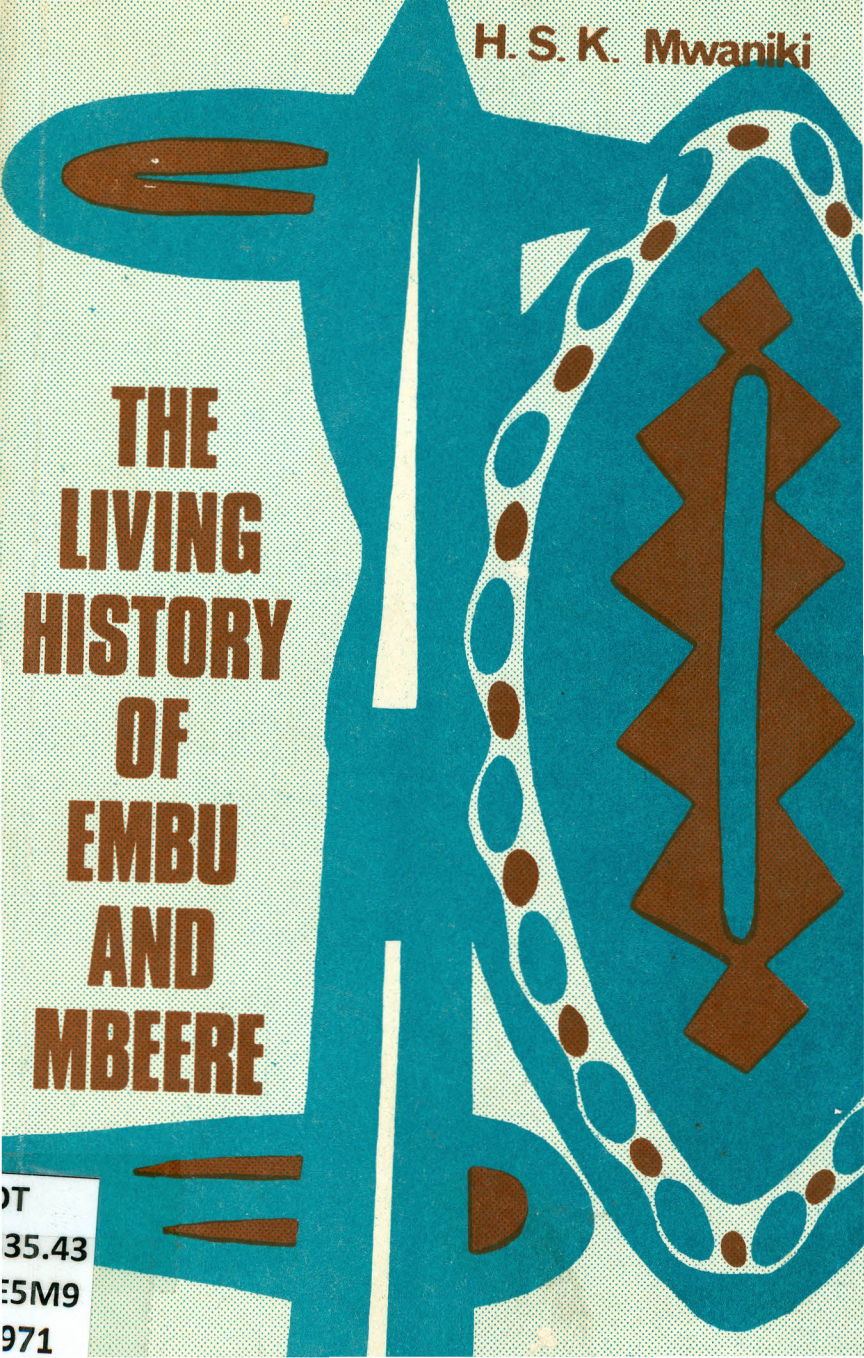


H. S. K. Mwaniki

**THE
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OF
EMBU
AND
MBEERE**

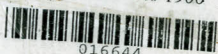
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The Living History
of Embu and Mbeere to 1906

H. S. KABECA MWANIKI

Mwaniki, Henry Stanley
*The living history of
Embu and Mbeere to 1906*



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FOREWORD

This book was written in an attempt to answer the many questions that the people of Embu and Mbeere, and of other areas, ask about Embu District and its people.

As in many parts of Africa, stories about the origins of the people, settlement in their present land, their relationships with neighbours, historical events that took place and the general life of the people in pre-colonial days have been passed by word of mouth from generation to generation.

To be able to dig out the above information about the Embu/Mbeere people and the whole historical background, many journeys had to be made and several hours spent in asking questions, and quite a number of places, including the neighbouring areas such as Chuka in Meru District had to be visited. The aim was to find out from the people their opinion about the Embu and Mbeere.

This book has concentrated on Embu district. Extensive research has been done so as to give adequate background information. The material will be useful to those who want to learn about Embu and Mbeere. To teachers and scholars of Embu/Mbeere history, it will be of special interest as a

source of information and starting point for further research into the history of Embu and Mbeere.

*John N. M. Nyaga,
Provincial Education Office,
Eastern Province.*

PREFACE

The Living History of the Embu/Mbeere to 1906 by Mwaniki Kabeca, is the best attempt of any compiled or written record of the people living in Embu today, namely, the Aembu and the Ambeere, I have so far come across. Two or three previous authors of this kind of work did not delve sufficiently deep into either the social or the cultural history of these people. As a matter of fact in one case a gross misconception of truth about these people appears in a book written in the first decade of this century entitled: *The Vanishing Tribes of Kenya*. Perhaps if the author were to revise his book today the title might change to read: *The Flourishing Tribes of Kenya*. My dear reader, those so-called "vanishing tribes of Kenya" were the Achuka and the Atharaka (of Meru District) and the Aembu and the Ambeere (of Embu District). Knowing the 1970 population figures of these people one would simply dismiss the judgement by the author of *The Vanishing Tribes of Kenya* as an inaccurate forecast of an amateur anthropologist.

In thirteen short chapters, the author of this book, Mwaniki Kabeca, has achieved much in this his *first* published book on the traditional history of the Aembu and

Ambeere. The author is to be congratulated on his successful achievement of bridging the *past* of our ancestors with our own *present*. In simple and yet clear language Mwaniki, a qualified professional teacher, has presented a useful summary of his many hours, days and weeks patient and scholarly research to the reader. The present work represents a vital springboard for an even fuller and more detailed work on this subject in the not too distant future. Knowing the author's enthusiasm and love for thorough presentation of facts in as accurate a form as possible, I am more than convinced that he would be the last person to even suggest that this subject has been covered exhaustively. I am, therefore, as anxious as anybody to see an early edition of this book bringing to us yet more thrilling and revealing accounts and episodes of our Aembu and Ambeere.

A research for oral history entails a lot of hard work, which takes many hours of patient interviews with people often of advanced age and not always coherent in their narrating of the stories.

This work entails a great deal of listening and later sifting of the relevant facts from a lot of verbosity. My introduction to this book *The Living History of the Embu/Mbeere to 1906* by Mwaniki Kabeca, could not possibly be complete without pointing out to the reader and the author both the need and the importance of a further study on the history of the Agichugu and the Andia — the Aembu and the Ambeere's immediate neighbours to the west. These are the people generally and mainly referred to in this book as the Agikuyu. I am convinced that this study would provide yet another valuable and useful series of historical data, both complementary and supplementary to this present work.

Elsewhere in this book the author has mentioned of mixing and the assimilation of other tribes, continually going on among and within Embu and Mbeere, especially at the times

of wars, and famines. This process of tribal mixing and assimilation did not leave Agichugu and the Andia, our neighbours living in the recently created Kirinyaga District, unaffected. The process was a two-way traffic. I would, therefore, commend to the author in his next research to interrelate this work with the study of these neighbours of Aembu and Ambeere, namely the *Agichugu* and the *Andia*. These people have several points of common contact with the Embu and Mbeere.

In conclusion, I wish to record my appreciation and a sense of parochial pride, for being invited to write a *preface* to this book, whose author is one of the sons of Embu; one of Kenya's budding traditional history researchers and scholars; a product of our Kenya educational system at the University of Nairobi; and a former student of Kangaru School, Embu. The book will particularly be of great assistance to both the teachers and their pupils in schools when teaching the history of our people. I am sure that the author would welcome any additional contribution from the readers.

J. J. M. NYAGAH

Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

9th July, 1970.

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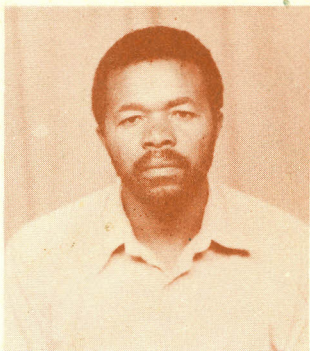
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In this simple and well written book the author brings out the impact of the past on the present. He vividly describes the Embu and Mbeere society in political, social and spiritual aspects. Above all he shows it as a society always in flux, changing and accommodating new situations and ideas. Despite the changes, the author has taken pains to show that there still exist some basic tenets of belief which hold the people together and distinguish them from others.

It is not an idyllic piece of work but one in which the author seeks to present truth to lay bare the fiction and myth that there is no African culture or personality. In so doing he has given all of us a sense of pride, that the past had a meaning which should not be despised. The book is a veritable masterpiece, written both for adults and young, the layman and the student.

Born at Embu in 1942, Henry Stanley Kabeca Mwaniki was educated at Kibogi, Kianjokoma, Kamana and Kangaru schools before proceeding to the University of Nairobi where he obtained an M.A. in History and a Diploma of Education. This volume was completed while the author was a Junior Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies in the University of Nairobi.



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