MAU MAU IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

By
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Introductory Remarks

It is possible to look at Mau Mau consciousness in terms of two overlapping phases of the Colonial and Post-colonial periods, represented by seminal publications which show the power of books to shape thinking and public consciousness. In the colonial period were Jomo Kenyatta’s 1938 Facing Mount Kenya, the Corfield Report in 1960. In the Post-Colonial period were John Nottingham’s The Myth of Mau Mau soon after independence, and Caroline Elkins’ 2005 Imperial Reckoning/Britain’s Gulag. Each represents a phase of consciousness with regard to the Mau Mau War and can be divided into the following segments:

a. The Colonial Setting
b. The shock of the Mau Mau War outbreak
c. The attempted destruction of Mau Mau Consciousness
d. Post-colonial ignoring or effort to rearrange Mau Mau Consciousness
e. Limited revival of Consciousness

The Attraction

The attraction to Mau Mau consciousness is partly because there probably was no challenge to the European colonial state in Africa that captured as much global attention as the Mau Mau War in Kenya against the British and the Algerian War against the French. The Mau Mau War was bitter and the benefits did not always accrue to those who bore the brunt of the war. A few fighters benefited, but the rest appear to have been neglected. In contrast, those who had opposed the war or supported British colonialists seemingly benefited most, continue to benefit, and a feeling of betrayal cropped up that is often the subject of many debates. After the Jubilee celebrations in December 2013, Mutuma Mathiu, Group Managing Editor of the Nation Media

Group, complained that “Kenya is averse to recognizing the role of the Mau Mau in the liberation of our country.” Instead, it gives “national honours to homeguards, politicians, civil servants and their relatives” but not to “those who actually did something for our country.” He asked: “Don’t you think we have done enough for the home guards?”

This is a question that has been asked many times as the Mau Mau War is constantly re-fought in different arenas. In the process, there have been many attempts to destroy, ignore, shift blame, and rearrange Mau Mau consciousness to suit prevailing political mood. In re-arranging history, a bit of homage is paid to the Mau Mau consciousness on such national holidays as Madaraka Day, Kenyatta Day, and Jamhuri Day and then quickly forgotten. In part this is because anti-Mau Mau forces are persistent and seemingly control tools of opinion making. Proud “old diehard colonialists like me”, wrote RA Massie-Blomfield in the *Sunday Standard* of June 1, 2014 Madaraka Day, “were … apprehensive about granting independence to people who wanted independence for all the wrong reasons.” Kenya’s true patriots, he insisted, were the home guards who “defeated” the Mau Mau and recognized how much Kenya owes “to these colonialists for their hard work, vision, and self-sacrifice.” The colonialists had successfully created black Englishmen. Subsequently, regaining the destroyed, ignored, and re-arranged Mau Mau consciousness becomes problematic and often baffling.

**The Rationale for Destruction of Mau Mau Consciousness**

The destruction is in both colonial and post-colonial phases, mostly by officials whose attitude is like that of Henry Ford who after declaring that history was “more or less bunk” spent a lot of time and money to recreate his version of history. The history they want known and taught to the public and children in schools is the one they create or approve. In Kenya, this is rooted in colonialism whose intent was to ruin the African past and consciousness while creating a new consciousness of submissiveness and admiration for things European. To do that, Tom Askwith wrote in his *Kenya’s Progress*, the “British decided that they must have agents through whom

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3 Mutuma Mathiu, “Leadership is not about putting people down or showing how useless they are,” *Daily Nation*, Friday, December 20, 2013, p.12


5 Jessie Swigger, “History is Bunk”: Assembling the Past at Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), passim
they could work when dealing with the Africans in the various areas, and so the most outstanding men and natural leaders were made official headmen.” Missionaries were also agents of colonialism and if some did not understand what their exact role in the colonies was, colonial officials in British East Africa advised them to read a little book by Sidney Olivier, *White Capital and Coloured Labour*, which outlined the role of missionaries as being to soften the natives for proper exploitation by white capitalists. The work of the missionaries, therefore, was to help make the African poor by depriving him of his heritage so that he can be properly controlled in order to entrench European interests. To Askwith in the 1950s, the main purpose “was not how to read, write and do arithmetic, but how … to behave towards parents and those in authority like chiefs and the Government, and finally, of course, how to God.” As they prepared to vacate Kenya, the British officials destroyed documentary evidence of their atrocities. Given the fetish associated with documents, the destruction of documents was an attempt to destroy Mau Mau history.

While ignoring or rearranging African pre-colonial history was a colonial phenomenon, ignoring and rearranging the Mau Mau consciousness is a post-colonial phenomenon mainly because the inheritors of the colonial state were uncomfortable with it. It was meant to destroy Mau Mau awareness in Kenya and those who refused to comply landed in much trouble. Yet, connected to the strategy of ignoring is the attempt to re-arrange history by broadcasting a bit of the Mau Mau consciousness on such national holidays as Madaraka Day, Kenyatta Day, and Jamhuri Day. On such days, the inheritors pay a little homage to “liberation” and selected “heroes” who are then quickly forgotten. There is also effort to rearrange “facts”. Kenya’s 2010 constitution, in some way, was an attempt to re-arrange history and to create new local consciousness befitting the political climate of the day. Given that the concept of Kenyatta Day was not Kenyatta’s doing since it started in 1959 while Kenyatta was in jail, the removal of the name *Kenyatta Day* was an attempt to destroy an aspect of Mau Mau consciousness. It was rearrangement of history.

Subsequently, regaining the destroyed, ignored, and re-arranged Mau Mau consciousness is often problematic and publicly confusing. The examples of two events involving Mau Mau generals

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8 Askwith, *Kenya’s Progress*, p.82
9 Porter, “How did they get away with it?”
are indicative of the confusion. First, was the 2003 confusion over the issue of General Stanley Mathenge. An old man from Ethiopia agreed to come to Nairobi, all expenses paid, because he supposedly was “Mathenge” but, on arrival, he profusely denied himself. The impression created was that the government officials were so inept and idiotic that they could easily be duped by an old Ethiopian. No action was taken against the supposed “conman” or those who identified him as Mathenge, and a mystery arose.

Second, the issue of Dedan Kimathi’s grave, and who a national hero is, revealed hypocrisy on the part of political leaders. As Ali Mazrui once wrote, heroes are admired when dead but not when alive. Dead heroes are actual assets to political villains who then masquerade as followers of the dead hero knowing that he cannot respond. Kimathi was probably such a hero who was good dead, and unfound, and a lively subject of debate on heroism. Another such hero was Achieng Oneko who, when alive, used to say, “Give us something to eat when we are alive”. After his death, Oneko was accorded a hero’s funeral in Rarieda with Mau Mau veterans singing his praises. As for Kimathi, a statue was erected in Nairobi and a technical college in Nyeri was elevated into Kimathi University. The country is still not sure who qualifies to be a national hero or, given the behavior of some political leaders, a national villain.

The effect of the Mau Mau War, mostly on people around Mount Kenya, was devastating. It left lasting impressions of the horrors of war in fortified villages and detention camps where torture was the norm. It seemingly encouraged the growth of a biting socio-cultural chill, heho which instilled fear that was ingrained in the people, scaring them from asserting themselves, defending their interests with vigour, or taking pride in themselves. Heho, undermined the people’s collective body fabric and promoted meekness and an inexplicable sense of collective guilt, and self-doubt. Fearing a repeat of the horrors of the 1950s, members of the community repeatedly seemed to fail to defend themselves, even as they got the beatings.

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11 Ali Mazrui, “Thoughts on Assassination in Africa,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 83, Number 1, March 1968, pp. 50-52
The Colonial Phase

The Colonial Setting
There are two conflicting aspects to the outbreak of the Mau Mau War within the context of colonial setting. First is the establishment of the colonial state and the presumed white man’s country. Second is the African reaction and resentment to that establishment that virtually relegated them to the status of perpetual slavery. The struggle between the two aspects of the creation of colonial Kenya culminated in the Mau Mau War that ended territorial colonialism.

White Man’s Country
All this goes back to the imposition of British rule in East Africa in what former US President Theodore Roosevelt believed was "one of the few regions of the world still left which is fit for new white settlement [and] it would be a crime to the white races to fail to take advantage of it." He advocated the mounting of “every effort … to favor the growth of a large and prosperous white population” where missionaries and colonial officials “work hand in hand” in ruling Africans “with wisdom and firmness and when necessary with severity”

It was, as Askwith argued, after the coming of the Europeans that “the danger of raids from other tribes disappeared, and the people moved out from their forts, and each family built its own village.” Askwith reportedly told Caroline Elkins that the Europeans believed “in our higher purpose” which had “so much better to offer” Africans. This thinking was in line with that of Roosevelt who had "no patience with people who sit at home and prate of self-government to people who have not governed themselves and never could." Among the offerings was peace obtained by making raids difficult by reserving for European or Asian farming “land which lay between African tribes who were frequently at war with each other …. In this way a barrier was placed between the tribes, and fighting was prevented.” Besides, he claimed, Africans benefited because the European farmer had to “risk money and use his brains” and employ Africans who

15 Quote in Munene, The Truman Administration, pp.16-17.
16 Askwith, Kenya’s Progress, p.2
17 Quote in Porter, “How did they get away with it?”
18 Roosevelt, "The Prospect of British East Africa", pp. 44, 46.
19 Askwith, Kenya’s Progress, p. 4
“benefit from the wages he pays and the food he provides ... [and] from the taxes he pays, which enable the Government to provide services.”

Making Africans behave properly towards Government was the work of such conquerors as Francis George Hall at the Kikuyu country as of August 1893. Since the Gikuyu irked him with defiance, he wanted them wiped out: “Unless they took to work like other natives,” he wrote “they would eventually be wiped out [and] better people brought into the country.” Hall, claimed fellow administrator Charles W. Hobley “did more than any living man to establish pax Britannica among the Kikuyu, who were then a very turbulent and treacherous tribe”. In doing so, Hall was ruthless and believed in flogging “natives” for misdemeanors after which he expected little trouble. He launched a series of punitive expeditions and admitted:

"To tell the truth, I want a lot of food for Macdonald's caravan... In fact this is the real reason I have been so keen to smash them properly[ sic] as they would otherwise be a continuing menace to our food parties and probably take the first opportinity[ sic] of cutting them up." 

While preparing to bring “better people to the country” by wiping out the defiant Gikuyu, however, Hall started having doubts about other Europeans. He dismissed other administrators like Arthur Hardinge and John Ainsworth as paper pushers looking for opportunities to move up, considered missionaries to be an inconvenience that sometimes stopped him from doing what he wanted, like flogging the natives, and was angry with traders like John Boyes who masqueraded as a government official, collecting and pocketing taxes. Hall, no longer thinking of wiping out the Kikuyu for not being cooperative, started having reservations about the behavior of white people and warned of a possible uprising. “One of these days” he wrote,

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20 Ibid., p.14
25 P.R. Booh, "How Peace Came to Kikuyu," Extracts of Letters From Francis George Hall in Political Record Book, Fort Hall District, Kenya National Archives.
26 Sullivan, Edited Letters of Francis Hall pp. 13, 46, 152-153, 165, 168
27 Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu, p. 159
28 Ibid., p. 155
“when the natives have wiped out a few Europeans, they may learn the wisdom & the only thing is to hope not to be amongst the first victims.”

He was not one of “the first victims” roughly fifty years later, in 1952, when the natives tried to wipe “out a few Europeans” in what became the Mau Mau War.

By then, the dream of white man’s country appeared to be reality in settler lifestyles. “Having invested,” according to Max Hastings, “in making a new life in that most wonderful of African countries, the settlers were fiercely determined to stay.”

It had seemingly started with a suggestion from Lord Delamere to Commissioner Charles Eliot in 1902. Eliot, believing in white supremacy and turning East Africa into white man’s country, had mounted white farmer recruitment campaign with promises of huge tracts of land in tropical Africa with plenty of native labour. In that recruitment, Jews and Indians were not welcome and when Britain toyed with the idea of Zionists and Indians, it flopped. The World Zionist Organisation, focusing on Palestine, had turned down the idea of making East Africa their “home” while the Indians aspired to move villages into East Africa and not just agricultural settlers. Keeping Jews and Indians at bay preoccupied a settler political organ, the Colonists’ Association, led by Ewart Grogan whose activities instilled settler faith in the “country” as they demanded a say in governance. Visiting Under-Secretary of State Winston Churchill noted that “every man in Nairobi is a politician; and most of them are leaders of parties.”

The faith was partly based on what came to be called “The Elgin Pledges”. These were derived from supposed concessions to the settlers by Lord Elgin, Secretary of State, beginning in 1906 with a Legislative Council comprising the settlers and government officials. This would eventually lead to self-government for settlers. The “pledges”, the settlers claimed had established “policy of reserving the highlands exclusively for settlement of Europeans.”

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29 Quote in Sullivan, Edited Letters of Francis Hall, p. 162.
30 Max Hastings, “The Dark side of the Empire,” The Guardianbookshop, January 11, 2005
33 Paice, Lost Lion, p.196
35 Quote in Maxon, Struggle for Kenya, p. 215
In building white man’s country, depriving the Africans of their lands for white settlements became a norm. In 1915, the government decreed that all African lands were “crown lands”, not African with 999 year leases to be given to settlers. After the War, Britain rewarded white soldiers with land and as a result, the poorer sort of white people were allowed in the Soldier Settlement Scheme. Potential settlers acquired land allocation tickets either in Nairobi or London. Tickets were placed in revolving drums and then picked one by one to decide, by lottery, who would get what piece of land. When some natives petitioned against land alienation Sir Jacob Barth, the judge, ruled in 1921 that native land tenure system did not count and that all land, including land ‘reserved for natives’, was crown land for the crown to do as it pleased. All natives, therefore, were ‘tenants at will of the British Crown.’

The decision increased the feeling of confidence in the government to alienate more land from the Africans whenever it felt the need and look into the other needs of the settlers. Although the settler dream of self-government had received a jolt in the 1923 Devonshire White Paper whose purpose was to lower the political temperatures between two immigrant communities, the settlers and the Indians, there was no perceived danger to settler interests. The paper stressed the paramountcy of African interests when in conflict with those of the immigrant communities but not for Africans to take over white control.

There being no perceived danger, areas thought to be safe from white alienation also became open to white settlements and the settler population kept rising. In Kakamega in the 1930s, there was white invasion once some sort of gold was discovered. Some people in Tigoni area of Limuru became victims of white land appetite and were forcibly moved to Olenguruene in Nakuru. And World War II, wrote Max Hastings while reviewing Elkins and Anderson, “there was a postwar recruiting drive for white migrants to Kenya, which caused a surge in the European population from 29,000 in 1945 to 42,000 in 1952, 54,000 in 1956 at the height of the Mau Mau insurgency, and an amazing 61,000 by independence in 1961.”

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40 Spencer, *Kenya African Union*, pp. 80, 86, 89, 157
41 Hastings, “The Dark side of the Empire,”
Once they had the land the white settlers received help in terms of capital, provision of infrastructure such as extension of the railroad, and most important labour. Although labour was cheap, it was not easily available and so the administrators made the chiefs to persuade young men to go work in the farms. The chiefs and headmen had been created as colonial instruments, what Lovatt-Smith termed “as intermediaries between” colonial officials “and local people.” The only way to persuade large numbers of natives to work for the white man as field hands was by forcing them out of their productive lifestyles where they appeared to be self-sufficient embarked on the process of creating poverty as a way of compelling many of them to work for white settlers. Taxes that were to be paid in cash were increased and the only way an African could get cash was to work for a mzungu whether the mzungu was a missionary, an administrator or a settler. It was the pressure by the government that sent men to settler farms as field hands, tenant farmers and squatters, or houseboys. In those farms, wrote Cranworth, some labourers were made “gang leaders, or neoparas” who received “more pay” and enjoyed “the job of bossing their fellows.” In addition, some settlers administered “beatings at frequent intervals” and even the easy ones “on occasion countenanced the kiboko.”

African labourers became property and a friendly owner like Frank Joyce could talk of devoting “the rest of my life to my own Africans.”

In treating Africans like property, the white settlers also believed that Africans were naturally inferior to the Europeans. Christopher Wilson, writing from Kikuyu in 1954 defended his “apparent belief that the African is not only different from the European but also in some way inferior…. I recognize … rising grades of human culture …. By birth and breeding we have inherited the advantage, in tradition, religion, manner of thought and way of life, of the higher state of civilization.” That belief was reinforced in the envisaged colonial education system, to be based on racial expectations. When in 1909 with the Department of Education created in 1911, to cater for settler children as future owners of the country. Education was not supposed to be for Africans since, one settler argued, “it would only put foolish notions … in their heads.” And the 1923 Devonshire White paper reinforced the view of African

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42 Trzerbinski, *The Life and Death of Lord Erroll*, p. 69
44 Trzerbinski, *The Life and Death of Lord Erroll*, p. 69
49 Quote in Robert F. Stephens, *Kenyan Student Airlift to America, 1959-1961: An Educational Odyssey*, p 4
intellectual inferiority asserting that “no articulate expression of opinion can be expected from the African tribes of Kenya.”

That way, Kenya became a paradise on earth for white settlers where, according to Hastings, they “were fiercely determined to stay” in “that most wonderful of African countries.” 51 It was also seemingly a safe place for British imperialism to entrench itself after being harassed out of India and the Middle East. In those farms or in any contact with the mzungu the relationship was one of master and servant and there were rules of etiquette to be followed. One of those was that masters, and all Wazungu irrespective of how young were masters, would keep social distance from Africans who were not to speak English, the language of the master. “When it was necessary to talk to an African,” Geoffrey William Griffin who grew up in Kitale as a small master remembered, “the pidgin Kiswahili known as “Kisettler” was the accepted form of conversation” with “boys” since “etiquette forbade the African to speak English, ‘the master language!’”52 The masters tended to elevate themselves with military titles like colonel, sometimes go on “safari to study the natives”, complain about how the Indians were exploiting and taking over the country from the Europeans.53

And for ‘health’ purposes, the masters were required to take time off. To ensure they stayed fit, Griffin remembered white officials living upcountry had “a medical obligation” and were expected once a year to go for “a holiday at Mombasa … as a way of keeping European government workers fit and in good form. It was ‘lazima’ for them all.” Little Griffin had fun and was excited going to the coast in a train “as it snaked its way through the present day Tsavo National Park. The sight of the sea had a tonic effect and I loved splashing water when we went swimming at the beaches.”54 They were also entitled to “home leave” which, Richard Leakey observed, “was a relic of the Victorian belief that it was essential for English people to get away from the tropical sun now and again to avoid creeping madness or worse still, becoming completely ‘African’. To ‘go native’ or to admit not longing for the joys of English civilization was a terrible stigma that ruined many a promising career.”55 After the regular visit to England for inoculation from going “native”, the officials and

50 Quote in Pace, Lost Lion, p. 308
51 Hastings, “The Dark side of the Empire,”
settlers would return where they were happy. “Are you married or you still live in Kenya,” Elkins wrote, was the kind of greeting that settlers used when they met in Europe.\(^56\)

In the process, Kenya had become a paradise on earth for the white settlers. It had become, argued Dennis Judd, “the repository of unrealistic hopes and aspirations on the part of a small white settler community.”\(^57\) It was what Julius Gikonyo Kiano termed a “Shangri-la”, or a glorified brothel\(^58\) but one that was to Askwith “this wonderful country of Kenya.”\(^59\) In that wonderful country, every white man was referred to as a “colonel” or some other military rank, and was “king”, served by happy “boys”, providing everything they needed, including holding the pants for “bwana” to put his legs in.\(^60\) “In those days,” remembered Griffin, “Africans were very loyal and had great respect for white people. When talked to, they always answered ‘Ndio Afande’ respectfully.”\(^61\) Natives were simply cheap labour for such settlers as Karen Blixen who, to maintain the loyalty of her *native labour*, believed it was in her “own interest to take care of their children just as much as calves and fouls.”\(^62\)

While the settlers enjoyed their make believe “white man’s country”, there were rudimentary signs of future trouble that would lead to the outbreak of the Mau Mau War. The United States, taking an anti-imperial position during World War II, had together with Britain issued the Atlantic Charter stressing freedoms that emboldened colonized peoples to dream of such freedoms. In 1940, Lord Haley of Shahpur toured Africa and issued his “Africa Survey” on “Native Administration and Political Development in Tropical British Africa” recommending giving opportunity for Africans to evolve self-governance. He called for “Partnership” but the colonial office simply ignored his ideas. There was, however, a new Colonial Office junior minister in charge of war resource mobilisation. This was Harold Macmillan who took the Haley idea of “Partnership” and suggested selling small portions of white held lands in Kenya to

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\(^{56}\) Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag*, p.11  
^{59}\) Askwith, *Kenya’s Progress*, pp. xv-xvi  
^{60}\) Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa*, pp.10, 22  
^{61}\) King’ala, *The Autobiography of Geoffrey W. Griffin*, p. 20  
selected Africans. It was political tactic to silence American critics of imperialism. And Mergery Perham ventured to observed that the aloofness of colonial officials had not only failed to win African hearts for the crown in Kenya, it might make the Africans to support the Japanese if they appeared in Mombasa. By July 1943, Britain was having problems recruiting Africans for the war but it eventually managed to recruit a number of them, and some would later participate in the Mau Mau War. Among them was Waruhiu Itote alias General China and Kago wa Mbuku or General Kago.

_African Resentment_

Before the outbreak of the Mau Mau War, African resentment had been building up partly due to the failure of colonial officials, as Perham argued, to win African hearts for the crown but mainly because, Negley Farson claimed, of “the stupidity of the white man.” That build up manifested itself in political agitation as well as intellectual challenges to colonial logic. It could be traced to the treatment of Waiyaki wa Hinga at the hands of William J. Purkiss and a belief later evolved that Waiyaki was buried alive head downwards in Kibwezi thereby making colonialists particularly sinister. The British could not be trusted for after all Waiyaki’s big mistake was that he had trusted a white man, Lugard, only to be betrayed by Lugard’s “brothers”. The resistance is seen at Kihumbuini, in Murang’a County when in September 1902 the people defied the government, “cut up the mail party on Thika River,” proceeded to capture and punish “a white man who was trying to buy sheep from the Kihumbuini people,” and vented their anger by pegging “him down on the ground and wedged his mouth open: then the whole village, man, woman, and child urinated into his mouth till he drowned.” It is there in the

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64 Lawrence James, The Rise and Fall of the British Empire (London: ABACUS, 1994), pp. 502, 508  
65 Paul Maina, Six Mau Mau Generals (Nairobi: Gazelle, 1977)  
66 Farson, Last Chance in Africa, p. 119  
70 Kinyatti, History of Resistance in Kenya, p. 11.  
71 Meinertzhagen, Kenya Diary, pp. 50-51
activities of Harry Thuku and in Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru in March 1922\textsuperscript{72} and those of Joseph Kang’ethe Jesse Kariuki and James Beauttah who went on to create the Kikuyu Central Association, KCA, making demands that the government ignored.\textsuperscript{73} It is there in Peter Mbiyu Koinange, son of chief, who went to the United States to get the type of education reserved for white people. In England, while getting British teaching certification,\textsuperscript{74} he became close to another Kenyan African, Jomo Kenyatta, who had been sent there by the Kikuyu Central Association to agitate for African rights. Koinange helped Kenyatta in preparing \textit{Facing Mount Kenya} and the two men, with their separate contacts in the African-American community, developed political bonds. Koinange returned to Kenya in 1938 and became an inspiration to the African youth that included Kariuki Njiiri, Raul Mugo Gatheru, and Julius Gikonyo Kiano, the "the son of Jonathan Kiano".

The resentment is visible in Kenyatta not only in terms of political agitation but also in the intellectual challenge to colonial logic. He had risen to prominence in the 1920s, one of the few literate Africans, and was recruited by Kang’ethe and Beauttah into the KCA as Secretary General. Founding editor of KCA publication, \textit{Muiguitania}, Kenyatta the political adventurer quickly had agreed to go to England to present petitions on behalf of the KCA\textsuperscript{75}. In his first trip, he wrote articles stating the KCA position that Africans should have direct representation in the Legislative Council. He warned in 1930 that, “Until this representation of Africans by Africans is justly settled, there can be no peace or prosperity in Africa.”\textsuperscript{76} He became entrenched in Pan-African circles and became friends with singer and actor Paul Robeson with whom he shared a room and appeared in a feature film. The two influenced each other politically although Kenyatta used to get angry at the white people who expected him to sing like Robeson.\textsuperscript{77} He followed this up with his 1938 publication, \textit{Facing Mount Kenya}, a defiant intellectual attack on colonial benevolence that asserted the rights of Africans to speak for themselves. In the process of destroying other people to advance colonial interests, Kenyatta argued, colonialism used an instrument that he termed “professional friends” of Africa who claimed to know what was in the

\textsuperscript{72} Clough, \textit{Fighting Two Sides}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{73} Judd, \textit{Empire}, p. 349
\textsuperscript{74} Robert F. Stephens, \textit{Kenyan Student Airlift to America, 1959-1961: An Educational Odyssey}, pp 4-5.
\textsuperscript{75} John Spencer, \textit{Kenya African Union}
\textsuperscript{77} Oral Interview, Ruth Njiiri, Springfield, Massachussetts, USA, December 28, 1995.
best interest of the African. These professional friends then ensured that the African was not
given a chance to speak for himself.78

His fame, as an anti-colonial force, spread widely in Pan-Africanist circles. He helped to
organize the 1945 Pan-African Congress at Manchester which stressed commitment to the
destruction of colonialism, one way or another.79 Speaking for Eastern Africa and an illegal
organization in Kenya, the KCA, Kenyatta stressed accessing political power. “One thing we
must do,” Kenyatta told the participants, “… is to get political independence. If we achieve that
we shall be free to achieve other things we want. Self-independence must be our aim.”80 What
was important for Kenyatta was political power, not ideology. On returning to Kenya, he
convinced former KCA operatives to become members of the Kenya African Union, KAU,81 and
also advised KAU officials to maintain contacts with potential international supporters.82 In that
spirit, he had the portraits of people he considered anti-colonial and anti-imperial heroes on his
walls. These were Vladmir Lenin, Paul Robeson, and Jawaharlal Nehru.83

As head of KAU, wrote Hatch, Kenyatta was president of “the black man’s biggest political
organization, viewed by the Kenya Government with just about as much favor as Washington
views the Communist Organization in the United States.84 He became the inspiration to the anti-
colonial movement and was, asserted E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, “the man with the message: the
dismantling of colonialism… he showed the direction: settler colonialism could only be
dismantled from London. He thus weened the age-group of Oginga Odinga from the politics of
local focus … into the concern with independence.” 85

79 Macharia Munene, The Truman Administration and the Decolonisation of Sub-Saharan Africa (Nairobi: Nairobi
University Press, 1995), pp. 59-60
80 Jomo Kenyatta, “The East African Picture,” in George Padmore, editor, Colonial and Coloured Unity: A
p. 42.
82 Macharia Munene in Athens, Ohio, Telephone Discussions with R. Mugo Gatheru in Sacramento, California,
83 Edgerton, Mau Mau Crucible, p. 47
84 Hatch, Last Chance in Africa, p. 114
& Independence in Kenya, 1940-93 (Nairobi: EAEP, 1995), p. 34
The resentment was also there in Kenyatta’s dilemma of seemingly getting out of touch with his own symbolism and being torn three ways by overlapping forces for which he was symbol. First was the mainstream KAU which Kenyatta had popularized throughout the country, stressing constitutional demands. He had, in June 1952, recruited Kisumu businessman, Oginga Odinga, into politics. Odinga declared to Kenyatta that in the fight for “our self-government … I am your disciple to the hilt …. I remain always Your Disciple in Nationalism.”86 Having “declared that the tree of freedom must be watered with blood,”Atieno-Odhiambo insists, “Kenyatta of course was guilty of ‘managing Mau Mau’, the Mau Mau of the minds that he had liberated by his presence and oratory, from Elburgon, where the likes of Wasonga Sijeyo caught on to the message in 1948, to that of a meeting at Ruringu stadium, Nyeri, on 25 July 1952.” As a result, “the Mau Mau proper, that is, people who were still young enough to fight militarily, looked up to him and did not abandon his message in the forest. They sang of him as their Messiah.”87 Then there was the militancy of the Kiambaa Parliament at Banana Hill, presided over by his father in law, Chief Koinange, which overlapped with the underground KCA leadership and had started its own oathing ceremonies to bind people. Kenyatta took the binding oath and approved its spread to other areas.88 Third, there was also the militancy of the youth, generally termed anake a Forty, the age group of 1940, who questioned Kenyatta’s moderating constitutional approach to anti-colonialism and decided to adopt violent ways of demanding independence.

The militants had mixed backgrounds but they agreed to form a Central War Committee to prepare for potential war. There were old KCA hands like Jesse Kariuki. Some had military experience gained in World War II fighting for the British.89 Among them was Bildad Kaggia who had risen to the rank of staff sergeant.90 There was also Fred Kubai, militant trade unionist, Isaac Gathanju, and Eliud Mutonyi. These created a war council and started recruiting fighters, administering oaths, and silencing “moderates.” They included the KCA firebrand Jesse Kariuki who reprimanded Kenyatta at Kiburi House for daring to express an unacceptable opinion.

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87 Atieno-Odhiambo, “The Formative Years, 1945-55,” p. 34
89 King’ala, The Autobiography of Geoffrey W. Griffin, p. 35; Elkins, Britain’s Gulag, pp. 23-24
Although the outbreak of the war was a culmination of all these anti-colonial resentments, the Wazungu were mostly oblivious to the growing African unhappiness. While being served by natives, Hatch observed, it rarely occurred to the whites that the native know them and were unhappy. “Watch the face of the house-boy as he serves at table on a certain plateau in Kenya, and you will see a resolutely controlled mask of hate. Drive on fifty miles further, or back, and the boy is smiling as if it was the greatest pleasure in life that he can bring you in your morning tea.” 91 To them, the ‘colour-bar’ in which Africans received regular mistreatment and were denied services enjoyed by other races was sacrosanct. Africans were required to “toa kofia” in front of a mzungu and were subjected to residential inspection raids known as ”peksen”. Regular insults on Africans, Atieno-Odhiambo notes, included “shenzi, pumbavu, blade-Swaini, Kaffir, sokwe mtu, kuma nina fakini, nugu waheed.” There were also regular kiboko unleashed on men who were then expected to “sarut” in gratitude. 92

Some Wazungu noticed that something was wrong. They noted that the governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, took little interest in the warnings of danger partly because he was retiring and did not want to rock the boat. 93 And when King George VI died in 1952, white people were full of grief and prayed but not the Africans. Young Richard Leakey, then in school at St. Mary’s, later wrote, “I remember being puzzled that the local African people were not really responding to the King’s death in the same way and, even more surprisingly, my European elders did not seem to expect them to.” 94 Christopher Wilson, a disappointed settler, complained that “our young Colony,…the youngest colony of the British Empire … long before reaching years of maturity and discretion, is approaching a crisis.” 95 When the accumulated African resentment exploded in the Mau Mau War, it shattered Askew’s “wonderful country” that was paradise for white settlers.

The Shock of the Mau Mau War

The Mau Mau War outbreak made Hall and Meinertzhagen prophetic for having predicted that a clash between the whites and the blacks would occur. They had also ventured to predict that the

91 Hatch, Last Chance in Africa, p. 174
92 Atieno-Odhiambo, “The Formative Years, 1945-55,” pp. 32-33
93 Smith, Kenya, the Kikuyu and Mau Mau, pp.120-121
94 Leakey, One Life, p. 19
95 Wilson, Kenya’s Warning, p.1.
whites would not fare very well. In November 1902, Meinertzhagen wrote: “I fear the day is fast approaching when flannel suits and pretty frocks will give a cloak to political upheaval and all the evils of embryonic nationalism.” Roughly fifty years later, one of Meinertzhagen’s admirers, Lieut.-General Sir Gerald Lathbury was sucked into fighting the predicted “political upheaval … and embryonic nationalism.” Lathbury received the honor of commanding British forces against the Mau Mau after General Sir George Erskine’s tour of duty ended in April 1955. Writing a “Foreword” to Meinertzhagen’s *Kenya Diary* in January 1957, Lathbury expressed his belief that “it is often kinder to take strong measures in the beginning and so avoid subsequent loss of life: it should not be forgotten that fatal casualties in the Mau Mau rebellion between 1952 and 1956 reached five figures.” Was that a subtle swipe at Erskine?

Despite the Hall and Meinertzhagen predictions, the outbreak of the Mau Mau War made colonial officials to conjure up images of African return to satanic primitivism and to adopt a tough stance. Governor Evelyn Baring, in April 1953 ruled out self-government for Africans, as in the Gold Coast. Since the war took longer than expected, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, on March 6, 1953, suggested that helicopters be used, stressing “the importance … of making a display of air power over the heads of the Mau Mau.” Askwith fumed about “reckless leaders with their stupid followers” having lit a fire which “the Government has had to make every effort to put it out.” Immature “false leaders of Mau Mau,” who were “too ready to return to a primitive and savage way of getting what they want,” were to blame. Secretary Oliver Lyttelton saw “a new and unexpected convulsion” that “now shook Kenya.” To Lyttelton, Kenyatta was “a daemonic figure with extreme left-wing views” who made Lyttelton, while writing instructions to Governor Evelyn Baring, “suddenly see a shadow fall across the page - the horned shadow of the Devil himself.”

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96 Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary*, p.59
101 Askwith, *Kenya’s Progress*, pp. 120-121
103 Ibid., pp. 394-395.
Among the supposed immature and reckless leaders was Jomo Kenyatta. In the May 4th, 1953 issue of the popular *LIFE* magazine, after discussing how the "Kukes," wanted to drive out the British and how "Mike Blundell" believed in the white people keeping what they had worked for, described Kenyatta as a "Kenya Agitator... who studied in Moscow."104 Kenyatta, claimed the *Manchester Guardian* on learning of Kenyatta’s conviction, had misused “his immense ability and force of personality”. Had he allied “himself with the ruling powers ... his qualities might have him memorable in African history”.105 In 1960 *Time* magazine described him as a "fierce, bearded...wild eyed Kikuyu spokesman and student of telepathy, magic spells and Kikuyu lore.”106

Steps were taken to control opinion everywhere and deal with those who might sympathise with the devil. The Kenya African Union, KAU, was banned in June 1953, having mobilized an international legal defense team for Kenyatta.107 Peter Evans, a British lawyer who, apart from assisting in Kenyatta’s defense, presented a report to the governor about the killing of two Kikuyu prisoners by the security forces, was declared a prohibited immigrant in Kenya and in Tanganyika and was actually detained at Fort Jesus, Mombasa. In Kampala, *Uganda Post* Editor Joseph William Kiwanuka was charged with sedition because of an article that questioned Thacker’s credentials to be a judge in Kenyatta’s trial.108 A London based magazine, *Africa and the Colonial World*, was banned in Kenya because it revealed the atrocities being committed by the security forces.109 A white schoolmaster who, according to Lyttelton, had “attended Kenyatta’s meetings, and ... evinced considerable sympathy in public with Mau Mau,” was declared a prohibited immigrant and kicked out of Kenya.110 Reverend George M. Houser, a founder member of the American Committee on Africa, was in 1954 denied a visa to Kenya

106 *Time Magazine*, March 7, 1960, p. 27.
109 *Africa and the Colonial World*, September 1953, pp. 2-4; January 1954, pp. 2, 4-6, 10; February 1954, pp. 1-2; April 1954, pp. 1-2, 4-5, 8.
because he had participated in anti-racist campaigns in the United States and was likely to be critical of government policies. He was declared “a prohibited immigrant” in East Africa.111

And the Americans helped the Britons. American officials gave commitment that Mau Mau would not be debated at the United Nations.112 Mau Mau, the USIS Regional Public Affairs Officer John Alfred Noon wrote from Nairobi, "revealed that African nationalism in Kenya is powerful and could be captured and used by the Soviets." To Noon, African nationalists were subversive.113 The belief that nationalists were subversive explains why KAU activist Joseph Murumbi was denied a visa to the USA to present the African position. To stop an American academic, George Shepherd, from traveling to East Africa where he had previously met Kenyatta and expressed sympathy for African nationalism, the USA government withdrew his passport at the British behest.114 The US government went to the extent of trying to deport Mugo Gatheru back to Kenya where he could be locked up because of his close association with Koinange and St Clair Drake whom the government considered subversive.115

Despite the enforced conformity and brutality cover-ups, there was no quick military victory and so the British had been forced to rethink their governance of Kenya. Lyttelton flew to Kenya three times between 1952 and 1954 and started looking for formula to accommodate a few Africans.116 The result, Baring stated in the Legislative Council in 1954, was the Lyttelton constitution mandating a multi-racial government as well as the decision to “initiate a study ... of the best methods of choosing African Members of the Legislative Council.” Walter F. Coutts, the Administrator of St. Vincent in the Windward Islands, was appointed to conduct the study117 and he submitted his report in 1956.

114 Houser, No One Can Stop the Rain, pp. 22, 64; Africa Today, August-September, 1954, p. 2.
116 Chandos, Memoirs, pp. 397-399, 403-404.
117 Governor’s Speech from the Chair, October 12, 1954, in Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Legislative Council Debates, Tenth Council, Fourth Session, First Sitting, pp. 6-7.
The image of the Kikuyu as evil and sickly was drilled in the minds of other Africans who were to be protected from being infected with the Mau Mau disease. Canon F.C. Bewes of the C.M.S. warned that Mau Mau was not confined to the Kikuyu and quoted a Muganda telling him that other tribes in Uganda, Tanganyika and Sudan “are watching the issue” and that “the real problem is a world-wide one, not just Kikuyu”. The government took such views seriously and feared Mau Mau influence spreading to, according to Colin Legum, “other important tribes like the Luo, the Baluhya and the Kipsigis in the Nyanza province”. The possible spread of “the Mau Mau infection” to the Kamba was particularly worrying because, reported Douglas Brown of the Daily Telegraph, the Kamba formed “the backbone of the Regular Army and Police in Kenya .... It is now admitted that authorities have been worried about the moral health of the Kamba for the past nine months”.

For the government, it became necessary to isolate the Kikuyu. Askwith explained: “As a result of the unsettled state of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru areas brought about by the Mau Mau terrorists, it became necessary for many of the Africans to live once more in large villages, where they could rely on each other for protection and resist the lawless gangsters.” In addition, the government forced the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru to carry special identifications that effectively singled them out as bad people. During the emergency, Mboya wrote, “the law then laid down that no member of the Kikuyu, Embu or Meru tribes could join a political party unless he possessed a Loyalty Certificate from Government … Kikuyu leaders were stopped from taking part in politics.”

As Mboya noted, apart from punishing the Kikuyu, the idea was also to encourage members of “loyal tribes” to take up African leadership. Since Kenyatta was slated to be a non-person in African history, it was necessary for the colonial state to create new leaders. “The Kenya

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121 Askwith, Kenya’s Progress, p.2
Government’s policy,” according to a 1954 government analysis, “is to assist the emergence of responsible African leaders.” Among the Kikuyu, those encouraged would be “home guard leaders.”\textsuperscript{125} Blundell’s prescription was to reward the tribesmen who had loyally helped the government to suppress Mau Mau with appointments to the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{126}

\textit{The Rearrangement of Mau Mau Consciousness}

Giving Africans, other than the Kikuyu, chance to elect a few of their own was one way rearranging Mau Mau consciousness. Those elected, supposed moderates, would be grateful to the government as a buffer zone between African political demands and colonial authorities. The March 1957 elections, in which Africans were allowed for the first time to elect a few of their own, was especially designed to keep out the Kikuyu and to rig out Eliud Mathu because, being Kikuyu, was probably Mau Mau contaminated. The government, in February 1956, started portraying the Meru and Embu to be loyal tribes to be exempted from the restrictions imposed on the Kikuyu and then encouraged a Meru candidate, Bernard Mate, to oppose Mathu. They were then given many votes to cast for Mate, votes were denied to the Kikuyu and therefore Mathu lost to Mate.\textsuperscript{127} The elected eight men then refused to cooperate, demanded parity with Europeans, and created the African Elected Members Organization (AEMO). Colonial Secretary Alan Lenox-Boyd had to find a solution to African demands\textsuperscript{128} and allowed six more African representatives and an election followed in March 1958. The achievement in forcing an increase in their numbers from 8 to 14 strengthened the anti-colonial momentum.

The achievement in forcing an increase in their numbers from 8 to 14 strengthened the anti-colonial momentum. This was despite an incipient political and ideological rivalry between Mboya and Odinga that was creeping into the African body politics. That rivalry would be


\textsuperscript{128} Blundell, \textit{So Rough a Wind}, p. 242.
partially responsible for bringing the Mau Mau and Kenyatta’s name into the public arena. To
disabuse the impression created in the media that Mboya was the leader of the Africans, Odinga
declared in June 1958 in the LegCo that the only leaders that Africans knew were the prisoners at
Laukitaung. Subsequently, it became prudent for all African politicians to demand Kenyatta's
release at every opportune moment.\textsuperscript{129} October 20th, the anniversary of Kenyatta’s arrest was, in
1959, turned into a national holiday as 5,000 Africans boycotted public transport, refrained from
smoking and drinking, and marched in Nairobi streets chanting Kenyatta's praises and demanding
that he be released.\textsuperscript{130} This exercise in self-denial on 'Kenyatta Day' was repeated in 1960\textsuperscript{131} and
thus started what in Kenya would eventually become a public holiday.

Other than mounting the first “Kenyatta Day,” the year 1959 was special in a different way that
showed the convergence of interests between Kenya’s anti-colonialists and America’s Cold War
interests. It was the year of the “airlift” which marked large scale opening of the United States to
African students as part of Cold War strategy. This had not come up suddenly because both sides
had been increasingly attracted to each other especially after 1956 when Mboya and Kiano
returned from the United States and became close to Robert Stephens, the new American cultural
officer in Nairobi. They embarked on promoting American education for Africans which offered
opportunity for getting what Eliud Mathu had graphically described as "those letters that appear
after other people's names."\textsuperscript{132}

The British were not amused by growing such political developments or the rising American
educational influence on their natives. Carey Francis, the headmaster of Alliance High school,
reflected British attitude when he complained about Kiano being a “bright boy” who had gone to
America to get a fourth rate education from third rate universities.\textsuperscript{133} Other than complaining,
however, the government started identifying potential students to be sent to good British

\textsuperscript{129} Odinga remarks on "Convicts at Lakitaung and Elsewhere", 26th and 27th June, 1958, Kenya Legislative Council
Debates: Official Report, Volume LXXVI, 1958 Second Session, pp. 2402-2403, 2406-2408; Oginga Odinga Not Yet Uhuru; The
\textsuperscript{130} Leonard Ingalls, "Police Break Up Rally in Nairobi", New York Times, October 21, 1959; Kenya Weekly News
October 23, 1959, p. 9, and October 30, 1959, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{131} The New York Times, October 21, 1960; John W. Richards, "The Enigma of Jomo Kenyatta", The New Leader,
December 26, 1960, pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{132} Eliud Mathu's Contribution in the Legislative Council debates, 16th February, 1956, Colony and Protectorate of
\textsuperscript{133} Shadrack Kwasa, Oral Interview, August 30, 1995, Nairobi University.
universities. Among those who benefited from the new British Government attitude were Bethwell Alan Ogot, who was helped by Carey Francis, and Ali Mazrui.\textsuperscript{134} And the students, as Ben Kipkorir, noted were groomed to be suspicious of the Kikuyu.\textsuperscript{135}

Besides planting seeds of suspicion, colonial strategists also mounted an intellectual war against Mau Mau, the Kikuyu, and Kenyatta. In the process, some colonial officials ended up in British and American universities as experts on African, and particularly Kenyan, affairs. Others returned to universities to acquire higher degrees which then supposedly gave them academic credentials to write Kenyan history. This development allowed intellectual conditioning of the African elite in two ways, through publications and the educational system.

To start with, the government published its own version of the official history of the Mau Mau War that was supposedly authoritative. This was the 1960 \textit{Corfield Report} that essentially tried to counter Kenyatta’s growing prominence. It was, colonial official David Lovatt Smith later wrote, “most conclusive” in dealing with the land issue which Kenyatta had exploited.\textsuperscript{136} This official version of what had happened in Kenya declared that the Mau Mau, led by Kenyatta, was “wholly evil”. The new governor, Sir Patrick Renison, gave his stamp of approval by quickly endorsing Frank Corfield’s claims and then went on to decree that Kenyatta was “the African leader to darkness and death”. In doing so, quipped Elkins, Renison ignored “the small technicality that Kenyatta’s trial had been rigged.”\textsuperscript{137} There were other “technicalities” that Corfield downplayed so much that even Colonial Secretary Ian Macleod reportedly considered \textit{The Corfield Report} “turgid, biased and unselective”\textsuperscript{138} By asserting that the police killed only three people in the Thuku incident, for instance, Corfield ignored eye witness accounts as well as media reports of the scores killed.\textsuperscript{139} He thus tried to adjust the facts but then adjusting facts for public consumption seemingly part of British policy.

\textsuperscript{136} Smith, \textit{Kenya, the Kikuyu and the Mau Mau}, p. 89
\textsuperscript{137} Elkins, \textit{Britain’s Gulag}, p.357
\textsuperscript{139} Edgerton, \textit{Mau Mau Crucible}, p. 42
The most vulnerable public comprised school children. They were taught what fitted into the Corfield attitude as reflected in the official primary school text books for history classes in Kenya. Those Kenyan pupils who attended secondary schools between 1958 and 1967 were exposed to two history books. These were first Introduction to the History of East Africa by Z.A. Marsh and G. Kingsnorth and A History of Africa by W.E.F. Ward who also wrote Emergent Africa. Marsh and Kingsnorth, taught Kenyan pupils that Mau Mau delayed independence and that forced villagization enabled the government to provide “piped water ... which could not be provided for in isolated land-holdings”. The interesting thing is that those who were forced into villagization did not see any pipes or any water in any village.

W.E.F. Ward, scornful of Mau Mau, had glaring distortions. “It would be misleading to describe the Mau Mau men as ‘freedom fighters’”, he wrote in Emergent Africa, “The Mau Mau was ... merely a revulsion from modern ways back to tribal traditions .... Whoever its leaders were, they did not succeed. They created an atmosphere of terror, but they were defeated because the mass of their fellow Kikuyu refused to submit.” Conveniently, Ward ignored that the government had mounted the mass detentions, organised air bombings, and had used harassment and terror methods to force compliance. He asserted that “Mau Mau did not hasten independence, it delayed it”.141

Ward’s distortions then went into high gear. The Kikuyu, in his view, craved for villagization as “Kikuyu men brought their wives and families out of their scattered homes into stockaded villages and formed an efficient Home Guard to defend them”. The home guards did become efficient in their repressive activities to please the colonial state; those forced into villages, however, were not happy about it. Ward claimed that Kenyatta succeeded Harry Thuku as head of Kikuyu Central Association whose name Kenyatta supposedly changed to “Kenya National Union”. Ward concluded his history by asserting that on the eve of independence party politics in Kenya was “a struggle between the Kikuyu and the rest” through KANU whose strength “was mainly among the Kikuyu and their allies”.142

142 Ibid. p. 159.
These students moved into universities where a point which Marsh and Kingsnorth emphasised in their 1965 edition that Britain had an independence time table for Kenya was stressed. John Middleton was involved in the Oxford University project on the History of East Africa to be read at universities and to act as reference material. Middleton’s contribution in Volume II was on “Kenya: Changes in African Life, 1912-1945”, and was published in 1965. In it, Middleton termed Kenyatta’s Facing Mount Kenya pseudo-scientific mythology. In the pre-colonial days, he wrote, the Kikuyu and the Maasai were enemies and had nothing in common.143 Middleton was particularly adept at emphasising tribal animosities against the Kikuyu. The reason that Mau Mau did not “spread beyond the borders of Kikuyu”, he emphasised, was because by 1945 “all other tribes [were] against the Kikuyu”. Through his contribution to this official Oxford history of Kenya, Middleton went on to teach students that Kenyatta was a “tribalist” who “had become the nationalist - had had to become so if he were ever to be more than a petty local politician”.144

Colonial Mau Mau bashing was thus both political and intellectual. Politically, it was to scare other tribes to be suspicious, to despise, and to hate the Gikuyu. Among the political consequences was the creation of the Mwambao Movement and KADU. At the coast, wrote Judy Aldrick in The Fannin Papers, “A Group of Europeans headed by Major ‘Jako’ Heath … and Dick Cleasby … got together with the leading Arabs and plotted to bring about an autonomous Coastal State of Mwambao … which would … recognise the suzerainty of Zanzibar.”145 KADU was also a political consequence of this scare strategy. Once the settlers accepted that Kenya was heading for independence, wrote Tom Mboya in Freedom and After, “a group of right-wing settlers” inspired KADU’s separatist policies.146 Intellectually, it was to indoctrinate school children with historical distortions and thereby plant perpetual anti-Gikuyu dislike in independent Kenya. Some of those children became university professors and school teachers and thereby helped to perpetuate the British version of events. Using the two strategies, the colonialists were remarkably successful.

II

144 Ibid, p. 392.
146 Mboya, Freedom and After, pp. 84-87
**Post-Colonial Phase**

**Downplaying but Tolerating Mau Mau**

Independent Kenya was largely unkind to the Mau Mau legacy as it sought to deal with two realities. This was the reality of revolutionary expectations because of its Mau Mau legacy and the reality of global challenges for a young state. At that time, the West feared that a Kenya led by Kenyatta would reenact the Mau Mau violence.\(^{147}\) The initial debates hinged on whether to stress Kenya’s Mau Mau “revolutionary” reputation or to assure the West that Kenya would not become another Congo. It found itself engaged in balancing acts of addressing conflicting expectations in a strategy that Munyua Waiyaki later called “dynamic compromise”.\(^{148}\)

The two realities confronted inheritors, led by Kenyatta, of the colonial state and its institutions of political control.\(^{149}\) They made it clear that they would not encourage anti-Western socialist rhetoric that scare potential investors. Considering himself “a big bourgeois,”\(^ {150}\) not a petty one, Kenyatta abandoned radicalism in favour of moderation.\(^ {151}\) He became, according to Ali Mazrui, “a great friend of Great Britain after independence”\(^ {152}\) and showed this in a number of speeches. In his first Madaraka Day speech, June 1, 1963 he warned that the ”Marxist theory of class warfare” was irrelevant to Kenya and added: "attitudes which were appropriate when we were fighting for independence have to be revised.\(^ {153}\) Two months later, he addressed the white settlers in Nakuru in August 1963 and assured them that they had nothing to fear from his government.\(^ {154}\) On his part, Tom Mboya, minister responsible for Independence celebrations, rejected the presentation of a play at


\(^{151}\) Prunier, “Kenya: Roots of Crisis,”


\(^{154}\) Elkins, Britain’s Gulag, pp.361-362; Oral Discussions with Njoroge Mungai.
independence prepared by a youth club in Eastlands that castigated British colonialism. He asserted: “That ... is not the spirit in which we want to enter independence.”155

Believing in political expediency and aware of the hostile international and domestic political environment, Kenyatta made effort to rearrange Mau Mau consciousness that gave rise to internal disputes on what the Mau Mau meant. The debates were also informed by personal political rivalries associated with the politics of Kenyatta’s potential death and compounded by the existing international cold war climate. On one side were men like Joseph Murumbi, in charge of foreign affairs, stressing a revolutionary foreign policy that was based on the Mau Mau legacy. “In Kenya,” he said in October 1964, “the Revolution which broke out in 1952 changed the course of our history and sparked off other revolutions in the continent of Africa.”156 But even Murumbi had limits to Mau Mau expectations. The limitations were based in part on the fear of what imperial powers could do to dismantle independence, as they had done in Congo. The imperial powers had “offed” Patrice Lumumba in 1960 within months of independence and had plunged Congo into chaos. This reality helped to make Kenyatta ambivalent, trying to keep the revolutionary spirit while assuaging the egos of the imperialists.

Subsequently, ignoring or rearranging history became a post-colonial phenomenon in the midst of raging debates on *socialism*. The inheritors relied on colonial infrastructure and loyalist to create sense of stability and attract foreign investments and ignored the pleas of disappointed Mau Mau “freedom fighters” as he embraced the settlers.157 With Kenyatta leading the way by calling for revision of anti-colonial attitudes,158 others joined in and started praising Britain’s supposed good work. Among them was Justus Ole Tipis who, responding to Bildad Kaggia, asserted in Parliament, “I believe we obtained our independence in a very nice way at the instigation of the British Government, but not through fighting in the forest.”159

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159 Quote in Kinyatti, *Mau Mau*, p. 95
In that context, the winners were those who were uncomfortable with the Mau Mau and, with Kenyatta leading, inherited the colonial state and its institutions of repression and political control.\textsuperscript{160} They ignored the pleas of disappointed Mau Mau “freedom fighters” and embraced the settlers. \textsuperscript{161} Kenyatta had sought to assure the West by condemning the Mau Mau and asserting in 1962: “We are determined to have independence in peace, and we shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. We must have no hatred towards one another. Mau Mau was a disease which had been eradicated, and must never be remembered again.”\textsuperscript{162} He assured the West and white settlers that they were safe in his Kenya. He did this at the meeting in Nakuru in August 1963 with the white settlers after which the settlers started singing his praises as a wise man and shouting “Harambee.” He told the settlers: “Many of you are as Kenyan as myself …. Let us join hands and work for the benefit of Kenya, not for the benefit of one particular community. We want you to stay and farm well in this country: that is the policy of this government…. We can all work together harmoniously to make this country great, and show other countries in the world that different racial groups can live and work together.”\textsuperscript{163} In the process, he was transformed into a defender of white interests.\textsuperscript{164}

But since all the policy makers were not agreed on the spirit, there followed heated debates on scientific socialism and Kenyatta wanted none of it. Not having time for socialism, Kenyatta used Mboya to terminate the debate on socialism in 1965 by issuing \textit{Sessional Paper Number 10: African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya}. In the preface to the document, Kenyatta took pain to explain: “Our entire approach has been dominated by a desire to ensure Africanization of the economy and the public service. Our task remains to try to achieve these two goals without doing harm to the economy itself and within the declared aims of our society.”\textsuperscript{165} He would not, therefore, pay attention to those advocating policies that would disrupt the economy. He went on to tell those complaining about scientific socialism to keep quiet because he had answered their concerns.\textsuperscript{166} The Sessional Paper put Kenya officially on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{160} Mueller, “Government and Opposition in Kenya,” pp. 401-402
\item \textsuperscript{161} Tamarkin, “The Roots of Political Stability in Kenya,” pp. 306, 316-317
\item \textsuperscript{162} Quote in Edgerton, \textit{Mau Mau Crucible}, p. 216
\item \textsuperscript{164} Judd, \textit{Empire: The British Imperial Experience}, p. 353
\item \textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Western camp, rejected socialism, and its leaders were proud of it.\[^{167}\] He would not, therefore, pay attention to those advocating policies that would disrupt the economy.

The *Sessional Paper* marked Kenya’s ideological stand to be in the Cold War and attracted “revolutionary” critics. Among the critics was an economist named Barack Obama whose international fame bloomed when his American son became President of the United States in 2008.\[^{168}\] His 1965 article in the *East Africa Journal* questioning the logic of the *Sessional Paper* that perpetuated economic dependency\[^{169}\] became the focus of psychoanalysis for the behavior of the son as president.\[^{170}\] In 1965, however, the attention was on the ideological split between Kenyatta, the political master, and his political disciple, Odinga. While the “master” was shunning revolutionary rhetoric and embracing capitalists, the “disciple” embraced “socialism” and the Mau Mau and its champions like Bildad Kaggia. The *Sessional Paper* put Kenya officially on the Western camp, rejected socialism, and its leaders were proud of it.\[^{171}\] Kenyatta then went on to tell those complaining about scientific socialism to keep quiet because he had answered their concerns.\[^{172}\] On Kenyatta Day in 1967, October 20th, he launched his “we all fought for uhuru” slogan to silence those like Kaggia who kept on talking about Mau Mau bringing uhuru.\[^{173}\]

Kaggia’s political fate in post-colonial Kenya was symbolic of the crashing of the Mau Mau. He had joined Odinga’s KPU as the vice-president. An angry Kenyatta had actively campaigned against him in Kandara, and against Achieng Oneko in Nakuru, in the 1966 Little General Election using foul language. Kaggia, he had asked in Kandara, are you a kihii,? He ensured that his two Kapenguria Mau Mau co-convicts lost their seats. Kaggia’s troubles were compounded

\[^{167}\]The views expressed by Mwai Kibaki during the Democratic Party Presidential Debate between Mwai Kibaki and Benjamin Ndubai, held at Hotel Inter-Continental, Nairobi, August 27, 1997. The authour moderated the debate which was hosted by Democrats 2000 Club.

\[^{168}\]Sally H. Jacobs, *The Other Barack: The Bold and Reckless Life of President Obama’s Father* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), passim

\[^{169}\]Ibid., pp. 182-184


\[^{171}\]The views expressed by Mwai Kibaki during the Democratic Party Presidential Debate between Mwai Kibaki and Benjamin Ndubai, held at Hotel Inter-Continental, Nairobi, August 27, 1997. The authour moderated the debate which was hosted by Democrats 2000 Club.


by being arrested and jailed for holding illegal meetings and then made to serve his sentence where the public could see him in prison uniform slashing grass. Kenyatta continued to ridicule him in public because of his poverty asking in 1968 what Kaggia had done for himself. Noting that Paul Ngei, Kungu Karumba, Fred Kubai, besides Kenyatta, had each done well economically, he repeatedly asked, “What have you done for yourself?” Upon his release, Kaggia quit KPU and disappeared into political oblivion.

Intellectually, Kenyatta’s effort to downplay the Mau Mau found support in Ogot and his admiring students. Considered the shaper of Kenya’s history by William R. Ochieng’, one of those adoring students, Ogot’s version of history claimed that talking of Mau Mau as the only freedom fighters was to “over rate their contributions to the nationalist cause at the expense of other freedom fighters.” He, in 1970, wanted Mau Mau importance downplayed as he called for reassessment of “the roles of violent and non-violent methods in the struggle for Kenya’s independence. He later focused on attacking Kaggia’s stress on the Mau Mau role in independence. “By insisting that Mzee Jomo Kenyatta knew nothing about ‘Mau Mau’, he is in effect saying that the Father of the Nation actually never participated in the nationalist struggle.” He argued that “Kaggia’s insistence that the nationalist struggle in Kenya must be equated with the ‘Mau Mau’” was not only a distortion of history but also that the insistence was not acceptable to those who never participated in the movement. Kenyatta died two years later and tolerating Mau Mau views slumped.

The contest over the Mau Mau attitude was also in what people learned in schools and universities and, in post-colonial Kenya, Ogot was in the forefront. While children continued to learn history according to Marsh and Kingsnorth, and Ward, and Middleton that was in line with the Corfield Report, Ogot was initially part of the stirrings that started to dispute the school version of history. These were mainly from a growing number of African academics who tried to Africanise education and attracted eager minds that wanted freshness. Ogot’s longevity in the

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177 Ogot, “Towards a History of Kenya,” pp. 6-7
education field has inspired many prominent intellectuals. He was best known for his History of Southern Luo, his edited textbook on East Africa, Zamani: A Survey of East African History, and for “Africanising” and “nationalizing” history in Kenya from its colonial mind-frame. To be Kenyan, he wrote, was to have “shared historical consciousness… to share a particular history”178 that he undertook to shape. But as a mathematic high school teacher at Alliance, Ogot had unwittingly influenced Ngugi wa Thiong’o not so much in mathematics but simply by holding Peter Abraham’s Tell Freedom.179

Ngugi was simply one of the emerging Kenyan intellectuals that captured imagination in part by championing the Mau Mau. He became Kenya’s leading literary writer whose Weep Not Child and The River Between pleased pupils because they were written in understandable language in terms of context and even the vocos, meaning vocabularies. There was also John Mbiti’s African Philosophy and Religions discounting missionary claims that Africans were Godless. And Ali Mazrui was fascinating with his political analysis and command of the English language. There was also fun in following Okot p. Bitek’s African religions and Western Scholarship faulting Kenyatta, Ogot, Mazrui, and Mbiti for relying on Western methods to make African arguments. He labelled them intellectual smugglers of imperial ways180

Debates on intellectual smuggling were entertaining but not as attractive as publications on Mau Mau and freedom politics. Several publications recasting Mau Mau positively came up at independence and were accommodated and tolerated as part of the new but contentious Mau Mau narrative. Many of these were memoir like. Waruhiu Itote (General China), Mau Mau General and JM Kariuki, Mau Mau Detainee led the way with their personal accounts. Others included Karari Njama’s Mau Mau From Within and Bildad Kaggia’s Roots of Freedom. There was also Tom Mboya’s Freedom and After, Oginga Odinga’s Not Yet Uhuru. In terms of scholarship and potential influence, however, the most important publication was Carl Rosberg’s and John Nottingham’s The Myth of Mau Mau which tried to go deep into hitherto officially

178 Ibid, pp. 1-2
unknown origins of Mau Mau nationalism.¹⁸¹ These publications did not substantially affect the growing official mood of downplaying the Mau Mau and were simply ignored or accommodated in the national image of “we all fought” for Uhuru that became the hallmark of Kenyatta’s 15 year rule.

**Pronounced Hostility**

When Kenyatta died in August 1978, intellectual accommodation of Mau Mau was discarded and open hostility became the norm. The new president, Daniel arap Moi was a man who had professed not to have a mind of his own and had therefore appeared to be safe.¹⁸² He had been appointed to the colonial legislative council, LegCO in 1955 where he praised British colonialism stating in February 1956 that when he looked at history, he had no choice “but recognise how much more Africans owe to her Majesty’s Government – administrators who have done so much in the darkest years – days when Africans were in the dark, and now have come to see the light.”¹⁸³ With that recognition, he had thus developed what a later British High Commissioner to Kenya, Sir Edward Clay, called a “valuable and civilized relations” with the British.¹⁸⁴

Moi was therefore even more unsympathetic to the Mau Mau as he consolidated his hold on the country and everyone. Those who continued to talk of Mau Mau, top among them being historian Maina wa Kinyatti and novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o had it rough. They were the counters to the Kenyatta-Ogot line of thought on Mau Mau. Of the two, Ngugi was better known for his pro-Mau Mau writings, particularly *Ngaahika Ndenda* and *Petals of Blood* which had seemingly irked Kenyatta so much that the novelist was detained in December 1977. On being released in 1978, he released *Caaitani Mutharabaini* (The Devil on the Cross) that portrayed Kenya as a land ruled by internationalist capitalist thieves and robbers fixing ‘nationalists. He

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¹⁸² For Moi’s claim that he did not have a mind of his own, see Sheila Rule, “No Tune Like His Own Tune, Kenyan Tells Nation”, *New York Times*, November 7, 1984
went into exile but then there was Kinyatti at Kenyatta University. Ngugi, in his memoirs after prison, *Detained*, claimed that Mau Mau had found its voice in Kinyatti.

This was a time of the imposition of Moi’s *fimbo* ideology that was intolerant of intellectual or any dissent. He wanted the whole country to know who was the boss, that initiative would be stifled and intellectuals would be relegated into oblivion. In September 1978 he asserted that all Kenyans were answerable to him and he was answerable only to God. 185 His right hand man at the time and highly pro-British, Charles Njonjo, reminded lecturers in 1980 that they were “employed to teach but not to mislead students” with Marxist ideas. 186 In the effort to create a Moi imprint he proclaimed a slogan of ‘*Nyayo*’ to mean he would follow Kenyatta’s footsteps and at the same time adopted the symbol of a well polished ‘fimbo’ or stick in contrast to Kenyatta’s flywhisk. With it came an ideology of the *fimbo* which was close to the Communist political ideology 187 and led to the concept of “true *nyayo* follower”, as indicator of the level of a person’s loyalty to Moi. Since the media was vital to the implementation of fimbo ideology and the concept of ‘true *nyayo* follower’, the government pressured the media to conform. The *East African Standard* and the *Weekly Review* succumbed to pressure with the *East African Standard* in the forefront of determining who was a better Nyayo follower than another and of promoting the notion that Nyayoism could be measured with some degree of exactitude. 188

After freeing himself from the appearance of dependency on Njonjo, Moi mounted an intensified crackdown on people described as *Mwakenya*, and on academics who insisted on thinking and Kinyatti, who accused Ogot and his students of distorting Mau Mau history, 189 was one of them. Kinyatti, wrote William R. Ochieng’ identified “Mau Mau with the stand which the Kenyan people as a whole took against British colonialism.” 190 Moi reiterated his position on thinking in September 1984 when he decreed that thinking was essentially a presidential prerogative as he

185 *Sunday Nation*, September 17, 1978, pp.1 and 3.
189 Kinyatti, *Mau Mau*, pp.98-100
190 Ochieng’, *A History of Kenya*, pp. 133-134
ordered all Kenyans “to sing like a parrot after me” and not to have ideas of their own.\textsuperscript{191} Those who could not sing, he claimed, were “Marxist agents serving the interests of foreigners” and he vowed to be ruthless with them because they were advocates of “anarchy and totalitarianism.”\textsuperscript{192}

Moi found university lecturers to be particularly troublesome, especially those who kept talking about Mau Mau and reminded them that he was their paymaster and they therefore had to toe his line. Those who did not were declared to be intellectuals ‘terrorists’ and subsequently universities became instruments of recruiting ‘intellectual home guards’ to suppress critical thinkers who deviated from the authorized line.\textsuperscript{193} He wrote in his \textit{Nyayo Philosophy}, “I see no systematic alternative to the intellectual re-education of staff for the purpose of reforming the learning atmosphere” in which students would “evolve into intellectual home guards against intellectual terrorism, political agitation and subversion in the universities.” He wanted the “intellectual home guards” to identify “the terrorists”, who would then be reeducated.\textsuperscript{194}

Subsequently, an anti-intellectual atmosphere prevailed at the university and history became a target for official attack. Godfrey Muriuki complained that there was an attempt to sabotage history, especially when a minister for education, JJ Kamotho, rubbished it as irrelevant stories about Vasco Da Gama.\textsuperscript{195} And the rubbishing was more intense when it came to Mau Mau as those in the university became divided between establishment academics who rarely saw anything wrong with the Moi regime, and the critics who needed ‘re-education.’ A new intellectual term, the \textit{Mau Maus}, became a code for referring to government critics, those who continued to write in praise of the Mau Mau War and to insist that the Mau Mau was a nationalist movement that had brought independence to Kenya only to be betrayed by those wielding political power. Thereafter, fixing the Mau Maus, both at academic and political levels, became a fixation with lecturers praising Moi and trying very hard in order to be in good books

\textsuperscript{191} Kinyatti, \textit{Mau Mau}, pp.63-64
\textsuperscript{195} Macharia Munene, “History in Post-colonial Kenya: A Tentative Assessment,” University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni, Swaziland, December 1989
so as, as Casper Odegi Awuondo pointed out in his *The Cheering Crowd*, “to keep a safe distance from Kamiti prison.”

A number of intellectuals, ‘the Mau Maus’, were unable to keep a safe distance from prison, and since they seemed to be “intellectual terrorists,” they were sent for ‘re-education.’ Among the identified ‘intellectual terrorists’ was a historian at Kenyatta University, Kinyatti, who was very noisy attacking those whom he accused of distorting Kenya’s history by misrepresenting the Mau Mau. “Why,” Kinyatti wondered “should our national struggle, because of its national uniqueness and development, be condemned and damned as tribal insurrection.” He later found himself being ‘re-educated’ in prison with the likes of Willy Mutunga, a law lecturer, Mukaru Ng’ang’a, another historian, Alamin Mazrui, a linguist, and Katama Mkangi, a sociologist. Their offense, according to Mkangi, was to be “foolish enough to live by the time-honoured tradition of academic and intellectual integrity.” In the process of dealing with critics ruthlessly, detention without trial and torture became so common that in 1989 he explained: “Of course we torture people. But we don’t torture everybody. We torture the ringleaders of Mwakenya.”

Ogot, the perceived leader of the anti-Mau Mau academics in post-colonial Kenya had evolved to become a history reference point and shaper of local consciousness on the Mau Mau. This was particularly so in the 1980s when debates on Mau Mau raged as Moi complained of intellectual terrorists. Having joined Kenyatta in dismissing the overrating of Mau Mau, he led the attack on Mau Mau in the 1980s as nothing more than Kikuyu chauvinism, similar to what colonialists had argued. His students, top among them being B.E. Kipkorir and Ochieng had reinforced the claim. These two then elaborated that the Mau Mau were not nationalists as the *Mau Maus* claimed, and were mostly Kikuyu tribalists. The Ogot team, argues Casper Odegi Awundo, set

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198 Munene, *The Politics of Transition in Kenya*, p. 10
202 Kipkorir, *Descent From Chereng’any Hills*, pp. 165-166
out to deliver a thorough intellectual beating on the Mau Maus and recruited Odegi to discredit Ngugi wa Thiong’o. Instead, Odegi caused havoc with his “Rise of the Cheering Crowd” conference paper.²⁰⁴ Ogot had turned on his student at Alliance.

Despite Ogot’s close contacts with power brokers such as Carey Francis in the 1950s, Tom Mboya in the 1960s, Daniel arap Moi in the 1980s and 1990s, and Mwai Kibaki after 2003, he appeared trapped in his own success. A man of establishment, Ogot ended up in intellectual anguish as a staunch defender of perceived Luo interests. He best demonstrated this in his “The Siege of Ramogi” lamentations in which he portrayed the Luo as falling short repeatedly due to the perfidy of other people.²⁰⁵

Ogot, labeled the “Luo historian”,²⁰⁶ was part of the new elite who advanced an argument that the Luo, as Kenya’s custodians of intellect or brains, were repeatedly short changed. During the emergency, Mboya wrote, an impression developed that “a Luo clique” reportedly tried to “rule all Kenyans in the absence of the Kikuyu”²⁰⁷ and thus made them feel special. With the Kikuyu having been derailed academically because of the Mau Mau War, wrote Philip Ochieng’²⁰⁸ in his Sunday Nation column, on January 16, 2011, the Luo had seemingly surged forward academically and a “myth” developed that the “Luo have a special kind of intelligence as a result of a diet dominated by fish… The rest of Kenya saw the Luo as the most educated community.” And the Luo tended to agree on the part of “intelligence” if not the fish diet. “As a young Luo,” noted Philip Ochieng’, “I grew up with a particular kind of ethnic arrogance.” At independence, the Luo, “claiming to have come from a celestial place called “UK” (United Kisu mu) swaggered like peacocks in the streets of Nairobi—well dressed, speaking good English and brandishing The East African Standard— that time’s symbol of intellectual arrival.”²⁰⁸ They were elites in a new Kenya, observed Atieno Odhiambo, that were comfortable singing In an English Country, Garden rather any African song.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Odegi Awuondo, The Cheering Crowd.
²⁰⁷ Mboya, Freedom and After, pp.80-81.
This advantage had created a myth of Luo super brilliance, among the intellectuals, that the Luo were the best everywhere and therefore should get more resources. In parliament, for instance, James Orengo argued that the government should build more secondary schools in Siaya because that was where the most promising students in the country were. As late as 1997 Bishop Henry Okullu, could write, “Luos were and still are among the most intellectual” Luo narratives, argued Lesa Morrison, arose from that privileges that the Luo had in the late 1950s in education opportunities and bureaucracies which enabled them to dominate positions in the early days of independence, before others got a chance. While the absolute numbers of the Luo in high positions increased, they were not the only ones and had to compete and thus an impression of losing out developed. Ogot, with his stress on the downplaying of Mau Mau in history, summed all this impression of losing out in his Ramogi lamentations.

Yet the lamentations, by removing responsibility, make the Luo and their leaders to appear particularly politically gullible. In the lead of that supposed gullibility was Jaramogi Odinga, a dominant force in Kenyan politics since June 1958 who had enjoyed pricking the West by praising the Mau Mau and “looking east” before it was popular to do so. He had resigned from the vice-presidency and founded his own political party, Kenya People Union, which was banned in 1969 after fracas in Kisumu. When Moi became president, he undertook to reconcile with the Luo and went on to rehabilitate and appoint Odinga chairman of the Cotton Lint and Seed Board after the November 1979 elections. Odinga was poised to rejoin Parliament in a Bondo by-election and then he in April 1981 put his political foot in the mouth by calling Kenyatta a land grabber and claiming that Moi had called him “baba”. Moi denied the claim and Odinga lost chance of returning to Parliament. Odinga’s attempt to found another socialistic party had led Moi to amend the constitution by imposing Section 2A that declared Kenya to be a single party state and KANU was to be that party. This removed the possibility of anyone challenging Moi.

215 Main story, Weekly Review, June 4, 1982
The impression of the Odinga gullibility was reinforced in the build-up to multi-partyism. On the same day that he earned Moi’s praises for having sat out in the early days of agitation for multipartyism, in June 1990, Reverend Timothy Njoya prompted him to return to active politics by offering a Bible. Having “kept completely out of the fray” on the multi-party debate, commented The Weekly Review, “Luo leaders,” who had worked hard “to distance their community from the multi-party campaign … [were] particularly irritated by Odinga’s remarks and his timing.” They accused Njoya of tribalism and having “dragged” Odinga into multi-party affair.  

Thereafter, Odinga appeared to assume leadership of political agitation. He tried starting another political party but failed; it was not registered. He then became a founder of FORD, Forum for Restoration of Democracy, that did not need registration. FORD pressured the government into repealing Section 2A of the constitution. Thereafter, FORD split into two political parties, FORD KENYA that was associated with Odinga and FORD ASILI that was associated with Matiba. In the 1992 presidential elections, Odinga was placed fourth after Moi, Matiba, and Kibaki.

After the elections, Odinga abandoned the opposition, to join Moi in political ‘cooperation’ that helped him to wrench the position of Leader of the Official Opposition from Matiba. His death in January 1994 left FORD-Kenya in disarray but enabled The Kenya Times, in its editorial, to praise him as “Kenya’s courageous and colourful politician” who had “realised the folly of an opposition party working to antagonise the Government.” It was to help the Luo community, the editorial pointed out, that Odinga “came up with the compromise formula to cooperate with the Government to bring about development even in areas where Kanu was rejected at the polls.”

Not everyone agreed.

Among those who disagreed and placed blame at Jaramogi’s feet were several Nyanza and Western people who felt slighted by the Odinga dynasty. Among them were two of Ogot’s students, Mwanzi and Ochieng. Mwanzi accused Odinga of encouraging and enjoying Luo

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tribalism and of having “incontrollable ambition to rule this country” failing which he created *Odingaism* through which he controlled the “Luo mentally and psychologically [as they] seceded from Kenya and lived in a world of their own - ‘Luoland’…. He chose for them who to elect.” Mwanzi’s call on the Luo to liberate themselves from Odingaism,\(^{219}\) was shared by Ochieng’ who complained that Odinga had enslaved the people of Yimbo. Within five days of Odinga’s death, Ochieng’ reacted angrily to those suggesting that Oburu Odinga succeed his father in parliament and asserted that “Bondo constituency was not Jaramogi Oginga Odinga’s personal latifundia to be passed to his progeny.” He accused Odinga of having oppressed, despised, and discriminated against the very talented Yimbo people” and considered the suggestion “an act of provocation as well as naked aggression against our human rights.” He vowed: “We in Yimbo will consult and resist this enslavement” as he went to call for the next MP for Bondo to come from Yimbo rather than Sakwa.\(^{220}\)

**Limited revival of Consciousness.**

Jaramogi’s reputation, despite his shift to the Moi camp before his death, was that of champion of multi-party politics that appeared to revive the Mau Mau spirit in small doses. The revival was part of a new defiance in the 1990s. There was the challenge to particularization of the term “tribalism” to refer only to the Gikuyu when anyone complained but others were dismissed as merely disgruntled elements. When in May 1990 Maina Wanjigi complained about the eviction of his constituents at Muoroto and compared it to the 1954 *Operation Anvil* against the Mau Mau, for instance, he was labeled “tribalist” and fired from the cabinet.\(^{221}\) A Moi stalwarts, Nakuru District KANU Chairman Wilson Leitich was representative of this attitude and hostility when he declared, “We shall take and rape your wives, you Kikuyus, like we did during the Emergency if you follow multiparty supporters.”\(^{222}\) The revived Mau Mau spirit rejected that trend both intellectually and in arts. Intellectually Macharia Munene’s 1996 seminar paper on “The Colonial Origins of Kikuyu Bashing,” addressed the anti-Gikuyu phenomenon in the


\(^{220}\) Times Reporter “Ochieng’: It’s Our Turn in Bondo,” *The Kenya Times*, January 26, 1994, p. 2


\(^{222}\) Quote in Kinyatti, *Mau Mau*, p.95
country and placed the blame at colonial doorsteps. It was not the fault of those bashing the Gikuyu because they were simply good disciples of colonial anti-Mau Mau conditioning in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The paper, widely distributed informally mainly through Joseph Kaguthi’s initiative, became an unofficial reference to the Gikuyu anti-colonial grievances.223

The arts were already in the picture as vehicles for expressing political dis-satisfaction. In the lead was humorist Wahome Mutahi, a former resident in Moi’s re-education centres. He was very popular not only for his “Whispers” column, but also for his new captivating Gikuyu plays performed in clubs in the outskirts of Nairobi. Singing Mau Mau songs, in and out of the makeshift theatres, indicated the renewed pride in self-identity and rejection of self-hatred. This revival of the Mau Mau spirit gave rise to the proliferation of vernacular FM radio stations starting with Rose Kimotho’s Kameme FM. The government countered by starting Coro FM and then SK Macharia launched Inooro FM. The success of these Gikuyu FM stations indicated that the vernacular radio market was big which led to the opening of FM stations for other languages.

There was also religious soul searching. Since the heho instilled during the emergency continued to prevail, some people turned religious to appeal to the God of Kirinyaga. A group referred to as the Mount Kenya College of Seers harped back to a mythical past that supposedly links the Kikuyu to the Hebrews. Both are hard-working, shrewd and outgoing in business, have gone through serious suffering and attempted political annihilation or genocide. There is even a claim that the Jewish and the Kikuyu DNA are the same and that the two people are guided by the same Covenant given by God. From Jerusalem, the Covenant supposedly found its way southwards first to Ethiopia and then eventually to Mount Kenya where its parts were supposedly hidden in different secret places in the 13th Century of the Christian Era. This claim removes any supposed theological conflict between true Christianity, not the mzungu version, and true Kikuyu traditional religion. Returning to the true faith and beseeching God of Kirinyaga to intervene would probably restore peace among the Kikuyu.224


Most important, the defiance revival also prepared the way for return to multi-patryism and the end of Moi’s presidency and the KANU rule in 2002. Two elections were held in 1992 and 1997 in which orchestrated violence produced strange political alliances. After the 1992 elections, Oginga Odinga ganged up with President Daniel arap Moi essentially to punish the Kukes and thus helped to divert attention from official violence that became a norm. William Ole Ntimama, minister for local government, appeared to be above the law as he orchestrated evictions and killings in Enoosupukia and Attorney General Amos Wako could not touch him. Odinga was bitter at being placed fourth in the official election results which destroyed the myth of his national popularity. He had sought financial help from US Ambassador Smith Hempstone to file cases against Matiba’s and Kibaki’s Kikuyu parties but Hempstone had turned him down.

Mau Mau and The Kibaki Ambivalence
Moi and KANU were eventually dislodged in 2002 after which there was an attempt to give respect to the Mau Mau but, as in early 1960s, confusion took centre stage which showed how problematic and baffling Mau Mau consciousness still was. The Kibaki government took the step of unbanning Mau Mau as a movement, being seen to honour some Mau Mau “heroes”, and then mounting an investigation on what it meant to be a “hero.” Examples of two events involving two famous but rival Mau Mau generals are indicative of the bafflement. The two rival generals were Stanley Mathenge wa Mirugi and Dedan Kimathi Waciuri and their ghosts returned to influence happenings in the Kibaki administration.

First, was the 2003 confusion over the issue of General Stanley Mathenge. An old man from Ethiopia agreed to come to Nairobi, all expenses paid, because he supposedly was “Mathenge” but, on arrival, he profusely denied himself. He insisted that his name was Ayanu even as he stayed for one week at the Pan-Afric Hotel in Nairobi and was then escorted back to his farm in Ethiopia. In the meanwhile, rumors spread that the Ethiopian was a conman with one local musician releasing a song on Mathenge Badia. The impression created in the Mathenge/Ayanu saga, however, was that the Kenya government was so idiotic that it could easily be duped by an

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old Ethiopian. No action was taken against the supposed “conman” or those who like journalist Joseph Karimi had identified him as Mathenge and made arrangements for his visit to Kenya. A mystery then arose and it remains part of the new myth of Mau Mau.

Second, the issue of Dedan Kimathi’s grave, and who a national hero is, revealed hypocrisy on the part of political leaders. As Ali Mazrui once wrote, heroes are admired when dead but not alive. Dead heroes are actual assets to political villains who then masquerade as followers of the dead hero knowing that he cannot respond. Kimathi was probably such a hero who was good dead, and unfound, and a lively subject of debate on heroism. Another such hero was Achieng Oneko who, when alive, used to say, “Give us something to eat when we are alive”. After his death, Oneko was accorded a hero’s funeral in Rarieda with Mau Mau veterans singing his praises. As for Kimathi, a statue was erected in Nairobi and a technical college in Nyeri was elevated into Kimathi University. The country is still not sure who qualifies to be a national hero or, given the behavior of some political leaders, a national villain. The explanation for the confusion on the Mau Mau legacy in the Kibaki government may be similar to that in the Jomo Kenyatta government. This was the presence of competing pro and anti-Mau Mau forces within the same government.

International Revival

Oneko was one of those who favourably received the publication of Caroline Elkins’ Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya in 2005, also going by the title of Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya. It became an international sensation and coincided with renewed global interests in Mau Mau because of three Kenya related developments. First was the Mau Mau case in London with world wide ramifications. Second was emergence of Barack Hussein Obama as a political force in the United States and attempts by Obama critics to link him with the Mau Mau War as a way of scaring white voters. Third was the deep involvement of the Euros in Kenyans affairs that led to the 2007 election upheavals and the ICC fiasco that was reminiscent of Kapenguria in the 1950s.

228 Ali Mazrui, “Thoughts on Assassination in Africa,” Political Science Quarterly, Volume 83, Number 1, March 1968, pp. 50-52
At the height of election violence in January 2008, the government advised FM stations to delay live broadcasts and edit incitements. The then US ambassador to Kenya, Michael Ranneberger countered the government by saying there should be no restrictions and then requested to be interviewed live in KASS FM and violate the ban. His wish was granted and he asserted: “I’m even happy that this is a live show. I hope I’m violating the ban because I do not agree with it.” Asserting that the United States recognizes states but not governments, Ranneberger claimed that his country did not recognize President Kibaki. This was a low point of insult to the country but it was in line with the growing Euro attitude to Kenya.

Together with David Anderson’s 2005 Histories of the Hanged, Elkins’ book forced rethinking on British atrocities during the Mau Mau War. The two writers, later joined by Huw Bennett’s 2011 Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency, shifted focus from the Mau Mau being producers of violence and atrocities into being victims. Anderson examined the efficiency of the British judge and hangman, Elkins looked at the administrator/jailor, and Bennett dealt with the responsibility of British military officials in the atrocities. The three concluded that the atrocities were not aberrations by wayward “colonials” in Kenya but actual policy approved and blessed by top British officials in London. The books helped to counter the growing intellectual sanitization of imperialism, mainly from academics in top British universities. They reinforced the point that the British Government, not colonial officials in Nairobi, authorized atrocities during the Mau Mau War in Kenya.

Of the three historians, it was Elkins who appeared to arouse the most anger from the defenders of the empire. Although her being American probably contributed to the hostility, it was her claims that peeved such empire defenders as Andrew Roberts, Neill Ferguson, David Lovatt Smith, David Elstein, and Max Hastings. In November 2002, her “White Terror” documentary aired in BBC led to media accusations of anti-British bias requiring the intervention of an

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ombudsman. Former colonial official David Lovatt Smith reacted by producing *Kenya, the Kikuyu and Mau Mau* a defensive book in praise of colonialism which John Lonsdale of Cambridge University noted was “a valuable contribution to the history of Kenya and should be made widely available.” Lavatt Smith’s book, wrote Roy Spendlove CVO, was “important contribution to a rounded understanding” of “the backward-looking delusions and destabilizing impact of the myopic promoters of the Mau Mau intruded their moribund and narrowly self-serving ambition.”

Then three years later came Britain’s *Gulag/Imperial Reckoning* portraying Kenya as one giant concentration camp in which 100,000 died at British hands. Roberts, a defender of the empire, was angry. Reportedly describing himself as “extremely right wing” and “a reactionary”, Roberts was close to white supremacists in South Africa and Zimbabwe, considered the Springbok Club as “the heir to previous imperial achievements” and endorsed its dream for “the reestablishment of civilized European rule throughout Africa”. He accused Elkins of committing “blood libel against Britain.” For Niall Fergusson, who stayed in Kenya in mid-1960s as a boy, the 1950s and Mau Mau were non-issues as he remembered Kenya as not having changed from colonial days with its “sight of hunting cheetah, the sound of Kikuyu women singing … the taste of ripe mango. I suspect my mother was never happier.” A colleague of Elkins at Harvard, he termed Elkins a “sensationalist” and asserted that it was “egregious to compare the suppression of Mau Mau with Stalin’s Terror.” Fergusson advanced in 2013 to being an advisor to national curriculum on the history to be taught in British schools. And there was Max Hastings, that was mostly praise for Anderson’s *History of the Hanged* but considered Elkins to have allowed

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232 John Willis, “External Ombudsman’s decision on David Elstein complaint.” theguardian.com, Monday 7 April 2009
234 John Lonsdale, Back cover Blurb, Ibid.
235 Roy Spendlove CVO, “Forward” in Ibid., p. 25
238 Quote in Porter, “How did they get away with this.”
239 Niall Fergusson, “Home truths about famine, war and genocide,” The Independent, Wednesday, 14 June, 2006
“her anger” to make “her eschew intellectual rigor in favour of a good deal of somewhat inelegantly written ranting.”

Fending off critics, however, was easy compared to the task of turning history into a legal weapon by testifying on behalf of four Mau Mau victims of British atrocities. Together with Anderson and Bennett, the three historians proved that nothing happened in Nairobi without London’s consent and then their case was strengthened by the “discovery” of the “Hanslope” documents proving official culpability. The judge decided that Britain was culpable and London agreed to apologise and pay damages. The implication was that even powerful countries can eventually be held liable, even if it is in their own courts.

This point was brought home when testimony by the three historians helped to nail Britain in a London court. They made history a tool of law, testified London’s attempt to shift blame to its officials in Nairobi, argued retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Cape Town, “represents an intolerable abdication of responsibility.” It fed the belief that Britain had to pay compensation for its brutality on Africans. Her testimony in the English courts led to a landmark decision in favour of the Mau Mau.

The 2011 decision in the Mau Mau case brought into attention American challenges in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo detention centres in Iraq and Cuba and the US president, Barack Obama, whose paternal roots are in Kenya. Obama, elected in 2008 to take over from where George W. Bush had left, found himself mired in Kenyan politics. He also became a subject of psychoanalysis focusing on the Mau Mau anti-colonial war in the 1950s.

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241 Hastings, “The dark side of empire”
244 Porter, “How did they get away with it?”, Hobhouse, “The British Imperialist Image”
245 D’Souza, “Why Barack Obama is an anti-colonialist”
CONCLUSION: MAU MAU IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The coming of multipartyism appeared to revive the Mau Mau spirit in small doses. This was in response to Gikuyu bashing that was reminiscent of the 1950s. It was practiced most by people who were in upper primary and secondary schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s and were colonially drilled to isolate the Gikuyu politically and using the pen. A university lecturer was actually promoted for claiming that Jomo Kenyatta invented tribalism. The revived Mau Mau spirit rejected that trend. First was the challenge to particularization of the term “tribalism” to refer only to the Gikuyu when anyone complained. When Maina Wanjigi complained about the eviction of his constituents at Muoroto, for instance, he was labeled “tribalist” and fired from the cabinet. Second, the arts became vehicles for expressing political dis-satisfaction. In the lead was humorist Wahome Mutahi, a former resident in Moi’s re-education centres. He was very popular not only for his “Whispers” column, but also for his new captivating Gikuyu plays performed in clubs in the outskirts of Nairobi. Singing Mau Mau songs, in and out of the makeshift theatres, indicated the renewed pride in self-identity and rejection of self-hatred. This revival of the Mau Mau spirit gave rise to the proliferation of vernacular FM radio stations starting with Rose Kimotho’s Kameme FM. The government countered by starting Coro FM and then SK Macharia launched Inooro FM. The success of these Gikuyu FM stations indicated that there was a big vernacular radio market which led to the opening of FM stations for other languages.

The revival also prepared the way for return to multi-partyism and the end of Moi’s presidency and the KANU rule. Two elections were held in 1992 and 1997 in which orchestrated violence produced strange political alliances. After the 1992 elections, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga ganged up with President Daniel arap Moi essentially to punish the Kukes and thus helped to divert attention from official violence that became a norm. William Ole Ntimama, minister for local government, appeared to be above the law as he orchestrated evictions and killings in Enoosupukia and Attorney General Amos Wako could not touch him.246 Odinga was bitter at being placed fourth in the official election results which destroyed the myth of his national popularity. He had sought financial help from US Ambassador Smith Hempstone to file cases against Matiba’s and

Kibaki’s Kikuyu parties but Hempstone had turned him down. When he died in 1994, the Kenya Times praised him for seeing the folly of being in the opposition.

Among the many things that Kenya is suffering from is the legacy of the Mau Mau War which is constantly being re-fought in different arenas. The War was bitter and the benefits did not always accrue to those who bore the brunt of it. A few fighters got one or two little things but the rest appeared to be neglected. Most of the benefits seemed to go to those who had opposed the war or supported British colonialists. A feeling of betrayal then cropped up and would often be the subject of debates about the Mau Mau War. In the process of those debates, some things occasionally happen that leave people baffled.

The first Kibaki administration, for instance, appeared to be divided on Mau Mau and in 2003 appeared to be particularly confused on the issue of Stanley Mathenge. The Kenya government went to a lot of trouble to bring a man from Ethiopia who supposedly was Mathenge. This man left his house, boarded an airplane in Addis Ababa bound for Nairobi and was, coming to Kenya as Mathenge. When he arrived at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, however, he decided that he was not Mathenge and made a lot of noise. A mystery, therefore, existed with regard to the relationship between the government and the Ethiopian “farmer” who had agreed to come to Nairobi, knowing that he was invited, and that his expenses were being paid, by the government because he supposedly was “Mathenge”. But it was part of the ambivalence that is also part of the legacy associated with Mau Mau that is imprinted in national consciousness.

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