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Title: “*The Role of African Evangelists and Teachers in the Development of Western Education and Christianity in Nithi Division of Meru District of Kenya, 1907-1960*”

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**Abstract:**

This is a study of the role of African evangelists and teachers (the *athomi*) in the development of western education in Nithi Division of Meru District from 1907 to 1960. With the coming of the British administration and Christianity, traditional education could not adequately prepare individuals for the new social, economic and political roles in the colonial set up. western education became the means through which individuals were equipped with the knowledge and skills which enabled them to meet the demands and challenges of the colonial period. African evangelists and teachers played a crucial and complementary role in the dissemination of this education.

The foundation of western education in Nithi Division was laid by African evangelists while the European missionaries played the role of supervisors. African evangelists and teachers were the real force in the transformation of society. They founded and managed a series of “bush” schools as well as private schools in the division. They used schools as means of imparting new systems and values which they learnt. Africans were, therefore, active participants in their own history.

The study found that a few evangelists and teachers were appointed to leadership positions in Local Native councils (LNC) and church councils, Legislative Councils (Legco), while others were made chiefs and sub-chiefs. In these capacities, African teachers and evangelists gave moral and material support to the development of education. They were participants in the formulation of school curriculum and in personnel and teacher recruitment. The development of education in the division was as a result of time and energy that a broad range of Africans put in the enterprise.

The evangelists and teachers depended on the support of so many people—Christians and non-Christians, in their endeavor to impart western education and Christianity. The individuals who defected from the Church and started their own schools and churches contributed much to the development of western education in the division. Those persons who abandoned schooling or were rejected by the missionaries for various reasons became supporters of the teachers and evangelists in their task of imparting western form of education. The *athomi* of all levels were a great help to the spread of Christianity and western education.