

Primary Sources:

The End of the First World War



Introduction

In 1919, two groups met in Paris: The first were Allied leaders who set to work on post-war agreements. Denied participation in those meetings, the second group, composed of members of the Pan-African Congress, met independently to discuss the concerns of peoples of African descent and their place in the post-war order.

The first two documents below are from those meetings. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations was written as a part of the Treaty of Versailles. It signaled the postwar transfer of colonies from the defeated central powers to France and Britain, on the basis that they required further “tutelage” before they would be ready for independence. The resolutions of the Pan-African Congress Proceedings of 1919 are also provided. These resolutions speak especially to people living under colonialism and advocate for greater participation in government, an end to economic exploitation, and eventual self-determination, among other things. As you read these two sources, think about who attended each of these conference and created these documents: What were their perspectives and goals, and why did they create them? What is the relationship of these documents to one another, and how do they compare?

In addition, four short excerpts are provided: Solomon T. Plaatje, John Archer, Z. K. Matthews, and Harry Thuku. As you read these sources, consider what their main message is, and how they relate to Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and/or the Pan-African Congress.

Primary Sources

Introduction

Article 22 of the
Covenant of the
League of Nations

Resolutions of the
Pan-African Congress,
1919

Solomon T. Plaatje,
“Shall We Appeal
to You in Vain?,”
1916

John Archer, African
Progress
Union, 1918

Z. K. Matthews,
South Africa, ca.
1919

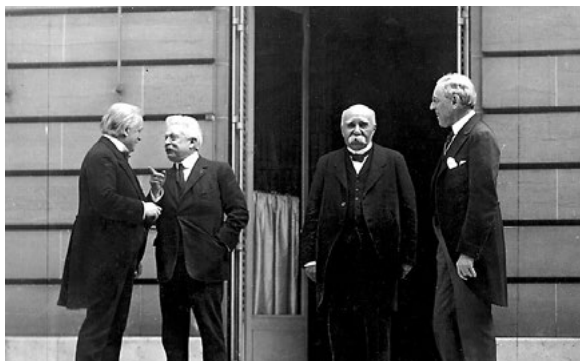
Harry Thuku, An
Autobiography,
1970

Primary Source 1:

Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, and was one of several treaties that officially ended World War I. A key element in the Treaty of Versailles was the creation of the League of Nations. The League was launched with a document called the Covenant of the League of Nations, consisting of a preamble and 26 Articles. Below is Article 22, which outlines what should be done regarding the colonies of the defeated powers. The powers on the winning side were given power to rule over the territories formerly held by the Ottoman Empire and Germany, including Germany's colonies in Africa. The idea was that France and Britain, for example, would prepare these newly acquired territories for eventual self-rule—they were thus given a "Mandate" (an official order or commission) to offer "tutelage" to these territories "until such time as they are able to stand alone."

Source: *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, from Avalon Project - *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp



The "Big Four" at the Paris Peace Conference: Lloyd George (Great Britain), Vittorio Emanuele Orlando (Italy), Georges Clemenceau (France),

ARTICLE 22.

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the

performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.

The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.

Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.



Heads of State at the Paris Peace Conference, Versailles, 1919

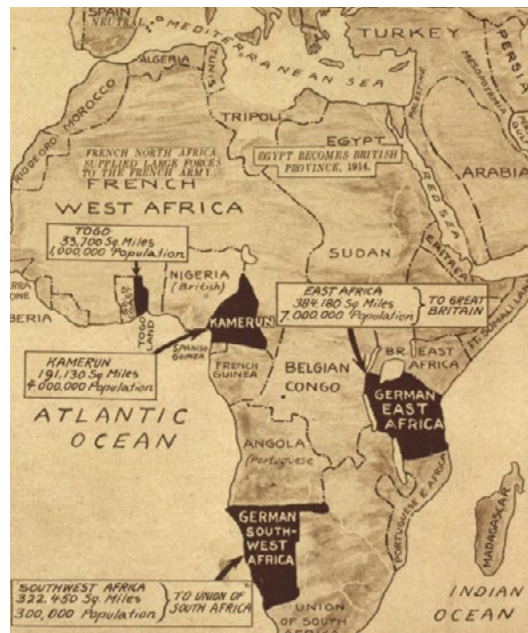
Other peoples, especially those of Central Africa, are at such a stage that the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defence of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.

There are territories, such as South-West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilisation, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.

In every case of mandate, the Mandatory shall render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge.

The degree of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the Members of the League, be explicitly defined in each case by the Council.

A permanent Commission shall be constituted to receive and examine the annual reports of the Mandatories and to advise the Council on all matters relating to the observance of the mandates.



Map of Africa, showing the transfer of colonial holdings in 1919

Primary Source 2:

Resolutions of the Pan-African Congress, 1919

The Pan-African Congress held in Paris in 1919 was not the first such attempt to gather prominent men of the African diaspora with the purpose of generating resolutions aimed at improving conditions for Black Africans in Africa and people of African descent in Europe and the New World. But the 1919 Congress was held in February—simultaneously and adjacent to the gathering of the leaders of the Great Powers that had defeated Germany in World War I. The heads of state of the United States, France, Britain, and Italy—known as the “Big Four”—began their meeting on January 18, 1919. Those proceedings went on through June of 1919. The 1919 Pan-African Congress was instigated by W. E. B. Du Bois. His intention was to find a way to present the Pan-African Congress’ resolutions for consideration in the crafting of the final peace settlement. Well aware that Wilson’s Fourteen Points included plans to establish a League of Nations, Du Bois was concerned about how the post-war settlement would affect the “250,000,000 Negroes” throughout the world. Present were Blaise Diagne, deputy to the French National Assembly representing French citizens in Senegal, W. E. B. Du Bois from New York, 15 other prominent Black U.S. leaders, 13 representatives from the Caribbean and 7 from Haiti. Representation from outside of the continent of Africa was greater than for those from Africa itself.

Source: “Enclosure: Resolutions Passed at the 1919 Pan-African Congress, Paris 19-21, 1919,” African Series Sample Documents, <https://www.international.ucla.edu/asc/mgpp/sample09>

Paris, 19-21 February 1919

The Negroes of the world in Pan-African Congress assembled at Paris February 19, 20, 21, 1919, demand, in the interest of justice and humanity and for strengthening the forces of civilisation, that immediate steps be taken to develop the 200[,]000[,]000 of Negroes and Negroids; to this end, they propose:

- A. ---That the allied and associated Powers establish a code of laws “for the international protection of the natives of Africa,” similar to the proposed international code for Labor.
- B. ---That the League of Nations establish a permanent Bureau charged with the special duty of “overseeing the application of these laws to the political, social and economic welfare of the natives.”

The Negroes of the world demand that hereafter the natives of Africa and the Peoples of African descent be “governed according to the following principles.”

- 1. ---The Land: The land and its natural resources shall be held in trust for the natives and at all times they shall have effective ownership of as much land as they can profitably develop.
- 2. ---Capital: The investment of capital and granting of concessions shall be so regulated as to prevent the exploitation of the natives and the exhaustion of the natural wealth of the country. Concessions shall always be limited in time and subject to State control. The growing social needs of the natives must be regarded and the profits taxed for the social and material benefit of the natives.

3. ---Labor: Slavery and corporal punishment shall be abolished and forced labor except in punishment for crime; and the general conditions of labor shall be prescribed and regulated by the State.

4. ---Education: It shall be the right of every native child to learn to read and write his own language, and the language of the trustee nation, at public expense, and to be given technical instruction in some branch of industry. The State shall also educate as large a number of natives as possible in higher technical and cultural training and maintain a corps of native teachers.

5. ---Med[i]cine and Hygiene: It shall be recognized that human existence in the tropics calls for special safeguards and a scientific system of public hygiene. The State shall be responsible for medical care and sanitary conditions without discouraging collective and individual initiative. A service created by the State shall provide physicians and hospitals, and shall spread the rules of hygiene by written and spoken word. As fast as possible the State will establish a native medical staff.

6. ---The State: The natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the government as fast as their development permits in conformity with the principle that the government exists for the natives, and not the natives for the government. They shall at once be allowed to participate in local and tribal government according to ancient usage, and this participation shall gradually extend, as education and experience proceeds, to the higher offices of State, to the end that, in time, Africa be ruled by consent of the Africans.

7. ---Culture and Religion: No particular religion shall be imposed and no particular form of human culture. There shall be liberty of conscience. The uplift of the natives shall take into consideration their present condition and shall allow the utmost scope to racial genius, social inheritance and individual bent so long as these are not contrary to the best established principles of civilization.

8. ---Civilized Negroes: Wherever persons of African descent are civilized and able to meet the tests of surrounding culture, they shall be accorded the same rights as their fellow citizens; they shall not be denied on account of race or color a voice in their own government, justice before the courts and economic and social equality according to ability and desert.



A session of the Pan-African Congress of 1919; W. E. B. Du Bois seated at center.



The Grant Hotel in Paris, site of the 1919 Pan-African Congress

9. ---The League of Nations: Greater security of life and property shall be guaranteed the natives; international labor legislation shall cover the native workers as well as whites; they shall have equitable representation in all the international institutions of the League of Nations, and the participation of the blacks themselves in every domain of endeavour shall be encouraged in accordance with the declared object of article 19 of the League of Nations, to wit: "The well being and the development of these people constitute a sacred mission of civilisation and it is proper in establishing the League of Nations to incorporate therein pledges for the accomplishment of this mission."

Whenever it is proven that African natives are not receiving just treatment at the hands of any State or that any State deliberately excludes its civilized citizens or subjects of Negro descent from its body politic and cultural, it shall be the duty of the League of Nations to bring the matter to the attention of the civilized World.

For the Pan-African Congress, composed of 57 members from 15 countries, inhabited by 85[,]000[,]000 Negroes and persons of African descent---to wit:

United States – 16

French West Indies and French Guiana – 13

Haiti – 7

France – 7

Liberia – 46

Spanish Colonies – 2

Portuguese Colonies – 2

Abyssinia – 1

Saint-Domingue – 1

England – 1

English Africa – 1

French Africa – 1

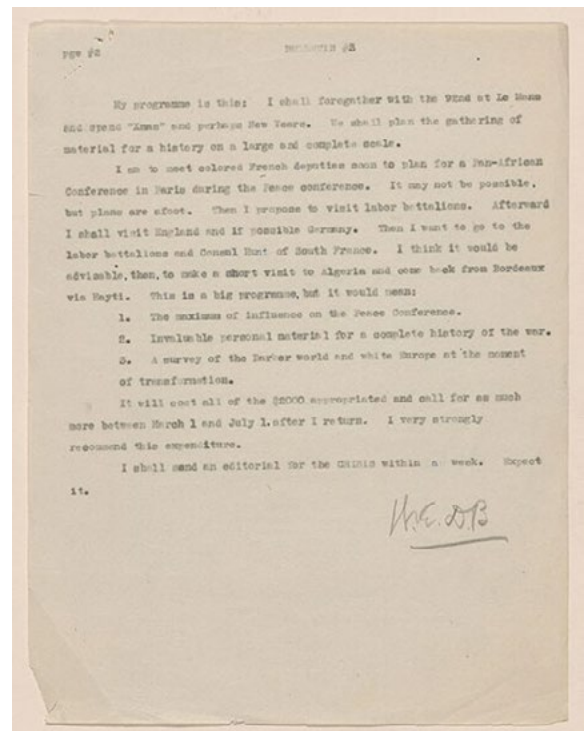
Algeria – 1

Egypt – 1

Belgian Congo – 1

TOTAL – 57

W. E. Burghardt Du Boise, Director,
National Association for the Advance-
ment of Colored People, U.S.A., Sec-
retary (of the Congress)



Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to the NAACP seeking support for his post-war travel to Europe, to interview soldiers and plan the first Pan-African Congress, January 1919

Primary Source 3:

Solomon T. Plaatje, "Shall We Appeal to You in Vain?," 1916

Solomon T. Plaatje was a Black South African man educated at a German mission station in southern Africa. Plaatje had worked as a court translator (speaking English, Afrikaans, German, SeTswana and several other African languages) in the British-ruled South African town of Kimberley. He was one of the founding members in 1912 of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which became the African National Congress (ANC)—now the ruling party in South Africa. Plaatje had traveled to England to protest the Natives Land Act of 1913, which prohibited Africans—67% of the population—from buying or leasing land in 93% of the country, which was reserved for whites. He had been present in London during the outbreak of World War I in 1914, and returned again in 1919 as part of an ANC delegation. In the years after, he traveled to Canada and the United States, where he met members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and pan-Africanist W. E. B. Du Bois.

Source: Solomon T. Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa, Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion (P. S. King & Son, 1916), 352.

[W]e are encouraged to hope that, 'when peace again reigns over Europe', when white men cease warring against white men, when the warriors put away the torpedoes and the bayonets and take up less dangerous implements, you will in the interest of your flag, for the safety of your coloured subjects, the glory of your Empire, and the purity of our religion, grapple with this dark blot on the Imperial emblem, the South African anomaly that compromises the justice of British rule and seems almost to belie the beauty, the sublimity and the sincerity of Christianity. Shall we appeal to you in vain? *I hope not.*



Sol Plaatje (right) with members of the South African Native National Congress, June 1914

Primary Source 4:

John Archer, African Progress Union, 1918

John Archer was born in Liverpool, England, in 1863, the son of a Black Barbadian sailor and an Irish immigrant. He was a founder of the African Progress Union in Britain and was one of the first Black Britons to win public office when he was elected a member of the Battersea Borough Council in 1908, and then mayor in 1913. He attended the Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1919 as a British delegate. Archer's speech quoted below was given on the occasion of the founding of the African Progress Union in London in 1918. Gabriel is a figure from the Christian Bible; the reference to Gabriel's trumpet in this speech reflects a commonly held belief that it was the angel Gabriel who would blow a trumpet signaling the arrival of the end times.

Source: Z. K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z. K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968* (David Philip, 1981), 62.



John Archer, November 1913

We are living in stirring times. We have seen the end of the greatest war in the annals of history, a war that marks an epoch in the history of our race. Side by side with the British Army, for the first time, our compatriots from Africa, America, and the West Indies have been fighting on the fields of France and Flanders against a foreign foe. A war, we have been repeatedly told, for the self-determination of small nations and the freedom of the world from the despotism of German rule. The truth of that statement will be proved by the way they deal in America with Afro-Americans, in France with their Negro subjects, in Belgium with their Congo subjects, and Great Britain with India, Africa, and the West Indies. We shall be told the old, old story. Africa is not ready; the time is not ripe; they are not sufficiently advanced. According to some critics the Negroes will only be ready when the Angel Gabriel sounds his trumpet. I do not know when that great day will come but I am hoping it is far distant, because we are inaugurating tonight an association which I trust to be the parent of a large number of similar institutions, whose sole reason for existence will be the progress of our African race. I have said according to some people the African is not ready. Upon whom, then, can the blame be placed more equitably than the white race? What have they done, what are they doing, to rectify the great wrong inflicted upon our forbears? The children of the white race today owe a great debt still to the children of the darker race. We are hearing a great deal about indemnities on the one hand, reparation on the other, that the Peace Conference is going to demand from Germany. I venture to submit each delegate to the Conference this proposition: "keep your minds on the patent fact that Negroes have been associated with you in bringing about the possibility of this great conference of the nations who are so desirous for the world's freedom."

Primary Source 5:

Z. K. Matthews, South Africa, ca. 1919

Z. K. (Zachariah Keodirelang) Matthews was born in 1901 in what is today South Africa. He entered Fort Hare University around the time that World War I was ending, later graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1923—the first Black African to earn a BA at a South African institution. While he was a student at Fort Hare, he and his classmates were keen observers of international affairs, including the peace proceedings in Paris. They were acquainted with South Africa's involvement on the British side of the war, and knew about Wilson's Fourteen Points. The Union of South Africa was only just formed in 1910 as a self-governing state of the British Commonwealth, with voting rights almost exclusively for whites. The Native Land Act of 1913 had effectively barred most Blacks in South Africa from access to their ancestral lands. Black South Africans participated in World War I strictly as non-combatant laborers. A longtime member of the African National Congress (ANC), Matthews pursued further education at Yale and the London School of Economics, and had a long, distinguished career as an educator in South Africa.

Source: Z. K. Matthews, Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z. K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968 (David Philip, 1982), 62; as cited in ifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, "The African agenda and the origins of internationalism within the ANC: 1912-1960," in Busani Ngcaweni, ed., The Future We chose: Emerging Perspectives on the Centenary of the ANC (Africa Institute of South Africa, 2013), 69.

When President Wilson published his 14 Points, the phrase 'self-determination for small nations' caught the ears of Africans. Did the 'nations' to which he referred include us? Did they mean us, the black peoples of Africa, too? At Fort Hare we talked of little else. The consensus was that the re-makers of the world did not count us as a nation or as part of any nation... We lived in South Africa, but we were not regarded as part of the South African nation. Indeed, when white leaders spoke of the 'nation' of South Africa, they meant only the white nation. When they gave population figures of the nation, they only gave the number of Europeans.



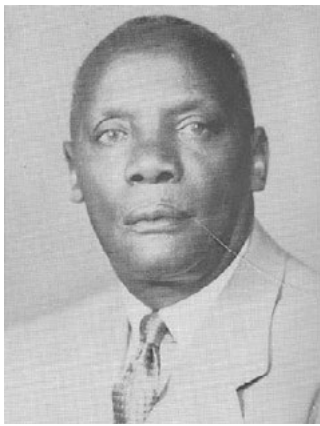
Z. K. Matthews (left) as a teacher at Adams' College in 1928, with Robbins B. Guma, and Albert Luthuli 1928

Primary Source 6:

Harry Thuku, An Autobiography, 1970

Harry Thuku was born in British East Africa in what is today Kenya in 1895. His family were Kikuyu, an ethnic group that had lost significant land to white settlers during the British takeover. Though Kikuyu was his mother tongue, he was educated by American missionaries and became fluent in English and Swahili. He moved to Nairobi at age 16, where he found work at a newspaper. There, he learned how to compose type and print, as well as how to print maps and sketches of war positions. Because his specialized skills served the British war interests, he did not face recruitment into active service in the East Africa Campaign. After the war ended, Thuku became active in political movements advocating for the rights of Africans in the British colony of Kenya. He and Abdalla Tairara co-founded the Young Kikuyu Association, the first organization to defend African interests in colonial Kenya, and in 1921 he founded the East Africa Association, the first multi-ethnic political organization in East Africa.

Source: Harry Thuku, *An Autobiography* (Oxford University Press, 1970), 18–9.



Harry Thuku

The War ended, and after it, things began to warm up in the British East Africa Protectorate (that was Kenya's old name). First there were many thousands of porters who came back from very very difficult conditions in the East Africa Campaign, and found that they would not get any gratuity. Instead the government under General Northey decided the white soldiers, and especially the officers, should be rewarded. So they alienated many thousands of acres in the area round Kericho for a Soldier Settlement Scheme. Also in my own Kiambu area, more land was taken at this time and given to white settlers....

The second thing that was making Africans angrier after the War was this thing called *kipande*. This was Swahili for a container in which a registration paper was carried. Now General Northey¹, Kenya's Governor after the War, decided in 1919 to implement the recommendations of an earlier committee which had suggested that Africans be registered. The ordinary people did not understand what this registration was, but even more educated ones like me did not oppose it to begin, for we knew that many countries asked their citizens to register. So we did not object until we found that it was a very different business in Kenya. First of all you had to wear this quite heavy metal box round your neck on a string all the time; then in the columns on the paper inside there were many things that were against Africans. There was one space where the employer had to sign when he engaged you and also when you left.... Another thing in the early kind of *kipande* was a space for remarks; and here, if an employer did not like you, he could spoil your name completely by putting "lazy," "disobedient," or "cheeky." That column made me very angry. *Kipande* was only for Africans....

Image Citations

Page 1:

A view of the interior of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, with heads of state, 1919, by William Orpen, Imperial War Museum London, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:William_Orpen_%E2%80%93_The_Signing_of_Peace_in_the_Hall_of_Mirrors,_Versailles_1919,_Ausschnitt.jpg

Page 2:

Council of Four at the World War I Paris Peace Conference, May 27, 1919, U. S. Signal Corps, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Big_four.jpg

Page 3:

A view of the interior of the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, with heads of state, 1919, by William Orpen, Imperial War Museum London, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:William_Orpen_%E2%80%93_The_Signing_of_Peace_in_the_Hall_of_Mirrors,_Versailles_1919,_Ausschnitt.jpg

Map of Africa in 1919 (Image 495 of The War of the Nations: Portfolio in Rotogravure Etchings: Compiled from the Mid-week Pictorial, New York, 1919), Library of Congress, Public Domain, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/collgdc.gc000037/?sp=495&q=map+of+africa+191>

Page 5:

A session of the Pan-African Congress, Paris, February 19-22, 1919, from The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races, Vol. 18, No.

1, May 1919, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pan-African_Congress,_Paris,_February_19-22,_1919.png

L'hotel InterContinental Paris Le Grand, 2022, CC-BY-SA 4.0, Arthur Weidmann, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H%C3%B4tel_InterContinental_Paris_Le_Grand_2.jpg

Page 6:

W. E. B. Du Bois to NAACP January 1919 about First Pan-African Congress, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:W.E.B._Du_Bois_to_NAACP_January_1919_about_First_Pan_African_Congress.jpg

Page 7:

The South African Native National Congress delegation to England, June 1914, including left to right: Thomas Mapike, Rev Walter Rubusana, Rev John Dube, Saul Msane, Sol Plaatje, Public Domain, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ANC1914.jpg>

Page 8:

Mr. R. J. Archer, Mayor of Battersea, November 10, 1913, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Archer,_10_November_1913_\(btv1b6927787x\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Archer,_10_November_1913_(btv1b6927787x).jpg)

Page 9:

Z. K. Matthews (left), Robbins B. Gumma (center), and Albert Luthuli (right) at Adams College, 1928, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MatthewsGumaLuthuli.png>

Page 10:

Harry Thuku and map of British East Africa, CC-BY-SA 4.0, Editor, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harry-Thuku-banner.jpg>