

# Mahoo and 'The Taveta Chronicle'

'The Taveta Chronicle', edited by the superintendent of the Church Missionary Society's (CMS) station at Mahoo near Taveta, Rev. A. R. Steggall was launched at Easter time in 1895. It was printed quarterly on small octave sheets with up to 18 pages to an issue and continued until November 1901. It was printed on a No 2 'Model' Press costing £6 in London, England and finally ceased due to financial difficulties and when the editor went on his overseas leave.

The printing quality of the paper was of a generally good standard, but occasional indifferent types of ink and worn rollers caused blurring of the type to occur. Annual subscriptions to the paper cost one shilling (£) per annum including post. When one considers that at this time everything had to be carried on the heads of porters trekking up from Mombasa for about two weeks, as the railway only reached Voi in 1897 it was quite a feat. Once the railway arrived at Voi goods were either transported by ox wagon and porter.

In addition to the local church affairs the chronicle also offered details of the mission statistics, educational development, news of neighbouring Roman Catholic and Lutheran missions in the Kilimanjaro region. It also recorded the movements and arrivals of officials in the immediate area from the British and German Protectorates. Records of weather and climate and its effect on agriculture, crop trials, the movement of locust swarms, and matters relating to the health of the local population and missionaries were all noted. Many of the later editions had articles commenting on the policies and practices of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEACo) and then the Protectorates colonial administration, since the CMS had been in the Taveta area long before any administration had arrived they were well placed to comment on the temper and attitudes of the local populace once a government representative had reached Taveta and set up an administration centre. History and anthropology, development of roads and communications, stock and their care were all covered in the paper.

'The Taveta Chronicle' was the first periodical published on the East African mainland and the second 'newspaper' to be printed in the British and German spheres of East Africa. No other publication appeared before the end of 1899, when the weekly East African & Uganda Mail and the fortnightly Official Gazette for the East Africa were published. The earliest of the mainstream newspapers, the 'African Standard, Mombasa Times and Uganda Argus' first appeared in 1902. The founder, Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee, also held the contract for the recruitment of indentured labourers for the building of the Uganda Railway and financed much of the establishment of Nairobi. He was also largely responsible for bringing in the use of the Indian rupee currency to the country to pay his Indian labourers taking over from the less popular IBEACo tokens then in use.