

Assessment of the socio-political and economic impact of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in the Eastern region from 1915 to 2022

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the impact of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in the Eastern Region from 1915 to 2022. PCEA was introduced in the Eastern Region by the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) in 1915. The Eastern Region was the third mission area after Kikuyu and Tumutumu. Their mission strategy was holistic in nature, combining evangelism, education, medical and industrial work. Since its inception, PCEA has been involved in transforming the socio-political and economic lives of people in the Eastern Region. There is a paucity of scholarly work on the impact of other missionaries like the Methodists, the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans in Meru, but that of PCEA is conspicuously missing. Thus, there is a need for this kind of study. Data was collected by descriptive survey research design. Data was collected and analysed from 376 church members, 53 church ministers and 9 presbytery moderators. The study established that PCEA has had both negative and positive impacts on the transformation of the people in the Eastern Region. The study recommends that PCEA should improve on the management and supervision of its institutions to ensure they serve the purpose for which they were established.

Key terms: Assessment, economic, impact, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, socio-political.

INTRODUCTION

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) originated from the Global Scottish Presbyterian Church and was introduced to Africa by the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM). The Presbyterian Church in Africa began in North Africa in the eighteenth century at Alexandria. PCEA came to Kenya as a private venture pioneered by directors of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) who were running business in Kenya (Muita, 2003). They formed a committee in Scotland called the East African Scottish Mission. A missionary team was then recruited comprising Thomas Watson, John Grieg, John Linton and Cornelius Rahman, who arrived at Mombasa in 1891 (Macpherson, 1970). They established a temporal mission station at Kibwezi with the help of Chief Kilungu, who assisted them get a piece of land. However, the site proved unsuitable because it was infested with mosquitoes. Many of the missionaries died of malaria. The mission station was moved to Baraniki in 1898, near Dagoretti. In 1899, the mission station was transferred to Thogoto, which was later named Kikuyu after the people it was serving. In Thogoto, the mission constituted itself as the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM). The mission adopted a holistic approach, combining evangelisation, education, health, and industrial work (Wilkinson, 1994).

In 1908, the CSM extended the mission work to Tumutumu, where they were received and assisted by Chief Rukunga who helped them to acquire land on which the mission was built. The mission station was started by an African Petro Mugo, who was sent from Kikuyu Mission School (Muita, 2003). He established a school which also served as a worship centre. By 1919, several congregations had been established at Nyeri, Mahiga, Magutu and Mihuti. Medical work was started in 1911 by Dr. Philip Homer.

By 1907, the Southern part of Meru was not occupied by any Christian mission. The CSM was granted permission to occupy the area in 1915 (Wilkinson, 1994). Three African couples who included Daudi Makumi and his wife Priscilla, Samson Maingi and Naomi Njeri and Wilson Waweru and Rebecca, were sent from Kikuyu and Tumutumu mission station to start the work in the Eastern Region (Muita, 2003). They were later joined by Dr. Clive Irvine in 1922. They

blended the work of evangelisation with education, health care and industrial work. They followed the same pattern used in Kikuyu and Tumutumu, where they introduced Christianity, Western education, and medical and industrial work. Chogoria became the central station from where the CSM spread to Chuka, Mwimbi, Tharaka, Imenti and upper Meru within Tharaka Nithi and Meru counties. PCEA has been in the Eastern Region for over a century now. However, its impact has not been given any scholarly attention. This gave impetus to carry out the current study to assess the impact of PCEA on socio-political and economic transformation in the Eastern Region from 1915 to 2022.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious institutions in a religious community have a function of stimulating and guiding the socio-political and economic transformation of their societies. (Miszta, 2013). From the beginning, PCEA took an integrated approach. Their activities were directed towards evangelism, education, and provision of medical services, as well as income-generating projects and employment opportunities (PCEA, 2011.) Barret, Mambo, Laughlin & Malcolm (1973) aver that in the early years, Christianity in Kenya was preached as a way to both heaven and to a better life on earth. Wilkinson (1994) posits that the main objective of the missionaries was to civilise the Africans through the introduction of education and modern health care. The missionaries wanted to spread the word in the quickest and most effective, convincing, and permanent way and saw education as the easiest way of doing it. The Church of Scotland Mission adopted a holistic approach. They built schools, financed them, recruited and trained teachers and integrated new teaching approaches. PCEA played a major role in the provision of both basic and tertiary education. PCEA sponsors 700 schools, primary and secondary, several colleges and the Presbyterian University of East Africa.

PCEA has been providing health care from the time it established hospitals in Kikuyu in 1908, Tumutumu in 1911 and Chogoria in 1922. According to Kahiga (2005), PCEA was the first to establish a centre to provide health care services to the community. Barasa (2020) opined that PCEA established nursing schools in order to provide qualified personnel to work in hospitals and dispensaries. Tumutumu Hospital established the

school of nursing in 1929, and in 1951, Clive Irvine College of Nursing was started. PCEA collaborates with other organisations under the Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) to promote the health of their adherents.

Karimi (2014) asserts that religious institutions have been instrumental in the political changes in Kenya. Church political activities are actions that are inspired by the church with the view of improving the government's ability to control state affairs and promote peace. According to Bradford et al. (2015), the Church has two goals: providing civic education and being the conscience of the state. PCEA provides civic education and encourages members to exercise their democratic rights. During the sixteenth General Assembly, the PCEA noted an increase in the incidence of violence and insecurity in Kenya. In its message to the congregations after the sixteenth General Assembly, the Church noted that the use of force in working places by persons in authority and within families was increasing; the church demanded that this should stop. The Church also noted that the cry of insecurity was still high in the country. At this point, the church called for repentance by all those who caused insecurity and denied justice to others in the country (PCEA GA, 2000). According to Oginde, Odede, & Kandu (2021), the Church has a God-given mandate to provide the moral compass from which the nation is led. PCEA has promoted political participation in various ways, including inculcating civil skills, recruiting members into politics, holding political meetings, and clarifying political expectations.

The Church indirectly influences economic culture through the transfer of religious value. Adesina (2013) posits that PCEA has been involved in economic activities such as publishing, broadcasting, entertainment and hospitality industries. Religious bodies have also ventured into banking, insurance and other sectors of the Kenyan economy. PCEA has established microfinance to help open up opportunities that lead to social economic independence. The Church empowers society by providing relevant education through workshops, seminars and conferences on socio-economic challenges and how to address them. From the onset, PCEA started encouraging its members to engage in economic activities at both the individual and

community levels. With the adoption of the Jitegemea philosophy, the church encouraged members to be economically independent; hence, they had to work hard in order to support the church and develop themselves individually (Karithi, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey is a form of data collection that involves interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) posit that a descriptive survey research design is viable when analysing social issues that exist in communities. Questionnaires, oral interviews and document reviews were used to collect the data. The target population was 60,862 members of PCEA in the Eastern Region. The sample size for this study was 438, which included nine presbytery moderators, 53 church ministers and 376 church members. The presbytery moderators were purposively sampled; church ministers were identified through stratified sampling, while the church members were randomly sampled. The study was carried out in the Eastern Region, which covers Tharaka Nithi and Meru counties. The design was used to assess the impact of PCEA on the social, economic and political transformation in the Eastern Region from 1915 to 2022.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact on Education

Before the coming of the CSM to the Eastern Region, the Meru people had their own form of education, which was mainly informal. Traditional Meru education was mainly aimed at molding the members to fit into the society and be able to take up their respective roles (Mwiandi, 1993). Meru traditional education was aimed at shaping the character of the child by emphasising moral values like sensibility, ethics and obedience. This was done during circumcision (Gitari, 2006). It was a lifelong process from birth and ended at death. It was aimed at inculcating a sense of belonging and mold the character of the children. It was indigenous and developed naturally out of the culture of the Meru people. Oral methods which included myths, legends, folktales, proverbs and folksongs were the means of passing on the Meru education. Grandparents, mothers, fathers, peer groups and the elders were the main instructors

(Imwara, O I, 2022). A few individuals were taught special skills like blacksmiths, medicine, and prophesying, which were important for the development of society. These were impacted through apprenticeship. Ceremonies were also a learning experience, giving children an opportunity to learn about social organisations, family and clan members, religion, customs and taboos (Bernard, 1989).

The CSM attached a lot of importance to education because they felt that it was the means through which Christianity could easily spread (Nkoroi, OI, 2024). From the onset Presbyterians (CSM) were so concerned with the development of education. Christianity was found in a book, hence the need to learn how to read and write. The missionaries used education as a strategy to reach out to the Africans in the process of evangelisation; hence, it was introduced alongside Christianity. The first schools also served as centres of worship. The first missionaries in the Eastern Region were teacher evangelists from Kikuyu and Tumutumu. They laid the foundation for education in the Eastern Region. The first school was started in Mugui in 1915, but the Chuka people had no interest in education. Only the social misfits (Imaramari), orphans and the poor went to school (Mutegi, OI,2023). Therefore, the school was

transferred to Mweria in lower Mwimbi at a place called Kanyue. In 1919, the attitude changed as there was an increase in the number of evangelists who moved from one place to another, encouraging parents to enroll their children in school. At the same time, they had witnessed the literate getting employment in the mission centers and by the government (Kabii, OI, 2023).

In 1923, Dr. Irvine started Chogoria boys mission school called “Mambere” and 35 pupils were enrolled. Other schools were started at Kiereni, Mukuuni, Kajiuduthi, Ngeru, Tungu, Ithimbari, Kanyakine, Nkumbo, Kambandi, Gituntu, Nkuthika, Njuri and Gakuuni. The kind of education taught was mainly religious education, mathematics, agriculture and practical skills like carpentry, masonry, and brick making. The main language of instruction was Kikuyu since most of the teachers were trained at Kikuyu and Tumutumu. The system of education started at the elementary level before joining primary school, where one sat for the Common Entrance Examination in order to qualify to join junior secondary and then senior secondary. More schools were established, and by 1939, there were 30 schools across the Eastern Region. Today, PCEA has 168 primary schools, 80 secondary schools, and 9 tertiary institutions, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Distribution of Educational Institutions under the Sponsorship of PCEA in the Eastern Region

Presbytery	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Chogoria West	12	7	1
Chogoria Central	19	9	-
Chogoria South	14	9	1
Chogoria North	22	13	1
Imenti South	18	7	1
Imenti North	14	5	-
Imenti Central	18	6	-
Magumoni	19	14	2
Chuka	32	10	3
Total	168	80	9

Source: Church Records, 2022

Mutegi (2023) said that PCEA played a major role in the provision of education in the Eastern Region. PCEA transformed the education system through the establishment of schools in various parts. This provided learning opportunities to many, including Bernard Mate, who became the first man from Chuka

Mwimbi to join Alliance High School and later joined Makerere College in Uganda. He also attained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in the United Kingdom and later served in the National Legislative Council. PCEA established Ikuu Intermediate School in 1965, and the beneficiaries included Daniel Kagondou, who qualified

to become a medical doctor; Petro M' Nkiria, who was a chief; Mwalimo Nkune and Kamwithi Munyi, who was a minister for Cooperatives during the Moi era. The others included Jaspher Mwathani Mbaka, who was a magistrate; Jaspher Mutegi, who was a chief; Jotham Njeru, an educationist; Gakundi Njoka; Elias Njoka, former Director of City Education and Jevero Muchunku (Kathuni, OI, 2024).

The Meru system of education provided training in special skills like blacksmiths. This was improved by Dr. Irvine who started industrial work and trained the Africans in vocational skills such as masonry, carpentry, agriculture and brickmaking with the help of the vocational artisans who had been trained at Kikuyu and Tumutumu. Today, PCEA continues to provide vocational training in the Polytechnics established within the Presbyteries, which include Gaitu, Mungoni and Ciamakie (Kathuni, OI, 2024).

Through the establishment of educational institutions, PCEA contributed to the social transformation of the people of the Eastern Region. The pupils were taught social skills which helped in socialising the Africans. Dr. Irvine was keen on teaching them mannerisms such as saying thank you, knocking on the door, dressing well and table manners, hence helping them to fit in institutions of higher learning (Nkoroi, OI, 2024). The study also established that PCEA has established advanced schools and colleges, which have boosted capacity building and human resources in the region and in Kenya. This has enabled most of their products to actively participate in government and social activities. PCEA started Rubate Teachers' College in Magumoni Presbytery in 1993 for the Primary Teacher1 certificate. Graduates from this college helped reduce the teacher shortage in the country. In the year 2007, Rubate introduced a Diploma in Education, producing graduates who worked in public secondary schools. Rubate has since upgraded, and in the year 2012, a branch of the Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA) was inaugurated, offering a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor of Theology. Many Primary one teachers have upgraded to Degree certificates in the institution (Kirimi, OI, 2023, Kamau, OI, 2024, Nkoroi, OI, 2024). The CSM also contributed in the training of medical staff through the establishment of Clive Irvine School of Nursing. Dr. Irvine started by training the hospital staff informally. Today, Clive

Irvine's College of Nursing offers a Diploma in Community Nursing. The graduates serve in both public and private hospitals in the country.

PCEA acknowledges that education is one of the most influential aspects of socialisation in human life (PCEA, 2018). Basic education is undertaken in the years before the age of 25. The world views a person adopts in these years are fundamental for the rest of their life. Hence, the only way the church can meaningfully contribute to this worldview is by being actively involved in education. To ensure that PCEA remains relevant in the provision of quality education, the Church decided to deploy some of its staff to become Religious Educational Advisers (RES) to help oversee education institutions in the Region. The work of the RES was helping the individual presbyteries and parishes within the region to be more actively involved with the schools within their jurisdiction. The advisers were to represent the Church in the District Education Boards (DEB).

The Church has sponsored 168 primaries and 80 secondary schools, including National schools such as the Chogoria Girls and Ikuu Boys. Other major schools include Chogoria Boys in 1962, Kanyakine Boys in 1968, Ikuu Girls started in 1969, Kiriani Boys in 1969, Thigaa High School in 1970, Yururu Girls and Mukuuni Boys started in 1969 (Nkoroi, OI, 2024). The missionaries blended Christian values with education; hence, the graduates were persons of integrity and strong morals who provided better leadership based on Christian values. Thus, the CSM produced the first leaders in the society.

The Church has been keen on strengthening the principal's forum in the PCEA-sponsored schools and have been actively involved in the ongoing development of a policy of chaplaincy in schools. This is one of the urgent needs of the church as it will help mold today's youth to be morally upright and leaders of integrity (PCEA, 2019). The Church continues to ensure that learners in PCEA-sponsored schools receive life skills, including spiritual nourishment, which has been core in ensuring the holistic development of learners (Kirimi O I, 2023).

During the colonial era, most Africans could not afford to take their children to the schools that had been

established to host the children of the whites who worked for the colonial government, as they were expensive. Gifted children were able to attain education easily in the Mission Schools and get employment (Wilkinson, 1994). PCEA, in partnership with Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in the USA, allocates bursaries to bright and needy students in secondary schools, colleges and Universities in the parishes within Magumoni Presbytery. PCEA has enabled many to acquire education as they charge lower fees, offer scholarships and have enhanced their curriculum to include moral and social issues, preparing better citizens (Nkoroi, OI, 2024).

PCEA facilitated in the establishment of Chuka University. The Church donated the land on which the University is built. The land initially held Ndagani Youth Polytechnic, which had been established by PCEA and the Ndagani Rescue and Street Children's Centre. The Church surrendered the land, paving way for the development of university education in the area. This has boosted the standards of education in the Eastern Region as it opened opportunities to many to acquire higher education and employment in different sectors of the economy (Kathuni, OI, 2024, Gitari, OI, 2024, Nkoroi, OI, 2024).

The study, however, observed that the introduction of education by the Church of Scotland Missionary Society had some negative impact. Those who embraced the white man's education had to do away with some of the Meru culture. The Chuka people felt that the new system of education interfered with the traditional education given to the men. Schooling system kept the boys away in the schools thus hindering cultural education (Mutegi, OI, 2023). One pupil by the name of Joel M' Ikingi was withdrawn from school to go and take care of his father's goats. Others like Daniel Kagondu and Petro Njeru had to withstand a lot of beatings and threats from their parents for choosing to go to school instead of helping the parents work on the shambas.

The introduction of modern education by the CSM in the Eastern Region led to the introduction of forced labour. The CSM in Kenya recognised and utilised the institution of forced labour. Scholars and teachers provided all the labour needed by the missionaries in the mission and the out schools (Mwiandi, 1993). All the garden work, fetching firewood, masonry and

carpentry work was done by the pupils. The women cooked, washed clothes, cleaned the hospital and ground grains for porridge for the patients. This was done during school hours, disrupting learning. Forced labour was alien to the Meru people and disadvantaged those who went to school because they had to leave their homes unattended, yet the education offered in school did not help them to get white-collar jobs. The chiefs took advantage of this and would pull out some students from the schools to provide the labour needed for public works (Kabii, OI, 2023). The missionary in Chogoria failed to protect the people from forced labour despite the fact that he had the ability to do so. This discouraged some locals from joining schools.

Missionary education disadvantaged the Meru people in comparison to their counterparts in Nyeri and Kikuyu. The CSM in Meru concentrated on imparting manual skills like agricultural skills with little reading and writing. They were not taught English, especially in the out schools, and even where it was taught in Chogoria Mission School by Mrs. Irvine, it was only to a few selected pupils. The number of those literate in English was kept low. Thus, the people from Meru could not get employed as teachers and clerks like their counterparts in Kikuyu and Nyeri (Mutegi, 2023).

For one to qualify to be a teacher with the CSM, one was expected to adhere to the Native Church laws. These laws were meant to govern the Africans and made some of the African cultural practices look primitive and anti-Christian. The Church laws became a tool for oppressing the Africans and could only be executed by the Scottish missionaries. The Africans found these laws too demanding on their culture. They worked against the African culture, which held the Africans together. The Christian was expected to uproot themselves from his or her culture, shatter his traditions and trample on his institutions so that he could be acceptable in the church, school and in the hospital. This led to the creation of social segregation among the once cohesive Meru people. Those who embraced the white man's education were alienated from their families, and this marked the onset of individualism among the Meru people, hence the disintegration of the traditional Meru community (Kabii, OI, 2023).

The traditional Meru education was meant to inculcate a sense of belonging to all members of the society. The missionary education alienated one from their families. The missionaries established boarding schools in order to alienate the students from their traditional cultural setting. To safeguard the girls from harassment by the community, a girls' boarding school was established at Chogoria in 1964 (Kabii, OI, 2023). This also contributed to the disintegration of the African family system, where family members lived in the same compound and practiced mutual sharing of resources.

The people living in the Eastern Region speak different dialects of Kimeru. The Chuka subtribe speaks "Gichuka", the Muthambi subtribe speaks "Kimuthambi", while those in the northern part of Meru speak "Kiiminti". The introduction of Western education affected the development of these languages in the Eastern Region. This was because Kikuyu was the medium of instruction in the CSM schools as the first teachers were trained at Kikuyu and Tumutumu while others were of Kikuyu origin. Most of the pupils learnt how to read and write the Kikuyu language instead of their mother tongue. This greatly affected the development of the local languages in the Meru region. This was made even worse due to the fact that even the Sunday services were conducted in Kikuyu. The Kikuyu hymn book and Bible were used in worship. This has been passed on from generation to generation, and up to date, many of the graduates of the CSM schools cannot read and understand their mother tongue (Nkoroi, OI, 2024, Kathuni, OI, 2024, Imwara, OI, 2022).

After independence, the management of the schools was taken over by the government, and the church was delegated the role of the sponsor. The churches were expected to come up with programs meant to instill morals and help the learners to grow spiritually. The Roman Catholic Church, which is one of the major partners in providing education, took up the challenge. They developed a school outreach program through catechism. This program targets students in both public and private institutions with the aim of changing their behaviour and molding their character as they instill morals in them (Mbaabu, 2022). The students are helped to grow spiritually as the priests visit them regularly to conduct mass and Holy

Communion. Most Catholic-sponsored schools are best in terms of discipline and academics. This kind of organisation is lacking in the PCEA-sponsored schools and often the students' spiritual and social welfare is not given proper attention. The consequence is low morals and poor spiritual growth. Discipline grows out of discipleship, and a religious institution should be an all-round model for others to emulate. This is lacking in the PCEA-sponsored institutions. The Church needs to develop strategies that will encourage teamwork between the teachers and the sponsor to create a stable environment for effective learning to take place.

The study concludes that the PCEA played a major role in the development of education in the Eastern Region. Education has both positive and negative effects, as discussed above. The mission education was only concerned with the needs of Scotland and not with the culture and the ecology of the local people. This resulted in the growth of individualism, overpopulation, nepotism, corruption, greed and exploitation of the community (Mbaabu, 1987) however the development of education led to opening of the Eastern region for social economic development.

The Impact of PCEA on Health Care in the Eastern Region from 1915 to 2022

According to Mbae (OI, 2024), before the coming of the missionaries, the people of Meru had medicine men who claimed to have the ability to cure all kinds of ailments. The healers and medicine men were always invited to offer services to patients at their homes. They were paid in kind by being given goats or food. They offered herbal medicine. The diviners were consulted to explain the cause of the sickness and give advice on the nature of treatment needed.

Health care was one of the major pillars of the Church of Scotland Mission (PCEA). Medical work started in 1923 after the arrival of Dr. Irvine (Murigu, 2022). The work started with the construction of a dispensary (Kabii, 2023). With the help of Samson Maingi, Suleiman Nanju and Paulo Wahoro, who had trained as hospital assistants from Tumutumu and Kikuyu, Dr. Irvine started offering medical services, improving the health status of the locals. By 1925, the medical services at the Mission Hospital had really increased.

Patients came from as far as Ukambani, Embu and Meru North. The establishment of medical facilities made it easy to manage sicknesses without involving traditional rituals, which were sometimes expensive. The greatest impact of the CSM on health care was on the treatment of communicable diseases. The major ones were leprosy, yaws, tuberculosis, tick-borne fever and malaria. Among the Meru, leprosy was a common disease, but the Mwimbi people did not know what this disease was despite its disabling features. Dr. Irvine helped the locals to understand the disease. To manage the spread, he built a leprosarium at Gatheru down the Kamara valley, where he isolated the lepers as he treated them (Mbaabu, OI, 2024). By 1927, the hospital reported that they had treated 774 patients of yaws and 491 of malaria. Dr. Janet Welch, who was assisting Dr. Irvine reported that they had brought these diseases under control. According to Kabii (2023), the medical staff at Chogoria greatly contributed to wiping out yaws and leprosy in the Chuka-Mwimbi area. This greatly improved the health status of the locals.

Dr. Irvine also played a major role in promoting hygiene. In 1931, the medical doctor noted that the residents were infested with jiggers. To fight the menace, the missionaries came up with a restriction that barred anybody with jiggers from attending church service. Mrs. Irvine was instrumental in teaching the women how to maintain personal cleanliness, maintain their homes clean and prepare food in a hygienic way. According to Mbae (OI, 2024), the wives of the first African evangelists were experts in nutrition and personal hygiene. Kathuni (OI, 2024) affirmed that Chogoria Hospital was the first to train and introduce community and public health officers who went from house to house, teaching the community about the need to observe cleanliness, such as sweeping the homesteads. They ensured that every home had a latrine, which was new to the people. Initially they helped themselves in the bushes which contributed to the frequent communicable diseases such as dysentery. Wilson Kang'a and Hilder Ciacukuru were the most widely known public officers in the Chuka- Mwimbi area who paid constant visits inspecting the cleanliness of the homes (Nkoroi, OI, 2024). Through observing hygiene communicable diseases such as dysentery and malaria were significantly reduced.

According to Mutegi (OI, 2023), the missionaries assisted in promoting the health and hygiene of the people in the Eastern Region by introducing the burial of the dead. Among the Meru people it was a taboo to touch a dead body. The Chuka-Mwimbi people referred to it as "Mugiro". One was considered ritually unclean and had to undergo a cleansing ritual. The dead were, therefore, not buried but were left in the bush to be eaten by the wild animals (Murigu, OI, 2023). The dead body would be dragged to the bushes and the hut in which one died burnt. The CMS missionaries passed a law that demanded that the dead should be buried. This introduced a more hygienic way of handling the corpse and reduced the trauma caused by death.

Six months after Dr. Irvine arrived in Chogoria, a number of educational centres had been established outside the Chogoria mission and two well-trained medical dressers posted to them (Wilkinson, 1994). Chogoria Hospital became the central hospital but was surrounded by a number of satellite dispensaries at varying distances from the hospital. The dispensaries included; Kiamuriuki, Kiereni, Kambandi, Weru, Karimba, Kaanwa, Minugu, Iriga, Mutindwa, Kiriani, Ngeru, Nkumbo, Kieni, Kairini, Kajiampau, Gatutune, Ikuu, Gaatia, Kathera, Nkacii, Kirigone, Makandume, Gaitu, Gangora, Kiang'onde, Karaa, Kairungu, Nyagani and Itugururu.

The establishment of a curative preventive health outreach, provided a comprehensive and organised service to the local community. In 1970, a team led by Sister Faro and Jane Miriti was formed. They provided health education in all its aspects in the hospital and in several dispensaries on a regular basis (Chogoria Hospital Report, 1995). Health education helped improve the nutrition and health of children and families in general. Mobile clinics specialising in preventing communicable diseases were established. By 1974 the community health services had expanded to include antenatal, child welfare, family planning, tuberculosis, epilepsy, leprosy and the physically handicapped. Ciambaka (OI, 2023) said "the families were now healthy and raised the standards of living as the locals enjoyed quality health and life".

The CSM also contributed in the transformation of health care in the Eastern Region by training medical

personnel to work in the mission hospitals and government hospitals like Embu, Kerugoya, Nyeri and Meru (Kabii, 2023). Dr. Irvine established a nursing school in 1950 to train the medical staff. This was renamed Clive Irvine School of Nursing, which continues to offer a Diploma certificate in nursing. This provides qualified medical personnel needed to provide medical services to the locals in the Eastern Region.

PCEA has an organ called the Health Board, which mainly comprises the medics in the congregations. All the Presbyteries have an active Health Board who engage in various activities at the Parish and congregation level. The Health Boards have been holding free medical camps and offer blood sugar screening, blood pressure monitoring and first aid to the members during services. In the year 2022, Murugi West Parish held a cancer screening camp, Thuita Parish and Chuka Town church held free medical camps. During these camps many residents of the Eastern Region turn up for free screening and treatment. The health boards were also instrumental in implementing the COVID-19 mitigation measures (PCEA, 2022). Kiriimi (OI, 2023) affirmed that the health boards in congregations also conduct seminars on HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. PCEA realised that some of the members living with HIV/AIDS were poor and could not afford drugs. Through the Health Board, Meru Town Church has been assisting members who are HIV positive to get their drugs on time and ensure that they eat well in order to make sure they remain healthy (Imwara, OI, 2022)

In the 1980's PCEA Chogoria Hospital, in collaboration with other stakeholders, started the specialists' clinics which offered special care to the patients. This included the clinic for the physically handicapped and a Psychiatric clinic. The hospital also has a palliative care unit where patients with terminal diseases like cancer are assisted to alleviate their pain and that of the caregivers, making life more bearable in times of distress (Mbaabu, OI, 2024). PCEA has realised that cancer is one of the leading killer diseases in the region, and the country has lost some of its members to the disease. Through the health board, qualified doctors who are members of the PCEA assist in screening the community members and advise them

on them accordingly. The study established that PCEA has impacted health care in the Eastern Region. However, PCEA handed over the dispensaries to the community due to financial constraints.

The Impact of PCEA on the Economic Transformation from 1915 to 2022

Initially, the Meru people from Mbwa were pastoralists, but later, they settled in Meroe, which is the southern part of Egypt. As they were migrating from Egypt, they came across a mad woman who had different grains of millet, sorghum, maize, beans and finger millet. The Meru took the grains from this woman and planted them. By the time they arrived at Arusha in Tanzania they had already abandoned pastoralism and adopted agriculture (Gitari, 2006). However, they continued to keep cattle for meat and milk.

When Dr. Irvine settled in Chogoria, he realised that the Chuka-Mwimbi people were mainly agriculturalists and that there was plenty of rainfall (Chogoria Booklet, 1923). In 1927, Dr. Irvine introduced coffee growing in Chogoria. In 1935, the first African farmers from Chuka-Mwimbi were allowed to plant coffee. They included Stephano M'Rewa, Jeremiah Itimitu, Daudi M'Raria, James Maiti, Joseck M'Rachi, Josiah M'Mantu, Daniel Ndagani, Enos Mwongera and Jackson Nkuuri who were members of the CSM. He also introduced cotton farming in the lower zones of Tharaka. The introduction of cash crops promoted the economic status of the people in the Eastern Region.

The Church teaches members better methods of farming in order to increase production and preserve the fertility of the land. The Church teaches on using God's way of farming. This is a faith-based approach to farming which incorporates conservation aspects such as kitchen gardening, tree planting, agro-forestry, animal husbandry and care for the ecosystem. To ensure improved agricultural practices in Tharaka, PCEA set up the Kajjampau Rural Development Project in 1980. They acquired land to build the centre and provided plots for agricultural demonstration. This led to increased production in Tharaka, reducing dependence on handouts.

PCEA holds capacity building on income-generating activities for its members to empower the youth and

the jobless in the Church (Kimathi OI, 2023). Chogoria Central reported holding capacity-building seminars on job creation and mobilisation of all on environmental conservation and proper stewardship. This has assisted members in initiating income-generating projects.

The economic empowerment pillar has been supported through the formal establishment of Saccos and housing finance. This has enabled the members of the Church to save and later borrow loans which they use to develop themselves financially. At least five Parish Saccos have been started and are doing well hence improving the economic status of the members of PCEA. Further, members are encouraged to save in other credit facilities like the Thamani Sacco. The church also has bought Safaricom shares and encourages members to do the same. In Imenti Central, the Presbyterian Church Mens' Fellowship (PCMF) has started a merry-go-round fellowship for the members (Church Records, 2022).

The adoption of the Jitegemea Moratorium of John Gatu also played a vital role in the economic empowerment of the Presbyterians. PCEA has encouraged its members to find solutions to economic and social dependency. Thus, the members became industrious in economic enterprises in order to support the Church and their families. Various congregations have been able to undertake projects without any external assistance. Mbaabu (OI, 2024) asserted that; through the Jitegemea initiative the CSM members were taught hard work and this helped raise the living standards of the people in the Eastern Region. PCEA has established income-generating activities. From the funds collected by various congregations, the parishes have been able to pay their allocation of the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund (MMF). The balance is used by the parish to start their own projects within the church or the community. Some presbyteries like the Chogoria North have invested in the money market and have rental houses, Chogoria South runs Murambani Dispensary, Chuka Presbytery has rental houses at Kaigoro and Chuka town and new ones are under construction at Ndagani, Imenti Central has beehive and pig rearing projects, Imenti North has an investment project in Meru town and tea and avocado project in Igoki Parish. In Magumoni Presbytery, the Nthambo

congregation has rental houses in Chuka, the Mutuguni congregation Men's Fellowship has a fish farming project, and the Woman's Guild has maize millers while Imenti North Presbytery has invested in plots where they have planted tree nurseries. The youth in Chogoria West have a car wash, and there is a widow and widowers' welfare programme in the presbytery (PCEA, 2022).

PCEA has provided employment to some members of the church. The employees include the Hospital staff, Church ministers, evangelists, secretariat in presbyteries and parish offices, teachers in the church-owned private schools, watchmen, and caretakers in various congregations (Nkoroi, OI, 2024). Through the provision of education, PCEA has provided human resources to various sectors of the economy in and out of the Eastern Region.

Housing is another indicator of the economic levels of a community. The traditional Meru hut was made of mud and wattle walls with a thatched roof of grass. It was circular with a conical roof and built on the ground with a low wall and thatched eaves. It had no windows and no provision for ventilation. Dr. Irvine designed a better house, which was rectangular in shape and stood off the ground to protect it from destruction by the termites. The walls were made of wattle and mud, it had proper opening doors and windows. To improve hygiene, he built a small kitchen adjacent to the main house. Thus, the new house was well-ventilated, preventing the spread of communicable diseases. The livestock was also removed from the house, making it more habitable. According to Ciambaka (OI, 2023), this was one of the greatest contributions of the CSM to the local community. She was quick to add that the family ties were now strengthened as it made it possible for the husband and wife to live together rather than in the separate huts they lived in traditionally. Ciacukuru (OI, 2023) added that later, better houses were built of stone and iron sheets roofing and members of the PCEA were the first to own model houses which distinguished them from adherents of other denominations.

PCEA has also been providing assistance to vulnerable members of society. Most of the parishes have reported that they give aid to the famine-stricken

members of the society, especially those living in the lower parts of Meru, where the rainfall is unreliable. They have given food supplies to the people living in these areas. However, this help only comes whenever there is a crisis. The Church need to share more often with the needy.

The establishment of the Mission station at Chogoria opened the area to all aspects of development. The establishment of the hospital, a Church, primary and secondary schools and the Nursing School attracted a huge population who came to work or learn in the institutions. With the growth of the population, the Chogoria has since grown into a hub of activities. In 1991, it was recognised as an urban centre with an urban office. This led to an influx of entrepreneurs, and Chogoria has now become a hub of business activities. This has created employment for a large number of residents of the Eastern Region, raising their economic status (Mbae, OI, 2024).

However, although the Church has established various income-generating projects, the stakeholders who are the members of the Church are yet to enjoy the fruits of their labour. This has created a feeling of discontentment among the adherents, with some opting to leave the Church. PCEA is known to venture into various income-generating projects, but very little effort is made to oversee their management. This has led to mismanagement and often closure of some of these projects, for instance, the Woget Hotel started by the Womans' Guild in Meru, which is not fully utilised.

The Impact of PCEA on the Political Transformation in the Eastern Region 1915 to 2022

The Meru people had a system of government with their own leader, who was called *Mugwe* or *Mukiama*. According to Nyaga (1997), each sub-community of the Meru had their own *Mugwe*. He ruled with the help of a council of elders known as the *Njuri Ncheke*. He was respected by all and held a powerful position in society hence everybody focused on him. The members of the community were expected to take care of all his needs while he discharged his duties of protecting the people from their enemies and keeping away drought, famine and diseases. *Mugwe* had a dual nature of power and performed both religious and secular roles in society. He was both a priest and a king.

The people of Meru did not have a single leader. By 1907 they were governed by spokesmen until the early 1920s when the chiefs were instituted. The Meru had an age-set system together with a council of elders whose main responsibility was to resolve conflicts and organise for raiding (Kithinji, 2020). A judicial system also existed, which dealt mainly with issues of morality. Meru people had specific offences which were regarded as crimes. These included raping, adultery, sorcery or fornication. Offenders were punished through stoning, crucifying or binding on a tree until the criminal died or putting one in a beehive and letting it roll down the slope. There were also moral offenses. These were minor crimes which were punishable through fines or shaming the offender. The Meru people had a series of disciplinary measures aimed at maintaining peace.

The people of Meru have a lot of influence in the Kenyan politics. After independence, the Meru people became part of GEMA, which included Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association, which had been formed during Mzee Jomo Kenyata's reign. Although GEMA was officially banned in 1980, and with the advent of multiparty politics, the people of Meru have been voting together with the Gikuyu and Embu in the presidential election.

The study established that PCEA allows and encourages its members to participate in politics. In the Eastern Region PCEA, the Moderator of the 22nd General Assembly during his visit to the Eastern Region advised the members of the Church to seek political seats in order to get an opportunity to form the government. He further advised the members to respect independent institutions such as the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the judiciary and security organs. He called upon the Presbyterians seeking elective positions in the government to remain Godly and good ambassadors of the Church. The members of the Church were urged to continue praying for peace and vote for their choice but ensure they vote for people of integrity, God-fearing, responsible, approachable and reasonable leaders (PCEA, 2017). This helped to shape the outcome of the elections and ensured that peace prevailed in the Eastern Region even when other parts of the republic were engaged in political

incarcerations. Currently, Patrick Munene, member of parliament for Chuka Igambang'ombe and the Governor of Tharaka Nithi, His Excellency Muthomi Njuki, are members of PCEA Magumoni Presbytery.

PCEA actively participated in the constitutional review process. PCEA was among the mainline churches that mobilised its members to reject the constitutional draft of 2009 on the grounds that it allowed abortion and the establishment of the Kadhi courts in Kenya. The Church secretariat was instrumental in sensitising the members to give their views on the Constitutional review. This helped the members to actively participate in the constitutional review process by making their voices heard. The members were able to articulate their concerns regarding the laws that were to govern their country.

PCEA provides civic education to its members through the Justice Peace and Reconciliation Council (JPRC), which is an organ within the PCEA. The body was constituted to ensure peace and reconciliation in the country. This organ has played a major role in the political life of the people of Meru and Tharaka Nithi Counties. JPRC sensitises members on matters of politics stressing on the human rights and the need to actively participate in politics. It has also organised studies and activities for justice and peace. Members of this organ have gathered various bills from the county assemblies and have used them to educate the members at the congregational level (PCEA, 2022). This has assisted in reawakening the residents on political activities and how to hold their political leaders accountable. The JPRC has also actively participated in providing civic education to the members of PCEA. Civic education sessions have been conducted in various churches and market centres to help the residents of the Eastern Region make wise decisions while voting for their political leaders (Kirimi, OI, 2023).

In the Eastern Region, the Church has been instrumental in guiding the members in voting for political leaders. In the year 2017, the then moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Reverend Julius Mwamba, in his address to the members of the church during a visit to the Eastern Region at Chuka Town Church, called on the politicians to exercise mature and responsible politics. According to Mbaabu (OI,

2024), PCEA is a political church. The leaders in PCEA are politically elected in hotly contested elections. PCEA encourages its members to participate in general elections, thus demonstrating their political rights. PCEA is very active when it comes to casting their votes during the national elections (Kathuni, OI, 2024).

Prior to independence, most religious institutions were hardly differentiated from the state. The churches originating from Europe appeared as a wing of the state. Most of them preached loyalty to the state and obedience to the law. The colonial state and PCEA sprang directly from IBEAC. The church has been active in helping society to do away with the chains of colonialism and neocolonialism. There is a close connection between religion and government issues. PCEA has been working with the government to provide education in the Eastern Region, where it has sponsored over two hundred schools. The church also works closely with the government in the provision of medical care in the region. Chogoria Hospital is a level five hospital and has been handling referral cases from the Chuka Referral Hospital. The government has also been seconding doctors to Chogoria Hospital. The study has established that PCEA has been working with the government to provide humanitarian assistance to the needy. The Meru Town Church has been working with the county government of Meru to rehabilitate street children in a programme labeled "Okoa Boy Child". The Church has also been visiting Meru prisons to assist in rehabilitating the prisoners (Mbae, 2024). PCEA Imenti North Presbytery has been working with the Meru County Government in reaching out to women alcoholics in a bid to rehabilitate them and give them a decent life by helping some to start income-generating activities (Murigu, 2022).

The PCEA has also been instrumental in preparing leaders for community service. In its efforts to promote African education, the PCEA church contributed a lot in nurturing leaders. Teachers trained by PCEA for service in PCEA schools, became community leaders. Sider (1993) opined that the role of the clergy in leadership is to equip God's people for public service in various institutions in which God has placed them.

In conclusion, the contribution of PCEA to political transformation cannot be underscored. However, it has been noted that the Church does not play an oversight role in the political government in the region. There are so many evils in the political government, including corruption in awarding tenders, bloated labour, inadequate drugs in the public health care facilities and a slow rate of economic growth in the two counties. The Church has not come out openly to condemn these evils and advise the political leaders, yet it should be the conscience of the state. There have been two attempts to impeach the governor of Meru, yet PCEA has not come out clearly to declare its stand on the accusations brought against

the leader. The Church has thus failed to execute its prophetic role in the Eastern Region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: In conclusion, the study established that PCEA greatly impacted in the social, economic and political transformation of the people of the Eastern Region from 1915 to 2022. The impact was both positive and negative.

Recommendation: The study recommends that PCEA needs to improve the management and supervision of its institutions to ensure they continue to serve the purpose they were meant to well and actively participate in the politics of the region.

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