle class eager to support the agricultural betterment campaign.<sup>38</sup> The Swynnerton plan was to have a profound effect on the rise of African bourgeoisie whose agricultural impetus

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<sup>35</sup> R.J.M. Swynnerton (1955), *A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya*, 10

<sup>36</sup> Lagat, A. B (1995), *The Historical Process of Nandi Movement into Uasin Gishu District of the Kenya Highlands: 1906-1963*, 108

<sup>37</sup> Berman, (1990) *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 129

<sup>38</sup> Makana, N. (2009), *Peasant Response to Agricultural Innovations; Land Consolidation, Agrarian Diversification and Technical Change. The Case of Bungoma District in Western Kenya, 1954-1960*,

positively impacted on investment and expansion of Eldoret town. This endeavour set in motion a move towards economic Africanization of the town.

Despite the gradual Africanization of the white highlands, there was the massive Kikuyu exodus from Uasin Gishu which negatively impacted on farm labour to the extent that production of peas, beans and potatoes was adversely affected. This is according to the 1955 Uasin Gishu District annual Report.<sup>39</sup> Other main crops that however sustained the agricultural economy of Uasin Gishu and Eldoret were barley, coffee, leys, maize, oats, pyrethrum, wheat, sisal, and wattle.<sup>40</sup>

It was felt that the removal of a large number of Kikuyu families during the past three years (1952-1955), due to the emergency, would give other tribes in the area, Elgeyo, Nandi and North Nyanza an opportunity to step into their shoes and thereby gain profitable employment. This did not occur since the Africans themselves did not seem to require settled employment, nor to give an adequate output of work. This was attributed to the fact that most of them had one foot in the reserve and they seemed intent on keeping it that way.<sup>41</sup>

In 1955, Uasin Gishu produced nearly 25% of the eggs sold in Nairobi though the marketing organization had not been able to maintain this, with the result that a number of producers had gone out of production.<sup>42</sup> However, the fact that the said marketing organization was based in Eldoret town was a boost to the volume of trade in the town. Thus, the poultry component of agriculture was a worthwhile contributor to the economy of Eldoret town.

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<sup>39</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1955, 17

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1955, 36-37

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.,19

The 1955 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report took cognizance of the increased production of dairy products marketed over the previous three years. There was a 74% increase during that period which was believed to be by far the greatest increase recorded anywhere in the European farming areas. During 1955, one million gallons of milk and one million pounds of butter fat were delivered to the Creamery compared with 700,000 gallons of milk and 854,000 pounds of butter fat in 1954. There was a perception of greater realization of the importance of the regular income to the farmer.<sup>43</sup>

On matters pertaining stock marketing, permits for 1,242 cattle to the Kenya Meat Commission, Athi River, were issued during the year. Stock slaughtered by Eldoret Municipality numbered 3,848 oxen, 547 calves, 3,121 sheep, 1,879 goats and 996 pigs. Cattle exported through the Kenya Meat Commission, Eldoret to Uganda numbered 680 head in 1955.<sup>44</sup> The busy nature of Eldoret's slaughterhouse, the permits to the Kenya Meat Commission based in Thika, lends credence to the remarkable economic transformation that had taken place in Eldoret town in the post-war period.

Unlike 1961 when there was a famine,<sup>45</sup> 1962 was "a reasonably good one."<sup>46</sup> Crops did well and prices for breeding dairy livestock had improved tremendously, and beef production had been sound in the entire Uasin Gishu District. The wheat crop had been extremely good and averaged nearly 5 ½ bags per acre throughout the district.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>45</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961

<sup>46</sup> After the 1961 famine, various voluntary bodies cooperated, starting a soup kitchen for the poor children and women in the municipality. This was spearheaded by Major S. Gordon of the Salvation Army.

<sup>47</sup> KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1962, 3

It was the highest average ever recorded. This bumper harvest was yet another pointer to the economic wellbeing of Eldoret town.

Early in the year 1962, there was an exodus of European settlers from the Plateau most of them of South Africa origin. They were referred to as “20<sup>th</sup> Century Voortrekkers” who then headed for South Africa expecting to find a welcome in a land of milk and honey. Others headed for Australia where ‘they found work harder than they had ever imagined.’ In general, those who left had been from poor families or who had left a spirit of adventure calling them.<sup>48</sup>The departure was occasioned by “the political events of 1960”.<sup>49</sup>

It was widely perceived that the district did not have a chance to recover its composure after the said political events. However, European population of British extraction was in no less of a hurry to go and was prepared to go only if forced to do so by circumstances beyond their control or if they could get a fair price for their land. Only a few families had so far gone to Australia.<sup>50</sup>

The year 1961 was described by the Acting Agriculture Officer as “a year of change, disaster and depression.” On the flip side, it is the year that saw the settlement of African farmers in the Uasin Gishu for the first time in the history of colonial Kenya. The political uncertainty in the country and the frightening statements made by ‘certain extreme elements’, had finally forced many of the European farmers in the Uasin Gishu into deciding to leave the country. Consequently, European capital long term development of farms had virtually ceased, and generally the only capital that farmers were prepared to sink in the land was that which would be repaid in full

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<sup>48</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961,2

<sup>49</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961,3

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.,5



within the year.<sup>51</sup>In addition, more and more livestock were being slaughtered in order to give a quick cash return and very few dairy calves were being raised as herd replacements.<sup>52</sup>

#### **5.4 The Social Sector in the Post-War period (Education, Housing, Health, and Water)**

The rapid growth of the immigrant communities, especially the European population, which grew from 22,800 in 1939 to 29,700 in 1948 and more than 61,000 in 1960 also generated a steadily rising demand for social services and public investment in improving transportation, communications, energy supplies and water resources. The demand for social services was particularly felt in the areas of health and education: the Medical Department's European staff increased from 155 in 1947 to 358 ten years later, while the European section of the Education Department grew from 178 to 373 in the same period.<sup>53</sup>

Development policy towards the colonies after 1945 involved laying the groundwork and providing the essential preconditions for the entry of private capital on a large scale.<sup>54</sup> The official version of the postwar intervention in the economy for the colonies entailed a 'new deal' which asserted a new version of 'native paramountcy' where money and specialist personnel were to be provided for every colony to promote 'development and social welfare'.<sup>55</sup>

This 'new deal' for colonial territories was concerned to provide these areas with extended infrastructure and services, with the hope that this would stimulate private investment in agriculture and industry. Economic services provided under the development plans

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.,17

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Rono, 78 years, interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020

<sup>53</sup> Berman, B (1990) *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 290

<sup>54</sup> Swainson, N (1980), *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya*,106

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

were generally confined to such measures as the conservation of physical resources, provision of public utilities.<sup>56</sup>

The Education sector was one that enjoyed continued expansion after World War II. For instance, by 1949, there were two government schools in Eldoret namely: The Highlands School, which catered for the children of the district and the Hill School, for children from other parts of Kenya and from Uganda.<sup>57</sup> There was a private school at Kaptagat and the Government Indian School which ‘continued to expand and had a good all-round record. Its new buildings were completed.’ In addition, the African school run by the Church Missionary Society in Eldoret was still confined to its inadequate quarters although a new building was very largely completed to house it by end of the year 1949. However, one main undoing of African education was that ‘some were left to the tender mercies of an unqualified African teacher.’<sup>58</sup>

In 1951, a large new boys’ block and a new girls’ dormitory were completed at the Highlands school. In addition, a form II was added to the Government Asian School where a number of new buildings were erected. The student population numbered “nearly 800.”<sup>59</sup> This high enrolment in the Asian school was a reflection of the remarkable presence of the Asian community in Eldoret. Their business acumen and prowess in the footprints of Kenyan history dates back to railway construction and was strongly carried forward in the 1950s.

However, in 1961, Asian confidence in the future was sadly undermined by threats from some “irresponsible elements”. In particular, the “corner boy” and three card trickster elements had endeavored to cash in on the prevalent uncertainty. Consequently, there was a marked decline in the number of Asian taxes during the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> KNA/UG/PUB.24/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1949, 5

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>59</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 7

year and a marked increase in the number of poor Asian families who were unable to pay full fees at the Government Asian Schools. There were a number of Asians out of work while others had already left for India. It was the exodus season.<sup>60</sup>

In the African school which also went up to form II in 1951, there were 297 pupils as compared to 125 pupils in 1944.<sup>61</sup> The Hill School comprised of 115 Uganda children, 45 boarders and 60 day-scholars, several of the latter being Afrikaans children. The Uganda parents' fear of Mau Mau bringing danger to the Hill School was removed by the provision of Uganda police askaris as guards. The Uganda police also provided guards for Loreto Convent and Kaptagat schools. In terms of school development, the re-building of the Hill School made satisfactory progress as two double-storied boarding blocks and one dining hall were completed at a cost of £62,000. Phase I was completed in 1954.<sup>62</sup>

Throughout the year 1955, preparations continued for the move of the Highlands Primary School to the Hill School, and for the establishment of the new Girls Secondary School at the Highlands School.<sup>63</sup> The secondary school was opened in January 1956.<sup>64</sup> The same name was retained at the Primary school. The school operated two classes short in 1956 since there was a shortage of senior girls.<sup>65</sup> However, the school was off to a good start and would progress steadily in the coming years to become a revered girls' national school in independent Kenya.

It is no doubt that the swelling number of learners and expansion of infrastructure in the institutions of learning in Eldoret had economic benefits and created opportunities

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<sup>60</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961,5-6

<sup>61</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 7

<sup>62</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 14

<sup>63</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1955, 23

<sup>64</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956, 21

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

that inevitably resulted in the town's growth. The attraction of workers of various cadres and the trade opportunities that were consistent with school maintenance, all played a huge role in enhancing the development of Eldoret town. It would therefore be imperative that every aspect of progress in the institutions of learning be recognized as critical components of growth in an urban centre.

In 1961, the educational picture in the entire district was one of increasing enthusiasm for African education and of diminishing numbers of pupils in both Asian and European schools as a result of the political uncertainty both in Kenya and Uganda.

The school buildings were completed during 1961 with a boarding block for 104 girls. This brought the total accommodation available at the school to 408 boarding places and 50 for day girls. Owing to the number of families leaving Uganda, the Trans Nzoia and the Uasin Gishu – the area mainly served by the school – only 250 boarding and 25 day girl places have been filled for 1962.<sup>66</sup>

The scenario was the same for Hill School where the number of boarders declined steadily each term from 303 in January 1961 to 255 at the end of the year. Of these boarders that remained, 85 were from Uganda and their numbers were expected to decline further if the Uganda Government decided to do away with assistance towards fees. The number of day pupils declined from 190 to 169 at the end of 1961.<sup>67</sup>

In the housing sector, there was a deliberate attempt to expand African and Asian areas in Eldoret town after 1945. The Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1949 says, 'satisfactory progress was made in the acquisition and planning of its Eldoret West estate which provided for expansion of the Asian and African sections of the town.'<sup>68</sup>

In 1950, twenty new permanent quarters were built in the African location, but this

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<sup>66</sup> KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1961,19

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1956,21

was not sufficient to solve the housing question.<sup>69</sup> This was attributed to the increase of Africans employed in the town that far outstripped the housing available in the location. However, the problem persisted without being faced with ‘the urgency that the situation demands.’<sup>70</sup>

In 1952, the Municipal Board completed 52 new one-room quarters for Africans during the year and applied for a loan to build 152 more in 1953. In addition, ‘one or two firms’ took up land in Eldoret West Estate for the erection of housing for their own employees, but only one firm actually built any.<sup>71</sup> In the same year, at an initial cost of £5,000, financed mainly from canteen profits and supplemented with donations from various sources, a recreational hall was constructed for Africans and was completed by end of 1952.<sup>72</sup>

New labour offices were constructed in 1953 alongside one class IV European house, one type 3A African quarter, one type 3 sanitary block and water-borne sanitation for the new African quarters in Eldoret West.<sup>73</sup> In June 1954, ninety-six rooms in the new African location in Eldoret West were completed. At first, Africans were not overanxious to occupy the new housing in view of the high rentals, but by October, all the rooms were let.<sup>74</sup>

The year 1956 saw a ‘credit squeeze’ that brought about a considerable shortage of cash for building development. In fact, if it had not been for the fact that Government decided to construct a new and spacious Court House, and the Municipality a double

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<sup>69</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1950, 9

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 16

<sup>71</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1952, 8

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1953, 9-10

<sup>74</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 16

story building for Municipal Offices, the building trade would have been extremely quiet.<sup>75</sup>

Early in the year 1957, four new blocks were erected, and ten new blocks were commenced in July of the same year. Later, in 1958 and 1959, the Municipal Board took a loan of £30,000 and requested the Central Housing Board to construct a total of 240 double roomed houses for the African population. This was to go a long way towards clearing the mud and wattle huts in the location. In addition, the board also applied for a loan of £5,000 for Somali housing.<sup>76</sup> These African oriented developments were in tune with Britain's post World War II policy that sought to 'bolster investment in colonial areas.'<sup>77</sup>

In 1959, there was yet another commencement of the African housing scheme.<sup>78</sup> This was expected to enable all the existing temporary wooden huts and grass roofed huts to be demolished by the end of 1960. The African area was one of low-grade structures, a phenomenon that had characterized many urban centres in Kenya during the colonial period.<sup>79</sup> This was targeted for transformation as it seemed to appear that colonialism was in its sunset years and Africanization was apparently inevitable. African areas were gradually being improved.

The year 1960 saw the completion and handing over of 198 two-roomed houses with individual latrines and showers. The new houses in Kilimani estate were officially opened by the Minister for Local Government on 29th October 1960. The tenants were slow to take up these houses saying the rent was too high. However, at the close

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<sup>75</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956, 26

<sup>76</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1957, 19

<sup>77</sup>Ochieng', W.R (1986), A History of Kenya, 126

<sup>78</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1959, 11

<sup>79</sup> John Sambu, 64 years, oral informant, interviewed on 18 July 2020.

of the year, all the houses were occupied.<sup>80</sup>The council continued the program of demolishing rondavels and wooden huts which were not of 'a sufficiently high standard'. There were 48 rondavels remaining, all African owned. Those two were lined up for demolition. The demolitions signified better housing days ahead. Although many Africans felt slighted by the demolitions, the town's housing upgrade had to continue in order to provide a face-lift for Eldoret town.

The year 1960 was understandably one of uncertainty due to the ensuing political developments. However, among the other 'few important developments' that took place during the year was the completion of the new African housing in Eldoret. This was opened by the Hon. W.B. Havelock, Minister for Local Government. Other distinguished visitors were few and far between.<sup>81</sup> These indications reflected the lethargy that preceded independence, and which considerably negatively affected the pace of economic transformation of Eldoret town.

In the same year, forty-two houses in Kilimani estate had been wired for electricity as an experiment. Tenants were asked to apply to the East African Power and Lighting Company to be connected. Stores were added to 17 shops at Kidiwa Square to bring into line with public health requirements.<sup>82</sup>There was a marked slowing up in building development during the year 1960 which was attributed to 'the general atmosphere of uncertainty in the colony.'<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> MSS/15/19/9b Letter from H McCullagh; Eldoret Municipal Town Clerk

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> KNA/K.VI/1 Eldoret Municipal Council Annual Report 1960, 6

As a pointer to the bulging population in Eldoret town, the Eldoret Municipal Council Annual Report of 1960<sup>84</sup> showed that the approximate population in Eldoret was about 16,000 as shown in **table 4** below:

**Table 4: Eldoret Population in 1960**

Europeans	1500
Asians	5000
Africans	9000
Others	500

*Source: Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1960, 13*

**Table 4** above indicates a sharp increase in African population that outnumbered the other races combined. The African moment of control in Eldoret had come. However, this increase in African population in Eldoret and their systematic and historical gave rise to “serious overcrowding” in the town particularly in Ortleppville where unscrupulous African and Asian landlords had rented rooms at exorbitant rates to African families.<sup>85</sup> This trend would last in Eldoret for many decades to come as it did in many colonial towns across the world.

From late 1940s, the health sector in Eldoret expanded steadily. In 1951, one additional ward with 24 beds was built at the ‘Native Hospital’ bringing the total number to 104. The daily average number of in-patients was about 110. The medical officer-in-charge, the Asian Assistant surgeon and the one Nursing Sister were kept very busy being assisted by only three Hospital Assistants. In addition, eight landhis were converted for use as an infectious diseases block but owing to the shortage of housing for African staff, half of these had to be used as staff quarters.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Eldoret Municipal Council Annual Report 1960, 1

<sup>85</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1962, 8

<sup>86</sup> KNA/UG/PUB.24/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 7-8



In 1953, a new out-patient department was completed as well as five new African staff quarters. In addition, the Railway dispensary in Eldoret continued both to cater for the needs of the railway African employees and to serve as an out-patient clinic for the Asian Government staff of Eldoret.<sup>87</sup> The cost of child welfare clinic and maternity services for Africans continued to be borne by the Government in 1953 but was taken over by the Municipal Board as from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1954.<sup>88</sup> The main diseases in Eldoret in 1953 were bacillary dysentery and pneumonia with ‘a good deal of seasonal malaria.’ There was also a good deal of gastroenteritis among Africans as well as chickenpox and German-measles which paved way for real measles in the Highlands School. <sup>89</sup>**Table 5** below reflects the “continued increase in African patients”<sup>90</sup> in Eldoret town in the years 1961 and 1962:

**Table 5: Figures of Yearly in and Out-Patients**

	1960	1961
<b>African Outpatient</b>	40773	46311
<b>African In Patient</b>	4316	4359
<b>Asian Outpatient</b>	2296	2145
<b>Asian In Patient</b>	56	75

*Source: Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961*

The figures in *table 5* above indicate a steady increase in the number of African patients flowing into Eldoret town. This increase was not due to a disease outbreak. Instead, it revealed greater involvement of Africans in the economic life of the town.

In the water sector, there was increased demand of water due to increased influx of people into Eldoret town. There were intensified efforts to improve the situation. The 1951 Uasin Gishu District annual report indicated that, ‘given the increasing number

<sup>87</sup> This also continued in 1954 according to the Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 12

<sup>88</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 12

<sup>89</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1953, 8

<sup>90</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961, 21

of town residents<sup>91</sup>, the town water supply remained quite inadequate to cope with the demand, and difficulties were experienced in obtaining delivery of 8-inch piping for the new main in 1951. As an emergency measure, the Board gave out a contract at the end of the year for the laying of a temporary 6-inch main from headworks, and invited tenders for the design and construction of a water purification plant capable of dealing with 500,000 gallons a day. This was done with the aid of a loan of £37,000 which was approved by the government.<sup>92</sup>

In 1961, the Eldoret Municipal Council undertook projects for expansion of water supply to domestic, industrial, commercial, and institutional consumers. Water connections increased from 1110 to 1141 and water metered and paid for was 156,980,300 gallons in the year 1961.<sup>93</sup>This was partly due to the construction of two dams between 1960-1962<sup>94</sup>, situated downstream of Ellegerini at its confluence with river Endoroto. The other source was at Kaptagat on the river Ellegerini. The water was treated at two treatment works-one at Kapsoya and the other at Sosiani. The total treatment capacity was 18,500 cubic meters per day or 4 million gallons per day.

A new Municipal water supply and sewage plan was ongoing and would commence operation at the beginning of 1962. It was expected to suffice for the needs of the town and substantial developments for many years ahead. The focus that was given to the water sector was an essential factor in the intended economic transformation of

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<sup>91</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1950, 7

<sup>92</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1952, pp 4-5

<sup>93</sup>KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1960, 13

<sup>94</sup>KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1961, 17 The dam to augment Eldoret water supply and the new Kapsuswa village were the main additions to the Municipality's development.

Eldoret town and the wider British postwar colonial policy. The first installations by the colonial authorities would not suffice to cater for the swelling population.<sup>95</sup>

The economic value of water supply could be portrayed by the employment opportunities that it progressively created for the technicians, engineers, water meter readers, clerks, accountants, security personnel, among others. In addition, the construction of housing units for the water personnel contributed to the expansion of Eldoret town.<sup>96</sup>

The improvement of water situation, which involves improving access to, and using the water sector and improved water environment through investment in water infrastructure, can support economic growth. Creating institutions and making policy reforms are also part and parcel of this growth. However, economic growth is not a prerequisite for solving water related problems. Instead, countries invest in water infrastructure, institutions, and policy reforms to achieve human development and sustain economic growth. In addition, investment in large water storages seems to reduce malnutrition and incidents of child mortality.<sup>97</sup>

Increasing population pressure, large scale urbanization, rising economic activities, changing consumption patterns, improving living standards, climate variability, expansion of irrigated agriculture and changing cropping pattern towards water intensive crops were among the major drivers for rising demands for water. In general sense, every urban centre is under obligation to ensure water sufficiency for the survival of its residents. Eldoret enjoyed the advantage of its proximity to River Sosiani which became one of the determining factors for its very location.

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<sup>95</sup>KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1962, 7

<sup>96</sup>Mwangi, 64 years, interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>97</sup>Kumar, et al. (2008) *Water, Human Development and Economic Growth: Some International Perspectives*; 3

### 5.5 Industrial Developments in Eldoret in the Post-war Period to Independence

Before the Second World War, international firms invested in estate agriculture, primary processing, trading, and mineral exploitation.<sup>98</sup> Conversely, the longer-term aim of the metropolis after 1945 was to raise production in British industry, which had been adversely affected by the war effort. In any event, by 1939 in colonial territories, British firms were facing increasingly tough competition from the newer industrial nations such as the United States and Japan, so that the logical move for British manufacturing firms after the war was to invest in colonial production behind tariff wars. Therefore, the thrust of post-war development policy in Kenya served to support this process.<sup>99</sup>

**Table 6** below demonstrates the comparative size of selected Foreign Firms (present in Eldoret) by paid-up capital in 1930 and 1945.

**Table 6: Comparative size of selected Foreign Firms (present in Eldoret) by paid-up capital in 1930 and 1945.**

<b>Firm</b>	<b>Issued Capital 1930 (£)</b>	<b>Issued Capital 1945 (£)</b>
East African Tanning and Extract Co.	60,000	477,201
East African Breweries	2,085	70,637
East African Power and Lighting	570,000	4, 231, 333
Gailey & Roberts	133, 142	146, 692

*Source:* Registrar General of Companies, Kenya in Swainson's, *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya (1980)*, 65

**Table 6** above provides evidence of intensified colonial industrial investment. As already mentioned, this was an inevitable consequence of the post-World War II tariff wars and the resultant British colonial policy shift for survival.

<sup>98</sup> Swainson, N (1980), *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya*, 58

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 105

Kenya Cooperative Creameries was one of the three main cooperatives that were registered in 1931. The other two were the Kenya Planters Co-Operative Union (KPCU) and the umbrella Kenya Farmers Association (KFA) –The KFA campaigned for high standards of products and growing (and against African competition in agriculture); the KCC processed and marketed milk, while the KPCU marketed settler coffee.<sup>100</sup>The milk and milk products' company had its regional headquarters in Eldoret. It actually started production in 1932.<sup>101</sup>

Apart from KCC, a new Pepsi cola Factory was constructed in the Workshop area and opened during the year 1954. Unga Ltd., which had been established earlier, was also in existence and was seeking plots for further expansion according to the Uasin Gishu District Annual Report of 1954.”<sup>102</sup>

East African Tanning and Extract Company (EATEC) started operations in the years preceding the Second World War<sup>103</sup> initially to process wattle bark and production of tanning products. By 1949, it had been so well established that it was arguably getting a fair supply of labour by recruiting as well as offering better conditions than the individual farmer.<sup>104</sup> The company raised the pay of their recruited contractees for estate work to Shs.18/- per ticket.<sup>105</sup>

The company was able to provide good housing and latrines for all their 3,500 labourers on their nineteen different estates according to the 1951 Uasin Gishu

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<sup>100</sup> Hornsby, C (2012) A History of Kenya Since Independence, p.36

<sup>101</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.25

<sup>102</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 13

<sup>103</sup>Kurgat Paul, 59 years, oral informant, interviewed on 10 July 2020. It specifically started operating in 1932.

<sup>104</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1949, 9

<sup>105</sup>Unga Limited also gave considerable increases in pay to their mill staff, whilst outside labour also got well above the minimum wage which included bonuses, rations, etc. This is according to the 1949 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report.

District Annual Report.<sup>106</sup>In the mid-1950s, the company had invested a colossal sum of 30 million Kenya shillings in 50,000 acres of black wattle plantations in the Uasin Gishu and Sotik districts with a factory in Eldoret. Its tanning products were a major foreign exchange earner for Kenya.<sup>107</sup>

EATEC was for a time renamed The Plateau Wattle Co. Ltd. It provided good welfare facilities on its twenty estates in 1953. These welfare amenities comprised football competitions, sports meetings schools, shops, and canteens.<sup>108</sup> All these improved not only its image but also the morale of the workers and its overall productivity.

In 1956, the company continued its focus on marketing wattle and also received large quantities of bark for processing. In addition to this, the Wattle Company installed a creosoting plant for treating wattle poles for fencing posts and other purposes; also, quantities of charcoal are produced for export to the copper mines of Uganda.<sup>109</sup>The introduction of synthetic substitute worldwide posed stiff competition to the natural extracts. This setback however proved to be a boon in disguise and spurred the company into greater and varied activity. The late 1950s and the early 60s saw the company involved in intensive diversification into agricultural and industrial productions from beef, cereal and mushroom production to wood preservation all formed the new function of the company – the whole panorama presented a different picture.

## **5.6 Trade in the Post-War Period**

After 1945, many new shops were built in Eldoret. Business was generally steady amongst all communities especially at the beginning and end of the year when the

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<sup>106</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 12

<sup>107</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism, 1986, 24

<sup>108</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1953, 10-11

<sup>109</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956,26

farmers were receiving the proceeds of their crops.<sup>110</sup>The interplay between agriculture and trade in Eldoret was historical and this continued after the War. Both had a marked corresponding effect on the other. African trade also flourished in the bazaar by late 1940s. This was a testimony to the radical transformation that had taken place in Eldoret which had hitherto been an exclusive European town. Africanization momentum in Eldoret was on a steady march.

The banks observed a steady increase in turnover of 5% by 1949. Whereas Tuesdays and Fridays used to be busy days, every day of the week became busy by the end of 1940s.<sup>111</sup> Eldoret was depicted as a ‘rapidly growing municipality whose present (1949) population bears no resemblance to the 4,345 souls recorded in 1939.’<sup>112</sup> The resultant crowding of inhabitants provided an enlarged market for business to thrive.<sup>113</sup>

In 1950, a covered-in market was being constructed in the location in Eldoret. In 1951, the National Bank of India prepared to re-open a new branch in Eldoret after a lapse of 16 years.<sup>114</sup> Being that agriculture was the thread that held Eldoret’s economy, the Agricultural Department supplied figures indicating that the gross farming income for the district in 1951, excluding cattle products, was about £2,168,000. Of this sum, wheat brought in £1,100,000, sisal £385,000, maize £289,000, wattle £129,000 and buffer fat£74,500.<sup>115</sup>

In 1953, the farmers acquired credit facilities that came to define them as ‘living mainly on credit.’ Short term loans reached a record figure of £240,000 as compared

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<sup>110</sup>John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>111</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1949, 7

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>114</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 9

<sup>115</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1951, 9

with the 1945 figure of only £54,000. Trading debts also showed no improvement with the estimated amount being roughly assessed at £250,000. A Mr. Troup reportedly bought a large farm in the Moiben area.<sup>116</sup> His action was evidence of yet more European influx in Uasin Gishu and the consequent agricultural expansion. In the same year, there was considerable development in the whole milk trade with Uganda, and a milk round was started in the Turbo area. The Kenya Co-operative Creamery attracted 64 new members from the district, bringing its total to about 300.<sup>117</sup>

The milk export trade with Uganda expanded throughout the year 1954 from approximately 350,000 gallons, to approximately 800,000 gallons in 1954. This was not at the expense of Butter Fat which showed a slight increase over 1953.<sup>118</sup> With Eldoret being the collection point, the volume of trade in the town expanded with this increase in milk export.

The 1954 picture of Eldoret trade was as captured in the extract below:

Trade is flourishing, and the town continues to develop and expand. There is ample evidence of new buildings under construction for shops, offices, and flats. In the Workshop area, a new Pepsi cola Factory was constructed and opened during the year, and a new large Gailey & Roberts Showroom and Store is well underway. Hughes Ltd. are building a large three storied corner plot and Unga Ltd. are demanding plots for further expansion.<sup>119</sup>

Despite these developments, ‘the standard of African trading in the district was still very low’ and the Africans themselves seemed content with having many small general shops, earning a subsistence income. The Municipal Board, however, considered a scheme put forward by the Government for securing loans for African

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<sup>116</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1953, 9

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 14

<sup>119</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1954, 13



shop keepers of various trades. This was expected to foster a better type of trading than had been carried out in the past. In addition, more shops were to be erected by the Municipality in the Eldoret (West) location.<sup>120</sup>To further stamp the resolve to better African trade, Mr. Maddison, Secretary to the Minister for Trade and Commerce, visited Eldoret and discussed the matter with the Town Clerk and the District Commissioner.<sup>121</sup>

In the Workshop area, two very large maize stores were constructed in 1955 by Maize Control, through their agents, the Kenya Farmers Association. This would bring a lot of trade into Eldoret. Previously, farmers stored their maize on their farms and received direct railage orders from their nearest station. The new maize stores meant that the crop would be removed from the farms as soon as possible after harvesting into Eldoret.<sup>122</sup>Similarly, a wheat store was put up to serve a similar purpose to the maize stores.<sup>123</sup>

Extensions to the Social Hall, costing £3,250 were completed in 1956. These extensions provided a library, small beer shop and offices for the African Affairs Officer.<sup>124</sup> The extensions of the Beer Hall were completed in 1955 and there was a new Women's Bar, a Men's Bar and a lounge for European type beer, and a large bar and lounge for members. The estimated amount brought in by the Beer Hall was between £1,200 and £1,500 each month.<sup>125</sup>

In 1960, there was a 'trade depression' resulting in a deficiency of funds to meet the various needs of Council. The African beer halls continued to show a decline in

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<sup>120</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1955, 37

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Nelson Buses, 67 years old, interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2020.

<sup>123</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1955, 28

<sup>124</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956, 26

<sup>125</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1955, 35

profits as a result of deliberate boycott and illegal manufacture of 'tembo' and Nubian Gin in the peri-urban area. It was inevitably expected that social service would decline if the trend continued. This 'trade depression' was attributed to the detrimental effect of the outside political events which caused a profound change of heart in the farming community. In such circumstances, the efforts of the agriculture department must have suffered despite the inauguration of courses for young farmers, among others. The 'wind of change' was to blame for the retrogression in the farming sector which in turn impacted on the economy of Eldoret.<sup>126</sup>

The political events were characterized by certain external as well as internal activities. To begin with, in February 1960, Macmillan, leader of Conservative Party, declared Britain's intent to withdraw from all its remaining colonies and recognized a 'wind of change' blowing across the continent that the colonial powers could no longer hold back. Although the Conservative Party was the party of empire, Macmillan had no personal loyalty to Kenyan Europeans.<sup>127</sup>

According to Hornsby, it was the African pressure and changing British attitudes that led to a moment of sudden, shocking change: the first Lancaster Conference in London of January-March 1960. The Conference saw the Legislative Council meet with Macleod, the new British Colonial Secretary to chart a new course. Ngala, Muliro, Odinga and Mboya led the African delegation. To some surprise, even amongst African members, the conference laid down the goal of Kenyan independence under majority rule for the first time.<sup>128</sup>

As a result, many settlers felt abandoned by the British with no guarantees of what would happen to their land. African calls for imminent independence roused fears

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<sup>126</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1960, 11

<sup>127</sup> Hornsby, C (2011), Kenya, 60

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

amongst the 61,000-strong white community. The violence of the Congo in 1960 after Belgium's withdrawal deepened these fears.

The 1960 report mentions the return of the Kikuyu which had instilled a spirit of competition and keenness in African trade. It says,

His drive and eagerness to exploit any avenue of trade whatsoever is in marked contrast to his competitors. He is now in command of 75% or more of the African trade in the district (Uasin Gishu District Eldoret included).<sup>129</sup>

The business acumen of the Kikuyu people has been a topic in many street discussions. The reason and sense in such discussions may require further scrutiny. However, the entrepreneurial spirit of the Kikuyu captured the attention of the 1960 report writers. By this fact, its being a possible factual and legitimate claim is underscored. Their arrival had been triggered by European preference for the Kikuyu labourers who later resorted to active business ventures in the town. As such, their arrival in Eldoret ignited a spirit of healthy competition among the African segment of town dwellers.

The executive officer of African trade Mr. D. A Rousham commented that in addition to the courses for African trade Jeans school, a short course was held in Eldoret in June, attended by 24 traders, six of whom were recommended to Jean's school as suitable for further instruction.<sup>130</sup> An analysis of the role of economic factors on the evolution of Eldoret town cannot ignore such a purposeful effort to sharpen skills of African traders in Eldoret town. This 1960 short course was a significant step towards the deliberate economic transformation of Eldoret town.

The Eldoret African Traders Association was registered in 1960. A special committee to administer a Trading Loans Fund was set up and funds earmarked. This fund was

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 10

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 12

meant to inject new capital into the African business in Uasin Gishu and replaced the fund which formerly could assist only traders in Eldoret Municipality. Other trade, with exception of the motor industry and farm implements was badly hit as the secondhand car particularly so.<sup>131</sup>

The role of the Asian community as traders in Eldoret in 1960 was said to be dependent upon the prosperity of the farmers to whom the Asians allowed considerable profit. However, with the cessation of development on the farms in the area, business got to the doldrums, and it was uncertain as to when it would pick up. There were outstanding debts to be collected, existing stocks to be paid for, restrictions on credit and rates and rents to be paid.<sup>132</sup>

Independence was a critical symbolic step, but the process of decolonization had begun six years before and continued for a decade thereafter. Following the defeat of the Mau Mau revolt, the shape of the country's accelerated decolonization in 1960–3 reflected a complex combination of African pressure and divisions, the legacies of war, settler land fears, changing metropolitan strategy (blown by an anti-colonial 'wind of change') and Cold War security concerns.<sup>133</sup>

The decline in agricultural activities was attributed to uncertainty as described in thus: "The sad fact remains that the general Afrikaans view is 'why should I work to develop this land which for want of security of title may well in a few years be requisitioned for some purpose or other.' As a result, land is being farmed but not developed."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual report 1960

<sup>133</sup> Hornsby, C (2011), Kenya, p19

<sup>134</sup> KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual report 1960

The situation in Eldoret was described as “windy”, not in a climatic sense but in the sense of political wind of change blowing in favour of decolonization. The Afrikaans felt that they were better qualified to judge the situation by virtue of past experience from South Africa. As a result, there were few important developments during the year. The chief event being the completion of the long awaited new African housing in Eldoret. This was opened by the Hon. W.B. Havelock, Minister for Local Government, who flew up to Eldoret for the occasion.

In 1960, there were two hotels in Eldoret, the New Lincoln and the New Wagon Wheel. <sup>135</sup>The New Lincoln was centrally placed in a quiet part of the town. It had a pleasant friendly atmosphere, and all bedrooms had their own bathrooms. The hotel had a bar, lounge and an attractive garden equipped with gaily colored umbrellas and tables. <sup>136</sup>**Plate 8** is a photo of Wagon Wheel Hotel.



**Plate 8: Wagon Wheel Hotel.**

**Source:** *Photo taken by researcher on 20 July 2020*

<sup>135</sup> The Lincoln Hotel was frequented by the British while the Wagon Wheel Hotel was almost entirely for the Boers.

<sup>136</sup>KNA/DC/UG/24/1/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1960, 16

## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to investigate the economic factors that influenced the development of Eldoret town between 1945 and 1963. It has emerged that after the Second World War, the British government played a more active role in bolstering investment in colonial areas marking a new British ‘development policy’ towards colonial territories after 1945. This they did aware that one method of speeding up economic recovery from the ravages of the Second World War was to channel government resources into colonial primary and industrial production.<sup>137</sup>

It was on this premise that the British government initiated a significant amount of industrial investment after 1945. This policy saw growth of factories in the towns in the colony resulting in an increase in the number of Africans living in Eldoret town pretty much as it did across the colony. The milk and milk products’ company which had its regional headquarters in Eldoret, but had started production in 1932,<sup>138</sup> experienced exponential expansion after World War II. EATEC also continued its focus on marketing wattle and received large quantities of bark for processing. It installed a creosoting plant for treating wattle poles for fencing posts and other purposes; also, quantities of charcoal were produced for export to the copper mines of Uganda.<sup>139</sup>

The chapter further argues that the rapid growth of the immigrant communities, especially the European population, which grew from 22,800 in 1939 to 29,700 in 1948 and more than 61,000 in 1960 generated a steadily rising demand for social services and public investment in the social sector. The demand for social services was particularly felt in the areas of water, housing, health, and education. There was

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<sup>137</sup>Ochieng’, W.R (1986), A History of Kenya, 122

<sup>138</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.25

<sup>139</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956,26

also significant maintenance and bituminization of roads in the period between 1945 and 1963.

Further, it is observed in this chapter that the declaration of the emergency in 1952 negatively impacted on production for it witnessed the exodus of Kikuyus from the forest areas of Uasin Gishu, some to central province and others to serve prison sentences having been accused of oath taking offences. This exodus negatively impacted on farm labour to the extent that production of peas, beans and potatoes was adversely affected.

Despite the simmering clamor for constitutional changes in the mid-1950s, trade continued to flourish in Eldoret, and the town's development and expansion went on steadily. For instance, the milk export trade with Uganda expanded throughout the year 1954 from approximately 350,000 gallons, to approximately 800,000 gallons in 1954. Butter Fat also showed a slight increase over 1953. With Eldoret being the collection point, the volume of trade in the town expanded with this increase in milk export. There was ample evidence of new buildings under construction for shops, offices, and flats during that period.

With the Town Hall being built in 1956 and the town being elevated to Municipal Council status in January 1958, the first Mayor, J. Wolston-Beard, was elected and in November 1959, the Governor of Kenya presented the town with its Charter and Mace. The chapter further established that the year 1961 saw the exodus of both Europeans and Asians from Kenya given the political uncertainty that characterized the march to decolonization. This was followed by the settlement of Africans in Uasin Gishu farms in 1961 for the first time since the advent of colonialism.

Finally, Eldoret did not enjoy considerable privilege of playing host to many secondary industries during the colonial period. This, among other economic dreams, was progressively achieved after independence partly due to the political significance that the town acquired as the headquarters of the Kalenjin nation. The next chapter covers the economic transformation of Eldoret town in the post-independence era, 1963-2003.



**CHAPTER SIX**  
**ECONOMIC DRIVERS FOR CHANGE IN ELDORET'S POST-  
INDEPENDENCE ERA, 1963-2003**

**6.0 Introduction**

This chapter sets out to discuss the factors for economic transformation of Eldoret town in the post-independence era, 1963-2003. It explores the key economic drivers that spurred the growth of Eldoret town in the 40-year period. The overlapping nature of projects and policies from Jomo-Kenyatta era (1963-1978) to that of Daniel Arap Moi (1978-2002) did not make it practically easy to subdivide this period into two making it the largest chapter in this research. The chapter particularly focuses on industrial developments, housing, tourism and hospitality, transport, agriculture, informal sector, and sports during the forty-year period. It argues that the post-independence era was characterized by large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC). The latter's central role was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise even though it took some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects.<sup>1</sup>

**6.1 Factors Responsible for Eldoret's Rapid Growth in the Post-Independence Period**

Several factors were behind Eldoret's fast growth in the post-colonial period. First, Eldoret benefited from the national urban policy in the 1974/7 national development plan when eight towns (Kisumu, Eldoret, Kitale, Thika, Nyeri, Embu, Meru and Kakamega) were designated as development centres within the centre-periphery

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<sup>1</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956,26

economic paradigm.<sup>2</sup> This policy required the government to invest in the various urban sectors in order to attract private investment and bring change to the surrounding rural peri-urban centre. This would in turn help stimulate the development of the designated local towns and infrastructure. As for Eldoret, there was political good will that saw the town elevated to be the headquarters of the north rift region. In addition, the reign of Daniel Arap Moi was consistent with many African' leaders who tended to develop strong regional towns in their home areas.<sup>3</sup> As expected, Moi's ascent to the Vice Presidency in 1967 and the presidency in 1978, elevated Eldoret's economic fortunes.

The post-independence era was equally characterized by large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC). However, it was the ICDC which provided the pivotal source of state finance to the local commercial and industrial sector and the Corporation was the successor to the Industrial Development Corporation, which had been set up in 1954 by the colonial government.<sup>4</sup> The central role of the ICDC was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise even though it took some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Eldoret town was also favoured by a good communication network with the rest of the country. It was also situated amidst rich agricultural farmland. The town also played host to three textile factories, an industrial estate, four commercial banks, an Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), the Kenya Farmers Association branch and National Cereals and Produce Board stores. Others were the Kenya National Trading Corporation stores, Breweries depot, Oil Companies depots,

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<sup>2</sup> National Development Plan, 1974/7, 31

<sup>3</sup> Hornsby C, (2011), Kenya, 345

<sup>4</sup> Swainson, N (1977), The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977, 190

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

several flourmills, wholesale and retail agency services, the mineral bottling companies, several sales and repair firms for motor vehicles and farm machinery and several other smaller size but with similar economic significance.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the industrial installations established during the post-independence period include Raymond company, RIVATEX, Kaptagat Sawmills, Rift Valley Bottlers, Highland Paper Mills, Rai Plywood, Kenya Cooperative Creameries, National Cereals Board, Ken Knit, East African Tanning Extract Company, Kenya Industrial Estates and Kenya Power and Lighting Company.

## **6.2 Industrial Development in the Post-Colonial Period, 1963-2003**

While industrial enterprises flourished such as KCC, EATEC and KPLC, new industrial plants were established which significantly led to expansion of Eldoret town. The post-independence era was characterized by large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC). The central role of the ICDC was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise even though it took some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects.<sup>7</sup>

Eldoret had a wide spectrum of industrial development springing up especially after independence. They include textile production, woollen garment manufacture, utilization of timber resources by way of tanning extractions, plywood, and furniture fabrication through packaging, and bottling factories to the utilization of maize and maize waste in the preparation of starch derivations and pharmaceuticals.

Companies such as Rift Valley Textiles (RIVATEX), Ken-Knit, Raymond Woollen Mills, Kenya Industrial Estates (A consortium of small-scale manufacturers), Rai

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<sup>6</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 7

<sup>7</sup> Swainson, N (1977), The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977, 191

Plywood, National Cereals and Produce Board, Kenya Cooperative Creameries, Donyo Lessos Cheese Factory, and the Corn Production Company (CPC); contributed to the economic transformation of Eldoret town.<sup>8</sup>

Eldoret enjoyed the evergreen savannah lands of the legendary Sirikwa civilization, the traditional pasturelands of Nilo-Hamitic Kalenjins. These pre-European pasturelands, with the rich volcanic soils, were the land of mild sunshine, the dream promised land of the early British settlers for the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is why the environs and hinterland of Eldoret became an early scene for rapid advancement in modern agriculture and livestock industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It became an early centre for services to the farming community. This is what formed Eldoret's industrial base.<sup>9</sup>

### **6.2.1 The Raymond Company, Rift Valley Text Mills (RIVATEX) and Ken Knit Factory**

In 1986, one of the biggest factories in terms of size and the number of employees was the Raymond woollen mills (Kenya) Ltd with a labour force of 2,300, working non-stop on three shift basis.<sup>10</sup> The factory was established in 1968 as a joint venture of the J.K organisation of India, the I.C.D.C and Chadha Brothers Ltd of Kenya.<sup>11</sup>

Raymond started with the manufacture of knitting yarn which encompassed a wide range of products from sewing thread to fabric, from blankets to readymade suits, among others. In a span of ten years that is according to the company's 1981 records,

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<sup>8</sup> John Sambu, 64 years, oral informant, interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Hezekiah Oyugi, former P.C, Rift Valley Province writing in 1986 in the magazine "Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment in Eldoret."

<sup>10</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 12

<sup>11</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1968, 6

the factory's turnover increased 130 times – a compound annual growth of 60% - an unprecedented expansion by any standards.<sup>12</sup>

Raymond was the first major textile factory to be set up in Eldoret which until then was predominantly an agricultural centre. The initial knitting and hosiery international standards within a couple of years and by 1971, these were fully established in the market as quality products. They embarked on the manufacture of pullovers and cardigans over the next two years.<sup>13</sup>

In 1973, a major expansion programme resulted in the installation of sophisticated machinery to the weaving of suiting fabric, designing and production of knitted dress materials and processing of various fabrics.<sup>14</sup> Later in 1975, Raymond installed machinery for the manufacture of yarns for its various products and they became sufficient. In 1975, yet another expansion programme was undertaken by the company that increased its worsted spinning capacity by 50%, polyester/viscose spinning capacity by 3 times and weaving capacity by 200%.<sup>15</sup>

Other innovations were the installation of machinery for the woollen system of spinning for the manufacture of blanket yarn and installation of fibre drying machine. A fully integrated garment factory, adopting the most modern technology early was commissioned during the first quarter of 1981 making Raymond's ready to wear garments afford acceptance in the local market with respect to quality and design. In 1982, these garments were exported to European markets, notably UK; for the first time. The response of the overseas buyers was described as 'encouraging indeed'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 8

<sup>13</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1971, 14

<sup>14</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1973, 11

<sup>15</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 15

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

In 1984, Raymond added to its operations wool scouring and combing. This would enable the company to use wool produced by the local farmers.<sup>17</sup> By 1985, the greasy wool was exported from Kenya.<sup>18</sup> According to the Municipality magazine, ‘Why Eldoret? A guide to Investment and Tourism (1986)’, the success story of Raymond was underpinned by their strict adherence to quality control and design under the vigilant eyes of a team of local qualified technicians and high fashion designers from Europe and America who kept abreast of world trends.<sup>19</sup> In addition, training of local technical staff received priority consideration by the management. In 1970, two Kenyans were sponsored for a 4-year Diploma course in Textile Technology in India.<sup>20</sup> The exercise was repeated yearly thereafter.<sup>21</sup>

In 1975, the company started its own Training Institute manned by qualified staff to train operators. Experts who passed out of the Institute every year were absorbed in the various departments of the factory. Apart from assisting the workers to acquire items like bicycles, radios and other household necessities at concessional prices, the company also built 48 senior staff houses by 1985. In that manner, the company maintained healthy and cordial labour relations with its workers. It also enhanced the expansion of the housing sector in Eldoret town.<sup>22</sup>

Prided as being ever conscious of its social obligations, the Raymonds contributed to various charity organisations. In 1984 December, they donated a classroom for the standard 8 learners in Eldoret. It also contributed towards the Nyayo wards which were also sponsored motor rallies commonly referred to as safari rallies.<sup>23</sup> In a

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<sup>17</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1984), 13

<sup>18</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/4 Uasin Gishu District Annual (1985), 15

<sup>19</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.16

<sup>20</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1970), 21

<sup>21</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 11

<sup>22</sup> John Sambu, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>23</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1984), 7

nutshell, Raymond put money in many people's pockets both directly and indirectly. It injected quite a significant portion of money into the economy of Eldoret right from its inception in 1968.

Rift Valley Textiles Limited (RIVATEX) was started as a joint venture between the Kenyan Government through industries and commercial development corporation (ICDC) and four foreign partners on the outskirts of Eldoret. It later became almost wholly Kenyan owned and managed by Kenyans with 'great success and pride'. From the time of inception in June 1975, the ultra-modern integrated textile mill, with a covered area of 22,048 square metres and a total initial investment of Kshs.283 million, was constructed, setup and put into over shift operation in the record time of 15 months and the full production – shifts achieved in July 1977.<sup>24</sup>

This factory was officially opened on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1978 by Vice President Daniel Arap Moi.<sup>25</sup> The opening of this factory by Moi lends credence to the assertion that his political elevation was a blessing to Eldoret town.<sup>26</sup> By 1985, the mill, with a total investment of over Kshs.400 million, employed 1162 technical, 249 administrative and 10 expatriate staff and produced a total of approximately 12 million metres of high quality fabrics per year ranging from dyed and printed cotton and polyester blends, to locally designed and created original patterns.<sup>27</sup> Its famous brands were Kanga and Kitenge java, alongside fine quality fabrics for uniforms, suiting, furnishing, bed sheets, skirting, dress materials, denim fabrics and sanforised drills.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Tourism and Investment (1986)

<sup>25</sup> KNA/DC/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1978

<sup>26</sup> Hasssan Musumba, 68 years, an oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), p.7

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

The mill which was completely air conditioned and protected by automatic fire fighting installation, housed the most modern and sophisticated machinery plus a well-equipped engineering section which catered for all repair work and fabrication of new parts and spares. A complete design and film engraving section further added to the self-sufficiency of the mill.<sup>29</sup>

The ever-increasing need for trained personnel was met through the mill's own training facilities. The company's training school for technicians, reorganised by the director of industrial training, was fully involved in intensive on-site programmes. Regular Company sponsored seminars for workers kept them abreast with technological advances both nationally and globally. In addition, selected candidates were sponsored for higher technical training and qualifications in high technology centres in Asia, Europe, and North America. Several trained Kenyans already held key positions.<sup>30</sup>

By 1985, only 10 expatriates as opposed to 40 in the beginning remained on the company's staff roll, a no mean achievement indeed, according to the Eldoret municipality magazine of 1986. Higher level training of personnel formed a regular yearly undertaking by the company. In 1986, four Kenyans underwent training in Canada, UK, and India, pursuing highest qualification in Textile Technology.<sup>31</sup> RIVATEX products were marketed in Kenya through the company's distribution network which ensured adequate and prompt supplies throughout the county. Expert possibility especially to quality conscious overseas markets were exploited.

The company prided itself as being one of the most industrial-relations –cum-worker-welfare conscious companies in Kenya. It was a well-known fact that the company

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 8

<sup>30</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Reports (1985), 12

<sup>31</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 18



had the “best transport system” for its workers in the country.<sup>32</sup> The worker family welfare was well looked after as the company’s fully equipped and staffed dispensary within the precincts of the mill under the dedicated care of a company doctor, clinical officers, and nursing sister.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, the company provided subsidised needs from its canteen to its workers; the recreational needs of the workers were fully looked after. The RIVATEX FC<sup>34</sup> was a force to reckon with within the national football Super league.<sup>35</sup> A boxing team was in the process of formation by mid-1980s.<sup>36</sup> The RIVATEX Football Club was a huge attraction to the general population of Eldoret during its game days. Their matches were a thrill to the fans and an economic avenue for traders.<sup>37</sup>

RIVATEX was not content merely with its internal organisation. Community service formed an integral part of its programmes. Every Thursday, the company conducted educational visits for school children and adult organizations. These were a regular feature within the framework of the company’s busy production schedule. Various self-help projects, schools, social organisations, and handicapped children benefited from generous donations by the company.<sup>38</sup>

RIVATEX envisioned reaching greater heights with the support of the government of Kenya, the Eldoret Municipal Council, the international and local finances institutions, and the Kenyan personnel and workers. It was considered a super Kenya enterprise which was projected to compete with the best in the world to the great pride

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<sup>32</sup> Kurgat Paul, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 19

<sup>34</sup> RIVATEX Football Club

<sup>35</sup> Musomba Hassan, 68 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020

<sup>36</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 17

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020

<sup>38</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

and justification of the Kenya nation while bestowing great economic benefits to the residents of Eldoret and by extension the entire country.<sup>39</sup>

The immediate beneficiaries of the economic milestones of RIVATEX were the residents of Eldoret in their numbers who earned their daily bread from the company. The standard of living of the entire workforce was uplifted through the subsidised canteen services, a good healthcare system and the good industrial relations that kept the workers focused.<sup>40</sup>

Money circulation in the town improved with the salaries paid to all cadre of workers reaching food sellers, transport service providers and the service sector in its entirety as well as traders of all shades hence improving revenue base for the town's development.<sup>41</sup> The council was in effect, financially stronger to handle essential sectors of Eldoret's public utilities.

**Plate 9** below shows RIVATEX company in a photo taken in 2020.



**Plate 9: RIVATEX East Africa Ltd.**

**Source:** [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city)

<sup>39</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 17

<sup>40</sup> Paul Kurgat, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020

Ken-Knit (Kenya) Ltd – the first knit wear factory in East Africa was born in the old industrial area of Eldoret. The company was established in 1966<sup>42</sup> by K.Z. Shar (Bachu) who, while on a European shopping trip for the family’s Kitale-based clothing business (Gulabs Ltd), committed himself to the purchase of knit-wear machinery. He invested all his hard-earned savings of the family’s toil of many years into the bargain. Later, with the moral backing and support of the Eldoret Municipal Council, it moved to bigger, modern premises on the outskirts of the town in 1977.<sup>43</sup>

From a steady start in 1966 with a labour force of 30, the company employed over 700 semi-skilled and skilled workers and technicians by 1986.<sup>44</sup> They had good factory relations – like a big family ‘where everyone knows everyone’<sup>45</sup>. Their unwritten rule was, ‘abandon all rank all ye who enter here.’ It was common to find the directors, two of whom were qualified technologists, working side by side with the lowest worker or labouring with the knit wear master endlessly. Between them they tackled all technological programs as well as guide and assist other technical staff all around and directed the intricate operations of the mill. The prevailing overall atmosphere within the mill was one of amicability with no tensions or exhaustion as the three eight-hour shifts progressed smoothly day in and day out except for the national holidays and when stillness reigned there was abuzz of activity.<sup>46</sup>

My mid-1980s, Ken-knit had assets of over Kshs.110, 000,000.<sup>47</sup> It had always been forward looking and had explored all possibilities for expansion and newer markets especially in Europe through trade fairs and missions. The company then commenced expansion programs with the aim of producing yarn for the blanket industry and the

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<sup>42</sup>KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu Annual Report 1966, 18

<sup>43</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3Uasin Gishu Annual Report 1977, 7

<sup>44</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Tourism and Investment (1986), p.13

<sup>45</sup> Mwangi, oral informant interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Tourism and Investment (1986), p.14

manufacture of high class woven blankets. When the expansion exercises got completed, it provided employment for more than 300 extra workers bringing the total work force under the company's umbrella to over 1000.

Dralon fibre from West Germany was the only raw material imported by 1986. Hosiery yarn converted from this best quality fibre was utilized in the manufacture of knitted outer wear garments such as cardigans, jerseys and pull overs. These and the then popular ken knit knitting wool were available in the home market as well as exported to the neighbouring countries. Ken knit endeavoured to keep abreast of the market trends and fashions. The diversity and high-quality knit wear resulting from strict quality control, intensive training programs and dedication of its management and workers.<sup>48</sup>

### **6.2.2 The Kaptagat Sawmills, Highland Paper Mill Limited and Rai Plywood**

Two cousins, Gajjan Singh Deogan and Prem Singh Ranauta set up a building contractors' trade in Eldoret and involved themselves in many a building project for the next 20 years or so. In 1934, they diversified into saw milling and handed over to their second generation who carried on the work started by their pioneers.<sup>49</sup>

Kaptagat Sawmills operated on a 200-acre forest land in Kaptagat, about 25km from Eldoret. The forest was a government concession granted under licence and strict conditions of control. The complex employed a work force of 250, consisting of supervisors, skilled technicians, saw millers, mechanics, and a labour force. The mill handled approximately 400 tons of timber per day – transported by trailer trucks each capable of handling 20 tons at a time. All operations from felling to loading and final

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<sup>48</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1986), 16

<sup>49</sup> KNA/PC/RV/2/8/9 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1934, 23

processing was mechanized. Replenishment of the forest was under government control and was carried out strictly according to programs illustrated below:

The mill's main function was sawing and resawing timber to various sizes and shapes as per trade demand. In addition, prefabricated houses were manufactured on site. The houses were in great demand in the rural areas; especially farms around Eldoret. The main raw product was cypress, timber being in great demand for shuttering and the building industry in general. The mill had its own camp at the site for its workforce, adequately supplied with electricity and water through its own sources. Worker and worker family welfare and their recreation needs were well looked after, and the management ran its own nursery school on site.<sup>50</sup>

The role of Kaptagat Sawmills played a significant role in shaping up the housing and furniture sectors of Eldoret town. It also created employment opportunities for several people such as supervisors, skilled technicians, saw millers, mechanics, drivers, and security personnel whose settlement in the town added to the number of town dwellers hence boosting the customer pool.<sup>51</sup> Their economic contribution was significant for the post-independence expansion of Eldoret. Moreover, the water and electricity supply were boosted by the company's-initiated projects which it 'supplied from its own sources'.<sup>52</sup>

The Highland Paper Mill company was inaugurated on 14 September 1977 and started operations in October 1980 as an integrated pulp and paperboard manufacturers.<sup>53</sup> It had majority Kenyan shareholding along with the Industrial Development Bank – 27% and Development Finance Company of Kenya – 21%.<sup>54</sup>The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) was established in 1973, which was about the beginning of a new era of investment in Kenya. The bank was owned directly by the Kenya government, with an authorized share capital of Kshs. 40 million, shared between the

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<sup>50</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.24

<sup>51</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020

<sup>52</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.24

<sup>53</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1980

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

government (49 per cent) and the ICDC (26 per cent). Another 12 per cent each was held by the National Bank of Kenya and the Kenya Assurance Company.<sup>55</sup>

The IDB's goal was to finance large industrial projects- competing with both the DFCK and the ICDC- but its speciality was the acquisition and disbursement of World Bank loans.<sup>56</sup>

The Development Finance Company on the other hand was yet another Kenya-based financial institution first established in 1963. It was owed jointly by the ICDC, the CDC, the German Development Corporation, and the Netherlands Finance Company. Unlike the IDB, the DFCK's financing facilities were primarily directed towards establishment and expansion of manufacturing industries.<sup>57</sup>

By January 1981, various grades and sizes of strawboards were being produced commercially for the first time in Kenya by Highland paper Mill Ltd. The basic raw materials utilized consisted of wood-free short-fibred agricultural waste and wastepaper. Wheat straw was obtained from farms in Uasin Gishu while sugarcane bagasse was procured from western province and Kisumu District. Wastepaper was obtained from the major urban centres of Kenya. Soda ash, used for the removal of lignin from the raw materials, was supplied by Magadi Soda Factory.<sup>58</sup>

Numerous locally manufactured products like soap, wrappers, school chalk, shoe boxes, toothpaste packets, suitcases, briefcases, handbags, box files, matchboxes, photo frames, automobile door linings, shirt boxes and many more utilized the company's products. In that sense, the company provided extended economic support to several other companies and therefore became a huge booster to the economy of Eldoret.

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<sup>55</sup> Swainson, N (1977), *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977*, 224

<sup>56</sup> Hornsby, C (2011), *Kenya*, 244

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 226

<sup>58</sup> *Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism* (1986), 31

Eldoret was naturally blessed as the home of timber in Kenya.<sup>59</sup> Rai Plywoods (Kenya) Ltd set up operations in 1973.<sup>60</sup> It manufactured a variety of timber products ranging from plywood, tea chests, sliced veneer and sliced veneer plywood, block boards, flush doors, parquet flooring tiles, chipboards and veneered practice boards, ceiling boards, furniture, domestic partitions, and furniture components. Logs of different species from various forests mainly in Nandi and Kakamega were utilized in their manufacture.<sup>61</sup>

A plant was installed in mid 1980s for the manufacture of polythene woven bags which were widely used for packaging purposes.<sup>62</sup> Later, it began to produce sacks and mattresses.<sup>63</sup> The main outlet of the products was local – the impact was appreciated much considering the great contribution made by the timber industry in the development projects with which Kenya had been bustling since independence and saved the country millions in foreign currency. Apart from meeting local demand, a limited export to neighbouring countries added further to much needed foreign currency reserves.<sup>64</sup>

The company benefitted the citizens of Eldoret in two major ways: job creation and supply of timber products. In the first instance, it was an income earner to several people thereby injecting a lot into local economy.<sup>65</sup> It also improved both money circulation and the people's purchasing power.<sup>66</sup> In the second instance, timber products, sold locally, boosted the business sector, and created further employment

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<sup>59</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020

<sup>60</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1973

<sup>61</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.25

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> William Aura, 48 years, oral informant, and an employee of Rai Ply Company between 1994 to early 2020, was interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>64</sup> Kasiba, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020

<sup>65</sup> Atito, oral informant interviewed on 17 July, 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Ouma Francis, oral informant interviewed on 17 July, 2020.

opportunities.<sup>67</sup> Severally families were therefore sustained in Eldoret town. Such families in turn made their contribution to the expansion of Eldoret.<sup>68</sup>

### **6.2.3 Rift Valley Bottlers and Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC)**

A notable feature of the post-independence period was the large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the *Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation* (ICDC). However, it was the ICDC which was the main source of state finance to the local commercial and industrial sector and the Corporation was the successor to the Industrial Development Corporation, which had been set up in 1954 by the colonial government.<sup>69</sup> The central role of the ICDC was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise even though it took some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects.<sup>70</sup>

Rift Valley Bottlers Ltd, was an associated company of Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (I.C.D.C) of Kenya. It had a franchise to bottle and market Coca-Cola range of soft drinks which it incorporated on 27 August 1977, commenced operations in Eldoret on 5 June 1978, and started production on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1979.<sup>71</sup> The company manufactured and marketed a variety of soft minerals (drinks) which included Coca-Cola, Fanta Orange, Gingerale, Lemonade, Sprite, Krest, Bitter Lemon and Club Soda.<sup>72</sup>

In the mid 1980's, these were marketed in nine districts in Northwest Rift Valley Province through a chain of 150 distributors and stockists in the sales region. It had 5000 outlets through which its products got to be sold.<sup>73</sup> The company obtained the

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<sup>67</sup> Atito, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>68</sup> John Sambu, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Swainson, N (1977), *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977*, 190

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> KNA/DC/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual report, 1979

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism* (1986) p.23



bulk of its raw materials locally: sugar factory in western Kenya, bottles from glass plants in Nairobi and Mombasa, carbon dioxide from Uplands; bottle crowns from Nairobi while the Coca-Cola company supplied essences from their essence (concentrate) plant in Nairobi. By 1986, the company had a labour force of around 250. It conducted regular training seminars of their personnel. These were organized at all levels to equip the employees with necessary technical and management skills.<sup>74</sup>

As the company expanded, it supported many seminars, sports events at private and national level by providing free or at-cost soft drinks to the participating public.<sup>75</sup>

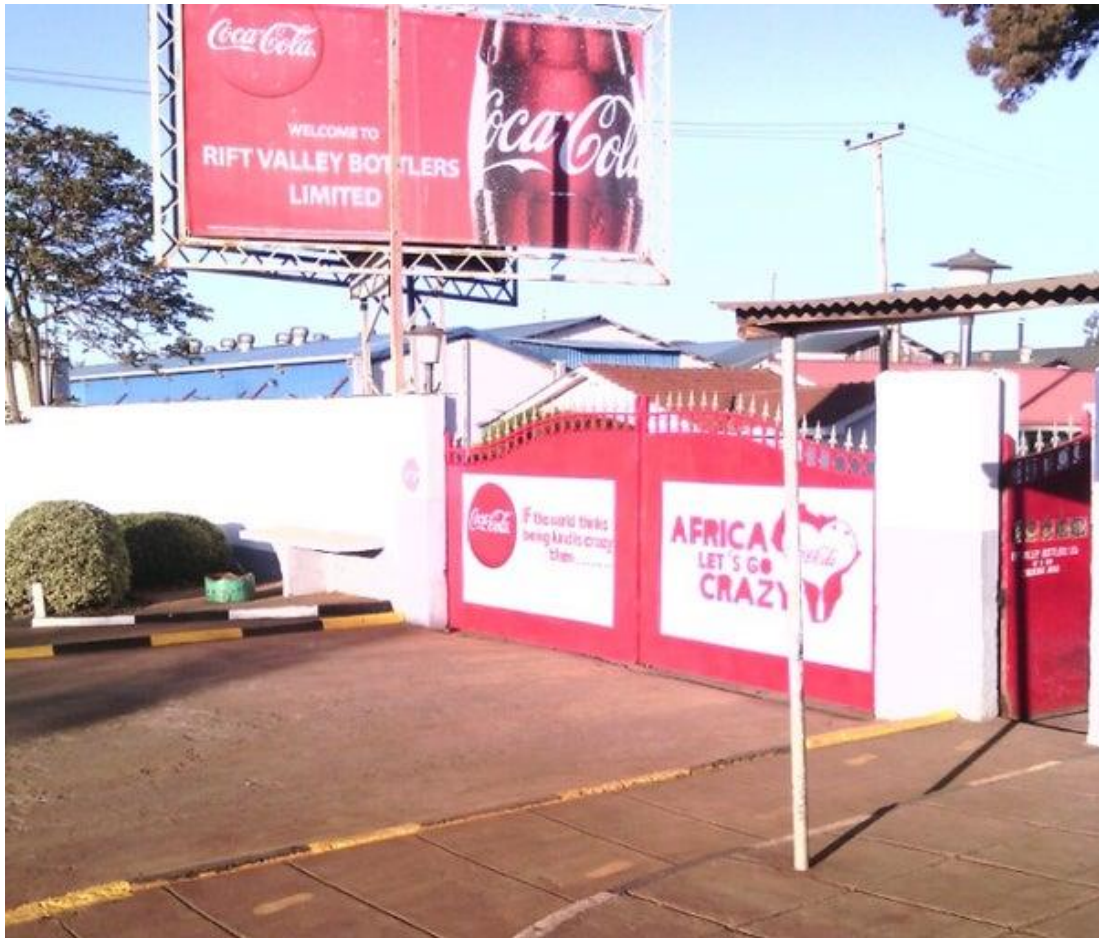
Quality mineral drinks always formed an important accompaniment of public leisure time, enjoyment, and entertainment. They therefore boosted the hospitality sector of Eldoret economy.<sup>76</sup> **Plate 10** below shows Rift Valley Bottlers Company in Eldoret.

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<sup>74</sup> KNA/DC/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1986

<sup>75</sup> Mwangi, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Musomba Hassan, 68 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020



**Plate 10: Rift Valley Bottlers Limited**

**Source:** [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city)

The Kenya Cooperative Creameries was one of the three main cooperatives that were registered in 1931. The other two were the Kenya Planters Co-Operative Union (KPCU) and the umbrella Kenya Farmers Association (KFA) –The KFA campaigned for high standards of products and growing (and against African competition in agriculture); the KCC processed and marketed milk while the KPCU marketed settler coffee.<sup>77</sup>

The milk and milk products' company had its regional headquarters in Eldoret. It actually started production in 1932. However, its expansion largely took place after independence, and that is the reason for its incorporation in the post-Independence

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<sup>77</sup> Hornsby, C (2012) A History of Kenya Since Independence, p.36

analysis. In 1986, it was the sole body in Kenya which handled the entire milk production of the country at various depots.<sup>78</sup>The Eldoret branch, by 1985, was manned by 24 management and 400 non-management staff consisting of trained and skilled personnel and labour who were mainly deployed in the production of departments and sales.<sup>79</sup>

Milk and dairy production remained dominated by the KCC, which handled more than 90 per cent of formal-sector dairy sales (most produced in the ex-scheduled areas), although most milk was still consumed locally. ‘Africanization’ of the dairy industry was actively supported by the state, with improved milk-producing stock, veterinary services, cattle dips, and husbandry advice for smallholders.’<sup>80</sup>

The factory obtained milk from dairy farmers around Nandi, Kakamega, Uasin Gishu, Keiyo, Marakwet and part of Bungoma Districts. As much as 18,000 litres of milk were handled daily – most of which was processed and sold as market milk and a substantial amount packed up for free distribution to primary school children all over the country.<sup>81</sup>

A shot in the arm for KCC arrived when the school milk program was initiated and announced by President Daniel Arap Moi in his first national address as President on December 12, 1978, Jamhuri Day. The program entailed provision of free milk for all primary school children.<sup>82</sup>The success of this Nyayo milk program lay with the creameries.

Nutritional surveys in 1974–5 and 1977 showed that, on average, both urban and rural Kenyans received adequate nutrition. But there were pockets of deep regional poverty, and one-third of Kenyans

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<sup>78</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1986

<sup>79</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1985), 16

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Tourism and Investment (1986), 27

<sup>82</sup> Hornsby, C (2012) A History of Kenya Since Independence, 353

were still nutritionally deficient. This was the background to Moi's free school milk program of 1979.<sup>83</sup>

Other products manufactured by the company were spray dried milk powder, ghee, butter, and a variety of cheeses – the Kenya Cheddar being the best known. Ultra-Heat Treated (U.H.T) milk was also produced in smaller quantities. The company's expansion program included the addition of a U.H.T plant to the existing creamery.<sup>84</sup>

K.C.C gave special attention to the training of personnel who were deployed throughout its branches to man key positions and production line specialized products. Training of such personnel was under the Company sponsorship and took place in countries like Sweden, Denmark, and Holland known for their highly advanced technology in the field of milk and milk products production.<sup>85</sup> **Plate 11** shows the new Kenya Cooperative Creameries Ltd. in Eldoret.



**Plate 11: Eldoret KCC**

**Source:** [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city)

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Tourism and Investment (1986), 27

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

#### **6.2.4 East African Tanning Extract Company (EATEC) and Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE)**

After independence, EATEC continued to intensify its production activities. Its colonial beginning provided a strong base that enabled the company to thrive. Structures were already put in place to ensure supply of raw materials and good management practices. Twenty years after independence, EATEC was considered to be the most self-sufficient organization of its kind in all Africa with a virtually all Kenyan work force of over 2500 along with the families of the employees. It could easily be said that about 15000 people relied on activities of the company for their livelihood.<sup>86</sup> Prominent visitors to the company set up referred to it as a show piece of utilization where nothing went to waste- even steam and electricity for factory's consumption was being produced in site.<sup>87</sup>

When EATEC ventured into mushroom growing, Eldoret became recognized as one of the top mushroom producing centres in the world with an output reaching 40 tons per month by 1985.<sup>88</sup> Production of mushroom spawn, a highly specialized and sophisticated technological process and the very core of successful mushroom growing was perfected by the company – an unheard of achievement in East Africa, a few years before and was yet to be perfected in many developed countries. Both qualities spawn and mushrooms under the trade name “Eldore” were exported to overseas markets notably the EEC countries and the neighbouring African countries and were in great demand locally. The mushroom production was a model in its

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<sup>86</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), p.24

<sup>87</sup> Hassan Musomba, 68 years, oral informant interviewed on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

<sup>88</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism, 1986

utilization of labour, natural resources, and organic waste and exemplified EATEC's commitment to making optimum use of all resources.<sup>89</sup>

When the company's research department finalized research into using liquid extract as an adhesive, the company's fortunes brightened. The products proved an exceptionally strong band for particle board, ply woods and generally served as an all-purpose adhesive. The extract also possessed excellent water-resistant properties, a useful advantage in the manufacturer of dump proof materials and timber products designed for external use. Additionally, EATEC ventured into the manufacture of organic soil, seven million worms were used in production of this which again made use of waste material. The finished product was known as "Good Start" Organic Soil.<sup>90</sup>

With all the intense activity at the company since inception, EATEC contributed significantly to Eldoret's development.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, 98% of its products were earmarked for export to those traditional overseas markets which favoured the vegetable extracts to the synthetic alternative.<sup>92</sup> As such, the company became a foreign exchange earner for the country,<sup>93</sup> increased production rates for the foreign market definitely meant more economic engagement locally to meet the high market demands both locally and internationally. The economic contribution of EATEC as a company cannot therefore be gainsaid.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Hassan Musomba, 68 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020

<sup>92</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1986, 15

<sup>93</sup> Mwangi, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020

<sup>94</sup> Sarah Barno, 77 years, oral informant interviewed on 5 September 2020

The huge number of employees and the multiplier effect on their families as well as the 15,000 people who relied on the company's diverse activities for their livelihood greatly sustained the evolution momentum of Eldoret town.

Kenya Industrial Estates started its operation in Eldoret in mid-1975 on a 15-acre piece of land provided by Eldoret Municipal Council with the option of another 10 acres for future expansion and development.<sup>95</sup> In a bid to fulfil the self-sufficiency dream of the new nation, this government institution under the ministry of Industries engaged in the promotion of small and medium skill industries. The Eldoret regional office was established to cater for industrial development of five districts within Rift Valley. They included: Uasin Gishu, Nandi, Trans-Nzoia, West Pokot and Turkana. These five districts constituted north Rift Valley region.<sup>96</sup>

Initially, what may be referred to as phase one of the project, 13 factory shades along with administrative offices and a Technical Service Centre (TSC) fully installed with equipment and machinery and all serviced by roads, water lines and power connections were constructed at a cost of over Kshs.20 million in the form of loans from the government.<sup>97</sup> Phase two of the project comprising 12 factory shades complete with machinery and infrastructure was also completed in 1982.<sup>98</sup> The total complex consisted of 21 operational projects providing employment for 160 workers; while 20 local staff and two United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) expatriates managed the administrative side.<sup>99</sup>

Apart from training programs jointly sponsored by UNIDO and KIE, loans were provided to indigenous people in easy terms of repayment to start their own cottage

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<sup>95</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1975), 11

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 21

<sup>98</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report (1982), 16

<sup>99</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 21

industry. The popularity of this facility was reflected in the large number of applications for assistance which KIE received for processing constantly. The regional loans committee had the mandate to approve loans up to Kshs.500, 000 and would recommend any other project above that figure to the KIE board of directors for consideration.<sup>100</sup>

By mid-1985, following the establishment of the regional office, over 100 projects had been supported out of which 45 were fully operational. The overall KIE financial support exceeded Kshs.30 million out of which Kshs.22 million had been disbursed by 1985. Another 23 projects were under implementation with total KIE committed funds of Kshs.8 million. The establishment of KIE regional office in Eldoret created jobs and job opportunities for the town residents and the surrounding areas. It also opened new vistas for its citizens in entrepreneurship. In the process, the project introduced industrial technology at the grassroots level which in turn resulted in the manufacture of several items, which had hitherto been imported.<sup>101</sup> The progress at KIE was steady for many years. It gave a new lease of life to the economy of Eldoret residents as it boosted their purchasing power and raised their standard of living.

### **6.3 Impact of Industrial Enterprises on the Post-Independence Evolution of Eldoret**

Due to the many industrial endeavours in Eldoret, it provided the largest and fastest growing industrial sectors outside Nairobi, Thika and Mombasa. The commerce and industry sector in Eldoret was instrumental essential in several respects the production and distribution of essential goods and services was both useful in satisfying basic needs of the population and for provision of inputs in different sectors.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Suleiman Ndumuli, 55 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.



Employment and income opportunities were generated both directly and indirectly from the diverse commercial and industrial activities.<sup>102</sup> Eldoret became the main production and distribution centre for most of the consumer goods and services in Uasin Gishu District.<sup>103</sup>

The existence of the enterprises and services greatly stimulated the level of commercial activity in Eldoret town which had a spiral effect on the town's population growth and general town expansion. The allure of improved living standard occasioned by the establishment of streetlights, bigger shopping areas with a wider volume and variety of goods, improved security, and transport; all had their contribution to the evolution and development of Eldoret town.

As the commercial sector accounted for a sizeable proportion of the national income, it also provided increased job opportunities for Kenyans, both in formal and informal activities. Despite being the fastest growing town in Kenya with a population of 112,000 in 1989, an annual growth rate of 8.3% and a potential work force of about 60,000; Eldoret's fast population growth rate had by far outpaced the creation of formal employment opportunities resulting in the rise of a fast-growing informal sector.

#### **6.4 Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) – Eldoret Deport**

Electric supply is considered as the nerve centre of all industrial, commercial, agricultural, and domestic manipulations in any rural area, town, or city. The first

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<sup>102</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>103</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 17

supply in Eldoret town was done in 1933 and connections continued to expand thereafter.<sup>104</sup>

The Kenya Power and Lighting Company conducted all its technical operations for its substation in the industrial area and administrative work of service from its offices in the town centre. The sub-station was fed from the national grid and in turn distributed the power supply to various parts for domestic, commercial, and industrial use as well as to out-lying farms and homesteads. The fast developing industrial and agricultural sector in Eldoret had placed heavier supply demands on the Eldoret depot. The new sub-station 132/22KV had not only met the extra requirements but had a 45% spare capacity to cope with anticipated developments.<sup>105</sup>

The Eldoret depot, in line with the company policy, gave top priority to workers' welfare. Company houses and leased houses provide accommodation for a number of employees while others received appropriate housing allowances. Later, company houses were constructed. This in turn saved the employees money that boosted their purchasing power.<sup>106</sup> The staff was medically well attended to by a company doctor. Social needs were provided in the form of athletics, football, outdoor and indoor games, and social functions conducted under the company auspices.<sup>107</sup>

The operations at the Eldoret depot were self-reliant and smooth running. The efficiency exhibited at the depot was crucial as a necessary condition for many kinds of business activities. The supply of electricity in Eldoret across time became one of those attractions being an economic enabler.<sup>108</sup> Thus, it contributed immensely to the economic transformation of Eldoret. The confidence that the investors developed in

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<sup>104</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/1 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1933

<sup>105</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 23

<sup>106</sup> Kurgat Paul, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Aruba Mogambi, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020

the town was partly contributed to by the reliability, sufficiency, and efficiency of electricity supply. Security of the town relied on the lighting of main streets and gradually residential streets.<sup>109</sup> With security improved, economic activities were set on a path of progress. People could work longer into the night, or even overnight in those premises that developed three shift (twenty-four hour) operations.

Workers' residential houses were also supplied with electricity, a factor that boosted their morale and tilted many people's opinion towards working in Eldoret.<sup>110</sup> Electricity supply would enhance both private and public entertainment, thereby lightening the moments of residents and visitors in Eldoret. The depot provided jobs for several people and many others who were engaged as freelance technicians.<sup>111</sup> In addition, the motor vehicle repairs, welding, institutions of learning, among others; were supported by the efficiency provided by the electricity depot. In many respects, electricity was a key driver of Eldoret's economy.

### **6.5 Housing and Hospitality Demand in the Post-Independence Period**

After independence, a lot of progress was witnessed in the housing sector in Eldoret. For instance, the Eldoret Municipal Council completed a £52,000 housing scheme and commenced a further £45,000 housing scheme which was completed in early 1969.<sup>112</sup> Constructing of 96 USAID tenant purchase houses was completed and the houses were allocated to the successful applicants in the same year. In addition, construction of a rental housing scheme at Pioneer consisting of 43 units commenced

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<sup>109</sup> Atito, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020

<sup>110</sup> Catherine Ochieng', 32 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020

<sup>111</sup> Aruba Mogambi, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020

<sup>112</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1968

during the year 1968. Similarly, the council put up 33 units using its own internal resources.<sup>113</sup> Other schemes offered for construction by the council included:

- I) A mortgage housing scheme-15 unit
- II) Bandari housing phase II – 57 units
- III) Kapsuswa housing scheme

Housing remained a problem in the municipality. By end of 1978, there were 6, 484 applicants on the council waiting list for housing.<sup>114</sup> Residential housing faced a acute shortage that the council had to make a strong appeal to the government for special allocation of funds for rental housing schemes within the municipality. Private individuals were also called upon to put up rental houses in Eldoret town.<sup>115</sup> **Plate 12** below shows Eldoret town in the 1980s.



**Plate 12: Eldoret in the 1980s**  
**Source: Kenya National Archives**

By 1985, there was still a great demand for levy in Eldoret particularly low-cost houses for the low-income groups. The council therefore emphasized the construction

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1978

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

of low-cost houses. Some 2,163 houses were already let to residents by the council.<sup>116</sup> Over 1,286 of these were two-roomed and self-contained. The remainder were single-roomed houses with communal toilets and showers. Rents varied in Eldoret town from Shs.65/- to Shs.145/- for single roomed houses and from Shs.20/- to 100/- per two/three-roomed houses. Some housing estates were situated close to the industrial areas. Some 48 shops within the estates were also let to the industrial areas. Another 48 shops within the estates were let to local traders.<sup>117</sup>

In addition, tenant purchase schemes under the auspices of USAID and privately developed middle- and upper-income group houses in pleasant residential areas of Eldoret, available for sale or lease, supplemented council's housing projects. Moreover, a number of companies had their own housing projects in hand and the council recommended and supported such housing development to ease its own financial commitments in that direction.<sup>118</sup>

According to Kamau, an oral informant there were only four storey buildings in Eldoret town in 1980.<sup>119</sup> Much of the transformation in the housing sector took place because of the many operational industries that sprang up in Eldoret such as RIVATEX, Raymond, Cereals Board, Kenya Farmers Association, EATEC, Corn Production Company (CPC), among others.<sup>120</sup>

Some of the notable residential estates that sprung up in the town include the leafy Elgon view, Kapsoya, Annex, Subaru, Action, Rock Centre, Eastleigh, West Indies among others.<sup>121</sup> These developed in the fifty years after independence when

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<sup>116</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1985, 12

<sup>117</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 27

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Kamau, 51 years, an oral informant who came to Eldoret in 1980, interviewed on 17 July 2020

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Kasiba, 51 years, an oral informant, interviewed on 16 July 2020

many Kenyans began to embrace town life and got attracted by diverse factors, some of which have been discussed above. **Plate 13** below shows Eldoret Suburb next to MTRH along Nandi Road.



**Plate 13: Eldoret Suburb next to MTRH along Nandi Road**

**Source:** [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city)

Eldoret's Elgon View Estate developed gradually into a home to Eldoret's affluent,<sup>122</sup> and its serene environment made it perfect for comfort living. Located South of Eldoret town just ten minutes' drive from the Central Business District (CBD), the estate was zoned for low-density residential buildings, mostly bungalows and maisonettes.<sup>123</sup>

It was strategically located along the Eldoret-Kapsabet Road, which leads to the Eldoret International Airport. In its surrounding were Eldoret State Lodge, the Eldoret Sports Club, Eldoret Club, and major hospitals. Well performing private schools like

<sup>122</sup> Nelson Buses, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020

<sup>123</sup> [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city)

Hill Primary and secondary schools, Eldoret Seminary High School, Testimony primary and secondary schools were within its neighbourhood.<sup>124</sup> Electricity and water was excellently supplied to the estate, which also had a fairly good road network. The tranquility of the estate attracted non-governmental organizations that then set up their headquarters within the estate. They include the United Nations offices, the World Food Program, and the Kenya Red Cross Society among others.<sup>125</sup>

The estate became home to prominent politicians, athletes, businessmen and religious leaders in Eldoret and the larger North Rift region.<sup>126</sup> Security was tight with alarm systems and guards in every home. The guards from established firms patrolled the estate, where homes also had fierce dogs like German Shepherds to ward off criminals.<sup>127</sup> Residents jealously protected the serenity of the estate and opposed plans to establish commercial buildings that would disrupt serenity.

Due to harsh economic times, some residents had to rent out the servant quarters for additional income from their houses.<sup>128</sup> The servants were then forced to rent houses in adjacent low-class estates like the neighbouring Langas, reporting for work early and leaving in the evening.<sup>129</sup> The posh nature of Elgon View Estate influenced development of high-class residential homes in the neighbouring outspan area. The area was initially land belonging to the defunct East Africa Tanning and Extract Company, which was bought by individuals for private development. **Plate 14** below shows a residential house in Elgon View Estate in Eldoret.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Kurgat, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020

<sup>127</sup> Joseph Rono, oral informant interviewed on 5 September 2020

<sup>128</sup> Peter Cheruiyot, a businessman living in the estate, quoted in [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.



**Plate 14: A Residential House in Elgon View Estate, Eldoret**  
**Source: Photo taken by researcher on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

The County Council initiated drives to encourage tourism in its surrounding areas. The 200-bed Eldoret Sirikwa Hotel, in which the council was a major stakeholder, opened its doors to the public and the tourist trade in 1983.<sup>130</sup> Later the growth of Eldoret would be spurred by income from tourism. It was an ideal centre touring the most spectacular places of the great Rift Valley, Nandi, Keiyo-Marakwet, West Pokot and Turkana which in addition to offering scenic delights, had their own distinctive wildlife and ecology. Eldoret had many facilities for sports and recreation, fine shopping, banking<sup>131</sup> and an airfield served by air charter companies and available for private flying and charter. When the Eldoret International airport was established, the tourism fortunes of Eldoret improved. More tourists arrived in the North Rift town with the ‘best climate in Africa’.<sup>132</sup>

As a matter of fact, most of the hotels were established in Eldoret town after 1990.<sup>133</sup> Hotels such as Mahindi, Queens Garden, Marriot Hotel, Asis, Riverside, Ndupawa, Star Bucks, Maya, Poa Place, Sirikwa, among others sprung up in Eldoret alongside a

<sup>130</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1983

<sup>131</sup> Eldoret had branches of the major banks such as Standard Chartered Bank, Barclays, etc.

<sup>132</sup> Dr Paul Kurgat referring to the statement attributed to Sir Charles Eliot.

<sup>133</sup> Atito, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020



host of bars, restaurants and numerous eateries that lip up the town's hospitality industry. The Eldoret Sirikwa Tourist Hotel is here below discussed a little further:

Tenders for the construction of the Eldoret Sirikwa Tourist Hotel, a joint venture of the Municipality with others and the Tourist Development Corporation, were invited towards the end of 1978. It was argued that when completed, this project would provide improved accommodating facilities to tourists visiting western Kenya.<sup>134</sup>

The project was a joint venture of Eldoret Municipal Council, the regional county councils, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and the Kenya Tourist Development Corporation (KTDA). The 224-bed hotel provided guest facilities of international 3-star standard and opened its doors to the public on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1982 – a landmark in Eldoret's great strides forward in the hospitality sector.<sup>135</sup> The hotel, not only enhanced the public image of Eldoret, but also fulfilled a long-standing need of the residents, visitors, industrialists, and tourists.<sup>136</sup>

The hotel was situated within walking distance of the Town Hall, not far from the town centre. It was also next to the the National Bank of Kenya (NBK) and within easy reach of the railway station and airstrip.<sup>137</sup>

The accommodation comprised 93 double rooms, 6 junior and family rooms, 4 deluxe rooms, 2 deluxe one-bedroomed and 1 deluxe two-bedroomed suits.<sup>138</sup> All rooms were self-contained with wall-to-wall carpeting and ensuite bedrooms. Public areas consisted of a residents' lounge (Kerio Lounge); a public bar (Sosiani Bar), a public lounge (Moiben room), a terrace bar and snack area, a large swimming pool, a conference room to accommodate sixty with screen and blackboard facilities (Baraza

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<sup>134</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1978, 5

<sup>135</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1982

<sup>136</sup> Isaiah Kandie, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>137</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Tourism and Investment (1986), 21

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 22

room) and a restaurant with seating capacity for 200. The organization of the Hotel was manned by 80 employees and the management by African Tours & Hotels Ltd.<sup>139</sup> **Plate 15** below shows a picture of Sirikwa Hotel in Eldoret town.



**Plate 15: Sirikwa Hotel**  
Source: *www.safarinow.com*

## 6.6 Transport

### 6.6.1 The Eldoret Airfield

The airfield at Eldoret was situated some three miles outside the town on a plateau.<sup>140</sup> The runway which was constructed in 1973<sup>141</sup> and extended in 1975-76 was 1000 meters long and 20 meters wide.<sup>142</sup> Most of the aircraft which landed there were small 6 to 8 passenger carriers, although larger Kenya Airforce aircraft occasionally used

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.3

<sup>141</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1973, 11

<sup>142</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1976, 16

the facility. The airfield was a very useful airlink between Eldoret and other commercial centres in the country. An average of 12 to 14 aircraft, mostly from Nairobi, used the airfield every week. A four-time weekly passenger service operated between Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret and Kitale as did also a chartered aircraft service.<sup>143</sup>

The advent of Moi era led to tremendous developments in Eldoret in the 1980's including economic growth which then necessitated the upgrading of the airfield. This had already been stipulated in the development plans of 1985-1989 in which K&100,000 had been earmarked for this under the minor airports' development program.<sup>144</sup>

Air Kenya/Sunbird was a Nairobi based Aviation Company which provided air service to Eldoret four times a week by 1985.<sup>145</sup> This made it possible for the businessmen to travel to and from Eldoret in the early morning hours, attend to business during the day, and back the next day. The company was well placed to handle all types of aviation requirements within Kenya and the neighboring countries with an efficient network which catered for the businessmen and the tourists alike.<sup>146</sup>

Apart from the efficient movement of businesspeople and some of their light goods, it was a positive development towards a more accessible town that was opening up to the rest of the world, much faster. The transformation of Eldoret was becoming more apparent as the town paced towards conforming to the compelling forces of modernity. The once colonial city was now in the hands of the African people and was firmly on its development tracks.

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<sup>143</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.3

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1985

<sup>146</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986)

The internationalization of the airport was an idea that was being mooted in government circles, albeit with reservations pertaining to its viability.<sup>147</sup> The once rocky open field had advanced to include a railway, a network of roads of bitumen standard and air transport. Modernization had indeed turned around the town. More was still coming as further advances were sought. Eldoret had to contend with the pace of its quick march towards a national city standard.

The Moi era saw the growth of the Eldoret International Airport which was started in 1995 after the government acquired land from East African Tanning Extract Company (EATEC).<sup>148</sup> It had a 3500m long and 45m wide runway connected to the upfront run by 2 cross taxiways each measuring 400m long by 23m wide.<sup>149</sup> The front area was such that it could park at any one time, seven aircrafts. The freight terminal with 2000m upfront and 220m<sup>2</sup> freight was built with the intention of future expansion. It was opened in 1997.<sup>150</sup>

Business in the North Rift Districts had been negatively affected because of insecurity in the form of cattle rustling. Despite that, minerals such as gold deposits, gypsum and semi-precious metals were fairly quantitatively profitable. Limestone deposits were also available in greater commercial amounts in Ortum, West Pokot District; all of which had remained largely unexploited.<sup>151</sup> North Rift Districts were an economic sleeping giant which required awakening. The International airport was intended to satisfy that quest. It was believed that such a venture would contribute to some

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<sup>147</sup> Paul Kurgat, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

<sup>148</sup> Chebet, P (2004), Evaluation of Public Utility Projects: The Case of Eldoret International Airport, 1

<sup>149</sup> *ibid*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*,2

<sup>151</sup> Wairago, Singo and Kamenju, (2003), 7

significant decline in cattle rustling activities that were synonymous with the region.<sup>152</sup>

Being that airports facilitate safe landing and departures of flights both nationally and internationally, it was hoped that the airport, as a public utility, would become a booster of people's standard of living.<sup>153</sup> The Kenya Airports Authority had felt that the facility, on completion, would effectively serve the western region of the country. According to the KAA management, Eldoret International Airport aimed at maximizing revenue generation from airport operations by opening up tourism and promotion of business in Western Kenya and the Great Lakes Region.

A scrutiny of the airport's six objectives reveals sufficient reasons to conclude that the main motive of its establishment was economic. The objectives were: to pursue progressive marketing of the airport locally and internationally, provide world-class services and maintain quality facilities and services, facilitate the establishment of the tourist circuit in Western Kenya, create a regional cargo hub, design and implement appropriate safety standards, regulation and procedures and finally, to develop and implement effective personnel administration policies that adequately address all matters pertaining to personnel management.<sup>154</sup>

All the six objectives of the airport have reasonable economic inclination. They would collectively boost the economy of the country with the citizens of the town being the main beneficiaries. The hotel industry, employment opportunities, industrial sector,

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<sup>152</sup> Samwel Kipketer Tarus, 78 years, oral informant interviewed on 15 September 2020.

<sup>153</sup> Chebet, P. (2004), Evaluation of Public Utility Projects: The Case of Eldoret International Airport

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

educational institutions, the health sector, business sector; all stood to gain from this facility that increased the speed of both freight and passengers.<sup>155</sup>

There was apprehension when the airport was on the verge of being established. Some sections of politicians expressed reservations on the suitability of its location. It was considered unviable. According to these critics, the airport would become a white elephant.<sup>156</sup> This opposition became so intense that some donors became hesitant in supporting its construction.<sup>157</sup> The effect was that the size of the airport had to be scaled down from a runway initially poised to be 4.7km long to 3.5km.<sup>158</sup> The airport was expected to boost the activities of the athletes, the famous sport in the region. Eldoret had always been a training ground for many athletes such as Moses Kiptanui, Moses Tanui, David Marus, Laban Rotich, Daniel Kipng'etich Komen, among others. The airport would open the town to the outside world. Prospective sponsors would eventually access Eldoret and support the athletes.

Geographical positioning of the Eldoret International Airport was based on economic considerations. In 2001, however, the airport handled an average of eight planes a day as compared to 100 planes per day handled by Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in the same period.<sup>159</sup> In spite of that, the airport performance was favourably attractive, and the number of planes and cargo tonnage kept on rising right from the time of its inception.

In mid-2003, the government, citing alleged malpractices at the airport, sought to ban cargo flights to it. The ban was lifted in May, the following year. Eldoret airport at its initial stages used to facilitate operations of airlines such as Kenya Airways, Egypt

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<sup>155</sup> Suleiman Ndumuli, 55 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>156</sup> Dr Kurgat Paul, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

<sup>157</sup> Musabi James, 51 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>158</sup> Chebet, P. (2004), Evaluation of Public Utility Projects: The Case of Eldoret International Airport

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

Cargo, MK Airlines, Sky Air cargo, African Airlines and Daloo Airlines. Many of them later withdrew from the routes owing to low volumes of activity. In their place, new Airlines came on board such as: DAS air, Cargolux, IMTREC, ATLANT and YEREVAN RIN. The major airline had always been the Air Kenya that had scheduled three passenger flights per week. Over time, the volume of activity at the Eldoret International Airport increased.<sup>160</sup>

The airport boasted of having the best state of the art functional equipment. The navigation and aeronautical facilities used at the aviation tower were among the best in Africa. However, the cost to many would-be-users was prohibitive. Charges on passenger flights were not within the reach of the majority.<sup>161</sup>

The economic conditions due to collapse of many industries in the region affected the capacity of Eldoret Airport. RIVATEX, Sawmills, Raymonds, K.C.C and many other industries went under only a few years after the airport inception.<sup>162</sup> This eroded the purchasing power of the locals hence reducing their capacity to make use of the airport. In addition, the locals had low entrepreneurial spirit and the enterprising culture was yet to evolve.<sup>163</sup> This explained the rather low-key business operations in the region despite its resource endowments. For instance, the locals did not diversify crop production different from their traditional crops such as wheat, maize, and beans.

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The stakeholders and other professional bodies such as Export Processing Zone (EPZ), the Investment Promotion Council (IPC) and the Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA), which had not shown concern in sensitizing people on businesses

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986)

<sup>162</sup> Atito, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>163</sup> Hassan Musumba, 68 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>164</sup> Chebet, P (2004), Evaluation of Public Utility Projects: The Case of Eldoret International Airport

and investment opportunities in the region, also blamed the diminishing usage of the airport on poor contributions. Only KTDA and IPC had opened offices in Eldoret by 2004.<sup>165</sup> On the flip side, the airport created a lot of job opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. Tourists came through the airport, creating jobs for taxi drivers.<sup>166</sup> **Plate 16** below shows Eldoret International Airport.



**Plate 16: Eldoret International Airport**

**Source:** [Skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city](https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/Eldoret-city)

### 6.6.2 The Development of Roads

In the early days of Eldoret's history, there were big ditches for drainage each side of the roads and planks were put down to cross them.<sup>167</sup> This reality provided a rationale for initial attempts to establish a system of road infrastructure in Eldoret. However, in the course of time, it became necessary that improvements be made to facilitate

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> William Aura, 48 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>167</sup> MSS/125/1 "64" Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968) p.8



economic activities in the town. It emerged that in the post-independence era, both political and economic advantages gave Eldoret an upper hand in reaping benefits particularly in the roads sector.

For instance, Eldoret was a Regional Head Quarters for the maintenance of roads in Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet Districts. The town was thus well served by roads connecting it to the main centres of East Africa and all the principal urban and rural areas of Kenya. The main trunk road – the A104- was a well-maintained tarmacked highway which connected Mombasa,<sup>168</sup> Nairobi and Nakuru.<sup>169</sup>

Other link roads were: C30, linking Eldoret, Kapsabet, Kisumu and Kakamega; the C51 to Iten and the C54 to the fluorspar Mine in Elgeyo Marakwet District. All these roads were fully tarmacked and well maintained by mid 1980s. The rest of the roads were of good gravel standard and easily passable during wet weather. All types of vehicular traffic from heavily loaded trucks and fuel tankers with trailers and other loaded vehicles bound for Uganda, Sudan, and Burundi; passenger service vehicles and private cars used the A104 intensively. The rest of the roads were mainly used by farm produce transporters for travel to other parts of the country via Eldoret road or rail links.<sup>170</sup>

In the early 1980s, Eldoret was connected by a high standard bituminous road to a further large development area to the east which made it easily accessible from the high potential area of the Kerio Valley.<sup>171</sup> The Sergoit-Tambach Road and its extension to Kabarnet and further to the east up to Marigat was designed and constructed under financial cooperation between the Government of Kenya and the

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<sup>168</sup> Mombasa was the national port and harbour.

<sup>169</sup> Nakuru was the Provincial Headquarters of Rift Valley

<sup>170</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986) p.7

<sup>171</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1985, 11

European Economic Community (ECC) between 1982-1985.<sup>172</sup> This was attributable to the covert influence of Daniel arap Moi whose inclination towards uplifting Eldoret was a matter at the centre of many discussions.<sup>173</sup>

By 1985, all the main roads and practically all other roads in the central, western, Elgon view and industrial area were bituminized and were maintained and kept in good order by the Municipal Council. Roads in the central area of the town had wide concrete pavements on both sides. Verge clearance, the planting of shrubs and flowers and flowers and the improvement of pedestrian paths were usually carried out throughout the year.<sup>174</sup>

Eldoret was emerging as a well-organized town with paved roads and beautiful flowers.<sup>175</sup> The estate access roads were gradually being bituminized and would turn out to be a huge attraction. Investors, customers, and job seekers were attracted to this town touted as the fastest growing town at the time. The muddy roads were being murramed and annual improvements were carried out.<sup>176</sup>

Trade was certainly becoming more efficient as standards were raised gradually towards global standards. The town was steadily pacing towards an infrastructural revolution, a key enabler for agrarian and industrial revolution.<sup>177</sup> The political climate, as already mentioned, was also tilted towards Eldoret with President Daniel Arap Moi rising to the apex of national leadership since August 1978.<sup>178</sup> Several projects were directed to the town in the wake of the new political developments.<sup>179</sup>

Eldoret had been considered as the major urban metropolis and headquarters for the

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>174</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1985, 14

<sup>175</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>176</sup> Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1985, 15

<sup>177</sup> Kasiba, 51 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020

<sup>178</sup> Aruba Mogambi, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>179</sup> These projects included roads, industries, educational institutions (not part of this analysis)

people of the North Rift.<sup>180</sup> The rise to power by Moi was one significant factor that gave impetus to the development of Eldoret town. Ironically the Kalenjin, particularly the Nandi, were reluctant to embrace urbanization. This was because the community embraced widespread livestock keeping and crop farming that required the labour of every member of the community.<sup>181</sup> Anybody escaping from the same was considered lazy and idle. This attitude was so prevalent that the urban dwellers were stereotyped and derogatively referred to as “*chelosos*” meaning one who is a thug, a spoilt person<sup>182</sup> or a prostitute.<sup>183</sup>

The main roads in the town and the commercial Centre were relatively well supplied with sodium and mercury streetlights. Installation of additional streetlights of additional streetlights and security lights were undertaken on regular basis annually. The maintenance was carried out by Kenya Power and Lighting Company on behalf of the Council.<sup>184</sup>

The strategic location of Eldoret at the crossroads of important road axes linking Nairobi to northern Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan places the city at the heart of significant flows of people and goods. The connectivity of Eldoret to other cities and rural hinterlands suggests that it was important to consider this city as part of a wider network of places and people.<sup>185</sup>

### **6.6.3 The Development of the Railways**

The railhead, once at Londiani was connected to Eldoret in 1924 as already discussed in chapter three. Eldoret was on the main line, linking it with the port of Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru in Kenya and Tororo, Jinja, Kampala and Kasese in Uganda. In addition to the main line services, there was a direct rail line to Kitale – an important

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<sup>180</sup> Kalenjin is a group of seven communities who speak related languages. President Moi was a Kalenjin from the Tugen community, a section of the larger Kalenjin group.

<sup>181</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>182</sup> Onesmus, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>183</sup> Dr. Prisca Tanui, 53 years, oral informant interviewed on 20 July 2020.

<sup>184</sup> Mwangi, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>185</sup> Eldoret, A City on the Move, 2018

and thriving agricultural area some 100km from Eldoret and connecting services throughout the whole of East Africa, including Dar-es-Salaam and throughout to the southern highlands of Tanzania.

The town was provided with extensive railway facilities in the form of a major goods depot and a large railway served industrial area capable of considerable expansion. Regular train services, both passenger and goods, ran between Nairobi and Eldoret and beyond Eldoret to Uganda border. This main railway trunkline connected all the important towns of Kenya through branch lines serving other parts of the country.<sup>186</sup>

Kenya Railways was a parastatal corporation created by an act of parliament in January 1978. The corporation inherited a system which went back to the origins of East Africa Railway system which had been instrumental in opening up the country and the subsequent development of Kenya. This network stretched from Mombasa on the east Coast, to Malaba on the border with Uganda.<sup>187</sup>

Traffic growth had provided a strong impetus for Kenya Railways to expand. Demand for services extended beyond Kenya's borders. Commodities transported by Kenya Railways contributed in a major way to the economy of neighbouring countries.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, the development of inland container depots within the country provided Kenya Railways with yet another traffic demand to be met. After independence, more wagons were purchased to increase the volume of goods flowing to Uganda, through Eldoret. More than 100 wagons were converted locally for handling containers by mid

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<sup>186</sup> "64" Eldoret Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (1968) p.14

<sup>187</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), p.9

<sup>188</sup> Dr Kurgat Paul, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

1980s and projects were well in hand to reach a figure of 400 wagons needed to run the container business smoothly.<sup>189</sup>

The Kenya Railways had a primary task of transporting goods and passengers. Improvements by way of computerization of wagon movements and telecommunications speeded up the work and eased communications throughout the network. There was a further proposal to develop the line to the mineral rich and fertile agricultural region of Kerio-Valley. This was expected to further boost the economic fortunes of Eldoret.<sup>190</sup>

The East African region, having been securely connected, Eldoret was covered securely within the network. It was poised to benefit from the massive exchange of commodities and a strong inflow of skilled and unskilled labour force.<sup>191</sup> This led to reduction in prices of goods and services. It also increased the volume and diversity of trade commodities.<sup>192</sup> As such, the railway injected life into the economy of what was once ‘an empty vast grassland teeming with game.’<sup>193</sup>

Heavy commodities and vehicles were transported more securely than before this expansion took place. For Eldoret to benefit to the maximum, it was important to widen the network for the benefit of the entire region. The level of exchange that was witnessed kept several people in business hence creating a lot of income and job opportunities. Consequently, Eldoret expanded steadily as more goods landed in its market. All the necessary building materials, non-food and food items found easy access to the town’s rising consumers. Assorted farm implements found their way into

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<sup>189</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986), 17

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Suleiman Ndumuli, 55 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>192</sup> Isaiah Kandie, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 18 July 2020.

<sup>193</sup> KNA/MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 16

the breadbasket of Kenya,<sup>194</sup> through the railway. In this respect, Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet were well able to benefit more from this widened network.

### **6.7 The Central Role of Agriculture**

Settler agriculture played a crucial role in the emergence of Eldoret town. It was the Boer settlers who demanded for more government attention and development that was to open up the Plateau and enable the residents access essential services. This was to be done through the establishment of ‘a big centre in the North Rift.’<sup>195</sup> The centre that was thus established and became known as Eldoret, an agricultural town *par excellence*.<sup>196</sup>

The first Agricultural show in Eldoret was in 1912.<sup>197</sup> It was the beginning of what would later become an annual event. In the mind of the colonial bureaucrats, the economic fortunes of Eldoret depended on the success of a strong agricultural base. After all, agriculture was the lifeline of the town, right from its inception. The event was held every February or March of each year where the farmers, industrialists, traders, administrators, social workers, townspeople, and the rural population got together to display their skills and achievements. The show, which became popular with the people, was a meeting ground of people of all walks of life where problems of mutual interest were discussed; where crop produce, manufactured goods, livestock services were exhibited; and where hospitality to visitors from other places and countries were extended.<sup>198</sup>

The annual Eldoret Agricultural show was a practical expression and demonstration of what could be achieved by a farming-cum-industrial community. The show

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<sup>194</sup> North Rift is often referred to as the breadbasket of Kenya.

<sup>195</sup> David Kipkugat Meto, 82years, oral informant interviewed on 14 September 2020.

<sup>196</sup> Ndege, P, (2005) Afrikaner Identity Politics and the Growth of Eldoret Town, 1903-1939.

<sup>197</sup> MSS/125/1 “64” Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968), 21

<sup>198</sup> Barabara Tanui, 88 years, oral informant.

attracted visitors especially newcomers who had an opportunity to see a progressive, well-governed up-country centre which was the hub of a vast agricultural area, rich in livestock with a variety of crops and resources.

The show provided an economic learning opportunity for the residents to challenge one another so as to produce more for the town and rural dwellers.<sup>199</sup> The bulging Eldoret population had to be sustained with enough food and other agricultural necessities. The latter were to support agricultural industries that had gained a foothold in the town and were becoming bigger by the day.

An urban centre, being a non-agricultural settlement, can only be sustained by a fertile agricultural hinterland. If not, the supply and cost of food would not be manageable for the town dwellers. Eldoret became famous for its cheap food items. Maize, for instance, had become a crop of prime importance both as cash crop and a staple food crop for the indigenous populations. The cultivation of maize had steadily improved after independence and showed even more significant prospects in the years that followed. This increase was attributed to the influx of small-scale farmers into the Uasin Gishu District, the streamlining of marketing systems and price increases of this commodity.<sup>200</sup> The availability of market in Eldoret town and other parts of Kenya made farmers to become more zealous in production. The town was thus influencing agricultural production in its hinterland both as a market for town consumers and a collection centre to other parts of Kenya.<sup>201</sup>

Wheat also became a crop of great economic importance to the town dwellers in Eldoret.<sup>202</sup> Its cultivation had been increasing all along. Not very labour intensive, its

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<sup>199</sup> Onesmus, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 20 July 2022

<sup>200</sup> KNA/DC/UD/1/2/3 Uasin Gishu District Annual Reports, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

<sup>201</sup> Joseph Rono, 78 years, oral informant interviewed on 5 September 2020.

<sup>202</sup> Kurgat Paul, Kasiba and William Aura; oral informants. (59, 51, 48 years respectively)

production was highly mechanized in the after independence, in the 1970s and more in the 1980s and marketing was quite good. Introduction of seasonal credit schemes and good returns induced farmers to give priority to wheat cultivation.<sup>203</sup> Sufficient wheat was produced for home market and for export to neighbouring countries.<sup>204</sup> Eldoret was the collection point for wheat. It was also a key market for local consumption both by the town dwellers and the surrounding centres and localities.

Other crops included beans and pulses, Irish potatoes, among others. Eldoret was set in the heart of some of the richest farming country in East Africa. It was the mainstay of the economy of Uasin Gishu district and was expected to remain so for a long time. Majority of the inhabitants of the town's hinterland derived their livelihood, both directly and indirectly, from agriculture.<sup>205</sup>

Eldoret was initially almost entirely an agricultural town. Later, industries injected additional economic boost.<sup>206</sup> When the farmers harvested, there would be a beehive of activities in town as farmers streamed into the town with their produce. They came from as far as Marakwet, Baringo and Elgeyo to sell and to purchase items.<sup>207</sup>

The more the town grew, the more the farmers' produce found ready market and the more intense farming activities became. Large scale farming also transformed the town as profits were invested in the building industry.<sup>208</sup>

Even the *jua kali* sector experienced a new lease of life around the month of September every year, when farmers harvested their produce.<sup>209</sup> There would be a lot of activity. However, the situation changed as more people resorted to business and

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<sup>203</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2/3/ Uasin Gishu District Annual Report, 1985.

<sup>204</sup> Pius Kemboi, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>205</sup> Hassan Musumba, 68 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>206</sup> Kasiba, 51 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>207</sup> John Kibiri Ritogoch, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>208</sup> Onesmus, 67 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>209</sup> Kimani, 39 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.



not agriculture as their economic pillar.<sup>210</sup> The town gradually disengaged from agriculture as more people sought to diversify their incomes.<sup>211</sup> This was mainly due to increased industrialization in Eldoret and other Kenyan towns; trade in industrial and imported commodities; banking; and expansion of educational institutions.<sup>212</sup> Mwangi, an oral informant opines that the agricultural foundation of Eldoret is being overturned by other ‘stronger’ economic forces like trade in industrial goods and establishment of universities, among others.

Eldoret was an agricultural town. However, in recent times, the town can stand on the strength of the banks and universities. That means any agricultural downturn would no longer have a significant impact on the town.<sup>213</sup>

However, it is abundantly clear that an urban centre, being a non-agricultural settlement, can only be sustained by a fertile agricultural hinterland. Thus, Eldoret’s progress cannot be understood away from the centrality of its agricultural significance. It is no surprise therefore that Eldoret became famous for its cheap food items. In that regard, the farmers’ economic input in Eldoret cannot be ignored.

### **6.8 Informal sector (*Jua kali* sector)**

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the informal sector is characterised by its ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale operations, labour-intensive and adapted technology, skills acquired outside the formal school system and unregulated but competitive markets.<sup>214</sup> Informal activities include hawking, market trade, craftsmanship, manufacturing, and repairs.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Mwangi, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>212</sup> Pius Kemboi, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>213</sup> Mwangi, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>214</sup> ILO (1972) *Employment, Incomes and Equality: A strategy for increasing productive employment in Kenya*. Geneva: International Labour Organization (ILO).

<sup>215</sup> Kinyanjui, M (2014), *Women and the Informal Economy in Urban Africa*,3

In Eldoret, the informal sector emerged to operate mainly from open space or with very little shelter and therefore had to contend with harsh climate conditions. It was therefore referred to as “*jua kali*” (hot sun). The sector was generally underrepresented in official statistics and was referred to as “parasitic occupations” by some scholars and civil servants. In spite of that, its highly prominent location ensured it a prominent place in the urban environmental and popular consciousness.

Nyakaana (1997), states that ‘Nobody walking down the streets of Eldoret municipality will fail to notice the omnipresent informal sector activities.’ These activities have been classified into two major groups namely service and production sectors. The service sector was sub-divided into three groups as follows:

- a) **Petty services:** Shoe shining, hand cart transport, washing clothes (dhobi), head porterage, photograph, and prostitution.
- b) **Retail services:** Second hand clothes, foodstuffs, non-food stuff products and newspapers.
- c) **Modern services:** Vehicle, watch, electrical repairs, hair salons.

Production activities in the informal sector were on a one-fold classification, namely, Modern activities which used industrial produced or processed raw materials. These activities include tailoring, furniture, shoe, rubber stamp, window/door frames making, welding tin smiths and key cutting.<sup>216</sup>

According to the ILO (1985), It was estimated that services obtained from the informal sector took about 75% of the poor man’s budget; thus, providing the market and economic basis for informal sector enterprises.<sup>217</sup> The sector creates ‘survival’ incomes by selling ‘survival’ goods. Mwangi, an oral informant agrees that the

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<sup>216</sup>Nyakaana, B (1997) Informal Sector Employment and its Contribution to Rural Development in *The East African Geographical Review*, December 1997.

<sup>217</sup>ILO (1985), Informal Sector in Africa: Jobs and Skills Program for Africa. ILO: Geneva.

informal sector provides ‘cheaper alternative commodities’ to the general public.<sup>218</sup> For a long time, occupations in this sector have been considered as ‘marginal occupations’ or those mechanisms of the poor to cope with the shortage of alternative work opportunities and the lack of capital necessary to buy or rent suitable premises in which to set up operations.<sup>219</sup> In fact, the very emergence of the informal sector was pegged on these twin issues. As Eldoret expanded, unemployment and the concomitant inadequacy of funds pushed many residents into the informal sector.<sup>220</sup>

In his 1991 & 1994 research conducted in Eldoret on the informal sector, Nyakaana states that ‘the informal sector activities in Eldoret municipality are concentrated in the central business district around the municipal markets, bus stands and along streets especially Ngala, Arap Moi, Kenyatta and Nandi roads. Informal activities were also to be found in the high-density areas of Langas, Kamukunji, Huruma, Munyaka, Kingongo and Mathare.’<sup>221</sup>

In the residential areas, vendors operated along the streets especially at junctions. At such junctions, temporary kiosks, open air vending, and temporary shelters for farm produce were a common site. Other hawkers moved with their trade wares within the residential areas in search of customers.<sup>222</sup> Surprisingly, informal activities especially foodstuff retailing were slowly penetrating into the medium and low-density residential areas. This was because these areas were slowly being invaded by low-income workers on account that they were being sublet unused car garages and servant quarters for residential purposes. This was evidence that informal trade had become a vital source of extra income even for medium class households. The

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<sup>218</sup> Mwangi, 64 years, oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>219</sup> Nyakaana, B (1997) Informal Sector Employment and its Contribution to Rural Development in *The East African Geographical Review*, December 1997.

<sup>220</sup> Paul Kurgat, 59 years, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Aruba Mogambi, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

informal sector in Eldoret absorbed the majority of the over 60% potential workers who failed to get formal employment.<sup>223</sup>

Due to low capital investment and ease of entry anyone who failed to get formal employment or felt dissatisfied with formal employment could easily join the informal sector especially retail trade as a self-employed entrepreneur. Most of these entrepreneurs started from scratch investing their meager savings or borrowed funds from a friend or relative.

However, those involved in the production process, specialized services and sale of secondhand clothes needed relatively high capital investment.<sup>224</sup> A few people could access loans due to lack of collateral from potential borrowers, an essential condition for obtaining a loan. Self-employment allows those involved to have access to outlets of outputs and have ownership of the means of production.

Eldoret had a high concentration of women in the informal service sector especially in retail trade where they were either self-employed or wage employed. This concentration was due to the low wages paid, low energy requirement and low capital investment. Men in the informal employment actively sponsored their wives into the informal sector especially the service sector such as hairdressing, tailoring or petty trade.<sup>225</sup> A growing number of women also participated in part time prostitution as a means of supplementing their household income.<sup>226</sup>

Working in the informal sector gives women greater control and more autonomy within their households. It also keeps them in the civilized localities in the urban

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<sup>223</sup>Nyakaan, B (1997) Informal Sector Employment and its Contribution to Rural Development in *The East African Geographical Review*, December 1997, 69

<sup>224</sup> Omolo Jacob (2012), *The Role of the State in Economic Development; Employment Challenges in Kenya*, 19

<sup>225</sup> William Aura, 48 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>226</sup> Nyakaana, B (1997), *Informal Sector Employment and its Contribution to Rural Development*, 17

centres. The security provided by women in diverse informal occupations gave the family a sense of assurance and supplemented the family budget.<sup>227</sup>

With the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS) and other ill-advised macro-economic policies, the earning capacity of employees both in the formal and informal sector dwindled. This fueled an increase in rural urban migration in Kenya and other parts of the developing world. This forced urban women to seek sources of income to look after their children and also to assist their husbands who could no longer successfully cater for their families alone. Most of these women are ‘survival entrepreneurs’ creatively adapting strategies for survival, largely an outcome of the macro and micro level economic problems facing the economy.<sup>228</sup> Kaplagan (1972) calls these women ‘micro entrepreneurs’ and ‘heralders of free society’. He maintains that it is women who are in the forefront of small business activity worldwide.<sup>229</sup>

Through their informal activities, women would then obtain a sense of self-worth and independence which might not otherwise be available to them. The sheer number of women burning with the desire for this emerging independence pushed more and more of them to Eldoret town effectively turning the town into a beehive of intense diverse informal occupations.<sup>230</sup>

Informal sector activities in Eldoret were concentrated in the central business district and the Municipal markets, bus stands and along Ngala, Kenyatta and Nandi roads. There existed a diversified mix of informal sector activities which were to be in the density residential areas of Langas, Kipakaren, Kamukunji, Huruma, Munyake, King’ong’o, and Kimumu. In the residential areas vendors operated along the streets

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<sup>227</sup> Jemeli Joy, 42 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>228</sup> Nyakaan, B (1997), 18

<sup>229</sup> Kaplagan, U. (1972), Women in the Informal Sector and Perspectives on Struggles, *Social Scientist* 15:33-44

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

especially at junctions. At such junctions, temporary kiosks, open air vending, and temporary shelters for farm produce, especially vegetables, tomatoes and onions were a common site.<sup>231</sup>

Other hawkers moved with their trade wares within the residential areas in search of customers. Surprisingly, informal activities especially food stuff retaining were slowly filtering into the medium and low-density residential areas. The explanation for this is that low-income workers, on account that they were being sublet unused car garages and servant quarters for residential purposes were slowly invading these areas. Informal trade was indeed becoming an important source of extra income even for medium class households.

Increased unemployment caused flooding in the informal (*jua kali*) sector. A lot of people who did not proceed with primary or secondary schooling rushed into the sector. This dealt the sector a heavy blow owing to ‘very high competition’.<sup>232</sup> The industry was quite small even in early 1990s but expanded greatly especially after the year 2000.<sup>233</sup> In addition, when the industries such as Raymonds, RIVATEX, EATEC and CPC collapsed,<sup>234</sup> most of the former employees fell back on the informal sector.<sup>235</sup>

## **6.9 Role of Sports in the Development of Eldoret Town in the Period after Independence**

Right from the colonial period, various sports and athletic activities formed an integral part of public life in Eldoret and the Municipal Council supported such

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<sup>231</sup> Nyakaan, B (1997) Informal Sector Employment and its Contribution to Rural Development in The East African Geographical Review, December 1997.

<sup>232</sup> Atito, 60 years, oral informant and a *jua kali* operator in Eldoret town since 1991.

<sup>233</sup> Kasiba, 51 years, an oral informant interviewed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>234</sup> Kamau, 51 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>235</sup> William Aura, 48 years, oral informant, and a former employee of Rai Ply company, interviewed on 17 July 2020.

activities both morally and materially. The economic contribution of the sports sector cannot be gainsaid. This sector produced giant international achievers within and around the vicinity of Eldoret town, some of whom invested their earnings in various endeavours in Eldoret town.

The Council provided a magnificent eight-track stadium, capable of seating 20,000 spectators. Athletic meetings, for both schools and the public were staged at this stadium. Major football league matches were also played in this stadium. Several private company football clubs organized friendly games on weekends and participated in nationwide league events, to the delight and great enthusiasm of the public of Eldoret which attached great importance to this sport.<sup>236</sup>

Hockey and volleyball were equally popular in the early 1980s, especially with the young. In addition, there were two private swimming pools at Hill School and the Sirikwa Hotel which were open to the public at certain hours at a small charge.<sup>237</sup>

Good fishing, including trout fishing, was available within reach of Eldoret. Moreover, private sailing could be done at Lessos dam, some 25km from Eldoret. One of the most popular and social indoor games which had a large following was darts. Almost all social places and clubs provided facilities for the game. Dart competitions at local and national levels were routine events. Facilities for snooker, billiards, squash, and badminton were available at some clubs, social and private places.<sup>238</sup>

At Soy Club, situated in a delightful countryside, about 25km outside Eldoret, there was a nine-hole golf course and facilities for tennis. The Sikh Union club, a social

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<sup>236</sup> MSS/125/1 Eldoret Yesterday and Today (1968)

<sup>237</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism, 1986

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

club, was famous for its international standard hockey field. Many international Olympic sides had played hockey there to the delight of the residents.<sup>239</sup>

Eldoret club, a residential club, had squash and tennis courts, billiards, and a golf course. The Kenya Golf Union would organize the Plateau Championship Golf Tournament there every year. The event would attract golfers from all over the country. In addition, the Eldoret Sports Club had a variety of sports activities including rugby, football, cricket, tennis, billiards, table tennis and darts. Dances were held regularly as the club had its own bandstand and piano.<sup>240</sup>

The entertainment industry in Eldoret was abuzz with activities in the 1980s. The hospitality industry supplemented the sector with excellent hotels offering tourist standard facilities such as Eldoret Sirikwa Hotel; New Wagon Wheel Hotel; Highlands Inn; New Lincoln Hotel; Mahindi Hotel and Eldoret Country Club. There were also several local standard hotels catering for low budget clientele. The Kihuga and the Gem cinema halls were situated centrally in town and offered regular programmes to the public daily and on the weekends.<sup>241</sup>

The entertainment and hospitality sectors were crucial to the economy of Eldoret. They provided employment opportunities and revenue generation that were critical for the improvement of the town. Moreover, they gave the town an attractive face, a factor that has a bearing on the number of people attracted to town centres.

In Eldoret town, several athletes invested in high-rise buildings and posh estates. A good number of the town's modern buildings bear names of big cities and famous

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<sup>239</sup> Kurgat Paul, oral informant interviewed on 10 July 2020.

<sup>240</sup> Why Eldoret? A Guide to Investment and Tourism (1986)

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.



races around the world that remind their owners of victory. Examples include Rotterdam Centre, Grand Pri Hotel and Johannesburg Plaza.<sup>242</sup>

In the town's central business district, there were at least 20 commercial buildings owned by athletes who either originated from the area or had migrated to it. Kipchoge Keino, one of the country's earliest winners of Olympic Gold Medal (1968) and one who also broke the 3000-steeplechase world record, owns Kip Keino Sports House in Eldoret.<sup>243</sup> Fred Kiprop, who was the 1999 Amsterdam Marathon, owns Kirem Arcade, which houses K-Rep Bank in Eldoret.<sup>244</sup>

One of the athletes-cum-investor in Eldoret was Moses Kiptanui a three-time world 3000m steeplechase champion, and a former world record holder in the race. He was the first man to run the steeplechase in under 20 minutes. He owns Komora centre and Utamaduni House in the heart of Eldoret town, and Komora estate along Nairobi Road. Kiptanui invested internationally, owning Komora estate in London.<sup>245</sup>

Moses Tanui, a two-time Boston marathon winner, was the first man in the world to run half marathon in under one hour. Mr. Tanui was also among the first to win IAAF Grand Prix races, where he derived the name of his investment, Grand Pri Hotel in Eldoret.<sup>246</sup>

David Marus, another Eldoret based athlete was a dairy farmer and described himself as one of the main suppliers of milk in the area. He cultivated vegetables for subsistence and rarely bought any. Most of his vegetables were grown on his farm. He also sold maize. His proximity to Eldoret town afforded him a convenient market for his produce. In addition, he built rental homes in Eldoret town. Laban Rotich won the

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<sup>242</sup> 1 September 1, 2015, Standard Newspaper "Real Estates attracts Kenyan Athletes."

<sup>243</sup> John Kibiri, 75 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>244</sup> Pius Kemboi, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>245</sup> Standard Newspaper, "Real Estates attracts Kenyan Athletes", 1 September 2015.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

prestigious IAAF World Cup 1500 final in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1998. This single achievement stood out as the biggest achievement in his athletics career, which is why his Eldoret building bears the name Johannesburg Plaza as shown in **Plate 17** below:



**Plate 17: Johannesburg Plaza, pictured to the left**  
(Source: *Standard Newspaper*, “Real Estates attracts Kenyan Athletes”, 1 September 2015)

Daniel Kipng’etich Komen, a holder of world indoor record also made a name for himself in 3000m races. He put up Potters House Academy in Eldoret town.<sup>247</sup> The commercial buildings, hotels and rental houses put up by these athletics played a crucial role in uplifting the economic status of Eldoret town. Apart from providing business spaces or premises, they increasingly attracted investors and customers. As such, the athletics sector became a key contributor to the evolution and development of Eldoret town. The residential estates housed the workers and provided them with

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

the necessary shelter to enable them to execute their duties appropriately.<sup>248</sup> This expansion, brought by both residential and business premises acted as a panacea to the economic woes of the town.

Some of the athletes' buildings hosted banks such as K-Rep, and a supermarket such as Tuskys Supermarket which operated from Komora Centre. The jobs created by these businesses and hotels boosted the income of the residents and improved their purchasing power. The ripple effect of one salaried employee spreads far and wide. Families are thus sustained in the town.<sup>249</sup> The continued residency of such family provides a cyclic pattern of economic survival leading to the town's expansion. Athletics, a sporting activity that put Kenya on the global map, locally strengthened the economy. Eldoret was the immediate beneficiary.

Over the years, sports emerged as a global business with evermore-crowded stadia getting attracted to watch. These spectators international provide significant contribution to economy. Spectators' spending on goods and services inside event venues included food and beverage, retail, and others; and outside venues which involved accommodation, food and beverage, retail, transport, entertainment, tours, and others. Usually, the number of spectators attending the particular event judges the success of the event. In addition, there are coaches, managers, officials as well as relatives and friends of the participants. All these contribute to the agglomeration that bulges the stadia numbers. In a nutshell the runners of Eldoret have contributed significantly to the economy of Eldoret town from their winnings in races all over the world.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Dr. Prisca Tanui, 58 years, oral informant interviewed on 20 July 2020.

<sup>249</sup> Atito, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>250</sup> KTN news 1 October 2013

## 6.10 Conclusion

Chapter six set out to discuss the factors for economic transformation of Eldoret town in the post-independence era, 1963-2003. It has explored the key economic drivers that spurred the growth of Eldoret town after 1963. The chapter particularly focused on industrial developments, housing, tourism and hospitality, transport, agriculture, and informal sector during the forty-year period.

It emphasized that the post-independence era was characterized by large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC) whose central role was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise with some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects.<sup>251</sup> It has emerged that Eldoret town experienced more rapid growth after Kenya attained independence in 1963 when a number of industries were set up in the town. They included: Raymond Company, RIVATEX, Kaptagat Sawmills, Rift Valley Bottlers, Highland Paper Mills, Rai Plywood, Kenya Cooperative Creameries, National Cereals Board, Ken Knit, East African Tanning Extract Company, Kenya Industrial Estates and Kenya Power and Lighting Company.

In addition, the hotel industry grew in tandem with the industrial progress witnessed in Eldoret town. Most of the hotels were established in Eldoret town after 1990.<sup>252</sup> Hotels such as Mahindi, Queens Garden, Marriot Hotel, Asis, Riverside, Ndupawa, Star Bucks, Maya, Poa Place, Sirikwa, among others sprung up in Eldoret alongside a host of bars, restaurants and numerous eateries that lit up the town's hospitality industry. The number of employment opportunities created, and the business openings

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Atito, 60 years, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

provided, catapulted Eldoret town to the position of being the fifth largest town in Kenya.

It has also discussed the rise and development of transport, agriculture, the informal sector, and sports. It emerged that Eldoret underwent remarkable transformation in these critical fronts which played their rightful role in the post-independence evolution of Eldoret town. The forces of modernization were directed towards developments in transport which included the Eldoret airstrip, a very useful airlink between Eldoret and other commercial centres in the country. Eldoret International Airport was started in 1995 and opened in 1997. It played a significant role in transportation of both people and goods to and from the entire North Rift region.

In the road sector, the main trunk road became a well-maintained tarmacked highway which connected Mombasa,<sup>253</sup> Nairobi (the national capital) and Nakuru.<sup>254</sup> Another road was that which linked Eldoret, Kapsabet, Kisumu and Kakamega; and another, Iten and the fluorspar Mine in Elgeyo Marakwet District. All these roads were fully tarmacked and well maintained during the 'Nyayo era' as the Moi era (1978-2002), was christened.

The next chapter provides a summary of the entire study, that is, the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret town from 1903 to 2003. It also covers the conclusion and recommendations for further study. **Plate 18** below shows Kerio Valley Development Authority, constructed in late 1980's in Eldoret town and **Plate 19** is an aerial view of Eldoret town depicting the town's modern state.

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<sup>253</sup> The national port and harbour

<sup>254</sup> The Provincial Headquarters



**Plate 18: Kerio Valley Development Authority, constructed in late 1980's.<sup>255</sup>**  
Source: <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/files/styles>



**Plate 19: Aerial view of Eldoret Town**  
Source: <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/files/styles>

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<sup>255</sup> [www.oagkenya.go.ke](http://www.oagkenya.go.ke)

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 7.1 Summary

This study set out to analyze the transformation of Eldoret settlement into an urban centre with key focus being economic factors responsible for the town's evolution. The study traced Eldoret's emergence during the colonial period within the prevailing global historical contexts. These included: World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the wind of change that characterized the post-World War II period which unavoidably culminated into Kenya's attainment of independence. It also analyzed economic drivers for change in Eldoret town in the post-colonial period up to 2003.

Chapter one dealt with the background of the study, objectives, statement of the problem, scope, and limitation of the study as well as literature review. It also explained the rationale for the theoretical constructs employed in the study while additionally explaining the applicable methodology employed in the analysis of the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret town during the colonial period. The study is hinged on the fact that economic development is the motive force behind urbanization and that the growth of cities and urbanization of the world is one of the most impressive facts of modern times.

The argument in the study harmonizes with the perspective that modernization approach views development as a process of change towards social, economic, and political conditions prevalent in the industrialized west. As Africans flocked into towns in great numbers, the modernization theorists suggested that they were entering the mainstream of history. The fact that the African was becoming an urbanite was an affirmation of modernity. This school perceived African societies as developing from simple traditional societies to complex (western-like) levels of social organization

with colonialism being the major driving force. It is upon this line of thinking that chapter two discussed the emergence of Eldoret town up to 1912.

Chapter two began by focusing on the early history of Eldoret before European arrival. It described the existence of the Sirikwa community in the Uasin Gishu Plateau and how they paved way for the Maasai and the latter's subsequent disturbance by the Nandi following a grueling battle at Kipkarren (place of spears). This was followed by a description of the arrival of pioneer Europeans (the von Breda brothers), the early European land matters, early agricultural overtures and the game and hunting activities on the plateau. Then followed the proclamation of Eldoret town in the official gazette of 14 November 1912, the erection of a police station, administrative offices, and officials' houses. The origin and meaning of the name Eldoret was also explained. Finally, the establishment of early European and Indian business activities and the establishment of Standard Bank of South Africa in 1912 concluded the chapter.

The cumulative picture that emerged in chapter two is that the evolution of Eldoret can be attributed to Sir Charles Eliot's invitation of settlers into the East African Protectorate. The settlers were induced by the news concerning much game and shooting at lions, camel, rhinoceros, and every kind of game. Cheap fertile land which supported settler farming was the prime reason for Eldoret's emergence. The ensuing trading activities and the establishment of the Standard Bank of South Africa further placed the town on a sure evolution path. This was followed by chapter three which analyzed the immediate period following Eldoret's declaration, that is, 1913 up to 1929.



Chapter three aimed at scrutinizing the economic factors responsible for Eldoret town's evolution and development between 1913 and 1929. It emerged from the chapter that the period between the First World War and the depression onset was one of controlled urbanization in Kenya, and Eldoret mirrored that control. Nonetheless, it was also a watershed in the urban transformation in Eldoret. The chapter revealed that it was during this period that the spatial organization of Eldoret town was developed and consolidated in both time and space. It further established that, important developments took place in the following sectors: transport and communication such as arrival of the motorcar and motorcycle in Eldoret town in 1913, construction of the first road in town in 1913/14, construction of Eldoret-Kapsabet road, Eldoret-Kacheliba road and Eldoret-Londiani road built after 1920. There was also the railway which was extended from Londiani to Eldoret in 1924. Other developments were the telephone and telegraph connections.

The chapter further demonstrated that there was improvement in the banking sector which included establishment of the second bank, Barclays Bank in 1920. In the agriculture sector, there was the first agricultural show in 1913 and expansion of agricultural production which was triggered by the railway arrival in 1924. In addition, piped water (from River Sosiani) was installed in 1928 by the Railways from 8 miles away. This improvement marked the beginning of improved sanitation and better health in Eldoret town.

Other developments included establishment of the Magistrate's court, prison, educational institutions, and health facilities. An aerodrome was also established in Eldoret in 1928. There were also developments in the housing sector as well as trade advancements that included butcheries, 4 Indian stores and Goan store, a motor garage. There were hotels such as The Pioneer Hotel, The Sosiani Hotel and The

Eldoret Bar and Restaurant. This laid the basis for chapter four which detailed further evolutionary developments in Eldoret from the onset of the Great Depression (1929) to the end of World War II in 1945.

In chapter four, the discussion focused on the transformation of Eldoret town within the context of two events; the Great Depression that began in October 1929 and lasted into the 1930s and the other being World War II which commenced in 1939 and ended in 1945. The chapter established that the sequence of events occasioned by the Great Depression of the 1930s necessitated state protection of settler estate production to rescue it from the brink of collapse. This period saw the expansion and bureaucratization of state management of the economy and the consolidation of settler production and marketing monopolies.

It emerged that the interventions put in place during the 1930s enhanced agricultural activities, thus enabled the settler economy to survive. For instance, two categories of boards were appointed, namely: Central Board and Local Boards which made financial advances and played an advisory role in various centres. Another measure involved creation of a Land and Agricultural Bank whose objective was to make available for farmers long term loans on first mortgage of land. In addition, European farmers responded to the low prices of crops by paying increasing attention to livestock farming whose evidence was the sustained million-mark sale of gallons of whole milk during the depression years. This was a shot in the arm for the economy of Eldoret town.

The chapter further revealed that a windfall arrived in the Kenyan Colony with the discovery of huge deposits of gold in Kakamega. This became a blessing to the banks in Eldoret town for it was the banks that bought gold from the traders, further

stimulating the town's agricultural economy, hence boosting diverse sectors in Eldoret. In addition, the chapter underscored the fact that agricultural production in the Kenyan colony underwent fundamental transformation during World War II and Eldoret being an agricultural town, was most fortunate as it experienced sustained and extended expansion of its economy.

During World War II, the institutional structures of production and market control were developed and extended down to the district level; and direct contract buying arrangements with the metropole assured producers of a market for whatever they could grow. Initially, the settlers had been informed by the metropolitan authorities that the allocation of shipping space to the colony was not justified. Soon after, however, the scale and urgency of Britain's wartime commodity needs led to fundamental change in the situation.

Moreover, during the war, a substantial number of factories were established in the major African cities to process locally produced materials that hitherto had been imported in their finished state from Europe. There is little evidence pointing to the establishment of any such factories (other than the flax industry) in Eldoret but the relatively quick access of products from Nairobi made it a lot easier for the town to receive such supplies due to the railway connection of 1924. The policy of industrialization during this period of World War II was one that improved trade in the colony in general and Eldoret's economy was not spared.

The chapter argued that there were intensified economic activities in the colony arising from the need to meet war demands, hence impacting on the transformation of Eldoret town. Heightened development was consequently witnessed in health, roads, trade, agriculture, and water sectors. Moreover, it was the increased influx of

Europeans into Kenya during the period of World War II that generated a steadily rising demand for social services and public investment in the areas mentioned. The positive developments arising from World War II further laid the basis for chapter five whose analysis covered Post World War II and the development of Eldoret town till 1963.

Chapter five focused on investigating the economic factors that influenced the development of Eldoret town between 1945 and 1963. It emerged that after the Second World War, the British government played a more active role in bolstering investment in colonial areas marking a new British 'development policy' towards colonial territories. This they did well aware that one method of speeding up economic recovery from the ravages of the Second World War was to channel government resources into colonial primary and industrial production.

It was on this premise that the British government initiated a significant amount of industrial investment after 1945. This policy saw growth of factories in the towns in the colony resulting in an increase in the number of Africans living in Eldoret town pretty much as it did across the colony. The milk and milk products' company which had its regional headquarters in Eldoret, but which had actually started production in 1932, experienced exponential expansion after World War II. EATEC also continued its focus on marketing wattle and also received large quantities of bark for processing. It installed a creosoting plant for treating wattle poles for fencing posts and other purposes; also, quantities of charcoal were produced for export to the copper mines of Uganda.

The chapter further argued that the rapid growth of the immigrant communities, especially the European population, which grew from 22,800 in 1939 to 29,700 in

1948 and more than 61,000 in 1960 generated a steadily rising demand for social services and public investment in the social sector. The demand for social services was particularly felt in the areas of water, housing, health, and education. There was also significant maintenance and bituminization of roads in the period between 1945 and 1963.

Further, it is argued in this chapter that the declaration of the emergency in 1952 negatively impacted on production for it witnessed the exodus of Kikuyus from the forest areas of Uasin Gishu, some to central province and others to serve prison sentences having been accused of oath taking offences. This exodus negatively impacted on farm labour to the extent that production of peas, beans and potatoes was adversely affected.

Despite the simmering clamor for constitutional changes in the mid-1950s, trade continued to flourish in Eldoret, and the town's development and expansion went on steadily. For instance, the milk export trade with Uganda expanded throughout the year 1954 from approximately 350,000 gallons, to approximately 800,000 gallons in 1954. Butter Fat also showed a slight increase over 1953. With Eldoret being the collection point, the volume of trade in the town expanded with this increase in milk export. There was ample evidence of new buildings under construction for shops, offices, and flats during that period.

With the Town Hall being built in 1956 and the town being elevated to Municipal Council status in January 1958, the first Mayor, J. Wolston-Beard, was elected and in November 1959, the Governor of Kenya presented the town with its Charter and Mace. The chapter further established that the year 1961 saw the exodus of both Europeans and Asians from Kenya given the political uncertainty that characterized

the march to decolonization. This was followed by the settlement of Africans in Uasin Gishu farms in 1961 for the first time since the advent of colonialism.

Finally, Eldoret did not enjoy considerable privilege of playing host to many secondary industries during the colonial period. This, among other economic dreams, was to be progressively achieved after independence partly due to the political significance that the town acquired as the headquarters of the Kalenjin nation.

Chapter six discussed the factors for economic transformation of Eldoret town in the post-independence era, 1963-2003. It explored the key economic drivers that spurred the growth of Eldoret town after 1963. The chapter particularly focused on industrial developments, housing, tourism and hospitality, transport, agriculture, informal sector, and sports during the forty-year period. It argues that the post-independence era was characterized by large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC). The latter's central role was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise even though it took some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects.<sup>1</sup>

It has emerged that Eldoret town experienced more rapid growth after Kenya attained independence in 1963 when several industries were set up in the town. They included: Raymond Company, RIVATEX, Kaptagat Sawmills, Rift Valley Bottlers, Highland Paper Mills, Rai Plywood, Kenya Cooperative Creameries, National Cereals Board, Ken Knit, East African Tanning Extract Company, Kenya Industrial Estates and Kenya Power and Lighting Company.

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<sup>1</sup> KNA/DC/UG/1/2Uasin Gishu District Annual Report 1956,26

In addition, the hotel industry grew in tandem with the industrial progress witnessed in Eldoret town. Most of the hotels were established in Eldoret town after 1990.<sup>2</sup> Hotels such as Mahindi, Queens Garden, Marriot Hotel, Asis, Riverside, Ndupawa, Star Bucks, Maya, Poa Place, Sirikwa, among others sprung up in Eldoret alongside a host of bars, restaurants and numerous eateries that lit up the town's hospitality industry. The number of employment opportunities created, and the business openings provided, catapulted Eldoret town to the position of being the fifth largest town in Kenya.

Moreover, Eldoret underwent remarkable transformation in transport, informal sector and sports which played their rightful role in the post-independence evolution of Eldoret town. One key development in the transport sector was the Eldoret International Airport which was started in 1995 and opened in 1997. It played a significant role in transportation of both people and goods to and from the entire North Rift region.

In the road sector, the main trunk road became a well-maintained tarmacked highway which connected Mombasa,<sup>3</sup> Nairobi (the national capital) and Nakuru.<sup>4</sup> Another road was that which linked Eldoret, Kapsabet, Kisumu and Kakamega; and another, Iten and the fluorspar Mine in Elgeyo Marakwet District. All these roads were fully tarmacked and well maintained during the 'Nyayo era' (1978-2002).

## **7.2 Conclusion**

This study set out to answer three questions regarding the role of economic factors in the evolution and development of Eldoret town. In relation to the first question which sought to examine the role of settler agriculture, hunting activities and early colonial

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<sup>2</sup> Atito, oral informant interviewed on 17 July 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The national port and harbour

<sup>4</sup> The Provincial Headquarters

trade efforts in the emergence of Eldoret town, the findings of this study established that the evolution of Eldoret can be attributed to Sir Charles Eliot's invitation of settlers into the East African Protectorate. The settlers were induced by the news concerning much game and shooting at lions, camel, rhinoceros, and every kind of game. The study established that cheap fertile land which supported settler farming was the prime reason for Eldoret's emergence. The ensuing trading activities and the establishment of the Standard Bank of South Africa further placed the town on a sure evolution path.

In relation to the second question, the study sought to analyze the role of infrastructural developments, banking, education, and trade in the economic transformation of Eldoret town. This question was critical to the study as it addressed the initial developments that occurred at the very foundation of Eldoret town. Regarding this question, the study demonstrated that it was during this period that the spatial organization of Eldoret town was developed and consolidated in both time and space. Thereafter, important developments took place in the following sectors: transport and communication i.e., arrival of the motorcar and motorcycle in 1913, construction of the first road in town in 1913/14; construction of Eldoret-Kapsabet road, Eldoret-Kacheliba road and Eldoret-Londiani road built after 1920. There was also the railway which was extended from Londiani in 1924. Other developments were the telephone and telegraph connections. In addition, there was establishment of Barclays Bank in 1920 and expansion of agricultural production which was triggered by the railway arrival in 1924. In addition, piped water (from River Sosiani) was installed in 1928 by the Railways from 8 miles away.

The third question focused on investigating the role of agriculture, industrialization, sports, housing, health, and water services in the evolution of Eldoret town. The study



found out that the sequence of events occasioned by the Great Depression of the 1930s necessitated state protection of settler estate production to rescue it from the brink of collapse. This period saw the expansion and bureaucratization of state management of the economy and the consolidation of settler production and marketing monopolies. It emerged that the interventions put in place during the 1930s enhanced agricultural activities, thus enabled the settler economy to survive. The chapter also revealed that a windfall arrived in the Kenyan Colony with the discovery of huge deposits of gold in Kakamega. This became a blessing to the banks in Eldoret town for it was the banks that bought gold from the traders, further stimulating the town's agricultural economy, thereby boosting diverse sectors in Eldoret.

In addition, the chapter underscored the fact that agricultural production in the Kenyan colony underwent fundamental transformation during World War II. Eldoret being an agricultural town was most fortunate as it experienced sustained and extended expansion of its economy. During World War II, the institutional structures of production and market control were developed and extended down to the district level; and direct contract buying arrangements with the metropole assured producers of a market for whatever they could grow.

The study argued that a substantial number of factories were established in the major African cities to process locally produced materials that hitherto had been imported in their finished state from Europe. However, the study found little evidence pointing to the establishment of any such factories (other than the flax industry) in Eldoret but the relatively quick access of products from Nairobi made it a lot easier for the town to receive such supplies given the railway connection of 1924. Existing industries were however expanded in Eldoret.

It emerged that after the Second World War, the British government played a more active role in bolstering investment in colonial areas marking a new British 'development policy' towards colonial territories after 1945. This they did well aware that one method of speeding up economic recovery from the ravages of the Second World War was to channel government resources into colonial primary and industrial production.

It was on this premise that the British government initiated a significant amount of industrial investment after 1945. This policy saw growth of factories in the towns in the colony resulting in an increase in the number of Africans living in Eldoret town pretty much as it did across the colony. The milk and milk products' company which had its regional headquarters in Eldoret, but had actually started production in 1932, experienced exponential expansion after World War II. EATEC also continued its focus on marketing wattle and also received large quantities of bark for processing. With regard to sports, the study established that the embers of athletics were lit during the 1930 athletics event. It was the launching pad of what would, in the coming years, contribute remarkably to the economic transformation of Eldoret town. The whole wide world would later feel the might of the athletics champions of Eldoret.

It also emerged that Eldoret experienced more rapid growth after Kenya attained independence in 1963 when several industries were set up in the town. They included: Raymond Company, RIVATEX, Kaptagat Sawmills, Rift Valley Bottlers, Highland Paper Mills, Rai Plywood, Kenya Cooperative Creameries, National Cereals Board, Ken Knit, East African Tanning Extract Company, Kenya Industrial Estates and Kenya Power Lighting Company. Several hotels also sprung up in Eldoret in the post-independence period such as Mahindi, Queens Garden, Marriot Hotel, Asis, Riverside, Ndupawa, Star Bucks, Maya, Poa Place, Sirikwa, alongside a host of bars,

restaurants, and numerous eateries. They created a number of employment opportunities and business openings that revolutionized Eldoret's economic life.

There were also developments in housing, tourism and hospitality, transport, agriculture, informal sector, and sports during the forty-year period. The post-independence era was characterized by large-scale extension of state credit institutions such as the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC). The latter's central role was the financing of local trading and industrial enterprise even though it took some equity shares in large foreign industrial projects. All these played pivotal roles in the post-independence evolution and development of Eldoret town.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

In view of the findings of the study, it can therefore be concluded that economic factors play an indisputably critical role in the establishment, evolution, and development of an urban centre. As such, the study proposes the following recommendations for improving the economic fortunes of Eldoret town:

1. Enhance agricultural productivity in the hinterland of Eldoret town to uphold the town's agri-business economy.
2. Expand industrial enterprises in the town with a view to provide a boost to the economic capacity of the town dwellers.
3. Promote the social sector such as education, hospitality, and sports so as to further improve Eldoret's economic development.

### **7.4 Suggestion for Further Study**

Further research should be conducted to address those aspects which were left out in this study due to limitation erected by scope of the specific objectives of this study.

The researcher established in the course of this study that there is need to further explore other issues pertinent to the historical economic development of Eldoret town.

1. Further research needs to be carried out on the contribution of political factors to the development of Eldoret town.
2. Secondly, the social sector should also require deeper scrutiny particularly the contribution of educational institutions and religious institutions.
3. Finally, the extent to which the Kakamega gold mining contributed to the development of Eldoret town also should elicit further research.

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	<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
	SAMWEL OTIENO	37	29/06/2020
	CATHERINE OCHIENG	32	1/7/2020
	DR KURGAT PAUL	59	10/7/2020
	DR PRISCA TANUI	53	22/7/2020
	KIMANI	39	16/7/2020
	ONESMUS	67	16/7/2020
	MWANGI	64	16/7/2020
	HASSAN MUSUMBA	68	16/7/2020
	KASIBA	51	16/7/2020
	JOHN KIBIRI RITOGOCH	75	17/7/2020
	KAMAU	51	17/7/2020
	ATITO	60	17/7/2020
	OUMA FRANCIS	55	17/7/2020
	KEMELI JOY	42	17/7/2020
	WILLIAM AURA	48	17/7/2020
	SULEIMAN NDUMULI	55	17/7/2020
	JOHN SAMBU	64	18/7/2020
	BENARD LUGALIA	46	18/7/2020
	SAIDI	60	18/7/2020
	ISAIAH KANDIE	67	18/7/2020
	ARUBA MUGAMBI	60	18/7/2020
	NELSON BUSES	67	18/7/2020
	MUSABI JAMES	51	18/7/2020
	PIUS KEMBOI	58	22/7/2020
	LEAH JEPCHUMBA	58	22/7/2020
	BARABARA TANUI	88	17/8/2020
	JOSEPH RONO	78	5/9/2020
	SARAH BARNO	77	5/9/2020
	DAVID KIPKURGAT METTO	82	14/9/2020
	SAMUEL KIPKETER TARRUS	78	15/9/2020

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Sample Questions

#### ORAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES ON THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELDORET TOWN FROM 1903 TO 1963

##### General Information

Name----- Gender: .....

Age..... Date.....

My name is Johnson Oyugi Odera. I am a Doctor of Philosophy (History) student from Moi University. I am conducting research on “The Role of Economic Factors in the Evolution and Development of Eldoret Town from 1903 to 2003”. Your assistance in answering my questions will be highly appreciated.

1. What is your name and how old are you?
2. For how long have you lived in Eldoret?
3. What do you think is the meaning of Eldoret?
4. What was the original name of the place now called Eldoret?
5. Who were the original inhabitants of Eldoret before the white men arrived?
6. What economic activities did those inhabitants mentioned above engage in?
7. How did the place now called Eldoret look like before European arrival? Was it inhabited or deserted?
8. Did you experience European rule here in Eldoret? If yes, how would you describe it?
9. What could have led to European coming to Eldoret?
10. What noticeable economic changes did the Europeans bring in Eldoret?
11. Where did Europeans in Eldoret stay? Where did the local people and other races stay?
12. How did settler agriculture contribute to the growth of Eldoret town?
13. What main crops did the Europeans cultivate, why and how?
14. What impact did European hunting activities have on the economy of Eldoret town?

15. What was the contribution of the European trading activities to the expansion of Eldoret?
16. What infrastructural changes were made in Eldoret by the Europeans?
17. According to you, to what extent have infrastructural developments spurred the growth of Eldoret town?
18. Will you mention any colonial educational institutions that you know?
19. How did education contribute to the economic expansion of Eldoret town?
20. What are some of the colonial health institutions that you know in Eldoret?
21. Were they racial or multiracial in their operation? Explain.
22. How do you think the health sector transformed the economy of Eldoret during colonial times?
23. In your view, did colonial industrialization contribute to the transformation of Eldoret? Explain.
24. At what point did Africans begin flocking to Eldoret town and who were those Africans?
25. What could be the historical reason for Nandi avoidance of towns according to you?
26. Where did the Africans who tramped to Eldoret stay and what did they do?
27. At what point did Africans take control of the leadership of Eldoret town?
28. What were the main trading commodities in Eldoret town from colonial times according to you?
29. In what ways has trade impacted on the economy of Eldoret town over time?
30. Do you know any economic contributions of athletics, or sports in general, to the development of Eldoret town?
- 31.** Is the airport of any economic benefit to Eldoret town? Explain.



## Appendix B: Research Authorization Letters



### MOI UNIVERSITY

(ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED INSTITUTION)

THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Eldoret

KENYA

29<sup>th</sup> October 2020

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
 NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
 P.O. BOX 30623-00100  
 NAIROBI

**REF: OYUGI JOHNSON ODERA-SASS/DPHIL/HIS/03/15**

This is to confirm that the above named is a student in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of History, Political Science and Public Administration pursuing Doctor of Philosophy in History. He has successfully completed his coursework and defended his thesis proposal titled: -“-“**The Role of Economic Factors in the Evolution and Development of Eldoret Town from 1903 to 2013**”. He is now allowed to collect research permit in order to collect data in the field.

Any assistance given to him will be highly appreciated.

**Prof. Ken Oluoch, PhD**

**Chairman, Department of History Political Science and Public Administration**



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Ref No: 885863

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr. JOHNSON ODEAR OYUGI of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Uasin-Gishu on the topic: THE ROLE ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELDORET TOWN FROM 1903 TO 2013 for the period ending : 06/November/2021.

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