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Taaita Arap Toweett: A Life Of Social and Political Influence (1925-2007)

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Taaita Toweett emerges as a prominent and influential political figure in Kenya's historical landscape, attracting scholarly attention due to his noteworthy contributions and intriguing life trajectory. With a commanding presence, Toweett is characterized by his insightful and earnest demeanor, infusing his life story with a nearly mythical quality that showcases its uniqueness and intricacy. Researchers in contemporary discourse focus on Toweett's formative years, educational pursuits, political engagements, and personal attributes, examining these aspects in depth. Born in 1925 and passing away in 2007, Toweett's Life spans significant historical periods, enriching his experiences with temporal and socio-political relevance. His rise from relative anonymity to political prominence illustrates leadership's intricate paths in Kenya's socio-political context. Toweett's life story presents a fascinating subject for scholarly analysis, inviting exploration of themes such as social advancement, leadership dynamics, and the interplay between individual will and structural limitations. Through academic investigation, Toweett's legacy emerges as a part of broader socio-political dynamics, enhancing our understanding of Kenya's historical trajectory and the multifaceted nature of its leadership landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

The fight for Kenyan self-rule under the constitution by Taaita Toweett is the subject of this article. Despite fighting with great zeal, Taaita Toweett's History as a Kenyan independence fighter is not recorded in history books. The essay uncovered the main points of his past and examined his attempts and contributions to achieving independence. The 1958–1964 constitutional struggle of Toweett was examined in this article. In order to properly lay the groundwork for Toweett's political journey, the article also looked at his early Life. It proved that Toweett was born in 1925 in the Kericho County village of Chepwagan, to Christopher Chelogoi Arap Abosiek and Tabsaba Temugo in the Litein area of the Bureti constituency. In 1958, Toweett became involved in politics after winning a seat in Legco and being named assistant minister for agriculture in the colonial Government that same year. His constitutional struggle, which Toweett supported, officially began at this point.

The story of Taaita Toweett entails an individual's journey and interactions in various contexts and within diverse spaces that were turning points in Kenya's History, especially in national politics. Toweett was born during the inter-war years that was in 1925. He grew up and attended School during the inter-war and post-war periods when tensions were rising daily, threatening international peace. The period was important in Kenya's History since it witnessed increased forces of nationalism and marked a march toward independence and self-rule. There was a new awakening among the African populace, which undoubtedly saw an escalation in the hopes, expectations, and dreams of the people of African origin. Taaita Toweett's generation became an embodiment of those dreams and expectations.¹

As Europeans acknowledged African leadership in 1958, Taaita Toweett entered active politics. He was elected M.P. for the Southern Electoral Area, which included the then Kericho and Narok Districts in the (Legco) Legislative Council, and was given the title of Assistant Minister for Agriculture, which he held until 1961. Ronald Ngala, who was chosen to represent the Coastal Region, Daniel Torotich Arap Moi, the Rift Valley, and many more² leaders from various regions were also elected. After constitutional changes in 1962, the Bureti Constituency was established; Toweett was chosen as the constituency's first M.P. and designated Minister for Lands, Survey, and Town Planning³.

History has it that Toweett was appointed the Minister for Education in 1969, and became the longest serving Minister for Education for ten years between 1969 and 1979.⁴ Due to his friendly relationship with then-president Jomo Kenyatta and his extensive experience in the field of education, the ten-year period was successful. While still serving as Minister of Education, he became frustrated with students' ongoing failure to pass the national exams for secondary and tertiary education, and he shocked the country by publishing an advertisement in the newspaper urging students to seek his counsel and never give up. He publicly urged the Government to end the provision of free elementary education, arguing that it was sapping the ⁵Ministry of Education's funding. He once went to the University of Nairobi during a disturbance and demonstration by university students.

The study examines Taaita Toweett's Early Life and his work as a Member of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister. It also examines his private work as an entrepreneur after retiring from active politics. Consequently, documenting Toweett's story provides a platform to narrate the transformational dynamics of Kenya's change in the post-World War II period, the post-

¹ P. G. Okoth UCLA: *A Journal of African stories: Autobiographies in Kenya history*, 1972, p. 102.

² T. Toweett, *Unsung heroes of Lancaster*, "call a spade a spade, historical memoir" (Nairobi: EAEP Ltd, 2011), p. 14

³Marco Group, *Who is who in East Africa 1965-196*, (Marco Publishers ,1965), p.146

⁴ The weekly Review, East Africa, February 23, 1979

⁵ M. Amin and M. Peter, *Vote is one man one vote*, (Nairobi: E. African Publishers, 1993), p. 3

independence History of Kenya, and how Toweett became part of it.

TAAITTA TOWEETT'S EARLY LIFE, AND EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC LIFE BETWEEN 1925 TO 1956.

From a humble background, Toweett rose to fame and became a force to reckon with in Kenyan politics, particularly among the Kipsigis. His colonial education prepared him for the future and nurtured him to what he turned out to be. He defied all odds including the death of his mother when he was very young; and having to work extremely hard to help his father to raise his siblings and become a great leader in Kenya's History.

Kaptanui, observes that Taaaita Toweett was born into the Narachek clan which is believed to have originated from the Gusii community. The founder of the clan was a man of Gusii origin whose name was Naroche. He is said to have gone to Kipsigis land to take refuge and was assimilated by Kap-soigoek clan. He later married a girl who had been adopted from Terik. He further avers that many years later when the Soigoek wanted to expel him from Kipsigis land due to unspecified reasons, the girl pleaded with elders claiming that her children were related to the Kap- Soigoek. Subsequently, the Kap-Lochnng'wonet clan sprung from the Narachek clan. The clan's totem is hawk while their war division is Ng'etunyo.⁶ Clans among the Kipsigis are families believed to have had a common origin and shared a common ancestor. The Kipsigis of Sotik were made up of several Kisii clans namely Mabasik, Mataborik, Buguserek, Basweetek, Narachek, Kimeitek and Kowagoi.⁷

Toweett's father was a Kisii who was assimilated into the Kipsigis community and was given a Kipsigis name Arap Chelogooui. Toweett was born a mixture of Kipsigis and Kisii blood. His late father Mzee Chelogooui Arap Maeero who died

aged about 120 originally was from Mokomoni area of North Mugirango in Kisii where he and his younger brother were seized and captured by a group of Kipsigis morans who had gone out on cattle rustling expedition in the Kisii region. The Gusii father in the making of the Kipsigis society is well documented.⁸ For a long time there was continuing cultural exchange between the Gusii and the Kipsigis. This involved intermarriage, trade and social exchanges resulting from the context. Though the Kipsigis are highland Nilotes and the Gusii are Bantu, the two communities share a number of common words in their language which are nearly similar.

According to Kaptanui, Taaaita Toweett's early childhood was spent from 1925 in the small village called Tepesoonik (Cheborge). To him, Toweett moved with his father to Kaapkesempe near Kipkmoolwet. After two years at Kaapkesempe, they moved to Tumoi (near Sigor), which is the present Chepalungu Constituency. They lived in Tumoi for about a month, and they returned to Bureti and lived in Yaganek village near Kaapkesempe. After another two years the family (father, mother and sister) moved to Meturi village next to where he was born (Tepesoonik) near Litein. His mother passed on in 1934 when Toweett was only 7 years and he was raised by his father alone. He was the first born hence the name *Taaaita* which means first born, to a father who was the last was born hence the name *Toweett* which means last born among the Kalenjin.⁹

He spent his childhood with the family stock as an ordinary Kalenjin boy. He was left to herd his father's cattle as his father tilled the land on the plantation. After the death of his mother, he had to assist his father to cater for the family. The hardships he faced after his mother's death shaped his way of Life. He worked in an Indian restaurant when he was 10 years old, enabling him to care for his siblings. His hard work drove him closer to his father, his siblings equally envied him and

⁶Kiptanui, O.I., May 20, 2022.

⁷Toweett.Oral (Tradition) History of the Kipsigis (Nairobi, 1979 KLB) PP 19-20.

⁸SEO H. A.Mwanzi Social. "Change Among the Kipsigis ".(Ogot B.A. od 1976)History and (Social Change in East Africa Hadithi 5.EALB Nairobi 1976)

⁹Kiptanui, O.I., May 20, 2022

even their neighbors observed Kiprono.¹⁰ Kiprono, further told that the full responsibility that Toweett had at his tender age played a vital role in preparing him to get to the peak in the political arena in the country.

Any moment the young Toweett was absent from School, he would do the humble duty of taking care of his father's livestock. Toweett, traveled long distances with their cattle looking for water and pasture, it could be estimated to be around three kilometers from Tepesoonik to Kisiara.¹¹ Chepochok posits that, Toweett was indeed a hardworking boy and he had totally taken the full responsibility of his family members. He could help his father in all almost all activities. His father cherished him very much because of his compliance and resoluteness in every thing he was assigned. He was an early person which was very important in taking care of his day to day chores, prepare his young siblings for the day-to-day activities.¹² The responsibilities that were put on Toweett at that young age, in one way or another prepared him to being a great leader whom he was in Kenya.

During these formative years, families' wealth was measured by the number of cows, goats and sheep it had. The higher the number of livestock, the higher the respect a man was accorded to in the community. It was, therefore, desirable and fashionable to always replenish herds through cattle rustling. The number of children in a family - especially boys - was equally an important consideration among the Kipsigis. This made polygamy a crucial consideration among members of this society even though Toweett's father never practiced polygamous marriage. This explains why Toweett's father never remarried after the demise of his wife. Consequently, he successfully took care of his three children.

Toweett's family also practised subsistence farming. The family used traditional farming tools such as hoes and sticks to cultivate subsistence crops such as sorghum, millet, maize and bananas. Other crops included beans which were planted during the dry seasons.¹³ The livestock which the family kept provided meat, milk and hides. Among the Kipsigis, milk is highly cherished to the extent that it has cultural tags. The Kipsigis believed that milk was a traditional medicine used to cure various ailments. It was also one of the items available during the performance of rituals. Children were given cow's milk to improve their immunity and protect them from witchcraft. *Mursik* was also used as a source of food. More interesting was the fact that it was also used as a lotion and a skin softener hence a source of aesthetics.¹⁴

Hunting and gathering was also part of the family's source of livelihood. Toweett and his siblings hunted giraffes, zebras, gazelles and warthogs which roamed their grazing areas.¹⁵ Hunting was both an economic and social activity. Among the Kipsigis and the entire Kalenjin community, hunters were highly respected. Men who brought meat home were received as heroes and greatly respected. Therefore, each household was expected to be able to hunt and provide for its livelihood through hunting.¹⁶

Young boys and girls went out for gathering activities.¹⁷ Generally, they collected wild fruits which grew naturally in the forests and along the pathways. Such fruits had well-known medicinal value. They also collected firewood and leaves to help ripen bananas at home and fetched water from the rivers and streams for cooking and washing/cleaning. Alongside collecting such fruits, women and young girls also gathered traditional vegetables which were eaten together with *mursik*.¹⁸

¹⁰ Kiprono, O.I., April 12, 2022

¹¹ Chepochok, O.I., May 20, 2022.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ D. R. Kandagor, *The Economic Transformation of the Tugen of Kenya*, (Nairobi: University of Nairobi, Press, 1992), p.15.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁵ Chepochok, O.I., May 13, 2022.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 16.

¹⁷ Kiprono, O.I., June 17, 2022.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 17.

It is important to note that Toweett's family depended highly on honey and livestock as a source of income. Young men learned the skill of beekeeping and harvesting of honey at an early age. Normally, honey harvesting was done during the cold seasons or evenings when the bees were inactive. This involved smoke that calmed and flushed the bees out of hives, paving the way for honey harvesting.¹⁹

Toweett underwent traditional circumcision like any other Kipsigis boy and he belonged to chumo age-set. As a leader, Toweett employed clever use of literature, sayings and stories to drive home his argument with great ease, especially in his writings. Finally, marriage was an important custom in Kipsigis society and they practiced exogamous, and that was why Toweett could not miss the pressure from his father and even his relatives for him to at least get himself a wife.²⁰ Toweett managed to heed to that pressure and he finally married in 1952 at the age of 27.

It is important to note that among the Kipsigis, myths formed a very crucial basis for their moral teachings. They were usually told during beer-parties. Songs were also used which were accompanied by a four or five-stringed lute (Kipugandet) and were usually sung by men. They did that to praise the beauty and gallantries of love, their great warriors, their community's peace, and the beauty of their village.²¹ Undoubtedly, this was what nurtured Toweett to be the brilliant politician and an academia in the History of Kenya.²²

Notably, the biggest influence in Taaitta Toweett's Life was the African Inland Mission (A.I.M.), which was baptized and named Elisha. Christianity played a very vital role in his Life because the same Church where he was baptized was the same Church that opened its doors for him for his early education. This was a privilege that

only the converts were entitled to. Toweett and his father were seen as betrayers in their community for having embraced the white man's way of Life, but this never slowed their spirit. Chesang, argues that when Africans in Kipsigis land began to realize that the white men meant well for them by providing formal education to them, Toweett was already a step ahead of the rest and that was what made stand out amongst his community members.²³

TAAITTA TOWEETT'S EDUCATION LIFE

Sifuna and Otiende avers that Kipsigis informal education was aimed at training the child to deal with the problems of living in his/her particular environment and with the right behaviour. Essentially, this kind of education is concerned with conserving society, maintaining its social and political integrity, and passing on the skills necessary for economic survival. According to the duo, through this type of education, the Kipsigis could find ways of passing their own culture or way of Life to the next generation. In fact, to Sifuna and Otiende, this education system was effective, tangible, definite and intelligible.²⁴ This is contrary to the view held by many Europeans When they first came to Africa that the Africans was a savage, a pagan with no history and culture to perpetuate. He was primitive and, therefore, needed some sort of civilization.

Vocational education and training in Kenya started during colonial rule when the white man had a strong belief that Africans were not to receive the same type of education as them. For example, education would lead to university education and white-collar jobs. The white man made sure that Africans would always receive an education that would only qualify them for manual jobs. This consequently led in Africans rejecting technical and vocational education

¹⁹ Kiptanui, O.I., May 23, 2022.

²⁰ F. Burnette, *The Kalenjin heritage: Traditional Religious and social practices*, 1995, pp. 31-41. Cheruto, O.I., 03 October, 2021, Lang'at, OI, 11 October, 2021

²¹ F. Burnette, *The Kalenjin heritage: Traditional Religious and social practices*, 1995, pp. 31-41.

²² Cheruto, O.I., October 03, 2021.

²³ Chesang, O.I., March 21, 2022.

²⁴ D.N. Sifuna J.E. Otiende, *An Introductory History of Education* (Nairobi, 1994), p.129.

training (TVET) when they needed preparation for a job, turning to it only as a last resort.²⁵

Turgut, Toweett's closest friend avers that Toweett started his primary school education in 1931 when he was only six years old. This period was characterized by the Great Economic Depression that affected countries' economic growth globally. Many Europeans found their ways into Africa as a possible destination for raw materials. Sotik was rich in gold, and that was what attracted many Europeans and missionaries to the area. To Turgut, Toweett joined Chepwagan primary School which was a missionary school. Turgut further posits that Toweett was the youngest child amongst his classmates and as was the norm, many would always bully small-bodied pupils; in this case, he explains that Toweett was not an exemption. His young age and small body size, notwithstanding, he was still very aggressive in School and was committed to his work at School.²⁶ Due to his hard work and dedication both at School and Church, he attracted the attention of many including the Church clergies. Toweett became very close to the church leaders and he began to learn leadership skills from the spiritual realm, Turgut further alludes.

Toweett's intelligence and discipline earned him a place at the missionary school where he was able to access the white man's education which was cherished by many if not all. His father, having known the importance of formal education, wanted to get in between his son and his bright future. He was ready and willing to support his son in achieving his best, unlike what other radical traditionalists would have done. Toweett's father faced a lot of criticisms from the community for having taken his son a missionary school but that never lowered his spirit. Embracing white man's way of Life to many Kipsigis meant eroding their culture something that they could not allow.

From his scores that Toweett attained, it was evident that he was very bright and the best in his School. The subjects taught to the children were

indicative of the kind of education offered to Africans by the colonial Government. It equipped the learner with the basic skills in History, Geography, Nature, Mathematics, Agriculture, Hygiene and Manual Skills. He had received the highest total marks in the 1943 KAPE results in Kenya. He later joined Alliance High School in Kikuyu. In those days one was admitted to Alliance for Catholics or Mang'u for Protestants. Though his father and mother never went to School, Taaitta Toweett saw his father as a wise and determined man who wanted the best for his family. A man determined to educate his son and entire family, this is a trait he learnt from his father. While at Alliance High School, they were schooled with Kitili Mwendwa in 1944 and 1945. They were in form one together. He was in 1B and Taaitta Toweett was in 1A. At the end of 1945, they sat for the Kenya Junior Secondary Examination in December and went home for Christmas and the New Year in 1946. In 1946 he got a letter from the School stating that he had passed KJSE and had been accepted to form III and did well to Form Four in 1947 in the Cambridge School Certificate.

In 1948/49 Taaitta Toweett was admitted at Makerere College Uganda to study literature. Makerere was the only institution of higher learning in those days in the English-Speaking Countries or territories. Makerere University is with no doubt Uganda's largest and old institution of higher learning, it was first established as a technical school in 1922. Makerere was the place for the elites in Africa especially the post-independence leaders like Milton Obote, Julius Nyerere, Mwai Kibaki among others. Years after Uganda had obtained her independence, Makerere was with doubt a focal point for the literary activity that was central to African nationalist culture. It is observed that many prominent writers like Ngungi wa Thiongo, John Ruganda among

²⁵Z.M. Mosoti, Education and Training in Pre-colonial and Colonial eras in Kenya, *International Journal of Research in Education*, vol.8, No.1, p. 204.

²⁶Turgut, O.I., April 12, 2022.

others were at Makerere university at one point in their writing and academic careers.²⁷

While at Makerere, there were students from Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia among others. The English-Speaking States were territories under the direct and indirect rule of Britain. Form V and VI in 1947 was only offered at Makerere College thus was as for the Britain Higher Learning. It meant that two years after the general certificate of education which in those days used to be called Form4 (IV). Kenya had to assume British education curriculum. This was reformed to as Higher Studies. After completing these, students sat for the examination of Higher Studies Certificate (HLSC). Higher learning in 1948 meant the British syllabus for form 5 and 6 which were reformed to later as the "A"level Courses. Makerere was not a university at that time, but it was a college of higher studies. Higher studies mean all studies which are done by B.A. or B.S.C. students. Higher studies in 1945 until about 1952 was an institution of learning which some selected students from East and Central Africa attended. After a student completed four years of secondary education (in accordance with the then English system of School) he was obliged to sit for a Makerere competitive entrance (or admissions) examination.

It is worth noting that the colonial government in the past in Africa had established three systems or approaches to learning and teaching. Education was racial hosted with white people (colonisers) establishing schools for their children. Only the white children were allowed into the white people's schools; for example, the Prince of Wales School, Now named Nairobi School, was for whites only. Then there were schools for Asian children. Thirdly, there were government-established and governed schools for the children of the Natives. They were for four years first; later, they were made to be six years. Later on,

they were made to give education for eight years. That is, Sub-standards A, Sub-standard B, Standard 1 to 6.²⁸

Taaita Toweett was among the Kenyans to be admitted at Makerere College. In 1948 Makerere was admitting students who completed form I to IV the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) but earlier before 1942, Makerere used to admit students after form II who made to form III and form IV work in Makerere after which they went into professional classes which existed in Makerere then. Taaita Toweett and William Martin Kimutai were the first two students from Kericho district to be accepted as qualified Makerere students in 1948 and January 1949 respectively. Taaita Toweett while at Makerere College founded the Makerere Philosophical Society in 1949. He was the first Chairman or president for one year and left after completing his studies. In 1949, while at Makerere, Taaita Toweett loved reading widely due to his curiosity. One of his favourite books were-Tom Paine's, The Age of Reason. While at Makerere he contributed in East African Standard by writing letters to the editor. He first published a letter to the editor of East African Standard in 1945 while he was a form two student at Alliance High School.²⁹

While at Makerere College he studied English, Geography, Sociology and Literature. Due to his hard work in School, he qualified for admission into trading diploma course in the same institution. However, he declined to do a teacher one year course. The reason for this was that there few teachers and teachers during that time taught all subjects in one class of about 25 students per year. He therefore left Makerere College without any professional diploma or certificate.³⁰

At Makerere College, Taita Toweett met and interacted with other key figures like Mwai Kibaki who later became the third president of the Republic of Kenya. Interacting with Mwai Kibaki

²⁷J. Namakula, "Full List: Makerere University now ranked eighth best in Africa". *Education News Uganda*. Kapala, Uganda. Retrieved 30 January 2022.

²⁸See also J. G. Peristiany, *The social institutions of the Kipsigis* (London, Reotledge and Kegan Paul),

²⁹Who is who in Kenya 1982-1983, *Africa Boook Services*, (Youth Magazine Publication Of Africa Book Service1983.) p. 83.

³⁰Chumo, O.I., April 23, 2022.

shaped the political History of Toweett as Kibaki was already developing a lot of interest in politics even though he was still a student. After Makerere College, Toweett decided to become a social worker where joined Kabete School of Administration, and trained as a social welfare worker upon finishing his course in Kabete Jeans School and seeking a job for a short time. In 1955 he was awarded a scholarship by the Kipsigis County Council to join South Devon Technical College in Torquay, Germany. There, he pursued a diploma course in public and social administration. As a scholar, his studies never ended at once. After the completion of his studies at Devon Technical College, he proceeded to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Heratun University of South Africa, and by 1956, he had graduated with his bachelor's degree in English Literature.³¹

Taaitta Toweett married from within the Kipsigis community; he was only twenty-seven years of age at the prime of his youth. Kowon observes that Toweett had a small well-built body; his features were coming to maturity. His face was tender, smooth and round. He was slim and of a small height. His skin was dark and handsome. His eyes were bright, communicative and appealing. He was a Lady Killer.³²

Toweett met his first wife in 1952 Rachael Chemibei while he worked as a Community Development Officer in Kericho.³³ This was based in Kipsigis Cultural practices founded on the fact that the basic unit was the family to form a homestead. A homestead is comprised of a husband, wife or wives, and unmarried children. It is worth noting that marriage among the Kipsigis was much respected. A person of his stature had to follow the customs. Amongst such a people as the Kipsigis there are special reasons why marriage is of more than ordinary importance.

Toweett later married another beautiful young girl called Elizabeth with whom they lived at his Sotik

farm. He also bought a farm at Kokwet in the Londiani area where he became the first black farmer among the White settlers. He later married his third first wife Elizabeth from Nandi and eventually married Anne (Mama Nigeria) from Sabaot or Sebei whom he settled in Ngomwet farm in Keleges near Awasi -Muhoroni area. His first wife Rachel died a couple of years ago and was buried at his first home near Kericho T.T.C. The second wife Rachel was buried at his Sotik farm, which is located next to the K.C.C. milk plant. The veteran politician had a total of 31 children and had homes in Kericho town, Kamirai near Kaplong, Sotik, Chomosot, Ngomwet and near Ngata farm in Nakuru before finally establishing another home at Darajani near Nakuru town.³⁴

Mibei, observed as it is in Burnette's book *The Kalenjin Heritage*, the Kipsigis believe not only in the immortality of the spirit, but in its reincarnation in the family and the importance of the family as established by marriage. When a child is born a spirit of a deceased relative enters it, usually from the father's clan, but not always; usually the new-comer retains the sex of the spirit, but again not always. This spirit comes voluntarily, nay desires to come; although in speaking of the ceremony at which it is ascertained which spirit has come, they use the word " *kuur* " which means to "call" as if they decided on the spirit and called it. The child usually had the nature of the spirit, for instance has such a character as the spirit had when previously incarnated in human bodily -form. Grandfather, grandmother, father's brother or sister are those who most commonly come. It is the urgent desire of every spirit, whether embodied or not for instance, of every person alive or dead, to return again to earth, and

³¹Obituary - DR. Taaitta Arap Toweett" by Leo Odera Omolo, www.jaluo.com

³²Kowon, O.I., March 23, 2022.

³³Ibid

³⁴Chumo, O.I., April 23, 2022.

therefore it is the greatest disaster to die childless (chemukto).³⁵

Mibei, a member of Toweett's age-set avers that he could not emphasize too strongly, therefore, that amongst the Kipsigis group of tribes (Nandi, Keiyo, etc.) the family is of very great importance. It is natural that the family should be highly developed amongst them, for they do not live in villages, but each married couple has its own house often far from any others; in fact they dislike being close together. Near the house is often the "Singiroinet" house where the elder children and young unmarried men sleep. The parents and children therefore are much thrown together being thus somewhat isolated from the rest of the community, except when in the field or at ceremonies. It is there that the (children's characters are formed, and they learn from parents or other children all they know before they go to the initiation at the age of, say, 15-17. Further, civil Government used (before the advent of British rule) to be based on the. "Kokwet," the social unit consisting of families living within reasonable distance of one another, say a couple of miles, irrespective of clan.³⁶

TAAITTA TOWEETT'S CONTRIBUTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE, 1957–1979.

Toweett political journey started in 1957 when he contested for position to LEGCo.³⁰ A part from his interest to contest in general election of 1957, his leadership interest started since childhood and it was not by surprise that he plunged himself into discretionary post.³¹ Besides his interest of vying for the post, elders drawn from Kericho saw him fit because he was dedicated hardworking intelligent and charismatic young person. Additionally, his intention got support from his home area given that he had worked for the Europeans in tea plantation and he understood the grievances of African workers who were enslaved to pluck tea with little payments.

Taaitta Toweett developed interest in politics when he witnessed the kind of oppression that Africans were subjected to when he was a social worker. In his own wisdom, he knew that the only way to defend his people was to join politics and gain some power.

Toweett, joined politics in 1957 where he was elected to the Legco to represent Bureti constituency. As a Member of Parliament, the struggle for self-rule began. He attended the first, second and third Lancaster House Conferences where issues to do with Kenya's independence were discussed. Kenya finally attained her independence in 1963 and in 1964 became a republic. Kenya's becoming a republic happened after some changes had to be made to the independence constitution. This move created a big division in KADU which Toweett belonged to. Most of the KADU members had been convinced by the Government to abandon their party and join KANU. This dream became real when the bill to change the constitution passed with very minimal opposition. Ronald Ngala, the party chairman, finally dissolved the party and joined KANU. Toweett was the last man standing, he refused to be persuaded by KANU policies which he did not believe in. He finally resigned as a Member of Parliament and went to seek for a fresh mandate and he unfortunately lost.

Taaitta Toweett in the political darkness which some could refer to as political oblivion is also examined in this Paper. This was the period between 1964 to 1969. For five good years for a veteran politician like Toweett to be out of active politics was too long. Toweett's problems began when he refused to cross the floor in 1964 when the Government swayed his colleagues in KADU to cross the floor and join KANU. Toweett was the last man standing and refused to be swayed by the Government to embrace ideologies which he did not support. He resigned from Parliament and went back to his electorates to seek a fresh mandate, but he lost his seat. Toweett wisely spent

³⁵F. Burnette, *The Kalenjin heritage: Traditional Religious and social practices*, 1995, pp. 31-41. Mibei, O.I, June 30, 2022.

³⁶Mibei, O.I, June 30, 2022.

the five years to traverse his constituency to popularise himself. He became so popular so much that no candidate in his constituency could match him in the 1969 general elections. He managed to return to Parliament in 1969 after beating all his competitors in the ballot.

The Paper also examined Taaitta Toweett's contribution in the various ministries but the most important one being the Ministry of Education where he served for ten years. His era as the Minister for Education saw the number of schools increasing and the pupils and students' enrolment skyrocketed. The Paper examines the differences between Moi and Toweett which came out openly in Machakos where Moi attended an educational even under the Toweett's docket and Toweett never showed up.

TAAITTA TOWEETT'S LIFE AFTER ACTIVE POLITICS FROM 1980 TO 2007.

Immediately after the death of President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi took over as president. In June, 1982 parliament officially declared Kenya a one-party state. This meant that KANU was the only authorized political party in the country. However in 1991, President Daniel Moi allowed the restoration of multiparty system in Kenya. During this period there were several political happenings in Kenya and in 2007 during the year that Taaitta Toweett died, there was disputed political elections that led to several deaths. This event led to the power sharing agreement between the then Government and the opposition. This Paper entails the details on Toweett's Life after politics and in particular, as a Member of Parliament, Taaitta Toweett and the Bomas Constitution review, Toweett's family life after politics, his controversial Life, the death of his first wife, Rachael Chemibei and his death.

Every beginning must always have an end, notably, Toweett's active years were slowly but surely coming to an end after he lost his Parliamentary seat in 1979. This Paper examines Toweett's Life in the government appointment

slots. It focusses on Toweett as a nominated M.P. between the period 1 showing how, KANU was so loyal to him. The various responsibilities that he assigned is also examined in this Paper, for instance, in 1983 he was appointed the Chairman for Kenya Airways which he served for a period of two years. He would later be appointed the Chairman of Kenya Seed Company. Toweett and his role in the Bomas of Kenya constitution Review is also examined in this Paper, Toweett was very critical with matters constitution, he therefore participated in drafting the Bomas draft in 2003-4, constitutional draft which Kenyans later rejected in 2005 referendum. Toweett and his family life is also critically assessed during his time in politics. Most importantly, the Paper also touched on Toweett's controversial Life that had raised many questions among those close to him. The death of Toweett's first wife, Rachael, is examined in this Paper. The Paper ends by focussing on the death of Taaitta Toweett, the Kalenjin veteran politician, writer, linguist and a scholar with extremely unique characters.

Manaret, Toweett's best friend, observes that Toweett as a husband of many wives spent his quality time with his family because the pressure of traversing the constituency who whip the voters to vote for him reduced. He decided to focus on the well-being of his many children and the four wives. Since education is the only important gift a responsible father can give his children, Toweett ensured that all of his children went to School. He was keen to balance between his personal engagements and family time. He ensured that his family lived a very comfortable life because according to him, that was the reason he was working hard. According to Manaret, Toweett cherished academic excellence and wanted the same for his children. As per his wish, most of his children followed his footsteps. One of his daughters went to Russia to study linguistics, and the other one went to France to study French, to mention just a few.³⁷

With many children around him in a traditional African set-up, Toweett had to be very strict and

³⁷ Manaret, O.I., May 23, 2022.

he believed in caning as a way of reprimanding children. Manaret, further told the study that if it were not for Toweett's firm stand, his 32 children would not have grown up to be responsible people in the society. He also taught his children to be responsible and that was why when he wrote a will, he gave each and every child five acres of land but it was not for free. Toweett did not believe in free things in life. Toweett charged each child Ksh 1,000 per acre and this was mandatory before the land could be handed over to them.³⁸

Toweett lived a life that many could describe as scary, some could describe it as controversial, while some could describe it as a life of someone who was not sure whether he could live to see the following day. In other words, Toweett was so insecure and did not trust a lot of people with his life. As a veteran politician, he was loved and hated by people at an equal measure and his life was prone to threats. These threats maybe could explain why Toweett decided to become a unique human being up to his sunset years.

Toweett decided to go settle at his home in Ngata, he built an underground home so that he could escape his enemies. Jebei, avers that only a few people knew Toweett's home at Ngata, even the passer-by could not know that there was a home there. The compound was covered with banana trees and many other tree species making it a very strong hideout. This act showed that Toweett was either insecure or just dramatic. As we all know that people with homes underground are always believed to be hiding something from the people or the Government. When Saddam Hussein went underground, it was evident that he was hiding from the American troops and so was Osama bin Laden's case.³⁹ So, the whole idea of Toweett opting to go underground for years raised a lot of questions but the only available answer from Manaret, his closest friend was that he was hiding from his enemies.

Jebei, who hails from Sotik told the study that Toweett conducted a lot of research on moles and from his research findings, he discovered that moles lived longer. Since he admired the life span of the moles, he therefore started feeding on moles and rats. This act was very scary and people began questioning the characters of Toweett. Some even concluded that their long-time leader was losing his mind. Jebei, further told that the many talks from the villagers did not make Toweett change his characters at all. In fact, it even escalated as he trusted his research findings and no one could advise him otherwise. It was also strange that he told the family to donate his body to the U.S.A. universities for research after his death. However, the family did honour this request after Toweett's death. His body was preserved, attributed to his love for research. It was also said that Toweett had a "bad tongue" he could easily curse those who crossed his line. It is said that Isaac Salat was a victim of his "bad tongue" Toweett cursed him and he died in a road accident.⁴⁰

In his cars, Kemboi said that Toweett switched all the seats apart from the driver's seat to face the opposite direction. Whenever he was traveling in his cars, he always wanted to see where he was coming from. This character was very strange and it raised a lot of questions, Toweett however argued that he had so many enemies and therefore wanted to see those who were trailing him wherever he was travelling to.⁴¹

According to her eulogy, Rachael Chemibei Toweett was born on 22 March, 1936. She was the first born of Samuel Ngasura and Alice Ngasura. Rachael married Taaita Toweett in 1952 as mentioned earlier in the previous paper. In 1973, Rachael was employed in Kericho High School as a cateress. Upon leaving Kericho High, she joined KUDEHIA where she was an active member. Later she was nominated a councillor of the Kipsigis County Council while still in the union in 1978. Rachael was an extraordinary lady among others, she stunned people when she was the first

³⁸Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Jebei, O.I., April 10, 2022.

⁴¹ Kemboi, O.I., April 12, 2022.

lady in Litein to ride a motorbike. She had twelve children, several step children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Manaret, Toweett's best friend told the study that Toweett spent his 83 years on earth and he managed to fulfil almost all his desires if not all. It was evident since his childhood that Toweett was always up to the task and he could do anything that came his way as long as it was the right thing. After the demise of Toweett's mother, he did not hesitate to man up and help his father to take care of his younger siblings since his father never remarried. Toweett joined a missionary school to acquire a Whiteman's education which was on the contrary to the expectations of his people and even his father at one point. Manaret further observed that one could say that the young Toweett was a prophet because at that young age, he had already known that there was no way the whites could be defeated by Africans if Africans could not join them and learn their ways.⁴²

Toweett later married his wives even as he could with his studies and Research since he loved Research. But most importantly, his struggle for independence could not go unnoticed. Manaret further argues. Toweett played a very key role in the fight for independence in Kenya. He attended the first, second and third Lancaster House Conference. As a member of KADU, he raised pertinent issues at the conference that he wanted addressed, majimboism being one of them. The whole idea of majimbo created heated debate between KADU and KANU which were then the major political parties in Kenya. Through their struggle, Kenya finally obtained her independence. Both KADU and KANU could then merge and this merger cost Toweett his parliamentary seat when he went back to the electorates to seek a fresh mandate.⁴³

Toweett later came back to Parliament and he served the country at various capacities including at the ministry of education where he served for ten years. Toweett also served the country as the Chairman of various parastatals including Kenya

Airways, Kenya Seeds Company among others. Toweett later lost his first wife whom he had separated with. His former wife suffered from diabetes for many years and later succumbed to it. Toweett also participated in drafting the Bomas Draft, the constitution that Kenyans had been promised by the NARC government. The Bomas Draft was later rejected by the citizens at the referendum. Manaret, avers that his friend Toweett lived a fulfilled life and he achieved almost everything that he wanted to achieve if not all. He finally died on 8 October, 2007 in a car accident. The car that Toweett was travelling in collided with a canter truck just a few kilometres from his shimoni residence. Manaret emotionally told the study that Kalenjin community and Kenya at large lost a real patriot on that

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study shows that Toweett was a very important figure in Kenya's History. This is a man Kenya was about to forget despite his selfless contribution to the attainment of independence in Kenya. The study therefore recommends that Taaita Toweett's History be published and made available to the public as this will create awareness and enrich the biographical studies. Secondly, the study established that Toweett and his KADU members were the pioneers of the devolution that Kenya is enjoying today. They fought for it through Majimboism. The study therefore recommends that the Government should make devolution as strong as possible because that is the only way of appreciating the contribution that Toweett made at the Lancaster House Conference. The study has laid a foundation that future studies on Toweett will lie on. The study therefore recommends a further investigation on the controversial Life of this veteran politician and what prompted him to do all the unusual things that he did. The relationship between Moi and Toweett is also an area that requires thorough investigation. This study has unearthed important historical data on biographies and the Life and times of a great Kenyan politician. Through this study, the

⁴² Manaret, O.I., March 12, 2022

⁴³ Ibid

traditions of various communities have been unveiled, and how they are interconnected. The data can be used to gauge Toweett as a politician, cabinet minister, and Chairman of various parastatals in Kenya. The study also serves as a point of departure for more Research on Taaita Toweett and other leading figures in Kenya.

This Paper has demonstrated Toweett's undertakings in the struggle for independence. He played a crucial role when he was appointed to the LegCo in 1958. Toweett was the first LegCo member representing the Southern Electorate Area. He also became the first Member of Parliament to represent the Bureti Constituency after the demarcation of boundaries, which created more constituencies in 1961. Toweett is portrayed as one of the prominent leaders whose political impact was felt in the fight for the achievement of Kenya's independence. When he was elected in the LegCo in 1958, he was one of the members of the AEMO who aimed to unite the African leaders to fight for a common objective. He was one of the pioneering leaders of the AEMO and CEMO.

The two organizations comprised all African leaders elected to the LegCo and aimed to bring unity and togetherness among the elected leaders. Toweett was an eloquent and fearless leader in the LegCo debates. He tabled the demands of the Africans without fearing the intimidations from the European administrators. When he was appointed the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and co-opted member of Cabinet, Toweett continued to agitate for the grievances of Africans directly to the Governor of the Kenya Colony. He was one of the members who were punished for holding a press conference and mobilizing the Africans to continue protesting for their rights to be heard by the colonialists. Toweett was one of the leaders who challenged the Lennox Boyd and Littleton constitutions that the Europeans brought to marginalize the Africans in their original homeland. He preferred peaceful negotiation means to be applied in the gaining of independence.

Toweett was a resourceful leader and wise thinker whom other African leaders always consulted. He was appointed in the first and second Lancaster House Conferences, which aimed to develop a constitution that would govern African countries and give them independence. The Second Lancaster Conference gave Kenya independence in 1963. Toweett's contributions to both conferences greatly impacted the achievement of independence. Indeed, Toweett emerged as one of the unsung Hero of the Lancaster house. Additionally, Toweett formed national political parties which helped African leaders unite and fight for a common interest. They used these parties to channel their grievances and demands of Africans. He participated in the establishment of the constitution which guided the country after it gained independence in 1963. He is one of the pillars and supporters of KANU, a political party that has existed and was used by Kenyatta the first president to gain independence. The historiography of Dr Taaita Toweett has remained unearthed in the History of colonial heritage. His political journey sums up the current and contemporary leaders in our country and Africa at large. The recommendation of this study suggests further analysis on the writings of Toweett about the struggle for independence in his six books, the political journey of Toweett after independence and the track record on development of Bureti and Legacies he left in various ministries he served after independence.

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