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| Sommario/riassunto | This is a study of the genesis, evolution, adaptation and subordination of the Kikuyu squatter labourers, who comprised the majority of resident labourers on settler plantations and estates in the Rift Valley Province of the White Highlands. The story of the squatter presence in the White Highlands is essentially the story of the conflicts and contradictions that existed between two agrarian systems, the settler plantation economy and the squatter peasant option. Initially, the latter developed into a viable but much resented sub-system which operated within and, to some extent, in competition with settler agriculture. This study is largely concerned with the dynamics of the squatter presence in the White Highlands and with the initiative, self-assertion and resilience with which they faced their subordinate position as labourers. In their response to the machinations of the colonial system, the squatters were neither passive nor malleable but, on the contrary, actively resisted coercion and subordination as they struggled to carve out a living for themselves and their families.... It is a firm conviction of this study that Kikuyu squatters played a crucial role in the initial build-up of the events that led to the outbreak of the Mau Mau war. —from the introduction. |