

**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

**UNIVERSITY OF ORAN**

FACULTY OF LETTERS, LANGUAGES AND ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON LANGUAGES  
SECTION OF ENGLISH

**The Ins and Outs of Nationalism in Kenya:  
From Early Contact to Confrontation  
(1800's-1960's)**

Thesis submitted to the Department of Anglo-Saxon Languages in Candidature for the  
Degree of DOCTORAT in African Civilisation

Presented by :

**Mr. Belkacem GHASSOUL**

Supervised by :

**Prof. Badra LAHOUEL**

Board of Examiners:

President : Sidi Mohamed LAKHDAR BARKA	M.C.A.	University of Oran
Supervisor: Badra LAHOUEL	Prof.	University of Oran
Examiner : Fouzi BORSALI	Prof.	University of Adrar
Examiner : Abbes BAHOUS	Prof.	University of Mostaganem
Examiner : Fewzia BEDJAOUI	M.C.A.	University of Sidi Belabbes
Examiner : Belkacem BELMEKKI	M.C.A	University of Oran

**Academic Year : 2009-2010**

## **DECLARATION**

I, hereby, declare that this work has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Belkacem GHASSOUL

The researching, preparation and presentation of the thesis have been undertaken entirely by the author.

Belkacem GHASSOUL

## **DEDICATION**

To my family and friends

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Professor Badra Lahouel whose patience, confidence, wisdom and grace have been central to the making of this work. She read and tracked down obscure passages. Her knowledge and most valuable general intellectual comments have lightened my reflection as a researcher and inspired my prospects as a teacher.

I am deeply aware of the great privilege I have to have her as my supervisor, to have met her, and I do wish, one day, to be faithful to the most honourable values that she embodies as an Algerian intellectual.

I am immeasurably indebted to Professor Fouzi Borsali who never failed to provide useful books and encouragement.

During the course of my research I have been the grateful recipient of invaluable assistance from Dr. Nait Brahim and Dr. Belmekki. I am fortunate in their friendship.

Besides, I am indebted to the following:

Dr. Sidi Mohamed Lakhdar Barka

Pr. Abbes Bahous

Dr. Fewzia Bedjaoui

for having accepted to read and evaluate my dissertation.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>GLOSSARY.....</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b><u>CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND FACTS ON THE EARLY</u></b>	
<b>HISTORY OF KENYA (15<sup>th</sup> –end of the 19<sup>th</sup> ).....</b>	<b>25</b>
I. The International Scene.....	27
A. The British Scene.....	34
II. The African Context.....	37
A. Pre-colonial Africa.....	37
1. Factors Facilitating British Penetration.....	40
B. Establishment of a Colony.....	44
1. Early Stages of British Settlement.....	44
C. Kenyan Early Resistance.....	57
1. Identification of Resisting Tribes.....	60
1.1 Bantu Speaking Population.....	60
1.2 The Nilo-Hamitic Speaking Population.....	61
1.3 The Hamitic Speaking Population.....	61
2. Resistance Through Warfare.....	62
III. Nation and Nationalism.....	72
A- What is Meant by Nation?.....	72
B- What is Nationalism?.....	74
C- Nationalism and Kenya.....	77

<b><u>CHAPTER TWO: BRITISH MACHINERY, THE LAND ISSUE AND FURTHER KENYAN RESISTANCE (1900-1914)</u></b> .....	82
I. Consolidation of British Machinery and its Consequences.....	84
A. British Policies and Land Expropriation.....	90
B. Forced Labour and Taxation.....	108
C. Missionaries and Education.....	113
D. The Question of Representation.....	121
II. Further Kenyan Resistance Through Nativistic Organizations.....	122

<b><u>CHAPTER THREE: POLITICAL AWAKENING AND FACTORS LEADING TO THE RISE OF NATIONALISM (1914-1945)</u></b> .....	131
I. Factors Leading to the Rise of Nationalism.....	132
A. Exogenous Factors.....	133
1. The First World War and its After-Effects.....	133
2. Pan-Africanism.....	140
3. The Universal Negro Improvement Association.....	144
4. Communism.....	145
5. Turmoil in India.....	147
6. The Great Depression (1929).....	148
7. World War Two.....	150
B. Endogenous Factors.....	155
1. British Machinery and Settlers' Pressures.....	155
2. The Rural Sector and Land Scarcity.....	165
3. The Urban Sector and Population Concentration.....	173
4. Labour and Squatter's Advent.....	176
5. Missionaries and their Ongoing Impact.....	180

II	Growth of Better Organized Associations.....	182
A.	Syncretistic Associations.....	183
B.	Modernist, Educational and Other Movements.....	191
C.	Further Political Associations.....	199
D.	The Organization and Failings of Associations.....	205
	1. Organization.....	206
	2. Failings.....	208
<b><u>CHAPTER FOUR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN AND</u></b>		
<b><u>DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAU MAU UPRISING (1940'S-1963)</u></b>		
I.	The Etymology of the Word Mau Mau.....	217
II.	The Origin and the Key-Architects of the Movement.....	219
A.	The Political Plane.....	219
B.	The Economic Plane and Population.....	224
C.	The Social Plane.....	228
III.	The Emergent Patterns of Resistance.....	232
A.	Oathing Ceremonies.....	234
IV.	The Ongoing Patterns of Resistance.....	237
A.	The State of Emergency.....	241
V.	The Kenya Parliament.....	266
VI.	Anvil Operation and Government Strategy.....	267
VII.	Disintegration and Propaganda.....	271
VIII.	Mau Mau and Nationalism.....	288
	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>293</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>300</b>
	<b>ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>315</b>

Annex I: Letters.....	316
Annex II: Interviews.....	340
Annex III: Speeches.....	354
Annex IV: Resolutions.....	358
Annex IV: Income and Expenditure Record of Kenya Parliament.....	360



## **LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES**

### **MAPS**

Map 1: Merchant places along the East African Coast.....	29
Map 2: Kenya boundaries as drawn by the British.....	38
Map 3: Some warring tribes in East Africa.....	42
Map 4: Railway transportation in the East African Protectorate.....	55
Map 5: Enumeration and distribution of some tribes (1870-1905).....	61
Map 6: Location of population by clans.....	80
Map 7: The East African campaign, 1914-18.....	134
Map 8: Kenya districts, 1950s.....	251

### **TABLES**

Table 1: Somme important concessions before 1914.....	107
Table 2: Salaries of African agricultural labourers in 1953.....	227
Table 3: Ethnic origins of squatters in the White Highlands in 1950s.....	228
Table 4: Crime in Nairobi in 1949.....	231

## ACRONYMS

### **a-Some important acronyms of political organizations:**

<b>K.A</b>	Kikuyu Association (1920)
<b>Y.K.A</b>	Young Kikuyu Association (1921)
<b>Y.K.A</b>	Young Kavirondo Association (1921)
<b>E.A.A</b>	East African Association (1922)
<b>K.T.W.A</b>	Kavirondo Taxpayer Welfare Association (1923)
<b>L.N.C</b>	Local Native Councils (1924)
<b>K.C.A</b>	Kikuyu Central Association (1925)
<b>P.K.P</b>	Progressive Kikuyu Party (1929)
<b>K.L.P</b>	Kikuyu Loyal Patriots 1931)
<b>K.C.A</b>	Kavirondo Central Association (1932)
<b>N.K.C.A</b>	North Kavirondo Central Association (1934)
<b>K.P.A</b>	Kikuyu Provincial Association (1935)
<b>T.P.W.A</b>	Tax Payers' Welfare Association (1930's)
<b>U.M.A</b>	Ukamba Member Association (1938)
<b>T.H.A</b>	Teita Hill Association (1938)
<b>M.U</b>	Mijikenda Union (1940's)
<b>K.A.N.U</b>	Kenya African Nationalist Union (1960)
<b>K.A.D.U</b>	Kenya African Democratic Union (1960)
<b>K.L.F.A</b>	Kenya land Freedom Army (1951)
<b>C.C</b>	Central Committee (1951)

- WC** War Council (1952)  
**CPC** Central Province Committee (1952)  
**I.NA** Ituma Ndemi Army (1952)
- S.W.C** Supreme War Council (1953)  
**K.D.C** Kenya Defense Council (1953)  
**K.P** Kenya Parliament (1954)

**b- Some important religious and educational associations:**

- G.T.C** Githunguri Training College (1920's)  
**A.I.P.C** African Independent Pentecostal Church (1929)  
**A.O.C** African Orthodox Church (1929)  
**K.K.E.S** Kikuyu Karinga Education School (1929)  
**K.I.S.A** Kikuyu Independent School Association (1929)

## GLOSSARY

*Ascari:* African soldier belonging to the KAR

*Avasiala:* cross-cousins

*Awamenya:* clan-strangers

*Baraza:* weekly newspaper founded by the colonial government (1939)

*Batuni;* oath of unity

*Elitugu:* a clan head

*Githaka:* plot of land owned jointly by a group of individuals

*Guku ni Guitu:* This is our land

*Gutiri yuuraga ndikie:* there is no rainfall that does not cease

*Ingongona:* Kikuyu customary ceremony

*Irua:* female circumcision

*Itikwa:* bequeathing ceremony

*Itungati:* a guerrilla

*Kabuuru:* Boers

*Kipande:* identity instrument

*Laibon:* a military leader amongst the Masai

*Mateme:* Kimathi's undercover name

*Mbuci:* guerrilla camp

*Migendanyama:* no-man's-land

*Miti-Ya-Kenya:* the trees of Kenya

*Muigwithania:* the conciliator

*Muingi:* the Movement

*Muma Wa Uiguano:* the oath of unity

*Mumboism:* anti-European natavistic movement

***Muthamki:*** Kikuyu rulers

***Ngai:*** God

***Nzama ya nduaz:*** a council of war leaders

***Oluangereka:*** surplus land,

***Omwene:*** *wo mulimi* owner

***Shamba:*** garden in Swahili

***Uhuru:*** independence

***Unoto:*** cyclic age-group rituals of the Masai

### **Armaments**

***Gatua:*** Big game shooting guns

***Kamwaki:*** Pistol

***Makombora:*** Bren gun

***Mwaki :*** Gun

***Pepeta:*** WhoraSten gun

## **INTRODUCTION**

*To wage a revolution is to  
annihilate what is bad, and build  
what is good.*  
Ho chi min, 1952.

Throughout the last four hundred years or so since the 16<sup>th</sup> century at different times and places, Kenya had fought against various invaders: Arabs they be, Portuguese or British. Colonial conquest was a traumatic act of societal change and, basically, most native Kenyans endured a tragic tale of frustration during the British invasion in the nineteenth century and the subsequent colonial occupation in the first half of the twentieth century. As yet, invasion was indubitably accompanied by the heroic resistance of Kenyan people. Brilliant battles were fought and defensive fortifications were built. For example around Mount Elgon, Bukusu fortifications still stand as a reminder of Kenya's heroic tradition of resistance and struggle. "*Some names of Kenyan fighters, like those of: Koitalel, Hassan, Waiyaki and Katilili have become legends*" (Kinyatti, 1987: XIV). Yet how can one unbury the real tradition of struggle concealed by the existing British propaganda that erected the tradition of loyalist collaboration in its place? Otherly said, how can one keep the memories of the

true fighters like Dedan Kimathi and others alive and appraise their history today with impartiality? In this respect, the study of the past and its uses is important for understanding how heroes and societies came to be the way they are today. The past also helps people stop thinking of heroes as being the individuals who got medals at the end and having their names etched in a rock and start thinking of them more as humans who did the right thing and damn the consequences.

To begin with, via this thesis, there is a tentative approach to document and analyse objectively how the historical memory of resistance to conquest and of uprisings against British rule had been a prime ingredient in Kenyan nationalism. Verily, the carryover from early resistance to the rise of nationalism is coincident with a process whose route was long, tortuous and filled with obstacles. In order to grasp this process and demonstrate the way the nationalist movement came into existence and developed, it will suffice to outline the major stages that characterized this route leading to nationhood. In this regard, the thesis is organized in such a way that it falls on four chapters each of which being designed to explore particular aspects (British colonial machinery, the rural sector, the urban sector, etc.) of Kenyan historical past along a chronological order relevant to each one of these aforementioned aspects.

There is an attempt to cast light on both the international and African scenes, including Kenya, in chapter one. In that respect, a survey of Kenya early history and overseas expeditions—to establish contact across the Indian Ocean-world with the East African Coast to plant trading stations and Colonies—is outlined. In addition to that, the chapter provides a preface to British rule in Kenya (1880's-1900), the factors facilitating their penetration as well as the early reaction of the autochthons. The British penetration in this country spurred some Kenyan tribes on to an initial resistance involving initiatives of defence. Who were the tribesmen? Where and how

did they resist? Did they act individually and locally or co-ordinately? And what was the outcome of such a reaction before World War One? The remainder of the chapter corresponds to an analysis of the concept of nationalism, including its connection with the concepts of nation, territory and the adaptability of these concepts as to how far they suit conditions in the East Africa Protectorate, later Kenya.

Not only does chapter two analyses what happened from 1900 to 1914 in what became the East Africa Protectorate<sup>1</sup>, but it also uncovers the establishment of the British administration before World War One. Specifically, the chapter examines the era which witnessed the implementation of British colonial machinery, its supportive ideology and its aftermath. The missionaries' activities—who felt duty-bound to insert western civilization through their educational program—were also tackled. Ultimately, questionings relevant to the reaction of the autochthons in this chapter are bound to be raised. What was the position of native Kenyans vis-à-vis this foreign institution and its policy? How was it similar or dissimilar to that orchestrated during early defensive warfare?

The interest of chapter three concerns the political awakening of native Kenyans following World War One. The inter-war years witnessed the official incorporation of Kenya in the British Empire as a Colony. That colonial fact entailed wrongdoings; as a result, tensions among communities sharpened from 1914 to the 1940's, a crucial period during which a solid feeling of togetherness was taking root among different

---

<sup>1</sup> Protectorate refers to a virtually complete control by a strong nation of the foreign and domestic affairs of a weaker nation that has surrendered these powers in return for a guarantee of protection; however, a colony is any territory acquired through the process of colonization. The chief motives for establishing a colony have been to get control of trade already existing between a territory and the rest of the world, to get possession of precious metals, gems or raw materials, to take advantage of cheap labour of native peoples, naval and military bases, etc... (*Time*, August, 26<sup>th</sup>, 1962: 11).



tribes. The chapter brings under review exogenous and endogenous factors that led to the rise of nationalism during the inter-war years. In fact, with the growth of associations, nationalism was rising. At this juncture, what type of associations developed? Did World War Two bring changes? And how did colonial government react to that?

Mau Mau armed insurrection is mainly analyzed in chapter four. The latter uncovers the working realities of the 1940's and the 1950's. Correspondingly, the factors leading to the insurrection, its development and idiosyncrasies, and the reaction of the colonial power constitute major aspects of this chapter alongside the following queries: was Mau Mau movement to be equated with the fact of fighting a losing battle in 1952? Or was it a veritable expression of Kenyan nationalism against the British rule in the sense that it contributively and assertively accelerated the process towards independence in 1963? One certainty is that Kenyan militants never ceased to be committed to freedom however hard and long the road had to be.

Broadly speaking, the appraisal of African struggle during the early years of colonial rule and, even after, in the late 1940's was undertaken traditionally and mostly by European historians. Basically, it was a period during which universities outside Africa started progressively to take notice of its history. Yet it should be stressed that characterizing that period uniquely from such perspectives is virtually introducing general readership to see it through biased eyes only. While tackling African history and addressing many of the complexities of the African states, historians John Lonsdale and E.S Atieno Odhiambo argued that European scholars were not 'natural' when approaching African history (Atieno Odhiambo and Lonsdale, 2003:2). This

possibly implied that the European version of the historical facts was vehemently superseded by a certain amount of subjectivity in the rhetoric.

For some European scholars, who rewrote history, the past of Africa had no meaningful existence except as it was relevant to and existed through their Western literature. It would not be an exaggeration to say that too often these scholars maintained both a paternalistic and a parochial approach towards African history. For years, a number of Western accounts depicted African autochthons deprecatingly as “*objects of white action rather than as subjects in their own rights*” (Kolchin, 1995: 2). In the same vein the scholars Kimambo and Temu pointed out: “*most of the fragmentary material in print has either ignored or distorted the history of the African themselves*” (Kimambo and Temu, 1969: 11). To mention few other examples, in the *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau*, also called the *Cornfield Report*, published by F.D Cornfield in 1960, the movement was portrayed as backward-looking and tribal. Furthermore, in *the psychology of Mau Mau*, J.C Carothers looked at the movement as “*mass madness*,” a case study of a people with a weak tribal cohesion and worldview (Carothers, 1954: 36). Placing emphasis on psychology and not on politics or economics, Carothers was bound to present a misreading of the situation. In *Race and Empire*, the historian Campbell Chloé did not focus on the behaviour and beliefs of native Kenyans themselves; instead he put the stress on Europeans in Kenya and their writings on racial differences in the 1930’s. After all, Campbell Chloé’s work reflected his partiality as a writer coupled with a sardonic European thinker; he expressed what was relevant to and most pertinent for his expectations and those for his race. As for native Kenyans, for instance, their liberation movement popularized under the name Mau Mau, which was jack-hammered into their brains, was equated with barbarism and savagery by the

British propaganda, such propaganda that seriously bashed the movement upheld by a large section of the people of Kenya (Barnett, 1966: Preface).

Glossing over wars during the imperial conquest of Africa, the scholarly duo Roland Oliver and John Fage explained European triumph in the botched African struggles as a result of ‘racial superiority’ and overstressed the overwhelming military superiority of Europeans. By all accounts, African people who took the path of armed resistance to European invasion in the years 1800-98 faced daunting technological disadvantages. The disjuncture between European military capabilities and those of indigenous armies turned out to be a yawning gulf. After all, weapons of war grew larger and more efficient in Europe during the nineteenth century as the Industrial Revolution changed the face of warfare. This circumstance gave an unquestionable advantage to British colonizers in Kenya. There, British troops were equipped with the new weaponry spawned by the breechloader revolution of the 1860’s. For instance, The Martini-Henry single-shot breechloader was capable of killing an opponent at up to 1,000 yards; whereas, the Lee-Metford magazine rifle fired smokeless-powder cartridges with deadly accuracy against their Kenyan adversaries, whose military system was built around spears, lances, bows and arrows (Vandervort, 1998: 48).

Furthermore the British who organized the conquest of Kenya and some parts of Africa in the nineteenth century, liked to trumpet themselves as ambassadors of progress to African countries, said to be, floundered in relative barbarity and bloodthirstiness. Indeed the British justified their presence by a self-imposed task, i.e. a civilizing mission. They viewed their expansion as beneficial to the autochthons whose territory they entered, and *a fortiori* they saw themselves as bringing upliftment, emancipation and the fruit of progress. These included western government, law and order, refurbishment, science and medicine. For instance,

*“vaccination carried out by missionaries and officials helped to spread a message about the potency of the foreigners as therapists”* (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 576). These therapists as well as militarists were to assist what they termed backward people of whom L.S.B. Leakey recalled: *“the noble white man fervently engaged in bringing civilization, Christianity, education and the good life to Kenya’s backward natives”*, hence, depicting a somewhat distorted vision of native Kenyans’ existential reality in the Colony (Leakey, 1954).

Because all history is subject to continuous revision and historical reinterpretation is fundamental, any attempt to create a historiographical, objective and substantive account of colonial Africa, including colonial Kenya, requires coming to grips with the diverse and changing ways in which historians have treated history. Things happened and what is important for readership is how they were actually tackled.

In this respect, the scholar Kjekshus aptly noted that:

*over the last years, historians writing about the newly independent nation-states have brought out a number of books, pamphlets and articles aimed at restoring the African as an agent of his own past, and rejecting as biased and racist the neglect of African initiatives in the colonial historiography.*

(Kjekshus, 1977: 1).

To redress the matrix of narrow-mindedness towards Africans, Michael Crowder wrote: *“Battles are not to be seen in terms of the success of the conquerors but the prowess of the defeated leaders in the face of overwhelming odds. And these battles, fought years ago, are still vivid in oral tradition”*. (Crowder, 1968: 38)

Reacting against the stereotypes, most of today's African historians and African Kenyans themselves focused on Africans not as subalterns, but as actors, resisters, nationalists and martyrs who never disengaged from their combative attitude; thus these African historians stressed the colonial world from African perspectives. For example, while exploring the material context that underlay those military and political Mau Mau concepts in *Kenya's Freedom Struggle*, W. Kenyatti avoided stereotypical views regarding race and chauvinism; instead the scholar came to grips with the problems inherent to the native Kenyans' condition outside or among the freedom fighters. Equally, Belhwell A. Ogot—former professor of history in Nairobi university—described Mau Mau movement as forward-looking as it evidenced a strong sense of nationalism. In the eponymous book *Mau Mau From Within*, K. Njama helped Dr Barnett depict far from the circle of Manichaeism the fundamental reality of the participation of the fighters in the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA) and the way the fighters strove to defend their interests either in the foreground or discreetly through intricate channels. For historian Collins, “*the Mau Mau movement was fundamentally a reaction to British rule and the paternalism which dismissed a whole people as irresponsible*” (Collins, 1971: 249).

African scholars including, for instance, Gatheru Mugo and Maloba Wunyabari—who discussed the genuine viewpoint of Kenyan people in their respective books: *From Colonization to Independence* (Gathru, 2005: 77), and *Land Ordinance Act of 1915 in Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (Wunyabari, 1993: 112)—backed up the idea that native Kenyans, who received the British legacy viewed colonialism as a one-armed exploiter. The autochthons felt mostly victimized and abused by foreigners who unjustifiably stole their resources—cattle, land...—used their labour and, on top of all, shattered their traditions, such traditions around

which secularized local societies were “*framed and reframed*” in the pre-colonial era (Cooper, 1975: 4)

As a reminder, pre-colonial African societies, and particularly East Africa—Kenya inclusive—enjoyed a fairly acceptable degree of organization. Societies and polities in most of these areas were already in flux. The Kenyan tribes, whether Kamba traders, Masai herders, Embu or Kikuyu farmers, were all industrious in the array of economic activities and thus responsible for the ongoing development and changes that led to the construction of their micro-environments. In effect, the spirit of societal construction conducted by those tribes and others was affected when Britain set a foothold in East Africa (Kenya) in order to impose a new colonial order and mould this country for its colonial purposes as will be seen.

This thesis is not just an account of the ins and outs of Kenyan nationalism in the context of British colonial rule. By implication, it uncovers the resistance years and the heartbreak memories of Mau Mau hatching revolt, including the repressive alien regime, with the concomitant accumulation of collective punishments, frustration, pain, as well as the loss of family, land, livestock and dignity. Kenyans need to remember what their struggle was like in order not to be estranged from their own history, and then, maybe, they will let bygones be bygones.

Hereupon, there is no other aspiration in this thesis beside the will to provide, at the very outside, a fresh lens for viewing those historical events, not in an attempt to purge some traditional alleged European scholars’ prevarications and biases towards Kenya history but to demonstrate, away from biases, the very peripeteia British colonizers and Kenyan resisters came across during the period under discussion. In this regard, British colonial rule, which dwelt upon Kenya from the early 1880’s, left its perdurable stamp

on the Kenyan civilization. Unsurprisingly, this foreign rule was conducive to the emergence of a different society since it brought about encompassing socio-economic, political, religious and educational changes the nature of which not only affected every facet of native Kenyans' existence but more importantly induced a reaction which culminated into a nationalist movement.

Precisely, nationalism, which had begun to appear faintly but fore-bodingly across the first half of the twentieth century, had not always been woven into the fabric of Kenya history. In order to measure its causes, its evolution—the way it proceeded steadily in Kenya—and its outcome, it is useful to step back in time and fulfil the twin mission of both examining the very nature of the response that some Kenyan tribes had worked out as they staged and carried out their fighting to resist against the British invaders and demonstrating that *“inchoate, often local, resistance to colonial rule which had been evident since the conquest was channelled into a unified anti-colonial movement in the years after World War II by an educated elite”* (Cooper, 1971: 4); thereby, resistance was to become the key-link between two struggles, that is the early defensive warfare and the subsequent growth of a wide range of organizations—ethnic associations, trade unions, religious, educational and political—parties all of which underlay the rise of nationalism and its evolution.

In order to be enlightened on the driving motives that led to the choice of this research work, one has to bear in mind that almost fifty years after its independence, Kenya history still excites argument and controversy. Factually speaking, the country stood and stands as the crossroad of plurality with diverse nationalities that sought to graft in it during a key-period in its historical evolution. This period was both eventful and changeful. As a matter of course, one unpreventable change in the concept of

resistance worth signaling regards the strategy of defence displayed by different tribes in different places, such a strategy shifted from warfare to political activities passing through syncretism and educational movements.

At bottom, it is clear that the relation between resistance and nationalism cannot be fathomed unless one considers the pre-colonial context including the factors that “*proved to be a preparatory stage for the era of British colonial rule*” (Rodney, 1972: 160), and the subsequent evolution in this east African continent.



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Background Facts on the Early History of Kenya**

**(15<sup>th</sup> - end of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

*By the adaptation of trans-oceanic transport, the conquest of distance had become a fact since 1860. The contracted and finite dimension of the terrestrial globe had suddenly become of practical and not merely 'philosophical' interest to the industrialized societies of the West.*

(Fage and Oliver, 1997: 96).

The era which extended from the seventh to the late nineteenth century corresponded to a historical process interspersed with events that inexorably marked the international scene and the African one. This chapter is an attempt to discuss some of these events and examine the way they led Western Europe to Africa and, more expressly, Britain to Kenya including the early reaction of many autochthons at the

turn of the nineteenth century as well as an analysis of nationalism. Above all, what were the main Kenyan tribes that set up initiatives of defence? Where and how did they resist? Did they act singlehandedly or cooperatively? Did they all resist? And what was the aftermath of such attitudes before 1914? Prior to working out these issues, it may be useful to cast light on the international scene.

### **I. The International Scene:**

Archaeological evidence of sites and extensive fossil finds of human ancestral forms about prehistoric cultures of East Africa made by archaeologist Lewis Leakey (1903-1972) proved man was far older than had previously been believed. The most varied assemblage of early human remains—going back a million years—was contained in a site along the shores of lake Rudolph in present day Kenya. Around 10 000 BC hunting and gathering societies as well as fishermen occupied the region. Reportedly, they represented the most ancient occupants of the region (Martin, 1983: 30). Later, between 5000 and 4000 BC, pushed by desertification, pastoralists came from the north to establish also in East Africa. They were followed by Pigmy Bushmen. And much later, thirteen century references in medieval Arab documents indicated that “*Sabaeen kings of south Arabia had exercised some form of rule over parts of the East African coast from the first century AD*” (Hailey, 1956: 380). But it was not until the sixth century that the steel-like determination of the very first Arab sailors, who appeared at first move in the guise of geographers, map-makers and traders, ushered in an era of overseas expedition and exploration to establish contact across the Indian Ocean-world with the East African coast.

Judging by historical accounts, the East African coast’s proximity to the Arabian Peninsula was ultimately to prompt immigration. Gradually, the ongoing influx of Arabs and Persians, who also began to take notice of the region, paved the way for a

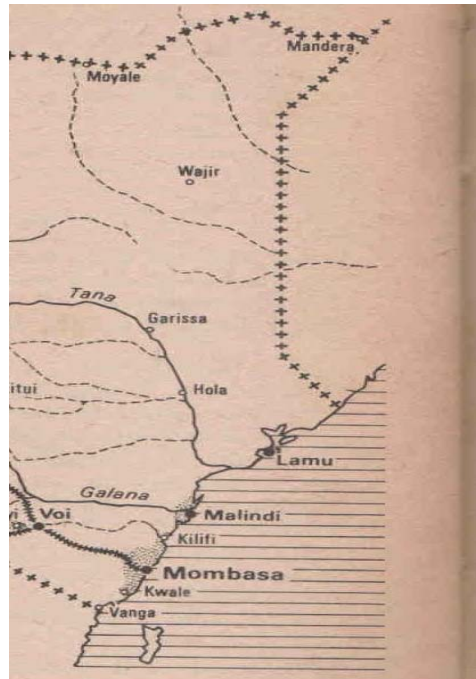
major migratory, maritime route of a nascent commerce linking the land of Zinj<sup>2</sup> with the Indies. As a practical matter of fact, the Arab tradesmen were quick and apt to promote their cultural, religious and commercial activities. But settlement did not take place until Omani Arab merchants from south-eastern Arabia established a string of trading posts on the coast during the seventh century<sup>3</sup>. For eons the East African coast had been important in trade across the Indian Ocean. Relationships were pulled by cross-currents of trade networks. Precisely, the region was “*criss-crossed by trade routes which converged on the Swahili towns of the east coast*” (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 539). For instance, Along with retail market traders, including the Luo and other Kamba middlemen<sup>4</sup>, Swahili-speaking merchants established warehouses in places like Malindi, Mombasa, along the coast, and Lamu islands. In the process such places were to develop further to become trading centres wherein these protagonists dealt mainly in imported glass, textiles and other manufactured products from China and India to be exchanged for ivory, gum, copper, iron , gold, rhinoceros horns, shells, beads, slaves and other commodities (Duignan and Gann, 1960: 95). It should be noted that the large majority of slaves were brought from the Lake Malawi (Nyasa) area by Yao and Swahili traders before they were delivered to Kilwa where they were to drudge in the clove plantations of Zanzibar and Pemba, or meet the economic demand of the Malindi Kilifi and Lamu coasts (see Map 1 below) by working in the coconuts plantations. Some other slaves were shipped to Arabia. Slave categories included also the *Manyema* (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 547).

---

<sup>2</sup> Zinj: name of Persian origin used by the Arabs to designate the blacks, especially the Bantu (Heers, 2008: 2).

<sup>3</sup> Arab tribes and precisely Zaidiyah and Eharth settled in Lamu and Mombasa respectively in the 8th and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hailey, 1956: 380).

<sup>4</sup> The Kamba retained the middlemen function between the Kikuyu and the Swahili caravans (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 546).



Map1: Merchant towns along the East African Coast.  
(Source: Martin, 1983: 22)

No venture had been made at this point of history to conquer land and create settlements anywhere beyond the confines of the coastal strip that included Zanzibar, Pemba, Mombasa and Lamu islands. In any event, it was not until the ninth century that the pioneering Arab traders started organizing their caravans to the interior to pursue the paths of yielding grounds for their business. The same paths would be used hundreds of years later by European explorers.

Very likely, the spirit of competition and the unbridled control of the seas undoubtedly constituted outstanding and interwoven factors which not only prevailed in Western Europe, but unsurprisingly produced an overall disposition favourable to the establishment of contact between Western Europe on the one hand, and overseas-continents on the other hand. It is worth stating at this point that great voyages of exploration eased the process.

Accordingly, the discovery of America and the route leading to the African Coasts and to the East Indies began under the auspices of Portugal at the turn of the fifteenth century. In fact, Prince Henry of Portugal sponsored many expeditions to unstudied regions of Africa, thereby, enabling the trailbreaker Bartholomew Diaz to go round the stormy Cape of Good Hope at the Southern tip of Africa in the exploring mission of 1488 (Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia, 1995). Around the same period, another Portuguese seafarer called Vasco de Gama arrived at the Kenyan coast of Mombasa. He stumbled there in 1498 in search of China. Yet, the first Portuguese to display military ambitions for the occupation of the city of Mombasa was Don Francisco de Almeida. For over ten years, the Portuguese navy laid siege to and conquered all coastal cities save Mombasa which resisted invasion for a while<sup>5</sup>. With twenty three ships and 1500 soldiers, de Almeida eventually eclipsed the Arab dominance in the pre-cited city and occupied it in 1505.

It is instructive to indicate the fact that the strategic importance of the East African harbours ignited an ongoing series of confrontations between the Portuguese, the Ottomans and the Arabs<sup>6</sup> to establish dominance. For instance, in 1660 almost the whole of Mombasa was beleaguered by Omani forces, although the Portuguese held Fort Jesus until 1669 when it fell after an epic three-year siege. By 1720, the Portuguese were neutralized and were driven out by the Arabs. For the next century, the region continued to be the theatre of turbulence. Ultimately, the Arabs re-emerged as a strong force which pitted itself against the Portuguese who fatefully met their Waterloo. Under the leadership of the Sultan of Oman from Arabia, Seyyid Said, the

---

<sup>5</sup> “*The Portuguese adventure on the east coast of Africa had two objectives: first, the establishment of footholds on dry land to serve as outposts on the road to India; second, the seizure of the fabled wealth of the gold field of Sofala*” (Hailey, 1956: 381).

<sup>6</sup> Forming a predominantly lower class and illiterate, the Arabs concentrated on the coast. The dominant force among the Muslims, divided internally into a number of sects, was the Ismaili community, a Khoja sect following the Aga Khan (Barnett, 1966: 26).

Arabs worked willy-nilly to regain economic and political supremacy over the coast and the island of Zanzibar until the eighteenth century. It was a period during which the Mazrui dynasty asserted their power in Mombasa and established an independent sheikhdom.

In 1806 Omani authority in East Africa was reasserted by Said Bin Sultan. His rise to power coincided with British efforts to curb the slave trade and combat piracy in the Persian Gulf, which caused Britain to exercise a dominating influence over the actions of Said and his successors throughout the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1824 Said's forces had ousted the Mazrui from the Lamu Archipelago and were poised to besiege their stronghold at Mombasa ([KenyaHistory:overviewofhistoricevents/world 66.com Africa/Kenya](http://KenyaHistory:overviewofhistoricevents/world66.com/Africa/Kenya)). When the townspeople petitioned officers of British naval vessels to guarantee their security, Captain Owen and lieutenant Reitz did not hang back to assist them militarily and bring deftly their forceful anti slavery message by hoisting the Union Jack in Mombasa, thus declaring the short-lived and first British Protectorate from 1824 to 1826.

The beginning of European colonial era in East Africa is not clear cut; nonetheless, it was not until the start of British anti-slaving activities in that early century that European influence was to be asserted in the region; thus the British started progressively to make their influence felt. Later on, in 1840, Said moved his court from Oman to Zanzibar, where he assumed the title of Sultan, and British influence followed him there. He took over the control of the region and eventually signed a new treaty with the English Consul Hamerton for banning slave exports in 1845. About few decades later, the British signed an agreement with the sultan of Zanzibar in which a ten-mile strip along the coast was leased to them; then the British took it upon

themselves to 'protect' the African subjects. Further south, on the Zanzibar mainland, the consul, Sir John Kirk, heartened the new Sultan Bargash to stretch and formalize his influence around 1877. The Sultan "*proved to be a 'progressive' ruler in the eyes of the British officials prosecuting the anti-slavery campaign in East Africa*" (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 547); eventually, the Sultan signed an anti-slave trade treaty with the British agreeing to close the slave market in Zanzibar and make illegal the shipment of slaves from the mainland coast to the islands or beyond (ibid.: 548); at the same time:

*Kirk was pressing him to grant the Scottish ship-owner Mackinnon, mainland concessions which would have transferred to Mackinnon the reality of power and profit. In the same year, Sir Robert Morier, the British ambassador at Lisbon, proposed the enrolment of Portugal as a third British client-state with functions similar to those of Egypt and Zanzibar....he believed, it would be easy for Britain to acquire paramount influence throughout the whole of Africa.*  
(ibid.: 120).

Before some parts of East Africa could be made amenable to European rule, it should be recalled that in the 1870's the region was best of all defined as "*the economic hinterland of the commercial entrepot of Zanzibar*" (ibid.: 539). Meanwhile, major European States like Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, France and others were bent on aggrandizement; so they were determined to follow Portugal's trails. In Europe, the subsequent period, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, was not one of uninterrupted boom. Periods of prosperity, alternated with periods of slumbering under-achievements and depressions. In depressions, business declined, people were thrown out of work and investment slowed to a trickle across Europe. Precisely, in the middle of the nineteenth century, European industry underwent periodic recessions occasioned by lack of raw materials. Fortunate businessmen, who accumulated excess of capital, found it difficult to put it in profitable circulation in Europe. It then became

necessary for these afore-said countries to make a conscious effort to alleviate the economic crisis, so they turned their gaze towards other continents and countries possessing the required raw materials, notably Africa. In the voluminous Cambridge History of Africa, Fage and Oliver argue that:

*By the end of the 1870's consciousness of a shrinking and all too finite globe, the apparent satiation of existing markets, the temporary absence of new opportunities for sale and remunerative overseas investment, and the evolution of a new map of Africa embodying some determinate interior content, had conspired to present the African interior as the world's last great untapped reservoir of markets, resources and possible investment opportunities. This image developed precisely at the moment when the growth of technological confidence was encouraging the belief that political control and economic exploitation of the interior had at last become feasible operations; within five years or so of the development of this image, the scramble for Africa had begun.*

(Fage and Oliver, 1997: 103).

In this respect, rivalries in Western Europe and the nature of European competitive capitalism produced a frenzy of annexation in Africa. The African continent presented a great abundance of things of every trade—coffee, ivory, rubber, palm produce and other commodities, including human resources—coveted by European powers. Besides, while hinting at humans, L. Markovitz asserts: “*defenseless Africa seemed just the right human reservoir from which labour could be drawn at minimum risk and cost*” (Markovitz, 1970: 22). Thus, the scramble for territories was well under way and these European powers were at loggerheads with each other about the various portions of Africa they could obtain. In order to settle these staggering territorial disputes, or what Monroe terms “*the unparalleled territorial acquisitiveness*”, (O’ Connor and Sabato, 1997: 736) the European powers entered strategic alliances through an international conference held at Berlin in November 1884. The conference was envisioned to enshrine the principle of European spheres of interest in Africa and to lay



down the rules and regulations for the parcelling out that was to follow. Some historians stress the peaceful aspect of the ‘sharing out’ of Africa via treaty makings and the protectorate device. Yet, the use of military force was sometimes the ultima ratio to tame those who dared to stand in the paths of spreading empires, those resistance fighters. As a case study, Kenya provides a good illustration wherein British authorities combined alliance with coercion to counter resistance movements whenever necessary. However, prior to introducing and analyzing Kenya resistance and its peripeteia, it is worthwhile considering the British context in order to uncover some of the factors that favoured British conquest overseas and singularly in East Africa.

#### **A- The British Scene:**

Britain emerged as a naval power around the seventeenth century onwards. It had come to play a phenomenal and preponderant part in the world history. In fact, economic and religious factors, epitomized by the need to develop commerce through maritime achievement with a view to better conditions in Britain and propagate Christianity, could not be confined to the British Isles. In reality, *laissez-faire*<sup>7</sup> policy became the watchword during the eighteenth century. In any event, the success of Britain’s free-trade mercantilism<sup>8</sup> along portions of the west and east African coasts in the early nineteenth century owed much to the presence of its Royal Navy.

Yet, the context also zoomed in a period that had absolutely nothing romantic about it. It was spotlighted by a plethora of unfavourable socio-economic factors. These

---

<sup>7</sup> Laissez-faire: during the early 1900’s while some people raised the public cry for regulation of business, many British, especially businessmen, continued to resist such moves. They believed that the role of the government was not to regulate but instead facilitate the national economy through a commitment to laissez-faire, a French term literally meaning let to do (O’Connor and Sabato, 1993: 269).

<sup>8</sup> Mercantilism: a theory of trade, which means, above all, increasing foreign trade through, monopolies (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1997: 404).

embraced, among other things, the evils of the industrial revolution and its aftermath: struggles, hardships, humiliations and despondency. In the course of things, the economic crisis of the 1850's produced the bankruptcies of weak firms; in practice many businesses failed and employment opportunities dwindled rapidly. The unemployment rate soared to a high percentage and hordes of people were jobless. People depended on friends, relatives or private charities for food. That was a time when a whole country was 'in want'. People wanted to glut the job market, and those fortunate enough to do it caused wages to fall. Indeed, those years, known as the Victorian Era, were particularly marked by poverty. For example, in 1851 a huge work, entitled *London Harbour and the London Poor*, provided the most complete description of lower class-life in Britain yet published<sup>9</sup>.

Globally, the pressing economic wants for expansion could hardly be translated into reality without the actual fact of colonial expansion. In this respect, Africa was eventually considered as a site wherein economic opportunities beckoned. The discovery of diamonds in South Africa in 1867 and the opening of Suez Canal, two years later, are good instances.

Basically economic incentives operated in that British investors, buccaneers, privateers, entrepreneurs and their associates feared that other European emulators might cut off their access to potential resources after annexing sections of African coasts and, later, the interior. As a matter of fact, the African continent became virtually at stake by the end of the nineteenth century and the time for laying the foundation stone had arrived. This clique of English businessmen clubbed together to

---

<sup>9</sup> Lower-class life was spread everywhere. In Westmorland, a region in England, children were employed in the manufacture of stockings as early as the age of four. Child labour was a bitter fact, among others, that reflected times of distress (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1997: 432).

call on their government to use national power and money to support their economic enterprises overseas, and to have a protected trade-zone of their own in Africa. With a view to upgrading its prestige and status, Britain started to feel the need to control overseas markets, to get hold of raw materials and to take advantage of cheap labour.

Ultimately, Africa would be a satellite directed to yield and drain exports increasingly required in European countries and Britain. To fit these requirements, many autochthons would be, more often than not, despoiled of their lands and put in positions that would satisfy British interests. Y.M. Ivanov made this point clear through this quotation: “*established forced labour... would comprise slavery, the imposition of taxation and the curtailment of native lands*” (Ivanov, 1979: 13). Again, within this framework Kenya provides a case in point. One will bring out, in the next chapter, the extent to which land confiscation was so detrimental an issue for some tribes, notably the Kikuyu.

Aside from materialistic considerations, another telling happening, was the anti-slave campaign mentioned before. It spurred on the British government to a greater commitment in Africa. The British Navy with its anti-slavery patrols “*immeasurably strengthened British influence in those African regions*” (Kennedy 1983: 166), an influence exercised by naval bases that announced the existence of an informal rule, behind which there was the indisputable urgency to put down the nefarious business of dealing with human flesh and, eventually, launch legitimate trade in Africa as an alternative.

## **II- The African Context:**

By and large, the British authorities were ready to enter the race and claim officially the different regions that became British Colonies. Still one wonders what Kenya was like before the colonial advent.

### **A- Pre-Colonial Kenya:**

Prior to the 1880's, there was no country known as Kenya. At best, there was a particular topography including: highlands, semi-arid lowland, lacustrine regions, coasts and deserts "*over an area of 225,000 square miles*" (Hazlewood, 1979: 2)—whose territorial boundaries were to be drawn by the British (see Map 2 below)<sup>10</sup>. Eventually, along with Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Kenya was to be part of British East Africa.

In all likelihood of events, while launching unrestrainedly its process of settlement in Kenya and stamping its name ingloriously on the pages of history, Britain did not actually operate in a vacuum. Like virtually all African countries, Kenya<sup>11</sup> comprised a kaleidoscope of clusters of people with different languages, customs and ways of life. British civilization was to be grafted upon more than two hundred ethnic groupings (Meister, 1975: 27), a certain number of whom proved unforthcoming and sought to thwart British project of settlement by the end of the nineteenth century.

---

<sup>10</sup> The country is bounded on the east by the Indian Ocean, on the north-east and north by the Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia, on the west by Uganda and on the south by Tanzania, ex Tanganyika.

<sup>11</sup> The origin and meaning of the name is a matter of dispute it is perhaps an Anglicization of the Kamba name for Mount Kenya: Kii Nyaa, the mountain with streaks of snow 17,000 foot peak (Hazlewood, 1979: 2).



Map 2: Kenya boundaries as drawn by the British  
 (Source: <http://www.kenyalogy.com/eng/mapake/gmapgeo.html>)

In substance, the traditional landscape of Kenya had been mostly shaped over centuries by stateless societies with few exceptions, such as the Wanga state under chief *Mumia*. Nonetheless, for the stateless societies, the implication was the existence of pre-literate organisations that could not be identified as states in the classical sense of the term. Indeed, there were few incentives to state formation because of the rugged terrains, poor soils in certain areas, bushy hills, rivers (Chania, Gura...), lakes located eastwards, inadequate rainfall over semiarid-lowlands, and the secluded desert of the north. Instead, people either wandered across the immensity of the territory—for example, the Masai tribesmen spread over pastoral regions under the impulse of their migratory nature—or preferred living in small groups dispersed around tillable and fertile lands to graze their flocks. They moved notably to the Rift valley and the

highlands regions of south-western Kenya where the Kikuyu tribesmen happened to be long-established occupants. During colonization, the highlands were to constitute a source of dispute between European settlers and the autochthons.

Politically, *“pastoralist people and cattle-owning cultivators did not form a common political organization and were within themselves decentralized”* (Roberts, 1997: 545). In effect, most of these tribes had neither any kind of autarchy i.e. a centralized form of government nor chiefs, and nor were there great empires. *“Instead of being concentrated in a single central authority, tribal authority was dispersed through a number of counter-balancing segments”* (McEwan and Sutcliffe, 1965: 93) such as the Kamba, the Kikuyu and so forth. Precisely, the main clusters of population were not integrated within a unitary structure. They were loosely constructed politically and inherently democratic. Several, but not all, had no acknowledged clan heads (Wagner, 1949: 20). Power was held by a number of, more or less, sovereign classes, such as the Bantu of Kavirondo in the north, etc. Another instance is the pre-cited Kamba. There is no record of chiefs among them. Instead, they had a council of war leaders *nzama ya nduaz* (Marsh and Kingsworth 1972: 20) controlling a number of sub-groups. These sub-groups *“formed ‘fire-link’ units within which according to tribal law and custom members could call upon one another for assistance”* (Barnett, 1966 44). Amongst the Kikuyu, chieftainship corresponded to an age-group system in which a council of elders held office until a younger generation had reached the wisdom of maturity (ibid.: 45).

It is all important to recall that chiefs were few and far between. Traditionally, there were certain important traders, mediums or so-called seers who exercised their influence over councils of elders within the tribes. Most of these chiefs did not play an active part in the rise of nationalism. In respect of the Kikuyu, such rulers were called

*Muthamki*. For instance, Gaki and Metune were two sub-tribes respectively ruled by chiefs Wagambe and Mwati (Lambert, 1956: 101). There was also the famous long-lived *Mumia* who headed the Wanga state in North Nyanza. (Wanga State was one of the exceptions in Kenya).

At all events, one will show, in due course, how these non-kinship states, with many others, were in contact with the British missionaries, settlers, officials and so forth and how the latter stripped away thousand years of Kenya's history and the very foundation of all the ancient freedoms. Worst of all, they interrupted traditional migratory movements, thence shattering coming-of-age rituals, *unoto*, and tribal patterns that went back to millenniums. Good instances are the Kikuyu resentment resulting from the disruption of their cyclic age-group rituals by the British and the disturbance of the *unoto* ceremonies of the Masai by the same British.

Before introducing and discussing the reaction of the autochthons and the episode of resistance altogether, it is useful to tackle some of the factors that paved the way for British penetration in Kenya.

### **1. Factors Facilitating British Penetration:**

Albeit symbiotic relationships did exist between some ethnic groups, some pastoralists and cultivators were in fact involved in complex and changing interactions. On occasions, the Masai acted as middlemen between the Dorobo hunters and the coastmen and secured their relations with the Doboro suppliers in a number of ways including marriage, trusteeship of cattle, and so forth (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 546). However, some other tribes were swept by the wind of intermittent inter-tribal warfare and raiding across the pre-colonial years. These rival tribes embarked upon, what H. Kjekshus calls "*internecine wars*" (Kjekshus, 1977: 18). These series of endless rows

were ascribable to the following reasons. Historian A.G Fisher underlines that: fighting was explained in terms of economic rationality (ibid.: 18). He observed that the motivation for warlike action was mainly set off by materialism, such as cattle possession or territorial acquisition. Truly, ceaseless territorial adjustments that were reinforced by space-cycle mobility involved foundering warfare between Kikuyu, Embu, Luo, Masai and other rival ethnic groups. Relations with the Masai deteriorated as Kikuyu warriors defended agricultural activity in areas that also served as dry season pastures (Roberts, 1997: 546). The Embu, for example, had to fiercely repulse Kamba and even the fearsome-looking Masai invasions. Back to the sixteenth century, for instance, the Luo pushed into the area of the north displacing the Luhya eastward and clashing with the Kisii. During the eighteenth century, another instance was that the Masai pastoralists, who attempted to occupy land searching for new grazing surfaces, were desperately held by the Kikuyu agriculturists. The latter occupied what was to become the rich southern area of Kiambu and the rich highlands regions to the east and south of the Aberdares Range. The pastoralist Masai also occupied the highlands. These two tribes did not get along well with each other as they often happened to clash over land. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, the expansion of the same Kikuyu over land used by the Gamba hunters resulted in friction and eventually war in the open grasslands. Between 1870 and 1875, there were also serious encounters between the Masai on the one hand, and the Kiwavi with the Wakwaia tribes on the other. The wars often ended in complete defeat of the Masai's nemeses<sup>12</sup>.

Rows also broke out mostly on account of rivalry for power or succession between heirs. Actually, some tribes had no clear provision for succession to the ruling; if anything, they left a void that increased callousness between tribes. Slave raiding is

---

<sup>12</sup>The Kipsigis who adopted Kip-Chomber (a Nandi Orkoiyot) arranged continuous raids of cattle from neighbouring Luo and Bantu tribes, such as the Kamba and others (Harlow and Chilver, 1965: 382).



another cause that sometimes poisoned relations. Petty traders participated in clandestine slave trading. To secure slaves in Ukambani, Mijikenda, Kikuyu countries and the coastal areas, some tribes fought callously against others. As a matter of instance, Swahili slave traders at Mombasa attacked other tribes to secure slaves not for the replenishment of plantation labour as such, but for selling captives for guns with



Map 3: Some warring tribes in East Africa  
(Source: Martin, 1983: 64)

which to carry on civil wars. Basically, there was fear and mistrust between ethnic groupings.

Later, in an early dispatch about conditions in Kenya, the administrator Sir Charles Eliot wrote: “*The native tribes warred with one another to get slaves to sale to the Arabs*” (ibid.: 17). The escalation of violence intensified in coastal regions as well. In his book, entitled *Ties that bind*, T.J. Herlehy illustrates this intensity. Referring to the coastal fringe he states: “*the coast was torn by warfare and raids conducted by the dreaded Masai, Teita and other tribes with a relative amount of frequency*” (Herlehy, 1938: 12). The depredations of such inter-tribal conflicts made it difficult for many autochthons to be prosperous. Map 3 (above) illustrates some of the warring tribes. Right was the explorer Speke when he noted: “*In a situation where everybody warred against everybody, all scope for prosperity was undermined*” (Speke 1863: 344).

On the whole, the phase of insecurity and conflicts was further compounded and enduringly aggravated by a series of unparalleled disasters; epidemics such as rinderpest disease, locust and sleeping-sickness swept from Kenya to Somalia invalidating out cattle-keepers and herders without immunity like the Masai. In the woodlands south of Lake Victoria, human and cattle diseases in the 1890’s had caused much land to be abandoned; tsetse fly moved in and spread sleeping-sickness among people and cattle (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 662). There was also the deadly small-pox epidemics coupled with famine that choked a good many people. In fact, mortality rate was gruesomely higher among infected and malnourished victims. “*Estimates for the Kikuyu range from 50 per cent to 95 per cent population loss from smallpox*” (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 576); thus, formerly inhabited lands became barren. Add to that, more broadly, the fact that Africa remained an under populated continent until the late twentieth century, and Kenya undersized tribes, in the late nineteenth century, were remotely incapable of fielding armies as large as those routinely assembled for war by

the British in Europe or elsewhere (Vandervort, 1998: 39). One should recall that later British forces in Africa also relied heavily on African troops, such as the King's African Rifles (KAR) founded in 1902 through the merger of pre-existing chartered company regiments in Kenya, Central Africa and Uganda (Haywood and Clarke, 1964: 32). Racked by generation of tropical diseases, weakened by the lack of right food and warfare, the autochthons were more than vulnerable. These factors, among others, had probably contributed to facilitating British penetration in Kenya.

## **B- Establishment of a Colony:**

Little is known of the early history of Kenya's interior, except that many tribes from all over the continents settled there long before the British arrival. To fathom sketchily the early stages of British settlement in Kenya, one needs again to step back in time.

### **1- Early Stages of British Settlement:**

Back in the end of the sixteenth century, the first English ships began to appear in the Indian Ocean; however, by 1650, the strongest naval power in the Indian Ocean was the Omanis. They proceeded to drive the Portuguese, who took control of coastal trading from the early sixteenth century, out of Zanzibar in 1652<sup>13</sup>, and recovered most Arab possessions on the coast including Mombasa in 1698 (Coulson, 1982: 22). One hundred years later, the British made a treaty with Oman by which the sultan agreed to stop trading with the French and Dutch whose trading companies started to establish branches in Zanzibar. In 1806 Seyyid Said became the sultan of Oman. He signed treaties with a local chief Mwiayi and Hadimu people of the coast (Munro, 1976: 53).

---

<sup>13</sup> In the relatively short span of time of one century (1698-1798), the Omanis were challenged by another powerful Arab family the Mazrui. In 1741 the latter established an independent sheikhdom and gave Mombasa a dominating position on the coast. That period marked the beginning of an intense rivalry between the Marui and the Omanis. Finally, the latter took over (Coulson, 1982: 22).

After colonizing Zanzibar, he went on administering Mombasa and the entire coast. He secured commercial treaties with Germany and Britain. According to F. Munro, such “*treaties were undoubtedly an influential factor encouraging the settlement of trading European nations*” (Cornevin, 1978: 188). British and German paths were bound to cross. Destiny threw them together when both of them sought to establish their control and claim more and more trading concessions in the African interior.

Still concerned with the appalling episode of slavery, Britain took the lead in annihilating this sordid institution by way of an Act of Parliament passed in 1807. The Act stipulated that slavery was declared illegal in British vessels. Let us recall that Britain multiplied its anti-slavery campaigns along the Swahili coast. In the 1820’s Captain William Owen tried with all his energy to persuade the British that the answer to the slave trade was to accept a protectorate in East Africa; and the first English Protectorate was set up between 1824 and 1826, as already noted. Later with the support of the British, who had the mission to shore up his presence, Said proclaimed himself to be the new Sultan of Zanzibar and the East African coast.

The 1840’s ushered in the penetration of Kenya’s interior thanks to activities confined largely to missionary work and exploration by European trailbreakers, missionaries and the like. Contrary to the British, who were unacquainted with the interior, the Germans set to open the paths in the person of Dr Ludwig Krapf from the Church Missionary Society. Pioneer over all pioneers, he penetrated the unexplored inner lands of Kenya, armed only with a sunshade and a bible; he explored the Kenyan inland and established a mission station in Rabai in 1844. He established himself along the Mijikenda on the coast and later translated the Bible to Swahili. He was joined in 1848 by Johannes Rebman and Jacob Erhardt (Marsh, 1972: 51), two explorers who

took turns on a series of Christianization expeditions and who discovered the road leading to Kilimanjaro mount and Kitui, another huge mountain, which the Kikuyu people believed to be the dwelling of their god *Ngai*. Soon after his arrival at Mombasa, Krapf, then associated with the Methodist Missionary Society, founded another mission. The missions conducted schools that were the first such western institutions in Kenya. At schools young locals ‘sang God save the King’ and saluted the British flag. Krapf became very interested in the Kamba who were mediums fetching ivory by caravans of two hundred to three hundred persons from the interior to the coast (Ghai, 1965: 3). Very embryonic signs of resistance to aliens could be recorded when efforts to extend mission activities to the interior were frustrated by the locals. Large areas were kept unsettled. The indigenous Muslim population was strongly opposed to the teaching of Christianity. In the years that followed, however, mission stations for freed slaves were also settled by Roman Catholic and Presbyterian missionaries. In any case, the few converts were people displaced by disease, orphans and those outcasts who had nothing to lose.

Since then, a veritable influx of Europeans, mainly British philanthropists and explorers flowed towards those regions passing via the coastal string of East Africa (Kenya). Burton, Speke, Grant, Stanley, Livingstone and Thomson were foremost in the enterprise. Reportedly, most of the Europeans—estimated to number 300 in the region by 1885—were involved in missionary work.

In order to grasp the process of exploration and establishment of stations, for example, commercial, religious, etc.... that preceded British rule in Kenya, one needs to follow trail of some other adventurers. Richard Burton and John Henning Speke, two British explorers, managed to reach a vast lake, which Burton named Victoria in 1857

in honour of his Queen. Two years later, Speke with James Grant, another explorer, got support from the Royal Geography Society and the British government to organize other expeditions. In the 1860s', Dr David Livingstone, a Scottish missionary, established a major Mission on Lake Nyasa. Dr Livingstone's diaries did much to arouse the British to take a greater humanitarian responsibility, especially with the description of the practices of Arab Slave traders. In the 1870s, the British explorer Henry Morton Stanley was commissioned to carry on the unfinished exploration of Dr Livingstone. Stanley managed to reach Lake Victoria. The same decade of the 1870s witnessed William Mc Kinmon's presence. He was a British buccaneer who initially founded the British and Indian Steam Navigation Company. Mc Kinnon was well acquainted with the East African coast. He understood that the possession by a British Company of the coastline, including Mombasa, would be advantageous to the commercial interests of British subjects in the Indian Ocean. He, then, conceived a plan for a Company to obtain the points of access to interior trade. In sum, Mc Kinmon hoped that inland territory might effectively be occupied by commercial organizations with a royal charter. Whence, with his ally, Thomas Johnson, the explorer, he tried to convince the British government to form a Protectorate on the coast with a double aim of eradicating the persisting slave trade and advancing the commerce with India and East Africa. The British government kept manifesting its reserve with regard to the proclamation of a Protectorate, yet it was eager to do away with slavery.

*“Following the spirit of the times”*(Hailey, 1956: 33), to employ Lord Hailey's expression, Sir F. Bartle, ex-Governor of Bombay, was sent in 1871 to persuade the Sultan of Zanzibar, Seyyid Barghash,<sup>14</sup> to clear off unambiguously the ongoing slave

---

<sup>14</sup> Seyyid Barghash ruled from (1870-88); he succeeded his brother Seyyid Madjid (1856-70). After Barghash, came Seyyid Kheifa (1888-90) and Seyyid Ali (1890-3) (Marsh, 1972: 24).

trade in the region. It was listlessly abolished in 1873<sup>15</sup>. Barghash signed a treaty with the British, agreeing to close the slave market in Zanzibar and make illegal the shipment of slave from the mainland coast, whether to the island or beyond. In a parallel development, Britain forced the Egyptian government to abandon control of the whole African coastline from the confines of Egypt to the borders of present day Kenya (Afigbo, 1992: 359). And since the headwaters of the Nile became the object of a race between European rivals, namely France, Belgium, Germany and Italy, the British government bought the Suez Canal Shares from Khedive Ismail of Egypt in 1875 (ibid.: 359). As a reminder, the British occupation of Egypt was to take place in 1882.

By December 1876 the British colonial secretary, Lord Carnarvon not content with plans for the consolidation of informal British hegemony on both the East and West coasts, was anxious to extend British far into the interior, northward along the spine of southern and eastern Africa. “*We cannot,*” wrote Carnarvon, “*admit rivals in the East or even the central parts of Africa.... To a considerable extent, if not entirely, we must be prepared to apply a sort of Monroe Doctrine<sup>16</sup> to much of Africa*” (Etherington, 1981: 9).

---

<sup>15</sup> In the 1870's about 20,000 slaves a year were brought to Zanzibar to be re-exported to various parts of the world (the Caribbean or the American mainland). In 1871, the British parliament decided to prohibit the East Africa slave trade. It threatened to blockade Zanzibar itself by its navy unless Barghash cooperated. On June 1873, he duly signed the treaty making slave trade illegal between all his posts and at once messengers were sent to close the gates of the Zanzibar slave market forever (Coulson, 1982.: 25).

<sup>16</sup> Monroe doctrine: the limited capacity of US government to provide military or foreign economic assistance helps explain its response to the resolutions in the 1820's that helped most Latin American countries gain their independence. President James Monroe threatened action if European powers attempted to recognize the region and if the Russians extended their presence on the western coast of North America. In an annual message to congress in December 1823, Monroe declared that it would be dangerous to American peace and safety for European states to attempt to extend their system to the western hemisphere. This approach to hemispheric relations became known as the Monroe Doctrine (O'Connor and Sabato, 1997: 736).

Interestingly, after the slavers' era, other alluring commodities, (such as ivory, gum, vegetable-oil and others) that were bartered in Mombasa, surfaced and attracted further foreigners. Africa became "*a mythical Eldorado of vast fertile empty lands, African sleeping beauties awaiting the magical kiss of European energy, skill and capital*" (Roberts 1997:101). Hence British people with other Europeans including representatives of geographical, economic and religious institutions berthed at Mombasa and flocked to its vicinity. These people multiplied contacts with local residents. As early as 1883, the Scotsman Joseph Thomson was the very first European to set a foothold on the soil of the present district of North Kavirondo coming from the Uasin-Gishu plateau (Wagner, 1949: 30). He was sent to find whether a useful, direct route for European travelers existed through the Masai country to examine Mount Kenya (Marsh 1972: 51). The Masai were the people from whom the British expected most trouble. It was reportedly a hostile and warring tribe that was the nightmare of every expedition. Given Masais' penchant for clan warfare and inhospitableness towards foreigners, and given their aggressive reputation, the British explorers treated these shock-heads with respect. One year later, Sir Harry Johnson, an adventurer, recommended the establishment of British control in the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. Besides, he obtained various treaties, including a small concession at Taveta. The region was portrayed by some explorers as healthy and congenial. They saw there the possibility of building a white man's country.

In 1884, much of the scramble had been motivated by the aim of excluding rival powers. The principles held in Berlin Conference as well as the ensuing implications allowed Britain to extend its grasp over most of the region in East Africa and establish formal political control in order to consolidate its position there. Germans' move was still a menace for the commercial interest of Britain. Yet sending British agents, missionaries and the like was not without outsized risks. In 1885, two years after



Thomson's visit of Kavirondo, Bishop James Hannington crossed the area going North West. In the course of his visit through Busoga, he was murdered (Wagner, 1949: 30). In the same year, General Mathews made an expedition to Kilimanjaro because he feared that Germans would claim the area and he was lucky enough to make over two dozen treaties with various tribes, who swore loyalty to the sultan Barghash (ibid.: 33).

The premise of Britain's official settlement in Kenya was partly supported by Lord Salisbury—Britain's Prime Minister in the 1880s—who negotiated a line from Uganda to Lake Victoria, the present boundary of Tanzania and Kenya, in 1886; thereafter, the British sphere of influence was to be to the north, while the German sphere was down south by virtue of the Anglo-German Treaty of 1890. In that way and fleetingly, the northern interior fell wholly under the British Imperial East Africa Company (IBEA) launched by Mc Kinnon to trade in the mainland. The fact remained that initially the British government was reluctant to take active responsibility for the region of East Africa which became its acknowledged sphere of interest. In any case, commercial interests paved the way for the British. The bona fide Company received a royal charter in 1888 and obtained concessionary rights from the Sultan of Zanzibar for a fifty year period to trade, administer and develop the territory officially, especially on the coastal area. It is instructive to recall that, in much of Africa, invasion and settlement had been left to chartered companies. *“The first phase was called the era of armed caravans whose relations with local people were similar to those of large Swahili expeditions”* (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 571). Subsequently, *“the establishment of strong points, with small but significant arsenals and concentrations of uniformed soldiers and auxiliaries, often gaining strength through alliance with a pre-existing regional power”* (ibid.:). In Kenya, the creation of posts and stations abounded. For example, the Company had erected five posts on the coast: Kismayu, Port Dunford, Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa (Cornevin, 1975: 92). It did not hazard in the interior by

reason of the effects of the sweltering and humid climate and, above all, the threats represented by the Masai, the Kikuyu, the Embu and other bellicose tribes that resisted British penetration as will be stressed.

By 1889 commercial activities were prevalent and IBEA Company's representatives, Jackson and Gedge, paid a visit to north Kavirondo to buy up ivory on behalf the Company (Wagner, 1949: 30). During the same date, trading posts sprang up in the interior in Machakos, south west of Ukamba and in Kikuyu land. Later, three other posts were opened in the province of Naivasha, Ravine and *Mumias*. Fort Smith was a supplementary post that was established southwards of the peak of Kenya province (Harlow and Chilver, 1965: 212). In the service of the Company, Captain Lugard established a post in Dagoretti, 40 kms west of Nairobi in 1890. Two years later, the British opened a station at Machakos on the western side; meanwhile, a station was opened at Kitui and this was, altogether, the beginning of an unofficial colonial administration in Ukambani region (Coupland, 1956: 408). In parallel with this, the administrative control of Kenya coastline had effectively slipped from the sultan Seyyid Ali.

As the years went by, the IBEAC had a chequered career and proved short-lived. In 1892, it underwent an unwelcome reversal of fortune characterized by financial difficulties. Albeit the Company did not set a firm foothold in present day Kenya, it had the merit to set the wheel of settlement in motion. Indeed, it secured not less than ninety seven treaties<sup>17</sup>. No sooner had the Company charter been revoked (with compensation of 250, 000 pounds) than the British government stepped in to maintain

---

<sup>17</sup> The treaties, in question, covered only areas of land occupied by the Company station. They conveyed no rights to land and they were transferred to the Protectorate government later on (Harlow and Chilver, 1965: 673).

its stance, to stop warfare between Masai and Teita in the coastal region for example, and, above all, to protect trade and navigation by assuming administrative power. Thus the East African Protectorate, Kenya inclusive, became clearly a British responsibility. Factually speaking, the British government took interest to occupy this country for a strategic reason, to secure access to the headwaters of the Nile River, and at the same time, to protect the Suez Canal, the main route to India, the Far East and the Pacific. The ultimate objective was, as David McInryre recalls, that “*Britain went to Africa from the north east not to carve out an empire, but to protect the existing Indian Empire and the Dominions in the Pacific*” (McInryre, 1974: 257).

The imperiousness to institute a solid protectorate was imminent. At face value, this initiative did not emanate from a split-second decision to pacify war-torn tribes or protect trade and the Nile only, but the protectorate device had to do with the profitability of Uganda and its rich resources as well. By the 1890s’, Kenya was involved in the process since it appeared to be the gateway to Uganda.

Very likely, the British consul-General A.M. Hardingue had signalled an interest in establishing a diplomatic presence in Kenya. He announced British willingness to proclaim a protectorate in the region. In 1894, the Uganda protectorate was proclaimed and the East Africa protectorate (as Kenya was, then, called) followed in 1895, while the coastal strip remained a protectorate under the nominal sovereignty of the sultan of Zanzibar, Seyyid Ali’s successor. Years later, the British signed a bona fide agreement with the sultan in which “*a 10-mile strip along the coast was leased to the British who took it upon themselves to ‘protect’ the African subjects. For protecting the natives, the British government paid an annual rent and concession interest fee to the sultan and*

*this continued until 1963 when the agreement came to an end with attainment of independence for Kenya” (Waweru, 1988: 3).*

The foundations for British rule throughout the East Africa protectorate were effectively laid, subsequently opening the fertile highlands to white settlers as will be seen. They were to be accompanied with adequate communication. Reportedly, *“the different outposts required 2,000 man-loads of supplies each year. From a logistical point of view, a railway was the only viable means of supporting Britain’s growing endeavour in the interior. It would not only carry East African export crops from the British territories, placing them on the world market, but it would provide the cheapest route between the coast and the populous German districts to the south west of Lake Victoria”* (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 657). Sir Gerald Portal, Britain Acting Consul in Zanzibar, recommended the Foreign Office the construction of a railway in order to effect any real improvement in property or commerce efficiently and to reap the benefits of material progress (British dominance/Jambo/history.com7.htm). In fact, a key to the conquest of Kenya’s interior was the railway construction. It started in 1895 from Mombasa to Kisumu near the shores of Lake Victoria where it reached its planned terminal later in 1902 (Hazlewood, 1979: 1). The Uganda Railway, as it was called, *“was to run from Mombasa through scrub and desert to the temperate uplands south of Mount Kenya, across the Rift Valley and down to the shores of Lake Victoria”* (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 649).

Specifically, the British presence was most visibly felt with that construction. In addition to hypothetical commercial implications, *“the line of rail was also a central nerve governing military reflexes and conveying a logic of armed conquest”* (ibid.: 572). Initially, to build the railroads from Mombasa to Lake Victoria through land

which was largely unknown for British engineers, and from which no big profit could be apparently expected, was not easy for the British government. They expected the worst and with good reasons. Certainly, under the supervision of the British, local hands coupled with Indian labourers were to be encounter obstacles. It was probably back-breaking, and hazardous to hack a way through rocks, thorn-bushes, and steep rises, escarpments, heat, sunstroke, tse-tse flies swarming around, man-eating lions roaming in the area and the strong local opposition. Yet, the Foreign Office knew that communications meant “*to advance British influence inland as far as Uganda and to open a strategic back-door to the Nile*” as noted earlier (Duignan and Gann, 1960: 104). Anyway, the primary concern in the building of the railway was to obtain access to Uganda. “*The region between the Lake and the coast was an obstacle, and a railway was the way to overcome it. The completion of the railway brought Uganda within days instead of months of the coast*” (Hazelwood, 1979: 1). Besides, the Germans would construct a railway there if the British would retract. Energetic efforts were begun to develop the twin-tracks under the impulse of Joseph Chamberlain, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (1893-1903). Alongside African Kenyans, indentured coolie labourers, many of whom remained<sup>18</sup>, were imported mainly from the Punjab, Gujarat, Kathiawar and Cutch (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 658) to toil long and hard laying tracks. The undertaking was to last six years during which Indians and some locals were often crammed together in tents or sod huts. In those days, no unions existed to protect the railroad construction crew. What mattered much was the project not the labourers. Eventually, under chief engineer Ronald Preston, this tremendous project, which was to stretch across 970 kilometres, was not only to be the keystone of transportation infrastructure but also the mainstay of the later Kenya Colony. Indeed, it was to provide strategic access to places like the highlands, considered suitable for European

---

<sup>18</sup> The figure of Indian coolies varied. According to Lord Hailey, the number included as many as 1800 coolies largely from the Punjab (Hailey, 1956: 400). On his part Andrew Boyd and Van Rensburg recorded 35,000 many of whom remained after its completion (Boyd and V. Rensburg, 1962: 104).

farming. Later on, the railway did not simply open up a route but it literally created a new landscape by bringing infrastructural changes; thus, the main towns of Kenya owed their growth and status to the railway. Places like Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru and others were originally convenient staging points on the edge of the highlands. For example, “by 1899 the line had reached a point 300 miles inland at the approach to a high plateau over which it would have to pass on its way to the west. A military camp, at this point, was the origin of the city of Nairobi” (Hazelwood, 1979: 56). Soon the British administration was headquartered in that place and later it became the capital city of Kenya. However, the construction had shortcomings. For instance, lines crisscrossed the south-western region but did not expand between desert regions of the north (see Map 4 below). Such areas yielded probably no economic interests.



Map 4: Railway transportation in the East African Protectorate by the turn of the twentieth century (Source: Martin, 1983: 22)

Progressively, British policy revolved around the Mombasa-Uganda railway. On his part F. Munro punctiliously observes that “a newly railway line between Kenya and Uganda generated expenses to be faced by colonial policy” (Munro, 1976: 92). It cost £5.53 million which the British government charged and it was expected to carry about

the same value of imports (Mosley, 1983: 13). Thereof, the guiding principle of the British government was directly involved with the urgency to create conditions in the area based on profitability as stipulated by Sir Gerald Portal.

The policy of the time was that Colonies did not have to be crippling burdens. They had to pay their own way. How could that be? The British planners and investors would look only at the increased yields that would be channelled into exports, because exports alone would build up the foreign trade balances that would be needed to pay the external costs of running the Protectorates and the Colonies. As yet, the British government had also its share of investment to make construction projects sustainable. In that regard, the train had to be an instrument that would complement economic commitments. It was then a priority to develop the region economically. The line of rail was to have commercial implications; above all, it was to generate boom markets for produce which were to encourage local agricultural peoples to participate in large-scale exploitation under British control. This could only come about by exploiting Uganda cotton and, mostly, Kenya highlands whose soils were suitable for agriculture. In effect, only farming on a large Scale could provide the volume of freight needed for the railway to pay for itself. This agricultural enterprise would spark off the immigration of the would-be settlers to the highlands. The slogan: 'Kenya, a white man's country' put forward by the British East Africa Commissioner, Sir Charles Eliot, was to be converted into a living and working reality. According to C. Christianson, "*the colonization of Kenya was a direct consequence of the railway construction*" (Christianson, 1968: 24). Precisely, "*It is with the building of the railway and with British Government funds that the political delineation of the area—which became Kenya—began. It began under a single territorial British administration, thus the Protectorate and later Colony acquired boundaries not radically different from those of present-day Kenya*" (Hazlewood, 1979: 1).

The railway also caused the spilling of blood, especially amongst the autochthons. The latter expressed resistance to that intrusion. Notwithstanding considerable tribal opposition to the building of the railway, British settlement made strides. As yet, further forts were built and areas had to be encroached upon. This could only be achieved through clashes with several Kenyan groupings. The Giriama, the Masai, the Teita, the Kamba, some Kikuyu and Nandi and the Elgoyo were all receivers of brutal patrols which happened to kill ruthlessly men and women and sometimes exterminate their stock. In the light of these gory incidents, these tribes did not cry their eyes out; contrariwise, they masterminded a series of warlike acts without complacency and clashed fiercely with the invaders. The pattern of resistance is uncovered under the following headline.

### **C- Kenyan Early Resistance:**

The period of British occupation and resistance—from the turn of the twentieth century onwards, say 1890-1910— was marked by dramatic movements. The autochthons faced the decision that all men in all times must face...the eternal choice of men...to endure oppression or resist.

By no means were all Kenyan tribes analogous in their reaction. At face value, they were antagonistic. On the one hand, some ethnic groups were unequivocally cooperative and industrious with the British administrators, thus acquiescing their presence. Few of them were even willing to “*kiss the rod which scourged them*” (Roberts, 1997: 720). On the other hand, another category of tribes refused “*to bow to the verdict of history*” (Vandervort, 1998: preface). The latter were conducted by leaders who resisted colonial conquest day in day out.



For the first category of tribes, “*nothing was to be gained by resistance and much by negotiation*” (Fage and Oliver, 1988: 177). Alliances involved the gift of flags and the signing of crosses on pieces of paper. As will be seen, the British-Masai alliance is a case in point. In effect, some cattleless and famine-stricken Masai signed treaties and joined forces with the British clustering around the outpost forts of the Imperial British East African Company. There, these Masai were available to provide a ready source of military recruitment in the campaigns against the Kikuyu that produced enduring enmity between the two peoples (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 577). Basically, A.D Roberts points out that “*alien white commanders were generally accompanied by a swarm of African auxiliaries seeking to profit by a raid on neighbours*” (ibid.: 723); meanwhile, in semi-arid areas of Kenya, people in desperate conditions welcomed all forms of relief. For example, in parts of coastal Kenya food was given out by colonial government, in return for allegiance to missionaries or other colonial elements (ibid.: 579).

When the British Administration was opened up in the late 1890's (Wagner, 1949: 31) in North Kavirondo District, *Mumia*, among the few existing chiefs, was appointed by sub-commissioner C.W Hobbley to the rank of a paramount chief over all tribes there. *Mumia* had also convivial relations with Joseph Thomson; the latter was commissioned by the Royal Geography Institute to explore routes in the interior between Lake Victoria and Mount Kenya. Thomson also signed a treaty with local chiefs in Taveta. In Kinangui and Lenana, respectively Kikuyu and Masai chiefs maintained good relations with the ex IBEA Company's agents like Francis Hall, the founder of Mbiri Post located 100 kilometres north of Nairobi (Cornevin, 1975: 297).

Around the same period, few other Kikuyu chiefs, like Kature and Metune, in the North West, ratified agreements with the British. Then and there, Colonial officers kept engaging in alliances and feuds from their garrisons. Some officials, like John Ainsworth, often carved out districts and ruled them in a highly personalized way. At Machakos in Ukambani, Ainsworth was a sort of colonial 'seigneur'. This did not hinder, as a matter of instance, some Kamba from cooperating with him. Notwithstanding his attitude, this administrator set up Kitui post which later became the principal Kamba reserve south east of the highlands. Furthermore, another tribe that offered no resistance to the claim of British rule, was a section of the Luo tribe. Their chief, Ulado Odera, welcomed them far and wide on account of prophetic considerations. Ulado helped C.W Hobbley against his bellicose neighbours, the Nandi. The latter, a hostile tribe, mooted treaties and regarded them as bogus documents. Again, to stop occasional raids on the main caravans and to stop the theft of rifles through Kavirondo area, C.W Hobbley sent punitive expeditions against the Vugusu and Nyala with the support of 5,000 Bantu Kavirondo, all of whom recruited from tribal groups that owed allegiance to Chief *Mumia*. In addition, some 600 Uasin Gishu Masai, living among the Bantu Kavirondo, participated in the expeditions.

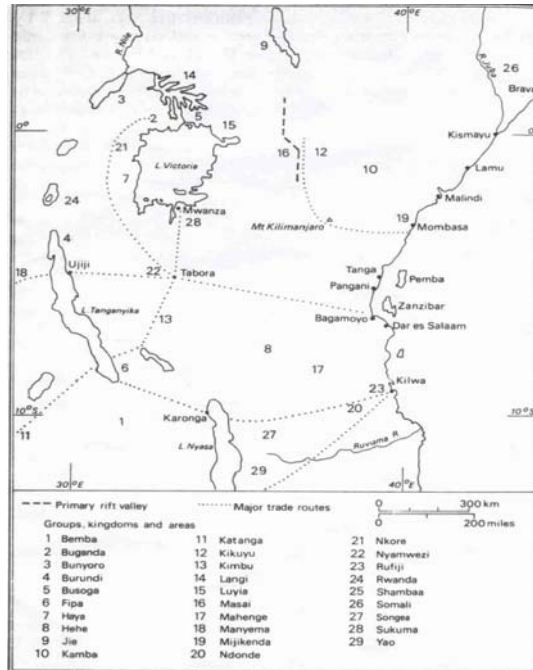
However, regarding the second category of tribes, many examples demonstrate that these tribes were, from the first, prepared to defend every vestige of their sovereignty. Thence, resistance movements in the form of guerrilla warfare were conducted by the recalcitrants against British soldiers and administrators at random intervals. Those British forces were in limbo. In truth, their expansionist surge that faced off defiant and wayward Kenyan tribesmen on the local scene was bound to have god-awful consequences. Still, who were these recalcitrants? Were resistance fighters successful? Why or why not?

## **1- Identification of Resisting Tribes:**

For the sake of gaining a brief insight into the identification of tribes that resisted staunchly the British penetration, it is useful to highlight that Kenya is the result of multiple contacts between people speaking closely related languages. Three major linguistic families prevailed: Bantu, Nilo-Hamitic and Hamitic languages. Given such a pattern, outstanding ethnic groups behind resistance movements will, therefore, be adumbrated with regard to specific linguistic distributions. This is by no means an exhaustive representation of all tribes that resisted. Map 5 (see next page) gives an idea of some of these tribes.

### **1.1 The Bantu Speaking Population:**

Generally, the Bantu populations lived in the centre, around Lake Victoria and the coast. Some of the tribes that resisted there included the Luhya in western and northern Nyanza, near Mount Elgon; the Kamba in the interior; the Kikuyu mostly in the centre; the Embu and Meru in the south-east of Mount Kenya and the Giriama in the lower valley of Tana and Teita near Mombasa.



Map 5: Enumeration and distribution of some resisting tribes (1870-1905)  
(Source: Roberts, 1975: 542)

### **1.2 The Nilo-Hamitic Speaking Population:**

Some of these fighting tribes comprehended the Masai in the Rift Valley, the Nandi between the Rift Valley and Lake Victoria, the Bukuso near Mount Elgon on the Uganda border and, finally, the Luo who dwelled in central Nyanza, on the shores of Lake Victoria, as well as in the west of Keiro Valley.

### **1.3 The Hamitic Speaking Population:**

Broadly speaking, the resistance fighters amongst the Hamitic people belonged to Somali tribes in the North East and the Rendille in the South East of Turkana without mentioning others.

## **2- Resistance Through Warfare:**

Notwithstanding, Kenyan resistance did not start with British colonial conquest exclusively. It occurred with the arrival of the Portuguese invaders. In fact, the episode of resistance has its roots going back a hundred years. One recalls briefly that it began as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Almeida, then Vice-Roy of India. In 1505 he sailed away on a maiden voyage to deal with Mombasa. The bowmen of Mombasa could not resist the power of Portuguese guns and armours. The Portuguese sought to venture beyond the east coast, contrary to expectation, they made little headway. Being checked by the autochthons that put up a strong fight and rolled them back, the Portuguese' advance was test-endurance. Eventually, they controlled coastal settlements overlooking the Indian Ocean. It is worth signaling, however, that in 1631 some people of Mombasa massacred a Portuguese Garrison fortified earlier (1593). Much later, in 1860, the Arab traders, who took over the route leading from the east coast to western Kenya, met with a very strong resistance from the Masai. The latter raided them consistently and sometimes captured well-protected caravans. Moreover, the Kikuyu and the Nandi alike spurned the Arabs and their caravans in the interior. They drove them away. Several parts of the region became armed control of Kenyan coastlines as well as its interior. Despite military repression of quite extraordinary severity and the stupendous tasks to subdue them, most tribes volunteered to fight. It may not be easy to explain how the drama that surrounded early resistance unfolded with precision in the 1890s' because each ethnic group reflected its own organization, tactics and methods; nevertheless, the *itungati*, guerrillas, used intermittent armed raids in the form of hit-and-run tactics and skirmish to fight the British army.

On the face of it, threats against the British colonial takeover came under the impetus of the Nandi, the Bukusu, the Luhya, the Kikuyu, and others. For instance,

having been subject to considerable harassment, Waiyaki wa Hinga—a Kikuyu chief who ruled Dagoretti, 40 kms west of, present day, Nairobi, and who had signed a treaty with Frederick Lugard of the BEAC—burnt down Lugard’s fort in 1890. Two years later, Waiyaki was killed by the British. The Kusu, a portion of Luhya, sustained punitive expeditions sent by Hobbley at the foot of Mount Elgon. On their part, the Masai, known for their war-like tendencies, frustrated British ambitions of settlement. Militarily organized, they assaulted them by sudden descents upon vulnerable and isolated outposts. In Nyanza, athwart the railway line, British control had been disputed by the Nandi for years. Several expeditions were made against them, especially when they tried to stop the railway construction. In truth, while building the railway, the British had to confront vigorous local opposition, especially from Koitalel Arap Samoei, a diviner and Nandi leader. He prophesied that a black snake would tear through Nandi land spitting fire. For many years he fought against the builders of the railway line. Ultimately he was assassinated. As yet, the Nandi went on resisting with might and main to servitude much longer than any other tribes. They carried audacious acts of sabotage at the British tirelessly between the Rift Valley and Lake Victoria. When the British sent four expeditions against them until 1900, the result was inconclusive. A series of raids, especially on the railway telegraphic lines and British caravans which were laid in Nyando Valley, continued. This caused other expeditions to be sent against them. The Nandi represented a permanent menace for two outstanding reasons. Firstly, there was the fear to see them coordinate their actions with their cousins the Kipsigis. Secondly, their country—Nyanza—was propitious to guerrilla since it consisted of a woody area of land covered with thick growing trees. The Nandi threat was rather impermanent. Though, they knew how “*to draw fire and then charge in after a volley of muzzle-loaders*” (Matson, 1972: 46), the Nandi tactic became bloodily obsolete against riflemen. In truth, they were slow at handling the rifles.

It took ten years to the British to control the Nandi people. This occurred when they moved against these unmanageable people, for the sixth time, using twelve companies, almost all Africans. According to AD Roberts, the toll was heavy: 117 were killed and many wounded (Roberts 1975: 652); another source states that they were subdued after losing 600 warriors and their chief ritual leader (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 652). Eventually, their excellent land in the Uasin Gishu plateau, west of the Rift Valley—a part of what became the white highlands—was to be confiscated and colonized by white settlers.

In the south west, Sendoyo—the son of the most renowned *Laibon*<sup>19</sup> from the Masai—fought against the British soldiers to undermine their advance unsuccessfully. A propos of other Luo sections, their upheaval started in 1895. It was a period during which they fought desperately trying to thief rifles from British caravans across the main route leading to Kavirondo. This gave rise to several punitive expeditions against them. In north Kavirondo, the Vigusu tribesmen killed twenty five soldiers of Sudanese origin in a British garrison<sup>20</sup>.

Resistance against the unjust Crown Land Ordinance issued in 1902, which will be discussed later, led the Giriama—a tribe that inhabited a sizeable portion of Kenya's coastal hinterland—to oppose the settlers' robbery of their lands and clash with the British forces, following the clash a colonial policeman was done away with. For the Giriama and many other tribes, alienation of land contained the double meaning of "*transference of ownership and losing something which nevertheless remains in existence*" (Barnett, 1966: 34). On realizing that the Giriama were not going to

---

<sup>19</sup> *Laibon* corresponds to a military leader belonging to the Masai tribe. This status was secured as a result of military prowess. (Vandervort, 1998: 76)

<sup>20</sup> Sir H. Colville was in charge of the Garrison that he founded with a European named F. Spire one year earlier in 1894 (Wagner, 1949: 31).

abandon the resistance to the alienation of their land, the colonial government placed the whole area under martial law. This led to the massacre of hundreds of locals and the capture of thousands of goats (Waweru, 1988: 22).

Between 1905 and 1908, the British invaded the country of Gusii and killed over 400 men; however, it took many years before the British could administer these nomadic herdsmen. Further, military and administrative posts such as Mbiri and others were put in Jeopardy by the Kikuyu. In the east of Iraini, the Kikuyu again and the Embu allies had started to make periodic onsets upon those Kikuyu who submitted to British jurisdiction, but they were repressed in 1906. Another tribe called Bukusu was hard hit by brutal expeditions after battling brilliantly. The Bukusu were neutralized around Mount Elgon in 1908 (Kinyatti, 1987: 1). By 1908, the British government had largely drawn to a close its conquest of the most densely populated parts of the territory: Kenya province, around Mount Kenya, and Nyanza province, bordering Lake Victoria.

The Thakara of Mount Kenya, in the east, held out for little longer but they were defeated and they submitted by the 1910s'. Less than four years later, again the Giriama rebelled against the British government. Similarly, the ferocity of the colonial machinery can be illustrated in cases involving other tribes such as the Somali, the Kisii as well as some Arabs who manifested a spontaneous overflow of resistance but they were beaten up for recalcitrance. In 1910, a Northern Frontier District east of Lake Rudolf (Turkana) was formed by the British while a post was set up on the borders of Italian Somaliland (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 652).



This reaction on the part of these above mentioned tribes and their *Itungati* flashed one clear cut sign. For many of them the point of no return had been reached and resistance intensified. Within their tribal framework, those who resisted were dismissed as ‘romantic reactionaries’ (Vandervort, 1998: preface) or premature nationalists although the idea of nationalism was not pregnant with significance for them while they waged defensive warfare. Nationalism was not, so to speak, their watchword. B. Davidson recalls that resistance in general and warfare in particular were defensive in motive. They were undertaken to protect people and a way of life from the coercive imposition of alien rule (Davidson, 1984: 162). Across those sporadic rebellions, these fighters “*reacted very early to the cut and thrust of the British intrusion*” to stress their sense of self-rule (Rotberg, 1965: 55). This feature was inherent in the pre-nationalist years. According to some historians, rebellion actions were, in truth, only the expression of natural instinct to preserve their freedom and to be rid of intruders. But the natural instinct manifested by them was, in any case, insufficient to pull back the British invaders, especially by measuring the extent to which those attacks were perpetrated in the interior of Kenya and by looking at the number of soldiers, the weapons used and the organization of the alien army. The comparison between resistance fighters and the British soldiers showed huge and even frightening disparities.

The colonial conquest coincided with technical advances in arms manufacture, which revolutionized warfare and gave the British an overwhelming fire power advantage; therefore, it is not the least astounding that new artilleries put an end to most defensive capabilities. Equipped with rudimentary arms—long or short-bladed spears and bows, patched Mwaki (guns) and so forth— Kenya tribes ultimately yielded to firearms represented by grenades automatic pistols, armoured cars with caterpillar wheels, shells and mortars and; therefore, they could not keep British troops at bay.

Less than a decade later, portraying this asymmetrical relation, Fage and Oliver quote Hilaire Belloc in *Modern traveller* : “*Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim gun; and they have none*” (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 98). Weaponry yielded not only circumstances in which fighting physically and militarily became a pointless exercise for the autochthons, but it made the invasion of Kenya a fact. In this respect Margery Perham states: “*African tribes, backward, disunited, weak were helpless before Europe, especially since the perfection of machine gun*” (Perham, 1941: 53). Right is the adage which says “*he who makes the powder wins the war*” (Rodney, 1972: 118).

Thus far, two major elements serve to throw into clearer relief the failure of these resistance movements. Firstly, Kenyan aggregates tended to persist as tribally homogeneous isolates, and so was tribal fighting. Mostly each tribe had fought for itself by fits and starts, organizing its own defence locally and, sometimes, randomly. As the maxim goes: *several fighting tribe pulled a thread, when they needed to pull the ball*. In so doing, uncoordinated actions coupled with lack of solidarity rendered resistance abortive. Secondly, the indubitable British superiority in arms was unquestionable and startlingly clear.

Clearly, the wall of resistance was breached and early revolts were tamed albeit some tribes attempted to pull together larger units so as to oppose the British soldiers. A good example worth mentioning was the experiment carried out by Sendoyo, from the Masai. He brought about a rapprochement between southern tribes around the Loita plain and their enemies, the Kaputie and Maputu from the north. Perhaps via his undertaking Sendoyo wished to spread his fighting beyond tribal scopes; however that may be, Sendoyo’s initiative was comparatively insignificant. It was only a scintilla of solidarity overshadowed by the perspective of tribal individualism.

In practice, the jumble of tribes had no inkling of placing a policy of union and togetherness on the widest possible footing to safeguard their autonomy. They did not and could not pull together to stand as a nation for there was neither a deep sense of common identity nor “*a national consciousness in the territorial sense of the term*” (Sylla, 1977: 75). In effect, the possible degree of integrating a tribal patchwork into a national entity was unthinkable at that time. The ingredients that would determine this operation were practically non-existent. At least few factors may have contributed to this.

First of all, hundreds of tribes were scattered willy-nilly across the country. Some of them were split by virtue of geographical hazards. For example, the Kikuyu of central Kenya lived on separate mountain ridges. Other tribes were transected from north to south by the Rift Valley. Besides, ethnographically speaking, the scholar Aylward Shorter explicates that Kenya was (and is) a plural society. It was fragmented by virtue of this plurality of ethnic groups, several of whom being unknowingly isolated and having their own structures, value systems, political ideologies, ways of life. They were seemingly homogeneous and self-sufficient (Shorter, 1974: 1).

A further factor was the near-absence of one distinct unified leadership amongst several tribal groupings. With few exceptions, there were not enough strong personalities to generate a sense of unity amongst tribes of disparate customs and outlook. Besides, the overall governing principle of authority was, to some extent, determined by councils of senior people. They were entrenched in the belief that the tribe was ‘the be all and the end all’, such a belief precluded rather than conjured up the notion of inter-ethnic relatedness. So the tribe functioned as a straightjacket and

this fact is corroborated by Ali Mazrui and Michael Tidy. In the introduction of their book, *Nationalism and New States in Africa*, they point out:

*A basic dialectic to understand in Africa is that while the greatest friend of Africa is race consciousness, the greatest enemy of African nationhood is tribal consciousness [...] The struggle for viable nations with Africa is considerably hampered by acute ethnic cleavages, often separating Bantu from Nilotes etc... (Mazrui and Tidy, 1984: 253).*

Finally, language diversity: Bantu, Hamite and Nilote demonstrated a lack of consensus among some tribes. “*Tribal affiliation is usually assumed to rest on an awareness of shared yet distinctive cultural habits, notably language: thus the strength and scope of tribal sentiment reflected perception of cultural differences*” (Roberts, 1997: 20), linguistic differences. How could they coalesce when the languages they spoke were mutually unintelligible? This incomprehension divided tribes, weakened inter-tribal cohesion and turned tribesmen away from their common objective. Being ungrouped, it appeared that these people could not ensure the preservation of their autonomy. To comprehend linguistic heterogeneity requires a perceptive understanding of both physical and cultural anthropology. Strictly speaking, the inhabitants of East Africa were Bushmen and they were followed by successive waves of Hamites and Negroes. “*The mixture of Negro and Hamite in which Negro predominated produced the Bantu and the mixture of Negro and Hamite in which the Hamite predominated produced the Nilote (From the Nile Valley)*”<sup>21</sup> (Marsh and Kingsworth, 1972: 762). Finally, “*the mixture of the Nilote and the Hamite produced the Nilo-hamite (a term given to a number of pastoral or semi-pastoral peoples in East Africa)*” (Seligman, 1930: 18)<sup>22</sup>. Therefrom, one notes that linguistic cleavages are underlain by racial and

---

<sup>21</sup> Negro and Hamite are racial terms (Shorter, 1974: 18).

<sup>22</sup> Bantu, Niote and Hamite are linguishic categories that underlie racial connotations (Shorter, 1974: 18).

cultural diversities that functioned as a brake, preventing the mingling of a number of tribes. In view of this, diversities did not help in the process of tribal unification whatsoever.

Therewith, the elemental fighting was carried out on the basis of Nandi, Kikuyu and other tribal values related to what A. Mazrui calls “*religious beliefs, the symbolism of religious combat, cultures and oath ceremonies*” (Mazrui, 1986: 283). Therefore, through those years, tribesmen remained tribesmen in the crucible of their territory. Those who had resisted conquest arms in hand were dismissed as premature nationalists as already noted, who had risen up in “*a gallant but doomed defence of state systems and ways of life that the arrival of the British had rendered anachronistic*” (Vandervort, 1998: 2).

Yet, when resistance crumbled away, the constellation of new conditions resulting from defeat and humiliation were disquieting. The overriding socioeconomic system was to breed glaring social injustice and inequity that accentuated distress amongst the autochthons. They had no fortitude to buoy them against the hostile environment except their feeling of bitterness that lingered long after the pre-nationalist years. The growth of concerns related to precedent clashes were to call for new forms for adequate resistance. The resistance forces had to develop an ideology reflecting the real needs of people. “*A successful ideology transforms discontent [...] into willingness to participate and organize other movements*” (Davidson, 1978: 163).

In brief, the purpose at hand is to perceive continuity between initial resistance and contemporary nationalism. Most of the activities displayed by quarrelsome tribes demonstrated that they were patriotic. By resisting fiercely, those African Kenyans

showed that their compactness and determination were far from being undercut. As a matter of fact, during the bloody and painful episode of violence, the flame of resistance lighted and it never died. Although fighting ceased militarily, at the level of bitter confrontation, it never ceased mentally. So far, the pacification<sup>23</sup> period did not signalize the end of an epoch, but it set up a paramount phase that climaxed into a new strife with different forms and means. In Kenya, colonizers versus colonized were like gun-powder and light that coexisted for a time. The atmosphere was volatile and British with Kenyan protagonists contributed scathingly to that state of affair. After studying those early forms of resistance, one is going to consider the concept of nationalism to see what components were needed to foster cohesion amongst fighting tribes that opposed early resistance.

Kenyan nationalism remains a well-trodden field which had been traversed by many a scholar. Kenya was patterned in several tribal entities dichotomized in their boundaries. These could hardly be taxed as nations in the classical European and linguistic sense. Nonetheless, this pattern was to change considerably during the twentieth century and onwards during a period of amazingly rapid changes and shifts, a period whereby tribes were to form respected units interwoven in the Kenya social fabric with the advent of nationalism. Being a spatial phenomenon or, more precisely, a territorial one—in the sense that nationalists seek to exercise political power in the name of the nation, which in turn depends on the existence of a given territory—it is, therefore, convenient to tackle the concept of nationalism after that of the nation. The latter represents the framework within which the former operates.

---

<sup>23</sup> Pacification: a concept that corresponds to the pacification of African tribes during the early decades of colonization by imperialist powers (Simpson, Weiner and Berg: 1991, 20).

### **III. Nation and Nationalism:**

#### **A- What is Meant by Nation?**

Approaches to nation and nationalism have been basically divided on two main questions. Firstly whether the nation is an organic or primordial entity (primordialists), or on the contrary, the nation is a social construct, somewhat “*invented, created or imagined*” by nationalists (instrumentalists), and secondly, whether nations are perennial, extremely old, not to say eternal (perennialists) or, on the other hand, they are more recent products of modern age (modernists).

The main premise of primordialists is that the nation exists, as a given organic entity. “*In terms of a world view, primordialists see the world naturally divided into nations*”. The historians Herb and Kaplan highlight the geographer, Bernard Nietchman, (1994) who claimed that there are 5000-8000 nations in the world. He considers them the only truly organic group-entities that are crucial for the survival of the planet because these nations have evolved through a harmonious relationship with the local environment (Herb and Kaplan 1999; 14). Primordialists overlap with perenialists who also equate the nation with an organic entity. For them, it is unchanged over time and thus its roots go back a very long time, for example the settlement of tribes in a given area. Conversely, instrumentalists and modernists would claim that the nation is a social construct and not an organic entity. For them, the nationalists take advantage of existing ethnic ties, such as language or culture or reinvent them in order to provide a “*social and political resource, a constructed repertoire of cultural elements that afford a site for political mobilization*” (Smith, 1994: 377). The instrumentalists and modernists insist on the fact that the nation is neither immemorial nor perennial, but was rather invented by nationalists relatively

recently during periods of transition (from Colony to Independency as was the case of Kenya among others).

It is claimed that nationalism emerges as a key-form of political mobilization that, for instance, “*imagines*” (Anderson, 1983: 56) or “*constructs*” (Gellner, 1983: 35) the nation. Hence the way the nation is defined by nationalists comes to be predicated on linguistic, cultural, historical religious or even racial elements that attempt to unite the nation internally while differentiating it from other nations.

Generally speaking, the term ‘Nation’ was an accepted form in Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century. According to Anna Barbag, a nation refers to a “*historically developed community formed on the basis of a common territory, history, language...*” (Barbag, 1976: 32). Part of this work will be to check when Kenya became a nation through a conjunction of circumstances and, therefore, if it should be cast in the same mould as that of classical nations in the European sense of the term.

As a brief reminder, R. Rotberg asserts that “*in pre-nineteenth century western Europe, the consequent establishment of centralized states brought about the creation of the nation from which nationalism and nationality flowed*” (Rotberg, 1966: 34). Again as a reminder, the modern state system dates back to the treaty of Westphalia<sup>24</sup> in 1648, whereby each state became “*the sole political authority with exclusive possession of a defined territory*” (Hirst and Thomson 1996:171). In contradistinction to Rotberg’s approach, the historian (Gellner, 1983: 35) seeks to demonstrate that it is nationalism that creates the nation and that this occurs during transitions.

---

<sup>24</sup> Treaty of Westphalia is part of the process referred to as Peace of Westphalia which denotes a series of peace treaties signed between May and October 1648 and ended the thirty years war (1718-1748) in the Holy Roman Empire and the eighty years war (1568-1648) between Spain and the Dutch (see Gross, 1948: 20-41)



In terms of the nature of the relationship between nation and nationalism, both the modernists and the instrumentalists are on the mark to point to the nation as a relatively modern phenomenon and one that cannot exist without the contribution of nationalists to its construction, invention or imagination. Colonialism provided to a large extent the necessary conditions for the emergence of the nation. And it is not the least surprising that the origins of nationalism, which stemmed out of the European context and experience developed in relationship with the concept of nation. Before one inquires into nationalists' contribution in freeing Kenya from colonial rule, one wonders at this stage, what is meant by nationalism and how it is connected to Kenya.

### **B- What is nationalism?**

It is generally accepted that the concept of nationalism had been the object of intensive and extensive studies made by social scientists throughout history. They had undergone searching scrutiny which accounted for a wide range of analysis, interpretations as well as definitions few of which had been selected and analyzed for the purpose of this work.

Throughout the last two centuries nationalism has been one of the most important hallmarks of politics in the western world. The historian Boyd C. Shafer identified the following which are ten of the most important elements present in nationalism:

1. Independent government, so that each nationality can govern itself.
2. A certain unity of territory.
3. Common cultural characteristics, such as a single language, similar customs etc...
4. Some common institutions, either social or economic.
5. Belief in a common origin and a common history.
6. Love and esteem for fellow nationals.

7. A feeling of distance from other groups or nations.
8. Devotion to the nation.
9. Common pride in the achievements of the nation.
10. Hope for a glorious future. (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 560)

Out of devotion for their nation, men and rarely women strove and died in the name of the nation. Basically some dictionaries define it as “*loyalty and devotion to a nation*”, others as the desire by a group of people who share the same race, culture, language, etc to form an independent country. The Compact Oxford English Dictionary for instance, defines nationalism as “*advocacy of political independence for a particular country*”. It should be added that nationalism is territorial, in that it seeks to control a given territory, but in order to do so, such control must be justified in the name of the nation. The scholar Smith’s extensive work on the nation and nationalism does not contain explicit references to the importance of territory for the nation. For Smith ethnic categories have no sense of common territory (Smith, 1994: 382), while ethnic communities are characterized by strong association with historic territories and homeland (ibid.: 382,3). Part of this thesis is to analyse when and how this was true of Kenya.

### **How Can nationalism be conceptualized?**

A comprehensive variety of nationalist movements have emerged over time and space. Verily, the contribution to the discussion centres, not so much on the ‘why’ of nationalism, but rather on the ‘how’, i.e. on how nationalism operates as a concept, and on what term does it mobilize a nation?

First, the answer is essentially territorial. The political power it seeks to exercise is premised on the modern concept of the sovereign territorial state. Second, the nationalists invest a series of differentiating characteristics in the territory that is occupied or claimed, in the extent that it becomes the national territory or homeland. The nation comes to be defined in terms of the national homeland itself: to belong to the nation one must belong to the homeland. Third, if the nation and national identity are geographical constructs, then the idea of the geography of the national identity may be introduced. In this perspective, Gellner argues that “*the nation is an abstract community in a territorial sense because it is fundamentally the product of the combination of multiple contexts of actions. Actions are bound to be stimulated by sentiments*” (Gellner, 1983: 40). It should be added that the sentiments of belonging to a given entity have been closely connected with nationalism.

In the extensive written works on the subject, nationalism has been variously understood as popular sentiments towards the nation, as an ideology or doctrine and as a political movement (see for example Breuilly: 1998 and Smith: 1994). The first approach considers the extent to which a population develops sentiments of national belonging or national consciousness (Breuilly, 1998: 147) of which Guibernau says: “*by nationalism, I mean the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life, and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny*” (Guibernau, 1999: 14). Still any tentative to measure the strength of such feelings over time is problematic given the absence of reliable quantifiable evidence. Besides, there is not always a strict correlation between the development of nationalist ideology, political movements and national consciousness. Furthermore, by placing national consciousness at the centre of nationalism, there would appear the temptation to pre-empt its existence. Did this happen in Kenya?

### **C - Nationalism and Kenya:**

Nationalism insists on the rights of all people to govern themselves. What could be more democratic? In Kenya in seeking to throw off the shackles of alien rule, Kenyan nationalists outreached to the masses. Their nationalism did not spring from some starry eyed-principles. It started off through their early strategy in Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru and elsewhere after their rallies in these towns to win the masses. The leaders sought to stir political interest among the people, instil the sort of love that would transcend the tribe i.e. the love of homeland, of the nation as will be seen.

Albeit it is premature to talk about nation in the early years of colonial rule in Kenya, concepts like devotion, common pride, and common cultural characteristics did exist in Kenya. Devotion, for instance, was directed to the tribe. One will see how, in the process, Kenyan distinct tribes and communities were “*cross-linked to larger groupings and to a Kenyan national element of consciousness with the emergence of an elite body of trade union, political and religious leaders*” (Barnett, 1966: 35).

In his book, *Manifeste Nationaliste*, J. Ploncard states that “*nationalism is applied to the notion of land ancestors including both the moral and spiritual heritage*” (Ploncard, 1979: 25). Basically, land did have an emblematic value for many Kenyan tribes. Its importance was beyond measure and it was the key of their life since it secured their material and spiritual needs. For instance, the Kikuyu did not merely consider it as a means of livelihood, but it enabled them to perform their rituals since it symbolically tied past and present generations together. When the need arose, land was defended collectively. The paramountcy of land is also illustrated by the historian W. Gunter. He explains that “*the traditional significance of land was*

*determined primarily by three factors: its economic uses, the social and political structure of tribal community and magico-religious notions, especially those connected with the ancestor cult*” (Gunter, 1949: 75).

For the scholar J.L Chabot, nationalism has a different connotation. He stresses that: *“it is a form of patriotism characterized by the natural love and pride that people display towards their nations”* (Chabot, 1986: 37). The question arises as to the extent to which patriotism and nationalism can be conceptually distinguished. For nationalists, patriotism reflects political mobilization and loyalty to the state and its symbols while nationalism relates to the nation itself. Patriotism merely seeks to perpetuate the dominance of one national group over another by taking for granted the existence of the nation. In pre-nationalist Kenya, patriotism not only served to ensure the dominance of a tribe over another, but it also serves to protect and preserve the independence of the tribe—Kikuyu, Masai...etc—by taking for granted the existence of tribal territories.

One should bear in mind the fact that tribes like Nandi, Kikuyu, Luo and others were patriotic and their feeling of patriotism reinforced their attachment to their community not to their nation. This feeling sharpened during colonial circumstances since British colonialists constituted a threat against land and the stability of the communities alike. Being aware of this threat, many tribes organized gamely movements of defence. In this connection, the concept of awareness has its own value which is forcefully illustrated by R. Rotberg in the ensuing quotation: *“nationalism is the consciousness on the part of individuals of their membership of a nation and the desire to further the liberty and prosperity of a particular nation”* (Rotberg, 1966: 36). Again, with regard to Kenya, consciousness was a factor that forged the cohesion of the group and not the nation yet. This became increasingly tangible during the

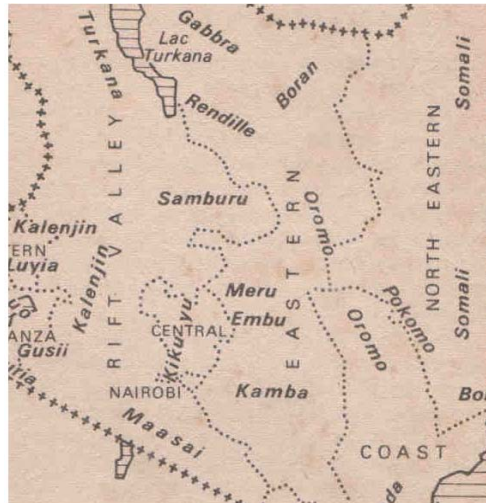
British presence in the sense that a stark difference appeared between two sets of values: Kenyan and British ones. At other times, the alien presence fastened and united members of communities more than ever before, especially those communities that rejected the alien force. Another historian, T. Hodgkin, virtually regards nationalism as “*the culmination of the radical sentiments and movements stemming from the combination of circumstances*” (Hodgkin, 1957: 44). The word movement should be taken in its functional aspect, an aspect related to protest. In the colonial period, protest movements were directed against the colonial established forms. By forms, one refers to arbitrary laws and other wrongdoings enforced by the system.

Very likely, the colonial period was propitious to the birth and evolution of Kenyan nationalism whose origin goes back to a relatively recent past. In truth, African nationalism is a novel phenomenon. Yet, can one affirm that the concepts of patriotism, consciousness and movements were sufficient enough to forge an iron-clad national unity and thereby could be equated with nationalism? An affirmative answer would sound inadequate, in that by the end of the nineteenth century Kenya corresponded, more or less, to groups of people of disparate languages, customs and outlooks, scattered, willy-nilly, across the country. This was the basis upon which native Kenyans met colonial experience.

To understand the ways in which historical conditions shaped social relations, it is useful to provide an overall picture of the location of population by clans in the following list and map:

- Central Province: Kikuyu
- Coast Province: Taita and Taveta
- Eastern Province: Kamba, Embu and Meru

- North-East province: Somali-speakers
- Nyanza Province: Luo and Kisii
- Rift Valley Province: Kalenjin and Masai
- Western Province: Luhya, Turkana (Hazlewood 1979: 5)



Map 6: Location of population by clans  
(Source: Martin, 1983: 64)

On the whole, these clans,<sup>25</sup> which resisted, had their own identities and their movements against the British forces were confined locally. Albeit each group reflected a genuine sense of love, patriotism and awareness, it is again premature to talk in terms of nationalism by the turn of the twentieth century.

Mobility and dynamism accompanied the colonial occupation in the first half of the twentieth century. Gradually, Kenya became a single society, a society where a new order was irrefutably afoot and ethnic groups re-clustered in the boundaries erected by colonial rulers. They were in the process of being welded together, a process whereby

<sup>25</sup> Clan: large social group corresponding to a patrilineal/matrilineal, exogamous/endogamous territorial unit. It comprises all persons who trace their descent in a paternal or maternal line to a common ancestor, and, who on that ground, form a community of interests. The appellation tribe is also used, especially in reference with extended clans (Wagner, 1949: 53).

separate entities gradually ceased to be scattered. Truly, homogenization started when the British colonizers broke down the foundations of the autochthons' traditional system and laid new ones. Thus the British power created and established the territorial basis of the present nation of Kenya. Yet within colonial boundaries, the British government generated repressive machinery of control that ultimately gave rise to protest. *A priori*, the rise of nationalism in Kenya could be portrayed as a protest movement against the toughness of British colonial rule. Many historians used the word protest to define African nationalism. This is, of course, too generic with regard to Kenya. It should be stressed that Kenyan nationalism has many constituent elements that will be discussed in this work. Before World War Two, educated leaders, mainly H. Thuku (a government telephone operator) and Johnston Kamau wa Ngengi (he will be known as Jomo Kenyatta later) set forth claims on the basis of western style political parties. They attacked chauvinism and made all out efforts to explain their aims to masses overburdened and overpowered with resentment and grief in order to secure their support.

Thus far, the conclusion of this work evidences two important elements that prevailed until the turn of the nineteenth century, namely the inter-play of domineering English officials and dominated native Kenyans who refused servility. Kenya people's history marked the opposition of rulers and ruled. It was about what got rubbed off between the persistence of the former and the resistance of the latter. It was a long drain-out struggle against the harshness and the pushiness of the British colonial system. Throughout the coming chapters, there will be an attempt to evaluate to what extent ongoing resistance contributed to the rise of nationalism.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **British Machinery, the Land Issue and Further Kenyan Resistance** **(1900-1914)**

*None are more hopelessly  
enslaved than those who  
falsely believe they are free.*  
Goethe 1820

Whenever humans have come together, *a priori* they have inevitably felt the need for rules to guide their behaviour. By 1895, the East Africa Protectorate (as Kenya was then called) was no exception. Within the confines of a foreign politico-economic system whose foundations were created by British officialdom and inside new boundaries that were erected after the Berlin Conference (1884- 85), the East Africa protectorate had undergone profound and disruptive changes.

Precisely in this chapter, one will investigate these questions: How did colonial policies concur to bring about these changes? What was the aftermath of such policies,

mainly geared to bestow favours on British expatriates and repression on newly-subdued autochthons in terms of land, labour, taxation, education and politics? And, last but not least, what was the demeanour of few indigenous tribes in the inter-war context? Did they accept a ‘legalized’ economic exploitation of their resources or did they continue to express their dissent?<sup>26</sup> Of no less importance is the need to note that the land issue is examined lengthily in this chapter.

### **I – Consolidation of the British Machinery and its Consequences:**

Regarding the British machinery, it was to be progressively consolidated through administration with various local and regional branches. Initially, a slender number of—short or long term—officials and Sir A. Charles Eliot<sup>27</sup> and Sir J. Sadler, among other men, were successively committed to establish and mould a colonial system into lines consonant with British standards and values.

The broad outlines of the policy were formulated primarily in terms of the needs of the metropolis. British colonial rule was heavy-handed and oppressive in Kenya because of the white settlers who expropriated large tracts of land and did their utmost to deny Kenya farmers the opportunities to be integrated into the colonial export economy or even possibilities to represent their Kenyan followers on the Legislative Council (Martin and O’Meara, 1986: 130) as will be seen.

At the onset, the East Africa protectorate was, to all intents and purposes, vested in Sir Arthur Hardingue, General Council of Zanzibar. He was in charge of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Dissent is defined as a difference of opinion. Yet the word implies far more than disagreement. One tends to think of dissent as a term that implies an attempt to change something through resistance (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 655).

<sup>27</sup> Sir Charles Eliot, the High Commissioner, was a scholarly man who thought that Africans were barbarous and in need of being colonized by white administration (Marsh & Kingsworth, 1972: 113).

protectorate from 1895 to 1900. Typically, with the backing of few civil servants, Sir Hardingue was designated by Marquis of Salisbury, Foreign Secretary (from 1895 to 1900) to lay the bedrock for the development of the British machinery with its prevailing colonial ideology. The outline of which was not designated to lay the foundation for the development of a modern African state. It had other goals some of which had been launched during the early phases of colonial rule. Some such goals revolved around the fostering of obedience to the British authorities through the imposition of law and order, in addition to the introduction of bureaucracies that regulated taxes, trade, land issue and, above all, the defence and promotion of politico-economic interests of the British metropolis any time soon while vesting control of existing resources, whether they be natural or human. As Charles Jeffries underscores: “*The British have imposed their rule because the furtherance of their main interests appeared to make such action necessary*” (Jeffries, 1972: 1).

Contrary to expectations, these goals were ensured through the application of both direct and indirect rule, whenever possible. In the infant protectorate, this singular application was mostly calibrated by disparate societies, like the Luo, the Luhya, the Embu, the Masai and so on, and, to a lesser extent, by states<sup>28</sup> like Wanga of Bantu, Kavirondo among few others.

The Direct Rule system meant that the British government did not govern decentralized tribal societies through traditional institutions because there were nearly (there existed few) no veritable hereditary traditional chiefs unlike a great deal of West

---

<sup>28</sup> State: like community, state means different things to different people in Africa. It is most variable in strength and character. Here it is strong, there weak. In its rudimentary form, it consists of large family groups who owe allegiance to a single chief or king whose domain covers a large area. Its main function; however, is almost everywhere the same: the maintenance of law and order. But such a large unit was the exception rather the rule in the Protectorate (*Webster's Concise Encyclopedia*, Software Copyright, Attica Cybernetics Ltd, 1994).

African societies. A good deal of Kenyan pastoralist societies was mostly known as acephalous from anthropological perspectives. There, a much more direct system of administration was devised. As a matter of example, in Kakamega (north Kavirondo), the local administrative body consisted of a district commissioner, several district officers, a magistrate and a police officer. The district commissioner administered the district directly making, however, extensive use of so-called location chiefs who were created, who were either prominent local men—such as priests or ‘rain-makers’—or else, who were former caravan leaders, traders and mercenary soldiers (Fage and Oliver 1997: 661). Jacques Lombart draws one’s attention on the fact that “*the British merely nominated agents coming from different tribes and fulfilling the role of chiefs*” (Lombart, 1967: 166).

Still, these local nominees had hardly ever room to manoeuvre through their own initiatives. Globally, Direct Rule was justified on the ground that their power was factitious. At best, they were consultative agents amongst tribes. In time some of these chiefs or headmen steadily enlarged their powers. Their authority was not completely warrantless. The British delegated low-level justice and taxation to them. From 1912, for instance, they were able to levy unpaid labour for public works, while informally many of these experienced headmen,<sup>29</sup> appointed and paid by government, served as labour recruiters for private employers (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 349).

Yet the Direct Rule concept did not overshadow the fact that the British authorities were sometimes flanked by those few traditional religious chiefs in existence. In effect, ruling the acquired Empires in Africa involved cultivating allies. And in the British Empire, there was a long tradition of sharing power with local residents through

---

<sup>29</sup> Headmen comprise those who came to some kind of contact with Europeans as traders, guides, and messengers. They were appointed as official headmen in charge of villages in 1902 by virtue of the Village Headmen Ordinance (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 349).

organisms. Besides, it was better to build upon African notions of justice and order, via Indirect Rule, than to risk anarchy with patterns which few, if any, could understand. Aylward Shorter rightly points out “*the search for authentic chiefs was fundamental to the British policy of Indirect Rule*” (Shorter, 1974: 39). For example, in Nyanza province (western Kenya), the Luo were divided into twelve sub-clans, each of which ruled by a religious chief (Cornevin, 1975: 298). “*The clan of the Wanga chiefs was the only one among the various tribes of Bantu Kavirondo which in pre-colonial days commanded an authority extending beyond the tribal limits*” (Wagner, 1949: 14). A good instance was chief *Mumia*. He was appointed paramount chief of all tribes of the north Kavirondo district in 1894. Such chiefs chafed under colonial authority because they were almost deprived of their executive traditional power (Rotberg, 1965: 46) by way of the native court regulation of 1897 (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 349). The latter empowered administrative officers to supervise the administration of justice with the collaboration of these chiefs. Under the Indirect Rule system, the authority of chiefs became voluntarily and mandatorily nominal. That being so, it must be stressed that they were not, however, decorative plumes on the administrators’ helmets. As it happened for the Direct Rule system, they were entrusted with some responsibility and were taught how local affairs should be administered. They were expected to carry out some stultifying functions of local government, including tax levying (Shellington, 1993: 302), labour recruiting, the maintenance of discipline, the reporting of crime, the provision of sanitation, the controlling of cattle movement and even the reporting of any cases of disloyalty towards the administration. Much later, the Indirect Rule system was well typified by the Local Native Councils (L.N.C’s) that will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the present state of affairs, the objectives set forth were responsive to conditions favourable to the British machinery. It is worth endorsing Y. Ivanov’s definition: “*The*

*colonial administration was concentrated on the development of European-owned capitalist economies” (Ivanov, 1979: 37).* In effect, central to the evolution of both a colonial economy and associated policies was the development, domination and export of local agricultural products. As a rule, the largely sufficient subsistence economies of Kenya’s indigenous agricultural tribes were brought into the exchange economy of the dominant power either through the export of labour in the form of migrant wage and contract workers or through the cultivation and sale of cash-crops, such as coffee, cocoa, cotton and peanuts. Such exploitation implied, among other things, the settlement of the overriding question of land alienation and a rural development, which was progressively initiated by settlers with the assistance of the administration of the Protectorate.

As a reminder, prior to the occupation of Kenya, there was virtually no distinction between the ownership of the country and the ownership of the land; the concept of country was nonexistent. As will be seen, with a plethora of Crown Land Ordinances, the ownership of a whole territory was transferred from the rightful proprietor to aliens. Inevitably, this was to give way to antagonisms.

Since most economic activities would be centred on the agricultural exploitation of commodities (marketable coffee, cotton, tea and so on) for export on the basis of large-scale production, especially in the highlands, south west and north west of the Protectorate, a requisite pre-condition was the immediate implementation of a comprehensive land policy, a policy that would define specific rights and responsibilities (Taylor, 1986: 38). Thereby, it would stipulate that part of this economic development would be the concern of private enterprises, white settlers and other planters, of whom former officials, traders and missionaries.

The highlands turned out to be the primary locus of plantation settlement because it was near the railway and it made it easier for the expatriate occupants to produce and transport cash crops. Eventually, these people pushed ahead towards Nyanza and the Rift Valley in the western region as well as towards the Central Province, with parts of the coast. Correspondingly, the effortful process was eased by the effectual intervention of the British administration. It facilitated “*the procurement of land, the provision of transport, the use of taxation and persuasion to secure labour from indigenous communities*” (Munro, 1976: 115). Ultimately, this situation resulted in the ascendancy of British subordinators—‘the bosses’—over subordinate native Kenyans—‘the bossed’—who became occupants of the bottom rung of their own society.

On the down side, British ongoing legislation reflected a certain amount of abuses some of which were erratically kept alive by way of decrees. The latter laid emphasis on a system that aimed at denying the autochthons’ rights. In this perspective, it is relevant to indicate that land annexation, plus forced labour, taxation, low-standard education and the sheer exclusion of African Kenyans from official governmental organs prevailed indisputably through Kenya history during many years. Such wrongdoings were bound to have a far-reaching impact on many locals, or better still they were conducive to polemics and frictions between the white settler community and the British administration on the one hand, and the local population on the other hand.

As a matter of fact, “*the politically volatile issue of large-scale alienation could barely be avoided*” (Hatch, 1965: 135). The situation reached crisis level when the British government cut big tracts of cultivable lands for the sake of seizure. As Pr.

Lahouel asserts: “*A large scale expropriation of the land provided the material foundation of imperialism*<sup>30</sup>” (Lahouel, 1984: 2). Indeed, being drawn into the vortex of this imperialism, many native Kenyans lost their fertile lands which constituted the backbone of their communities economically and spiritually, notably in the highlands to the benefit of British expatriates. These lands were, to a large extent, assigned unscrupulously to white settlers under the auspices of a battery of ordinances.

Therefore, it was natural that a significant number of native Kenyans resisted and opposed unfailingly the oppressive laws promulgated at their expense. However, prior to discussing the reaction of the autochthons—a reaction that will be detailed below—,it is useful to trace back the interplay of land confiscation, forced labour, oppressive taxation, inadequate education and politics on the one hand, and stringent bill enforcement on the other before the first World War.

#### **A- British Policies and Land Expropriation:**

Globally, the tract of land between the coast and the protectorate of Uganda was a wasteland for the British government. A priori, the land was largely uninhabited due to diseases and tribal clashes of the previous decades which left large areas depopulated as already noted and because traditional pastoralism required large grazing areas in addition to a shifting system of agriculture; hence, much of the temperate and well-watered land traversed by the rails looked vacant, or else it was thinly peopled. It was the case of Uasin Gishu Plateau, north of the railway line; furthermore, woodlands south of Lake Victoria were abandoned on account of cattle disease. According to V.

---

<sup>30</sup> Imperialism: a concept which refers to the practice of extending political power, especially through the acquisition of conquered territory (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 472).



Harlow, the region of Lake Victoria encompassed the highlands with some 40.000 square miles of fertile upland (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 212).

The climate and fertility of the Kenya highlands made the region ideal for European settlement. The British government not only saw in that predominantly rural area the heartland of economic prosperity, but it equally believed that large estates could not blossom to the utmost, or could not yield crops profitably, until they were fully accessible to new settlers that could be brought in the protectorate to manage them duly. As a matter of course, in the eyes of the metropolitan officials, white settlers were both an asset and a liability. In theory, they had the potentials, technique and the managerial decisions to initiate large-scale production; hence the possibility of deriving revenues from this source of wealth. In sum, land in the protectorate turned out to be an incentive that stimulated the Foreign Office.

From a historical standpoint, there had been no notable cases of land alienation whatsoever. As long as land was still in abundance, the areas occupied by neighbouring clans were not rigidly delimited. Chiefly, if it ever happened, the principle of territorial unit of the clan was overruled by the fact that clan-strangers, *Awamenya*, were permitted to settle on clan lands. Such clan-strangers were mostly relatives of members of the clan, viz. (1) *the sons of the married women of the clan and their off springs*; (2) *the husbands of the married women of the clan in matrilocal cases*; (3) *cross-cousins, avasiala, i.e. the sons of mothers' brothers*; (4) *brothers-in-law etc...* (Gunter, 1970: 56). Newly conquered land as a result of war was shared out among the most deserving warriors of all the clans that had participated in the fighting.

In the Protectorate, it all began when the Imperial British East Africa Company was extending its hold over the East African coast and obtained grants during the previous years from the sultan of Zanzibar, Seyyid Khalifa; then the crown assumed rights over land in virtue of the general provisions of the protectorate (1895). Furthermore, there were dealings between occupants and purchasers. Thomas Watson of the Church of Scotland Mission, looking for a mission site in Kikuyu country in 1897, obtained some concessions in Dagoretti region. This land was yielded at 8, 50 rupees per acre (Mosley, 1983: 14). Notwithstanding, the creation of white men's estates was not simply realized conceptually as a juxtaposition process, but it was seen as spatial expansion under specific conditions. The Secretary of State recalled the fact that "*land was a foreign soil and the protectorate did not carry with it any title to soil; therefore, it did not become vested in Her Majesty*"; he also suggested that "*there should be no interference with native owners and that land should be granted or leased where such owners did not exist*" (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 673). The Foreign Office acted on his advice and in 1897, a land regulation was issued. It was applied to the protectorate by the East Africa Order in Council. The juridical principle was that the government was entitled to the ownership (including the right of disposal) over all vacant or unoccupied lands while it recognized any private land then existing (Hailey, 1956: 685).

The juridical principle put concept forward by the government of the Protectorate did not really echo with the autochthons' concept of no-man's-land. It did exist; still it had a particular significance. Indeed, any uncultivated land that was neither claimed as surplus land or virgin bushland, *oluangereka*, nor recognized as belonging to another clan or tribe was referred to as *migendanyama*, or no-man's-land (Gunter, 1970: 82). However, as a rule an uninhabited zone was left between two adjoining tribes. If one of the two tribes then migrated—either spontaneously or as a result of pressure—some

individuals would begin to cultivate in the formerly uninhabited zone. Such settlement often appeared to have become the nucleus of a new clan territory. Besides a person can become an owner (*omwene wo mulimi*) of a field by inheriting, by taking off and cultivating a strip of virgin bush land, *oluangereka*, under clan control after having obtained the explicit or tacit permission of the clan head, *elitugu*, to do so. The notion of tribal territories and the importance of land were well defined and underscored (ibid.: 79).

The land regulation disregarded the autochthons' ties with land and authorized the commissioner to grant land certificates for a term of twenty one years with possibility of renewal. Yet, the Act did not provide for the sale of land so acquired, and it was necessary to make provision for this right by the East Africa Acquisition of Lands Order in Council of 1898. This vested the railway land, for example, in the commissioner in trust for the Crown and enabled him to sell or lease it. The Crown's title to the land was asserted alongside the railway zone when the line reached Lake Victoria and the highlands, around and north of Nairobi in 1899.

The allotment of land on any large scale posed problems with regard to that land existing outside the railway zone, what the government called wasteland. One thirteenth of the whole territory of the protectorate was affected by the scheme of settlement. This portion referred to the highlands areas. The rest of the Colony had been affected only in a minor degree. The law officer to Foreign Office declared: "*Waste land and unoccupied land accrues to Her Majesty by virtue of her right to the protectorate... Her Majesty might, if she pleased, declare unappropriated land to be Crown lands or make grant of them to individuals*" (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 675).

The need for a more definite appropriation and control over land for the purpose of colonization was forcefully expressed in a memorandum by Charles Eliot: “*All the interior of Kenya is to be a white man’s country and it is mere hypocrisy for any European not to admit that white interests are to be paramount and the main object of European policy is to found a white Colony in Kenya*” (Githumo, 1981: 258). One thing leading to another Eliot’s words echoed through bills. Whereupon, all public lands were declared Crown property. It was left to the commissioner to determine what was considered public and native lands. Under the control of Under-Secretary, Sir Charles Eliot, who took over from A. Hardingue in 1900, the policy of leasehold in conformity with the Order in Council of 1901 was advocated (ibid.: 675). The policy involved the granting of areas, favoured with fertile lands, inexpensively to those interested in settling in the Protectorate. Still the response was not very heartening and settlers did not consistently spill over. Many of them underemphasized the protectorate and stereotyped it as offering nothing but wilderness. They glossed over the complexities of growing wheat there. For them, the possibility of developing European crops in the realities of unconventional surroundings would prove an enterprise fraught with hardships.

Meanwhile, in order to boost settlement, Anglo-Saxon settlers and even non Anglo-Saxon settlers were to be attracted by advertisements praising the charms of bucolic Kenya. In this context, the loquacious George Padmore indicates: “*Publicity campaigns were conducted in the United Kingdom and South Africa boosting the charms of Kenya—good climate, free land and cheap labour—and as a result, in less than no time [...] whites began to pour into the country*” (Padmore, 1936: 101). Initially, a moderate number of settlers, among whom few hobereaux (the landed

gentry<sup>31</sup>) and others, moved out of the UK and South Africa (Martin, 1983: 45). These pioneers, of whom Pop Binks, Francis Scott, Ewart. S. Grogan and, the most determined of all, Lord Delamere, believed firmly that Kenya Protectorate would be a white man's enclave like Australia and New Zealand dominions.

Characteristically, these settlers never regarded themselves as impermanent residents and because of this they were concerned with ensuring security for themselves, for their children's and grand children's future; therefore, the allocation of large consolidated and alienated areas was of paramount importance for the perennial establishment of their community.

Although the notion of settlers' right on land became preponderant, settlers came to East Africa, Kenya not by right of conquest as was the case in South Africa, but they came by consent of the British administration. The immediate vicinity of Kikuyu territory was the open house to receive the new comers. There were about a dozen cultivating land there before 1902 (Marsh, 1972: 113). Soon leasehold boundaries surrounded superficies that belonged to Kikuyu, Masai, Kamba and other tribes. Little, or almost no, attention was paid to their rights whatsoever. The administration looked upon Africans as natural inferiors who had to be kept in subjection by the application of new rules; thereof, it had underestimated the extent to which they could assert claims to the apparently empty lands of the highlands area. Besides, this administration did not stop to establish the fact that lands were controlled by tribes as common property under customary law, like the *Githaka* (plot of land owned jointly by a group of individuals), or that these lands could be used for other objectives than cultivation and that they were symbolically important for many tribes. As a reminder, Kikuyu's

---

<sup>31</sup> *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*, 1968.

attachment to land was even portrayed by a British official, Sir A. Hardingue consul-General, when he was in charge of the Protectorate earlier (1895-1900). In comparison with other tribes, he stated that “*Kikuyu’s conception of private ownership in land is more developed among the Kikuyu than among the Teita, Wanyika and others*” (Cornevin, 1975: 296).

The bottom line is that the notion of tribal territories existed unquestionably. Jomo Kenyatta recalls in his land-mark book *Facing Mount Kenya (1938)*<sup>32 1</sup> which Dinah Stock, a Marxist lecturer for the Workers’ Educational Association, helped him publish when they met each other in Moscow. In that book, which stands as a pioneering achievement of outstanding merit in the sphere of culture, J. Kenyatta recalled that unoccupied land had never been vacant. In truth, woodlands and pasture lands were reserved respectively for firewood and livestock in accordance with a system of shifting cultivation, a system whereby land may be left fallow for years because it was exhausted and new clearings were slashed and burned (Kenyata, 1938: 36).

However, the British authorities regarded vacant land as part and parcel of the government property; better still, they decided to divide rights, privileges and lining areas on strictly racial bases. The greatest part of fertile Kenyan highlands was reserved for the white settlers. The government also awarded some of the uncultivated land to themselves, delimiting part of it as forest lands keeping the remainder for government use or sale. Slight economic compensation in the form of under-privileged areas was left to the autochthons. These areas were known as reserves. It was colonial policy to restrict autochthons to these specially designated reserves from which they would provide cheap labour. This policy was overtly

translated into action as early as 1904, as will be seen (Duignan and Gann, 1960: 529).

In point of fact, while introducing settlers complacently in farmable lands and immuring natives in confined areas that could barely support them, the British government went too far afield by planting the seeds of enormous antagonism. In order to fathom the process which led the autochthons to reserves like animals, and which prepared the ground for settlement before the interwar years, it is useful to give more details about land encroachment.

It is abundantly clear that the 1900's correlated with a key period in the history of land issue in the Protectorate. Sir Charles Eliot was inclined to forward white settlement and give this process a powerful impetus. Sir Eliot inherited a political mechanism of a government that lacked a concomitant economic infra-structure likely to bring about surpluses. Correspondingly, the means to raise adequate revenues topped the list of his priorities. To extend a workable economic basis, he followed a policy that was largely determined by the need to maintain the viability of settlers' agriculture on a large scale as noted already. Here it will suffice to note that bills were passed to secure and legalize land usurpation and, similarly, to prevent those tribes from asserting effective claims over land. Meanwhile, the territory was then referred to as Kenya since the reshuffling of the boundaries was definitely effected. Indeed, before 1902 wore on, the Foreign Office separated the whole of Eastern Province of Uganda (Kavirondo) and added it to the East Africa protectorate with a view to bringing the whole of the railway and the whole of the area considered suitable to European farming under a single territorial administration. In the same period, the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902 was introduced. It was a milestone in the

settlers' life before the First World War since no previous land confiscation in Kenya had been on so quite gigantic a scale. It was a first for Kenya history.

Drafted in the Foreign Office, this bill characterized the first large expropriation of land in Kenya<sup>33</sup> history. On the one hand, it was intended to offer terms more attractive to settlers than those of the regulation of 1897. It stipulated that unoccupied or partially occupied land was to be put at the disposal of white settlers. It could be rented on lease for 99 years (a rental of 15 rupees per 100 acres), or else it could be sold (a sale of 2 rupees per acre) (Cornevin, 1975: 251). On the other hand, the Ordinance stipulated that the Africans could only own five acres of land for one year on temporary basis (Tabitha, 1986: 38).

In practice, the ordinance permitted the rent of the best lands at give-away prices to white farmers. The foundation of a white man's country was well under way. It unfolded a scenario whereby large amount of lands were to be increasingly grabbed by the British administration. Indeed, the latter not only kept extending its influence over Lake Victoria and the Rift Valley in Kikuyu, Kamba and Masai lands, but it made settlers obtain more concessions in the region. In consequence, some twenty settlers acquired 500 acres. For example, Pop Binks, a British trailblazer, received in 1902 not less than 160 acres in the environs of Nairobi. In the same year, Lord Delamere secured 156 acres in the Rift Valley. This prescient settler was to receive more land by virtue of his excellent rapport with Commissioner C. Eliot. In the Rift Valley, Lord Delamere began relentlessly to prove—what he and C. Eliot believed but what many doubted—the feasibility of a European settlement in the highlands. Lord Delamere invested and lost a lot of money. After unexpected difficulties, he



managed to adapt foreign products to local conditions and introduced resistant crops with the help of wheat scientists.

In the course of events, Delamere founded the Planter's and Farmer's Association<sup>34</sup> whose paramount objective was the reservation of the highlands for white settlers exclusively. One year later, Delamere<sup>35</sup> was appointed land officer by C. Eliot. Nevertheless, application for estates proved scant which, in turn, did preclude a greater demand for agricultural land. In order to guarantee production on a large scale, Sir Eliot was laid under the imperativeness to deploy more European settlers in the vast areas of the highlands. Under those circumstances, he resolutely kept bolstering up white pioneers from other backgrounds. In such a way, he sent a mission to South Africa with a view to exposing the advantages of the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902.

In truth, the Ordinance was felt by the European settlers to be restrictive for few reasons. First, potential applicants were not to exceed 1,000 acres in one lot. Second, leases were not to exceed 99 years. Third, taxes were to be paid when those applicants had access to roads. As a result, a new incentive was to be given to push more settlers on the Kenya protectorate scene. In December 1902, C. Eliot introduced Homestead rules providing for the sale of a homestead block of 160 acres with payment spread over 16 years. A further area of 480 acres pre-empted for each homestead provided conditions on the homestead block that were fulfilled within

---

<sup>34</sup> The association was initially concerned with the marketing of potatoes in South Africa. It soon turned to politics--later on it became the Colonists' Association and it boasted 32 members-- It pressed for the reservation of the Highland for European settlement and protested against Jewish settlement proposed by Joseph Chamberlain visiting East Africa late in 1902 (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 269). Gradually, white farmers formed a solid block acting through other organisations such as the Convention of Associations and the Kenya National Farmers Union. They determined in a large measure the overall aims and policies of the white population (Barnett, 1966: 25).

three years. This area could be purchased by deferred payments (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 677). In 1903 alternating lots of 160 and 480 acres were demarcated for lease. Further, C. Eliot issued rules providing for free grants of agricultural land in an effort to stimulate foreign settlement in less popular localities<sup>36</sup>. The leasing out of more plots in the highlands, ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 acres, followed. The rent would amount to half a penny per acre (Cornevin, 1975: 299). Eliot's rules rather than the ordinance itself provided the main basis for alienation of land to European settlement in the highlands before the First World War. Ultimately, the ineluctable outcome was the white highlands policy by which 160,000 square miles were reserved for cultivation by British managers on large leases (Curtin & Fireman, op.cit: 504).

To set the example, more land was added to Lord Delamere. By the end of 1903, he received a concession of 405,000 hectares west of Nakuru; meanwhile, E. Grogan, another settler, received twice as much as he expected. In 1904, most lands located along the railway line between Nairobi and Kijabe were on sale. Around the railway area near the Rift valley, some local tribes were hoodwinked into signing treaties that drove them away. For example, at that period, "*the Masai made a treaty agreeing to withdraw from the Rift valley railway zone and live within two reserves to the north and south of the line, connected by a corridor*" (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 585). On its part, The East African Syndicate obtained 320,000 acres on the Rift valley<sup>37</sup>. It was awarded by the Foreign Office under the direction of the government of Arthur James Belfour (1902-1905).

---

<sup>36</sup> In less popular localities, the free grants were not to exceed 640 acres and were offered in Mazaras, Machakos, Elburgon and Fort Ternan. They were to be outside but parallel to the railway zone (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 677).

<sup>37</sup> The East African Syndicate obtained 320,000 acres on the Rift valley corresponding to 500 sq miles to promote white settlement. This was awarded by the Foreign Office under the direction of the government of Arthur James Belfour (1902-1905). (Encyclopaedia of World History, 2001)

The frenzy of unalterable land apportionment caused by generous grants of the British administration had dislocating effects on some tribes. For example, the territorial expansion undertaken by the Kikuyu some three centuries ago was interrupted (ibid.: 297). The displacement of the Masai towards the southern part of the country was carried out in conformity with an agreement made by the British officials and the Masai leader Lenana (Hjort, 1972: 55). In the same vein, the outcome did not spare the Indians. A banning was put on those who migrated in Kiu and Fort Ternant, east and west of the highlands.

At that stage of history, in 1904, Governor Sir Donald Steward was called from the Gold Coast to assume office in Kenya. No sooner had this settler-supporter replaced Sir Eliot than he signed an agreement with the *Laibon* Masai. These pastoralists who were confined to two territories—Laikipia in the north and Narok in the south—had to leave room for white settlement (Martin, 1983: 44).

In view of the difficulties arising from the dispossession of native Kenyans, there should be the establishment of reserves recommended by a local committee in 1904 (Hailey, 1956: 715). Basically, the overall transfer of these pastoralists and agriculturists alike corresponded with the British Policy of demarcating administrative areas along ethnic lines. These lines were the perimeters of areas adjoining 'white' properties. Set aside by the British administration, these reserves, ineluctably, led to spatial restrictions on inferior soils. They were also overcrowded. The resident population of Kikuyu was packed in Kiambu (Rift Valley). Here, for comparison, are two figures corresponding to two dissimilar dates. In truth, this population rose considerably from 432,000 at a density of 254 per square mile in 1902 to 489,000 at a density of 288 per square mile in 1931 (Harlow & Chilver, 1965:

340). The Masai, the Luo and, the Luhya who vacated the area of Nyanza unwillingly went to Ukambani (Kamba land, east of Nairobi).

At any rate, the wholesale removal of the autochthons before the First World War and after was painful. In effect, most of these original proprietors lost unfairly essential activities: cultivating, herding, gathering and grazing freely. These herders, growers and tillers were dramatically increasing the degradation of land. This made it difficult for them to secure a livelihood. Forcibly, many of them came to depend on the British administration for the necessities of life (Bell, 1986, 84). Conversely, the massive expropriation of land and cattle by white settlers was to hold out further prospects, notably through a complex shift of Kenya pre-capitalist production executed with the help of the British authorities. The latter were to create a new system, transforming part of food-crops for local consumption into cash-crops for export in order to orient coffee, tea and other agricultural resources towards the British international system of trade. The other part would be left for local consumption under the responsibility of smaller and less heavily capitalized farmers.

1905 serves as a convenient mark in the history of the Kenya Protectorate. It began with the development of easy communication and the growth of the railway passing unmistakably through Nairobi. In addition, the arrival of relatively more British and South African settlers intensified activities there. Nairobi became more than a cross-section. It metamorphosed into the settlers' headquarters. One thing leading to another, Mombasa, the capital of Kenya protectorate, signaled its demise and the capital was moved to Nairobi. This proved administratively convenient by reason of its central location. Thus the settlers felt that the country was theirs since they dwelt in its heart.

The period in question was also significant in that it witnessed the shifting of the balance of authority from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office. In March 1905, the affairs of the protectorate became under the extraterritorial jurisdiction of London<sup>38</sup>. The land-hungry settlers believed the Colonial Office would be more sympathetic and less miserly than the Foreign Office; however, the reason for such a transfer was the determination of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Lyttelton (1905), to put an end to the accumulation of enormous quantities of lands in the hands of individuals through free transfer. This gave birth to unrestricted speculation in land that would threaten the future prosperity of the Protectorate; meanwhile, in the same year, a Commission on land allocation under the chairmanship of the settler leader Lord Delamere, reported that there was no objection to the general proposition that Indians should hold land in the Protectorate. Considering that only a small area of the Protectorate was suitable for settlement and colonisation, it was desirable that land within that area should be reserved for the support and management of the white population. In 1906, Lord Elgin, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, appointed Colonel Montgomery, a commissioner of lands, to inquire into the situation. Thus, after Montgomery's report, the areas of homestead grants were to be scaled down. Leases were to be for ninety nine years with revision of rents and a land tax was to be levied. Ultimately, attempts to enforce such points proved unfruitful largely because successive Governors—J. Sadler, P. Girouard and H. Belfield—supported the line of white settlement promoted by one of their predecessors C. Eliot.

In 1907 the northern frontier of the East Africa Protectorate was defined by agreement with Ethiopia. As yet, the Colonial Office accepted the establishment of a Colony type Legislative Council with few nominated non-officials under the

---

<sup>38</sup> Decision-making powers regarding the Protectorate rested with the British Parliament, acting through its Minister of State for the colonies, Colonial Office and resident Governors (Barnett, 1966: 24).

pressures of white settlers and with the consent of Governor J. Sadler. This council consisted of eight members, two of whom were unofficial: Lord Delamere and Baillie (Marsh, 1972: 117). They considered their nomination to be the first step towards an effective European self-government since they kept a watchful eye on the political situation. Albeit power remained mostly in the hand of the Governor, the settlers started lobbying to free themselves from British rule and living on the models of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa (Which became the Union of South Africa in 1910 with Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Orange free state) and eventually transform Kenya into their Colony. On a visit in Kenya W. Churchill, the Under Secretary of State at the Colonial Office told the Colonists' Association "*never before in colonial experience has a council been granted where the number of settlers is so few*" (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 278).

In truth, the settlers were conscious that the most obvious measure of their strength was their membership in representative institutions in the Colony. So in 1908, the settlers' pressure began to materialize; Lord Elgin was convinced by the settlers to approve what Eliot had advocated in 1903, that is to say, the exclusive reservations of the highlands (between Kiu and Fort Ternan) for white settlers while the Indians would occupy the lowlands, Malindi on the coast and Nyanza province (Cornevin, 1975: 302). Thus Lord Elgin approved of a Land Board that passed with the decision that grants of land in the upland should not be made to Asiatic people (Hailey, 1956: 302). In reality, there was to deny Asians the right to own land anywhere in Kenya. As for native Kenyans they would be reduced to a state of servility.

The fundamental pattern that was established before the First World War was that Kenya became a cultural melting-pot while the British grafted upon this society

alongside Indians<sup>39</sup>, South Africans<sup>40</sup> *Kabuuru* or Boers and so forth. At that time, it was British policy to broaden unofficial participation. Indians, who were to challenge settler's ambition thanks to their large number, were represented by a businessman called A.M. Jeevanjee (Ghai, 1965: 6). He who was selected by acting Governor Jackson in 1909, expected that East Africa be annexed to the Indian Empire (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 659), whereas, native Kenyans—the most numerous of all communities—were not represented at all.

Multiracial communities meant multiracial conflicts. White settlers and Indians struggled for power through the Legislative Council. Through their activism, the former wanted to secure a monopoly over developmental resources, marketing and processing. This meant discarding Indians and the autochthons by accentuating their economic estrangement. Nonetheless, this Kenyan estrangement could not be achieved unless land apportionment continued. Governor Jackson ensured this continuation. He vested in the Crown areas like forests, minerals and the like. By the way, a portion of land was assigned to the Eastern African Estate Ltd. It embraced 350,000 acres. In its turn, Lord F. Scott, another white settler, purchased 350,000 acres (Rodney, 1972: 17).

By 1911, the consequences were drastic. In the region of Nairobi further Kikuyu vacated the area. They were 11,000 who lost some 6,000 acres. In north Nyanza, land shortage due to population density led the Luo, Luhya and others to move elsewhere. The Digo and the Durama had a good deal of their land taken as well. In the middle

---

<sup>39</sup> “Kenya’s socially defined Asians were of Indian origin and segmented primarily along Muslim-Hindu lines into a number of religious sects and caste groupings: Gujarati, Punjabis both Sikh and non-Sikh (skilled workers), the Ismaili muslim community, the catholic Goans (largely white collar workers) and a scattering of Sindis, Bengalis, Parsis, Madrasis, Bombay Maharastrians, etc.” (Barnett, 1966: 26).

<sup>40</sup> Some eighty Boer families from South Africa established on Vashin Gishu plateau, north of Nandi area in 1908 (Cornevin, 1975: 302).

of the country and farther south, the Teita (of Teita hill) had lost some 1.300 acres. The hills became overcrowded and many Teita migrated to Mombasa.

A new bill was introduced in 1913. Governor Henry Belfield, who took the place of Percy Girouard in 1912, met the settlers' wishes. The bill reflected patent infringements for the native Kenyans because it made settlers obtain a 999 year lease. Besides, a jarring clause of the bill stipulated that all lands occupied or not, were to be Crown lands and the original occupiers were to be tenants. This bill gave a new impulsion and the number of white settlers reached a figure of 1,000 by the 1910's. By and large, they took some 4, 5 million acres of excellent land, mainly in central Kenya (Davidson, 1984: 118). Kenyan communities were uprooted to clear the highlands and make room for white settlers. The Masai, among others, were moved en masse before 1914 (Hughes, 2006: 115). The situation that resulted from land alienation and the government patent lack of initiatives to cope with the problem in the reserves was extreme promiscuity in those reserves as well as a disproportionate sharing of land between the African majority and the white minority.

Therefore, in retrospect, it is no coincidence to note that 'white highlands' boundaries were not established until the eve of World War Two. The reason is simple enough to infer that the colonial government accepted the settlers' argument that any piece of land found suitable for European settlement should be added to the highlands region, whenever and wherever it became available.

Next is a list covering some important land concessions before 1914:



Purchasers	Acres
- East African Estates	350,000
- East Africa Syndicate	320,000
- ES Grogan & F.R Lingham (Forest concession)	132,000
- Scottish Mission	64,000
- Lord Delamere	109,562

Table 1: Somme important concessions before 1914 (Mosley, 1983: 15).

A misconception is to think that all tribes had been stripped of their lands. One recalls that groupings such as the Pokot, the Marakwet, the Boran and others were left unbothered. They dwelt in the north, in barring region and on some parts of the coastal belt with the Arabs. These people had very little contact with the British and the reason is ascribable to the remoteness and aridity of these pre-cited regions unlike the Kikuyu's.

All things considered, a different socio-economic environment was increasingly taking shape, an environment where most autochthons lost their land and cattle to the benefit of white settlers, private companies and the like. The very prevalent mood is well summed up by Mwangi wa Githumo:

*Once again painful tears caused to well in the eyes of the powerless but rightful owners of the land. Nowhere in Africa was the eve of the First World War more painfully felt than in Kenya, where thousands of Africans were still huddled in the overpopulated reserves with no room to expand*  
(Githumo, 1981: 360).

Actually, most tribes were pushed to the brink of dislocation. The imposition of this foreign regime engendered bad housing and feeding, endemic ill-health induced by poverty, mass-scale promiscuity in reservation camps, forced labour, taxation and inadequate education. It will suffice here to dwell on the last three aspects, namely, forced labour, taxation and education to depict the atmosphere that prevailed in the protectorate, an atmosphere that augured the aggravation of the situation and that intensified struggle amongst those who felt a sense of injustice.

### **B - Forced Labour and Taxation:**

While the economically unproductive and productive members of the population were trapped within the boundaries of arid and less suitable reserves set aside for them, most of the able-bodied men became landless. Indeed, one of the far-reaching impacts of the Land Acts was the loss of native Kenyans' main source of revenue i.e., land. Landlessness was to create a new proletariat. In this framework G. Padmore aptly notes: "*The system of land-grabbing in Kenya has resulted in turning hundreds of thousands of formerly independent black agriculturists and herdsmen into a landless proletariat*" (Padmore, 1936: 58).

Against such a background, the problem the colonial authorities ran up against was: what to do with the landless people? As a point of information, many of the 11,000 Kikuyu who lost land in Kiambu, near Nairobi, stayed on as 'squatters'<sup>41</sup> whose rights to graze or cultivate, henceforth, depended on working for the new white owners. (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 659) Landlessness did not pair with joblessness in rhyme only in as much as one was unswervingly conducive to the other. Still, joblessness did not

---

<sup>41</sup> Squatters were people living on cultivating, and generally grazing land that did not belong to them. In the early years of British settlement, they were occasionally the inhabitants of the land which had been confiscated by the colonial administration and alienated to European settlers (Leys, 1978: 46).

go ad infinitum. Colonial policy vis-à-vis labour is put bluntly by E.S. Grogan when he said of the autochthon in general: “*we have stolen his land. Now we must steal his limbs. Compulsory labour is the corollary of our occupation of the country*” (Rodney, 1972: 180). Yet, the labour nexus was a hair-raising problem in the period before the inter-wars. At least three reasons accounted for that.

First of all, the white farming population started to boom and this heartened the development of plantations greatly; so additional farms were acquired and available hands required. European farms and plantations, many quite new, needed a great deal of unskilled labour. There was an intensive demand for unskilled or semi-skilled labourers for fulfilling agrarian occupations (growing sisal, maize, coffee and other crops). The real point at issue was that the establishment of vast farms and estates were, to a large extent, unmanageable by white settlers. Relatively speaking, no matter how booming the white population was, its numerical distribution remained comparatively insignificant in these regions: the highlands, included the Rift Valley with Nakuru, Kisumu and Kericho (west of Nairobi), and Nairobi itself with its vicinity (central area). Therefore, such a white population became heavily dependent on labour that was in short supply despite the existence of densely peopled zones in Kikuyu country, north of Nairobi and Nyanza province on the border of Lake Victoria in the west.

Secondly, local labour, that was one of the resources, apprehended irksome and tiresome tasks imposed by the government and other British employers. Above all, the British government of the protectorate wanted to ensure labour supply to meet demands connected with the construction of roads, schools, railways, and the development of the economy for the sake of exploiting other existing resources in

mines and so on. In all likelihood, it was an uphill task for the British government of the Protectorate to guarantee a regular labour stock. With their insatiable appetite for land, settlers advocated a strategy of perpetual reduction of these reserves supposedly belonging to native Kenyans. Actually this proved to be an effective tool for the settlers to induce labourers from the reserves to go and seek a livelihood in European farms as squatters. In fact, reserves provided settlers with a convenient pool of cheap Kenyan labour. Yet on some occasions, the drudges were chained altogether by the necks as far as white men's estates or any work-place to slave away under unhealthy conditions. The pervasive use of physical punishment to maintain order and authority was a common practice in early twentieth century Kenya. For example, back in 1908 during a conference held by Governor J. Sadler, the use of whip was advocated to discipline the labourers. Some *Kabuuru* (settlers) acknowledged using it (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 279). This caused such concern in the Colonial Office that one official advised that the settlers be repatriated, but Governor Sadler balked at so radical a proposal.

Thirdly, employment opportunities did not tempt but rather dissuaded the indigenous population from responding massively to work because very few employers were willing or indeed able to pay wages sufficient to bring labour forward. Wages were derisory. Understandably, such wages could not placate native Kenyans who were already as poor as a church-mouse. This did not prevent most settlers from taking for granted the routine use of force necessary to impose heavy physical work.

Labour-hungry settlers demanded that native Kenyans be deprived of their lands, compelled to work by law and taxed more heavily. Three methods were adopted concerning labour market. Firstly: the application of squatter system. It referred to a version of wage employment, where in place of much of the money, permission was

given to use farm-land free of charge. Secondly: forced labour. It comprised so-called communal projects (road construction etc), and work on private farms, in particular bush clearing. Thirdly: the set up of migrant labour. It meant that labourers worked on the farms only part of the year, often to earn money for specific purposes. The last two methods “*played a tremendously important role in the emergence of wage labour*” (Ivanov, 1979: 11). It was the concomitant of a new migration system, a system that would shunt local labour to and fro between the reserves, the factories and European farms. Many a worker became a proletarian and factory workers ceased to regard the countryside as a source of livelihood, especially after developing a long-term commitment to wage-earning. Money was also earned to pay taxes. Their organisation and administration was such that they were levied on local people. Especially controversial was the way taxation put most Africans Kenyans out of kilter. In effect, this millstone about many autochthons’ neck was a source of impoverishment and it was levied forcibly. It was double trouble for those native Kenyans who needed to earn money frantically. They could do it either by selling their labour or by producing cash crops. Those few, who had the chance to produce, had to pay in cash. These taxes hoarded by the administration of the protectorate were relatively high and, more often than not, subsistence farming did not generate sufficient revenues to clear off this financial onus. Already, by 1901, native Kenyans were hit by the hut tax regulation. Two rupees were imposed. It was later raised to three rupees (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 130). According to C. Christianson, taxation affected seriously the traditional settlement structure (Christianson 1968: 137). The local people were made to live more crowded than before and new houses were built. Even the youngsters in a state of celibacy were not exonerated. The government required them to participate in paying the poll tax.

In the interim, methods of coercion were enforced by way of bills. One instance of this was the Master and Servant Ordinance to impose work on Africans. The bill, on the South African type, was issued in 1908 with the full backing of the hawkish Lord Delamere and Baillie. This bill was meant to satisfy labour-hungry settlers among other employers but it fell through because more labourers were wanted. In fact, neither taxation of 1901 nor the bill of 1906 met entirely the employers' needs while more indigenous hands had to be compelled to work on settlers' holdings and other centres of European enterprise.

Lord Delamere's plea was in the ensuing questioning: "*How could Africans be obliged to labour for Europeans if they had enough land to successfully breed livestock and cultivate crops for sale?*" (Barnett, 1966; 32). At his insistence and appeal for more African labour, the Labour Commission of 1912 further reduced the land reserved for 'natives'. This measure prevented those few independent African Kenyan peasants from having enough for a self-supporting level of production. It also obliged them to become tenants, thereby depending on white farmers. The relation of tenancy was only a preliminary step towards serfdom. In sum, the spectre of servility was certainly hanging on many African Kenyans' heads like the sword of Damocles. In the same year, the Native Labour Commission promulgated another increase in taxation and a further reduction of African Kenyan lands. Once more the indefatigable Lord Delamere urged that taxation be used as a means of forcing Africans to work for wages. In actuality, in addition to the measure implemented by the Labour Commission of 1912, taxation and its counterpart, low wages, were widely employed to stimulate the flow of cheap labour out of the reserves. In 1913 an editorial in the settler newspaper set forward Kenya's tax and wages policies: "*We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work*" (*East African Standard*, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1913). It had been reckoned that

“by the end 1914 an African had to work four times as long as in 1910 to earn his tax money” (Tignor, 1976: 183); meanwhile, settlers showed that civil disobedience could succeed: they mostly refused to pay an income-tax (imposed later in 1920 and withdrawn in 1922) (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 678).

The British conquest did not simply occasion forced labour recruitment or taxation among other things. As a matter of fact, this conquest also corresponded with missionaries actions, especially in the field of education and in the extinction of some rituals. This is the object of the following section.

### **C - Missionaries and Education:**

In nearly most contacts between colonizer and colonized, the westerners were abrasive and saw the natives as inferior. As it happened, when missionaries came up against the real things, the locals' culture appeared to them to be manifestly outlandish and inferior. The natives were miscategorized either as savages to be feared and repressed or as simpletons to be shown the road leading to so-called civilization. Yet the concept of civilization was not prevalent in the protectorate. The noted scholar, Robert Redfield pointed that “*civilization is creditor to the moral order as well as destroyer.*”<sup>42</sup> In the protectorate, the moral order was patently colonial and its concept brought about the quasi-breakdown of local cultures.

Nonetheless, Christianity, it was assumed, went hand in hand with material ‘civilization’ and the missionaries dealt with a kind of moralism derived from their

---

<sup>42</sup> Civilisation is interpreted as the expansion of moral order and the latter refers to the good life with a sense of rightness and obligation that people feel in their dealings with others (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 67).

theological text and they wanted native Kenyans to look respectfully at their obedience. Their so-called humanitarian drives made them believe that they had a moral obligation to wean native Kenyans off old habits and civilize them via their Christian crusade. In the Protectorate, these crusaders felt duty-bound to step in and build their Christian religion on what they held to be mumbo jumbo—or rather the rubble of antiquated indigenous religion—with a view to virtually obliterate it; therefore, expediting the transfer of Christianity and bringing along education to the autochthons constituted the chief tasks the missionaries entrusted themselves with.

Initially, in the unitary societies, which were more stratified than centralized, there was no chance of finding easily a key convert who would influence others. That was the case of the Teita, Masai, Nandi and many others. Then, Christianity made little headway since it was either rejected altogether or it was radically adapted to the autochthons' way of life. Nevertheless, the process of evangelization commenced around the 1840's when missionaries endeavoured to establish, by leaps and bounds, churches and later, mission schools adjoining them. Everywhere 'bush schools' were set up by the missionaries and confided to local catechists or evangelists. Progressively, the churches had put their whole weight behind education, seeing in the school the chief instrument of evangelization and church growth (Shorter, 1974:78).

Basically, they spread in various parts, mainly on the coast and in two compact regions: Central province<sup>43</sup> and Nyanza province<sup>44</sup>. Both regions supplied recipients who would play a dazzling part in their later history such as J. Kenyatta (a political spearhead, who was initially educated by the local Church of Scotland Mission in 1909) (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 766). On the coast, for example, the Church Mission

---

<sup>43</sup> The Central province comprises Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribes.

<sup>44</sup> The Nyanza province includes Luo, Luhya and Kisü tribes.



Society settled in Rabais, near Mombasa, as early as 1844. These Protestants had a single post in the interior on the Teita lush Hills. The fathers of the Holy Spirit were Catholics who worked in Mombasa and Taveta since 1892. In Central province, the evangelization work of Mission Societies began in earnest in 1898 when the Scottish Mission set a firm foothold in the Kikuyu area. They were followed by the Father of the Holy Spirit in 1899; meanwhile, six other societies operated amongst the Meru, Embu and Kikuyu; four of them defended a protestant ethic. They included the Church Missionary Society (Anglicans), the Church Missionary Society (Presbyterians)<sup>45</sup>, the African Inland Mission (Adventists) and the Gospel Mission Society (Pentecotists). The other two societies were catholic represented by the Fathers of the Holy Spirit and the Roman Catholic Consolata Fathers of Turin. In Nyanza province, the missionaries did not make headway until 1904, whereupon, the Mill Fer Fathers reached *Mumias*, north of Kisumu. The Church Missionary Society, the Church of God and the Salvation Army were also scattered over the whole province. Other missions settled there, for instance the Friends African Mission that worked with the Luhya in 1905. There was also the Nilotic Independent Mission with the Luo, the Seventh Day Adventist with the Kisu, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada with the Luhya (Cornevin, 1975: 298) and so on. Around 1912 the number of main mission schools reached 40 with more than 1,000 outschools attached to them (Harlow and Chilver, 1965: 305). Some such mission schools were controlled mainly by the Church of Scotland in Kikuyu and several afore-named missions.

In any event, the first step in the ‘civilizing’ process of the missionaries was an impetuous attempt to extinguish rituals in order to convert as many native Kenyans as

---

<sup>45</sup> The Church Mission Society had posts in Kihuruko (1901), weithaga (1903), Kuhukia(1906), Mahiga (1907) and Embu area (1910) (quoted in Cornevin 1975: 378). African Inland Mission was in Kijabe (1901) and the White Fathers of the Consolata were in Kiambu (1902). Most of the Anglicans and white fathers were in Uganda, near Nyanza since 1877 (Cornevin, 1975: 298)

possible. In short, the agencies of the western body did not take account of the foundations that formed the structural basis of Kenya education. For tribes, there was no separation between traditional education and productive activity. The learning process developed empirically in conformity with the need to master and harness the environment through specialized functions as hunting, organizing regular performances of rituals to gain the favour of 'gods' and the preaching of loyalty to ancestors via dancing, chanting and witchcraft. Very likely, the missionaries did not try to unlock the secret of mysticism and rituals proper to these tribes. And what is worse is that, they appeared in the guise of "*myth-dispelling people*" (Miller, 1986: 155) who understated the significance of indigenous spirits. Besides, they deprecatingly denied the validity of ancestors and viewed indigenous people as disparate groupings shrouded in fairy tales and nonsense. They endeavoured, as it were, shaping the ethic of individuals and they wanted them to reject the past. Rituals were derided as pagan. The missionaries preached a hard-line form of religion that condemned all other strains as heresy. They assumed that the 'new' religion was, by a kind of Hegelian necessity, better than the old one. It was to replace its dogmas bit by bit. A good example is polygamy, which was to be replaced by monogamy.

The responsibility of missionaries did not involve the partial destruction of Kenyan culture solely; missionaries were also proclaimers of British values imparted by way of education. They did incidentally recognize the importance of education but did not delve into it duly. The concept behind education is flatly depicted by J.H Odham, secretary of the International Missionary Council. He states a priori that: "*Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples...its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life...*" (Odham, 1925: 4).

To render the African Kenyan efficient i.e. productive the way colonial authorities expected, the missionaries embarked upon syllabi involving the insertion of western civilization with its supportive ideology and concomitants. Literary transition from oral to written form began thanks to these churchmen. Through their precepts, they tried to instil in Kenyan followers western values, attitudes and ‘Knowledge’ reflecting elementary standards. They would govern their behaviour throughout life.

Anyhow, white settlers made it clear that “*a Kenyan with the rudiments of education was at least preferable to one with more than few years of schooling*” (Rodney, 1972: 292); so native Kenyans were expected to fit the Procrustean<sup>46</sup> curriculum bed. Precisely, the curriculum was in line with an insistence on the superiority of British values. And what was prejudicial to those values in terms of programmes, the colonial government discarded it. As in Nigeria for example, schools were discouraged by the authorities from: “*teaching the Stuart period of English history, since this might foster disrespect for the authority*” (Hatton, 1971: 181). Whatever the programmes in the 1910’s, education did not tend to prepare the “*autochthons for a particular milieu in society*” (Bottomore, 1980: 262) as it had to, nor did it promote rational use of material and social resources. Contrary to what the natives wanted—“*knowledge of a kind that was to enable him to take his place in the world’s economic struggle on equal terms with the white man*” (Currie, 1933: 126)—the type of education that was developed demoted and downgraded them. Indeed, there was no education which “*would emphasize the integration of purposive and meaningful work into the system with the ultimate goal of providing services useful to the black community*” (Cheru, 1988: 369).

---

<sup>46</sup> Procrustean: Myth, a giant of Attica who seizes travellers, ties them to a bedstead and either stretches them or cut off their legs to make them fit in (*Compton’s Interactive Encyclopaedia* 1995).

In truth, while the great majority of Africans remained illiterate, missionaries did much to determine where and when those few gained enough knowledge. Education was outlined to keep the autochthons at a mental and cultural level inferior to that of British people. In a similar vein, the government of the protectorate in accord with British settlers wanted native Kenyans to be just sufficiently useful to them. The reasoning of the officialdom was at best, next to simple. It is vividly expressed by W. Rodney “*illiterates with the right attitude to manual employment are preferable to school goers who are not readily disposed to enter manual employment*” (Rodney, 1972: 292).

Teaching was in tune with vocational training. The conveyed aims were to train native Kenyans to help man the local administration at lower ranks. Correspondingly, native Kenyans were trained to modest bureaucratic roles rather than to entrepreneurial functions. Indeed, training was stressed to staff the inferior echelon of agricultural services, railway departments, etc. Even sons of few exiting local dignitaries were predestined to fulfil lowly functions. As Fage and Oliver underscores: “*The sons of local notables were called upon to attend school and act as clerks in the grass-roots levels of local government*” (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 582). So, primary education was enough. After all, the British government and settlers alike needed the autochthons’ hands and not their brains.

Yet in Kenya, western schools emphasized the role of the individual. One noteworthy feature of the future Kenyan political scene was the importance of the individual political leaders. Whether in the person of the health inspector T. Mboya, H. Thuku or J. Kenyatta, all these people (some of whom were fortunate enough to journey to Europe and pursue advanced education) felt they could be symbols that would bring together the various regions and create a new sense of loyalty. It was

their determination which led to the emergence of the nationalist movement as one will see later.

Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office W. Churchill had his own determination with regard to the conception of British educational policy in Kenya. It was tinged with sympathy. After an official visit to Kenya around the 1910's, W. Churchill insisted on the fact that it had to be marked with sympathetic comprehension to lead Kenyan tribes to a far higher social level. Apparently, W. Churchill's sympathy did not propel native Kenyans from their traditional ways to the preconditions of takeoff. How could education be the *open sesame* to a better status and how could they aspire to social mobility when their prospects were limited? They were not allowed to go beyond the primary standards. In all likelihood of events, missionaries' primary schools failed to satisfy African demands for education that would fit them for leadership.

Understandably, the most plausible reason for restricting education was that highly educated native Kenyans might represent a threat to the newly established order. Some African Kenyans understood that education was the gateway to knowledge. No matter how limited it was they accepted it; thereby they accepted the teaching of missionaries, a teaching that was dispensed in the English language.

The new Kenyan disciples started to discover that the ideas conveyed by the missionaries were divorced from their reality. The meaning and argument of Christianity were falling down especially when native Kenyans had access to doctrines of equality and brotherhood in a world dominated by the incurable racism of white settlers and the mistreatment inflicted upon Kenyan labourers. How could most missionaries turn an eyelid when, Jesus himself regarded human ill-treatment as

blasphemous? Much like soldiers and administrators, missionaries were perceived as part of the colonizing force. Ultimately, they became unwelcome fellows.

Of course, all the reforms brought about by Christian missionaries were not bogus. Some of them were beneficial. Later, with government aid for example, Protestant missionaries opened Alliance High School in Kiambu (later in 1939, one Alliance High School student became the country's first African doctor). The school taught that western medicine was right and healing through witchcraft was unadvised. The school turned out teachers and clerks for government and the railways while a few went on to Makerere. Having said this, the hard-won knowledge of native Kenyans seemed discounted. There was very little room in the colonial order for the best educated natives and virtually none for local farmers, businessmen or permanent town-dwellers (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 701). The relative benefit of the school also resided in the concept of belonging to the same family of the overmightiest God. Christianity offered a scope definitely larger than that allowed by lineage ancestors. The awareness of membership to a wider community, rising above clan lineage, was to become a tremendous fact and it was to reinforce a future national integration steadily.

On the whole, missionaries contributed to lay the basis of pre-nationalist associations, notably through the emergence of independent schools such as the Githunguri Training College set up later in the 1920's and financed by voluntary aids from the Association of Kikuyu Independent Schools and the Association of Kikuyu Teachers. Such associations were partly the precursors of nationalism in the sense that they provided continuous resistance against the British. The most noticeable outcome in the field of education was the nationalist generation of leaders from large clusters of Kavirondo and Kikuyu. Yet, prior to discussing the role of some of these

early nationalists in the political life of Kenya after the 1920's, one has to focus on the pre-nationalist years and, particularly, the representation question regarding the autochthons in the political scene. Such a representation corresponded almost to a void.

#### **D - The Question of Representation:**

In a sense, representative government had been part of human society from its very beginnings. In fact, the system of representative government has roots going back a thousand years. One highlights in retrospect that it developed out of the struggle for power between kings and their chief lords or nobles. Sometimes the lords prevented the king from ruling the whole country like a tyrant. Sometimes the king prevented the lords from ruling their own lands like tyrants. A good instance is England in the thirteenth century. King John (1199-1216) set new taxes, increasing the rate of shield money. In any event, a group of nobles revolted against him. To settle such a conflict, the king ruled with the advice of a council made up of leading lords, officials, and bishops from different parts of the country. The panel included England's archbishop who insisted that people's rights had to be respected. John gave in to their demands and (in June 15, 1215) signed the Magna Carta, 'Great Charter of Liberties' (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 368). Equally, Kenyan tribes had their rights respected via collective decision-making.

Precisely, the tribal council or the village elders amongst the Luo, Kikuyu and other tribes often acted as representatives for their whole groups, making collective decisions about whether or not to migrate, or whether or not to wage war. On many instances, the importance of individuals appeared in politics with the growth of representative councils. When the British organized themselves into towns like

Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and other places, which became part of the Protectorate, British laws upstaged and replaced traditional ones. As a matter of course, religious tribesmen ceased to have real power. Their own society became a melting pot with different nationalities seeking to graft in it. These included the British, South Africans, Indians, Arabs and so on. Rules were conceived to manage all these people and representatives entered the organs of colonial government. As noted before, two white settlers and one Indian were already nominated on the Legislative Council before 1910. The drive for political emancipation which involved Asians did not reach native Kenyans whatsoever. Indeed, political disparities sharpened invidiously. Native Kenyans were, by and large, excluded from participation in major decisions affecting their lives. The latter were not accorded a commensurate voice to that of the settlers or Indians. There was not even a meagre measure of participation ensured by white missionaries. Masses were far from being politicized. How could they be politically-minded, since *“physical and mental energies were (all) devoted to scraping up the means of existence leaving no surplus of thoughts for emulating the Indians or the white men’s entirely different way of life”* (Hatch, 1965: 124). Clearly, prior to the First World War representative associations were few and far between. Most of all, they had a religious character. They could not exert any influence on the central machinery because they were flatly excluded. Yet such exclusion did not balk their growth, nor did it hamper the spirit of resistance.

## **II - Further Kenyan Resistance through Nativistic Organizations:**

Across the years that predated the eruption of the First World War, life in the protectorate left to be desired. Reality was grim and notoriously rough for many native Kenyans. They were as depressed as the air before a typhoon. Predictably, the latter developed a strong undercurrent of bitterness since they became irrevocably disinherited and they felt reduced to a state of serfdom.



Being conscious of these ills, many native Kenyans invariably sought ways to carry on their resistance. In reply to the harshness of the British system, some had recourse to supernatural assistance and opposition to colonial rule continued in a religious fashion via religious bodies or what L. Markovitz calls natavistic movements<sup>47</sup>, such as the Milikenda of the coast. Their traditional religious praxes seemed as immutable as the laws of nature; and they continued them in conformity with ancestral spirits, regardless of the missionaries. Few other sects developed a swiftly accelerating surge to mobilize indigenous adepts. The Luo people from the Church Missionary Society were an illustration. They anathematized Christianity down to the ground and accused Christian missions of wantonly destroying ancestral traditions. They broke away and set up their own churches in 1906. Similar reactions were to occur during the inter-war years. Around 1907, a man called J. Owalo from the Luo as well received the beliefs and teachings of an “*English Anglican Mission, a Catholic Scottish Presbyterian and a Christian education in Italian*” (Davidson, 1984: 154). With laudable ambition, he considered himself well qualified to reappraise the divinity of Christ. He proclaimed himself a prophet and rapidly won thousands of followers. He also set about establishing a Luo Christian community with schools of its own and the right to speak for itself. Another cult called *Mumboism* was proclaimed in Nyanza around the 1910’s. Oyango Dundu became its upholder. He was a witch-doctor who was often liable to visions. One of these visions stigmatized Christianity as rotten to the core (Cornevin, 1975: 307).

*Mumboism* was, first and foremost, an anti-European movement rejecting Christianity. It also denounced the British as enemies. By 1913, this movement propagated south of Lake Victoria where Kisu and other Bantu resided. A strong

---

<sup>47</sup> "Natavistic movements are magico-religious bodies which are psychological or emotional outlets for tensions produced by frustration and so on" ( Markovitz, 1970: 155).

resistance was also expressed by the Giriama in the south east. Their opposition to British rule culminated in the context of economy. They refused to pay taxes and to send out young men as labourers in nearby settlers' plantations before 1914. The Giriama claimed that such plantations were their traditional homeland as Cynthia Brantley underlines in her book *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya* (Brantley, 1981: 156). Anti-European feeling was also based on the misdistribution of land among native Kenyans (Jackson, 1950: 33). As yet, attempts to tax the southern Turkana had also ended in failure.

It became increasingly obvious to many autochthons that the government would not look out the interest of labourers on the ragged edge of poverty. They could not get out of it unless they pressured the authorities. Even so, pressure was not easy to achieve. For example, Kenyan, labourers did not engage in trade union activities. The latter correlated to a vacuum that was realistically unfulfilled at that time. Therefore the work-force found it difficult to organize itself and protect its interests.

Political organizations did not emerge noticeably. The Outlying District Ordinance that existed since 1902 made it unworkable for groups to contrive forums of discussion having to do with politics. There was effort to keep tight control over any associations. Associations that appeared subversive and threatening to the order were disallowed and most actions were confined locally. The civil servants took measures including the denunciation of 'bad hats'<sup>48</sup>. At no time were autochthons to act as genuine pressure groups.

---

<sup>48</sup> 'Bad hats' refers to those people who were disloyal to the British administration (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 44).

The development of political unity in the form of large parties did not proceed in the protectorate before 1914. The most ubiquitous feature was characterized by religious ties which were often based on regional or ethnic loyalties as was the case with the Luo and the pre-cited *Mumboists* of Nyanza. Other tribes shared grievances and attempted locally to build up their own resistance.

A sort of camaraderie bound together those members of the same tribes that faced the same scourge. For example, the above-mentioned Luo and the *Mumboists* as well as the Giriama of the coast dissented from the Christians and the government's legislation. This dissent was a form of resistance. What inspired Luo and others to resist, risking disapproval and prison? Moral issues as well as unethical economic relations had provoked dissent day in and day out. Christianity had some inconsistencies; for example missionaries taught subjects that were irrelevant to Kenyan reality. A history course might be offered, but it turned out that "History" was British. In addition, the history of labour-management relation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was often tense in Kenya. Managers, generally white settlers and administrators, were often doers of acts which created a relationship of dependency inconsistent with parity, dignity and self-respect. Working conditions were unjustifiably appalling. Working on mines, plantations and railways meant diseases and high-death rates. Besides, young autochthons were alienated and wages remained slim and the full force of the law was on the side of the managers. Yet dissenters usually found themselves at odds with the law. One reason for this was that the laws tended to support and maintain the *status quo*; another reason was that the law usually reflected the attitudes and prejudices of those who made and interpreted it.

Against such a background, the Kenyan dissenters manifested their resistance either by rejection or by refusal. Cases of rejection were epitomized by the Luo. For example, in central Nyanza, they almost ritualistically clung to the myth of tribalism and spurned Christianity. As a result, the Nominia Luo Mission was founded in 1914 to build schools free from white missionary influence. Cases of refusal were manifested by the Giriama of the coast. The latter refused to pay taxes (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 663).

There is another example of dissent which was allowed to fester. The far-reaching land reforms that disrupted the Kikuyu were a point at issue. Attributing an invaluable importance to land, the Kikuyu harboured resentment and grievances. Through the next chapter one will focus on the growing rejection of the system on the part of this tribe and other indigenous dissenters. Many of these tribes had a basic sense of right and wrong which could not completely be suppressed. In every society there are those who refuse to support the will of the established order, whether religious, economic or else.

Kenya entered a period of transition. The autochthons were faced with many questions which concerned the quality of their lives, their environment, their rights and the abuses. All these were sources of instant and constant dissension which led to resistance. Resisting abuses was not conducted in a spirit of cross-ethnic partnership. There might have been flashes of unity. As yet, unity of action on a large scale was unthinkable more so because the consciousness of a large territorial unity was meaningless to the majority of tribes. These tribes were held back by the weight of unaltered traditions. Even large tribes such as the Kikuyu and the Luo were respectively land-locked in central and Nyanza provinces. They constituted communities regulated along tribal lines in a given geographical environment.

*“Geographical environments may provide a setting for an ethnic group to form a nation, but whether it will subsequently do so depend on how far the group or its ruling classes become conscious of their identity and reinforce it through education, legal codes and administrative centralisation”* (Smith, 1994: 342). Smith uses the ethnic entities as the forerunner to some modern nations, and defines them as *“named human populations with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity”* (ibid.: 191).

In those local environments, the sense of solidarity existed here and there, but there was no room for nation or nationalism in the modern sense of the term. Kenya was still a tribal society, predominantly agrarian. The reason was that there was no effective unification or fusion between the few elite that existed (nominated chiefs) and the vast mass of peasant food-producers and tribesmen subdivided into their several local cultures. Nor was there any chance of generating a sense or ideology of the nation since many autochthons had no national culture.

In theory, the subjection of purely ethnic ties for national ones was part of a lengthy historical process. And nationalism will be a leitmotiv leading to that process at the end of the inter-war period. Yet *“it is essential to differentiate between nationalistic features and nationalism as a movement”* (Cornevin, 1975: 307).

Do features of nationalism fit the specifications described in the previous chapter? Some features of nationalism came forth before the interwar years. Some such features included a sense of oneness that emerged from some social groupings. As they moved to the European owned farms of the Kenya highlands or to the centres, labour migrants started to forge a sort of *“collectivity subject to and controlled by one foreign*

*administration*” (Giddens, 1985: 116). Yet the concept of ‘unity or cohesion’ did not extend as far as the boundaries imposed by the administrative framework; nevertheless it did exist. Oneness in unemployment; oneness in sharing bondage of servitude and so forth. ‘Patriotism’ is another important feature. This feeling quoted in J.L. Chabot’s definition in the introduction was equally intense amongst certain tribes that underlined their attachment to the community because it was probably the only structure they sought to cling to. Later, this same patriotism would unshackle these narrow communal ties for the sake of a larger entity. One should add to this a ‘radical sentiment’ that was shared by wage-earners in industry and agriculture and other categories of labourers. This sentiment was also the result of growing deprivation and frustration.

These three particularisms that reflected somehow the reality of the 1910’s were not sufficient to conduce to nationalism as a movement. Other ingredients were needed. As it turns out, the transition to modern society requires geographical and occupational mobility. Society’s members “*must possess the generic training which enables them to follow the manuals and instructions of new activities*” (Gellner, 1983: 35), and they must be able to communicate with relative strangers (in this case other distant tribes), both verbally and in written form. Hence these communications must be in the same shared and standardized linguistic medium (notably the use of English which will be analysed in chapter 3 on page 180). The educational system was to guarantee that achievement with only a nation being sound and large enough to control it.

Within that nation, nationalism would be unitary ethnically, socially, politically, linguistically administratively and so on. In this respect, the role of the intelligentsia would be paramount in glorifying the past, interacting with the masses, exploiting the territory on a wide basis, attenuating ethnical barriers and constituting parties among

other things. Some of the leaders will emerge during the inter-war years to express their views and to lead the struggle.

One of the most influential factors which shaped the course of history in the protectorate was the official implantation of a British politico-economic and religious model with its aftermath. In a relatively short span of twenty years (1895-1914), the protectorate presented a different picture from that before 1890. The British created a way of life that set the pattern for much of the development of the British apparatus of administration. They encouraged the settlers, while keeping the native population under control. Basically, The British machinery, eventually, had lopsided effects on traditional local realities through the process of settlement; a sort of juxtaposition between two systems took shape. As the historian J.L. Chabot observes: “*a duality came on the forefront between modernism and tradition*” (Chabot, 1986: 100), a duality whose immediate effects were marked by its tragic failure to integrate the autochthons in the socio-economic and political system. It was a system with its kindred faults reflected through bills and other blemishes, a system where the majority was often impoverished and sentenced to labour in hostile environments. This majority lacked the elementary rights of citizenship that settlers took for granted.

Clearly, Kenyan dissenters sought to make life less woeful by resisting through religious bodies. That was the one of the changes they aspired to. They never felt their traditional rights null and void. So, they were to draw heavily on their will power to carry on their resistance and push for further changes. In any case, the atmosphere began to inflame as some native Kenyans were detained in uncomfortable reserves euphemistically called ethnic areas, and the First World War, with other factors, were to add fuel to the flames. The following chapter discusses the role of the government in

spawning an atmosphere that was conducive to further protest against British expatriates in the light of the inter-war years.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Political Awakening and Factors Leading to the Rise of Nationalism**

**1914-1945**

*Courage is not the absence of  
fear—it's inspiring others to  
move beyond it*  
N. Mandela, 1990.

#### **I- Factors Leading to the Rise of Nationalism:**

It is difficult to draw up an exhaustive inventory of colonial rule during the inter-war years because it was very eventful. On the international plane, such events included the First World War and the formation of international associations among other things. At the local level, colonial life ebbed and flowed according to rhythms unalterably connected with land deprivation, a repressive machinery of control as well as a disquieting European demand for labour. The confluence of all these factors produced a reaction essentially monitored by indefatigable Kenyan leaders be they traditional or modern. In fact, rising nationalism came to be the concomitant of the development of

associations. Related to that context are the following queries: what type of associations developed? What changes were brought during the inter-war years until World War Two? And what stance and steps did colonial government adopt during that particular period?

Prior to grasping the width and depth of Kenyan actions, which is the object of the following chapter, it is noteworthy to stress the reasons for these actions. Accordingly, in this section one will pay commendable attention to the factors leading to the rise of nationalism during the inter-war period, World War Two inclusive. Those factors can be traced to forces and situations evolving both outside and inside Kenya.

#### **A- Exogenous Factors:**

Basically, these extrinsic components are inherent to the aftermath of the First World War, Pan-Africanism, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Communism, the agitation that marked India, the Great Depression and the Second World War.

##### **1- The First World War and its After-Effects:**

It was an act of terrorism on June 28, 1914 that began the crisis. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, occupied by Austria-Hungary, the terrorists scored a big hit by shooting Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne. The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia increased tensions, particularly the demand that Austrian officials be allowed into the country to investigate alleged Serbian sponsorship of the terrorists. The government in Belgrade immediately dismissed the ultimatum as 'impossible'. Germany took the Austrian side; the Russians lined up with the Serbs. By August 4, a little Balkan difficulty had become an unmitigated, full-scale European war.



Map 7: The East African campaign, 1914-18  
(Source: Roberts, 1975: 663)

In fact, the crackling up of the war machine engulfed the European continent quickly as the powder keg that had exploded spread beyond Europe to areas of Africa among other continents. Geographically, Kenya did not constitute, so to speak, a territory blazed by this international conflict. Nairobi and other Kenyan cities were non-combatant centres. Yet Kenyan participation was unavoidable as long as this country was the most important region outside Europe where Germany<sup>49</sup> had common frontiers with Britain<sup>50</sup> (see Map 7 above). In fact, Tanganyika (present day Tanzania), German overseas-possession, borders on Kenya from the south east.

Most probably, the German government had no intention of fighting in East Africa. There, its defence force (*Schutztruppe*) was precisely that: 218 Europeans and 2,542 *askari* (African soldiers) faced 73 Europeans and 2,325 *askari* in the King's African

<sup>49</sup> The triple alliance consisted of Germany, Austria- Hungary and Italy (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 567).

<sup>50</sup> The triple entente was made up of France, Russia and United Kingdom (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 567).

Rifles, drawn from the East Africa Protectorate, Uganda and Nyasaland. Schnee, the German Governor, thought his Colony (Togo, Tanganyika and Cameroon) indefensible and hoped to preserve neutrality. The British, for their part, were merely concerned to prevent German warships from threatening communications with India, and at first the India Office took charge of the war in East Africa.

In East Africa and Kenya, World War One set white against white on 8 August 1914; then the British navy shelled a wireless station near Dar Es-Salaam. Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, the *Schutztruppe* commander, promptly grouped his forces near Kilimanjaro and captured Taveta, just inside British territory in Kenya. Soon the British sent units to reinforce the Indian army that proved desperately weak. Then, after reserves, the British War Office took control of operations there. In June 1915, the British captured Bukoba, on Lake Victoria. In February 1916, General Smuts took command of the British imperial forces in East Africa; these included the King's African Rifles, British and Indian Regiments and white South Africans. Together they outnumbered the forces of Lettow-Vorbeck by nearly five to one. The Germans and their *askari* were masters of bush-warfare and drew their pursuers across rugged and thinly peopled country during the worst of the rains.

In October 1916, a British intelligence officer wrote in his diary "*What Smuts saves on the battlefield he loses in hospital, for it is Africa and its climate we are really fighting, not the Germans*" (Meinertzhagen, 1960: 200). By the end of 1916, the allied forces were gravely depleted by sickness, and most British, South African and Indian troops were replaced by West Africans and new recruits to the King's African Rifles. In July, the British began strenuously a new advance inland from Kilwa and Lindi. In October, the column from Lindi finally confronted Lettow-Vorbeck at Mahiwa. That

was the fiercest battle of the campaign. Ultimately, Lettow-Vorbeck escaped into Mozambique and his colleagues from Mahenge surrendered (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 664, 666-667).

Thus far, the object is not to have insights into the stark fact of World War One in East Africa or elsewhere, but to measure sketchily the after-math of this event on Kenya. Admittedly, the impact of the war was felt on two planes: human and material. Judging by historical accounts, with 15,000 soldiers Lettow-Vorbeck compelled the British to deploy about 140,000 troops, nearly half of them Africans. British imperial forces lost more than 10,000 men, two-thirds of them from disease; the *Schutztruppe* had lost about 2,500 (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 667). As a reminder, by 1914 subjection of native Kenyans to British rule was almost complete. Being conscripted into the army to bear arms on behalf of the colonizing power, African Kenyan troops had no other choice than entering the plodding war, experiencing trench-warfare and gambling their lives alongside British soldiers.

In the process, between 1915 and 1918, thousands of native or African Kenyans served in the British army out of conscription. The latter was organized through the War Council. The War Council was formed in 1915 and was to deal with problems concerned with war in East Africa, notably problems of conscription and its organization. It was chaired over by Sir Charles Bowring. Nyanza<sup>51</sup> and Central<sup>52</sup> provinces were important suppliers of men during the war. The first province supplied some 21,900 carriers between 1916 and 1917, whereas the second provided 8,200 carriers during the same period (Middleton, 1965: 353).

---

<sup>51</sup> Nyanza included mainly Luo and Luhya (Middleton, 1965: 353).

<sup>52</sup> Central Province comprehended essentially the Kikuyu (Middleton, 1965: 353).

On the face of it, figures with regard to African Kenyan participation stagger. They cannot be ascertained accurately, an estimated 195, 000 native Kenyans took part in this war according to G. W. T. Hodges (Cornevin, 1978: 303). On the other hand, in his eponymous book, D. Martin points that the number involved is figured out on the battle front at 160, 000 among whom 47, 000 losses incurred (Martin, 1983: 168), a heavy toll for people who had nothing to do with an endemic quarrel opposing Europeans. In his book entitled *Histoire de l'Afrique*, R. Cornevin stresses that the strains of wartime affected mostly the Kikuyu, Kamba and Luhya tribes. He adds that not less than 165, 000 (Cornevin, 1978: 168) of them had been away acting either as porters to carry munitions and other supplies on their heads in the carrier corps, or as soldiers in the King's African Rifles for the British army. Altogether, well over three-quarters of a million East Africans served in the war; over 100,000 never returned (Hodges, 1978: 1, 19, 101-16).

For better and for worse to all the soldiers who stayed alive, an unparalleled opportunity arose for interracial and inter-tribal contacts. For the first time in Kenya history, these people had been uncommonly moved from their homes. There was much possibility for them to widen their horizons beyond the village water-well and the family fields. Thereby, they mingled fatefully with Europeans and, more importantly, with members of tribes other than their own to join the British armed forces.

Very likely, a sense of unstinted solidarity developed while these tribes were increasingly drawn together by a common lot. In this context, the distinction between British fighters and African Kenyan ones blurred considerably. The autochthons understood that the white masters were mortals like themselves. The stereotype of the stiff-upper lip Brit, who happened to be unflappable in the face of crisis, disintegrated.

War between whites tarnished white prestige and profoundly devalued many a British soldier and galvanized all African Kenyan fighters. Some of the former, who represented the symbol of ruling power, began to fear and tremble before the shooting of the fearsome enemy. This evidence was rather unsettling for African Kenyans.

In any event, aside from being unified by the experience of trench-warfare, these African Kenyan conscripts found that they gained nothing from the war. On the contrary, they reaped the fruit of bitterness and dissatisfaction that forged their personality, a personality that was to be reckoned with in the near future. Their reasoning was very simple and it is lucidly expressed by B. Davidson: "*If Africans, among whom native Kenyans, were good to fight and die for the British cause, they were good enough to live for their own*" (Davidson, 1984: 129). To 'live for their own' is an alternative. Yet, what kind of life?

In addition to manpower, there was a drain on material, notably food supplies which had an impact on the economy and precisely on the externally oriented exchange activities (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 110). Generally the war-years were unfavourable to the expansion of export sectors. Large companies and settlers having attained levels of production exports were handicapped because they were reliant on communications to ship their produce to international markets and war seriously disrupted trade communications (Taylor, 1986: 55). The economic order was brittle. Practically, war was the concomitant of forced cropping and the most local productive capacities were mobilized to sustain the war effort. Kenyan stock that existed had been shifted about according to military needs. Nyanza Province was heavily drained of both men and cattle. Between 1915 and 1918 the Turkana lost 400, 000 cattle to the British (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 660). Besides, most plantations were ruined through neglect. Many areas

were virtually emptied of men, and food production was crippled. Obliging, women continued to bear the brunt of sowing and harvesting as well as grinding, but without men, to clear new land was a milestone about their neck since they had often to cultivate existing plots to the point of exhaustion.

While the owners were away on military service in British military camps supervised by the British War Office in different places of Kenya, weeds and grass had spread over the ploughed land and through the coffee plantations. Few years of absence wiped out years of hard work, it should be recalled that there were about 3,000 white settlers in Kenya around 1914 and two thirds of them left their farms for the battlefields in Europe (Marsh, 1972: 118). Virtually some 1, 987 served in the armed forces and 158 lost their lives (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 7).

It took four years before World War One ended definitively. After the dissolution of German hegemonic ambitions, the years that followed the dull thud of the Great War were marked by a kind of awakening. This was due to the formative experience acquired during the war. Men were trained to handle radios, rapid-firing guns and motor-vehicles, while a few became even warrant officers. The impact of war was a great teacher for African Kenyans. It delivered many brutal lessons. Thus the latter taught them harshly that socio-economic bedevilment can be fought through adequate actions. In the process, historians K. Rosberg and J. Nottingham write of the effect of World War One: *“Somewhere in the Kenyan African’s collective experience in the war, whether from participating in small numbers with regular army units or in large numbers as porters in the Carrier Corps, lies the source of their first experiments in organized political activity. After the war, nationalism would begin to fashion effective alternatives to the spear”* (Rosenberg and Nottingham, 1966: 26-7). Thus mass mobilization swept native Kenyans into organizations of a scale, complexity and



discipline such as few had ever known. The sense of belonging to a group—even a military one—made for an atmosphere which encouraged many autochthons to recognize the necessity to set up consistent groups (religious, educational and political) to secure their defence as will be seen.

## **2- Pan-Africanism:**

The international context also witnessed the convening of Pan- African congresses. Before establishing sketchily the link between Pan-Africanism and Kenya, it useful to conceptualize this former. Pan-Africanism has been analysed from different angles. In any event, it is a twentieth century historical phenomenon with nineteenth century roots and precursors. It came in the forefront, outside Africa, among a Diaspora through the effort of tiny minorities of intellectuals, Afro-Americans and Carribeans, among whom the great Pan-African figure W.E.B Du Bois<sup>53</sup> (1868-1963) and others who did not fit in the frame of ordinary men.

Pan-Africanism derived its initial impetus from a sense of African cultural identity, a unity of values and beliefs among these people. In truth, the feelings of humiliation led this class to preach unity of the black race to withstand the protracted injustice of the whites. It found expression via the different congresses during which delegates exposed the falseness of the absurd European racial doctrines which denied them their dignity as human beings and any chance to attain equal rights culturally and socially. Such delegates were aware of the black's conditions on both sides of the Atlantic and connected the struggle of the blacks in USA with that of the Africans, especially the Colonies, such as Kenya. In actual practice, one catalytic factor that helped for the propagation of Pan-Africanism was the colonization of Africa. It should be noted that

---

<sup>53</sup> Du Bois: a black editor, historian and sociologist was catapulted to fame after his publication: *The Suppression of the African Slav (1896)* (Decraene, 1979: 4).

the First Pan-African Congress was held in London in 1900 under the Chairmanship of Bishop A. Walters (1858-1917). The congressmen discussed the frustration of black men in the world as well as their socio-economic status, which had been eroded by white racists and their lackeys. And within Kenya colonial boundary for instance, nationalist movements led by J. Kenyatta and others sought to convert into direct action the common purpose expressed in Pan-Africanism i.e. to dedicate themselves to equality of status and of rights, to the pursuit of personal dignity, self-respect and social regeneration (Bell, 1986: 85).

Being the leading personality of the 1919 Pan- African Congress, Du Bois geared his efforts towards the fostering of black racial solidarity. This being so, channels of unity had to be created. He stated: “*so long as we are fighting a colour line, we must strive by colour organisation*” (Du Bois, 1940: 311). During the congress, he recalled the practical need to translate into reality U. S president W. Wilson’s views. While drawing up the peace treaty in the same year, President Wilson stipulated that “*an evident principle runs through the whole program I have obtained. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their rights to live in equal terms of liberty and safety with one another whether they be strong or weak*” (Ostrowski & Kemper, 1977: 584). Du Bois, who stuck to this principle, undoubtedly put fire in African leaders’ breasts. And later in his essay *the talented tenth*, he wrote that the Negro race, like other races, was to be saved by its exceptional men (Wallerstein, 1961: 217). Dubois was also one of the founding fathers of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP)<sup>54</sup>.

---

<sup>54</sup> In 1909, a handful of individuals active in a variety of progressive causes met to discuss the idea of a group devoted to the problems of “the negro”. This group soon evolved into the NAACP. Its members had worked tirelessly to transform American race relations. In mid 1920’s, it protested the blockbuster silent film *Birth of a Nation* which glorified the Ku Klux Klan and was enthusiastically screened at the White House by Woodrow Wilson. Later, the NAACP members blocked the Supreme Court nomination of a segregationist judge and much later, the group persuaded the court to declare public

The aspect of Pan-Africanism one is interested in is the spirit of black solidarity and the need to reassert common rights. It is worth stressing that Pan-African congresses of the inter-war years did not propose immediate African independence. Yet the protection of the native Africans through international laws and the right to have a voice in the colonial government as expressed, in the conclave of 1923, were issues that did not leave J. Kenyatta indifferent. Basically astute and daring, the latter was poised to take a potent and active part in Pan-African movements especially during the inter-war period, when he was in London. He was the first insightful Kenyan to join Pan-Africanism and this proved to be a golden opportunity for him to get enough experience and weapons to defend proactively and effectively the Kenyan cause once back home. J. Kenyatta repeatedly and ominously warned the British government “*that any nation that is built up by force of arms may one day be destroyed by the same force itself*” (Wilson, 1974: 213).

George Padmore, a West Indian militant who took J. Kenyatta under his wing, regarded him as a revolutionist, rather than a reformist. For example after publishing J. Kenyatta’s anti-British article “*An African looks at British Imperialism*” of January 1933 in the *Negro Worker*, a Journal edited by Padmore and published by the Red International of Labour Union in Moscow, Padmore observed: “*We hope to be able in the future with the assistance of comrade J. Kenyatta to go more fully in the situation of Kenya in order to render the maximum assistance at our disposal in this fight of the Kenya toiling masses against imperialism*” (Wilson, 1974: 349).

In default of bringing “*Uhuru*<sup>55</sup>”, J. Kenyatta would, at least, provide weapons to fight for it. Doubtless, one of the many Pan-African branches in which he was active

---

school segregation unconstitutional. Echoes surrounding such successes were bound to deliver resoundingly optimism to African intellectuals including Kenyans (O’connor and Sabato, 1997: 195).

<sup>55</sup> *Uhuru* = Freedom in Kikuyu language (Oginga, 1967: 124).

happened to be the International African Service Bureau (IASB). The Bureau itself was launched in 1937 by George Padmore. The objective of the Bureau was: “*to win domestic rights, civil liberties and self-determination for Africans.*” (Murray-Brown, 1972: 198) As a reminder, the IASB grew out of an ad-hoc group called the International African Friends of Ethiopia. J. Kenyatta displayed assiduously his solidarity with Ethiopia after the Italian aggression of 1935. He wrote articles in the *Labour Monthly* to denounce the aggression (Murray-Brown, 1972: 198).

The Bureau was to deal with African matters increasingly, so it developed into the Pan-African Federation with J. Kenyatta as Vice-Secretary. With his spirit of hard work, ingenuity, drive, courage and no small measure of commitment, J. Kenyatta was instrumental in the Federation. Verily, he represented the authentic African: he had lived in Africa and knew what was going on in the Colonies, contrary to most of the doctrinaires who had only heard of Africa, but had never or barely set a foothold there. The scholar Murray-Brown was on the mark when he puts it: “*Kenyatta alone supplied authentic experience of Africa*” (ibid.: 1972: 198) to Pan-African movements. Much later, J. Kenyatta established sound relations with people from different horizons in England, those who brought the nationalist message in the guise of Pan-Negroism, like Du Bois, N. Nkrumah, M. Garvey, and so on. With these people, J. Kenyatta became imbibed with ideas of human equality and brotherhood. He felt that the values of his compatriots had been scoffed at by the ‘white establishment’. These educated leaders sought to establish through the stimulation of black consciousness, not only a cultural, but a viable political basis for action. They believed that there would be no political liberation without authentic cultural liberation. So emancipation was to pass through culture and politics, both of which became grafted on the nationalist movement of the 1940’s and accompanied most of its stages.

Kenyatta epitomized the conjunction of politics and culture in *Mount Kenya*, a book that was introduced earlier. Through his book, J. Kenyatta attempts to give a humane, down to earth, texture to his tribe which many foreigners ignored or regarded as a mystery. Although J. Kenyatta became inherently a tribal leader, he did not hang back to plead the case of his country. “*His towering personality made him not only the ‘father’ of people but also a skilful tamer of the tiger of tribalism*” (Hazlewood, 1979: 1).

### **3- The Universal Negro Improvement Association:**

Kenyatta was also influenced by Marcus Garvey (1887-1940)—a fervent Black Nationalist leader. M. Garvey had the aptitude to mobilize black masses of the world. While working in Costa Rica in the 1910’s, he published a newspaper, *La Nacionale*, concerned with the advancement and development of black’s working conditions (Pinkney, 1976: 42). In his native country Jamaica, he established the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914. Its goal included the promotion of black solidarity, with a special concern for the welfare of Africans. Garvey pledged to set up in Africa a black-governed nation and he worked for the rise in race consciousness among blacks. Garvey’s phrases ‘*back to Africa*’ and ‘*Africa to Africans*’ set a standard to many African leaders among whom J. Kenyatta (Bone, 1958: 6). In fact Garvey’s appeal was such that he once gathered 25,000 delegates in New York during an international convention in 1920. There, they discussed the appalling conditions endured by the black community throughout the world. Interestingly, the delegates came up with a statement asking for Africans’ right to self-government (Myrdal, 1944: 748). Self-government was part of the claims put by the African elite in Kenya to the colonial authorities.

#### **4- Communism:**

Communism is another exogenous factor among others that affected Africa and by extension Kenya. George Padmore's book, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, underscores how the Soviet Union wielded tremendous influence in Africa. There was a warning against imperialism with its hegemonic ambitions. Padmore explains: "*Strategic and economic motivations were the ultimate justification of imperial expansion*" according to Marxist's ideas and Lenin's theory of imperialism (Padmore, 1961: 31). Factually speaking, such ideas did attract a number of African intellectuals such as N. Azikiwi of Nigeria, K. Nkrumah of the Gold Coast, P. Lumumba of Congo, J. Kenyatta of Kenya, and, even, G. Padmore and others. All were magnetized by the East. For example Padmore argued that Africans were free to Africanize Marxism, if they wished, just as jackbooted Lenin had Russianized it. In the same line of thought the scholar Murray-Brown indicates, "*With the Russian Revolution, for J. Kenyatta and for all oppressed people in the world the Red Star now shone beckoning in the east.*" (Murray-Brown 1972: 163) As yet, it was first in the West that J. Kenyatta was to expand his political horizons and particularly in London by the end of the 1920's. He believed that actions should not stop at colonial frontiers. His decision to join Europe was equally nothing less than the expression of a determination to continue the present political struggle on a lasting basis and to project it on an international plane. He carried his pleas in London where he got acquainted with other African students and Pan-Africanists. Precisely, J. Kenyatta developed a tight web of relationships with G. Padmore (the founder of the International African Friends of Abyssinia), J. Wallace (the general secretary of the International African Service Bureau) and many others. They campaigned for territorial, economic and political rights for their countries. Moreover, J. Kenyatta was in contact with the Fabian Colonial Bureau<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Fabian Society (1883) is an organization dedicated to promoting socialist theory. It consisted of socialists who founded in 1931 the Fabian Research Bureau. They hoped to introduce socialist ideas into the existing liberal and conservative parties (*Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia*).

and its socialists, the Independent Labour Party, the Trotskyist, the League Against Imperialism and so forth. To the displeasure of the Colonial Office, the Communist Party and its affiliated organizations were in touch with colonial students. The former allegedly arranged to see them on their arrival from Africa.

By all accounts, J. Kenyatta's arrival in London ushered in a host of trips to the following destinations: Berlin, Hamburg, Leningrad, Moscow, Odessa, Sebastopol, Yalta and Istanbul. Basically, the visit to communist countries happened to be formative with gatherings and de facto rallies. Actually at a meeting of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) held in Moscow in March 1928, the call went out to mobilize black workers behind the Soviet banner. In 1929, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW) was set up, a kind of black branch of the Red International of Labour Unions, and George Padmore was instructed to find representatives of the oppressed colonial peoples.

It is noteworthy to recall that when the ITUC-NW held its first conference in Hamburg in 1930, the report showed J. Kenyatta's name on the list of the Provisional Executive Committee, representing the 'Central Association of Kenya, East Africa'. In 1932 Padmore went to Moscow accompanied by J. Kenyatta. There J. Kenyatta attended special revolutionary courses and received a full grounding in the Marxist classics. He participated in Professor Malinowski's seminars. Malinowski himself "*warned not to ignore Africans*" lest the British pave the way for agitation; Malinowski argued: "*By ignoring African agitators, we may drive them into the open arms of world-wide Bolshevism and he insisted on the catalytic effect upon Italy's invasion of Ethiopia*" (Kenyatta, 1938: introduction).

Around 1932, a West Indian sailor, who was stationed in Odessa, went to Moscow to attend lectures at a college for Communist Workers of the East. There, he described how boarders of the institute were indoctrinated:

*A large building with white washed rooms and many small cubicles. The desks were rough and ill made. There was a blackboard and few exercise books, and of course the usual communist literature and photographs of Bolshevik leaders... . As for lessons, we first learnt to sing the 'Internationale', and then we read histories of the different revolutions. (Murray, 1972: 57).*

Influenced by Communism, it is not the least surprising that, after his return from Eastern Europe to Kenya, the slogan “*guku ni guitu* i.e. *this is our land and give us back our land*” was like a familiar mantra for J. Kenyatta, Oginga Odinga<sup>57</sup> and others.

### **5- Turmoil in India:**

Another external factor is the early agitation in India. For instance, the turmoil that broke out in Amrister, Punjab, in 1919 was particularly bloody, British soldiers had, reportedly, shot hundreds of demonstrators and civil disobedience prevailed signally to affirm the sheer rejection of British authority.

This tragic event did not pass unnoticed in Kenya where the Indian community was implanted. Mostly, the Indian Kenyan community, as it was called, had arrived in the context of the railway construction; ever since then, the community had kept its eyes on its continent and the events that marked it. In turn, the business community of Bombay was heavily involved in East Africa where the prominent Indian group of

---

<sup>57</sup> Oginga Odinga stands out as a controversial figure in East African politics. He was labelled ‘Communist’ and was baptized by the British: “a pawn of the East, a subversive influence”. He made contacts and collected funds. By the time of independence, Odinga had helped to send close to 1,000 Kenyan students to take up scholarships in Communist countries (Metrowich, 1967: 188).



traders was from Gujarat the area around Bombay, and not from Punjab, as were the coolies who built the railway (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 61). It was reported that Indians were fighting for equal rights as British citizens in the empire, and Kenya was regarded as a training ground for this struggle. In the course of time, Britain had trouble to assert its colonial authority in India; the result was the imminent end of the British Empire in India. Clearly, events in India were to arouse other Colonies like Kenya by reason of the existence of the Indian community there as already noted.

### **6-The Great Depression (1929):**

In Kenya, the period from 1922 to 1929 witnessed signs of economic improvement. Tariff barriers boosted local production. In terms of production maize trebled, milk doubled, wheat multiplied by seven, coffee reached 125%, sisal 186% (Martin, 1983: 45). In sum Kenya revenue doubled although imports were twice as big as exports. The fact that settlers benefited from the economic amelioration inevitably produced an upsurge of anger amongst several autochthons who felt stranded. That very upsurge of anger was to be aggravated by the Great Depression which affected economic improvement.

In fact, the swings and shocks of economic adversity were global concern. The inherent uncertainty of events had engendered irrationality, in the process running up ruinous debts. The crisis began and centred in the United States but, like a snowball rolling downhill; it spread quickly throughout the industrial world to reach Africa.

The stock-market crash is conventionally said to have begun on 'Black Thursday'—October 24, 1929, when the Dow Jones industrial average declined to 2%—though in fact the market had been slipping since early September. According to Ferguson, a

history Professor, it all started when the “*Senate passed the smooth-Hawley tariff Act, which raised duties on some 20, 000 imported goods.*” That unhappy precedent was defined as one of the critical steps that led to the recession (*Time*, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008: 18). Over the next three years, the US stock market declined to a staggering 89% reaching its nadir in July 1932. The spectacular wave of bank failures and the massive monetary meltdown, between February and August 1931, saw commercial bank deposits shrivel and fall by 2.7 billion Dollars. By January 1932, not less than 1860 banks had failed. The, then , new Franklin Roosevelt Administration proclaimed on March 6, 1933 ‘Bank holidays’—a holiday from which 2,500 banks never returned (*Time*, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008: 20-21).

The nightmare scenario went on as the US economy was hamstrung, financial markets froze, government debt soured and the values of most shares of stock fell sharply, leaving financial ruin and panic. The wrench thrown into the economy defies description. Business closed, shredding jobs and putting millions out of work almost everywhere. Securing a job was hard enough in good time. In recession, it could be impossible. Those fortunate, who could still work, saw their wages falling precipitously; monetary value decreased as the demands for goods declined.

In much the same way as many countries, Kenya bore the brunt of the economic blow. Between 1929 and 1932 the commercial balance was subject to a deficit. “*The world’s prices of sisal, coffee, maize and hides fell by 70% while cotton prices fell by over 60%*” (Roberts, 1975: 79). This collapse undermined Kenya commodity prices in general. In this connection, capitalist farming was threatened with downfall, especially in regard with coffee culture in Kikuyu land and cotton planting on the coast and in Nyanza Province around Lake Victoria.

Therefore, the cost of living rose steeply due to increased charges of imported goods. The depression not only dealt with a staggering economic blow to the Colony as a whole, but it ignited tensions between its different communities. In addition, it fuelled the resentment of many autochthons and shattered their post-war expectations.

## **7- World War Two:**

The world's attention was focused on Ethiopia (the Italian aggression of 1935 denounced by Emperor Haile Selassie. Afflicted by that aggression, J. Kenyatta wrote an article called "Hands off Abyssinia" for the *Labour Monthly* where Ethiopia was portrayed as "*the last remaining relic of an Africa that once was*" (Murray-Brown, 1972: 198). While, the Italian aggression was going on, Hitler decided to take other steps to wipe out the memory of Versailles (Ostrowski and Kemper, 1977: 627).

In March 1936, he marched troops into Rhineland, a part of Germany near the French and Belgian borders. After annexing Austria to the Reich, Hitler extended German's borders. Rolling unopposed into Austria with his tanks, he felt confident enough for aggrandizement. Soon, he threatened Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1938. To defend them, European countries like France and Britain—which had military alliances with Czechoslovakia—would have to cross other countries or attack Germany from another direction. And that meant another European full-scale war which effectively broke out one year later (ibid.: 627). To what extent did the conflict affect Kenya?

On the eve of World War Two, predicaments undergone by the autochthons were still 'up to date topics' in the Colony. Such predicaments included the colour bar and subtle apartheid policies relevant to slim wages, land issues and prohibitions in all their

degrading aspects. These policies mostly bore a great and not accidental resemblance to South African practices. Having said this, the outbreak of the war and the decades that followed did bring new grounds for hope as well as setbacks.

To mobilize African support for World War Two, the oldest Kiswahili weekly in Kenya *Baraza*, founded by the colonial government in 1939, served as a propaganda instrument. Around 20% of valid Kenyan adults were drafted to take part in that war. They were part and parcel of the King's Africa Rifles (KAR). It was made up of 289,530 recruits drafted from the following East African countries; Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi (Mollo, McGregor and Turner, 1981: 56). They were to see the world including other African countries, Ceylon, India and so on. They were to be mobilized, as they were told, for the fight for liberties. They knew they had nothing to lose but their chains; besides, in a war opposing white people, none is invincible to attacks.

In effect, Britain's defeat by Japan in South-East Asia in 1941-42 wracked the myth of imperial invincibility. The impact of the Atlantic Charter on the literate intelligentsia of the Colonies was considerable. Precisely, in terms of impact, the war brought about patterns of external pressure on European colonialism in the continent. This very pressure originated markedly from the USA and via the bias of the Atlantic Charter. The joint declaration, later known as the Atlantic Charter, was signed on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1941 by both Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. 'Clause three' from the Charter did stipulate that the UK and the US respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live, and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who had been forcibly deprived of them.

The Atlantic Charter (August 1941) between Roosevelt and Churchill was a declaration of new values. Among the resolutions passed by the Sixth Pan-African Congress to be held in Manchester in 1945, the principles of the Charter were to be put into practice. “*For WEB Du Bois, the resolutions adopted condemned colonialism wherever it existed and he demanded full independence for black Africa*” (Martin and O’Meara, 1986: 144). Indeed eventual demand for political independence became a dominant theme of the emerging African organisations (Shillington, 1993: 372)<sup>58</sup>

It should be stressed that J. Kenyatta was a co-sponsor of the Congress and also the official reporter on Oriental African Affairs. As a result, he was well placed to plead the case of Kenya. His reports and petitions did not run into the sand. On the contrary, at the end of the conclave, a petition was addressed to the Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee and one of its demands was to stop the forceful acquisition of chunks of Kenyan lands. In addition to that, the congress intractably emphasized the urgent need of constitutional reforms in Kenya and Uganda to avoid a serious crisis as far as racial relationships between Africans and Europeans were concerned. The endorsement of such an attitude was bleakly welcomed by colonizers, the more so because it intensified anti-colonial militancy in the Colonies.

As yet Churchill was in favour of self-determination for white people only. Collins recalls the colonial administration policy: “*His Majesty’s government can’t but regard the grant of responsible self-government as out of the question within any period of time which needs to be taken into consideration....it will be necessary to see how matters develop especially as regard to African representation before proposals for so*

---

<sup>58</sup> See Annex IV for important resolutions voicing the determination of the African delegates.

*fundamental a change in the constitution of the Colony can be entertained*' (Collins, 1971: 341).

Whether one wished it or not, the war engendered a chain reaction: the founding of the United Nations dedicated to equal rights and self-determination, the fifth Pan-African congress, the wave of Asian independence and so forth (Bell, 1986: 81). In any event, the most important factor behind Africa's emancipation was Africa's own will to recapture its own sovereignty as expressed through prolonged resistance (Mazrui, 1986: 282).

After combating alongside the European allies to spearhead onslaughts against the machinations of Nazism and fascism in the context of World War Two, many African fighters began legitimately to wonder if what they had been combating for was really that flush of freedom. As in the aftermath of World War One, the myth of white supremacy and invincibility was brittle, not to say shattered after World War Two. Besides contacts overseas encouraged some of these African fighters to question not just the details but the moral justification of colonial rule. In sum, they felt it time to demand the same rights as the white colonial rulers.

Nevertheless, the post war *status quo* was maintained as the War brought an increase in the number of white inhabitants in Kenya. Many of the brigadiers and colonels escaped Britain to settle in a country where they could form a pseudo-gentry (ibid.: 122); whereas the vast majority of Africans were living in bare subsistence, with little to stimulate ambition. Indeed, against all evidence to the contrary, World War Two was the concomitant of forced cropping and inflation. It did not give the ex-black servicemen, who campaigned in the jungles of Burma, the chance to manifest a blithe

disregard for their situation in Kenya; for these servicemen, European allies had fought for democracy in name but not in substance. Indeed, in Kenya their situation did take a turn for the worse. The amount of bitterness among these servicemen surfaced when they had to be confronted with joblessness and an inadequate standard of living after World War Two.

Sharing adversity, the historian Bethwell A. Ogot recalls that: “*ex-war participants became more aware of themselves as a distinct racial group; they discovered the weakness and heterogeneity of the white men and, even more crucial, they learned the importance of organized resistance*” (Ogot, 1973: 265). Such resistance was regimented mostly through religious, educational and political organisms. For instance, an ex-serviceman called Kaggia, who took a dim view of Christianity, created his own independent Church to counter-face the English Church and its corresponding culture. Such syncretic bodies came to play an important role in Kenyan nationalist movements during the post-war era. Other instances of disillusioned ex-servicemen were Paul Ngei, who was a nationalist detainee during the state of emergency as well as Waruhiu Iote, who was to be called General China throughout the Mau Mau movement that will be discussed in the next chapter. Some such people, who jeopardized their lives by contributively saving the British Empire, ultimately battled with waves and winds to take the wind out of the British colonizers’ sails.

Altogether, serving in the King’s African Rifles or the Carrier Corps, the soldiers were somehow inclined to work with active nationalists to improve their lot and that of the illiterate masses that did not themselves raise revolt and who kept on living in endemic poverty. So organisers of political actions i.e. leaders from the intelligentsia were required to hasten the breakdown of tribal authority and speed the growth of

political consciousness (Hatch, 1965: 124). At any rate, the soldiers had been away from tribal society for too long to slip back into easy acceptance of its customs (ibid.: 138).

Substantially, disappointments and frustrations from World War Two led to the organisation of local opposition into nationalist movements. They were undertaken by educated people, independent traders, traditional leaders and those who received the opportunity to acquire skills introduced by colonial capital, but whose grievances stemmed from the limits the colonial state sought to impose upon their aspiration, notably their exclusion from access to decision making and political influence beyond the local level (Bell, 1986: 82). Of major interest is the need to remind that these factors were associated with internal ones some of which had been encapsulated under the following heading for analysis.

## **B- Endogenous Factors:**

To gain insights into Kenya during and amid the two World-Wars, one has to bring into relief the ensuing internal components: the British government's position and the irrepressible settlers' pressures, the slumbering socio-economic conditions of the autochthons including labour, the squatter's advent as well as other unwelcome religious interventions.

### **1- British Machinery and Settlers' Pressures:**

Internally, the twenty six years between 1914 and 1940, were perhaps the most trying of all periods for African Kenyans. The British authority played an extensive role in the economy of Kenya from the beginnings and throughout the inter-war years. The British machinery in London kept monopolizing the central administration of the



Protectorate at the decision making level. For example, Secretaries of State for the Colonies and also Under-Secretaries, such as Andrew Bonar (1915-1916), Under-Secretary Wilson Churchill (1918-1921), Lord Miler (1919) and Colonial Secretary Devonshire Victor (1922-1924) among others kept an eye on the Colonies. They worked in conjunction with prime ministers, including, for instance, L. David George (1916-1922), Stanley Baldwin (1923-1924) and others to determine socio-economic interests while deftly controlling access to resources and exerting an effective influence over prospects through local representatives in the Colonies.

In Kenya the colonial government acted as the managing agent of the dominant private interests. In this way, it predicated its policy upon the need to maintain racial monopoly over the key-developmental resources. As the British government required an export-oriented productive system, it believed that only large-scale estates based upon expatriates' management would be producing enough crops, such as coffee, sisal, tea and so forth. For this reason, Governor Sir Edward Northey (1918 -1922), a ruthless ideological hard-liner and a settler supporter, announced bluntly that European interest must be paramount through the protectorate. In the ensuing quotation the scholar W. Nbudere stresses without proclivity the bias manifested by the administration towards the white settlers. He says: "*The interests of the settlers were the very interest of the British imperialism itself*" (Nbudere, 1984: 157). The former wanted Britain to accede to their desire for a white-dominated state (Martin and O'Meara, 1986: 147).

The preference manifested towards the white community also meant being allowed to do things that others were not allowed to do. Settlers became exclusive homeowners in the highlands, while Asians and native Kenyans alike were denied access to such a privileged domain. After all, the settlers strove to perpetuate their economic supremacy

over these communities. In several ways, the process of economic development was fundamentally lopsided because it was responsive to capitalistic norms and standards. The elements of private enterprises, exploitation, profit and dominance prevailed in Kenya. Such dominance, in particular, “*required a net transfer of resources from the Kenyan to the British sectors and it required that the former sector be reduced to an underdeveloped labour reservoir for the latter*” (Brett, 1978: 291).

Virtually overtaken by their witless tone of intolerance, the class of expatriate administrators, profiteers and, especially, settlers strongly objected to the development of a Kenyan industry at the service of the autochthons. For instance, the existence of the expatriate monopoly in agriculture and processing was meant to exclude native Kenyans, Indians and Arabs from competition. As Hodgart and Worthington stress: “*Capital was only capital when it exploited labour, and to do this labour had to be prevented from owning land*” (Hodgart and Worthington, 1959: 21). Specifically, the settlers believed that if African Kenyans were allowed to produce commodities on their own, and if they would earn money from their crops, they would be disinclined to enter the market as labourers. The settlers were also convinced that African Kenyans—especially the Kikuyu and other tribes living next to European estates—were disqualified to produce grade coffee. Supposedly, poorly tended Kenyan coffee would spread disease to settlers’ farms. Coffee—primary cash crop—was the country’s leading export and the Coffee Plantation Registration Act of 1918 forbade the cultivation of coffee by Africans (Hailey, 1956: 384)<sup>59</sup>.

Gradually, most settlers developed skiff and energy to accede to the upper stratum of society. To a varying degree, the ambitious upstarts set their sights on politics and

---

<sup>59</sup> By the end of the 1920’s, Governor Donald Cameron backed up the settler lobby involved in coffee growing by enforcing its prohibition amongst non-settlers. For the most part, Kenyans were discouraged from growing crops (ibid.: 384).

sought to achieve political dominance. In this regard, the inter-war period witnessed the extensive influence of the British settlers on the local government. For the sake of improving their economic status further, the settlers had to guarantee their control over the state-machinery. It is no wonder that in return for their role during World War One, notably as a result of their contribution to the establishment of the War Council to gain recruits from settlers among others, they demanded that the government increased their commitment in politics through elected representation in the protectorate's highest governing bodies. They expected to win their claims, which included an initial demand for elective representation in legislature to secure a landslide victory. The government appointed a committee that was unanimous for giving the vote to every male British subject of European origin. Ipso facto, the white settlers were given elective majorities in the municipalities of Nairobi in 1918. One year later the settlers were allowed to elect members as Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, proposed that they should be incorporated in the Legislative Council through elections. Thereof, eleven (out of thirty) seats were to be filled by election among the 9,000 Europeans. The 25,000 Indians were allowed to elect two members on Asian communal franchise but refused to do so; the Arabs were given one nominated member. For the elections of 1920, ten electoral areas were delimited to represent settlers' interest in Nairobi, the rural areas of the coast, Uasin Gishu Plateau and other regions. The number of elected European members was fixed at eleven (ibid.: 296).

The year 1920 was a milestone in Kenya history. This country—named after a central mountain, *Kirinyaga*<sup>60</sup> that was sacred to the largest tribe of the area, the Kikuyu—became officially a Colony, a status that European settlers had long been

---

<sup>60</sup> “A common error that happened hundred times in the names of mountains, rivers and so on is the absence of the letters “r” and “g” in the Akamba people’s language. The correct name of Mount Kenya is *Kirinyaga* and the Akamba pronunciation for *Kirinyaga* is *Kiinyaa*, out of which the Europeans, being unable to pronounce it, created *Kenya*” (Barnett, 1966: 53).

calling for. According to some historians, this change from Protectorate to Colony had no constitutional significance, but it allowed the government to raise a loan of five million pounds to improve Mombasa harbour and extend the railway to the heart of Uganda (Roberts, 1997: 677). Paradoxically, other scholars think that the transference into a Colony had to do with the judicial problem relative to land. In the context of the Colony, native rights on land in the reserves had disappeared and the natives in occupation of such crown lands became tenants at will of the Crown on the land actually occupied (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 64). The insecurity of native reserves was nowhere more evident than with the disappearance of the autochthons' rights in land. This adverse experience added to the feeling of unease was to inflame native Kenyans' passions to defend themselves more effectively.

### **The Paramountcy of Natives' Interest?**

At that period, settlers who wanted their claims to be buttressed threw themselves in favour of a closer union or a federation in East Africa between Kenya, Uganda, Nyassa and Northern Rhodesia. The settlers' project was encouraged by Leopold S. Amery, the new Secretary of State for the Colony and Sir Edward Grigg<sup>61</sup>, his governor of Kenya. The settlers' concern was to bring about a unified native policy for the area. Obviously, native Kenyans and Indians alike were reticent since closer union was a term generally understood as the subordination of regional policies to settlers' communities and the enlargement of their political horizon. But strong opposition to closer union was offered by the influential African rights' lobby that had been mobilized by Dr Joseph Houldsworth Oldham, the Secretary of the International Missionary Council, and Lord Lugard (Rotberg, 1966: 98).

---

<sup>61</sup> Grigg was neither a civil servant nor a soldier but a politician sympathetic to *Round Table* ideals (Roberts, 1975: 47).

The government had been, thus far, the guardian of the welfare of white settlers. It was held to be protecting their exclusive land holdings; yet official attitude to this Colony was dominated by concern to avoid further confrontation since Kenya became a hotbed of rival racial faction mainly between British settlers and Indian communities. The government was laid under the obligation of arbitrating the quarrel between them with respect to representation on the Legislative Council and to the Indian access to 'white highlands'. In the 1920's, the Asians, who constituted an urban-middle class of traders, white collar workers and skilled labourers, numbered 23,000 and they claimed equal representation with that of the Europeans whose total number was 10,000 (Hailey, 1956: 190). The polemics revolved around whose interest should preponderate. This was discussed in London by some incumbents, notably, W. G Ormsby-Gore, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Duke of Devonshire, Colonial Secretary. At the Colonial Office, the discussion led these British officials to formulate a reply that went along with the imperiousness to preserve native Kenyan interests which, so far, had received subsidiary consideration. The paramountcy of native interests had to do with different factors, mainly the economic one. Native production of maize and other seeds in Kenya represented great potentialities that should not be neglected. Sir Robert Corydon, the Governor, expressed his conviction, while addressing Sydney Henn, an M.P, he authored: "*the native has hitherto been regarded chiefly as a worker on European shambas<sup>62</sup>, and a tax-payer-in Kenya; at any rate, he has never been considered hitherto as a big and cheap producer of bulk crops. When harvests happen to be prosperous, he is a great and increasing contributor to customs revenue*" (Brett, 1978: 179).

Aside from this economic point, it is useful to stress, as a reminder, that before 1920 Trusteeship<sup>63</sup> was a principle that epitomized to a certain extent British colonial policy.

---

<sup>62</sup> *Shambas*: garden or acre in Swahili (Barnett, 1966: 503).

<sup>63</sup> Trusteeship has a moral rather than political connotation. It is a principle emanating from British Colonial Policy and it is designed to signalize the nature of the responsibilities of the United Kingdom

Already, in July 1919, L. S. Amery, spoke favourably of the sacrifices of the Colonies during the war and he expounded that Britain had to gear its policy towards establishing a relation of trust based on common duties and; therefore, it would nowhere rule out the interest of the autochthons.

J.H. Oldham, then Secretary of the International Missionary Council, sought to develop and apply this policy in Kenya. Kenya, with its white highlands, provided the strongest core of settlers, and there the missions and Oldham played a particular role in challenging their demands and ambitions in the 1920's. Official instructions designed to force young native Kenyans to work for white settlers were roundly denounced by Dr. Arthur, leader of the Church of Scotland Mission and the Anglican Bishops of Mombasa. Meanwhile acute tensions between Europeans and Indians continued. Northey had bluntly told the Indian Association in Nairobi that European interests must be paramount, and early in 1922 the new Colonial Secretary, Churchill, encouraged Europeans to look forward to eventual self-government. But the government of India, hard-pressed by nationalists, compelled the British government to think again. In mid-1922, Whitehall proposed to mollify Kenya's Indians by creating a common roll for elections to the Legislative Council. The settlers' determination to crush Indians or any rival claimants likely to hinder their constitutional advance was such that they, reportedly, planned to kidnap Governor Robert Corydon, ex-Governor of Uganda since he was flexible and did not object the reservation of seats for Indians on the Legislative Council. Being ostracized, native Kenyans were bound to protest. Oldham, now Duke of Devonshire, took up native Kenyans' protest and in successive memoranda, he presented them to Milner and Churchill and the Colonial Office; subsequently, in December 1923 a constitutional compromise was achieved when the Duke of

---

towards its dependency. More precisely, it expresses the standard which should be universally adopted in dealing with undeveloped people (Hailey, 1956: 246-51).

Devonshire issued a White Paper declaring the paramountcy of native interest in the context of the constitutional struggle over Indians and settlers' rights. The Paper stated clearly that: "*Primarily Kenya is an African territory...the interests of the African natives must be paramount*" (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 679). In theory, this could perhaps be seen as a reassertion by the Colonial Office of control over Kenya at the expense of the India Office as well as the settlers. The White Paper made clear that the British government was loath to grant self-government to the settlers in the foreseeable future (Mosley, 1983: 24). Besides, the Paper laid down that "*His Majesty's government regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population, the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races*" (Hailey, 1956: 190). The declaration asserting the advancement of native interest was counteracted by a very concrete undertaking: there would be no drastic provisions to jeopardize the existing interests of those who had settled in Kenya. Most notably, the undertaking involved the maintenance of the inviolability of the highlands. Yet the Indians were virtually prohibited from possessing land there. As yet, Indians were assured the right of unrestricted immigration and were represented by five elected compatriots in the Legislative Council, but they scornfully ignored this concession until 1933 whereof Indians finally took the seats allotted to them<sup>64</sup>. The Arabs had one elected seat while an official seat was filled by a senior Arab on the coast (Fage and Oliver 1997: 679). The Arabs represented the Muslim minority from Persia and Arabia

---

<sup>64</sup> Indians also filled communally elected seats in the two municipal councils: in Mombasa from 1929 and in Nairobi from 1936. In 1935 an Indian unofficial was appointed to the Executive Council. The government remained firm against admitting Africans to the Legislative Council; instead a second European was nominated to represent African interests, but in fact this was done much more effectively by an Indian member, Isher Dass. By that time economic adversity was drawing certain Indians and Africans closer together. In 1935 Indian artisans formed a trade union which two years later led successful strikes in Nairobi and encouraged subsequent strikes among African workers (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 604). In Mombasa the increasing use of Luo and Kikuyu migrant labour depressed wages and housing conditions, which in 1939 provoked a series of brief strikes (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 605).

residing mainly on the coast<sup>65</sup>. One should recall that some coastal tribes of Kenya became Swahilized and experienced a measure of Islamization. In the course of time, European interests in Kenya were effectively, if discreetly, served by the appointment of men with South African experience to key-tasks in agriculture, the railways, education and local government. Besides, Kenya was central to any wider plans for entrenching White hegemony in eastern Africa.

In nothing was the amelioration more apparent than in the political condition of settlers in Kenya. The improvement had not been in equal degree to those aforementioned races since two settlers were introduced in the executive council. They were, to all intents and purposes, drawn into the decision-making process and could intervene directly in the formulation of policy (Brett, 1978: 170). On this, settlers outnumbered officials by eleven to three. In 1923-4 there was a sudden influx of new settlers: white landowners increased by one-half. As a reminder, between 1920 and 1929 the area under white cultivation increased between three and four-fold; the white population rose to 16,000 (Fage and Oliver, 1997:679).

It was the settlers' ambition to deny native Kenyans' opportunities to be represented on the Legislative Council. Albeit native Kenyans constituted the majority of the population 2,500,000 autochthons out of a population of approximately, three million people (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 322), not much was done, in practice, to preserve their interests, save a modest step embodied in 1924 through the appointment of a left-wing missionary, Dr Arthur, on the Legislative Council.

---

<sup>65</sup> Islam came from Arabia and Persia, yet it never expanded beyond the confines of the coastal communities which looked to the sea rather than to the interior of the mainland. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Islam began to spread inland along the trade routes with the building of the railway. The latter gave an immense impetus to Muslim traders who set up their small businesses in the towns and in the vicinity of the railway. There were also Shafii and Shiite groupings from India and Pakistan as well as syncretistic Ahmaddiay from the Indian sub-continent (Shoter, 1974: 88).



In the eyes of critical historians, the declaration of 1923 had little avail on the policy towards native Kenyans. The new function of the government ‘to protect the paramountcy of native interest’ became the grotesque caricature of protecting and preserving the settlers’ interests. In this regard, M. Dilley puts the following remark: “*the pre-eminence of Kenyan interests in the White Paper was only a screen or pretence that masked the real beneficiaries, that is to say the settlers*” (Dilley, 1957: 280). Their attitude had been, to a large extent, endorsed by the government, an attitude marked by colour prejudice justified on the ground of the maintenance of white standard of life, a standard of the ‘haves’ of the metropolis.

A new constitution became operative in 1927. Out of eighteen unofficial members, there was one nominated European—Canon Leakey— to represent African interest. Herein, the question is how could colonial government promote the prosperity of the autochthons through such an inadequate representation? Such being the case, the answer is nowhere along the broad lines of colonial policy. The native interest did not top the list of its priorities. This matter of factness was made clear by Colonial Secretary, Lord Passfield, in 1930. He sent parliamentary papers to governors of East Africa where he explained that “*the British Empire was primarily concerned with the furtherance of interest of British subject of British race and, thereafter, with British subjects, protected races and the nationals of other countries in that Order*” (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 67).

Under British supremacy, the bulk of the population was devoid of independent means of support. In the highlands, the majority of tribesmen were Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru. They were to some extent dependent upon white farmers for their low wages.

However that may be, most autochthons lived a similar tale. They constituted a class consigned irrevocably to the bottom. They were comfortless and were, almost invariably, enmeshed in reservations with a degree of distrainable poverty and recklessness that spoke unfavourably for their socio-economic status. They had no land or cattle, nor any hope of either. *“The crowding of several native Kenyans, into such agriculturally inadequate reserves, had caused famine and periods of acute hunger”* (Rotberg, 1965: 39).

However thorny their problems were, these people—whether subordinated in farms or increasingly filling lower-level positions in the executive and clerical grades—remained combative. Despite constraints imposed by their superiors, they attempted to pursue their resistance with the help of African Kenyan militants; they were organized in pressure groups. In the event of decades, these militants were to provide a pool of organizational experience; this experience acquired in their professional milieu was to be transferred to nationalistic purposes. Yet prior to dealing with this point, it is useful to inquire into these thorny problems, some of which are mirrored in the following socio-economic context.

## **2- The Rural Sector and Land Scarcity:**

Broadly speaking, one will start going back to the aftermath of the World War One; the rural sector was virtually unstable. The vast majority of indigenous peasants lived in bare subsistence as the rural sector was plagued by catastrophes such as the world’s influenza epidemics (Bennett, 1964: 325). In the sequel, much of the agriculture was exposed to drought and locust invasions decimated fields and affected the value of coffee export (Roberts, 1997: 692). In a parallel development, soil erosion due to continuous cultivation engendered declining productivity; while pressures of

population on limited land generated tensions. On top of this, transport difficulties, lack of support in some important areas in terms of health services, sanitation and educational structures exacerbated the living conditions. A “*Spartan welfare system*” was developing (Lewis, 2000: 85).

Land was the dominant theme in that lackluster period. Much worse, it became an ominous source of friction more than ever before by reason of its increasing shortage. Indeed, land scarcity in central Kenya and elsewhere was aggravated by its continuous apportionment for the benefits of an increasing white settler community around 1915. Then, the situation became more precarious for native Kenyans since the implacable nibbling away of more pieces of land—particularly in Mweiga area of North Nyeri, a location which bordered the forest, and around Nairobi—reached its climax when the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 increased the power of the Governor (Martin, 1983: 44). And as if Kenya were a no man’s land, the Governor could ipso facto “*grant lease or otherwise alienate, on his Majesty’s behalf any Crown Land for any purpose and on any terms as he may think fit*” (Maloba, 1993: 26). Basically, the Land Ordinance stipulated that white settlers would take out leases on 999 years (instead of 99 years in 1902) with a rent of 20 cents per acre for 30 years (Cornevin, 1975: 303). Concurrently, it made all Africans tenants at will of the Crown (as in the bill of 1913) and it allowed the Governor to cause the displacement of natives from their areas for the purpose of granting those same areas to white settlers any time at all. By the same year (1915), the majority of the fertile highlands were being used by the British and racial segregation of land effectively excluded native Kenyans and Asians alike from owning properties there. In addition, the government of the Protectorate refused to issue title deeds to Africans. Outside reserves, the autochthons were constantly denied land rights. Hence, they could never determine where to live, grow crops or graze their livestock.

Meanwhile the number of white settlers augmented steadily. From approximately 1,000 settlers in 1915, the figure rose to 1,200 in 1920 (Martin, 1983: 45). This increase is explicable on the basis of two factors. Firstly, the settlers' agricultural system based on plantations involved the use of big tracts of land. More land to exploit meant more settlers and vice versa. Illustrative of this kind of accretion in terms of acres is E.A. Brett's following calculation. In his book *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*, this historian indicates that, in the inter-war years, "four and a half million acres of excellent land in central Kenya had been taken away from its inhabitants and settled by about 1000 white farmers" (Brett, 1978: 226). Scholar D. Martin specifies that every settler possessed at least 1,000 ha (Martin, 1983: 45). This operation was done with the full backing of the British administration. Secondly, the Soldier Settlement Scheme, introduced by the government, provided agricultural employment to returning heroes in 1915, yet it was to be applied later (1919). The elaboration of this scheme was meant to organize the adjustment of new British corners, especially those brigadiers and colonels who escaped Post-War Britain to a glamour destination called Kenya where their status would be maintained (Hatch, 1965: 122). It is worthy of remark that the scheme was one of the measures formulated by the settlers to the British administration. According to V. Harlow, a thousand additional farms were to be demarcated and offered to ex-servicemen on easy terms (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 233).

Later in the Report of the Land Settlement Commission of 1917, the Kikuyu tribe concluded: "*The British government is like a mole which burrows underground and comes up and takes people's land*" (Githumo, 1979: 11). No changes were made for the betterment of the Kikuyu or other tribes. World War One claimed the lives of many blacks from British Colonies in East Africa, but those survivors did not deserve

any land settlement scheme at all. They felt enraged when they returned home to learn about the Ex-soldiers and Disabled Officers Schemes which continued to grab their land. The colonial authorities would always go on breaking their promises and adjusting their own laws to their vested interests. Another case in point for that adjustment is to be seen in the Kakamega gold issue of 1931.

The Land Commission of 1918 had recommended the excision from Kiambu reserve of thousands of acres to be allocated to ex-British soldiers. It served as compensation for these ex-soldiers who found the land they had chosen either unsuitable or allocated to someone else. Consequently, about 3,000, 000 acres were added onto more than 5,000,000 acres that had been expropriated by 1919 (ibid.: 130).

The density of the population in reserves was incredibly growing indeed, and was far from being proportionate to the allocated and continuously expropriated land. All the more, the aftermath of the First World War did not make the situation any better. It had dramatic effects in respect to the land issue. That era ushered in an ongoing phase of land-grabbing for the sake of the new comers or, rather, ex-soldiers and this land was to be found in the reserves already allocated to the natives. In fact, during the same year, 1919, the British government decided to make Kenya a dumping ground for ex-soldiers of the war after it was over. In this respect, other land settlement schemes for Europeans were launched as outlined in the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Ordinance No 13 was applied. According to this Ordinance, the Governor was empowered to authorize the commissioner of lands to reserve, lease or grant land or farms to any British discharged soldier anywhere in Kenya. In any case, and the ex-Soldier Settlement Scheme was applied around 1919. Governor Sir Edward Northey, ensured its application by excising a portion of Nandi reserves for the ex-

soldiers. Governor Northey welcomed the reservation of further tracts of virgin land in the uplands of Kenya. Originally, the government envisaged, “257 farms out of 160 acres to be given free and almost 250 acres to be sold” (Buell, 1928: 323). In a similar fashion, R. Cornevin observes that some “4,950 square miles out of which 960 sq. miles affiliated to Nandi reservation (north-west region) were assigned to these soldiers” (Cornevin, 1975: 304).

In all likelihood of events, the natives’ destination was fatefully confined and congested reserves. In 1919, a District Commissioner testified that:

*The density of population in Kikuyu reserve land between Nairobi and Limuru is about four hundred to the square mile, and that the population is increasing there. In Nyeri and Muranga reserve, the population density is about two hundred and twelve per square mile; in the Central Kavirondo reserve it is about one hundred and sixty-five; in the Bunyoro section of north Kavirondo it reaches eleven hundred.*  
(ibid.: 12).

Broadly speaking, about two millions and half acres of land were taken from the areas supposedly reserved for native Kenyans and set aside for this scheme according to Mwagi wa Githumo. These settlement schemes made the European population increase up to seventy per cent (Githumo, 1979: 349). The following instance illustrates the British spirit of land-grabbing: after they had been assured earlier in 1907 that land in the Kipkarren area was theirs forever, the disadvantaged Nandi had to relinquish 129 and a half square miles of it for the benefit of ex-servicemen.

In addition to the Ex-Soldiers settlement schemes, a special project was launched in the Kericho area especially for the disabled British ex-soldiers. The project was named the British East Africa Disabled Officers’ Colony (BEADOC) and more than 25,000 acres (ibid.: 360) were set aside for its achievement.

By the end of the 1910's the total superficies of European land was 8,945 sq miles. Settlement continued to be promoted by Delamere. After his arrival, Governor Cameron jacked up the speed of land alienation in several quantum leaps. A great deal of new land was to be surveyed and opened up in the north. Besides, land was also made available in the south for the first time. Cameron's objective was to make settlement possible in all areas with scarcity of population. The Kenya Annexation Order in Council of 1920, by which no native rights were reserved, and the Kenya Order in Council of 1921, to vest land reserved for the use of native tribe in the Crown, became effective. Thus all native rights vanished.

Gradually, settlers entrenched their position by acquiring the richest lands. As proof, by 1925, white domain reached 28,000 acres (Ross, 1927: 86). Not less than two years later, 120,000 square miles of the best lands was also assigned to them, according to L. Buell. This represented around 20 % of favourable land throughout the whole country controlled by some 2000 settlers (Buell, 1928: 177). At face value, this amount was provisional since more land was to be confiscated at the expense of the Nandi, Kikuyu, Luhya and other tribes.

Nevertheless, The Native Land Trust Ordinance of 1930 was intended to safeguard African rights to land in the so-called reserves. It was to compensate for this confiscation as Kenyan families in the reserves needed more land for cash-crops; and squatters were to move back to the reserves from white farms. In this way, these tribes were given land to be managed in mountainous regions of Eldara Ravine, Markwet, Elgo and Suk (Cornevin, 1975: 320). However fertile, reserves were notoriously over-populated, especially in Kiambu, Fort Hall and Nyeri—three Kikuyu districts—as well

as in north Nyanza. Among the factors that created serious land shortages in the course of the 1930's was population growth.

In actuality, the sheer of the inadequacy Ordinance was once more demonstrated in 1931, when gold was discovered at Kakamega, a densely populated African reserve. Consequently, new procedures for further expropriation of land and for eviction of Africans from the area were immediately initiated. As S. K. Aaronovitch stated "*this was another shameless rape of African land*" (Aaronovitch, 1947: 172). As a result, mostly Kikuyu but also Embu and Meru had been expelled from white-owned farms in the fertile highlands north of Nairobi (Shellington, 1993: 389). In an ultimate manner, they were driven in the reserves that were bound to be overpopulated.

Although the Native Lands Trust Ordinance stipulated that reserves were to be used for the benefits of the native tribes for ever (Wagner, 1949: 686), it did not hinder settlers from having forthwith access to Kavirondo goldfields—a Luhya area in the north west—in 1931 after the discovery of gold in Kakamega. This discovery heralded a land rush and attracted a clutch of gold-fevered visitors. In fact, some 75 white prospectors had set out full of enthusiasm to take rich land and drill it in search of specks of gold. They were followed by other settlers whose number varied from 360 to 420 persons (ibid.: 10). It is reported that 65,000 acres of native lands had been required for mining prospecting. Owing to gold-mine exploitation, the Native Land Trust Ordinance of 1930 was amended. It precluded the transfer of land to native Kenyans and it removed the areas on lease from the reserve. The amendment was bitterly attacked in England by Lugard and other influential figures as a breach of the very trust conveyed in the original Ordinance (Sorrenson, 1968: 687).



Between 1932 and 1934 Sir Moris Carter was required to examine the whole Kenya land situation including Kenyan grievances resulting from past alienation of land to non-natives and for the first time to define the boundaries of the white highlands. The Carter Land Commission had reportedly minimized land alienation. It concluded that alienation was shown to have affected directly only a small part of the country although it estimated that 110,000 Kikuyu were living outside the reserve (Maloba, 1933: 28); it also assumed that the occupation of the white highlands by Europeans was an accepted principle. The area held in European occupation was 10,345 square miles while the whole area of the Colony was 224,960 square miles (Hailey, 1956: 718); however, the European area was advantageous agriculturally. Through Morris Carter's recommendation, the total area of reserves was increased by almost 1,500 sq. miles. But much of this land was of dubious quality, and only 15 sq. miles were added to the congested Kikuyu reserves.

In spite of this, the white settlers under Cavendish Bentick, who took the lead after Delamere's death in 1931, were not satisfied with the final settlement arising from the Carter report in 1934. They wanted, but did not obtain the Leroghi plateau of the Samburu (Duignan & Gann, 1960: 69). In any event by 1934, some 6 543 630 acres of land had been alienated for occupation by 2 027 settlers, an average of 2 534 acres per occupant, of which only 274 acres were actually under cultivation (Barnett, 1966: 32). In the Kikuyu districts of Kiambu, Fort Hall and Nyeri, by the same year, "*there was a rapidly expanding population, reaching an average area density of 283 per sq mile and rising to well over 500 in some areas such as south Nyeri*" (ibid.: 33).

The Native Land Trust Ordinance of 1938 defined the area of the Kikuyu land unit. It comprised five administrative districts of Fort Hall, Nyeri, Kiambu, Meru and Embu. They fell into the four main linguistically homogeneous tribal groups: Kikuyu, Meru,

Chuka and Embu. Each of these was further subdivided. For instance, the Kikuyu proper fell into three sub-tribes: Metune in Fort Hall, Karura in Kiambu and Gaki in Nyeri. And the Embu themselves were divided into Embu and Mbere in Embu District (Lambert, 1956: 1).

Later in 1939 the Highlands Order in Council stressed that this was a 'final settlement'; outside these reserves, native Kenyans were permanently denied land rights while it seemed clear that in practice, if not in law, Indians would continue to be excluded from the white highlands (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 697). In the meantime, Kenyan agriculture declined in the reserves. Years of overgrazing caused depletion of soil fertility, in the late 1930's further locust invasion combined with the break prices, resulting from the Depression (1929), put small scale farmers out of business. Further along the spectrum, the crisis urged settlers to reduce the number of squatters (especially Kikuyu, Nandi and Kipsigis), and the superficies they occupied in the Uasin Gishu, west of the 'white highlands'. It should be born in mind that by 1940, there remained over one million acres within the white highlands which laid unused for either crops or pasture (Barnett, 1966: 32). Albeit it was in considerable measure unutilized or even squandered by its alien owners, land became unattainable. What about the urban sector? The answer is the object of the next section.

### **3- The Urban Sector and Population Concentration:**

Parallel to the predicament of the rural population, the Kenya deruralized multitude was overwhelmed with manifold problems relative to the urban sector. Major parameters indicate a worsening situation for the autochthons whose increase reached mammoth proportions in towns. In fact, the base of the Kenyan social structure was ineluctably shifting from a peasantry to an urban proletariat. Yet many native Kenyans did not migrate as a matter of choice. As noted earlier, colonial circumstances impelled

them to relocate. Entire families were pushed off overcrowded reserves and squatters—generally single men—were evicted from the highlands.

Globally, in face of such a frustrating background, there was an irresistible flow of native Kenyans desperately heading to towns in order to chance their luck and conglomerate there. And what better examples to choose than Nairobi, an industrial centre which provided considerable opportunities for earning a living. Because the railway was constructed by more indentured Indian workers rather than African ones, Nairobi was predominantly Indian. Going back to 1921, one notes that the balance had already shifted. Many Indian railway workers had vacated the area and some 12,000 native Kenyans with the Kikuyu, who formed the largest contingent, were estimated to be living in eight separate villages, or rather squalid slums, in Nairobi (Therton, 1970: 15). In these “*semi-tribal surroundings*” (Hatch, 1965: 122), there was a regular cycle of population increase. The population more than doubled. It grew from 12,000 in 1921 to 27,000 in 1931 (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 344).

At the district level, population was also dense. For instance, in towns like Kiambu and Nyeri (north of Nairobi), the population rose spectacularly while the limits of the town districts remained unchanged. V. Harlow points out that the number of Kikuyu residents increased from 452,000 at a density of 254 per square mile in 1902 to 489,000 at a density of 283 per square mile in 1931 (ibid.: 339). Harlow’s figures include Fort Hall, a third district.

Anyway the leading towns of East Africa had grown rapidly in the 1920’s (and by 1938 there were 65,000 inhabitants in Nairobi and 60,000 in Mombasa). For most town-dwellers conditions were very bad and getting worse. Part of the problem was urban unemployment but official neglect was more serious, since it was rooted in

prejudices largely impervious to economic facts (Fage and Oliver, 1997: 701). The colonial order involved various degrees of segregation in employment, education and urban residence.

Either in the outskirts of Nairobi or in other towns, district dwellers were often condemned to live on the edge of wretchedness. They were very frequently deprived of municipal water, light and other services. In promiscuity there had been several outbreaks of plague. Indeed, the absence of standards of hygiene and sanitation left room to diseases of epidemic proportions that raged unchecked. An annual medical report of 1928 for Kenya stated that the circumstances were such that people lived under conditions which were admirably suitable for the existence and spread of malaria, syphilis, pneumonia (Mc Millan, 1949: 30) and so on. To quote D. H. Patterson, a divisional engineer, “*cases of contagion broke out in the slums regularly*” (Hill, 1949: 191). The principle of racial segregation was accepted by colonial government and further district dwellers were subject to segregation. A commission of inquiry was in favour of a strict residential segregation and it proposed the development of African locations—on the South African pattern—to ensure the physical security of Europeans. This implied “*well-defined and separate quarters to be established for Europeans, Indians and Africans*” (White, Silberman & Anderson, 1948: 15), with a restriction of entry in European zones by special passes issued only to employees. The British did not mix much with local people in Kenya. They insisted on more segregated areas of residence and segregated schools, restaurants, hotels and so down the line. Consequently, distrust and suspicion spread in areas where social disparity evolved invidiously between the bulk of the Kenyan population and British residents whose houses were set in no less than an acre of land each.

Being the result of a wide range of changes, migration broke down tribal boundaries by way of an urbanisation process, thus bringing the autochthons into contact. In towns, they were faced with experiences which forced them to revise their traditional ways of living, thinking and so forth. Unlike the isolated villages, the crowded reserves in the outskirts of Nairobi, Mombasa, Nyeri and other areas provided a basis for a vigorous group life. In this urban environment, the combination of these pre-cited setbacks not only rocked native Kenyans' lives but they lifted them to a new plane of consciousness. A deep sense of social inferiority aroused, inferiority that underlay a growing nationalist feeling throughout Kenya.

Beyond the provincial profundity of the rural world and the cosmopolitan life of the urban one, the autochthons became united in their uprooting by an important economic phenomenon: Labour. Sure enough, the situation of labourers was not brilliant whatsoever, still less their recruitment. This point is the subject of the following headline.

#### **4- Labour and Squatter's Advent:**

The period of maximum activity of the labour recruiting profession in Kenya was in the middle of the twenties. Back to that period, one underlines that farms and firms were far from being overmanned. Thence, more labour was required either for the viability of private enterprises of settlers or for the development of governmental ones, no matter how this disrupted native Kenyans. Whenever possible the latter were employed locally in towns as manual workers in mining, manufacturing and construction or they were recruited in rural settings as farm hands on settlers' estates and so on.

Yet men who had survived the First War were in no mood to continue working for white men and labour shortage resulting from the war sparked an acute crisis in the field of labour recruitment. For instance, the main obstacle to the expansion of coffee was a shortage of labour. Notwithstanding, coercion to ensnare labour appeared the sole alternative for the British government. The following lines uncover how Ordinances reinforced labour recruitment, especially on settlers' estates.

To begin with, in 1915, the Native Registration Ordinance was enacted to decree forced labour. Three years later, the Resident Native Ordinance forbade leasehold to native Kenyans. These native Kenyans had Hobson's choice. They were tolerated as squatters with no security of tenure over the lands. They practised either share-cropping or tenant-farming. Without techniques, the services or the capital to farm extensively for the market, they had the right to cultivate gardens and pasture few animals as best they could. Members of their families were obliged to work when called upon. However their squatting was regulated by the Resident Natives Ordinance of 1916 which was applied in 1918 and which compelled African squatters to work for their landlords for at least six months of the year (Martin, 1983: 44). Contracts did not have to exceed three years. For example, in "*Nyeri area, thousands of acres of indigenous coniferous trees had been cleared by the forest squatters to whom an acre was allocated to each to cultivate for only three years and then the Forest Department planted timber trees, shifting the squatters to another dense forest to clear*" (Barnett, 1966: 159).

While squatting was in full swing, the labour recruitment process received its veritable impulse—by way of the Native Registration Ordinance—with Governor Northey, a veteran of the East Africa campaign. He elaborated circulars instructing district officials to persuade labour to come forward (Fage and Oliver 1997: 677). Such

measures aimed at favouring natives' recruitment in white plantations by 1920. The Northey circular also stipulated that tribesmen, including women and children, had to join the work-fields when farms were in the surroundings of reserves. Progressively, the system of migrant labour internal to Kenya developed. Indeed, this system accentuated the uprooting of tribesmen from homesteads. David Parkin underlines that "*participation in labour migration was so general in the districts that eighty per cent to ninety per cent of the present generation of farmers have had migrant labour experience*" (Parkin, 1975: 170).

Generally speaking, the number of Kenyan residents, on British farms reached a total of 112,000 of whom 33, 000 were adult males (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 259). On his part R. Cornevin reports that 1,715 settlers employed some 87,000 indigenous workers in 1924 (Cornevin, 1975: 310). In the middle of 1920, some 195,000 autochthons were registered. Under the Resident Native Labourers Ordinance of 1925, they were under contractual obligation to land owners as squatters. One should recall that the squatters never provided the whole of the settlers' force, yet their economic significance was considerable. "*It was estimated in 1931 that squatters were using a million acres of land in the highlands or nearly two-third as much as the settlers themselves were using*" (Van Zwanenberg, 1971: 440). In 1933, the Kenya Land Commission Report estimated that there were about 110,000 Kikuyu outside their reserves. The majority of them were squatters on British farms. For instance, in Kiambu district half of the able-bodied men—mainly from Kikuyu—were reckoned to be forcibly working for white settlers. There were also 130,000 Nandi and at least 4,000 Kipsigis squatters and many more Luo. It was they who participated in providing the spectacular and threatening development of religious and political associations.

Being driven into a cash economy, the plebs was also driven into destitution. At worse, being exposed to barefaced and near-slave conditions, this manpower strove day in and day out for slim wages. For many native Kenyans, wages were the most likely source of cash. Even so, this population had to pay taxes nearly at the point of a gun. There was nothing as certain in the Colony as death and taxes. And taxation was levied on them without reference to their revenue. The poll tax increased from 12 to 16 shillings in 1921 (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 356) More generally, “*of a gross one million pounds a year earned by native Kenyans in registered employment, only a quarter of their earnings remained to them. Between 1920 and 1923 taxes subtracted the rest, which is 750,000*” (Brett, 1978: 27).

The period under discussion also witnessed the issuance of *Kipande* (identity card) by way of the Native Registration Ordinance. The *Kipande* is a card-bearing finger print imposed in conformity with the Masters and Servants Law. Native Kenyans living in urban areas as well as upcountry were required by the Whiteman’s law to carry that identification card issued by the Labour Department. But the main purpose of the card went beyond the need to identify the native Kenyans. It primarily aimed at restricting the movement of native Kenyans in their own country. With the *Kipande* system, humiliation reached its zenith in Nairobi and the environs. The aberrant system, which concerned adult males and even youngsters, was felt as a denial of mobility because it unquestionably enchained people. Its generalization reflected extensively the nature of colonial policy. Overnight, hundreds of native Kenyans had to bear this so-called certificate. The *Kipande* was modelled on the South African system of control. It was also intended as a means of tracking down those who broke their employment contract. In March 1923, the *Kipande* was extended over boys aged twelve.



Later around 1937, the Resident Labour Ordinance granted white settlers permission to restrict the number of squatters and the number of working hours. Many of these squatters were deemed unnecessary and looked upon as a drag by settlers. So they were constrained to leave the rural area. Most of them were Kikuyu and they were obliged to retreat to Olenguruone in the Masai reserve wherein frustration reached its paroxysm or to Yatta on the dry plains which became a place for re-settlement and exile in Eastern Kenya for those who had also been uprooted from their homes by the colonial government. Although few squatters found prosperity, for the majority the situation was exploitative. Being so and being dissatisfied, these people constituted, as it were, an insecure category of which some went to the missionaries seeking refuge through conversion.

#### **5. Missionaries and their Ongoing Impact:**

Christian religion gradually and continuously enforced conversions and wracked long-established native customs and social values. It is relevant to recall that this process started before the First World War and extended throughout the far corners of the Protectorate as studied earlier.

This situation did not change in any fundamental respect during the inter-war years. The bulk of native Kenyans kept structuring their lives in terms of a culture to which they were denied access. Missionaries did not perform for the natives useful services all the time; perhaps the most evident illustration is the attempt to reduce the concept of lineage to a decorative status and, above all, their incapacity to suppress racial barriers that were erected in day to day life and from which escape was difficult.

As a matter of course, the autochthons were at once a part and apart from the Colony where they lived. In those days and particularly around 1929, the relationship between the missionaries from the Church of Scotland and some autochthons became marred by

polemics. Specifically, the Church of Scotland put into question and condemned with might and main one of the mainstays of Kikuyu culture: the practice of circumcision. They equated it with a useless mutilation emanating from appalling acts of barbarism.

One has to recall that in the life-cycle of the males and females, the practice of circumcision, together with the initiation rites, were undoubtedly the most outstanding and the most important events. The rites *de passage*, that was performed collectively and not individually, marked the entrance of the individual into a new phase of life. The initiation of young people was directly linked to political loyalties and was first and foremost a sign of full citizenship within the tribe (Shorter, 1974: 78). Yet not all tribes practiced it. The Nilotic and Teso-speaking groups did not circumcise (Gunter, 1970: 334). Among the Wanga as a rule, only the eldest son in every family could be circumcised. Circumcision was common among all the other Nilo-Hamitic tribes, such as the Masai and the Bantu like the Kikuyu.

The situation reached crisis level when the Church of Scotland tried to put a ban on this practice among the Kikuyu. In short, what Kikuyu resented most was the fact that missionaries often misperceived rather than perceived established patterns of local worship and beliefs that existed since time immemorial. And the attempt to impose foreign codes of ethics was tantamount to the subversion of these beliefs. The conflict between Christianity and traditional ways are traced thematically by Ngugi wa Thiango in his book the *River Between*. Ngugi attempts to demonstrate that many autochthons suffered a spectacular oppression as a result of conflicts. One must highlight that the female circumcision conflict led the Kikuyu adepts to undercut missionaries' priestly authority. The logic of events forced them to become activists. It is among Christian converts that anti-colonial sympathizers emerged. The Kikuyu reaction was typified mostly by independent schools and associations. In the same year Kikuyu Local Native

Councils (LNCs) raised over 20,000 pounds to build their own schools while J. Kenyatta, secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), called for “*a methodical education to open out a man’s head*” (quoted in Ranger, 1965: 32, 67). Were the whites willing to follow the line of J. Kenyatta? That is the point at issue.

On the whole, the stage was already set for a showdown between the autochthons who displayed both dissension and resentment, and all those who incarnated white values. Precisely, the ongoing reaction of many autochthons against the inauthenticity of such values is the subject of the following lines.

## **II- The growth of Better Organized Associations:**

It is generally accepted that the inter-war years correlated with a changeful episode in Kenya. One change worth signaling regards the notion of struggle manifested by many autochthons. From a historical standpoint, Kenyan struggle went on in a new form—it shifted from military and atavistic strife to syncretistic<sup>66</sup>, trade union and political fight— before culminating into a Colony-wide basis movement. Accordingly, this section will stir a nest of key-questions: What was the character of Kenyan struggle? Did it take the form of clear-cut associations? If yes, what sort of associations? Who regimented them and how? What were the objectives? Were they achieved? And, above all, to what extent could such associations epitomize the nationalist movement, one of the most striking developments of the mid-twentieth century?

Via this analysis there will be an attempt to bring into cohesive pattern the development of this type of struggle whose continuance gave rise to nationalism. It

---

<sup>66</sup> Syncretistic associations correspond either to kinship associations organized by western educated people or to separatist religious groups which have seceded and declared their independence from white European churches because of the desire for religious independence or because white clerics were intolerant regarding certain African customs (*Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia* 1995).

may be noted that during the post-First World War era, inflexible protests and claims were part of a build-up resistance to continued oppression generated by the disruptive socio-economic precariousness and the incurable wrongs among other things. Either locally or regionally, most native Kenyans were disinclined to take for granted the need of white hegemony. Better still, they wished to demarcate themselves from the pressures of colonial government, white settlers and the missionaries, and to canvass representatives to voice their discontent and express their spirit of resistance. Therewith, associational protests or pressure groups emerged. They mainly included syncretistic, educational and modernist associations.

#### **A- Syncretistic Associations:**

Albeit the Masai and other groups were hard-hit by land deprivation, labour recruitment and taxation, the Kikuyu, whose reserves lay north of Nairobi, were amongst the first groups to organize a new form of protest. It was neither that of a separatist church in the form of atavistic movements, nor of a return to some restatement of the African model. They formed political associations.

For example, Kikuyu chiefs and headmen mustered up around Chief Mbiyu Koinange to form the Kikuyu Association (KA) in 1920. The pressing grievances of chiefs centred essentially upon the question of tribal land and compulsive labour policies as both issues were connected. The Kikuyu chiefs tried genuinely to attract youngsters. But the young men were unresponsive. They looked on their elders as the tools of Europeans. Some of them were, after all, government nominated or government approved chiefs. J. Kenyatta made this point clear, as, for example, in Barnett's *Mau Mau from within*, on page 50, he stated: "*The Kikuyu people do not regard those who have been appointed over their heads as the true representatives of*

*the interests of the community*” (Barnett, 1966: 50). Surely, the concept of chieftaincy was rather unpopular amongst the community of the youngsters. This concept was indissociable from the role played by these disaffected provincial chiefs in respect of forcible labour recruitment, tax levying and so on. In addition, London was keen to strengthen the power of chiefs as a way of restricting the influence of young, potential activists.

For their part, young Kikuyu, among whom a former mission student called Harry Thuku, remarked that the Kikuyu Association was too moderate to enforce its policy. It was comparable to a toothless tiger since in 1921 taxation doubled from 5 to 10 rupees by reason of post-war economic imponderables and the registration certificate, *Kipande*, was in application (Cornevin, 1975: 168). So believing firmly that “*it was not enough to put patches on an old suit*”<sup>67</sup>, H. Thuku created the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) in 1921. It comprised low-grade clerks, office boys and domestic servants and it was Kenya’s first African political protest movement. Basically, Thuku was a reformer and he demanded a greater recognition of his people’s interests. Propped up by their followers, the members of the Young Kikuyu Association campaigned through mass meetings both in Nairobi and in Kikuyu reserves expressing their views without ambiguity. They petitioned against: (1) the Crown Land Ordinance of 1915, (2) the doubling of the Hut and Poll tax from 5 to 10 rupees, and eventually their transfer to finance indigenous schooling, (3) the one third reduction in African wages imposed in 1921, (4) the *Kipande* or labour registration system introduced in 1920, and (5) continued eviction of Kikuyu sub-clans as well as alienation of their land for European occupation (Barnett, 1966: 36). This last claim was circumscribed to the Kikuyu unlike the previous requests that had a general character. The reason is simple

---

<sup>67</sup> *Time*, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, p.8.

enough to infer that land confiscation, mostly in Kikuyu country, had opened up a running sore that continued to fester since 1902.

Overall, the claims were published in a paper managed by an Indian editor named M.A. Desai. H. Thuku, who socialized with Indians, contacted members of the Indian National Congress<sup>68</sup>. Some of these members, who were en route for England, were exhorted to present the claims to the Colonial Office. Soon, the reaction of the Colonial Secretary, Sir Christian Victor Devonshire was unfavourable since it was guided by colonial policy. Otherly said, under the Colonial Office's directives, the colonial government was inclined to inhibit widespread socio-economic claims and; therefore, it overrode them. Keeping the *status quo* was the solution. In truth, it was reported that "*the Colonial Office was organised to deal with places rather than problems*" (Roberts, 1975: 48).

The government's position did not impact on H. Thuku's militancy. Conversely, it made him more resolute than ever before. Little by little, the Young Kikuyu Association stood on the threshold of mass-supported nationalism. Actually, through his determination, H. Thuku illustrated a tentative convergence between native Kenyans. This leader campaigned valiantly in Nairobi before thousands of native Kenyans. He told them that they endured the unendurable slave conditions imposed arbitrarily upon them; furthermore, he backed up whomever he found hostile to the British model and those who agreed to force Colonial Government to modify policies. At this stage, H. Thuku believed that the diffuse frustration of urban workers might yield violent demonstrations to no clear-cut ends; therefore, he determinedly "*made the positive efforts to popularize and energize the nationalist crusade*" (Lugard, 1922: 83)

---

<sup>68</sup> The Indian National Congress is a political party formed in 1919 and led by Mahatma Ghandi (Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia 1995).

through the Nairobi proletariat. In so doing, H. Thuku did not recruit exclusively, to use Peter Harries-Jones's expression "*through ties of common blood and common locality*" (Jones, 1955: 218). Instead, this new social grouping, known as the proletariat, proceeded from different segments of the population: Kikuyu, Baganda, Nyasas and other tribal elements. They were behind Kenya's first strike in the early 1920's. Knowing his job thoroughly well, H. Thuku wanted mass protest to find its embodiment in the Young Kikuyu Association and he attempted to gear the grievances towards his definite objectives. Thanks to this indefatigable leader, the grievances spread not only over Kikuyu tribesmen around him, but also in western Kenya, two hundred miles away at Kisumu. He even visited Kavirondo, Baluhya, in North Nyanza where he addressed large meetings. One of his recurrent statements was "*tutingihe maleiriaga: we cannot die of starvation while they are eating*" (Kinyatti, 1987: 3). He found willing ears and was supported overwhelmingly, thereof the first signs of multi-tribal solidarity started to appear. H. Thuku's ambition was to carry his message to every town. It was a sort of Pan Kenyan message. So he was feared by authority. Speaking about him in the 1920's, a Chief Native Commissioner claimed that "*a prayer issued by H. Thuku introduced an element of religion which might lead to a dangerous situation, the people being told that they were in a state of slavery*" (Harlow and Chilver, 1965: 294).

With H. Thuku, there was a sense of continuity in the process of mobilization. Although links with Nairobi were still weak by 1921-22, the urban base began to extend its influence gradually into the rural areas. No statistics are available about membership, but all the same a large number of other tribal sympathizers, like the Kamba, participated in the Thuku-led movement.

Gradually channels of communication developed and connections were also established with the Young Kavirondo Association (YKA). It was founded in 1921 by a teacher called Masena and led by an Anglican Mission employee named Jonathan Okwiri (ibid.: 356). With the massive support of Luo and Luhya youth, J. Okwiri multiplied campaigns to militate against Nyanza ramshackle camps, the inadequate education dispensed by missionaries and tax increases. This organization made relative headway relevant to taxation since the latter was reduced from ten to eight rupees (ibid.: 293). One must say that the Governor was very forbidding vis-à-vis the militants of the Young Kavirondo Association. He regarded them as agitators. In order to avert the government's ban, two years later, the association was renamed the Kavirondo Taxpayers' Welfare Association (KTWA) on the initiative of the circumspect Archdeacon Owen from the Anglican Mission of Kavirondo. He promised to restrict claims to local problems and transform the KTWA into a tribal benefit association rather than into a political one.

So far, Kenyan resistance was still an aspect of pre-national struggle although the bulk of the population underwent a similar ordeal and efforts were made by H. Thuku to stave off social problems that, taken together, seemed insurmountable. By and large, riots and demonstrations epitomized such a resistance. For argument's sake, in 1922 the Young Kikuyu Association organized demonstrations in the centre and west of the country. In Nairobi, friction with the police created disturbances. Unable to quell them, the colonial police, flanked by armed white settlers, fired at a group of unarmed demonstrators. There were many fatalities.

These local rebellions were not nationalist movements in the strict sense of the term in that it was difficult to achieve a unity of purpose in the early twenties. Further, with



the exception of H. Thuku's endeavour, most claims were connected with tribal issues and remained within the boundaries of ethnic units. For example, at that time, the Kikuyu Association defended the land issue in Kikuyu country; and the Young Kavirondo Association militated against forced labour in Kavirondo. A good deal of associations mushroomed at the tribal level to attack colonial government. Rightly or wrongly, referring to these associations L.S.B. Leakey wrote: "*the Africans get the impression that so long as a group of people call themselves an association, they are entitled to attack government as much as they like; consequently, not few political associations have been formed*" (Leakey, 1936: 10). One difficulty with regard to the identification of some of these associations is that they were often marked by ephemerality with frequent changes of names. In this respect, scholar F. Cheru points out: "*Whether having a religious, an educational or a political character, most of these parties remained faceless shadow entities*" (Cheru, 1988: 198). Indeed, their history was one of "*fluctuations of sudden bursts of energy and activity succeeded by periods of apathy when the society existed only in name and sometimes not at all*" (Jones, 1955: 98).

Be that as it may, the lesson to be drawn thus far, from the above untoward incidents, is that the colonial authorities made it clear that they would not let anyone ever thwart their plans. Indeed, it—the colonial government—controlled associations and almost atrophied their power into ineffectiveness.

Nonetheless, in 1922 the East African Association (EAA) was set up under the leadership of the experienced H. Thuku. It was a more militant organization. This body had the ambition of a trans-tribal party since it tried to throw off the shackles of tribalism and claimed to speak on behalf of all Kenya and aimed at uniting all Kenya tribes around the more general African grievances. It rejected the fundamental

premises of colonial rule. In one of his speech H. Thuku accused the government of stealing Kikuyu land, attacked the missionaries for preaching the word of the devil, expressed his hope that the Europeans would leave Kikuyu land, urged the people to refuse to work for Europeans and called fellow countrymen to throw their *Kipande* away on the lawn of Government House in Nairobi (Barnett, 1966: 37).

In March 1922, the police stowed away in prison the Young Kikuyu Association leader, H. Thuku, with his brother and other militants. They were held on charges of being ‘dangerous to peace and good order’. Immediately, the first general strike in Kenya history was triggered. A crowd of 7,000 people encamped in protest demanding the release of their leader outside the police station in Nairobi. Frightened and tense by this unexpected show of natives’ strength, the police was led to open fire, blasting twenty-one African Kenyans and injuring a much larger number. After that act of callousness, H. Thuku was arrested and exiled at Kismayu, on the coast. The arrest of H. Thuku gave a blow to the EEA which had reached the hiatus of its career. Eventually, it was banned.

Concerning this serious affray, according to nationalist sources about a hundred and fifty were massacred on that day (on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1922), but one of the settlers’ papers, *The Leader*, minimized the seriousness of the situation (Martin, 1983: 45). In the same month, the paper reported that only a few people were killed. In May 1922, two ex-members of the previous banned EEA—Traorra and J. Kenyatta—led a deputation to Governor Northey. They insisted on the release of H. Thuku and the suppression of Nyanza work camps.

A wider sense of Kenyan consciousness was still infinitesimal and the East African Association's success was far from being achieved. Out and away, many problems persisted; wages were low, schooling remained grossly inadequate, for example the school had brought in its train expected problems. Far from being a factor of socialization or a vehicle to promote the development of programs, the school failed to cater for all the levels and facets of modern social life (Shorter, 1974: 75).

Meanwhile, Britain's concern in the area was manifested by H.J. Thomas, the Colonial Secretary of State in the early 1920's. He sent out an East Africa Commission to investigate the wide range of socio-economic and educational problems. Under-secretary of State for the Colonies, W.G. Ormsby Gore, was in the chair. He was flanked by the Liberal F.C Linfield, and the Labour A.G, Church. They spent October and November of 1922 in East Africa. These commissioners showed themselves genuinely anxious to get at the real truth of the matters. During the same months, J. Kenyatta availed himself of the commission's presence and addressed Ormsby Gore, presenting him a memorandum of sixteen points. The most important issues were fundamentally connected with education and the introduction of native Kenyans in the Legislative Council. This last claim denoted clearly Kenyan focus towards central politics. At this juncture, one must remind that native Kenyans were not represented on official bodies. Already, in 1919 and again in 1921 missionaries at Nairobi made overtures about the fact that native interests should be represented on the Legislative Council, but the commission of 1922 pondered more over economic problems. For instance, it insisted on the development of transport facilities to further economic production. On his part Linfield asserted that settlers' occupation had added greatly to the productivity and efficiencies of the country. It was assumed that settlement provided employment opportunities for native Kenyans and, at the same time, it enabled them to learn about agricultural techniques among other things.

Understandably, native Kenyans' problems did not top the list of colonial government's priorities; still in 1923 Dr. Arthur, only a left-wing missionary, accepted Governor Robert Corydon's suggestion to represent native interests<sup>69</sup>. In the same year, public meetings continued and one of them was held in Nairobi at which speakers called for the release of H. Thuku and a change in the status of Kenya from Colony to British Protectorate. Besides, the speakers urged their representative, Dr Arthur, to stop missionary interference both in traditional marriage practices and, more broadly, in the modification, not to say the elimination of tribal customs.

#### **B- Modernist, Educational and Other Movements:**

After the disillusion resulting from the Devonshire's White Paper (1923), the East African Association's followers debunked the colonial values more than ever before. Nevertheless, they were warned by colonel Walkins, the Deputy Chief Native Commissioner, that they should confine their actions within the context of Kikuyu boundaries. In addition, in the 1920's most inter-tribal movements were banned because they were suspected of being subversive. In order to circumvent Walkins's notification, members from the banned East African Association (EAA) amalgamated with the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). The latter was created in Fort Hall with the support of missionaries in 1925. The KCA was co-managed by Jess Kariuku and Joseph Kangethe who was reportedly anti-British (Duignan and Gann, 1960: 443), while J. Kenyatta was its secretary.

---

<sup>69</sup> Dr Arthur was put on the Legislative Council one year later. The number of representatives of Kenyan interest remained unchanged during the inter-war years. Despite the passage of the Hilton Young Commission and its recommendation to provide greater protection of African interests, there was only one European—Canon Leakey—representing Kenyan interests (Marsh and Kingsworth, 1972: 149).

In a changing world, the Kikuyu Central Association stemmed from the failure of preceding movements to impose themselves and eventually chart practical solutions to local problems. This association was not only devoted to the cause of higher education and the redress of economic grievances, but it was also concerned with the defence of Kikuyu culture and the securing of direct representation in the Legislative Council. For the next sixteen years, the KCA agitated and pressed for reforms through petitions, delegations to the British Parliament and mass meetings. It held large meetings in the reserves. It owed much of its success in mobilizing the masses to its secretary, J. Kenyatta. At mass rallies, he was both oratorical and rhetorical. He was not simply, as A. Mazrui underlines “*a nationally conscious member of the Kikuyu*” (Mazrui, 1986: 58) but he was also fixated on the desire to defend the interests and the cause of all his fellow-compatriots through more actions. In defending such interests, the KCA members petitioned the Governor, Sir Corydon, for removal of restrictions on coffee grown by autochthonous agriculturists and for the release of H. Thuku. During the same period, in 1925, the Native Affairs Department portrayed the KCA members as: “*an indeterminate collection of malcontents... with no representative authority, and no constructive program of reform*” (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 358). The colonial officialdom recognized the Local Native Councils as bona-fides and consequently, officially representatives of the autochthons.

To paint a general picture of the LNC’s in brushstrokes, one may recall that they were introduced in 1924 by way of amendment provided by the Native Authority Ordinance (ibid.: 350). The LNC’s were structures conducted by traditional leaders such as Apolo Ahanga and J.J. Chamellon. They were appointed by the governor and they were almost invariably controlled by district commissioners. These chiefs were empowered to maintain the authority of the colonial system in the reserves and inter-alia deal with specific tasks. In addition, colonial government expected chiefs to abjure

politics. They were also expected to represent their followers by reason of their propinquity; however, most of them were concerned with securing a good position, i.e. a superior access to the benefit of the colonial world. This was not without consequences, as shown in this quotation: “*This position was necessarily to bring them in opposition with the emerging nationalist force which was challenging the colonial structures that gave them (chiefs) privileges*” (Nottingham and Rotberg, 1966: 85). The unpopularity of chiefs was already decried by some district commissioners. As a reminder, in a memorandum of 1912, they wrote that: “*these so-called chiefs, especially in Kikuyu, were often little but partly detribalized riff-raff who enjoyed no confidence among their own people*” (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 349). Much worse, they became object of hatred amongst some associations. The KCA members capitalized upon their general unpopularity and conducted a protest movement against this older generation collaborating in the LNC’s.

Despite the fact that the nationalist force was, so saying, in gestation, and that multifarious Kenyan associations were practically prohibited in the 1920’s, and that no country-wide political movement was allowed, few associations outlived. All in all, these associations such as the Kikuyu Central Association, the Catholic Association or whatever else, never considered the LNC’s as reliable avenues of expression, let alone as genuine pressure groups. So they attempted to sidestep them as often as they could.

The KCA feared the ongoing disruption of tribal customs. The fear was justified on the ground that the British continued to oppose local rituals. They denied, for instance, the perpetuation of a traditional observance called the *itikwa*. It consisted of a ceremony whereby an older generation bequeathed sovereignty to a younger one after a period of twenty years (Martin, 1983: 49). As it was, the year 1925 coincided with this

ceremony amongst the Kikuyu. The old generation had to give ground to enable Young Kikuyu successors to assume the direction of tribal affairs, but the British authority interfered and skewed off the natural course of events by maintaining the older generation in office. The abandonment of such a ceremony and other *igongona* (Kikuyu customary ceremonies) was unacceptable for the Kikuyu Central Association activists. They seized this opportunity to continue their resistance with unabated enthusiasm while campaigning against the denial of the *itikwa*.

In 1929, another opportunity for protest was offered by the Church of Scotland and the African Inland Mission. They jointly endeavoured to put a ban on *irua*, i.e. female circumcision. Three years ago at the conference of East African governors (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 363), the missionaries of the Church of Scotland discussed and excoriated what they considered to be the baleful effects of this operation, an operation partaking of profligacy. The unfettered Church of Scotland Mission even required senior indigenous people to sign a paper forswearing this practice on pain of being definitely suspended from church membership. The Progressive Kikuyu Party (PKP), which had been formed in Nyeri and in the same year, had countenanced the Church of Scotland uncontroversially. Yet the Kikuyu Central Association, that was joined by a sect of polygamists called *Miti-Ya-Kenya* (the trees of Kenya), interpreted the mission's intention as an attempt to destabilize and obliterate their heritage.

Being undermined culturally and threatened religiously, they fought tooth and nail to resist. The African membership of the Scottish Mission Church, who had earlier agreed to abolish the circumcision act, was urged by the Kikuyu Central Association members to renew its pledge to ban the practice. Many parents calculatedly refused to send their children to church-schools. In a matter of few months, the number of church

adherents fell ominously. Consequently, the Scottish Mission, the African Inland Mission and the Gospel Mission Society, suffered a significant loss of membership. Many schools, especially those for girls were closed. During the same period, the Kikuyu steadfastly formed churches fully independent of white clerics. Thenceforth, in its institutional forms, Christianity became avowedly rejected by many Kikuyu.

As the 1920's drew to an end, Jess Kariuku of the KCA was conscious that it was not possible to successfully form and strengthen independent churches without experienced men. This entailed inviting the primate of the African Orthodox Church<sup>70</sup>, a Negro archbishop called Daniel William Alexander. Guided under the light of good will, this archbishop organized the new Kikuyu African Orthodox Church. In Fort Hall, Nyeri and the Rift Valley, Alexander baptized a large number of new converts. Before he returned to South Africa in later in 1937, in the late 1920's he formed four ministers. Two of them set up the African Independent Pentecostal Church (AIPC) and the other two created the African Orthodox Church (AOC). Other churches were set up. In addition, two educational bodies emerged from the Kikuyu in 1929: The Kikuyu Independent School Association (KISA) and the Kikuyu Karinga Education School (KKES). The former operated in Nyeri, Fort Hall, Kiambu and Embu. It was linked with the African Independent Pentecostal Church. The KISA wished to demarcate itself from the missionaries, like the AIPC; however, it offered to co-operate with the government in the field of education whereas the latter—the KKES—evolved in Kiambu. It was closely connected with the AOC. This independent school resisted government supervision and defended Kikuyu tribal values; moreover each of these independent schools and churches sought to syncretise Christianity. They stood overtly opposed to any interference or

---

<sup>70</sup> The AOC was a church of the Africans, governed by the Africans and for the Africans. It reportedly sprang from the Universal Negro Improvement Association of M. Garvey (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 371).



intervention by the white missionaries. They knew later that the Old Testament referred to polygamy without condemning it and nowhere did it forbid female circumcision.

Here the main foci is that increase in mistrust and breakdown of solidarity with the missionaries were promoted by a common sense of grievance related with the circumcision controversy and, more generally, with the missionaries' non-success to impose self-respect, equality and the like that continued to be denied. Referring to missionaries and their support for the colonial order, R. Rotberg states that: "*By assisting in the conquest of East Africa and by generally condoning the discriminatory policies of government officials...., and missionaries set in motion a rethinking of this ambivalence between precept and practice that, in time, contributed to the rise of nationalism*" (Rotberg, 1966: 11).

In Kenya, Christianity came to be tied up with colonization. For instance, the Kikuyu indicated that in the black-white struggle, there was no difference between a missionary and a settler (Barnett, 1966: 202). Predictably, the missionaries became indistinguishable from subjection to each and every demand of colonial government and white settlers. In one of his early speeches, J. Kenyatta said: "*The white man came and asked us to shut our eyes and pray. When we opened our eyes, it was too late...*" (Mazrui, 1986: 108). It was late since the seeds of hatred were planted. There was what Barret calls an "*unconscious failure in love*" (quoted in Shorter, 1974: 93) on the part of the autochthons. It caused a "*resentment that surfaced on the occasion of dispute, a flash point that ended in secession*" (ibid.:)

The controversy over circumcision in Kikuyu land coupled with related forms of cultural threats had psychological repercussions on the Kikuyu. They emerged as people conscious of their ancestral past. Equally, they started to develop a sense of unity. They fostered separatist religious groups in order to express their anti-European sentiment. These syncretistic movements displayed the beginnings of global awareness and the beginnings of modern nationalism. Precisely, there were bonds created knowingly between religious educational and political organizations altogether. J. Kariuki of the Kikuyu Central Association provided an illustration while contacting the archbishop W.D. Alexander to promote new independent churches. As noted, the African Independent Pentecostal Church set up in the 1930's under the impulse of the archbishop, William Alexander, coordinated actions with the Kikuyu Independent School Association. The overlapping of the missions and nationalism is sketched by A. Mazrui. He notes that "*the missions were interested in spreading the Christian gospel, but in due course a new secular gospel captured the imagination of many young Africans. This was the gospel of nationalism*" (Mazrui, 1986: 1).

Of course, the road leading to nationalism was still a long way and it is humbug to say that all the tribes organized themselves into active associations. For example, on the coast, the Pokomo and the Taveta were said to be unambitious. They had virtually no parties. It was not until World War Two that the coastal tribes started to organize political bodies, such as the Mijikenda Union (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 385).

It is interesting to note that the construction of webs, between educational bodies on the one hand and political as well as religious institutions on the other, was paired with the option for one single language, i.e. English, in lieu of any other languages. Specific motives accounted for the use of English by progressive Kenyan leaders in spite of the

breadth and wealth of linguistic diversities: Bantu, Hamitic, etc...In overall terms, the choice of the elite fell on the English language instead of Swahili, the Lingua Franca of East Africa, or any other vernacular for the following reasons. The first line of approach was the need to surpass linguistic barriers. *“The spread of literacy gave new significance to ethnic difference: the reduction of African languages to writing meant favouring some language over others, thus redefining ethnic frontiers while moulding new channels of communication”* (Flint, 1976: 4). Incidentally, the elite believed that the linguistic usage of English, which stood for the concept of universality, would therefore be an effective medium in the process of detribalization. It perceived it as a potential instrument that would shatter all the boundaries established by the plurality of linguistic diversities. In this frame of reference, R. Rotberg is correct in pointing out that *“a language which is foreign to all tribes within a nation and which has undeniable advantages as an international language seems the least unjust and soundest solution”* (Rotberg, 1965: 46). For Nairn one of the key points in his analysis was that *“the masses had to be invited in history for the first time in a language that they understood”* (Nairn, 1977: 41). By learning English tribes might be brought closer. That very language was to work as *“a trans-tribal pan-territorial instrument”* (Markovitz, 1970: 175). Its acquisition would not pose problems since this process was introduced by missionaries who provided elementary literacy for the young masses in bush schools and elsewhere to promote education.

Strictly speaking, English was not initially an instrument for national aspirations in Kenya; nonetheless, nationalists had opted for this international medium, at least for the achievement of these aims which are part of the second line of approach: firstly, to refuse being encapsulated in their vernaculars; secondly to branch out their activities and meet wider audiences than theirs; thirdly this language had a money-making value in the bureaucratic world. A. Mazrui explains this point: *“the economic value of*

*English was greater than the economic value of mastering several African languages altogether. There were more jobs, which required knowledge of English than there were occupations which demanded the mastery of several indigenous languages together”* (Mazrui, 1986: 69). Indeed, the gateway to bureaucracy could not be secured without the acquisition of English; fourthly, to feel linguistically strong enough and deal with colonial government on equal terms wherever and whenever possible. In this close respect, in the 1930’s the champion of the clitoridectomy cause was chosen by the Kikuyu as a spokesman. As indicated before, his ability to handle English enabled him to put forward claims without misgivings or equivocations. J. Kenyatta denounced the disreputable policy of exclusive European occupation of the highlands before different commissions. As a passing reference, one recalls that he gave evidence on the land question to the Hilton Young Commission and the Carter Commission in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Later, he forcefully demonstrated his mastery of the English language through his book *Facing Mount Kenya*, a book, which placed him decisively within the stream of talented writers.

### **C- Further Political Associations:**

It became clear that J. Kenyatta made great strides in terms of popularity. His activism evolved at such a speed that it was comparable to a trot that had broken into a gallop. In the event of few years, this foremost leader conducted his political career not merely as the KCA’s mouthpiece, but as the representative of all native Kenyans whatever their political colours as well. The peripeteia of his militancy continued as will be stated briefly.

As time marched on, associations continued to develop. In 1931 the Kikuyu Association was renamed the Kikuyu Loyal Patriots (KLP). It was led by chiefs

Koinange and Wahuriu. Its main concern was the land question in Kiambu. The year 1931 remained a key one in East African history. For the first time autochthons, among whom chief Koinange of the Kiambu Kikuyu, were given an official platform to speak on major political issues, notably during a Parliamentary Committee Session in London. There, Koinange with two other East Africans—Martin Kayamba of the Tanganyika Territory African Civil Service Association and Serwano Kalubya treasurer of Bugunda—denounced the long-standing pressure of white settlers and disapproved of their ideas of closer union (Roberts, 1975: 682). More importantly, these Africans, who had united to defend a common cause, called for direct representation on the Legislative Council. The last demand was not sustained by British officialdom, at the top of whom Ramsey Mc Donald, the Prime Minister. He believed that illiterate masses were not concerned with politics and that they were immature enough to choose suitable representatives directly. In addition, the chiefs were dismissed as being utterly unrepresentative. For instance, chief Koinange was of Kikuyu descent, as such he would represent solely his tribe and would be disqualified to speak on behalf of other tribes.

This colonial attitude hampered neither Kenyan activists to militate implacably against the strictness of the regime nor associations to burgeon by fits and starts. Again, one may refer to the unwearied J. Kenyatta who was in Europe at the outset of the 1930's as had been seen. There, he kept an incessant epistolary contact with the Kikuyu Central Association. In his writings, he continually stressed the fact that the relegation of his compatriots to a sub-human status (in comparison with the British) was not a penalty from heaven, but the product of British colonial policy. He prompted his followers not to give up the die-hard struggle.

The very fabric of modern nationalism was beginning to unravel as the struggle proceeded and other organizations grafted on it. Dissenting voices were manifested by the Kavirondo Central Association. Being formed in 1932, this body reacted against the apportionment of Kakamega (north-west) after the discovery of gold there. In the same year, H. Thuku—released in 1930—became president of the Kikuyu Central Association in Fort Hall. After few years of imprisonment, H. Thuku kept a low profile momentarily vis-à-vis the colonial government. He defeated the extremist Joseph Kangethe for the presidency of the party. Yet for hazy reasons, H. Thuku left the party.

In 1934, the Luhya set up the North Kavirondo Central Association. One year later, H. Thuku resurfaced on the political scene to form the Kikuyu Provincial Association. In a parallel development, the number of factory workers in Kenya rose to nearly 10,000 (Hatch, 1965: 127). This urban force became a significant factor in the economy of the Colony, an economy whereby the penetration of capitalist relations made it difficult for them to profit fully from the environmental resources in Nairobi, Mombasa and elsewhere. In the 1930's, the situation of workers, including Indians, who were expected to upkeep large families with low wages, presaged unquestionably the rise of urban organizations, such as trade unions. It is worth calling attention to Indians. They constituted a racially-conscious people who resented their subordinate position and who sought to defend their interest as best as they could. They had already defended their interest through the Asian Railway Union in 1918 and they were determined to fight for equal rights.

Being an association that sought to graft onto politics trade unionism was largely an Asian affair in Kenya. The reason is simple enough to infer that Indian Labourers were organized and financially helped by a powerful business community; in addition, they had figures like Makhan Singh, a famous Kenyan trade unionist of Indian descent. His

influence on trade unionism was so much so that he gave it full swing. In the 1930's, trade unionism needed to be spread on a Colony-wide basis. M. Singh attempted to round up the masses by transforming the Indian Trade Union of Kenya (ITUK), formed in 1935, in the Labour Trade Union of East Africa (LTUEA) in 1937 (Martin, 1983: 50). This Indian came into prominence in 1937 when he orchestrated a two-month strike in Nairobi as the secretary of the pre-cited organism (Kinyatti, 1987: 4) before being arrested and deported in India later (in 1940). The chain of events led "*Mombasa dock strike to mount big, long and effective strike actions in the 1930's which existing industrial relations machinery could not contain*" (Cooper, 1975: 452)<sup>71</sup>. So far, one question needs to be asked: in what sense was trade unionism connected with nationalism?

Indian trade unionists' perception stemmed from their common experience of life. It was based on unequal economic opportunities. Like native Kenyans, not only were they forced into insecure wage labour jobs, but their skills were devalued. In some, but portentous instances, they offered some kind of resistance by being relentless strikers. Meanwhile, these trade unionists had the potential to go beyond racial barriers by mobilizing Kenya workers because they acquired a sense of collective identity as sellers of labour power. They did not have a limited role. They collectively developed an extensive network in the urban areas. Of course trade unions were not organic components of nationalist movements and it took time before workers' protest converged on political protest, and therefore on nationalism, because the colonial government insulated them as much as possible; nevertheless, there was the emergence of a class consciousness among the workers whose actions did not merely demonstrate the attraction of integration, but they strengthened the formation of a common

---

<sup>71</sup> Much later, one of the achievements of Trade Union was the Bill of 1944 stipulating that trade unionists' activities could be performed in the same conditions as in the metropolis (Martin, 1983: 50).

labourers' voice. Together with the proliferation of associations and large numbers of people in contact, trade unionism helped make possible the rise of nationalism as will be seen.

Moreover, the urge for economic changes had to do with the shift from subsistence agriculture to an exchange economy, an economy that yielded frustration among workers. Beset by similar problems (housing, education, precarious employment...) these bitterly frustrated workers were to spread mass awareness of the colonial situation. The scholar James Coleman argues: "*The concentration of Indian and Kenya workers in urban centres to meet labour demands of European enterprise had loosened kinship ties, accelerated social communication between detribalized ethnic groups and, in general, contributed to national integration*" (Coleman, 1928: 207).

The urban setting played its part to enhancing economic interchange and facilitating closeness of contact within erected boundaries. So the process of detribalization was imminent, as ordinary native Kenyans were to accommodate themselves to new social circumstances and respond to new urban needs. They were learning how "*to adopt and apply their ethnic loyalties to new experiences in time of change*" (Shorter, 1974: 4). Many of these people moved to the cities. "*They became townsmen who had to fabricate new relations in towns*" and engage in associations" (ibid.: 52). While drawing more and more adherents, these associations proved that they were capable, given some solidarity, of challenging colonial administration. They had not only asserted a measure of influence within the colonial context by providing alternatives to total submission, but they had diffused their ideas about the importance of mobilization through organizations.



Politically, native Kenyans remained ostracized. In 1937 the executive council was reconstituted to increase the number of unofficial Europeans while only one member represented Kenyan interests; meanwhile, the Kikuyu Central Association continued competing against the Kikuyu Provincial Association and the first mentioned gained a greater membership. The Kikuyu Central Association proliferated in terms of adherents. The KCA had 300 supporters in May 1938, whose figure soon rose to reach a paid up membership of 2,000 in March 1939 (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 363). The organisation was to become the most powerful group. It had a growing influence on the independent church-school movements. It tried to achieve African solidarity and inter-tribal cooperation by establishing the Teacher Training College at Gathuguri (Kiambu District) which was open to students of all tribes. It equally extended its branches outside Nairobi and it sided with other ethnic groupings. For instance, J. Kenyatta, who was still its secretary, was entirely dedicated to Kamba cause. From Europe where he sojourned, he sympathized with them and supported their march of 1,500 on Nairobi to denounce forced cattle destocking in Kamba province in 1938 (Barnett, 1966: 39). Acting on Kenyatta's counsel, the Kamba formed the Ukamba Members' Association in the same year. Further J. Kenyatta sided with the Teita against forced labour in Teita Hills. The mobilization of the Teita led them to found the Teita Hill Association. It was declared an illegal society and its members were arrested partly because they upheld a casual workers' strike of 1939 in the Mombasa dock, orchestrated mainly by the Indian leader Isher Daas (nominated in the legislative council in 1935). This Kenya supporter was solicited by the KCA and the Tax Payers' Welfare Association (TPWA) for reading their petitions in the Legislative Council to Governor Mitchel. The endorsement of such petitions by intermediaries, notably Indians instead of missionaries, not only reflected the malaise existing between missionaries and autochthous militants, but it was out and away "*the only sure means for Africans to be heard*" (ibid.: 328). The demands of the two associations—KCA

and TPWA—centred mainly on (1) title deeds to land held by Africans in reserves, (2) the return of alienated land or a better and clearer delimitation of the highlands territory just compensation, (3) removal of restrictions on the planting by Africans of commercial crops such as Arabica coffee, (4) the training and employment of Africans as agricultural instructors, (5) compulsory primary education for African children, sufficient secondary and high schools, and opportunities for higher education overseas, (6) abolition of *Kipande* system, exemption of women from Hut and Poll taxes, and removal of other measures which restricted freedom of movement, (7) elected representation in the legislative council as well as in the other governing bodies, and a promise of ultimate African predominance (Barnett, 1966: 37). In its usual fashion, the colonial government negated the demands, declared all protests illegal and most parties<sup>72</sup> were banned by the end of the 1930's. On May 1940, the KCA was declared an illegal society on the pretext that it was in contact with the King's enemies of Ethiopia; as a result twenty KCA militants along those of Teita and Kamba sister association were arrested. Ultimately, the KCA was driven underground where it remained alive but inactive during the course of World War Two.

#### **D- The Organization and Failings of Associations:**

The colonial impact had not merely created disparities or revolutionized, to a large extent, different sections of Kenyan society including agriculture, communication, industry, transportation and so on, yet this impact was also punctuated with massive expropriation of land, cattle and labour. Thenceforth, it was observable that with a gradual increase in exploitativeness resulting from the system of British colonial domination, there would be a corresponding increase in counteraction and resistance from the native Kenyan malcontents whose prospects were increasingly restricted by

---

<sup>72</sup> Some parties like the Kikuyu Provincial Association were operative. This party was not prohibited because it supported the war.

the end of the 1930's. In sum, these people—the wage-earning class and the educated elite—reacted to a set of circumstances from a sensibility developed from their Kenyan upbringing; and their exposure to western values within the context of colonial boundaries. Such a context reflected the prevalence of unsocial norms which were frowned upon. These norms were indicative of ostracism which only accentuated anti-white feeling. As indicated before, people who refused to be the scum of the earth, continued to throw themselves headlong in the battle via associations. Some of these associations were better organized than those antedating World War One. What were the reasons that led to their improvement? And, more importantly, why did not they achieve much despite their organization? Then did such a context hamper or enhance the process which led to nationalism?

### **1- Organization:**

The concept of organization is relevant to the following reasons: the initial reason is undoubtedly connected with the settlers and the Indians alike. Both communities experienced organizational skills and their capacities to defend their interests through associations were good. For instance, as a reminder, the settlers set forth their protests through the Colonists' Association which was originally known as the Planters and Farmers' Association. They voiced their point of view journalistically through a press called the *East African Standard* which was originally owned by an Indian called A.M. Jeevanjee. Much the same pattern of event was repeated with Indians. It should be recalled that they formed the East African Indian National Congress before the end of the First World War. In so doing both communities set the standard by providing a model for most Kenyan activists, school teachers and clerks and those who saw themselves as the vanguard of a new African way of life. These people were, for the most part, nondescript and innominate clerks, school teachers and small traders forming the sub-elite. It should be pointed out that in default of Kenyan upper-

echelon elite including doctors, senior civil servants, and lawyers, the sub-elite played an important role in the organization of welfare and political parties in Kenya.

When Kenyan militants felt experienced enough and educated, they shrewdly and circumspectly organized themselves by adopting modern monolithic associations. As has been seen, the Kikuyu Central Association and sister organisations, such as the Kavirondo Taxpayer Welfare Association, the Ukamba Members Association, the Teita Hills Association are cases in point. Imitating the pre-cited communities, their sense of organization owed much to the European criteria of welfare state, western democracy, progress and other ways. Surely enough, The native leaders assumed a bouquet of responsibilities by establishing programs, tabulating facts, listing members, planning definite objectives and the like. The other reason is connected with these leaders' capacity to launch demonstrations peacefully, averting riots and disorder whenever possible and to hold large meetings on the model of Europeans. In this respect, H. Thuku's campaigns constitute a good example to promote communication with various associations. Above all, these leaders "*created around themselves a series of linked associations that would propagate the values and norms of their struggle*" (Jones, 1955: 97). In truth, organization meant co-ordination between educational, religious and political structures. For instance, the Kikuyu Karinga Educational Association was increasingly involved with the Kikuyu Central Association (Harlow & Chilver 1965: 366); likewise, the Kamba and Teita groups volunteered to develop cross-ethnic binds by assembling round the Kikuyu Central Association as well. Organization also implied the mastery of English. By the 1920's, few school teachers and few educated leaders were instrumental in using the English language to demonstrate that their associations were well structured enough to send pleas and petitions signed by a good deal of adherents. Their literacy was expected to give them a recognized status.

What matters in this approach is that despite the relative sense of management, these educated native Kenyans could not get rid of the storm of socio-economic deterioration. The situation of the autochthons did not change. Actually, the leaders' capacity to shape events was weakened and they could not organize a wider movement to direct efficient pressures against the colonial centre where all crucial decisions were taken. The ensuing headline pinpoints the failings that made the leaders' actions unspectacular.

## **2– Failings:**

In all likelihood of events, these leaders failed because their actions were not favourably developed at the national level. In fact, the road leading to nationalism was interspersed with obstacles. In terms of impediment, one may note that tribalism, in which some groupings were steeped, led to internal strife. One may add other obstacles including political rivalries, sectarianism, deficient economic affinities, age-group, cultural incompatibilities and so on. Some such obstacles precluded the development of harmonious relationships and provided an atmosphere conducive to the accentuation of lines of division.

Throwing light on these obstacles and the background surrounding them, one may start by tackling tribalism for illustration sake. The latter hampered Kenyan leaders from throwing their tribal shackles and joining hands on a Colony-wide basis through interaction. As a matter of fact, the feeling of attachment that most native Kenyans displayed centred on distinctive ethnic unity rather than on national one. At all events, each group stuck to its tribal distinctions. Scholar A. Southhall hints at these distinctions. He defines "*the tribe as a whole society, having a high degree of self-sufficiency... politically autonomous and having its own distinctive language, culture,*

*sense of identity and religion*” (Southall, 1970: 28). In addition to these above distinctions, for many, the tribe was an indispensable uniform, a convenient way to differentiate a friend from an enemy. It was a unifying force as well.

To comprehend the concept of tribal unity requires, at least, a sketchy study of human relations within the tribe. Native Kenyans, much like other native Africans, cultivated the habits of living lavishly together—brothers, sisters, aunts and so on. In family relations, ‘I’ or ‘Mine’ were slurred over while the emphasis was laid on ‘We’ and ‘Ours’. Put differently, this meant the suppression of individualism. ‘Ours’ referred to community and there was not that forwardness to indicate personal ownership of anything. Amongst extended families, there was a strong sense of tribalism and community with its “*rudimentary structure, organization and psychological basis*” (Bottomore, 1980: 10). The tribesmen claimed descent from a common ancestor and could, therefore, be said to be of the same ethnic stock, and believers in the same shrine, and their language would have a great deal in common. Beyond that, tribesmen were all members conscious of the same cultural and political unit. What bound them was common historical experience. Being deeply entrenched in this state of affairs, it was, therefore, difficult “*to sweep tribalism in the dustbin of history*” (Duignan and Gann, 1960: 528).

Be that as it may, political rivalries gained scores. The following is a case in point: in Nyanza (western Kenya), the Kikuyu Central Association failed to win support amongst the Luo in opposing colonial projects in the late 1930’s. Such opposition regarded encroachment on land which was so dear to the Kikuyu; and the Luo refused to swell the ranks of the Kikuyu Central Association and to form a larger association in that there was the fear of an over-representation amongst Kikuyu attendants.

Eventually, fearing numerical disproportion in respect of tribal representation, the Luo cling to their tribal affiliations. It is all important to know why Kikuyu did overshadow other tribes in the formation of political parties. The answer is not to be divorced from the fact that Kikuyu formed the largest contingent in Kenya. They were almost 200,000 Kikuyu squatting around Nairobi in the early thirties. They had undergone a painful expropriation of land and their homeland included the expanding city of Nairobi which was controlled by white settlers. One may add that missionaries made much headway in Kikuyu country. Without their teachings, people like H. Thuku, J. Kenyatta and, later, Eliud Mathu would barely emerge.

Another fact of the matter that accentuated cleavages is regionalism or sectarian suspicion which was planted by the colonizers. It also accounted for ethnic strife. Indeed, there were limitations in which tribes operated. Such limitations were the concomitants of sectarianism that could not be subsided easily. Much worse, metaphorically speaking, the airstream had become so much affected by that sectarian divide so that some associations had been breathing it wholeheartedly. They did so by devoting their time and energy exclusively to regional allegiance. For instance, the Kavirondo Taxpayer's Welfare Association was exclusively concerned with Luo problems.

A supplementary failing is deficient economic affinities which encouraged fissiparous tendencies and revived old wounds relative to inter-tribal wars. Generally, Masai pastoralists had scarcely been in good terms with Kikuyu agriculturists. The first mentioned used to graze on Kikuyu land, thus incurring their displeasure and bringing about conflicts.

In like manner, age-group was another source of friction. The North Kavirondo Central Association consisted of youngsters from the Luhya who turned down co-operation with other organizations conducted by chiefs. They considered them as being outmoded and unfit for representing a young generation in the 1930's. For these young, most chiefs were nominated by colonial rulers; as such they were their stooges. Some of these chiefs were said to be porters and even donkey men during the wearisome railway construction.

Another feature that did not facilitate inter-tribal communication was cultural incompatibilities. In the field of linguistics, different languages could be synonymous with manifold problems. One might as well argue that Bantu speaking people could not necessarily decipher the customs or codes of Nilo-Hamitic speakers in this multilingual society. Such multilingualism made it, at all events, difficult to accomplish nation-wide tasks, such as mass communication. In reality, several languages spoken widely in Kenya did not favour the production of newspapers except for a Kikuyu paper called *Muigwithania* (The conciliator). Although it was the first and only English-speaking paper in Kenya at the time to call for independence, it was not widely supported. The reason was that it marketed only the Kikuyu Central Association actions and targeted Bantu speakers rather than other linguistic families. In any case, Bantu-speaking people were sometimes given preference by other Bantu tribes over Nilo-Hamitic or other non-Bantu speakers.

The last feature is that the British colonial government had often pilloried young leaders and had considered them as agitators. By the same token, J. Kenyatta had never been accepted in the Legislative Council. Of course, at that time, the bulwark of



colonialism made it difficult for Kenyan leaders to bridge the gap from tribalism to nationhood.

The prevailing spirit of tribalism as well as other obstacles not only constituted a drag, but they showed that there were tribal groupings whose views did not converge and any division would not promote social cohesion. Conversely, it would rather demote and forfeit the chances of the movement. One notices that although farsighted militants like H. Thuku and others made it clear that the *status-quo* could not go on ad-indefinitum, and although they expected to maintain global cooperation by envisaging reforms against a background of trans-tribal solidarity in the 1930's, it was strenuous for them to contribute to the absorption of tribal discrepancies. Whereupon, the fostering of solid alliances, within the framework of associations and even outside on a wider scope so necessary for the formation of a nation-wide movement, was hard to achieve.

Clearly, the construction of a sound national base hinged upon the unification of all tribes. As L. Hailey points out rightly; "*movements fathered by the most advanced political elements require an operative force when they receive a substantial measure of support from among the people at large, the great mass of the population*" (Hailey, 1956: 253). And this process required from leaders the building of new ties and extend them beyond the tribe; then the construction would not result from tribal relations but, rather, from their disintegration. There had to be a national commitment to involve a unified political outlook with true unification of minds and energies. "*Tribalists had to become nationalists*" (Harlow & Chilver, 1965: 392). For that end, there was the foremost need to find a sound ideological basis for a wider unity than any known before. For pre-cited reasons these aspirations and ambitions were not

operationalized; notwithstanding, these same reasons did not make it any less necessary for Kenyan leaders to persevere and put forward their claims which manifestly symbolized challenge and long drawn-out resistance.

Failures served as incentives. Likewise, one must highlight that ‘Land-hunger’ was recognized as the principal catalyst for indigenous political organisations. As yet, the existing challenge did not mean achieving self-government. Indeed, neither H. Thuku nor J. Kenyatta were prepared to advocate a complete eradication of the colonial system that bred socio-economic injustice, nor were they ready to evict colonial rulers and enthrone themselves; nor were they ready to purge settlers from the country. “*They wanted to bring reforms rather than radical changes*” (Marsh and Kingsworth, 1972: 149). By the end of the 1930’s, Kenyan leaders sought to take part in the organs of colonial government to improve the conditions of their followers and ease their misfortune. They strongly believed in the following adage: *Gutiri yuuraga ndikie*, which meant that there is no rainfall that does not cease. Literally, every misfortune has an end (Kinyatti, 1987: 8). In any case, the ongoing struggle and the epilogue of that colonial misfortune, is part and parcel of the next and last chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **An Analysis of the Origin and Development of the Mau Mau Uprising (1940-1963)**

*The dialectic of colonial repression has proved that ....no colonialist aggressor can overcome people who are determined to win their freedom.*  
Amilcar Cabral 1970

When one looks for ways to depict and analyse the Mau Mau movement which developed into an all out struggle over time, the thing that comes to mind is the setting, and part of it are mountains, Mt Kenya and notably the giddy Aberdares<sup>73</sup>. High on its peak culminating at 13,000, as a researcher, one sees inviting gullies that seem to lead

---

<sup>73</sup> A general picture of Aberdares forest or Nyandarua can help one visualize the setting. The Aberdares forest, whose peak culminates at 13,000 feet, stretches 120 miles from its southern reaches in Kiambu District to its extremes in the north in Nderagwa, near Thomson's fall. Its width measures approximately 50 miles separating the Kikuyu districts of Nyeri and Fort Hall from the European settled areas of the Rift Valley. Eventually, it became the home of over 20,000 men and women revoltors fighting for the Kenya African Freedom (Barnett, 1966: 144-46, 276).

to the top. One starts scrambling over the narrow, rocky Aberdares Mountain with steep sides using one's hands and feet; then the gullies get steeper, tougher and narrower. Thunderclouds gather over there. The ways become indistinguishable, they become spiralling out of control, a sort of maze which does not seem to ebb away and it is up to the researcher to disentangle the maze by answering the questions: What happened in the Aberdares area? The area was more than a space chase; it became a tragic tale of humans under siege. Other queries must be raised such as: what were the socio-economic and political contexts like? What position did the African Kenyan elite take? Was it connected with Mau Mau and, finally, was the latter a veritable expression of Kenyan nationalism against the British rule? To answer these questions is to uncover the working reality of the 1940's and 1950's as well as a good deal of Mau Mau struggle.

It is no wonder that Mau Mau struggle against British colonialism remains irrefutably etched on Kenya people's memory. Considered anti-European and anti-Christian by the British power, the Mau Mau revolt turned into a civil war. Even today, many native Kenyans found it difficult to wholly disjoin, from that unprecedented historical event because of the amount of mayhem it stirred up through the application of brutalities and assassinations. In any event, the struggle, that held people's attention worldwide, was virtually a Kikuyu movement from October 1952 to 1956. Conditions for conflict had been brewing for years, but "*the period of most intensive conflict between the regime and these nationalists lasted for only two years, and high-intensity government repression and low-intensity guerrilla activities continued for three more years*" (Martin and O'Meara, 1986: 147). Overall, it was to last almost five years during which it stressed further the ongoing character of Kenyan resistance.

Reportedly, for the British, the rising had little to offer but an assortment of fear, blood and death. Yet almost certainly, the movement was born out of the desperate response of people who could not stand a colonial context, a context whereby unfair colonial policies helped to create and reinforce ruthless exploitation, abusive taxation, gross land despoilment, patent social discrimination and so on.

In order to grasp the width and depth of the movement, the problematics considers the following: the etymology of Mau Mau, the origin with the key-architects who envisioned the movement, the type of people they mobilized for the movement, its formation, trends, strategies, objectives, and the analysis of the extent to which the Mau Mau movement was, among other factors, the detonator of ‘*Uhuru*’ movement i.e. independence.

Curiously enough the coinage of the expression Mau Mau was not the invention of Kenyan resisters themselves. Instead they called themselves ‘*Muingi*’ (the Movement) or ‘*Muma wa Uiguano*’ (the oath of unity) or simply the KCA after the Kikuyu Central Association that created the impetus for what the British consider as the insurgency (Adekson, 1981: 69-92). For the British colonial authority, Kenyan resisters were insurgents i.e. people opposing political authority. Anyway, this does not tell much about the origin of Mau Mau appellation. How about that?

### **I- The Etymology of the Word Mau Mau:**

Basically, the appellation Mau Mau has no approved literal meaning in Kikuyu language. In truth, as no one seemingly knows what the term Mau Mau signifies with accuracy, the origin remains, therefore, hazy. In any event, *The American Heritage Dictionary*, the 2006 edition, lists etymologies of Mau Mau including even the sound

imitative of foraging hyenas. In the first place, four propositions which are not always concordant have been selected and paraphrased from the dictionary:

1-Mau Mau is Kikuyu for eat i.e. eating in a hurry or 'greedy eating.' It was widely known and used by mothers to reprimand children who ate either too fast or too much. Later, July 1990, it was reported, by a Kenyan State Park guide, that guerrillas adopted this name to describe how they lived hiding and always moving hurriedly.

2-It is the name of a range of hills: the Mau escarpment, the Mau stream in Eastern province, a place called Mau in the Rift Valley province etc...

3-It is an acronym that had been invented in Swahili language and it stands for '*Mzungu Aende Ulaya-Mwafrika Apate Uhuru*'. Translated into English it means: '*let the European return to England and the African obtain his freedom*'.

4-It is said to be a nonsense word created by the British settlers to demean the rebels.

In addition, there are some other interpretations that will be studied through the following historians: T. Colchester's, D. Barnett's and K. Muchai's. According to the former, quoted by J. Lonsdale, he argues that since *Ka* is a diminutive prefix in Swahili, while *Ma* is an argumentative prefix, so their combination (*Ka* plus *Ma*) produced *Kama* which became *Mau* (Lonsdale, 1990: 393-421). However, Barnett suggests it is a mistranslation of *Uma Uma* (get out, get out) referring to the native Kenyans' clear desire to drive the Europeans out of Kenya like the familiar mantra, quit India, often repeated, years ago, by the Indian crowds (Barnett, 1966: 53). Barnett provides two other interpretations that surround events of Naivasha area and that will be discussed. The first interpretation corresponds to an anecdote by the Kenyan freedom fighter General Karari Njama. Speaking about the origin of this binomial expression later, he explained that in May 1950, nineteen Africans (seventeen Kikuyu, one Masai and one Kisii) were charged with administering an illegal oath binding its

takers with a certain secret association during Naivasha trial. There, the expression Mau Mau was heard (ibid.: 53) The second interpretation is connected with Naivasha police station. There, one of the African detainees told a European police officer: “*I have been given Muma*”, an oath. “*The European being neither able to pronounce nor spell Muma correctly created his own pronunciation: Mau Mau*” (ibid.: 53). This is concordant with the following interpretation. In his memoir *The hardcore*, Karigo Muchai explains that “*in Kikuyu when referring to whispers or voices that can’t quite be understood, one uses the expression ‘mumu mumu’*. This was apparently heard by a journalist in the court during Naivasha trial as ‘Mau Mau’ and the following day the newspaper reported that the men had taken a Mau Mau oath” (Karigo, 1973: 38). In sum, the origin of the binomial expression Mau Mau lies, somewhere, in these interpretations.

## **II- The Origin and the Key-Architects of the Movement:**

### **A- The Political Plane:**

In 1944 after the release of banned KCA leaders, the core of the upheaval was to be led by few progressive intellectuals who happened to be Kenya African Union (KAU) nationalists—the KAU was the first modern nationalist party formed in the same year. It encompassed thirty three representatives from all Kenyan regions. It became the focus for Kikuyu nationalism under the management of James Gichuru (a teacher from the Church of Scotland Mission). The KAU was heavily dominated by Kikuyu with its founder member Mbiyu Koinange, but it was in no way a Kikuyu party. Non-Kikuyu were also appointed senior officers in the Executive in order to encourage other communities to join in: Achieng Oneko and Ambrose Offafa from Nyanza, Tom Mbotela from Coast Province and Odinga Oginga from the Luo tribe. The KAU also comprised militants like: Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai, J.D. Kali and James Beauttah. It

went from strength to strength, demanding abolition of colour bar, better education, self-government, African parity with other races in the legislative council, and other legal reforms to obtain greater opportunities. For the first time in October of the same year, a door to the Legislative Council had been thrown open for an African Kenyan—Eliud Mathu, a graduated from Oxford— after his nomination (Martin, 1983: 50).

Under government pressure a new broad-based, congress type African association was formed changing its name from KAU to the Kenyan African Study Group (KASG) and then back to KAU in 1946 when it came under the leadership of J. Kenyatta (who returned to Kenya after a fifteen year-stay in Britain). The KAU members worked out their own constitution:

*...To unite the African people of Kenya; to prepare the way for the introduction of democracy in Kenya; to defend and promote the interest of the African people by organizing, educating and leading them in the struggle for better working conditions, housing etc-;to fight for equal rights for all Africans; to break down racial barriers; to extend the right to vote to all African adults and be elected to East African Central Assembly, Kenya Legislative Council, Local Government and other bodies; to publish newspapers; to fight for assembly, press and movement; to raise funds necessary to effect these objectives.*  
(Barnett, 1966: 40-41).

It should be pointed out that KAU members negated their roots among the petty bourgeoisie and sought to heighten the national consciousness of a majority of Kenyan masses through rallies<sup>74</sup> and through the Press. The official Swahili newspaper: *Sauti ya Mwafrica* (the African voice) and numerous vernacular newspapers. They pleaded the cause and case of Africans on every front. In so doing, they joined hands with Kikuyu peasants from the highlands, along with smaller numbers of Embu, Masai and

---

<sup>74</sup> In one of the KAU rallies in Nyeri in the 1940's, J. Kenyatta exhorted: "*The freedom tree can only grow when pour blood on it, not water. I shall firmly hold the lion's jaw so that it will not bite you. Will you bear its claws? The audience with a great applause of admittance*" (Barnett, 1966: 75)



Meru ethnic groups. At the same time, they were joined by thousands of derelict Kikuyu squatters of the Rift valley, an emergent class of frustrated landless men or “*Ohoi*” who doubled Nairobi’s population and other cities. While searching for work the landless men swelled the rank of uprooted native Kenyans at grassroots level. These included semi-urban migrant workers. In addition, KAU members coordinated actions with the leaders of the working class, namely Cheg wa Kibachia and Makhan Singh. The result was an unflinching mobilization that gradually gained momentum to reassert claims reinforced by a historical movement coined ‘Mau Mau’. Correspondingly, from its inception Mau Mau was underground, and it was in connection with: the KAU organization, trade unions, independent schools and churches. It should be pointed out that independent schools and churches were suppliers of a great deal of recruits to be integrated in the movement.

However, there were contradictions within the nationalist party, the Kenya African Union (KAU), in the late 1940’s; in fact amongst the 100,000 militants of the party, discrepancies were bound to occur (Martin, 1983: 52). Some of its militants, contrarily to others, lost faith in constitutional methods. Assuredly, intestine contradictions amongst KAU members led to a split between the moderates and the radicals. The radicals, known as the ‘group of forty’, were, in reality, a bunch of circumcised Kikuyu called Anaka wa Forty. This organisation was led by ex-servicemen conscripted in the 1940’s. They included military men like Ndiritu wa Thuita, Kabuga wa Njogu, Ndiritu wa Wang’Ombe and others (Kinyatti, 1987: 35, 36). They were largely uneducated but talented and experienced town-dwellers who progressively came to control the areas of Nairobi. Later—between 1947 and 1951—they extended into all parts of Central Province and into some areas of the Rift Valley. They were also the ones who outflanked the moderates and clearly foresaw a revolutionary movement dedicated to the overthrow of colonial rule. Reportedly, the birth of the Mau Mau movement (in the

1950's) was brought about, by them and, among other things, by the divisions and contradictions within the KAU as already noted (ibid.: 2). In addition, there was African misrepresentation on the Legislative Council despite the slight changes that occurred with the nomination of a second African—B. A. Ohanga—to the Legislative Council in 1947<sup>75</sup>.

Not all Kenyan militants were in favour of a prospective struggle. The Kenyan historian M.W Kinyatti recalls that “*the ultimate political aim was a government of the majority and not to overthrow British colonialism through armed struggle*” (ibid.: 1). For his part, in *History of Africa*, scholar K. Shelington explains that initially a revolutionary war was not on the agenda of those militants, yet intimidation against white settlers was very envisageable:

*The aim was not to engage the colonial government in a full-scale war, but to frighten the settlers into abandoning their farms and ultimately leaving the country. Only then, rural Kikuyu believed political freedom be achieved. To them, ‘political freedom’ meant an end to oppressive land and labour laws and a radical distribution of white-owned land.* (Shellington, 1993: 389).

Meanwhile, late in the 1940's, the General Council of the banned Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) including the remaining leaders established sound relations with the radicals (the group of forty). Together, they prepared a campaign of civil disobedience to protest. The campaign was to serve as a prelude to a revolutionary situation. The efficaciousness of the ‘group of forty’ laid in the fact that its members

---

<sup>75</sup> Two more members were admitted in the legislative council in 1948. In fact, during that period, an unofficial majority made up the Legislative Council (twenty-two against sixteen). For the first time, Europeans and non Europeans were equal in number amongst unofficial members of the Legislative Council: 11 Europeans, 5 Asians and 1 Arab being elected; whereas 1 Arab and 4 Kenyans were nominated, the latter figured on the Local Native Council's list. As a reminder, the 4 nominated Kenyans represented 5,2 million Africans against 30,000 Europeans and 12 000 Asians (Martin, 1983: 51).

lived near and with the native Kenyans without any rift separating them from these people (Ferudi, 1973: 287).

Broadly speaking, disobedience ignited by the ex KCA members and the 'group of forty' commenced with Trade Unions. In January 1947, during a general strike at the harbour of Mombasa, Chege Kibachia—a worker in a clothing manufacture in Mombasa and a trade unionist—created the African Workers' Federation (AWF), an organism that was challenging and anti-colonial. "*Chege was arrested in August 1947. He was held in restriction for ten years in Baringo, a remote district*" (Leys, 1978: 49). It should be stressed that the leaders of the AWF were relatively uneducated men close to ordinary workers. In 1949 Makhan Singh, who returned to Kenya willy-nilly, took over the AWF and converted it into the East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC) in May of the same year in Nairobi. Singh became its secretary whereas Fred Kubai was its president (Martin, 1983: 53). Soon Bildad Kaggia, the KAU militant, came to the fore and joined them. Reportedly, both Kubai and Kaggia had never broken ties with the 'group of forty' (ibid.: 1983: 53). In his biography O. Oginga admitted that J. Kenyatta attended the inaugural meeting of the EATUC (1949) (Oginga, 1967: 185). In May 1950, the organisation demonstrated its increasing power by leading an 18-day general strike in Nairobi (Barnett, 1966: 40). No need to understand why the colonial government refused to register the EATUC. Anyway, the collaboration of native Kenyan militants with Singh was not only to radicalize the Trade Union movement, but operate a rapprochement between African workers and the Indian Congress. The EATUC, the KAU and the East African Indian Congress (EAIC) jointly held a meeting in 1950 during which they decided to run a campaign in the 1950's to boycott the celebrations over the granting of a Royal Charter to Nairobi because of the undemocratic white-controlled Council that ran the city.

Following a demand for Kenyan independence in the same year made by the EATUC, the trade unionists, Kubai and Singh (who was labeled 'Communist') were arrested<sup>76</sup>. The outcome was a strike movement called for by the remaining EATUC officers under the leadership of Kaggia who became their president. Generally, strike movements spread beyond individual workplaces to embrace entire cities and work complexes. Eventually, the general strike called for by Kaggia paralyzed Nairobi for nine days. It spread to Mombasa which was paralyzed for two days and it was broken only after 300 workers had been arrested and the British authorities made a show of overwhelming military force.

### **B- The Economic Plane and Population:**

Factually, the inducement to get rid of the British stemmed and germinated from parlous socio-economic conditions. There were "*Problems in rural areas combined with unpreventable tensions in towns and post-war inflation*" (Bell, 1986: 48). The grim reality was perceived in terms of social inequalities and blocked economic opportunities. Indeed the oppressive regime of taxation, high cost of living, low salaries, forced labour and land annexation, among other things, continued to prevail in Kenya.

Against that background, developing largely out of manifold politico-agrarian grievances against European rule and white settler occupancy of alienated African land, the secular aspect of Mau Mau ideology was revealed most clearly in the often-repeated demand: the return of alienated land among other claims (Barnett, 1966: 199). Very likely, the occupation of land, mainly central highlands, was an increasing bitter point of contention between the British settlers and the autochthons, mostly, the

---

<sup>76</sup> Singh was deported to Lokitaung, on the Ethiopian border, where he remained until 1961 (Martin, 1983: 50).

Kikuyu. They lived uncomfortably next to the large farms of the white highlands while Nairobi with its inaccessible riches and pleasure was on their threshold (Hatch, 1965: 136).

Precisely, The majority of peasants were living in the overcrowded and steadily deteriorating Native Land Units (NLU) ‘reserved’ for them and they were engaged largely in subsistence patterns of agriculture. There, they were faced with pressures produced by population growth on limited land, declining productivity and soil erosion. For instance, in Central Province some Kikuyu and Luo farmers were screened and brought to one area. They were ordered to live together in poor cage-like houses where many deaths occurred; thus they found themselves herded in ever-increasing numbers on too little unfertile soil; likewise, farm-holdings had become fragmented and insufficient to provide a livelihood.

Globally, out of a superficies of 245,000 sq miles that made up the Colony, only three per cent were owned by native Kenyans. Already, in the 1940’s 1,25 million<sup>77</sup> Kikuyu were restricted to 2,000 square miles (Meister, 1975: 123), while 10,000 European planters occupied 42,000 square miles, half of which being uncultivated (Martin, 1983: 51).

Beyond that, the situation of squatters, who were predominantly Kikuyu, became untenable in overcrowded reserves as a result of a rural exodus to Nairobi. As late as 1948, about “4,200 sq km of the approximately 5,000sq km of fertile land were held

---

<sup>77</sup> According to the East African census of 1948, the total Kenya’s population numbered better than five and a quarter million with the Kikuyu tribes comprising 30 %, the Luo 14%, Baluhya 13% and Kamba 12%. In addition there was almost 30,000 Europeans of whom 9,000 settlers and an Asian population (Indian, Arab and Goan) of over 120,000 (Barnett, 1966: 24).

*between 5,000 European planters, while one million Kikuyu occupied fewer than 1,000sq km”* ([http://gbgm-umc.org/country\\_profiles/country\\_history.cfm?Id=61](http://gbgm-umc.org/country_profiles/country_history.cfm?Id=61)).

As an example of the increase of population in the reserves, when handing over a report in 1950, the Commissioner for Nyeri District, P. S. Osborne, noted:

*The fundamental problem of the district is overpopulation. [...] In addition to the 180 odd thousand persons found to be residing in the district on the day of the 1948 census, there are more than 35,000 males with Nyeri identity certificates out of work of whom only a small proportion is detribalised. This formidable total has to find the only land it owns in the 300 square miles of the district.*  
(Report of the 1948 census) (Maloba, 1933: 31).

Another large segment of the African ‘lower class’ was comprised of unskilled largely migrant labourers employed primarily in the urban centres of Nairobi and Mombasa. For example, the city of Nairobi contained 86, 000 Africans of which over 55, 000 were Kikuyu (Barnett, 1966: 41).

More generally, about a fourth of workers of the entire African adult male population—some 385,000 workers—was engaged in some form of wage employment. “*Of this work number under 50% were in agriculture, 20% in Government service, 11% in manufacturing, 11% in domestic employment*” (Barnett, 1966: 27). The great mass was unskilled and the wage level was extremely low “*in the 1950’s a total of 385,000 workers earned the equivalent of 28 million dollars (an average of \$ 73 per worker per year). Asian workers 23,500 earned 17,4 million dollars (an average of \$741 per worker per year) European wage earners 11,500 garnered a total of 20 million dollars (an average of \$1,739 per worker per year)*” (ibid.: 27). Add to that thousands of Africans not figured in the above statistics living in slum locations such

as Kariokor or Pumwani and who drifted into the city as landless and unemployed peasants in search of work and slept twelve or sixteen to a room to avoid the cold Nairobi nights (ibid.: 27).

For the sake of illustration one details the salaries of agricultural labourers in shillings:

Less than 25 shillings/month for half of the labourers (48 %)
Less than 20 shillings/month for 26 % of the labourers
Squatters had less than 15 shillings/month
Africans working in the administration and in the private sector had less than 50£/year whereas a European civil servant on the lowest degree waged 600 £/month

Table 2: Salaries of African agricultural labourers in 1953  
(Padmore, 1961: 249).

Schematically, by the 1950's "*over a quarter of the Kikuyu population, some 273,000 persons out of a total of 1,026,000 were living and working outside the confines of their insufficient reserves, of these about four fifths (218,000) were engaged as squatters on the European plantations and mixed-farms of the white highlands, while most of the remainder had entered the urban centres of Nairobi (51,475) and Mombasa (3,304) as unskilled labourers*" (Barnett, 1966: 34).

More than any other tribes, the Kikuyu squatters had a numerical pre-eminence as the table shows below:

Places/Tribes	Luo Gusii & Luhya	Kipsigis	Nandi	Kikuyu	Kamba	Others	Total
Nairobi	252	Nil	Nil	11,675	18,620	96	30,643
Naivasha	24	166	50	22,136	79	227	22,682
Nakuru	687	929	106	36,383	87	300	38,492
Aberdares	24	392	5	19,622	11	218	20,272
Uasin Gishu	3,843	898	16,723	3,709	4	4,907	30,084
Trans Nzoia	8,946	431	1,800	754	Nil	5,811	17,742
Nyanza	822	9,582	4,295	6,754	Nil	24	21,477
Forests	66	52	Nil	21,143	8	114	21,383
Total	14,664	12,450	22,979	122,176	18,809	11,697	202,775

Table 3: Ethnic origins of squatters in the white highlands in 1950s.  
(Throup, 1988: 114)

Indeed, according to the table, for a total of 202,775 squatters, 122,176 of them—more than half of the total number of squatters in Kenya at the time— were Kikuyu. Since many squatters joined the Mau Mau movement at the time of revolt, no surprise then to realize that most Mau Mau activists were Kikuyu.

By 1953, while some 9,000 settlers held exclusive rights to 16,700 miles of land, including 4,000 sq miles of Forest Reserve, several million Africans continued to be trapped in their increasingly congested reserves (Barnett, 1966: 32). Clearly at the bottom of the Colony's socio-economic hierarchy, Kenya's African population numbered an estimated 5,561,000 in 1952 (ibid.: 26).

### **C-The Social Plane:**

During the years preceding the Mau Mau revolt, the African society in Kenya started to experience a severe clash of generations between the old and the young generations. There was a considerable disintegration of traditional and cultural obligations in a fast-changing society where the traditional elders had almost lost to the government appointees, the power to deal with local issues. As these government



appointees became centres of power, the power of the traditional elders was slowly but surely diminishing, thereby implying a tremendous damage to the unity of the natives in the country. In other words, the respect paid to the elders and to tradition, always claimed in Kenya was practically at bay, since what was primordial at that time was survival, by all means, among this economically depressed population of natives.

Basically, any form of surviving was welcome including violence. By the 1940's for instance, crimes of violence increased tremendously as poor landless peasants and frustrated young people attacked the landed 'gentry' and other rural agents of colonial administration. Some of the people attacked were also blacks by virtue of being close to the colonial administration. The District Commissioner of Kiambu, was warning of an alarming increase in crimes that were directly or indirectly attributed to excessive drinking. As yet, one cannot tell whether excessive drinking—which was itself the outcome of intense social tensions—was directly linked to land scarcity, the scarcity that had made economic survival quite impossible for a great many autochthons dependent on soil exploitation. Kiambu was not the only area where crimes increased dramatically however. Nairobi, too, faced an alarming increase of crimes of different natures as shown in Table 4 on page 213.

According to the table, incidences tantamount to misdemeanours, notably thefts for surviving, increased in Nairobi after the repatriation acts of late the 1940's. As it happened, squatters who were not welcome back in the reserves would try to survive in Nairobi, thus increasing the possibilities of more crimes in Nairobi. It appeared that the places where those acts took place were those where one could find food. Stealing was conditioned by surviving, and this may explain why thefts by pole fishing for instance, increased from 87 to 167 in a year. Yet these acts not very serious at first, led to the

formation of groups of gangsters easily recruited later on by Mau Mau activists. At this stage, one may advance that the increase of crimes may have been due to two factors:

Firstly, Ordinances were passed which led to the arrest of African Kenyans for small crimes such as vagrancy, and activities they could be engaged in for survival (prostitution and beer-brewing for instance). The Vagrancy Bill of 1949 and the Voluntarily unemployed Persons Ordinance of 1950 were used to banish from Nairobi all those African Kenyans who were unemployed and condemned them to repatriation to the reserves. Besides, not bearing the '*kipande*' was considered a crime.

Secondly, the racial discriminations Kenyan Africans had to face in Nairobi were rampant: discrimination in jobs, in entertainment facilities, in residential areas, also helped to intensify crimes and local hatred against the authorities and gave a serious impetus to the incidence of crimes. Prohibition to go to European hotels, schools, hospitals and cinemas were some of the racial discriminations the locals had to face in Nairobi. All these acts of racism consequently aroused bitter resentment against colonial institutions and white people in general, and eventually against those undesirable blacks. 'Gentry', committing such acts of delinquency and even serious crimes, these outcasts were bound to become potential recruits for Mau Mau radicalism.

Thus far, in addition to the clash of generations inside the African Kenyan community and the drift of displaced persons, especially Kikuyu, to the urban areas where they were actually abandoned by the authorities and had to face racism, still more of these people, mostly young, continued to move to the urban areas. Moreover, without qualification (they could only live on with odd jobs and low wages) and without any housing schemes, these new townsmen lived in what came to be known

Crime-Nairobi

1. *Burglary*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	44	26	39	21	47	40	40	42	23
1949	15	21	36	41	43	41	64	76	65

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=322  
 Number of Cases 1949=402

2. *Housebreaking by Night (external kitchens, etc.)*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	20	11	8	7	15	12	26	5	2
1949	9	18	11	17	23	21	26	17	26

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=106  
 Number of Cases 1949=168

3. *Warehouse, Shop Breaking, etc., by Night*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	10	22	20	11	10	14	6	9	5
1949	16	23	21	18	5	11	12	10	13

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=107  
 Number of Cases 1949=129

4. *Housebreaking by Day (dwellings, external & internal kitchens)*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	22	31	50	33	20	20	12	15	13
1949	9	5	14	16	19	13	27	33	20

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=216  
 Number of Cases 1949=156

10. *Thefts from Vehicles (other than cycles)*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	40	31	27	22	33	35	34	19	26
1949	25	39	39	46	41	41	41	60	24

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=267

11. *Theft by Polefishing*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	13	10	19	12	17	9	2	4	1
1949	5	9	12	18	26	26	25	18	28

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=87  
 Number of Cases 1949=167

15. *Total Offenses against Property*

	<i>Jan.</i>	<i>Feb.</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Sept.</i>
1948	418	416	477	405	414	424	368	235	280
1949	317	340	359	360	403	400	446	468	430

Comparison Totals:  
 Number of Cases 1948=3,437  
 Number of Cases 1949=3,523

Table 4: Crime in Nairobi in 1949

Source: Defence, Deposit 13, Piece 123, Kenya National Archives.

as ‘African locations’: essentially slums destined to the unemployed. The locations were overcrowded and hazardous to decent existence<sup>78</sup>. All these brute facts of insecurity and violence living in Nairobi and elsewhere contributed to feed African Kenyan extremism, better still they conditioned some of the marginal and disabled people involvement in the nationalist movement and peasant revolt that broke out later after 1951.

### **III. The Emergent Patterns of Resistance:**

Politically, economically and socially the situation left a lot to be desired. All the ingredients were being mixed and brewed up to prepare a Colony-wide explosion; however, *the British Government* remained implacable. This attitude was displayed by James Griffiths, the British Colonial Secretary. While visiting Kenya in May 1951, he met the Kenya African Union (KAU) leaders who presented him with a list of demands ranging from the removal of discriminatory legislation to the inclusion of twelve elected black representatives on the Legislative Council. Griffiths did not do anything to soothe the context. Instead, he ignored KAU’s demands and proposed a Legislative Council in which the 30, 000 white settlers received fourteen hawkish representatives, 100, 000 Indians (mostly from South Asia) got six representatives, the 24, 000 Arabs had one and the five million autochthons had five representatives to be nominated by the Government. Later, in 1952, two more native Kenyans were incorporated in the Legislative Council, while Eliud Mathu was to be a member of the Executive Council. That very proposal scaled-back all African hopes. To a certain degree, Kenyan militants knew that misrepresentation on the Legislative Council would not help them

---

<sup>78</sup> The Royal Commission Report of 1953-1955 acknowledged that in Nairobi, “3,000 men, women and children were occupying accommodation in one estate designed to house 1,200 people” (Maloba, 1993:36)

obtain relief from an unyielding colonial authority. Their hopelessness confirmed a sad cliché—that the more things changed, the more they tragically stayed the same.

As a result of these interlocking challenges and unending cycle of problems, the underground movement which most writers refer to as Mau Mau was, willy nilly, taking shape. Gradually, the KAU militants began to set the basis for launching a war of resistance to defy the unyielding British government, hold in check the white settlers, restore land and eventually gain freedom from pressure.

Further organizations were to emanate from the cities, notably the city of Nairobi. Thereafter, they were to reach rural areas. For instance, in June 1951, the urban radicals controlled the KAU by packing KAU meetings with trade union members; then a secret Central Committee (CC) was created in the city of Nairobi. It was the headquarters and the main base of its revolutionary activities. When the CC was set up in 1951, it was composed of twelve members, Eliud Mutoni as the Chairman and Isaac Gathangu as the Secretary. The CC was the supreme organ of the movement and was responsible for shaping its overall policies and directing the expansion of the movement into different regions of Kenya (Kinyatti, 1987: 2) from here on, diverse committees were set up at district, divisional, locational and village levels. They gave education to hundreds of native Kenyans, especially workers and peasants in central Kenya and the Narok, Nanyuki, Laikipia, Naivasha and Nakuru regions (ibid.: 2). The CC renamed itself the Council of Freedom with a military wing named, by the end of 1951, the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA).

In the process, the primary duties of the military wing were to help CC activists in the following prep work: first, the planning and holding of mass oathing ceremonies. Second, the education of hundreds of native Kenyans, especially workers and peasants

in Central Kenya and other detribalized employed and jobless of Nairobi environs as well as other regions. Third, the elimination of potential enemies. Fourth, the collection of funds, weapons and strategic information for the movement. Fifth, the recruitment of Kenyan youths into the movement, particularly Mau Mau armed forces, and the supply of military training to Mau Mau cadres. Sixth, the arrangement for attendance and transportation at public KAU rallies.

Recruitment was from sub-locations, squatter villages, labour sectors or urban ones. Indeed, D. Barnett describes that “*recruitment lay in its territorial base. The primary units were based in the rural Districts of Kiambu, Fort Hall, Nyeri, Embu and Meru on the traditional Itura or dispersed village groups. Urban cells existed in Nairobi. In the settled areas of the Rift Valley cells were formed within the squatter villages and on the labour-lines of the European plantations and mixed farms*” (Barnett, 1966: 61). In the intervening time, recruitment drive was explicitly carried out via oathing that is analysed in the ensuing lines.

#### **A- Oathing Ceremonies:**

At the outset, mobilization took the form of links of adhesion. The latter were solidified through the creation and introduction of secret oathing ceremonies by the CC members. Oathing was an effective tool in enforcing obedience, loyalty and truthfulness. Albeit a lot of cloak-and-dagger activity was involved in it, “*Mau Mau leaders used oathing as a major political weapon in politicizing, educating and mobilizing the Kenya masses against the British occupiers*” (Kinyatti, 1987: 2).

After signing pledges of support, the would-be oath-takers had to undergo an elaborate ceremony of initiation inside a vacated hut in a Kikuyu village to become

members of the KCA and join in the struggle for the return of the stolen land. In addition, the oath-takers had to reaffirm that the white man was an enemy and that they had nothing to do with him.

Precisely, the oath carried with it certain empirical exigencies and constraints as a method of recruitment. In effect, oathing corresponded to an ancient tribal custom around which exaggerated stories, apparently, circulated. According to the historian D. Barnett, ear-piercing, scarification and the removal of the teeth were common practices amongst the initiates. Animal sacrifice involving the indigestion of blood were also said to be current practices (Barnett, 1966: 59). The historian adds that “*during the ceremony, the initiates uttered sacred vows, passed under the arch and sipped a distasteful mixture of symbolic elements*” (ibid.:). Furthermore, there were rumours about cannibalism, ritual zoophilia with goats, ritual places curiously adorned with intestines and goat eyes and sexual orgies punctuated by the sipping of mixtures and danceable local songs and so forth.

I

Again, during the oath ceremony, it was necessary to prevent any outsiders from gaining knowledge of the secret society; so members of the Movement had to express boundless attachment to the vows of secrecy. While members were not forcibly recruited, they were prudently scrutinized before being recruited. The procedure entailed serious inherent endangerment when employed on a mass scale to bring a great deal of people within the proscribed secret society. It was unavoidable that few unwilling ‘initiates’ should contravene their vows of secrecy by divulging the nature of their experiences, the secrets they had learned and, not infrequently, informing on names of other comrades in the Movement to British officials or missionaries (Barnett 1966: 61). In all likelihood of events, the first oath bound the recruit (facing Mt Kenya) in the following words: “*I will never reveal the secrets of this organization to colonial*

*authorities and if I violate this now may this oath kill me*” (ibid.: 59). Each vow was ended by chewing some meat and a little soil. In terms of financial support, there were no sound backers except that every Mau Mau member was expected to surrender all his wealth to the movement: *“I swear before Ngai (God) and the compatriots present here today, that all my wealth—land, livestock, money—belongs to this movement”* (Kinyatti, 1987: 3). The oath was principally a pledge to maintain national patriotism. It not only generated an *esprit de corps*, but it reflected the national aspect of the struggle. The ensuing passage demonstrates so: *“I swear in the name of our country, in the name of this movement, that I will use all my power to the total liberation of Kenya from British colonialism”* (ibid.: 3).

By the turn of 1952, the ‘group of forty’ became the lit kingpin of Mau Mau and extended oath campaigns to the proletariat of Nairobi, Fort Hall, Nyeri District, Meru and Embu. Another campaign of oath of unity, called *Batuni*, was launched by chief Koinange to foster union among the squatters of the Rift Valley and widen it further to Kiambu district and other places. This second oath was to be administered to young men of warrior age (16-30) (Barnett, 1966: 67). By this Butani oath of Muingi (the Movement), it was made clear that if called upon to combat for their land, the young warriors were ready to shed their blood for it, and obey without surrender.

By mid-1952, three quarter of the Kikuyu had taken the oath. According to police sources, the figure went over 250,000 Kikuyu oath-takers (Martin, 1983:54). Equally, the CC members collected more adherents’ signed-pledges through the white highlands and the Kikuyu reserves. During the same year, there had been between seventy five per cent and ninety per cent of the Kikuyu population that had taken the Oath of unity; thereafter, the Movement was beginning to spread from Nairobi to other tribes such as



the Kamba, Masai, Kipsigis and, to a lesser degree, the Luo and Baluhya (Barnett, 1966: 66). As yet, one cannot affirm at that stage that it was a national movement.

Having taken the oath, the guerrillas, who called themselves freedom fighters, conducted a series of raids. They raided shops for firearms, carried out randomly acts of arson against white settlers' farms and hamstrung their livestock. Alongside white settlers, Kenyan loyalists were also targeted for being unpatriotic as will be seen. People like Gakure wa Karuri, the local representative of colonial authorities in Central Kenya, and Muhoya wa Kagumba, chief of the location in which D. Kimathi was born, as well as others were primarily seen as collaborators with the colonial regime (Kinyatti, 1987: 11) In fact, by and large, the relation between the British and the loyalists on the one hand and the native Kenyans on the other hand was regulated by a general feeling of fear and suspicion. With regard to this, the firing of government loyalists' homes in Nyeri District and other places was not uncommon.

At the beginning, these warning signs were unknown to by Governor Philip Mitchell who was only few months away from retirement. In June 1952, Henry Potter replaced Mitchell as Acting Governor. He was informed by the colonial police of a rebellion. Punishments and collective fines were levied on people living in unstable areas and some oath-givers were arrested, whereas Kikuyu loyalists were encouraged to denounce the resistance. A war was being declared on the Mau Mau by the British.

#### **IV- The Ongoing Patterns of Resistance:**

As seen before, trade unions were one of the main forces that continued resistance. When the KAU was banned in 1952 and its leader detained, it was the Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions (KFRTU)—to be transformed into the Kenyan

Federation of Labour (KFL) by its general secretary Tom Mboya one year later—that put up resistance. Finding itself at the centre of a society demanding political freedom, the KFL was to carry the banner clamouring change and fought against the injustices done to Kenyan workers and it was to raise funds to assist those evicted from the ‘white highlands’. It was equally to set up demonstrations in big cities, in addition to strikes<sup>79</sup>, boycott of transportation, refusal to buy products and to collaborate with governmental forces.

Alongside trade unions, resistance continued in the forests and elsewhere and, conceivably, the use of arms was an indispensable measure around 1952 onwards. Yet Fighters had defective lookouts, makeshift stashes for clothes and a deficient armoury. Poorly armed—with an odd assortment of spears, pangas (a type of machete), simis (short swords), kibokos (rhino hide whips), home-made guns (Banda) and few precision weapons—resisters took pains imposing themselves. Besides, they did not have cadres trained in guerrilla warfare. Still in June 1952, resistance was, in some way, misconducted since uneven equipment of every description and pit traps to defend hideouts in the Aberdares remained grossly inadequate.

In sum, retreating or taking refuge in the wilderness like a pack of wounded animals, the guerrilla fighters had a devil of a job organizing their actions around July 1952. In the early stages, the movement of the forests was slow, sporadic and, at least, desultory. It was, by and large, a reaction to external stimuli rather than the unfolding

---

<sup>79</sup> Between 1952-1955 various trade unions came together to found the Kenya Federation and Registered Trade Union (KFRTU) with Mboya as general secretary. He will use trade union to attack government policy and to demand a wide range of reforms. By March 1955 Mboya convinced some 14,000 Dockers to down their tools in Mombasa. Mboya secured the support of the Trade Union Congress of Britain. The KFL was to lead more political than trade-union actions fighting in favour of education and the right to vote (Martin, 1983: 57).

of a well-laid plan for a resistance movement. The fighters were inclined to strike back but they could not properly streamline and coordinate actions. For instance, remote farms and isolated targets were hit whereas strategic zones were not sabotaged.

However, later on readjustments were bound to be brought as the military wing of the movement i.e. the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA), was gradually organizing itself better. Under the command of General Mathenge wa Mirugi, armed squads reached, at the start of the formation, 300 fighters. The KLFA entered the Aberdares Mountains and the forests of Mount Kenya to start a national warfare—known as Mau Mau struggle—for the next three years, a struggle that native Kenyans coined a defensive war against the British occupation.

Meanwhile, in most parts of either the rural environment or the urban one, the wretchedness of the situation continued and these settings were gradually being sucked into the maelstrom of a war. Things went awry as peasants were herded into hastily erected centres. Many were pushed to the wall; or else they were faced with the alternatives of starvation, a life of petty crime or entering the merciless forests to fight for their food.

A growing stream of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peasants banded together and drifted into the bush or forested areas bordering their homes and eventually joined the Aberdares to swell the KLFA ranks and contribute to that war. This movement to the forest might be described as a withdrawal stimulated, in the main, by fear of government reprisals. Fear was not the only factor. Considerable acrimony and a desire to fight back with a sense of mission and the struggle of 'right against might' were supplementary stimuli.

What of the many school teachers, clerks, journalists, medical assistants? What did they do? During the first open months of the revolt, the educated Kikuyu tried to display fortitude in the face of tragedy, yet a good deal of them yielded a pre-eminently equivocal position vis a vis the Movement. Opposed to colonial rule and generally supporting the objectives of the Movement, the educated tended to be against those aspects of the oath which seemed to them both demeaning and debasing. Barnett explains that:

*Many, residing outside the main areas of recruitment, waited out on the sidelines rather than joined the guerrilla forces into the forests; whereas some others joined the ranks of passive supporters and a large number gravitated towards a pro-government, loyalist's position so long as they were highly sceptical about the chances of resisting, let alone vanquishing the armed might of the British with rudimentary means. (Barnett, 1966: 152).*

Other Kikuyu, Meru and Embu found themselves “*playing a double sphinx-like role*” (ibid.: 135). At night, they were foolhardy enough to take part in oathing ceremonies, supplied food to supply depots near the forest boundary; they equally provided refuge for active fighters, stole weapons, medical supplies and carried out multifarious tasks to back up the struggle for land and freedom. During daylight hours, however, these same peasants feigned loyalty to the white man’s Government and attempted to carry out through thick and thin the normal tasks of their everyday lives despite growing pressure (ibid.:).

In that early period of the war, in the city of Nairobi, while the Nairobi KLFA forces—divided into small columns—carried out swift attacks under the leadership of Enock Mwangi, “*the Kikuyu street gangs linked up with the militant Kikuyu trade unions led by the trade unionists Fred Kubai and Bildad Kaaggia to challenge the authorities*” (Throup, 1988: 304).

There were two ways of fighting; either by organizing swift hit-and-run attacks or by taking time to ruthlessly wreck the enemy's property, mostly by night. For instance, for the most part, these attacks were launched against households in the suburbs of Nairobi because they were inhabited by well off settlers; in addition, local traitors were also targeted in public buildings and the environs. Then the fighters shifted in hideaways for safety.

#### **A- The State of Emergency:**

After gaining an increased knowledge of the Movement through leakages of information and after the issuance of Cornfield's report On 17 August 1952—stipulating that troubles were based on oath-taking—acting Governor Potter informed the Colonial Office, in London, about the seriousness of the rebellion. Thereafter, he was given the green light by the Colonial Office to make numerous arrests and raids on oath-taking ceremonies in villages neighbouring Nairobi. By September 1952 there were over 400 persons in prison for having taken Mau Mau oaths and several hundred others were waiting for trial (Barnett, 1966: 66).

On 6 October 1952, His Excellency Sir Evelyn Baring took over the post of Governor. One day later, 7<sup>th</sup> October, senior Chief Waruhiu of Kiambu was horrendously assassinated because he was a notorious loyalist (Cornfield 1960: 57). It all happened when he was stopped in Kiambu District while driving on the outskirts of Nairobi. There he was shot dead. His death was celebrated in great applause and drinking parties by CC members.

On 20 October, the Kenya government, with the consent of the colonial secretary, declared a 'state of emergency'. The latter fomented tension since many autochthons

considered it—‘the emergency’—as a declaration of war. It was followed by shoot out, curfews, evictions, robbery of stock, and an abrupt rise in arrest as well as repression.

Given such a setting and such an emergency situation, violence against Europeans had gone mainstream, sweeping across city boundaries and reaching colonial farms. For instance, in central highlands, swift onslaughts were perpetrated against isolated European farms marked by the settlers’ presence. Soon, after that declaration of emergency, chief Nderi of Nyeri District was decoyed when told that the Mau Mau oath ceremony was being held in day time somewhere in a garden down in the Gura River Valley. *“He rushed out with three tribal police guards armed with two rifles, a shotgun and an automatic revolver which the chief had. They were directed to a place where they were ambushed and slain”* (Barnett, 1966: 127). The orchestrated assault was alarming for the European settlers whose first victim was Eric Boyer. He was killed on 28 October 1952. The murdering of eight British settlers that followed brought about dismay in a context that became more and more harrowing.

It was only a question of time before the Governor turned up the heat on the Kikuyu and the other tribes. Loyal to the government, police reservists, Kenya Tribal Police (KTP) and tribal police Home Guards’ services were called upon to obtain confessions under duress. They implemented crackdowns and tortured Mau Mau suspects, whenever necessary, to obtain those declarations of guilt. As a matter of fact, *“forced confessions and outright killings were frequent occurrences to arouse fear in the hearts of most Kikuyu”* (ibid.: 71). In this regard, castrating, beating, stringing and pressing human’s private with pliers were common practices in torture camps, such as: Ihuru Centre in the North Tetu location of Nyeri or Simba Camp in Thomson’s Fall District, or else in Bahati area of the Rift Valley sheltering the farm of a well-known settler

named Felth (ibid.: 209). Indeed, many settlers took an active role in the torture of Mau Mau suspects by assisting British security forces during interrogation.

In his autobiography, Oginga thoroughly describes how prisoners were treated in these camps:

*No detainee was released until he had been passed along a security clearance channel known as the 'Pipe Line'<sup>80</sup>; among the Emergency casualties not recorded are the victims of the Pipe Line who were injured and permanently disabled by torture to extract confessions.*  
(Oginga, 1967: 124).

Similarly, describing his exasperation about uncooperative suspects during interrogations, a British officer reported:

*I stuck my revolver right in his grinning mouth and said something, I don't remember what, and I pulled the trigger. His brain went all over the side of the police station. The other two Mickeys [Mau Mau] were standing there looking blank. I said to them if they didn't tell were to find the rest of the gang, I would kill them. They didn't say a word so I shot them both. One was not dead so I shot him in the head. When the sub-inspector drove up, I told him the Mickeys tried to escape. He didn't believe me, but all he said was bury them and see the wall is cleaned up.*  
(Anderson, 2005: 130).

Suspects were treated like organic matters and curfews, that were imposed, had a frightening impact on those who became housebound nerves. The Turkana and Somali tribal police poured into the central Province where curfew orders to remain inside houses from six pm to six am were imposed—unless a moving pass was delivered (Barnett, 1966: 136). For example, it had been made illegal for five persons or more to

---

<sup>80</sup> 'Pipe Line': official name of the detention system during the revolt aimed at finding out Mau Mau activists. Through tough questionings, it meticulously sorted people according to their Mau Mau sympathies (Oginga, 1967: 124).

be found anywhere at any time in the whole of central province—unless under Government supervision. Furthermore, collective fines were imposed along with levy on the Kikuyu peasants to defray the cost of extra police.

Retaliatory measures also led to the eviction of Kikuyu squatters numbering almost 100,000 from the Rift Valley to the crowded reserves along with unemployed workers from Nairobi. Later in the same year, cattle were seized in villages and 2,500 squatters were ousted from the white highlands, thereby finding themselves in sheer destitution. As for peasant labour, it was requisitioned for the building of guard and police posts (*ibid.*: 70).

At the outset of an operation called Jack-Scott, presses were locked up; Kikuyu independent schools were closed down<sup>81</sup>; political reunions were banned and the KAU dissolved. There was a wave of arrests. Any time soon, some Central Committee members and most KAU leaders—except Joseph Murumbi and Pio Gama Pinto—were arrested or held for trial under emergency regulations by the Government (Barnett, 1966: 127). More broadly, these apprehended persons included leading KAU officials, heads of independent school and church movements, businessmen, journalists, trade unionists and so forth... (*ibid.*: 70). The leading nationalists—including J. Kenyatta, Dagia, Fred Kubai, Kingu Karumba, Kinyatti and Paul Ngei—were arraigned in a Kangaroo court in a remote town Kapenguria (Northern Kenya) and given long jail

---

<sup>81</sup> The government closed over 300 schools under the management of the Kikuyu Independent School Association (K.I.S.A) and the Kikuyu Karinga Education School (K.K.E.S), thereby causing 60,000 children to lose their education. In Nyeri District only 10 of the KISA schools, under the leadership of Johana Kuniya, were not closed, as they accepted the Beecher Report (a 10 year-plan where schoolboys would receive a 4 year-training and stop) (Barnett, 1966: 130). In any event, the Beecher report intended to serve as the blueprint for Frisian education in colonial Kenya. It limited opportunities for higher education; only ten per cent of those in elementary schools would be allowed to sit the KAPE, the primary school leaving examination. This report was strongly opposed by nationalist forces (Kinyatti, 1987: 10).



terms and hard labour for their allegedly management of a terrorist movement. For instance, the militant Maina wa Kinyatti was sentenced to six years in prison two days after the emergency and the president of the KAU, J. Kenyatta was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for being the principal instigator of the Mau Mau conspiracy one year later (Ngugi, 1982: 112). In that “*large unfolding drama, 6 to 15 years to life imprisonment had become a somewhat easy court sentence to members and leaders of Mau Mau*” (Barnett, 1966: 130). Obviously, the colonial government’s decision to round up most leading nationalists was not promoted by the only desire to decapitate Mau Mau movement, but to eliminate the only organisation, the Kenya African Union (KAU), that was fighting constitutionally for the rights of native Kenyans.

As government pressure mounted, the first twenty five days subsequent to the emergency witnessed massive arrests. Up to 8,000 people were incarcerated. Yet the arrest of Kenyan nationalists’ leaders did not completely decapitate the movement since, in reality, it spurred men and women in unprecedented numbers to take to the forest joining hideouts in Aberdares Mountains. Forests groups also included a few girls and elders. Basically, women never comprised more than five per cent of the total forest population (Barnett, 1966: 226). Anyhow, children suffered most due to the absence of their parents, being either killed or in the forests.

Actually, the forests (Anerdares or Nyandarua and Mount Kenya) became peopled by most run-of-the-mill ‘types’. Two categories of people could be distinguished: the convinced freedom fighters that constituted the bulk and the less politically conscious Kikuyu who fled anti-Kikuyu sweeps led by the colonial troops. Among the leaders of these two categories, were several ex-servicemen who had campaigned in World War Two, such as Waruhiu Lote, who took the code name of General ‘China’, Dedan Kimathi and others.

At that time two persons were badly wanted. They were strongly partisans of the assumption that it was best to live free for few years than to live entrapped for life. These men were Dedan Kimathi (organizer of KAU's and considered as the chief oath administrator of Mau Mau movement in the Rift valley) and Stanley Mathenge Miguri whose photo and name had been used in publishing a song book that publicized the Movement (Barnett, 1966: 129). A reward ranging from 5,000 s to 10,000 s was to be offered against their capture.

In any event, Operation Jack-Scott went on while it intended to flush out the forest-fighters. For that purpose, armies and arsenals were deployed thus uncovering an asymmetrical warfare. Below are few details about the British military deployment. About 50,000 soldiers were to launch the assault on the forests (Martin, 1983: 55). The first Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers was flown from the Middle East to Nairobi. The second Battalion of the King's Rifles already in Kenya was reinforced with one battalion from Uganda and two companies from Tanganyika. The Royal Air Force sent pilots and Handley Page Haslings aircraft. In Addition, the cruiser "Kenya" came from Mombasa harbour carrying Royal Marines. During the course of the conflict, other British units—the Blade Watch, the Royal Innskilling Fusiliers and the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME)—were to serve for a short time to strengthen the third, fourth and fifth King African Rifles, the Kenya Regiment, the Kenya police and thousands of untrained young chaps from, mainly, Somali and Turkana tribes. Anyway, contrary to expectations, this massive display of British military might did not clamp down on the recalcitrants; it was said to have amplified the crisis although heavy bombings had not yet begun.

As that asymmetrical warfare was sprawling, the Aberdares and Mount Kenya were to be the unquestioned domain of the revolutionary force by the end of 1952; as yet no

permanent bases had been established in either area. Though long-ranged aims were still confused among forest warriors, there was the imperiousness to transform the CC into a War Council (WC). The headquarters was moved from Kiburi house to Mathare Valley. The W.C consisted of six members: three political leaders and three military commanders. Through this coordination action, one underlines the clear cut relation between CC Mau Mau members including the 'group of forty' with Ndiritu wa Thuita, Kabuga wa Njogu, general Limbo and so on and the elite with Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai, James Beauttah and others. They were formed to deal with legal matters within the movement. Duties of the War Council included a good deal of organizational work. Some such work comprised the following points:

1. -To coordinate the movement's war effort.
2. -To organize more Mau Mau cells in the urban centres and in the rural areas
3. -To infiltrate the colonial machinery in order to obtain weapons and strategic information
4. -To provide guerrilla army with men, weapons, medical supplies, clothing and strategic information (Kinyatti, 1987: 3).
5. -To use war magic. On occasions, the Mundo mugo, a member of the Kikuyu War Council, with his numerous military duties (advising on raids and so on) used it against the enemy, conducting cleansing ceremonies (Barnett, 1966: 198).

At the same time (around the end of 1952) the WC was enlarged and reconstructed into a powerful committee known as the Central Province Committee (CPC) whose headquarters was located in the city of Nairobi. Under the direction of Gichohi wa Githua. The CPC worked to maintain the coordination of war efforts and it was to function as the national congress of the movement. The strategy centred on unifying the entire Kenyan population within the movement. All the districts in central Kenya were represented in this committee. The latter was broadened to include members from Nyeri, the Rift valley and Ukambani. Besides, each of the urban district councils

selected three to six members to be represented in the Committee. Liaison officers linked their rural and urban district committees.

To give an insight about Nyeri and the Rift Valley, one stresses that with regard to Nyeri, the district council was known as the Ituma Ndemi Trinity (INT) and the Nyeri district army was called the Ituma Ndemi Army (INA). The INA was headed by Stanley Mathenge as the Council Chairman and Dedan Kimati as his Secretary (Barnett, 1966: 158). And with regard to the Rift Valley, in local cells, in the densely populated Nakuru and Laikipia districts, existed organizers and liaison officers to represent them in Nairobi. Besides, local and intermediate councils consisted of nine elected members referred to as 'elders' six of whom held office as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

By the turn of 1953, D. Kimathi joined the KLFA at the age of 32. Not only was he the detonator of an avalanche of initiatives, but he was to embody the peasant armed resistance to British colonial oppression. In that phase of the war, Dedan Kimathi's first initiative was to help General Mathenge in the organization and consolidation of the guerrilla army in Nyandarwa. Under their supervision, several guerrilla camps were established. Each camp had an average of 360 persons (ibid.: 163). Another initiative was the camp rules that included sixteen articles. For example, article fourteen stipulated that the camp's records must always be up to date. The record comprehended the registration of people, their names, numbers, etc (ibid.: 165).

Kigumo camp for, example, included persons from the Tetu location of Nyeri; it contained a pre-emergency population of over 20,000. Another camp, the Kariaini, comprised eventually some 3,500 guerrillas. The camp was to become the only permanent headquarters of the KLFA in the Aberdares (Kinyatti, 1987: 4). Kariaini

was, out and away, the largest camp-cluster in the forest sector. It also turned out to be a major centre for potential recruits. The headquarters included people from the Rift Valley, Fort Hall, Kiambu Kikuyu and few Embu, Meru and Luo from Nyanza province as well as people from Nyeri District and North Nyeri. In the headquarters, on D. Kimathi's initiative, leaders took concerted actions to organize raids, set up military plans and tactics and so forth (Barnett, 1966: 169).

Above all, D. Kimathi drafted efficiently the rules and regulations governing the *mbuci* or guerrilla camps that were established accordingly. In fact, in an attempt to explain the political position of the armed struggle, he issued the New National Regulations whose unequivocal content was directed against the Europeans who governed Kenya. Indeed, one notes the radical, but justifiable, character of these regulations. Below is an extract:

1. No African shall obey the laws of the White man, or seeks protection from his government.
2. No African shall join the homeguard, KAR and police forces, unless he is working as an undercover agent for the movement. Those who collaborate with the Europeans will be killed.
3. No African shall pay taxes to the White man and his government.

In conclusion, D. Kimathi insisted that a breach of those new regulations was to be punished by death. Equally important is the publishing of another document which D. Kimathi called the KLFA Charter. It comprised 79 articles the most important of which have been selected here. They are the following:

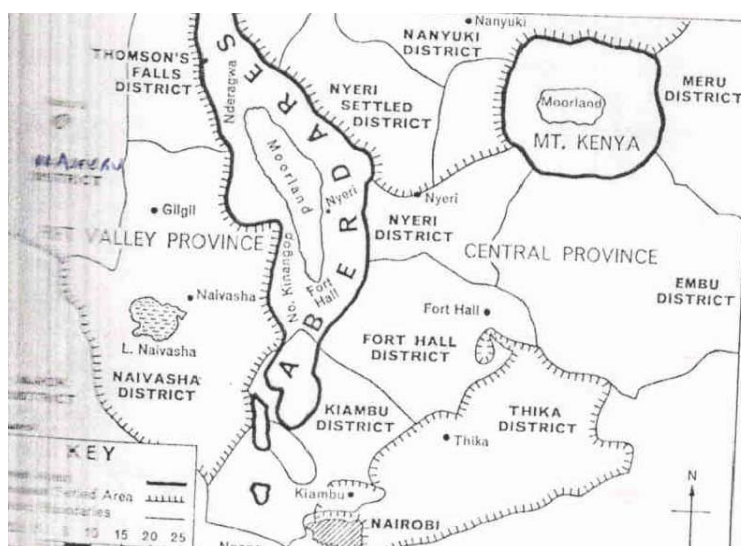
1. Calling for an immediate self-government (article one).

2. Rejecting foreign laws that were disquietingly unjust in Kenya (article two).
3. Demanding that Africans should have control of gold, markets, roads cooperative societies and auctions (article ten).
4. Demanding that Europeans, rascals, troops and policemen be withdrawn from Kenyan African reserves (article thirteen).
5. Objecting to the fact that foreigners sleep with our wives and daughters (article nine).
6. Recalling that our real fight is not against the white colour but against the system carried out by white rulers (article sixteen).
7. Recalling that nothing is more precious than independence and freedom. Only when we have achieved our independence can our people have genuine peace (article seventeen).

The KLFA Charter was a national political manifesto for the movement and it was widely circulated in the country districts: Fort Hall, Embu, Naivasha, Nyeri, Nanyuki, Nakuru, Meru, Kiambu (see Map 8 next page) and throughout the world. It was addressed to the British colonial authorities in London first; however, seeking for fraternal solidarity, in different countries, D. Kimathi reportedly, dispatched copies to the governments of India, France, Egypt; to president Eisenhower (USA), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Fenner Brockway (UK), W.B. Du Bois, the chairman of the Pan-African congress, and Mbiyu wa Koinange who was by 1953 the KAU representative in the UK (Kinyatti, 1987: 16). D. Kimathi was aware of these countries' anti-imperialist stance. In truth, the KLFA Charter adopted a strong anti imperialist line. In addition to the fact that the document outlined the position of the movement, it made clear that the struggle would go on until the expulsion of the British out of Kenya. Having ferreted some information related to fourteenth century's British history, D.

Kimathi ended the document with the ensuing remarks on the Wat Tyler Rebellion in Britain:

*Do you not remember what your grandfathers did during the reign of King Richard II, when sixty thousand slaves [serfs] went to [the King] and demanded their freedom? These people tore down prison walls and the houses of the rich men they hated, and killed many who were their enemies. They burned the houses of the lawyers, tax collectors and King's Officers who had wronged them, and killed many men of that sort, cut off their heads, put them on poles and set them up on London bridge. [because of their resistance] the King made them free forever...<sup>82</sup>*  
(Kinyatti, 1987: 12).



Map 8: Kenya districts, 1950s  
(Source: Barnett, 1966: 83)

<sup>82</sup> Wat Tyler Rebellion was the largest anti-feudal peasant revolt in medieval England which took place in 1381 (Hanawalt, 1998: 139). One notes that the rebellion or revolt bore many similarities to the struggle in colonial Kenya. Both were directly ignited by the desire for land among the peasantry, and, more obliquely in the case of the Kenyan revolt, harsh taxation.

Internally, D. Kimathi equally maintained contacts with Mau Mau War Council in Nairobi on matters dealing with recruits to be sent to Nyandarua and Kirimuaga forests, where meetings and conferences were held, or to be kept as urban guerrillas in Nairobi. Besides, circulars and directives relevant to discipline among guerrilla fighters were sent to front-line commanders, principally generals Matenjagwo, Kago and Ihuura in Murang'a guerrilla camps (Kinyatti, 1987: 5).

The subsequent and highly distressing event helps one have an idea about that crude period of insecurities and its significance. On January 1953, Mau Mau, possibly former servants, harshly murdered Mr and Mrs Ruck, as well as Michael their 6 year old son in their farm with pangas. *“Michael was found hacked to death in his bedroom, and newspapers in Kenya and abroad published graphic murder details and post-mortem photos, including images of young Michael with bloodied teddy bears strewn on his bedroom floor”* (Elkins, 2005: 42). Insecurity led many Europeans to dismiss their Kikuyu servants and build full-scale fortresses on their farms. Others joined auxiliary units, like the Kenya Police Reserve and the Kenya Regiment.

One thing leading to another, the oncoming months witnessed decisive Mau Mau offensives. The first decisive offensive action started on the night of 26 March 1953 with the attack of Naivasha police post and Lari (a small town west of Nairobi) by 28 Mau Mau guerrillas in the Rift Valley, Nakuru province (Kinyatti, 1987: 4). The Naivasha raid was on a police post which was taken all of a sudden. The police guards ran away after a short time of shoot out. The warriors released the prisoners and made off with the arms and ammunition in the armoury. The Naivasha raid gained them over one hundred precision weapons (see Glossary) and 3,780 rounds of ammunition. The other raid in Lari was on loyalists, namely chief Luka and his ardent supporters. He and his wives were killed and their houses set on fire; meanwhile, suspected of being wives



and children of Kikuyu Home guards, a good deal of non-combatants were hacked or burnt to death. The raid was mediated by the British contributing to the vilification of Mau Mau as bloodthirsty savages. In the weeks that followed, British and Loyalist forces entered the village and engaged in a retaliatory mass murder, thus massacring hundreds of civilians and executing summarily those suspected of being insurrectionists. The East African Standard report of 5 April, 1953 indicated that the official toll of Lari massacre did not exceed seventy casualties.

Two weeks after the Battle of Naivasha, which happened in March 1953, a three-day conference was held at Githugi camp in Muarang'a. This was the first major conference held by the guerrillas since the inception of the armed struggle. Not less than 250 guerrilla leaders were convened at the conference (Kinyatti, 1987: 4) during which a resolution was passed establishing a twelve-member Supreme War Council (SWC), with Mathenge as Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of the Mau Mau forces; Dedan Kimathi became the SWC Secretary-General and Mbaria wa Kaniu was appointed Mathenge's deputy. Moreover it was stipulated that all the existing guerrilla units would henceforth be brought under Mathenge's command.

Under Mathenge, the guerrilla leaders, including the Nyeri leader, Waruhiu Itote, later known as General China, and the leader of the Aberdares forest, D. Kimathi, urged expressly both the guerrillas and the people of Kenya to fight with unshakeable determination. They also agreed that in order to reinforce the armed struggle, the recruitment drive would have to be intensified, and more fronts would have to be established in the country. Ipso facto, SWC members were instructed to tower all the guerrilla camps and explicate the proceedings of the conference. Each SWC member was assigned to cover a specific region. For instance, D.Kimathi was assigned three

districts: Murang'a, Kiambu and Narok where he supervised other generals. Another example is Wahuriu Itote, commander of the Mei Mathati Army<sup>83</sup> who had been sent to organize the Mount Kenya fighters outside the Aberdares sector in March 1953. There, in the forest of Mount Kenya, some 500 fighters—mainly from the Meru and Embu districts as well as the eastern location of Nyeri—had established themselves.

The Kamba also participated actively in sabotage acts. After the formation of the Kamba Central Committee in April 1953, the Kamba rebels, who were mostly railwaymen and who effectively controlled the railway workforce, orchestrated three acts of sabotage against the railway lines during the emergency. It should be recalled briefly that the Kamba were also the core of the African Units in the Army and Police. Anyhow, guerrilla warfare proceeded and Naivasha as well as Lari were not to be the only targets to provide good illustration of occasional paroxysms of violence taking place then. Othaya police post and Kairuthi Home Guard Post were also targeted. Both were located about ten miles out of the Aberdares on the Othaya ridge. By mid-May 1953, eighteen home guards and three precision weapons were gained from Kairuthi raid, but Othaya post was well guarded and the raid was unsuccessful. At about the same time, Gatumbira Home Guard Post (few miles from the Aberdares forest) was raided. Three guards were killed and seventeen others were burned to death (Barnett, 1966: 140). Less than a mile north of this post, Bildad Giticha, supervisor of the Church of Scotland Mission School, was attacked in his shop. The death toll went on claiming the life of Karinjoya, alias Kariuki Mutha-ini, a headman of a village on the fringe of Aberdares. With his family, they were raided at night (Barnett, 1966:141). Some such people were assaulted by reason of their collaboration with the colonial authorities. In addition, six neighbourhood schools were attacked and thousand of herds of cattle were taken from the reserve into the forest for the warriors' food (ibid.:

---

<sup>83</sup> The Mei Mathati Army corresponded to a front made up of guerrillas from the Mathira area of Nyeri, Karinyaga district and from Ukambani (Kinyatti, 1987: 12).

140). Mau Mau was winning and hundreds of Europeans left their farms within five miles from Aberdare's forest edge and ran for security.

Despite efforts of coordination and unification, by mid-May, there were about 15,000 forest combatants that formed relatively isolated and loosely organized units (Martin, 1983: 55). Each camp within a cluster had its own leader. For instance, Kigumo camp, located in the Nyeri section of the Aberdares Range, provides a good illustration of permanent camp-clusters. Overall, fighting was often waged and staged in separate regions. General Ghumali and others knew that any isolationist attitude would be fraught with risks, thus weakening the fighting units. Besides the General figured that it was a great mistake to think that they were fighting for an isolated region alone, let's say, Central Kenya alone. He was also aware that assistance could be secured through more unification and mobilization. This was precisely what KLFA cadres did visiting different regions such as Ichagachiru and Kiambu to unite and politicize the masses. Better still; every guerrilla camp had to combat isolationism and set up close relations between them and with the masses of the peasants in the area of operations.

However, it was difficult to build a strong united army without resolving communication and transport problems so that coordination between army commanders would take place swimmingly. Work for unification was the cornerstone of Kenya's strength. D. Kimathi typified it by touring Kenya front to meet leaders like general Kariba and leaders of the Embu and Meru. In short, he multiplied contact with many chiefs through mail to mobilize them so that they championed their common cause. In a brief address to chief Kariba on May 23, 1953, D. Kimathi insisted that Kividu had to join the struggle against the common enemy. He also urged chief Kioko

to encourage the Wakamba youth to join the Mau Mau which was the cry of people suffering from poverty (Kinyatti, 1987: 13).

Concerning the settlers, one should point out that they were not arm folded; meanwhile, around the beginning of June 1953, they proved politically active. Albeit the Aberdares Electoral Union was the only settlers' political union, it wished to rule Kenya for ever under the leadership of Michael Blundell. Its final petition to Her Majesty's Government during her coronation ceremony, demanding independence for the white man in Kenya was completely jettisoned and Michael Blundell was warned that the settlers could only form a multiracial Government. If they failed Her Majesty's Government promised to grant the Africans independence (Barnett, 1966:421). When Blundell returned, he told the party that the Government had thrust an arrow right in the heart of their party's aim. On hearing this, the Aberdares Electoral Union split into the Federal Independence Party under Humphrey Slade, demanding Kenya be granted autonomous provinces: The United Party under Blundell, the Upcountry Party under Mr Baxter and Major Day claiming that the European supremacy in this country must prevail (*ibid.*: 421).

The forest fighters intensified meetings. For instance on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the same month and the same year (June 1953), a meeting between Mau Mau leaders was held in Kariaini headquarters. It was agreed, facing Mt Kenya that the coalescence was indispensable to carry out raids all over the country at the same time on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. For the raids an initial figure amounting to some 1,600 warriors had been selected from the headquarters. They were to split in 32 groups of 50 men. And each was to be selected in the headquarters camp (Barnett, 1966: 204). Some of the action plans behind the raids included the following: First, Every camp had to seize and bring into the forest as many livestock as possible. Second, it had to destroy all the roads,

bridges, electric and telegraph wires. Third, it had to kill as many enemies as possible. Five, it had to raid dispensaries for medicine. And last, it had to set fire on enemy houses, and sabotage water pipes (ibid.: 196).

In this context, coalescence remained more than ever a vehicle to liberate the Kenya soil. Liberation was also to owe much to Nyeri, the most militant of Kikuyu districts. By then, Nyeri had 5,800 warriors in Nyandarua of whom 1,800 were new recruits (ibid.: 197). It was regarded as the spear whereas Kiambu was regarded as the brain of the tribe by Kikuyu. Nyeri district council comprised all Nyeri forest leaders along with some 40 unified guerrilla units and 6,000 fighters by the end of June 1953 (ibid.: 158) and it is perhaps no accident that Nyeri contributed forty per cent to fifty per cent of the estimated 15,000-man-strong guerrilla force<sup>84</sup> which was operating in the Aberdares (ibid.:157). Viewing the entire revolutionary Movement by June 1953, there were four major zones of guerrilla activity in Nairobi, the Kikuyu reserve, Mt Kenya and the Aberdares Range (ibid.: 172). Forces also operated in the Rift Valley and smaller forests.

Concurrently, General Sir George Erskine took up the post of Director of operations to revitalize British efforts. In her strategy Britain attempted to curtail internal and external help to the rebellion. A military draft brought a flood of fresh troops, some 20,000 who were used aggressively. These colonial forces organized daring raids on different guerrilla camps such as Othaya, Kairuthi, Ihuririo and others. For example, precisely, on 11 July 1953, Kairani headquarter was overrun by bombings. The latter affected and dispersed guerrilla fighters. Many leaders and scores of refugees had

---

<sup>84</sup> Guerrilla force included warriors who had either ordinary clothing or dressed Government uniforms; probably acquired from the dead security forces. Few had long and shaggy hair and beards. Some had woven or braided their hair like women while others had wool braided in with the hair like the Masai. They could approach the Government forces without being suspected. The leaders tied turbans around their heads. Everyone had kitbags (gitumbeki) containing meals (Barnett, 1966: 174).

staggered into the Rift Valley side of the forest. Contact between leaders was greatly impeded, no meeting could be convened and the effectiveness of the Ituma Ndemi Trinity was reduced (Barnett, 1966: 212). Fighting went on as Devonshire personnel assisted by military and Home Guards positioned themselves in ambushed areas. There, counterinsurgency tactics were arranged successfully. Sometimes, the British set up mine traps along paths leading into the forest, for example, the Muringo path and others. Some other times the British used pseudo-gangs composed of de-oathed and turned ex-Mau Mau and allied Africans. Headed by white officers, they infiltrated Mau Mau ranks and carried out search-and-destroy missions. Pseudo gangs also included white settler volunteers in disguise. The pseudo gang concept was a successful tactic against the Mau Mau.

In all likelihood, the Mau Mau stuck together in Aberdares and unity was a great asset for them towards the end of 1953. The bonds of tribal unity, among Aberdares guerrilla groups, were reinforced thanks to the formation of the Kenya Young Star Association (KYSA) and the New Year's memorial ceremony was held at Ruthaithi. The KYSA cut across the various territorial forest groupings and hence weakened narrower sectional loyalties. It stressed the historical role of forest revolutionaries and received enthusiasm by gathering thousands of fighters and leaders from various sections of the forest. Unity was that markedly denoted the national character of the armed struggle was expressed vividly by the members of the Supreme War Council.

Accordingly, it was made clear that the SWC would function temporarily as a High Command of the Mau Mau movement with the proviso that a general conference was to be held to form a more permanent War Council. D. Kimathi was chosen the de facto convener of the first KLFA general conference. In August 1953, in accordance with the decision reached at Githuki, D. Kimathi called a four day general conference. The

conference was held at Mwathe, near the banks of Mwathe stream on the eastern edge of the moorlands in Nyandarwa. In fact, letters concerning the meeting were sent out to all guerrilla front commanders. However, according to General Karari Njama, when Mathenge received his letter, he was furious at D. Kimathi for calling such an important gathering without first consulting him. Mathenge argued that since D. Kimathi was his 'clerk', he had neither the right, nor the power to call any guerrilla meeting without him. Boycotting the meeting, Mathenge accused D. Kimathi of plotting to take over the leadership of the armed movement. Reportedly, Mathenge was beside the mark in that Kimathi had no personal interests to defend. His only motivation was the liberation of his homeland. His ardent patriotism was evidenced in a conversation he had with K. Njama after being informed about Mathenge's decision. He told Njama:

*Mathenge has lost a great chance to be known to many guerrillas...I hope he is not suffering from megalomania. I would certainly attend any meeting he would call me to. I would like to meet him and resolve our differences...nevertheless, I will postpone nothing due to his absence. (Kinyatti, 1987: 5).*

Later D. Kimathi told the members of the SWC that:

*Although I have never mentioned his name in this Parliament before, there is nothing wrong with Mathenge...I always like speaking well of people because I am not perfect. He is still doing his work, and he is a brave and active leader. Those helping me [to lead the struggle] are all efficient leaders and we have one target...My concern and responsibility are for the people of Kenya, for those comrades who have decided to sacrifice their lives for our land and freedom. I have no other ambition. (ibid.: 5).*

At Mwathe, more than 5,000 guerrillas and a large number of local peasants attended the conference (Kinyatti, 1987: 5). A number of steps were taken there:

formal military ranks were issued, a unified set of rules and regulations were agreed upon and in the course of the discussions, there was a general agreement on the idea of replacing the SWC by the Kenya Defence Council (KDC). There were two processes at work in determining membership. One, the election (from below) held by councilmen to determine membership in the higher council. Two, the appointment (from above) entitled the persons concerned to hold office within particular councils (ibid.: 64). In that regard, the KDC Executive Committee was composed of twelve members. The Council represented the first attempt to bring the guerrilla units under a unified military command and to integrate all of the revolutionary force in a central governing council. D. Kimathi was elected the Council's president and the Field Marshal of the KLFA forces with Macharia wa Kimemia as the vice-president, Kahiu-Itina as the treasurer and Gathitu wa Waithaka as the Secretary-General.

The KDC, which was the KLFA High command, was designed to function as the vanguard of the armed movement. It had to coordinate military campaigns to secure unification and it was charged with the duties including: *“the overall planning and coordination of military campaigns, to strengthen and maintain contacts and communication with the Nairobi War Council headquarters, which was mainly responsible for the recruitment and financing of the movement and to work closely with Mau Mau village leaders”* among other things (Kinyatti, 1987: 6).

By August 1953, the Movement already included militarily eight units: one, the Ituma Ndemi Army (Nyeri District warriors). Two, the Gikuyu Iregi Army (Murang'a District warriors). Three, the Kenya Inoro Army (Kiambu District warriors). Four, the Mei mathathi Army (Mt Kenya warriors). Five, the Mburu Ngebo (Rift Valley warriors). Six, the Town Watch Battalions (all the fighters in the town city-fighters). Seven, the Gikuyu Na Mumbi Trinity Army (any person wherever he or she lives).



Eight, the Kenya Levellation Army (all persons fighting in the reserves Nyeri...). The units operated in four major regions: Nyeri, Muranga, Nderagwa and north Kinangop (Barnett, 1966: 225).

The hard core of the Kikuyu army chose to fight on, using the natural strategic advantage of the forest. Speaking about the Colonial forces, General Karari Njama stressed: *“Our enemy’s ignorance of things in the forest was their great disadvantage. We would lay and wait for the trackers at the forest fringe, observe and count them and would open fire on them as their last men passed our ambush”* (ibid.: 207).

The backbone of the movement became largely supported by peasants, squatter tenants (mostly Kikuyu but also Meru and Embu) and workers, who dauntlessly supplied it with guerrilla recruits, shelters, weaponry, medicine, food and so forth. In organizational terms, the movement derived much of its strength and energy from tightly knit and well-disciplined cadres in the towns and the countryside.

The British and Kenya Governments opposed increasing strength during the third quarter of 1953. Everything was moving fast. The strategy was a vast many-headed monster: disarm or kill the insurgents, hunt down forest fighters, impose curfews, collective fines and punishment, counter Mau Mau campaigns and implement severe methods of interrogation. Above all, the Government strategy was concentrated on breaking Aberdares warriors in the process and at least neutralizing the popular base of the revolt among the peasant masses mainly in the Kikuyu reserve.

To do so, the British launched large-scale operations. They employed:

*a force of well over 50,000 men against the Mau Mau insurgents. Five tracks were cut into the Aberdares by an imported team of Royal*

*Engineers and forced Kikuyu labour. Battalion strength bases were established within the forest fringe and cordon operations were launched. Mount Kenya and Nyandarua were proclaimed prohibited areas. All huts and granaries, lying between the forests and reserve, were burned. Peasants were evicted and crops slashed in an effort to prevent the flow of supplies into the forests.*  
(Barnett, 1966: 211).

Airplanes fitted with bombs, especially Lincoln heavy bombers and Harvard bombers, began flying regular missions over the forest. Additional military deployments included the thirty ninth Brigade of Buffs and Devons, the forty ninth Brigade of Royal North Umberland, Inniskilling Fusiliers, the East African Brigade of six KAR Battalions, the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Kenya Regiment and three East African Units, an armoured car division and a squadron of Lincolns (ibid.: 211).

Disintegrated under round ups, in a state of siege and cut off from sources of new recruit, the Land and Freedom Armies showed signs of withering; meanwhile, desertions could not be avoided. In truth, the problem of desertion was seriously discussed some leaders such as General Ghumali, General kimbo and General Kahiuitina, argued that desertion could be the result of hunger among the guerrillas; other leaders, including D. Kimathi, rejected the argument insisting that desertion was the result of indiscipline among the fighters, plus the failure of the unit army commanders to maintain firm control over their men (Kinyatti, 1987: 28). To solve the problem, it was agreed that deserters had to be treated as war criminals and had, therefore, to be punished severely<sup>85</sup>.

---

<sup>85</sup> In a report sent to Marshal D. Kimathi in November 1953 by KDC General Secretary, Gathitu wa Waithaka, he states that “Since discipline is the most important weapon in this struggle, it must be strictly observed.” Therefore, to set the example, five guerrilla fighters were tried in court for desertion, and for committing rape, and were sentenced to be caned as shown below:

1. Karuthi Muthami—15 strokes.
2. Munuari Ndungu wa Wandete—10 stokes.
3. Kiraiku M Wanjiri wa Theuri—10 strokes.

For whatever reason, freedom fighters ascribed their failure not to desertion as such, but, strangely enough, to superstition and it virtually happened when an animal (a gazelle or a deer) crossed the path of a group. The crossing indicated mischance (ibid.: 205). Conversely, animals were also useful. They told about the approach of an enemy by their alarms. Eventually, the sentry would alert the hidden fighters by blowing the bulge (Barnett, 1966: 167). However, in spite of such large-scale operations, the British were unable to stem completely the tide of insurgency. Because of the various attacks on the movement and the arrest and detention of key-Mau Mau leaders in Nairobi, the KLFA headquarter was moved to Nyandarua in January 1954. As yet, during the same month, operation hammer began. Launched by the Government, it was to last three weeks throwing over a division of infantry (the King's African Rifles) in the Aberdares. They combed the area but met little resistance as most guerrillas had already left. Therefore, the casualties were relatively light, numbering 161 dead, captured or surrendered. Eventually, the operation was moved to Mount Kenya area. There, they captured a substantial number of guerrillas and killed a number of band leaders. Mau Mau fighters were forced deeper in the forest. At the height of 1954, there was an estimated 30,000 fighters in the forest of Aberdares or Nyandarua Mountains and Mount Kenya.

After the unconfirmed capture or surrender of General China to the British forces on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1954, surrender talks were mooted before the British plan to end the rebellion; nevertheless, Field Marshal Kimathi sent a circular to all commanders explaining the position of the KLFA vis a vis that of China and the colonial authorities. To justify his surrender to the enemy, General China had written a two-page letter to D. Kimathi stipulating that he was captured (see Kinyatti, 1987: 66-68) and asking him to

---

4. Mukungi Mukemi wa Githanga—5 strokes.

5. Kinguru Ngaoha wa Kibogoro—5 strokes.  
(Kinyatti, 1987: 43)

call off the struggle and to cooperate with the British government. In reply to China's letter, D. Kimathi said:

*My soldier will never leave these forests until the British government accepts our demand: to disarm its forces unconditionally; to release all the political prisoners; recognize our country's independence.*  
(ibid.: 7).

The British authorities wrote several letters to D. Kimathi calling for peace negotiations. In reply D. Kimathi consistently pointed out that prior to any peace conference, the British would have to withdraw their forces from the country and disarm their Kenyan allies. Be that as it may, the letters that circulated between D. Kimathi and guerrilla fighters constitute the most important documents in Mau Mau history because they tell readers about the dialectical relationship that existed between D. Kimathi and his men<sup>86</sup>. Most of Kimathi's letters were essentially addressed to his comrade-in-arms with a view to boosting their morale and strengthening the struggle. In that perspective, he wrote these lines to a guerrilla comrade: "...you should be proud of your black skin because the black keys of a piano always give the sweetest music..." Again: "you have done well to understand that our country and the people are the dearest things in the world. I advise you to support, with dedication, the great struggle of our people..." (ibid.: 8).

Some of D. Kimathi's letters dealt with how to ferry clothing, food, medicine and so on. In a letter, he sent to Colonel Wamugunda, he wrote:

*Try to put every effort into organizing food for guerrillas. We need plenty of ammunition because I don't to see the guerrillas walking around with empty rifles. The cadre who goes to Nyeri town should go regularly...Tell the women to make us sweaters, for this place is very cold, ask them to*

---

<sup>86</sup> For full texts of the letters, see Annex I.

*supply us with the following items: sugar, coffee, salt, tea-leaves, matches, soap and above all medicine... The medicine you sent me is finished and my teeth are still aching. Please send me some more.*  
(ibid.:)

In return, any guerrilla who had problems could write to D. Kimathi for help. In one of the letters, a guerrilla explained:

*Dear D.K.,  
I have no blanket. The one I had was taken away by Juma; he said he would give it to Karaari to bring it back to me, but I have heard that Karaari has gone to Ruthaithi for a mission. I have only a raincoat, but it is not enough because this place is very cold. If you have one extra blanket please send it immediately. I will be waiting for it.*  
(ibid.:)

Kimathi also received revolutionary letters from Col. Wamugunda. Here is one:

*To D. Kimathi:  
There is something important I would like to share with you. I hope you won't mind. As a supreme Commander of the KLFA armed forces and the leader of the national movement, you should be very careful and disciplined in what you do. Every step you take should be well-calculated. You should always suspect those you meet, even your own relatives...In short what I am trying to say is the discipline and secrecy are our greatest weapons in this unequal war.*  
(ibid.:)

When those brave guerrillas lacked secrecy and vigilance, they were captured. And when asked why they were fighting and what had to be done to disarm the rest of them and get them out of the forest without bloodshed. They replied:

*We are fighting for our land stolen from us by the Crown through its Orders in Council of 1915, according to which Africans have been evicted from the Kenya highlands. The British government must grant Kenya full independence under African leadership, and hand over all land previously alienated or distribution to the landless. We will fight until we achieve freedom or until the last of our warriors has shed his last drop of blood*  
(Odinga, 1967:120)

Quite for the first time a movement was openly and strongly demanding immediate independence. In any case, demands, actions and organizations were to be framed largely in the context of a newly formed Kenya Parliament.

#### **V- The Kenya Parliament:**

In February 1954, the Kenya Defence Council was superseded by the newly formed Kenya Parliament which operated thanks to various donors, among whom peasants (see Annex V for details). It comprised: D. Kimathi, General Ghumali and twelve elected members. The latter were drawn disproportionately from the various armies and forest zones. Thus, including the Ituma Ndemi Army that placed about six men, the Mburu Ngebo Army four, the Gikuyu Iregi and Kenya Levellation Armies one each. The Parliament hoped to establish the African Government of Kenya as the legitimate interim. It became the supreme organ of the entire armed struggle. Some of its aims were: first to establish its authority among Aberdares guerrilla groups, second to assume authority over the civilian population in the reserves, third to demonstrate its national character and gain added military support by extending the revolt to other tribes and regions and so forth (ibid.: 329).

Related to this last point was General Ghumali's message. While addressing his unit, the General indefatigably advocated the nation-wide aspect of the struggle and the need to enhance it through union in the following extract: "*In order to succeed in this*

*national endeavour, we must unite all our forces. Kenya does not only mean Nyandarua and Mount Kirinyaga. It is a large country*” (ibid.: 26). In the same vein, commander Ndiritu wa Thuita said that all members of the parliament had to understand that they were fighting for national liberation, for the total liberation of Kenya and not for one nationality or one region. Speaking along the same lines, commander Kigori recalled that justice won’t be done without the masses. He asserted: *“without the support and the cooperation of the masses, the movement would die”*. He added: *“Our battle is really between right and might”* (General Karari Njama, quoted in Barnett, 1966: 387).

The Kenya-wide aspect of forest ideology was manifested both in the symbolic representation of Kenya’s thirty three districts, in the recognized Kenya Parliament and in the hope for bringing other tribes in the revolt.

#### **VI- Anvil Operation and Government Strategy:**

A major Government operation involving 25,000 soldiers and police commenced on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1954. It was called operation Anvil and it was to put the city of Nairobi under military control for several weeks. It intended to crush resistance in Nairobi and halt the flow of recruits and supplies into the forest. The entire African population of Nairobi, some 100,000 persons, were rounded up and driven into a huge field where 70,000 Embu, Meru and Kikuyu were sorted out and screened.

The Anvil operation launched against Mau Mau guerrillas allowed the arrest of 35,000 fighters (Cornevin, 1975: 330). Another source from the historian Barnett indicates that Anvil resulted in the arrest of 40,000 persons (Barnett, 1966: 357). Many were deported in reserves and camps. As a matter of example, young Kikuyu of

warrior age (between 16 and 35) were interned and thousands more were deported to the Kikuyu reserves of the highlands, west of Mount Kenya. And some 17,000 suspected people were arrested as members of the Movement and charged with complicity. Eventually, they were sent to concentration camps. Similarly, the regrouping of land and the privatization of landowning were conducted under Swynnerton plan in the same year: 1954.

Until mid-1954, Government policy revolved, among other things, around the resettlement of Kikuyu villagers. This corresponded to the Villagization program that was initiated after 'Anvil'. This program was an attempt to break down the traditional, dispersed homestead-settlement-pattern of the Kikuyu and place Kikuyu peasantry in easily guarded prison-like villages or 'camps' (Elkins, 2005: 48). In so doing, the Government focused on destroying support for Mau Mau in the towns and reserves. At the edge of the forests, villages were razed and trees were cut down to provide a free-fire zone and cut off the forest fighters from the reserves where they could get supplies from. Consequently, from Nyeri (North) to Kiambu (South) thousands Kikuyu villagers were trapped under military surveillance in those new fortified villages where thousands died of disease and starvation. As it happened people were placed inside an apparatus of surveillance, turning their bodies into measurable, analyzable, controllable entities. Curfews controlled by Kikuyu Home Guards spread over Nairobi and its environs. Some 110 schools were locked.

Precisely, by the last half of 1954, over a million Kikuyu were resettled in those village camps. The historian Mark Curtis advances the figure of 1, 077 500 Kikuyu that had been concentrated in 854 villages when the program reached completion later, in October 1955 (Curtis, 2003: 327). A similar program was carried out in the plantations of the Rift Valley. In addition to villagization, a wide trench--fenced with barbed wires,



planted with mines and bordered by numerous military and police posts--was dug by forced peasant labour teams along 50 miles of the forest fringe which separated the Aberdares and Mt Kenya from the Kikuyu reserve (Cornevin, 1975: 332). The villagization and communal labour schemes combined with bad harvests yielded widespread hunger and a mounting toll of deaths from starvation among children and the aged.

In addition to all the pre-cited measures undertaken by the colonial government, the latter forced the people to take anti Mau Mau oath. It was called *Ekinni*. Their aim was to break people's resistance to atrophy and, hence, weaken the struggle irreversibly. The battle of Ottaya under General Mathenge was unsuccessful (Kinyatti, 1987: 132). Around the same period, 50,000 British with their sophisticated weaponry killed 11,503 guerrillas and imprisoned 12,585 (Cornevin, 1975: 330).

Nonetheless, almost by the end of 1954, it was stated in a KLFA meeting in Nyandarua that war efforts on the Mount Karinyaga front were still effective. General Tanganyika and General Kariba were regarded as the best strategists. Hit-and-run tactics, raid and ambush were implemented. The strategists capitalized on the element of surprise, mobility and coordinated action. For instance, General Kimbo and General Vido jointly organized an attack on the enemy forces in the Kanunga area. The forces destroyed the enemy's post, shops and other properties. General Kago was to liberate Muranga district during the same period. General Kariba had also forced the enemy to evacuate a large area of Nyeri district and according to his recent report, his strategy was to liberate the whole region; the Kikuyu were willing to give their lives as ransom for all Kenya peoples and Gthilu, a first class guerrilla fighter, sacrificed his life with other heroes for the sake of liberating all the regions and all native Kenyans.

However, through their treacherous acts, some quislings hampered the war effort. They wrapped themselves in the British flag by collaborating with the enemy against the homeland. They became part of the Government force. By the end of 1954, it should be underscored that over seventy five per cent of the 100,000 men of the Government force were Africans, comprising over 30,000 Home Guards, 10,000 Regular Police, 8,000 Kenya Police Reserve, plus 4,000 Tribal Police. The rest were regular soldiers in the Kenya Regiment, the British troops (four Battalions). Chiefly, the Government drew its forces by the fear of a region-wide Kikuyu ascendancy that served as a useful fund-raising tool as well as recruiting propaganda. Ipso facto, the ensuing tribes were mobilized: Akamba, Nandi, Turkana, Tende, Luo, Luhya, Kisii, Kipsigis and Somali (Barnett, 1966: 437).

Seemingly unable to defeat guerrilla forces within the forests, the colonial government tried to starve them. All the crops from maize fields had been wrecked by the Government so that the forest fighters may not feed on them. Though this Government strategy was not immediately successful, Aberdares groups were faced with an ever increasing problem of Military, logistic and ecological difficulties at that period and their relations with rural and urban supporters became more difficult and costly to sustain. Guerrilla units in several areas were beginning to run critically short of arms and ammunitions as severe Government anti-Kikuyu oppression deprived them of more widespread support of potential rural sympathizers. The latter were rounded up and forced into concentration camps (Shellington, 1993: 390). Thus guerrilla forces were becoming increasingly stranded and cut off from one another and from their major sources of supplies in the reserves and Nairobi; subsequently, the guerrilla forces, including the Kikuyu peasantry, had lost both the means and will to resist. They yearned only for an end to the struggle.

Albeit evident signs of trouble characterized the Mau Mau militarily then, from a political standpoint, Lyttelton Constitution of 1954 marked, on the one hand, the entrance of A.B. Ohanga in the Executive Council, while being in charge of communal development; and on the other hand the nomination of six native Kenyans on the Legislative Council (Martin, 1983: 56).

After Anvil operation the revolt was speedily flagging. Besides, a campaign, designed to bring about the surrender of forest guerrillas by offering a general amnesty for crimes during the emergency, was launched. His Excellency the Governor of Kenya Sir Evelyn Baring had given the general amnesty to all persons who had committed crimes during the emergency until July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1955. The amnesty both absolved Home Guard members from persecution and gave rebel soldiers a chance to surrender.

In charge of East Africa, Gen Sir Erskine, Commander-in-chief, came up with a report by the end of January 1955. It stipulated that there were 8000 killed, 700 hanged, 880 captured injured, 300 captured unhurt, 888 surrenderees against 68 Europeans and 21 Asians, in addition to 1800 Africans killed by the guerrilla forces (Barnett, 1966: 440). On the side of Guerrilla leaders the following estimates were put by General Karari Njama: 22000 fighters all over Kenya killed, 800 captured, 700 surrenderees.

### **VII- Disintegration and Propaganda:**

Unification, which once existed between top-ranking forest leaders, was to burst as a result of cleavages. The striking disconnectedness within the movement reached its peak when certain key-leaders proved defiant and did not recognize the Kenya Parliament's authority, such as Stanley Mathenge, Kahiu-Itina and Kimbo. In fact, Mathenge demanded unsuccessfully equal powers with D. Kimathi within the Kenya

parliament, whereupon he opposed the Kenya Parliament by forming a new central council, the Kenya Rigii, with the above-mentioned leaders. This split earned them the epithet of dissidents for the Kenya Parliament members. Othaya groups and leaders, including a North Tetu leader: Kahiu Itina, aligned themselves with Mathenge and the Kenya Rigii; According to General Njama, Mathenge portrayed himself as the defender of the interests of the illiterate peasants in the movement (Barnett, 1966: 471). Indeed, he claimed to represent the majority of illiterate fighters, the former undertook a series of negotiations with Government representatives which doomed to failure on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1955.

There was a general feeling of discontent manifested by the Kenya Parliament members countenanced by North Tetu leaders and the Fort Hall groups under Macaria Kimemia. Regarding the Riigi leaders as individual renegades, the Kenya Parliament hoped to apprehend and try them. Indeed, on Mathenge and his liquidationist clique the Kenya Parliament was intransigent. Their feeling was the following:

*Our former Generals are backward and that they are individuals seeking fame, not commitment and responsibility. They only seek the freedom of their region, not the total liberation of Kenya and Africa. They do not know where Mombasa or Rudolf is, nor do they know the way from Cape to Cairo. They love chieftainship but not work. Let us not be misled by primitive people who hide under trees because they are afraid of fighting. We have tried to convince General Mathenge that the position he had taken is incorrect, but he has refused to be self-critical and to join us. As a result, we have no other alternative but to use force in order to bring Mathenge and his followers back to the Kenya Parliament. We can no longer allow them to sabotage our glorious struggle.*  
(Kinyatti, 1987: 113).

At the same time, the Kenya Parliament had reason to be sanguine that it could contact the colonial Government's agent so as to assume its rightful position in the negotiations. However, the Government resumed its land and air attacks with more

Lincoln heavy bombers on the forest and intensified its effort to isolate the guerrilla fighters whose number had been reduced to around 5,000 (Barnett, 1966: 309). The tight control over both Kikuyu villages and the forest fringe never ceased. By mid-1955, the prohibition of food crops cultivation within three miles of the forest imposed on local peasants, combined with a Government food denial policy, requiring that cattle be kept in guarded enclosures during the night, forced the forest units to utilize their dwindling supplies of arms and ammunition exclusively for food raids and, where absolutely necessary, defence. At the level of this rank-and-file, disintegration continued. Small groups of men escaped military discipline and thieved peasant crops, raided stores and shops. They were referred to by the organized forest guerrillas as 'Komeraras', a term normally used to designate criminals (ibid.: 213).

In the latter part of 1955, there ceased to be any coordination between the different sections. "*New conflicts emerged within the Parliament leadership which resulted in a further split. As D. Kimathi left with his supporters for Fort Hall, the Othaya members, including General Karari, decided to rejoin Mathenge and seek reconciliation. Some of the members were captured in June*" (Barnett, 1966: 489). No longer functioning as parts of a larger network of guerrilla units, and considerably reduced in both size and strength, forest groups were cornered. No longer capable of offensive action beyond the occasional raid for food, the groups, who did not choose to surrender, lived entirely off of the forest.

Consequently, associations such as the Kenya Young Stars evaporated during 1955. Nevertheless, associations other than provincial ones are formed at the level of districts. In Nairobi, Chiedo Argwings-Kodhek, the first Kenyan lawyer, managed to set up the Nairobi District African Congress in June 1955 (Martin, 1983: 58). Further

associations were to grow throughout the country, yet no contact was established with forest fighters. The latter had to survive in that forested milieu.

*“The growing concern with survival as such, and the felt necessity for divine intervention tended to override all ideological dimensions. Disintegration and defeat had, for the most part, destroyed the collective and positive tenets of the old forest ideology”* (Barnett, 1966: 491). Albeit the Emergency State was still in force, the revolution popularly known as Mau Mau came nearly to an end around the beginning of 1956.

Meanwhile, Government had proclaimed that all fighters who failed to surrender before the termination of the amnesty offer on 10 July would forfeit their land in the reserve. Before the end of the year 1956 several Kenya Parliament members had fallen and from 5,000 guerrilla fighters, only 1,500 remained in the Aberdares Range. Mathenge disappeared, General Karari was captured while Field Marshal Kimathi remained as the leader of several strong North Tetu sections and was not captured yet.

During that period, the most effective weapon used by the Government was propaganda. The media and, by extension, the papers—including Baraza founded in 1939 by colonial government as indicated before—did not dare genuinely disturb or call in question the *status quo*. Basically its function was to reinforce the given life of the time, to talk the audience into accepting the reality that Mau Mau was deleterious.

Surely, the news was completely anti-Mau Mau revolution. Launched by sensational press reports, army handouts and, eventually, the British government in Kenya, a strong campaign of disinformation vilified Mau Mau as a savage, atavistic movement. Indeed, sensational coverage referred to fighters as mad outlaws, atavism barbaric,

terrorists...whereas government forces were peace-restorers. The newspapers helped stir up racist fears during the rebellion by publishing gory pictures of murdered settlers and portraying the 'bestial' and 'degraded' practices of the activists, most of whom were currently considered seers and witch-doctors. For instance, in the context of bloodletting, the "*British government would kill ten times as many persons and put it down to Mau Mau, spreading unfair propaganda*" (Barnett, 1966: 159). The point was to discredit the Mau Mau rebellion branding it a terrorist organization. News Radio sets were distributed to all villages in order to propagate the government's information from the General Information Office, Nairobi. In addition, vernacular propaganda papers were freely distributed to all the civilians even the illiterate ones, and they were forbidden to read any other newspapers. Writings from local white settlers contributively painted Mau Mau movement as dark and satanic in content and aspiration. In a similar situation, J.F Lipscomb's *We Built a Country* (1956), as well as L.S.B Leakey's *Defeating Mau Mau* (1954) and Sir Michael Blundell's *So Rough a Wind* (1964) are without any contest good illustration of non-objective writing of the revolt.

The other weapon was the pseudo gangs, renamed the Special Force Teams (SFT). These units led by whites and later 'loyal' Africans would go to the forest to undermine the remnants of the guerrillas. Their figure dramatically slumped to only 500 forest fighters by September 1956. Happy to have their own lives spared ex-forest fighters lent themselves to government's efforts to track down their former comrades. In fact ex-fighters, who were either surrenderees or captured, were converted and formed under the colonial government. Some of the Kenya Rigii supporters such as Gati and Hungu of the Mburu Ngebo Army found it relatively easy to assist British official Ian Henderson in his hunt for D. Kimathi in exchange for their lives. Though the number of these pseudo-gangs was never very large, reaching a maximum of 90 by June 1956,

their presence in the forest increased the suspicion and hostility already existing between leaders and groups. The first success of the SFT was the capture of D. Kimathi in the same year. Truly, D. Kimathi was the last Mau Mau leader captured by Kikuyu tribal police on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1956 in Nyeri with 13 remaining guerrillas and he was sentenced to death by a court presided over by British Chief Justice, Sir Kenneth O'Connor and subsequently hanged in early 1957. D. Kimathi's execution marked definitively the termination of the revolt since he was considered the flesh and blood of the struggle, though some Mau Mau stayed in the forests well after the termination of the emergency.

However, during the period of emergency, trade-unionism and nationalism worked side by side and more importantly, there was a striking overlapping between trade-unionism and political nationalism to represent African political feeling as any political activity was banned. The same people were behind trade union organisations and nationalist movements; not least because when colonial administration allowed in 1956 the formation of political parties at the district level, all the leaders of the parties that emerged sprang up from the labour movement. Some of these parties included the Nairobi Congress Party (NCP) led by Arguing Kodnek, the Nairobi People's Convention Party (NPCP), the Mombasa African Democratic Union (MADU), and the South Nyanza Congress (SNC) to name just a few. Mboya founded the National People's Convention Party (NPCP) to campaign for his election in the Legislative Council in 1957, thus switching effectively from trade unionism to politics.

For the record Arguing Kodnek was the first African lawyer to set up a legal practice in Nairobi. He played an important role in defending many native Kenyans arrested during the emergency. A good example of this was to assist the 48 accused allegedly involved in Lari massacre—when 500 people were arrested, put on a mass



trial in a cattle shed and convicted in 1953. The lawyer (Kodnek) helped them successfully appeal on a legal technicality against the conviction of taking part in the massacre. He was also adept on the political platform and made fearless, hard-hitting and impassioned speeches in Nairobi which promoted his arrest on a charge of making seditious utterances in 1957.

In any event, the Mau Mau movement lasted for more than three years. Those years of fight had made Kenya Government run bankrupt. It caused its Finance Minister Mr. E.A. Vasey to borrow almost 30,000,000 Pounds from Her Majesty's Government. Overall, with the termination of the Emergency, the struggle had cost 50,000,000 Pounds (Martin, 1983: 56).

Besides, though Mau Mau freedom fighters had technically been defeated and the war ended in a military impasse, by its military operation Mau Mau revolt was far from being an insignificant rebellion. Indeed after the struggle, the choice that the authorities in London faced was Manichaean. It was between an unstable Colony, which cost a fortune in military expenditure, run by settlers who contributed a little to the economic accretion of the Empire, and a stable Colony run by Africans that contributed to the coffers of the Empire. The struggle, in question, won for native Kenyans, as a whole, the possibility for changes in their favour.

Major reforms were to be instituted ahead. The impact of the struggle was such that, reportedly, the Colonial Secretary Mr Oliver Littelton was going to introduce a new constitution and form a multi-racial Government. There was more than mere coincidence in the fact that the official end of the State of Emergency (later in January 1960) occurred while British colonial officials at the Lancaster House Conference were to agree on an African majority in the Kenya Legislative Council. The Mount Kenya

and Aberdares leaders were thus optimistic and were proud of pressing their demands for land and freedom. According to them, they had achieved more in a year and few months of fighting than African politicians had managed in over 30 years of talk.

More precisely, in the first place, the revolt persuaded the British policy makers to abandon the extreme demands of the white settlers. Some 20,000 European settlers wanted some kind of direct political power over the autochthons (<http://www.britanica.com/eb/article>). In the second place, native Kenyans had been granted nearly all the demands made by the KAU earlier. Land reform programs were launched to coordinate land holdings of the Kikuyu. For example, scattered plots of land were rearranged to give African farmers compact land plots which were easier to work than the hitherto scattered parcels (Jackson, 1990: 331). This was coupled with a relaxation of the ban on Africans growing coffee, raising urban wages and granting the first direct election of African members of the Legislative Assembly in 1957, followed by an increase in the number of African seats. 127,000 voters out of six million native Kenyans elected eight members on the Legislative Council which was the turning point on the path to independence (Martin, 1983: 56). The African elected members could then claim they were supported by a large electorate, and could use the Legislative Council to demand further constitutional reforms. Among the elected members were Oginga Odinga for Central Nyanza, Tom Mboya for Nairobi, Ronald Ngala for the Coast and Daniel Arap Moi for the Rift Valley and Masinde Muliro. Under the direction of Tom Mboya, the newly elected members formed the Elected Members' Organisation and refused to take part in the council on ministers. They demanded the abrogation of Lyttelton Constitution which was supposed to be in effect until 1960 as well as the end of all discriminatory measures. In the same year, Tom Mboya and Ronald Ngala moved to London to meet Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, to envision new institutional forms. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1957, Lennox-Boyd

constitution was set up. It announced parity on the Legislative Council with Europeans and Africans; thereby fourteen Europeans represented 50,000 persons and fourteen Africans represented six million autochthons (Martin, 1983: 58). This very democratization of the system was to be accompanied with economic reforms aiming at bettering Kenyan peasants' conditions. Equally, it was to win, through the new Constitution, a moderate Kenyan middle-class that could comprehend interlocutors with the colonial authority.

In 1958, the new Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, added another eight African elected members and four specially elected African members, along with four specially elected European and four specially elected Asian members. Yet, the major weakness of the African elected members was the lack of a national political party and the lack of a charismatic national leader, with J. Kenyatta still in prison. However, the leadership problem was partly overcome with the acceptance of the detained J. Kenyatta as the leader of Kenya's Africans. Odinga Odinga astounded the Legislative Council in 1958 by referring in these terms to J. Kenyatta and his detained colleagues:

*These people before they were arrested were the political leaders of the Africans in the country, and the Africans respected them as their political leaders, and even at this moment, in the heart of hearts of the Africans, they are still the political leaders.*  
(Mazrui and Tidy, 1984: 107).

Though held in detention, J. Kenyatta was still considered by Africans as their leader. Odinga's plea was unreservedly upheld by Chiedo Argwings-Kodhek and Tom Mboya. Mboya's slogan: '*Uhuru na Kenyatta*'<sup>87</sup> was adopted by the African elected

---

<sup>87</sup> Uhuru na Kenyatta: a slogan in Swahili aimed at letting the colonial state know that independence meant freeing Kenyatta (Whiteley, 1969).

members. Most urgently to show their support to J. Kenyatta, they decided to boycott the Legislative Council in 1959, by demanding a full constitutional conference to grant Kenya's independence, and by calling for the release of J. Kenyatta. The boycott was daring indeed, but it showed how confident African nationalists had become at that time with the full independence of Ghana as the first Colony in sub-Saharan Africa to break away from its foreign master in the post-1945 era (on March 6, 1957). Then Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah declared: "*At long last the battle has ended. Ghana, our beloved country, is free for ever.*" He added: "*The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent*" (*Time*, March 5, 2007). Add to that, the 'Liberal' wind blown by Michael Blundell who was willing to accept changes progressively. As a result, the colonial government lifted the ban put on national political parties during the years of emergency and allowed them to form again. Consequently, the Kenya National Party (KNP) and the Kenya Independence Movement (KIM) were formed. Still in 1959, under the new Conservative ministers in England, the government announced its intention to remove all racial barriers including those in education<sup>88</sup> and the barrier on entry of Africans into land in the 'white highlands'. At the end of the same year, Iain Macleod was appointed Colonial Secretary by the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, with instructions to accelerate the rate of political advance in Britain's African Colonies.

With the lifting of the state of emergency in 1959, the era witnessed the Africanizing of the Legislative Council. It also witnessed the formation of multi-racial national

---

<sup>88</sup> Education was regulated on racial basis. Only white children enjoyed freed and compulsory education, and in addition to the fact that there was a small number of state schools destined to African Kenyans, most of these were directed by missionaries and did not receive equally treatment with white schools regarding education allowances. George Padmore claims that in 1952 for instance, £512,581 were allocated to 715 European children whereas £1,89,742 to 337,000 African children: one white child received in fact £72 whereas 1 African child received £3. At the same period, the government allocated £999,207 to projects for white children education, but only £350,196 for African children (Padmore, 1961: 252). In the same year, schools and independent churches flourished numbering about 300 with an enrolment of 50 00 pupils (Barnett, 1966: 38).

parties. Masinde Muliro set up the Kenya National Party (KNP); Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga and Julius Kiano formed the Kenya Independence Movement (KIM) and Michael Blundell was behind the New Kenya Group (NKG). The question of an African majority rule for a self-governing Kenya was decisively put on the Imperial agenda in 1960.

Macmillan set out on an African tour and made a speech (see Annex III), on what he dubbed the 'Wind of Change,' on the eve of the First Lancaster House Conference about Kenya on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1960 in London. The outcome was Macleod Constitution. The conference's measures actually transformed the Legislative Council: native Kenyans held thirty seats out of a total of sixty seven on the Legislative Council; there were to be thirty three open seats, twenty reserved seats (ten European, eight Asian and two Arab) designated to guarantee the representation of minorities; plus twelve special seats (Martin, 1983: 60). Besides, all candidates accepted in racial primaries to go forward to secondary elections by a multiracial electorate. The new Council of Ministers was made up of four Africans, three Europeans and one Asian as non-officials and four European officials.

Albeit native Kenyans went to London presenting a full frontal unified body, some discrepancy occurred in the course of the discussion at the Lancaster House. Eventually, the discrepant views led to the formation of two distinct national parties. In fact, Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga, Julius Kiano and James Gichuru created The Kenya African National Union (KANU); whereas the Kalenjin Political Alliance of Taaita Toweett and Daniel Arap Moi, the Luyia party of Masinde Muliro, the coastal party of Ronald Ngala and the Masai United Front formed the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) replacing respectively the Kenyan National Party and the Kenyan Independence Movement (Martin, 1983: 60).

At the elections of 1961, on the one hand, KANU polled 67, 4 % of votes and nineteen out of thirty three open seats; on the other hand, KADU obtained eleven seats. With J. Kenyatta in jail at Maralal, KANU, refused to take part in the Government which was finally formed by an unwieldy coalition: KADU, the New Kenya Group (NKG) led by Michael Blundell and the Kenya Indian Congress (KIC) run by Ronald Ngala (ibid.: 60).

The main political issue was the liberation of J. Kenyatta. Despite all these new powers, African leaders were not ready to let him down. For them, J. Kenyatta epitomized so fundamentally the struggle for freedom in Kenya. Being referred to, with African respect for age, as *Mzee* (the old man or 'elder'), J. Kenyatta was released from prison in August 1961 to become the president of KANU in October 1961 and leader of the African majority in the legislative assembly (Shellington, 1993: 390).

A second conference took place in February and April 1962 at Lancaster House with J. Kenyatta leading KANU and making concessions to KADU to set the stage for Kenya's independence. The, then, new colonial secretary, Reginald Maudling, told the Cabinet that officials throughout Kenya believed: "*one that the rate of advance to independence....was rapid and two they could think of no way in which it could now be slowed down*" (Cooper, 1975: 398). After the elections of May 1963, the autonomy of Kenya was proclaimed in June of the same year with J. Kenyatta as Prime Minister of a KANU government. In the third and last conference at Lancaster House in September, issues relevant to the independence of Kenya were discussed including the protection of minorities, the lowering of the Union Jack and the hoisting of red, black, white and green colours of the new nation of Kenya on 12 December 1963. That was unquestionably the culmination of political forces in motion upheld by the 1953-56 revolution called Mau Mau. Undoubtedly, as a catalyst, the movement had both an

African national dimension centred largely on the aim and concept of ‘freedom’ and a tribal dimension framed mostly in terms of Kikuyu claims to alienated land. To achieve that freedom, the price was rather stiff in terms of human fatalities resulting from Mau Mau conflict. The next point is about an estimate of such fatalities.

### **Casualties:**

Actually, when the British left Kenya in 1963, they destroyed all official files relating to their crimes. Indeed, native Kenyans still recall seeing bonfires around Nairobi in the final days before the British departure in 1963; some former colonial officers even acknowledged receiving orders to destroy hundreds of thousands of documents relating to the victims. The very story and evidence of how Britain crushed the revolt in Kenya were therefore effectively going in smoke, as well as the exact number of casualties. Consequently, up to now, there is still not a single death toll, but several of them. If we consider the figures given by Odinga in his autobiography (2,000 killed by Mau Mau and 11,000 activists killed by government troops) the death toll is about 13,000, not including civilian native Kenyans and the victims of the Pipe Line as Oginga points out. Quite the same figures are given by the colonial authorities and Olson & Shadle’s *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire* (11,503 rebels, 590 security forces and 1,877 civilians killed: about 13,970 killed in total).

However, according to ‘Secret History’, a program broadcast on Channel Four Television in Britain on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1999: the activists’ death toll during the emergency was “11,500, of whom around 1,000 were hanged. 80,000 Kikuyu were imprisoned in concentration camps, 150,000 Africans, mostly Kikuyu, lost their lives, with many dying of disease and starvation in the protected villages” (<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/36/026.html>). On the other side—still according to Channel Four—the Mau Mau killed around 2,000 people, including 32

European civilians and 63 members of the security forces. All these figures put together, the death toll of the revolt according to the Channel Four program is then put to 163,500. For the sake of exactness, it would be useful to have the survivors' own account too; most of them in their seventies and eighties now, and Channel Four did rely on several testimonies of these survivors. The program also takes into account casualties among civilians which don't exist in Oginga's biography for instance.

In the same perspective, Caroline Elkins published *Imperial Reckoning: the Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* where she interviews Mau Mau veterans and some ex-British officers in Kenya at that time in a thorough historical documentation of the capital crimes during the revolt. She came to the conclusion that: "*I now believe there was in late colonial Kenya a murderous campaign to eliminate Kikuyu people that left tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands dead.*" (Elkins, 2005: 78) In fact, while interviewing some Mau Mau veterans and other witnesses of the events such as missionaries, Elkins discovered that detainees in camps moved "up" or "down" the "Pipeline" according to their degree of resistance and also that brutality was something natural and took place at every scale, ranging from electrocution and mutilation to beatings and various forms of sexual abuses and humiliations. In an interview to the BBC Two program: *Kenya: White Terror* broadcast on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, she personally admitted when evoking the death toll of the revolt and how Britain crushed it: "*Conservatively, I would put that figure [the death toll] at somewhere around 50,000*" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/correspondent/2416049.stm>).

There may not be an exact death toll, and as investigations keep on going, new figures and facts were and will always be discovered. The ensuing sources are supplementary pieces of news: On a global scale, the brunt of front-line casualties was certainly borne by Africans. The total figure of Mau Mau casualties probably exceeded



10,000, alongside 1,700 African loyalists and barely 100 Europeans (Shellington, 1993: 330). Another source provided an estimate of: 13,058 fatalities: 10,000 Mau Mau; 2000 Kikuyu civilians; 1,000 African soldiers; 58 Europeans and Asians (Martin, 1983: 56). For Oginga Odinga, government troops killed 11,000 Mau Mau activists and detained 90,000 in detention camps. On the other hand—still in Oginga’s view point—casualties inflicted by the Mau Mau were about 2,000, of whom only thirty Whites (Oginga, 1967: 124). Such figures are underpinned by British sources indicating that the official number of European settlers killed was thirty-two; whereas the official number of native Kenyans killed was estimated at 11,503. Conversely, according to the historian J. Jackson, all in all about 2,000 Africans, thirty-two Europeans and twenty-six Asians had been slain (Jackson, 1990: 331). For Professor Elkins Caroline of Harvard University whose study of the revolt: *Imperial Reckoning: The untold story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2006, claims the toll among Mau Mau is probably at least as high as 70,000 (Elkins, 2005: 15-16). Elkins methodology for arriving at that figure was the object of criticism, notably from a letter writer David Elstein. In the *New York Review of Books*, Elstein contends that Professor Elkin’s figures are derived from an idiosyncratic reading of census figures and a tendentious interpretation of the fortified village scheme. More recently, the demographer John Blacker, in an article in *African-Affairs*, has estimated the total number of African death around 50,000 and half were children under ten (Blacker, 2007: 205-227). For scholar Sorrenson the Mau Mau was to be seen as a civil war or rather a series of local civil wars which accounted for the major part of the 13,000 African deaths during and after the emergency (Sorreson, 1967: 99).

Regarding all the studies made on the subject up to now, and in the light of these above estimates, concerning Mau Mau, there seems to be congruency around 11,000 fatalities. The British reaction to crush the Mau Mau revolt was utterly atrocious. The

living conditions in detention camps proved to be serious outrages to human rights. And John Nottingham himself, a district colonial officer during the 1950s who stayed on in Kenya after the uprising, told the BBC Two correspondent of *Kenya: White Terror* that: “*compensation should be paid immediately as most of the victims are now in their 80s*”. He added: “*What went on in the Kenya camps and villages was brutal, savage torture.[...] I feel ashamed to have come from a Britain that did what it did here.*” (<http://news.bbc.net.uk/1/hi/england/london/3026747.stm>) Some Mau Mau veterans like Mwangi Kanyari who met John Mac Ghie, the BBC Two correspondent reporting for the program, are now threatening to launch a legal action for compensation against the UK government.

A survivor of the Hola camp reported to Channel Four the abuse and fatal beating of eleven detainees in Hola prison. As it happened, actually, on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1959, eighty five internees at the Hola Detention Camp refused to take part in forced labour and sat down in protest. They had been refusing to work for nine days. When the camp commander, G. M. Sullivan, blew his whistle over, guards attacked the prisoners with clubs and rifle butts, killing one of them. The prisoners were then asked if they would work and as they still refused, Sullivan blew his whistle once more and the attack was renewed several times. By the end of assaults, the guards had beaten eight prisoners to death and seriously injured sixty others. The survivor of the Hola camp explained:

*We refused to do this work. We were fighting for our freedom. We were not slaves. There were two hundred guards. One hundred seventy stood around us with machine guns. Thirty guards were inside the trench with us. The white man in charge blew his whistle and the guards started beating us. They beat us from 8 am to 11.30. They were beating us like dogs. I was covered by other bodies - just my arms and legs were exposed. I was very lucky to survive. But the others were still being beaten. There was no escape for them.*

(<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/36/026.html>).

Governor Sir Evelyn Baring issued a statement claiming that the prisoners had died from drinking contaminated water. A few years earlier, he might have easily extricated himself from a similar situation, but by 1959 the rebellion was officially over and an atrocity like the Hola camp massacre could no longer be covered up. The incident became front-page news in Britain, and the Labour opposition in parliament attacked the Conservative government for the brutality of their methods in Kenya.

In any event, atrocities were committed on both sides. Mau Mau veterans have sued for compensation from the British government and their lawyers have documented about 6,000 cases of human right abuses including fatal whippings, rapes and blinding. Of particular note is the number of executions authorized by the courts. In the first eight months of the emergency, only 35 rebels were hanged, but by November 1954, 756 had been hanged, 508 for offense less than murder. By the end of 1954 over 900 rebels had been hanged, and by the end of the Emergency, the total was over 1,000 (Oginga, 1967: 124). Over the conflict some soldiers either would not or could not differentiate between Mau Mau and non-combatants and seemingly shot innocent native Kenyans. It was complete mayhem. Many soldiers were reported to have collected severed rebel hands for an unofficial five-shilling bounty, although this was done to identify the dead by fingerprint. It was also alleged that some kept a scoreboard of their killings, a practice forbidden by the commanding General Office Hinde, in charge of all security forces. This led him to issue stern warnings to troops.

However, Mau Mau militants were also guilty of human rights violations. More than 1,800 Kenyan civilians are known to have been murdered by Mau Mau, and hundreds more disappeared (Anderson, 2005: 4). Victims were often hacked to death by machetes. At Lari on the night of March 25-26 1953 for example, Mau Mau forces herded 120 Kikuyu into huts and set fire to them (ibid.: 4).

### **VIII- Mau Mau and Nationalism:**

One needs to indicate that the struggle was carried out at two levels. First, at the practical level: Physical confrontations. Second, at the level of ideas: mental confrontation. The Mau Mau fought the British militarily but they also fought them on the basis of Kikuyu values and related religious beliefs. Although The Mau Mau failed to win outright victory from the colonial powers, they were nevertheless politically triumphant in the sense that they both broke the white settlers' political will to continue ruling over an African majority and opened the doors for black majority rule (Mazrui, 1986: 287).

Beyond political breakthroughs achieved through the nationalist struggle, the general question of Mau Mau ideology was the object of controversy. The Movement was more than complex with major different components, African national, Kikuyu tribal, barbaric, secular and moral-religious. Indeed, for Rosenberg and Nottingham, it was "*an ongoing rationally conceived nationalist movement*" (Rosenberg and Nottingham, 1966: 54). In addition, Kinyatti argues that "*Mau Mau was based on patriotic nationalism rather than on the theory of dialectical materialism*" (Kinyatti, 1987: 12) Generally speaking, during the early stages of any national struggle, nationalism is a positive element; however, it eventually poses the danger of channeling the people's struggle away from the class struggle because of its ideological limitations. Via this dissertation one is given the opportunity to assume that there were no ideological limitations within the Mau Mau movement in spite of the fact that the national struggle was tribal for some and religious for others. For instance, Leakey views it rather as a "*self-conscious return to tribalism....based on synthetic paganism*" (Leakey, 1954: 41). Majdalaney considers it as "*a wholly tribal manifestation aiming at tribal domination and not at national liberation movement*" (Majdalaney, 1962: 70). For Mair, it was "*a form of millenarism*" (Mair, 1958: 175). In her pamphlet, *The*

*psychology of Mau Mau* , D.C Carothers, a colonial government psychologist, argues that the liberation movement represented a return to a barbaric narcissism among the Gikuyu. Thus the Mau Mau oath was portrayed as a symptom of Psychological deviation. A similar theory is to be found in Ian Henderson's *the Hunt for Dedan Kimathi* (Henderson and Goodhart, 1958); conversely, it is asserted by Cornfield to be "a pseudo-religious cult...of the golden age" (Cornfield, 1960: 199). In any case, the element of religion keeps one's attention.

Therewith D. Kimathi forcefully expressed it forcefully. For him, "*Kenya is a prophet chosen by God just like Moses who God chose to deliver the Israelite nation out of the Egyptian slavery; so is Kenya chosen to deliver the Kenya people out of the colonial slavery*" (Barnett, 1966: 440). God is invoked to intervene as a deliverer. And D. Kimathi made the point: "*We pray you for our leader J. Kenya, guard and guide him*" (ibid.: 163). He added "*We are God's people they can't defeat us*" (ibid.: 440). Besides at H.Q. Kairani, in June 1953 General Mathenge urged the lettered K. Njama to read few verses from the bible to the fighters. Here is a selected passage from Lamentations, Chapter 5, verse 9: "*We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness*" (Barnett, 1966: 184). Whatever the phraseology and logic used, God was always there. Biblical precepts visibly stimulated efforts and bravery in that hard struggle. The bottom line was that this verse above instilled the sense of sacrifice amongst these fighters who happened, also, to be humans, not to say breadwinners.

Alongside the biblical context, there coexisted magico-religious beliefs in Kikuyu culture with ideological reactions to contemporary events. Facing Kitui, the mountain, which the Kikuyu people believed to be the dwelling of their god Ngai. Kitui prayers were addressed to Ngai God:

*Oh God the merciful we pray thee for guarding us throughout the day.  
The soil you gave our forefathers is being used by strangers who have  
robbed us of our lands. ...We have no weapons to fight against these  
people, but we believe that thy sword will defeat our enemies.*  
(ibid.: 162).

Clearly, aside from tribal, secular and moral-religious considerations, nationalism, as a form of political mobilization, had and has a strong influence on modern Kenya. While forging a nation in the European sense, the Kenyan elite somehow provided the glue to stick the separate categories of the society together. There was an attempt to transform ethnic consciousness into national consciousness. Furthermore, there was a powerful emphasis on members of society as corporate associations (trade union, religious, educational and political associations) and not members of society as individuals. Hotchester and Kurumi make an interesting definitional point between national movement groups “*seeking to persuade their compatriots of the importance of consciously belonging to a nation*” (Hotchester and Kurumi, 1998: 80) and nationalism “*namely that outlook which gives an absolute priority to the values of the nation over all other values and interests*” (ibid.: 81). In this dissertation, among other aspects, two structural phases in the development of national movements had been dealt with:

Phase A involves the patriotic agitation by a new range of Kenyan activists in order to awaken national consciousness among a wide audience. Through rallies and mass-meetings educated Kenyan elite and the military in the forests recalled, time and again, that they were fighting for the whole country. In so doing, their energies were devoted to the dissemination of an awareness of the linguistic, social and sometimes historical attitudes to the non-dominant group. What were the distinctive features of the different tribes and how could they be bridged over by the activists? These are two questions that the educated Kenyan elite tried to settle.

Phase B—which partly answers the questionings— shows how a mass movement was formed while the major part of the population came to set special store by their national identity. For instance agricultural tribes entered the urban environment whereby the pattern of tribal isolation was, during the post-war period, giving way to broader groupings of an African national character. Albeit in Nairobi, some societies were still based on tribal or clan affiliation (e.g. the Abaluhya Association, Kitui Friendly Association and others), a growing number of African Kenyans were “*entering economic political and other associations where tribal identification was over-ridden by racial, occupational and residential criteria (e.g. the domestic and Hotel Workers’ Union, Kenya African Union , Labour Trade Union of East Africa) organized by a segment of educated Africans*” (Barnett, 1966: 28).

Beyond the exercise of political power, it is not haphazard that the nationalist forest leaders did not coin their organisation: the Kenya Freedom Army (KFA), but the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA). The inclusion of “land” deserves commendable attention because the identification of the homeland is vital for these nationalist forest leaders. The homeland is the basis for the realisation of material projects, thus its political framework constitutes a foundation and an arena without which the forest fighters’ dream remains a mere blueprint, but whose acquisition allows them—nationalist forest leaders—to translate their ambitions into practical realities. The land allows them to realise their goals of sovereignty, fraternity, identity and regeneration<sup>89</sup>. “*The land can be renewed, regenerated, rebuilt and through the act of rebuilding, people can be changed, their outlook revolutionized their capacities enlarged*” (Smith, 1994: 510).

---

<sup>89</sup> It is important to note that the post-independence expectations and promises of the Revolution were not totally met according to some guerillas whose interviews are provided in Annex II. These interviews inform also about the living conditions of the forest fighters.

For nationalists, the territory became a space to which identity did not have to be attached by a distinctive tribe that held or coveted that territory with the desire to have full control over it for the tribe's benefit. This, in fact, led nationalists to create a special territory, the national homeland.

Bearing in mind the importance of land which was perceived as a territory Mau Mau leaders with their revolutionary movement were certainly partakers in the process of cross-linking various tribes and local communities, fostering new loyalties (e.g. via oath-taking) to wider groupings and, above all, introducing an element of African national consciousness.



## **CONCLUSION**

*The measure of life does not solely  
depend on how much we struggled,  
But also on how much we left”*  
Charlton Eston, 2000.

Via some kind of chronological stretch, this work was an attempt to put in perspective the realities of Kenya people’s history tracing back the yoke of colonialism, the presence of its forces at work, the way they impacted on the Kenyan society as well as the reaction of the autochthons. The work features an intense focus on the Kenyan forebears who stumbled, persevered and triumphed with harrowing and glorious results and finally prevailed in shaping the nation Kenya is today. More to the point, this piece of work is done partly in contradistinction to the works of few early historians whose major concern was, among other things, to eulogize British colonial rule to conceal the colonial sins and allow neo-colonialism to take effective root.

In any event, the great voyages of discovery and exploration led to the end of one era and the emergence of another whose ultimate phase was the catalytic Berlin conference. It served as a convenient mark that institutionalized colonialism. This phenomenon commenced with a burst of interest in overseas continents, including Africa. In the process, the curiosity of missionaries, explorers and scientists was partly

supplanted by a category of ambitious careerists, hawkers, soldiers, officials, opportunists and would-be belligerents all of whom participated in the occupation, i.e. the colonization of Africa, and East Africa by extension.

In reviewing the hectic years that brought colonial Kenya to the threshold of its modern post-colonial history, one cannot help stating that Kenya history was a tale of crushing disappointments, resilience and hopes of a people, a would-be nation and a continent. With the advent of British colonial rule in Kenya in the heat of that pivotal period marked by the scramble for African territories, and the consequences that followed, Kenya and African Kenyans could no longer fit into their ancient form—a jigsaw of hundreds of clans. As it happened, the British colonial power participated, nonetheless, in the shaping of a nation by: drawing clear cut boundaries, during Berlin Conference in 1884, by imposing English, a unifying language (the point was to make everybody speak intelligibly the same language whether they were educated or illiterate, secular or religious, violent or not), and by inspiring Kenyan leaders to set up Western-style political parties to put forward their claims. Yet, the road leading to nationhood could not be achieved unless Kenyan nationalists forged a strategy that had to go beyond the narrow focus imposed de facto by tribalism. The question that is the point at issue is not whether British colonialism caused prejudice, but rather how historical conditions shaped socio-political relations to transform the ethnic kaleidoscope of Kenya into a modern state? To put it differently, how colonizers and autochthons interacted to create the particular set of relationships that paved the way for the emergence of the nation. There was an attempt to answer this question all along the chapters of this dissertation.

The first basic structure of Chapter one is broadly chronological. The chapter covered the pre-colonial era. It extended approximately from the fifteenth century to

the end of the nineteenth century. At that juncture, there was an attempt to cast light on both the international and African scenes and Kenya. In that respect, the focus was on the factors facilitating British penetration, the early stages of British settlement and the eventual establishment of a Colony. In addition, the chapter cast light on Kenyan early resistance and an analysis of nationalism. The point was to make out how the gap across the barrier of history between resistance movement of the past and the birth of nationalism was bridged.

Chapter two examined the 1900-1914 era. The latter witnessed the implementation of colonial machinery and its aftermath. Precisely, the missionaries' activities, plus the existence of a dominant European caste and colonial regime combined with a subordinate African Kenyan population were tackled. Land confiscation and a repressive politico-economic system were behind the mounting tension between the autochthons and the colonial authority. The point was to show how a growing population, whose aspirations and ambitions were repeatedly undercut, reacted through other forms of ongoing resistance: the set up of natavistic organisations and so on.

Chapter three, dealt with a crucial period (1914- the1940's) during which a solid feeling of togetherness was taking root among different tribes. The chapter brought under review exogenous and endogenous factors that led to the rise of nationalism during the inter-war years. Then, charismatic and gifted personalities like J. Kenyatta set up associations and helped coordinate efforts with the masses while addressing public rallies in various parts of the country. Many of their speeches articulated around forging unity in the country and continuing the struggle against alien rule. Here the objective was to depict the struggle and analyse the way the Kenyan militants sought to establish through the creation of a black consciousness, not only a cultural identity but

a viable basis for political action. They did so by hastening the dissolution of old and the construction of new social relations.

Exploring the 1940's and the 1950's, chapter four analysed how Mau Mau contributively assisted African Kenyans forge nationalism out of anger and searing loss, and how a people was committed to freedom however hard and long the road had to be. For the Kenya militants, their country was not to remain a white 'man's country'. For that aim, they resorted both to constitutional and military methods. Behind chapter four, the point was to trace the road leading to nationhood despite obstacles and stress that the idea related to 'the independent nation Kenya' was no longer an abstraction. Eventually, Mc Millan's 'Wind of Change' blew over the new nation of Kenya on 12 December 1963. The period during which Lugard believed that "*the era of complete independence is not as yet visible on the horizon of time*" (Lugard, 1922: 198) was definitively part and parcel of the past.

As yet, Kenya can't be built on misery, ignorance and inferiority of that past. Should this country's past be destroyed for all that? Definitely not, the past has its uses. Though Kenya history had undergone messes, it is only by historical analysis that one can determine how a people got into messes and how future generations can learn from those past lessons to deal with the present and face the future.

*"Nationalism emerged as a means through which territories were produced and reproduced by somehow amalgamating individual places into a national territory"* (Paasi, 1995: 53). This process happened in Kenya in the making of its colonial and post-colonial history. Is it still true of today? In any event, in Kenya nationalism could not be fathomed unless it was to be defined not in ethnic or linear terms, nor on the

basis of a monoculture, but in the perspective of a universal, plural culture based on a single status shared by individuals. Right is the scholar Linton when he points out:

*Because of this difference in cultural participation, it is a mistake to consider a culture as the common denominator between the activities, ideas and attitudes of members of one society. Such common denominators can be established by individuals who share the same particular status.*

(R. Linton, quoted in Nait Brahim, 2006: 99).

In Kenya that status was the classification of the autochthons by the dominant whites as 'Natives' reconciled to the bottom rung of society and subject to discriminatory and degrading policies. Thus classified and treated as one, the black community forged a unifying base of shared interests with the view to challenging a common enemy. As growing awareness was heartened by the educated elite, tribal discrepancies were played down (Barnett, 1966: 30). One thing leading to another, "linguistic usage, educational advantage and political aspiration were shaping aggregations of a kind which in Europe had long been labelled nations (Flint, 1976: 4). In fact, the overlap in leadership and rank-and-file via numerous Kenyan associations (Kenya's African political, trade union and church-school movements) yielded a single movement, a nation. Nationalism created the Kenyan nation. How was that?

As it happened, during the post-war years, migrant labour threw a large number of peasants in the urban milieu. There, they often met fellow-compatriots of other districts to form trade unions, political associations and other urban groups. One thing leading to another, multi-racial associations of the city and especially the fast-growing African nationalist and trade union movements tended to cross-link the many rural peasant aggregates, the forest fighters and people of like mind to involve them diversely in the process of African unification. As a result, "*inter-tribal suspicion and hostility among*

*the Kamba, Kikuyu, Baluhya, Giriama, Luo etc...were reduced in the framework of urban associations. These multi-tribal groups were successful in pointing out the vital interests common to all Africans and in working for the resolution of the emerging conflicts”* (ibid.: 30). Albeit the pastoral tribes remained outside this integratory process, amongst the agriculturists, it was unquestionably the Kikuyu who played the leading role in the context of Kenyan nationalism. Hopefully, they were followed at some distance by the Luo, Kamba, Baluhya, Teita and other tribes (ibid.: 30).

If nationalism is mostly about making claims on behalf of the nation, in Kenya in what way were claims made by early resisters and nationalists alike useful to readers today? How did Kenyan militants bridge the gap across the barrier of history between resistance movement of the past and modern consciousness? How this was achieved bearing in mind one of the themes of the new historiography of the wars of imperial conquest? The theme that: the historical memory of resistance to colonial conquest has been a paramount component in African nationalism. To emphasize the point of historical continuity, one will conclude by relating a somewhat homely anecdote concerning the Embu people. Badly beaten by the British in 1906, the Embu were forced to give up their weapons and forbidden to carry any weapons in the future. The memories of 1906 remain fresh since on a signboard, planted in 1963 (Kenya’s Independence Day) at the Feeder Road leading to Ngoiri primary school, one can read: *“Return our shield and spears”* (Vandervott, 1998: 215).

All in all, even if nationalism (as a movement) served the cause of liberation, in the light of present-day events, the movement does not seem strong enough to ensure the perennity of post-colonial stability most African Kenyans wish for. At this last stage, it is convenient to put the following questioning: Should the type of nationalism under discussion in this thesis require a change or amendment today, or else should it be left

out for the sake of another federating process? Therefrom, what are the features of Kenyan society today that could eventually help shape this new federating process? The answer entails a searching look at the conditions that are inherent in Kenya today which may be the object of future work.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **1/ Primary sources:**

#### **Archives:**

- **Carothers, J.C.** 1955. *The Psychology of Mau Mau*. Nairobi: Kenya Government Printer.
- Defence, Deposit 13, Piece 123, *Kenya National Archives*.
- **Oldham, J.H.** 1925. *Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical African. Dependencies: Education in British Tropical Africa*. His Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) (Cmd. 2374, 1925)
- Report of the Kenya Land Commission, Cmd. 1922. *PEP Colonial Students in Britain* 1955. London Archives. London: United Kingdom Government Publications.

### **2/ Secondary sources:**

#### **a-Books:**

- **Aaronovitch, S. K.** 1947. *Crisis in Kenya*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- **Afigbo, H.** 1992. *The Making of Modern Africa*. London: Longman Group Limited.



- **Anderson, B.** 1983. *Imagined communities; Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, New Left Books.
- **Anderson, D.** 2005. *Histories of the hanged: The dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson
- **Barbag, A.** 1976. *The Role of the English Language in the Development of African Nationalism*. Warsaw: University of Warsaw.
- **Barnett, D.** 1966. *Mau Mau from Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt*. New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks.
- **Basil, D.** 1978. *Africa in Modern History: The Search for a New Society*. London: Penguin Books.
- **Bell, M.** 1986. *Contemporary Africa: Development, Culture and the State*. London: Longman.
- **Bell, M.** 1986. *Development Culture and the State*. London: Longman.
- **Bennett, G.** 1964. *Kenya: A Political History in the Colonial Period*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Blundell, M.** 1964. *'So Rough a Wind': The Kenya Memoirs of Sir Michael Blundell*. London: Weindenfeld and Nocolson.
- **Bone, R. A.** 1958. *The Negro Novel in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- **Bottomore, T.B.** 1980. *Sociology: A View to Problems of Literature*. London: Unwin University Books.
- **Boyd, A. and Van Rensburg, P.** 1962. *An Atlas of African Affairs*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger.
- **Brantley, C.** 1981 *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya*. San Berkeley: Berkley University Press.
- **Brett, E. A.** 1978. *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change. 1919-1939*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

- **Breuilly** J. 1998. *Nationalism and the State*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- **Buell**, R. L. 1928. *The Native Problem in Kenya*. New York: Macmillan.
- **Campbell**, C. 2007. *Race and Empire: Eugenics in Colonial Kenya*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- **Chabot**, J. L. 1986. *Le Nationalisme*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- **Christianson**, C. 1968. *Geographical studies in Highland Kenya*. Stockholm: University of Stockholm.
- **Coleman**, J. 1928. *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- **Collins**, R. 1971. *African History: Text and Readings*. Santa Barbara, Ca: Random House.
- **Cooper**, F. 1975. *Decolonization and African Society. The Labour Question in French and British Africa*. London: Longman.
- **Cornevin**, R. & **Cornevin**, M. 1978. *Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine*. Vol III. Paris: Payot.
- **Cornevin**, R. 1975. *Histoire de l'Afrique*. Vol. 3. Paris: Payot.
- **Cornevin**, R. 1978. *Histoire Générale de l'Afrique, l'Afrique précoloniale*. Paris: Payot.
- **Cornfield**, F.D. 1960. *Historical Survey of the Origin and Growth of Mau Mau*. London: City House of publication.
- **Coulson**, A. 1982. *Tanzania: A Political Economy*. Oxford: Clarrendon Press.
- **Coupland**, R. 1956. *East Africa and its Invaders*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Crowder**, M. 1968. *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*. Evanston, Ill.: Northern University Press.
- **Curtin**, P. and **Fireman**, S. 1978. *African history*. London: Longman.

- **Curtis M.** 2003. *Web of Deceit*, New York: Vintage.
- **Decraene, P.** 1979. *Le Panafricanisme*. Collection Que sais-je? Paris: P.U.F.
- **Dilley, M. R.** 1957. *British Policy in Kenya Colony*. New York: Nelson.
- **Dubois, W.E.B.** 1896. *The Suppression of the African Slave*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- **Dubois, W.E.B.** 1940. *Dusk of Dawn*. New York: Hartcourt Brace.
- **Duignan, P.** and **Gann, L.H.** 1960. *Colonialism in Africa (1870-1960)*. Vol. 4. London: Cambridge University Press.
- **Elkins, C.** 2005. *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*. London: Pimlico Paperback.
- **Elkins, C.** 2005. *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.
- **Fage, J** and **Oliver, R.** 1988. *A Short History of Africa*, (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Penguin
- **Fage, J.** and **Oliver R.** 1997. *Cambridge History of Africa*. Vol. 6. London.: Penguin.
- **Flint, C.E.J.** 1976. *Imperialism and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Gatheru, M.** 2005. *From Colonization to Independence. 1888-1970*. New York: McFerland and Company.
- **Gellner, D.** 1983. *Nation and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- **Ghai, D.P.** 1965. *Portrait of a minority, Asians in East Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Giddens, A.** 1985. *The Nation State and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- **Githumo, M.** (wa). 1979. *Land and Nationalism in East Africa: The Impact of Land Expropriation and Land Grievances upon the Rise and Development of Nationalism*. New York: New York University Press.
- **Githumo, M.** (wa). 1981. *Land and Nationalism in Kenya*. New York: Hardcover.

- **Guibernau, M.** 1999. *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age*. Cambridge Polity Press.
- **Hailey, W.M. (Lord).** 1956. *An African Survey, A study of problems arising in Africa South of the Sahara*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Hanawalt, B.** 1998. *The Middle Ages*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- **Harlow, V. and Chilver, E.M.** 1965. *History of East Africa*. Vol. II. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Hatch, J.** 1965. *A History of Post-War Africa*. New York: Frederick A Praeger.
- **Haywood, C.** 1964. *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force*. Aldeshot: Galen and Polden.
- **Hazlewood, A.** 1979. *The Economy of Kenya. The Kenyatta Era*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- **Heers, J.** 2008. *Les Négriers en terre d'Islam: La Traite des noirs, VIIe-XVIe siècles*. Paris: Edition Perrin.
- **Henderson I. and Goodhart P.** 1958. *The Hunt for Dedan Kimathi*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- **Herb, G. and Kaplan, D.** 1999. *Nested Identities: Nationalism, Territory and Scale*. Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield.
- **Herlehy, T. J.** 1938. *Ties That Bind*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Hill, M.F.** 1949. *Permanent Wave. The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway*. Vol.I. Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours.
- **Hirst. P and Thomson, G.** 1996. *Globalisation in Question*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- **Hjort, A.** 1972. *Ethnic Transformation, Dependency and Change*. Stockholm: Stockholm University.
- **Hodgart M. and Worthigton, M.** 1959. *Songs in the Work of James Joyce*. New York: Temple University Publications.

- **Hodgkin**, T. 1957. *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*. London: Frederick Muller, Ltd.
- **Hotchester** J. and **Kurumi** H. 1998. *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*. New York: Routledge.
- **Ivanov**, Y. 1979. *Agrarian Reforms and Hired Labour in Africa*. Moscow: Progress Publisher.
- **Jackson**, J. G. 1950. *Introduction to African Civilizations*. New York: Citadel Press.
- **Jeffries**, C. 1972. *Whitehall and the Colonial Service: An Administrative Memoir, 1939-1956*. London: Athlone Press.
- **Jones**, H. *Freedom and Labour*. London: Oxford Basil BlackWell.
- **Karigo**, M. 1973. *The Hardcore: The Story of Karigo Mushai*. Richmond, B.C. : LSM Information Center.
- **Kennedy**, P. 1983. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Ashfield Press.
- **Kenyata**, J. 1938. *Facing Mount Kenya*. London: Heinemann.
- **Kimambo**, I. N and **Temu**, A. J. 1969. *A History of Tanzania*. Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House.
- **Kinyatti**, M.W. 1987. *Kenya's Freedom Struggle*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- **Kjekshus**, H. 1977. *Ecology, Control and Economic Development in East African History*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- **Kolchin**, P. 1995. *American Slavery*. London: Penguin Books.
- **Lambert**, I. 1956. *Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Lancine**, S. 1977. *Tribalisme et parti unique en Afrique Noire*. Abijan: Presse de la fondation nationale des sources politiques.
- **Langley**, J.A. 1973. *Panafricanisme and Nationalism in West Africa (1900-1945)*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- **Leakey**, L.S.B. 1936. *Kenya*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Leakey**, L.S.B. 1954. *Defeating Mau Mau*. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd.
- **Lewis**, J. 2000. *Empire State-Building: War and Warfare in Kenya: 1925-1952*. London: James Currey Publishers.
- **Leys**, C. 1978. *Underdevelopment in Kenya. The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- **Lipscomb**, J.F 1956. *We Built a Country*. London: Faber and Faber.
- **Lombart**, J. 1967. *Autorités traditionnelles et pouvoirs européens en Afrique noire*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- **Lotte**, H. 2006. *Moving the Masai: A Colonial Misadventure*. London: Palgrave.
- **Lugard**, F. 1922. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Edinburgh: Blackwood.
- **Madjlaney**, F. 1962. *State of Emergency*. London: Longman.
- **Maloba**, W.O. 1933. *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt*. Bloomington, Ia: Indiana University Press.
- **Markovitz**, I. L. 1970. *African Politics and Society*. London: The Free Press.
- **Marsh**, Z. and **Kingsworth**, G.W. 1972. *A History of East Africa. An Introductory Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Martin**, D. 1983. *Le Kenya*. Collection Que sais-je? Paris : Presses Universitaires de France,
- **Martin**, P. M. and **O'Meara**, P. 1986. *Africa*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Bloomington, Ia: Indiana University Press.
- **Matson**, A.T. 1972 *Resistance to British Rule, 1890-1906*, vol.1. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- **Mazrui**, A. 1978. *Political Values and Educated Class in Africa*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd.

- **Mazrui, A.** 1986. *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. New York: Little Brown and Company.
- **Mazrui, A. and Tidy, M.** 1984. *Nationalism and New States in Africa*. Oxford. Heinemann.
- **McEwan, P.J. M. and Sutcliffe, R.** 1965. *The Study of Africa*. London: University Paperbacks.
- **McMillan, W.** 1949. *Africa Emergent*. London: Penguin Books.
- **Meinertzhagen, R.** 1960. *Army diary 1899-1926*. London: Oliver & Boyd.
- **Meister, A.** 1975. *L'Afrique peut-elle partir?* Paris : Edition du Seuil.
- **Metrowich, F.** 1967. *Africa and Communism: A Study of Successes*. Johannesburg: Set-Backs and Stooage States.
- **Middleton, J.** 1965. *History of East Africa*. Vol. 2. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Mollo, A., McGregor, M. and Turner, P.** 1981. *The Armed Forces of World War II: Uniform, Insigne and Organization*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- **Mosley, P.** 1983. *The Settlers Economies, Studies in the Economic History of Kenya and Rhodesia 1900-1963*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Muggeridge, M.** 1934. *Winter in Moscow*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- **Munro, F.** 1976. *Africa and the International Economy, 1800-1960*. London. Rowman and Littlefield.
- **Murray-Brown, J.** 1972. *Kenyatta*. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- **Myrdal, G.** 1944. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers.
- **Nairn, T.** 1977. *The Break-up of Britein: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
- **Nottingham, J and Rosberg, C.** 1966. *The Myth of Mau Mau*. New York: Praeger.

- **O'Connor, K. and Sabato, L.** 1993. *American Government: Roots and Reforms*. New York: Mcmillan Publishing Company.
- **O'Connor, K. and Sabato, L.** 1997. *American Government: Continuity and Change*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon..
- **Odhiembo Atieno, E.S and Lonsdale, J.** 2003. *Mau Mau and Nationhood: Arms, Authority and Narration*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- **Oginga, O.** 1967. *Not Yet Uhuru: An Autobiography of Odinga Oginaga*. London: Heinemann.
- **Ogot Bethwell, A.** 1973. *Kenya Under the British, 1895-1963*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- **Ostrowski, R. and Kemper. J.** 1977. *Echoes of Time: A World History*. New York: Mc. Graw- Hill Inc.
- **Paasi, A.** 1995. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. London: McMillan.
- **Padmore, G.** 1936. *How Britain Rules Africa*. London: Wishart Books.
- **Padmore, G.** 1961. *Panafricanisme ou communisme? La prochaine lutte pour l'Afrique*. Paris: Présence africaine.
- **Parkin, D.** 1975. *Town and Country in Central and Eastern Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Perham, M.** 1941. *Africans and British Rule*. London: Collins.
- **Pinkey, A.** 1976. *Red, Black and Green: Black Nationalism in the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Ploncard, J.** 1979. *Manifeste Nationaliste*. Paris: Plon.
- **Roberts, A.D.** 1975. *The Cambridge History of Africa, 1905-1940*. Vol. 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- **Rosenberg, C.G. and Nottingham, J.** 1966. *The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya*. London: Pall Mail Press.



- **Ross, W.** 1927. *Kenya from Within*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- **Rotberg, R.** 1965. *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- **Seligman, C.G.** 1930. *The Races of Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Shellington, K.** 1993. *History of Africa*. London: McMillan Press Ltd.
- **Shorter, A.** 1974. *East African Societies*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan.
- **Sorrenson, M.P.K.** 1967. *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country*. Nairobi. Oxford University Press.
- **Speke, J. H.** 1863. *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. Edinburgh: Blackwood.
- **Tabitha, K.** 1936. *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau*, (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). London: Heinemann
- **Therton, D.E.** 1970. *Mathere Valley: A Case Study of Uncontrolled Settlement in Nairobi*. New York: Housing Research of Development Unit.
- **Throup, D.** 1988. *Economic & Social Origins of Mau Mau 1945-53*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- **Tignor R.L.** 1976. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Masai from 1900 to 1939*. New York: Princeton.
- **Vandervort, B.** 1998. *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914*. London UCL Press. .
- **Wagner, G.** 1949. *The Bantu of Western Kenya, Vol. 1*. London: Oxford University Press.
- **Wallerstein, I.** *Africa: The Politics of Independence*. New York: Vintage Books.
- **Waweru, J.F. (Major).** 1988. *The Bitter Struggle to Independence*. Nairobi: Kenya Army CSC.

- **White, T.W., Silberman, L. & Anderson, P.R.** 1948. *Master Plan for a Colonial Capital*. London: HMSO.
- **Wilson, E.T.** 1974. *Russia and Black Africa before WWII*. New York: Holmes and Meier Publisher.

#### **b-Articles:**

- **Adekson, B.** 1981. "The Algerian and Mau Mau Revolts: A Comparative Study in Revolutionary Warfare". *Comparative Strategy, International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 2, n°1: 69-92.
- **Basil, D.** 1984. "The People's Cause: A History of Guerilla in Africa". *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.17, n°1: 3-20.
- **Blacker, J.** 2007. "The Demography of Mau Mau: Fertility and Mortality in Kenya in the 1950's: A Demographer's Viewpoint". *Journal of African Affairs*, 106 (423): 205-227
- **Cheru, B.** 1988. "Dependence, Underdevelopment and Unemployment in Kenya: School Leavers in Peripheral Capitalist Political Economy". *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, n°2: 10-19.
- **Currie, J. (Sir).** 1933. "Present Day Difficulties of a Young Officer in the Tropics". *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. 12, n°126: 31-36.
- **Ferudi, F.** 1973. "The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Elite Politics". *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, n°2: 275-290.

- **Gross, L.** 1948. “The peace of Westphalia”. *The American Journal of International Law*, n° 42 (1): 20-41.
- **Hodges, G. W. T.** 1978. “African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918”. *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, n°3: pp. 4-15.
- **Lonsdale, J.** 1990. “Mau Mau of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya”. *The Journal of African History*, 31 (3): 393-421.
- **Mair, L.P.** 1958. “The Pursuit of the Millennium in Melanesia”. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 9, n°2: 175-180.
- **Miller, N.** 1986. “Kenya: The Quest for Prosperity”. *I.T.A.H.S*, Vol. 19 n°1: 150-165.
- **Nbudere, D. W.** 1984. “Imperialism in East Africa”. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, n°1: 15-23.
- **Ngugi, T. (wa).** 1982 “Repression Intensifies in Kenya: The Need for Solidarity”. *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol 9 (25): 112-117.
- **Rotberg, R.** 1966. “African Nationalism: Concept or Confusion”. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 4: 20-32.
- **Smith, A.D.** 1994. “Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations”. *Nations and Nationalism* 1: 3-23.
- **Southall, A.W.** 1970. “The Illusion of Tribe”. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, n°1-2: 28-50.
- **Taylor, T.** 1986. “The Establishment of a European Plantation Sector Within the Emerging Colonial Economy of Uganda 1902-1915”. *International African Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, n°1: 32-40.

### **c-Theses:**

- **Hatton, P.H.S.** 1971. *British Colonial Policy in Africa, 1910-14*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge
- **Lahouel, B.** 1984. *The Origins of Nationalism in Algeria: The Gold Coast and South Africa, with Special Reference to the Period 1919-37*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen, Vol. 1.
- **Nait Brahim, A.** 2006. *The Ideological Trojan Horse in the Pedagogical Realm: Towards a Recovery of the Intellectual Skeptron*. Doctoral thesis. University of Oran Es-Sénia.
- **Van Zwanenberg, R.** 1971. *Primitive Colonial Accumulation in Kenya 1919-1939*. Ph.D. thesis. University of Sussex.

### **d-Magazines:**

- *Time*, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1962.
- *Time*, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007
- *Time*, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008.
- *Time*, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008.
- *Time*, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### **d-Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:**

- *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*, 1968. London: Randle Comp. Cotgrave.
- **Olson, J. & Shadle, R.** 1996. *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire*. Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press.

- **Simpson, J. A., Weiner, E. S. and Berg, D. L.** 1991. *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- **Stearns .P and Langer, L.** 2001. *Encyclopaedia of World History: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. 2006, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- **Whiteley, W.** 1969. *Swahili: The Rise of a National Language*. London: Methuen.

#### **d-Electronic sources:**

- *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia*. Compton's New Media Inc., 1995.
- [http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/p/wind\\_of\\_change2.htm](http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/p/wind_of_change2.htm)
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/correspondent/2416049.stm>, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002.
- <http://news.bbc.net.uk/1/hi/england/london/3026747.stm>, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005.
- <http://www.britanica.com/eb/article>
- <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/36/026.html>, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005.
- <http://www.kenyalogy.com/eng/mapake/gmapgeo.html>
- *Webster's Concise Encyclopedia*, 1994, Software Copyright, Attica Cybernetics Ltd.

## **ANNEXES**

Annex I: Letters

Annex II: Interviews

Annex III: Speeches

Annex IV: Resolutions

Annex V: Income and Expenditure Record of Kenya Parliament

## Annex I

### Letters

These are samples of letters exchanged between various war actors during the Mau Mau struggle and which reveal some aspects of this event.

#### I. Guerrillas to Kimathi

Kirima Kia Igongona  
P.O. Box 29  
Nyandarwa  
12 September 1953

To the leader of G.M. Land Freedom Army,

Many greetings. I am glad to have this opportunity to inform you that I am still alive.

I was delighted when I received your last letter. I was not able to attend the consultative meeting of 9 August 1953 because of reasons beyond my control. Please accept my sincere apologies.

In the meantime, I would like to let you know that the people you sent to brief me about the proceedings of the meeting were not able to give me a concrete report. Each gave a different version of what he heard and saw. Consequently, I still don't know what we agreed upon at the meeting, and what new line of organization my force should adopt. Please send us the minutes of the meeting immediately.

When are you coming to visit this front? I would like to have a serious discussion with you concerning the reorganization of our fighting forces and the drawing up of a new war strategy. From my own experience, I think there is a need to weed out harmful elements within the guerrilla army. In this connection, there is a great need to draw up a general code of discipline for our guerrilla army to follow. I have found out that there are some individual guerrillas in my own force who refuse to submit to our discipline, and there are others who don't understand the necessity of carrying out directives to the letter; serious errors are committed as a result.

It is clear that the lack of discipline among our men, the lack of unity in our forces, and the lack of a serious attitude toward the struggle will strengthen the enemy's position and isolate us from our principal supporters — the workers and peasants.

In short, lack of discipline and petty complaints among the guerrillas have dampened my fighting spirit; sometimes I am so disappointed that I can hardly eat. For this reason, I need your help and advice.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter. In the meantime, let me know when we can meet. All our troops and their leaders should come up to this side, if possible, so that we can hold a general conference.

Goodbye,  
Kimbo Mutuku

EF1/3/3/601  
Wanja wa Gitonga  
c/o Ihwa  
Tetu Location  
Nyeri  
18 November 1953

Dear D. Kimathi,

I understand that you want to know why I decided to join the armed struggle. This is exactly what happened: a homeguard called Muhindi sent his brother, Karangui wa Kariuki, to try and persuade me to marry him, but I refused because I didn't know him. I was also not in love with him.

After I rejected his marriage proposal, Muhindi wrote a letter to my father telling him that we had agreed to marry, which was a lie. When they finally met, my father agreed to receive dowry from Muhindi despite my strong objection. He was given shs. 2,000. I decided to come to the forest in protest. I had resolutely decided not to be married to my enemy, the enemy of my country. I entered the forest on 25 September 1953.

I would like to know whether you approve of my action.

Wanja

F. Marshal D. Kimathi,

I received your letter of 12 December 1953, safely. I agree with you that a leader's inefficiency is of great harm to the entire force. As a matter of fact, it was this kind of inefficiency that cost Comrade Musa his life.

I have already sent one of my best men to reorganize Musa's unit.

We have to set up camp at a place called 'Free State', but we have not established good contacts with the peasants; we need your advice on this. Please write to us this weekend.

I have some gifts for you: 15 cigarettes; 10 envelopes; a copy of *Kenya Weekly News*; 4 copies of *E.A. Standard*; a copy of *Kihoto*; a copy of *Jicho*; two copies of *Habari Za Dunia*; two boxes of matches.

In the meantime, pass my greetings to Mungai, Podo, Juma Abdullah and the rest of the fighters.

*Tigwo na Wega* (best regards)  
Guthera wa Mwiria



Dear D.K. *Matemo*,

Greetings as usual. I am sorry for not having written to you for such a long time. I have lately been very busy with my work.

In an attempt to force our people to surrender, the homeguards, armed with sophisticated weapons, have nightly been committing rape, torture and murder. Some of our weaker supporters have consequently been forced to collaborate secretly with our enemy; those who love money and good food have also joined the enemy army and are working against their people's interests. My greatest fear at the moment is that even some of our cadres have started vacillating. One such cadre is Mwangi wa Ngunga, whose home is not far from here. Since he knows many of our supporters and cadres, he would do irreparable damage to the movement if he were to cross over to the enemy's side. He would have all of us arrested and killed.

I have indirectly raised the subject with him, explaining how important it is to serve our people and country. Since we know how dangerous he would be if he were to surrender, I suggest that you write him a letter praising him for his revolutionary work and promote him to a higher rank for the sake of the struggle. I think your letter will definitely hold him on to our side until we are strong enough to cut him down.

I have sent all the things you had requested except the money orders. I could not buy the money orders because of a shortage of funds. As usual, our *rule* is that we should pay for everything we take from our supporters, otherwise they will withdraw their support.

There are strong rumours that the British authorities will try to make some political reforms in the country in their effort to weaken and paralyse our struggle. They will announce these new changes by 15 July 1954. Although they will not admit it, the strength of our argument and our fighting efforts have forced them to begin thinking seriously about the political future of this country. However, they should realize that we have sworn under oath, and in the name of our ancestors, that we shall never rest until we drive them out of our country, regain our land and independence.

What I am saying in short is that you should reject these bogus reforms categorically and demand the total withdrawal of the British forces from our country. You have the support of the majority of our people.

Goodbye,  
Colonel Wamugunda

6 May 1954

Dear Marshal,

Greetings as usual.

I no longer maintain personal contacts with 'K' but I communicate with him through Reuben; I don't trust him, and I think he may betray me. However, I have tried to persuade him to support the struggle through our indirect contact, but it seems as if he is no longer sure of himself. He vacillates.

In the meantime, I think we should continue working underground in the village in separate cells instead of all of us working openly. Some of our comrades pose a great danger in the sense that they can betray us if they are arrested and tortured by the enemy.

*Thai Thathaiya Ngai Thai*  
Colonel Wamugunda

17 May 1954

To D.K.,

This is just to say hello to our comrades. I am fine and well although I don't know whether I will be alive tomorrow. There is a Gikuyu proverb which says '*muthigani uri nja ndahonaga*'. What I mean is that one of our cadres, Karuga, has secretly sold out to the enemy. I received this information from his own son, Wangai. The information is reliable because I don't think Wangai is against his father.

Under these circumstances I am afraid that I may be arrested or killed. In their attempts to force me to give them the secrets of the movement, the enemies may torture me mercilessly. But they will soon realize that I am as hard as steel, that I would rather die than turn a traitor.

My advice is that you should try and come to my house as soon as I am arrested and remove any materials which connect me to the movement. But Karuga should not be killed soon after I have been picked up, otherwise the enemy will try to link his death with my arrest. He is certainly very dangerous to our struggle and he should be eliminated as soon as you know about my fate.

If I am not arrested, I'm thinking of going deeper underground for a while in the coming month to try and assess the situation. Comrade Makeru will take my place.

That is all. Because of the importance of this letter, please acknowledge receipt.

Goodbye,  
Col. Wamugunda

EF1/3/3/103

1 June 1954

Dear Marshal D.K.,

Many greetings. How are you?

First I must inform you that Nyeri town is under a tight curfew and nobody, not even a woman, can go there without a road pass. So, as you can guess, the situation is very bad. It is now very difficult to get or purchase arms or ammunition in Nyeri town. But don't let this worry you. I will try to get into the town come what may.

At any rate, the piece of cloth you wanted is enclosed. It cost a hundred shillings. I had asked our contacts in Nyeri town to buy it, but they were slow in doing so; so I purchased it myself.

Also enclosed is the medicine for toothache which you had requested, plus seven rounds of ammunition. We have not received most of the ammunition and other war material from our contacts in Nyeri town; we are still waiting for them, and we will send them as soon as we receive them. Many of our cadres in Nyeri town are doing a wonderful job for the movement.

The last time I was in the town to pick up some ammunition I met a guerrilla fighter from your home area, and I was told he was a deputy to General Tanganyika. He frightened me at first because he wore the enemy's uniform.

There is something important I would like to share with you. I hope you won't mind. As the Supreme Commander of the KLFA armed forces and the leader of the movement, you should be very careful and more disciplined in what you do. Every step you take should be well calculated. In fact, you should always suspect those you meet, including your own relatives. I have noticed that you are very liberal when you are among the partisans, specifically the women. According to Gikuyu and Mumbi customs, we don't disclose our secrets to women, but since the Europeans came women know men's secrets. I would like you to know that since August 1952, I have never told my secrets to any woman in order to make her happy.

As I have already observed, you have a tendency to talk a lot when you are in the company of partisan women, and I think this is very dangerous. Of course, it is nice to be in the company of women, but we cannot afford that luxury until we have driven these foreign robbers out of our country. In short, what I am trying to say is that discipline and secrecy are our greatest weapons in this *unequal* war.

Needlessly to say you are the flesh and blood of this struggle; if something happens to you (arrest or death), this movement will definitely collapse.

We had a meeting with homeguard Muhoya who asked us to tell you to surrender to the British authorities, so that the war would end. He talked about the humanity of the British, and how they wanted this war to end, but we knew that all this talk was a ploy to get you arrested and

then killed, in order to weaken our people's determination.

By the way, did you get the letter discussing the Kanyugo affair? How about the money you promised me? When you get some please send it to me. Let me know whether you need a container to put it in.

Please send me the books belonging to William Muturi and Henia – I want to read them. I don't want you to trust the persons whose books I sent you; I am watching them carefully.

Before I conclude this letter, I would like to mention one more thing. The last time I was in Nyeri some compatriots did not want to be associated with me because they were afraid of the enemy. In fact, a few of them ran away when I asked them to help me to carry some war material. This really shocked me.

That is all for now.

*Ni Thayu wa Ngai Witu*  
Colonel Wamugunda

Dear D.K.,

Do not worry if I am slow in sending you newspapers. I buy them daily, but I don't send you those that contain nothing of interest.

I am sending you only 19 rounds of ammunition because it is very difficult to obtain arms nowadays.

At any rate, my people are doing everything possible to get some more weapons, and we will send them up to you as soon as we acquire them. There is a European at Nyeri town who sells us rounds of ammunition and an Indian who helps us a lot. This has given us a lot of encouragement in our work.

This is all for now

*Thayu wa Ngai,*  
Colonel Wamugunda  
1954

Dear D. Kimathi,

Greetings.

This is a summary of the situation here in Nairobi:

1. The city of Nairobi is now like Gilgil: there is no corner where a person can hide without being seen by the enemy and the Kenyan traitors.
2. Every African location in Nairobi has been fenced in with barbed wire; each location has one entrance which is guarded for twenty-four hours by armed policemen. They search us every time we enter or leave a location. But despite these tough restrictions, we still get through with

our *pangas* and revolvers.

3. When the Legislative Council was being reopened on 16 February 1954, it was heavily guarded by armed policemen and soldiers because it had been reported in the *East African Standard* that you would bring 2,000 guerrillas to attack the place.
4. All the Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru people [in Nairobi] have been forcibly removed from the Kaloleni and Eastleigh areas, and have been taken to Bahati where they are guarded by the enemy for twenty-four hours. Both Kaloleni and Eastleigh have been declared out of bounds for the Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru. At the same time there is an attempt by the British occupiers to organize the non-Gikuyu Embu and Meru [nationalities] to fight against the Mau Mau. This is worrying us greatly; it will be a test of our strength.
5. Many countries of the world are convinced that if Africans in Kenya are not granted self-government and more responsibilities, the struggle will continue unabated.
6. The settlers in the Legislative Council wanted to introduce martial law in Kenya, but they were opposed by the six African members.<sup>1</sup>
7. I have already sent the Central Province Committee a proposal that you be awarded the medal of a knight, so that you may have the title of 'Sir', but right now I do not know what the members will decide. If the proposal is adopted, you will be notified in due course. In this case, we will inform the newspaper men that your new title is 'Field Marshal Sir Dedan Kimathi, Matemo, KCGE'. KCGE means 'Knight Commander of Gikuyu Empire'.<sup>2</sup> The name *Matemo* is a code name which no one except yourself and those who are authorized to use it are allowed to know about.

I have much to write to you about, but I have many things on my mind at present. Ishmael Kungu is bringing this letter; he is a trusted comrade, so you need not have any secrets from him.

I almost forgot to tell you that your father-in-law is still alive and that I saw him today at 5.40 pm.

*Thai Thathaiya Ngai Thai.*  
Kabugara wa Kirimu,  
For the Nairobi War Council  
February 1954

1. The names of three of the African members of the Legislative Council were: W.W.W. Awori, E. Mathu, Muchohi Gikonyo,
2. Kimathi insisted that since Mau Mau was a national movement the new title should be changed to Knight Commander of Africa Empire (KCAE).

Despite my instructions Ngiree has refused to come and explain his case to you. Yesterday I insisted that he should come to see you, but after bitter arguments I decided to drop the matter. I have also suggested to him that if he does not want to see you he should write and explain his case, but he has also rejected this proposal.

Under the circumstances, I suggest that you and other members of the Kenya Parliament should visit my camp so that we can discuss this affair together. However, let me know about the day of your arrival beforehand.

With many greetings,  
Yours,  
General Omera

*P.S.* If you have any sugar, please send me some. Mine is finished. I have enclosed the daily report of our unit's activities. If it meets your approval, please stamp it and send one copy back to me.

Many greetings. Thanks to *Mwene-Nyaga* for giving me this opportunity to write these few lines to inform you that I am well.

By the way, did you receive the air-mail envelopes which were sent to you by Ngari wa Thimba? They were given to General Kimbo to bring them to you. How about Mathenge wa Kiniu's letter concerning the sacrifice and the disagreement between you and Mungai? If you have received that letter, let me know at once.

We have two rams and a ewe which are ready for the sacrifice. We are waiting for you to tell us when it should be performed. We have been preparing people from Mathira for the sacrifice up in the bamboo forest.

All the people are well and nothing is wrong.

I am the leader of  
W.G. No. 1 Ichagachiru

Witness No. 1 From Reserve  
Ref. Case: MM/KT vs. Marshal

F.M. Sir Dedan Kimathi,

I was very delighted to see you and to hear your voice and that of Commander Ndiritu wa Thuita. Knowing how busy you are, we did not really think that you would take the time to visit us. Everyone here has been talking about you, and we are praying to God (*Mwene-Nyaga*) to give you courage and strength to drive these foreign robbers from our beloved country.

In the meantime, I have asked the village leaders who work with me whether they had sent you a letter or verbal message about the Kibuku

conspiracy, but they told me they had not done so, and that they knew absolutely nothing about these treacherous plans.

We think that the person who told you about the conspiracy should explain the whole affair to the Kenya Parliament. He should provide you with the following information:

1. the number of persons, besides Kibuku, who are involved in this conspiracy;
2. the reason why Kibuku wants to neutralize your leadership;
3. how many other KLFA leaders Kibuku wants to eliminate.

Since this is a serious matter, we urge the Kenya Parliament to work relentlessly to unearth this conspiracy. The ringleaders of this treacherous group, especially Kibuku, should be eliminated as a lesson to the others.

In conclusion, we want you to know that we support your leadership and we are ready and prepared to defend it.

We send you all our love.

*Thayu wa Ngai Witu*

W. G. No. 1

Ichagachiru Village

14 March 1954

Central Province  
Nairobi Centre

Dear F.M. D.K. *Matemo*,

Warm greetings from your compatriots and from our beloved country which today is occupied by Europeans. We will fight to our last drop of blood to liberate it. This land is ours from the beginning – given to us by the God (*Ngai*) of *Gikuyu na Mumbi*. Those of our people who ignore this fact are as foolish as the Europeans who think that force will crush our determination; but we are going to fight against these robbers until we drive them out of this country. This war is just according to our *Ngai*, and therefore we will fight with vigilance and adversity.

We have received two of the letters you sent us. We received the first one on 20 February 1954 and the second arrived on 22 February. We studied them very carefully in order to understand the situation. We are shocked to learn that Kibuku wa Theuri and his accomplices are planning to get rid of you and take over the leadership of the movement. They should know that only the Mau Mau Central Committee can remove you from your position of leadership, and since you are already doing a good job, you will continue to lead the struggle. In this regard we consider Kibuku and his group as renegades and destructive elements. From *Ngong to Karimatura*, we consider them traitors and enemies of our struggle.

Since the line Kibuku and his group have taken is obviously one of

treachery, we have authorized you to deal with them as you see fit; they are no longer members of *Gikuyu na Mumbi*. They have proved to be the enemies of our people, and they should be exterminated and their bodies thrown to the lions.

We want to emphasize that we have confidence in your leadership; the Kenyan people depend on you for their victory.

Finally, the comrade we have sent with this letter is trustworthy; you can give him any information you want to send back to us.

The war situation is going well on our side, we are sure we will be victorious.

I am,

J.K. Kimaigwa

For the African Freedom Army, Headquarters, Nairobi

P.S. Mwangi's mother is still alive and has sent you the enclosed jersey.

M.K. Captain Gatemi

Kimuri Section A

29 May 1954

Dear Marshal D.K.,

Many greetings.

I am sorry that I haven't written to you since I came here from Murang'a. I hope you don't mind.

I am writing to request a transfer from Kimuri Section A to another unit. I find it difficult to work with my superior. Since this is my first request for a transfer from one unit to another, I hope the Kenya Parliament will have no objections. I intend to leave this unit as soon as I hear from you.

This is all for now. Please remember me to all our comrades.

Your Compatriot,  
M.K. Captain Gatemi

23 June 1954

Dear Marshal,

Greetings. Wamuyu is going to Mathira en route to Mount Kenya. I got this information yesterday at 2 pm.

I tried to persuade her not to go until she had received permission from the Parliament, but she said she must go because she is expected on 10 July 1954. In this connection, I would like to know whether you would like to prepare a letter to be taken to the Mt. Kenya KLFA leaders. She is leaving



today at 3 pm. If you are going to write, the letter should reach me before this time.

By the way, will it be alright for me to write to General Kariba (Gititi) and other comrades there?

Devotedly yours,  
Commander Magu

John Kameme  
Nyeri  
7 July 1954

Dear Marshal D.K.,

I have received letters from you twice, but please don't ask me why I didn't reply sooner. Things are tight here.

I am writing this letter on behalf of myself and Comrades Karumaindo and Muturi 5/5. First, we are sad to report that a faithful and dedicated comrade, Kahiwa wa Kagoni, was arrested by the enemy the other day. He was of great importance to us and to the struggle in general. He used to supply us with ammunition and guns from Nanyuki. He has the kind of courage that many of our compatriots don't have. Try and see whether force can be used to release him.

We have received a telegram from Nanyuki informing us that war materials like ammunitions and guns are available in plenty there. Our problem is that we don't have the cash to buy these precious things. We also have the problem of transporting this material down here now that Comrade Kahiwa is in the enemy's hands. What are your suggestions?

In your letter of 5 June 1954, you had asked for some sugar. We had some problems getting sugar in this town. I had 4 lbs which I gave to Col. Wamugunda when he was here recently.

Since Muria Runene has not yet brought the ammunition which he promised, we are sending you the twelve bullets we have. When Muria brings the rest, they will be sent to you immediately.

In conclusion, things are alright with us except that no Africans, except the homeguards, are allowed to enter or leave the town. This is part of the enemy's attempt to isolate us from the peasant masses.

Remember me to the heroes of the struggle. As you can see, I have changed my signature.

*Thai Thathaiya Ngai Thai*  
Yours, Murui  
John Kameme  
J.M.J. Kameme

16 October 1954

To Sir Field Marshal Kimathi,

Many greetings.

I would like to inform you that I moved my whole force from Mutangariru to Ruthaithi for tactical reasons. In case you want to contact me, I am based at Ruthaithi.

I received information about the last General Conference, but I was not able to attend because I was not feeling well. I will definitely attend the next one. When and where will it take place this time?

How are Mbaria wa Kahiu, Mathenge wa Mirugi and the rest of our comrades? Greetings from Nyaga.

Stand firm, the whole struggle depends on your strong leadership.

Yours,

General Kahiu-Itina

Major Gen. Vido

Kimuri Section A

July 1954

Dear Sir Marshal,

When I arrived here at about half past twelve, I found that my force had come back from the battlefield where it had done an excellent job. General Kimbo and I had jointly organized an attack on the enemy forces in the Kinunga area. The two forces fought heroically, destroying the enemy's post, shops and other property. Several numbers of the enemy were wiped out. In addition, they seized a full bag of sugar, several tins of milk cream, ghee, two big mirrors and quantities of writing material.

Another important piece of news is that the Battle of Kiringa ended in the complete defeat of the enemy. We captured two enemy soldiers. Our losses were light.

The sad news concerns Kanyinya's small unit. Most of his men were captured and the rest were slaughtered when the enemy made a surprise attack on their camp. The enemy is still occupying Kanyinya's *mbuci*. Thousands of enemy troops have also gone to Kiandongoro. Consequently, there is a bitter battle going on there between our forces and those of the enemy.

*Ni Thayu wa Ngai*

Major General Vido

27 October 1954

Dear Field Marshal Kimathi,

Thanks to *Mwene-Nyaga* for giving me this opportunity to inform you that I arrived safely and well.

I started working for the people with dedication, but we have had many problems. For instance, we have spent nine days without food or fire. I have also had a quarrel with the leader of the unit regarding the new rank you gave me. In this connection, I would be very glad if you could write to him and explain about my promotion. I would like your letter to reach him before I go to Gilgil on a mission.

I think I should come and consult you personally before I make any major decision. In fact, talking to you personally is better than writing letters.

In the meantime, I have decided to stay on the farm in order to have an opportunity to assess the leadership of the unit.

Many greetings from Mwangi wa Ng'ang'a from L/2 Unit. You should remember him; he is the Unit Secretary.

I remain,  
M.C.W. Kahugi

13 November 1954

D.K. Wachiuri,

Greetings as usual. I am well. Basically, our situation is not too bad; we are fearlessly working for the movement.

My mission to Nakuru was not successful. I was not able to meet our troops and, under these circumstances, I was forced to come back.

The important thing I learned when I was there is that the enemy is forcing the people to take an anti-Mau Mau oath. This new anti-Mau Mau oath is called 'Ekinni'. The enemy's aim is to break our people's resistance, and hence weaken our struggle.

My suggestion is that we should use all means possible to crush this evil propaganda, otherwise it will destroy all our efforts.

We have collected some money and we will send it to you shortly.

Best regards,  
Wanjau wa Kibiri

Dear Marshal D.K.,

I hereby accuse Mathenge wa Kihuni of a criminal act against my Unit. I hope you and the War Council will take this matter seriously.

At about 6 pm yesterday, Mathenge and his men came to my camp and stopped us from carrying on with our duties. He said that you had given him power to do whatever he wanted in the whole of Kenya. He accused us of being ineffective in our revolutionary work. When I insisted that he should move out of my camp, he gave an order to his men and within a few seconds 45 armed guerrillas surrounded me and disarmed me. They treated me as if I were an enemy. To avoid a bloody confrontation, I ordered my men not to interfere.

If I try to explain in detail what really happened you may think I am exaggerating. In short, Mathenge and his men told us that you had authorized him to discipline us because they were the only active and brave group in this region, and that the rest of us thought of nothing else but food. Before I react, I would like to hear from you as to whether you have given them such powers.

Another thing I would like you to know is that Mathenge and his men are insisting on taking away our guns. They said they would kill us if we refused to hand all our guns to them. They also said that in future we would not leave Nyandarwa without their permission.

Meanwhile we have a considerable number of sick comrades and we would like to know where we can take them for treatment. At the same time, we would like to know whether you would approve of a bloody confrontation between us and General Kariba's men. They took away one of our guns by force.

Please reply to this letter immediately; if possible, try to visit us. We are very much worried about what will happen when Mathenge returns from Ruthaithi. We will definitely not allow them to push us around this time.

Yours,  
Major M. Vido

Dear Marshal,

Hello! How are you? I hope you are alright. In brief, did Commander Abdullah inform you that I would like to see you today? The reason I am asking you this is because this morning I tried to see you but I was told that you could not possibly see me until tomorrow. This is fine with me, but what time can I see you tomorrow? It is important that I see you early tomorrow because I will be leaving for Ruthaithi the following day. A lot of work is awaiting me there.

I haven't written to the Mt. Kenya forces yet, but I will do so as soon as I reach Ruthaithi.

The principal reason why I want to talk to you confidentially is because I am very much worried about the war situation. We do not seem to be making much progress in the field, while the enemy continues to intensify its offensive. I think if we don't take a firm stand, vacillation, rivalry, opportun-

ism and a misunderstanding of war strategy will weaken our position and demoralize our fighting forces. Let us meet and discuss this in depth.

May *Ngai* guard and guide you all the time and keep your eyes open eternally.

Devotedly yours,  
Brigadier General Karari Njama

Dear D.K.,

Thanks to our *Ngai* that you are alive. We were very worried when we heard that you were sick.

I am still carrying on with my work. There is a great demand for guns – that is why I haven't sent you one yet – and I am trying to make as many as I can; I will send you one soon.

Since you left here I have made 8 guns. Besides, large quantities of material for making more guns are still coming. You can see how busy I am, but I don't mind since I am working for my country.

Goodbye,  
Yours, Major Nguku (Puno)  
Nyandarwa 1954

D.K.,

Many greetings.

We are doing fine down here. The other day we were attacked by enemy forces backed by warplanes, but we were able to chase them out of the area. We killed twelve of the enemy soldiers and seized several of their rifles plus one machine-gun. We lost three of our comrades and two were slightly wounded.

We are short of food. If there is some in the store, please send us. We need things like maize, wheat flour, cabbages, potatoes and beans.

In the meantime, I will try to contact the woman leader in this region; I am sure she will do her best to see that we don't die of starvation.

The report I have enclosed is a record of our activities for this month, please stamp it and send us a copy.

Greetings to other comrades—Macharia wa Kimemia, Abdullah, and the rest.

Yours,  
General Ihuura  
Irati Mbuci

Dear Marshal,

How are you?

Here is a gift for you—a song!

1. How are you Gikuyu na Muumbi?

We greet you with much pleasure and enthusiasm

For we have won the war,

The white man is pack̄ing.

*Chorus:*

Fight, fight everywhere

You sons of the soil.

Let us increase our strength.

They are our enemy,

They hate us Africans.

2. Cover yourself with bamboo leaves

So that they may not see you.

They are evil and brutal.

Beyond Kabage there are many mountains and forests

Where General Muhimu is the Commander

And has ordered his army to fight with vigilance.

3. Chania is a big river

Which we cross with bamboo

Each time we try to cross it

There is always a big argument.

4. Their warplanes came to Nyandarwa

To fight Kimathi's forces.

*Hika, Hika* Ndung'u wa Gacera shot most of them.

5. After the planes had gone

Marshal called a meeting.

He said to us:

'We shall fight them and win this war,

Despite their sophisticated weaponry.'

6. What makes me sad and angry

Is the ignorance of the homeguards and the chiefs

Who have denounced this glorious struggle

Who said they didn't want Self-Government.

They wanted the white man to continue ruling us.

7. You compatriot who sing this song

You must praise our fighting men

For their courage and patriotism.

But try to improve this song,

It was composed in the heat of the battle.

8. You should return it to us

When it is a better song

Because it was written with the blood,  
The blood of many of us  
Who have heroically fallen in the battlefields.

I suggest that you improve this song and then circulate it to the fighting forces. Patriotic songs like this always strengthen the morale of the fighters.

Yours,  
Comrade Puda

(Source: Kinyatti, 1987: 89-105)

## II. Letters to colonial authorities

Dear Sir,

After taking a long journey, travelling throughout Africa and Palestine for three months, I have found that many things have changed and evil has increased a great deal. For the return of peace and the birth of a new Kenya, I have told all leaders of our army in the forest to stop fighting from 1st August 1953. General Kahiu-Itina, who is a special leader, is now under arrest for attacking Kagunduini, the Tetu Location of Chief Muhoya wa Kagumba of Nyeri, without my permission. We want peace but we maintain that we must first be recognized as a people. We will always find food despite your efforts to stop us from getting it.

As a member of the Defence Council of the whole of Africa, and the President of its branch in Kenya, I ask the [Colonial] Government to withdraw all its armed forces—the police, the KAR troops etc.—from all areas of our country and stop the European settlers from hunting in the forest; then fighting will cease and racial cooperation will be established. I am telling you very clearly that there is no Mau Mau; since the poor man is Mau Mau, it is only Mau Mau which can finish Mau Mau, not bombs and other weaponry.

Because of the [Colonial] Government's policy of moving people without any consideration, and of harassing them in the Reserves, many people have come to the forest for fear of being killed or badly beaten. As a result, Mau Mau has increased a thousand times and now I am glad that I have many soldiers.

When KAU (Kenya African Union) was proscribed, I congratulated the [Colonial] Government because I received many *askaris*. Many Africans who were confined in Nairobi said they had been given a good reason to follow me in the forest. Every week and every month, I received many people in my office coming from Nairobi, Nakuru and other small towns.

1. If people are being wantonly attacked in the towns and even in the reserves, how can they put up with it without running into the forest?
2. If the police and KAR and Homeguards withhold food who can put up

with hunger?

3. If there is no political organization here in Kenya why should everyone not side with Mau Mau?
4. If colour discrimination continues in Kenya, will the Africans, who have eyes, ears and a brain, remain the underdog?
5. It is better to die than to live in misery; why should we put up with suffering in our hearts?

Now it is the responsibility of the [Colonial] Government to see whether [what I have said is], true or not. The foundation of lawful cooperation is also the foundation of peace, wealth and progress. . .

Why should the [Colonial] Government not believe me? I am certain after next month, it will.

Yours,  
Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi



The District Commissioner  
P.O. Box 32  
Nyeri

21 May 1954

Dear Sir,

This is to inform you that if the [Colonial] Government wants to communicate with me about a peace settlement, it should do so through my mother. The communication should be given to Senior Chief Muhoya, who will pass it to Headman Joshua Wakabe, who will then hand it personally to my

mother. This is one of the ways by which I can be contacted.

The other way to communicate with me is to organize a special letter box near the liberated territory which we could use as a point of contact. However, if your Government wants to write to me directly, my address is:

Field Marshal Sir D. Kimathi (KCAE)  
GMK Ngobo Office  
P.O. Karuri  
Ngamune

Please inform the [Colonial] Government officials, particularly the British Commander-in-Chief, General George Erskine, about this communication.

To make my position clear, peace can be restored in this lovely land only if your Government withdraws its armed forces from our country unconditionally.

Best regards,  
D Kimathi

Sir Frederick Crawford  
Acting Governor of Kenya  
P.O. Secretariat  
Nairobi

A.G.M. Chumali  
P.O. Box 32  
Nyeri  
23 May 1954

Dear Sir,

The consistent murder of unarmed Kenyans, the administration of an anti-Mau Mau oath to the peasants in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley, the imposition of a dusk-to-dawn curfew throughout the country, the confiscation of our livestock, the burning of our homes, and the destruction of the crops in the field, is clear evidence that the principal intention of your government is to use atrocities to force our people to submit to your inhuman rule.

To put it simpler language, we consider you, the Chief Native Commissioner, PCs, DCs, and the Colonial African Chiefs, as our principal enemy, and we will make every effort to destroy you.

Finally, we want to make it clear that the majority of our people support Mau Mau against your government, which is based on oppression and exploitation.

A.G.M.

*Copy to:*

Hon. E.W. Mathu

Hon. W.W.W. Awori

Chief Native Commissioner

The Magistrate  
Supreme Court  
P.O. Nairobi

P.O. Box 32  
Nyeri  
28 May 1954

Dear Sir,

I, A.G.M. Chumali, hereby file a case against the persons whose names appear below for being the managers and organizers of an unlawful oath ceremony. The accused have set up an unlawful society whose aims are to engineer civil war amongst the Gikuyu.

The names of the accused are:

1. Sir Frederick Crawford
2. George Erskine, the C-in-C
3. E.A. Sweatman, PC, Southern Province
4. Mr Johnstone, PC Central Province
5. R.E. Wainwright
6. C.F. Alkins, DC.

Kindly send the forms to file the case. Names of witnesses will be inserted on the forms when they are received.

Yours sincerely,  
A.G.M. Chumali

(Source: Kinyatti, 1987: 57-60)

### III. Letters to the colonial chiefs and headmen

Land Freedom Army  
HQ Nyandarwa  
28 May 1954

Dear Chief Kabucho,

*Ndaguthaitha na nguoa cia nyukwa* that you stop suppressing Mau Mau. If you continue, I will have you eliminated. Also tell Chief Gichuhi, Gichiriri, Samuel Wamunduru, Lazaro Waichigo, Mbiro Mugathi, Mwithuka Thaiya, Headman Richard Njoroge Njau, Wanjohi Kimani, Mwangi Karogi, Giathirithi Giathi, Hosea Wainaina, Douglas Rigitari, Murimi Njau, Muchiui Kamau, Josphat Kamanda, Ngari Gichamu, Mwaura Kinyanjui, William Gitu, Daniel Kariithi, Dahara Kariho and Joshua Nyanguui that if they continue supporting the British in killing our people and destroying their property, I will order their extermination. They have probably forgotten the lesson of Lari.

I am sending this letter with the clear understanding that you will read it and take what I have said seriously. It really makes my blood boil to see our own people supporting the British who have occupied our country and reduced us to slavery.

We pay taxes, and yet we are not allowed to make decisions concerning policies for this country. How long shall we continue to pay poll-tax, and still continue to allow ourselves to be killed and our property to be confiscated?

We are fighting in order to liberate our people and country. For those who stand in our way '*no kinya tumonorie*'. We will crush them together with their families like we did in Lari.

Let me emphasize this: If you want me to come to Kiambu, continue to suppress women and children. Don't you read newspapers to find out that we are winning this war? Can't you understand that your support of the British is a betrayal of your own people? Why do you want to die as a traitor?

In conclusion, let me say this: there is nothing which does not have its end. What I mean, in short, is that this war will end in our favour and, consequently, those who have betrayed our country and murdered our compatriots in support of the foreign occupiers will pay the ultimate price.

It is better to die for your country because the people will remember

you forever.

F.M. Sir D. Kimathi

Dear Headman. . .

First accept my greetings; after this listen carefully to what I am going to say.

If you want to live try and behave like Chief Muhoya. I mean you should be neutral in this war. First of all, I don't want you to patrol at night because your men are harassing women and children; I have witnessed this several times when I passed through that area. However, despite your criminal act I have ordered my men not to eliminate you, but to seize your cattle as a form of punishment. But if you don't take this warning seriously, I will have no other choice but to cut you down.

I really pity all of you who are collaborating with the British – the enemy of our country. Being surrounded by trenches, daily parades and subjugated by rigid colonial orders, you suffer more than those of us who are championing the people's cause. But why suffer for crumbs? How terrible it is to die as a traitor!

I would like all of us, including yourself, to unite as a people in order to fight for our land and freedom. True, our sacrifice will be great and many of our compatriots will fall, but we will definitely reach our goal – we will win this war. And if we all die, the coming generations will pick up the banner and continue the struggle.

This is all I wanted to tell you. Please don't bother women and children any more.

Dedan Kimathi,  
Supreme Commander of the KLFA.  
Nyandarwa 1954

Chief Kugudo Kavido,

Many greetings to you, your father, mother, and children. I am appealing to you to assist all Gikuyu who are forcibly brought there by the British authorities. Would you ask the other chiefs in the area to do the same.

I also want you to organize the Pokot youths in your area to join the Kenya Land Freedom Army in order to fight for land and freedom. Remember how [the British] mercilessly killed many Pokot youths, including our compatriot Lukas, during the Baringo confrontation. You are also aware that Europeans have taken our land, cattle, goats, and sheep. More and more are grabbed every month. This is clear proof that Europeans are our principal enemy.

As soon as the Pokot youths join the struggle against our common enemy,

I will supply them with firearms. Once we free our motherland, the Pokot and other [nationalities] will have enough land to graze their livestock and to cultivate.

I think these few lines are enough. Your friends, Kagiri wa Ngumo and Mirigu, send their regards. Kagiri is planning to visit you in the near future. He is now a great Captain in our liberation army.

Yours,  
Dedan Kimathi

23 May 1954

Dear Chief Philip Kioko,

This is to inform you that I have dispatched General Vido to that region with an army of 1500 strong. He is in the Yatta area at the moment. If you want to save your life, you should be careful how you treat General Vido and his army. My advice is that you should take a neutral stand in this war, as Chief Muhoya has done, otherwise General Vido will not hesitate to cut off your head.

The British are the enemy of our people and it is about time that we Africans united against these foreign robbers. Remember that many Wakamba youths were slaughtered during the two World Wars fighting for the British; but what did the Wakamba get for their bravery and loyalty? Their reward was to have their cattle, goats, and sheep confiscated for the benefit of the White Settlers.

For this reason, I am asking you not to be taken in by British propaganda. Mau Mau is the cry of a people suffering from poverty and exploitation. It is a vehicle to liberate our country – to regain the Kenyan soil which the Europeans have occupied by force. You should encourage the Wakamba youths to join Mau Mau; this will strengthen our position and, above all, help us to dislodge these foreign robbers from our land.

If war is bad Europeans would not have been fighting. In other words, war for the liberation of one's country is a just war.

Marshal D. Kimathi

(Source: Kinyatti, 1987: 61-63)

## Annex II

### Interviews

Here are some interviews conducted by historian Maina wa Kinyatti with former KLFA guerrillas, workers and peasants in Nyeri, Murang'a, Nairobi and Nakuru regions between July and September 1978.

**Person Interviewed:** GWK. He was a freedom fighter with the rank of brigadier.

**Social Status:** A worker.

**Q. Why did you join the Mau Mau guerrilla army?**

**Brig. GWK:** To fight for our country's independence.

*When did you go to the forest, and to which KLFA unit did you belong?*

I went to the forest in May 1953. I belonged to Gen. Kago's Battalion.

*Did you know Kimathi personally and, if so, how could you characterize him as a leader?*

Yes, I knew Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi personally. He was an able and intelligent leader and displayed rare qualities of organization. This is why we accepted him as our undisputed leader and the overall commander of the Mau Mau forces.

*What about the organization of the battles?*

We used guerrilla tactics to fight the sophisticated British army. Our principal strategy was to conduct 'hit and run' battles, and we were very successful.

*How many battles were you involved in? Did you shoot any enemy warplanes?*

I was involved in the Ndakani, Kayahee and Kandara battles. I never personally shot an enemy warplane, but people like General Kago shot several of them.

*How was life in the forest and how did you manage to get food?*

Generally speaking, life in the forest was very hard and difficult. Rain and cold caused us untold suffering. Food was also difficult to get, and we usually had to do with one meal a day when it was available. Some of our weak comrades surrendered because of hunger.

*How did you get weapons?*

We seized them from the enemy. We also made our own guns. Each KLFA unit had its own gun factory.

*What role do you think the peasant women played in the struggle?*

A very crucial one. Since they were aware that we were fighting for the liberation of our homeland, they gave us all their support. Most importantly, they supplied us with food and strategic information. Some acted as Mau Mau spies while others joined the guerrilla army in the forest. They formed Mau Mau war committees to coordinate and streamline the activities of the movement in the villages. In short, I would say that the women were the 'mothers' and spirit of the Mau Mau movement; we could not have done without their support.

*Did General China betray the movement after his capture?*

People say he did.

*You fought hard for independence and many of your comrades lost their lives and others were maimed for life – are you satisfied with the results?*

My only dissatisfaction and disappointment is that our own government refused to recognize our contributions to national independence. We, the freedom fighters, as well as the widows left by the guerrillas who died, expected a reward – land – for the great sacrifice we made in the struggle; but we got nothing but humiliation.

*Why did General Bamuingi order his force to return to the forest after independence?*

His demands had been totally rejected by the KANU government. He had demanded that the Mau Mau army should be recognized as a national army, and that all the homeguard traitors should be arrested and charged for their anti-Mau Mau activities.

*What do you personally feel about the policy of 'forgive and forget'?*

I think we should rather forgive but not forget. How can we forget our glorious struggle in which so many of our compatriots died?



*What do you see the future of this country given the fact that the majority of the people are getting poorer and poorer while a few are getting richer and richer?*

Well, I would rather not comment about that.

*Why?*

We don't trust you educated Kenyans. You vacillate too much.

Murang'a District

8 July 1978

**Person Interviewed:** WWG. He was a Mau Mau guerrilla.

**Social Status:** A farm worker.

*Q. Why did you join the Mau Mau guerrilla army?*

**WWG:** To fight for our stolen land and freedom. In fact, our aim was to drive the white man out of our country so that we could rule ourselves.

*When did you actually go to the forest and to which unit did you belong?*

I went to the forest in October 1953 and was placed in the Gikuyu Iregi Army under General Ihuura. We operated from the Nyandarwa mountains.

*What do you think of Dedan Kimathi as a guerrilla leader? Were you close to him?*

Well, I never had the chance of being close to Field Marshal Kimathi. He was a big man, you know. We respected and honoured him as our overall leader. His organizational skills and capabilities were excellent; he knew his job thoroughly well. In fact, we regarded him as a person with super-natural powers—our messiah sent by *Mwene-Nyaga* [God] to deliver us from the yoke of colonialism and imperialist domination.

*How was life in the forest?*

It was hard, difficult and painful, especially in the beginning. We had to adjust to an environment which was harsh, with wild animals and adverse weather conditions. Later on we adjusted well, and made friends with the animals and birds. They joined us to fight the British occupiers.

*How did you get your food?*

We used to get food from the people and we also stole cattle from white settlers. But this became increasingly difficult when villages were set up and pressure from our enemy was increased. During the final years of the struggle, those of my comrades who were still in the forest fighting had to rely more on wild game, wild honey, wild fruits and the like for food. They became more self-reliant. It was a difficult life, but since we had made a pledge to our people that we would never leave the forest without land and freedom, we made the best of it.

*How did you get weapons?*

Mainly from our enemy. We had our men in every section of the colonial

machinery. It was therefore the responsibility of our men to steal guns and ammunition. Besides, we made our own guns. Also, don't forget that each one of us had a *panga* which proved to be an indispensable weapon in this struggle.

*What were your personal contributions in the war for land and freedom?*

Not much. After only nine months I was captured during a bloody confrontation between my battalion and the enemy forces. In this encounter, I personally killed three enemy soldiers before I was captured.

*Were you fighting for the liberation of the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru or Kenyans in general?*

We fought for Kenya's liberation. As I have already mentioned, we wanted the white man to leave our country. Many Kenyan nationalities did not, of course, join us in the forest, but all the same they supported us. Some helped us with food, firearms, etc.

*Some of the freedom fighters like General Bamuingi decided to go back to the forest after uhuru, why was this?*

The fundamental reason is that they were not satisfied with the outcome of their long, painful struggle. They saw no differences between the colonial government and the *uhuru* government. They were disgusted to discover that the traitors of the movement had been given big posts in the KANU government and large tracts of land. General Bamuingi's demands were that all the traitors should be arrested and charged for the atrocities they had committed against the people, and that the Mau Mau army should be recognized as a national army. Our government was not ready to accept these demands.

*Are you personally satisfied with the outcome of this heroic struggle?*

Not at all. We thought and expected that the land occupied by European settlers would be distributed freely to us as a reward for our contribution to the liberation of Kenya. But to our dismay, our contributions were neither recognized, nor were we given the land. Instead, we were required by law to buy our own land from the same thieves who had stolen it from us, as if the price of blood we had paid was not enough. As you can see, we are still very poor; if anything, our situation has worsened. I lost my entire family, my small piece of land and now, after independence, I have to be contented with being a farm labourer—earning Sh. 120.00 a month! The person who owns this farm was a homeguard, a killer of our people. So I am not satisfied at all. To be more frank, I am very bitter.

*What future do you see for this country? You don't have to answer this question, if you don't want to.*

The present political system definitely leaves a lot to be desired. As long as we remain poor despite our brave role in the Mau Mau struggle and as long as these very enemies (homeguards, chiefs, white settlers) we fought against continue to harvest the fruits of the independence we fought and died for, We will remain vigilant. *Gutiri yuuraga na ndikie!*

Murang'a District  
8 July 1978

**Person Interviewed:** WWN. She was a firm supporter of Mau Mau.  
**Social Status:** Ordinary peasant.

*Q. How many Mau Mau oaths did you take?*

WWN: Two: the Oath of Unity and the Mbatuni Oath.

*Did the peasant women understand the aims of the Mau Mau movement?*

Yes, the movement was formed to fight for the liberation of our country. Our country was subjected to brutality by the British, and that was the main reason we decided to take up arms to fight against this inhumanity and barbarism.

*How did you supply the guerrilla fighters with food and other necessities?*

Food was the most important item the guerrillas needed, and we were committed to provide it despite the risks involved. First, we had to cook it at night after our forced communal work. You know we were working from 6 am to 6 pm. When the food was being prepared, we had to position the village KLFA cadres in strategic positions in order to check the approach of the enemy. After the food was cooked, it was packed in bags and given to the village committee leader to take to the forest. Those women—mainly unmarried young women—who were involved in transporting the food to the front had to travel under cover of darkness, accompanied by a detachment of armed peasants. After reaching the strategic point, they would pass the food to another women's group. This process would continue until the food finally reached the front.

We also had to transport ammunition from one village to another until they reached the guerrillas in the forest. We used clever methods: we put them in a *kiondo* (a Gikuyu traditional basket) and covered them with flour. If we happened to meet the enemy—homeguards—we would pretend we were coming from a maize mill and the homeguards could hardly suspect us; you know they were dumb and stupid. Actually, we were not afraid of the homeguard traitors and their British masters; we knew that although they were vicious and could make our revolutionary work difficult, we were too clever for them; in addition to that, we were convinced that we would eventually triumph, despite their ruthlessness and brutality. Those gallant women who happened to be killed in this noble mission were regarded as martyrs. In fact, their deaths strengthened and hardened our determination to fight. Besides, we were very much encouraged by the fact that in the struggle for liberation some would sacrifice their dear lives for our eventual triumph.

*How was coordination ensured in the villages in times of need? I mean how could you contact the guerrilla commander in an emergency?*

There was a Mau Mau Committee in every village, organized by the leaders

of the movement in that ridge to work in conjunction with the army commander. It was composed of both women and men. Its main duty was: to organize transportation of supplies to the front; to ensure the security of fighters in the ridge by organizing an elaborate system of spying; to contact the guerrillas in the forest for vital information; especially about the movement of the enemy troops; to eliminate spies, informers and traitors in the village; to recruit youths for armed combat.

*How many members of your family died in the struggle for land and freedom; and how do you feel about the homeguard traitors, and other elements who sided with the British occupiers during this struggle?*

No member of my family was killed by the homeguards. However, the atrocities and other brutalities these '*thata cia bururi*' subjected us to will never be forgotten – they beat us, raped our daughters in front of their parents, put bottles in our vaginas, and castrated men—they caused us untold suffering. Besides, they killed tens of hundreds of our compatriots.

*What punishment do you think these traitors should have received after independence?*

Some of them should have been hanged outright, and others should have been detained for a long time to pay for their unpatriotic activities.

*Don't you think we should forgive them now?*

No, they are murderers and thieves who now thrive on the fruits which should have been bestowed on those who died fighting for the liberation of this country.

Murang'a District  
21 July 1978

**Person Interviewed:** KWK: He was a member of Mau Mau.

**Social Status:** A worker.

**Q.** *Why do you think the people of Kenya organized Mau Mau?*

**KWK:** To dislodge the British imperialists from our country. They had taken our best land and reduced us to slaves.

*Some people in Kenya say that the Mau Mau struggle delayed uhuru. What is your opinion on this?*

This is a ridiculous and outrageous contention. I strongly feel that without the Mau Mau war of national independence, no uhuru (independence) could have been achieved in Kenya in 1963. The British wanted to make our country 'a white man country', and they were determined to do so. Our armed struggle dismantled this evil plan. Those who say that Mau Mau delayed *wiyaathi* (independence) are wrong.

*We have now our land and uhuru are you personally happy about these accomplishments?*

I am definitely not happy. The land question has not been solved and that is why the great majority of our people are still poor and landless. We thought that after *uhuru*, our government would freely distribute the land formerly owned by white settlers to the poor and the landless, but instead it insisted that we would have to buy this land from the same robbers who had stolen it from us. We really could not understand this policy.

As for *uhuru*, I think I can say that I can now walk in the streets without fear of police harassment as was the case during the colonial days. However, our present rulers must rule in fairness: justice and democracy must prevail if they expect peace and stability. The silencing and brutal murder of some popular Kenyan leaders cannot be tolerated by our people for long. For instance, the savage killing of J. M. Kariuki eroded our confidence in the present regime. How many more have to die like this, I wonder.

*Are you saying that the Mau Mau movement was betrayed?*

Yes, the people who are enjoying the benefits of the Mau Mau war are either those who betrayed the movement outright, or those who did not support it in any way. Some of them are children of the former colonial chiefs; others are those politicians who built their political careers on anti-Mau Mau crusades. Seriously, something should have been done to relieve the suffering of the hundreds of widows and children whose husbands and fathers died fighting for the liberation of this land.

*Do you believe in the concept of 'forgive and forget'?*

No! In fact, I don't see how we can be able to erase the atrocities and barbarities committed by the homeguard traitors from our minds. It is not human to forgive those who killed your children, your brother, your mother, your wife, your sister.

*What is your last comment?*

Well, sometime when I walk in the streets of Nairobi and I see all these foreign companies—Hilton, Intercontinental and many, many others, I always wonder whether we are really free.

Nairobi

23 July 1978

**Person Interviewed:** WWM. She was a firm supporter of Mau Mau.

**Social Status:** Ordinary peasant.

*Q. Could you please assess the role the women played in the Mau Mau movement?*

**WWM:** Yes, the entire success of the Mau Mau struggle depended heavily on the peasant women. They provided food, strategic information, as well as guns and ammunition (which they stole from the enemy soldiers) to the guerrilla fighters. It was also their main duty and responsibility to transport all supplies to the front.

*Do you think women really knew the aims of the movement?*

Obviously we knew that our compatriots were fighting for land and freedom. The white man had brought a lot of suffering among our people, and we wanted him to relinquish his rule over our country. As would be expected in any patriotic struggle, there were a few traitors among women, but all in all, the majority of peasant women wholly supported the movement. As a result, many of us were subjected to all kinds of atrocities by the home-guard traitors and their British allies.

*How did supplies (food, medicine, clothing, etc) reach the guerrillas in the forest?*

There was a Mau Mau Committee in every village which coordinated this activity. After the food was prepared, a few trusted women, usually unmarried young women who had taken the Batuni Oath, were selected to carry the supplies to a strategic point where other women would be waiting. They would give these items to the new group of women, and then return to their village. The other group would transport these items to another strategic point where they would be relieved by another group, until the items reached the front. It was a risky task, but it was our duty to support the movement.

*Why was there no fear of the enemy in this operation?*

Because of our commitment and undying love for our country.

*What actually happened when you were arrested? How were you punished by the colonial authorities?*

The most common punishment was to be put in detention, where we were subjected to all sorts of brutalities. For instance, bottles full of hot water were forced into our vaginas and our men were castrated in front of us. Oh, I can't really explain what I saw and experienced. I feel so bitter about it.

*You have mentioned the existence of a Mau Mau village committee. Tell me more about it.*

In every ridge or village, a prominent, able, committed and trustworthy woman or man was appointed to be the KLFA representative in the village. She would be authorized to organize a Mau Mau village committee to help her coordinate the activities of the movement in that ridge. In particular, the committee was responsible for supplying guerrillas with food, clothing, medicine, weapons, ammunition and strategic information.

*How many members of your family were killed?*

None. But I lost my friends in this war. A lot of innocent people, including children, were also killed, and it makes my blood boil when I remember them; especially when I remember that those who killed them now occupy the highest posts in our government.

*You mean you don't believe in the philosophy of 'forgive and forget'?*

Yes, we have been told to 'forgive and forget', but it is really difficult to forget the atrocities these traitors subjected us to during the war. How

can we forgive those who tortured and killed us; those who sold us out to the British imperialists? No, I will never forgive or forget! However, we have a nation to build, and it would be unwise to allow the past to hinder us from a better future. Our last experience should be used to improve the social conditions of many of us.

*Does this mean that you still perceive a future for this country, and if so, under what political and economic system?*

Well, certainly not under the present political and economic conditions. I feel that our government must do something to alleviate poverty among the great majority of Kenyans. We expected that the coming of *uhuru* would improve our lot, but it has been a great disappointment.

*What do you think of Dedan Kimathi?*

He was a great patriot, a great leader. In fact, I cried bitter tears when he was shot and captured. We always think that if he was not killed, he would have stood with us against the betrayers of our struggle.

Nyeri District  
13 August 1978

**Person Interviewed:** NWK. He was a member of Mau Mau.

**Social Status:** Ordinary peasant.

**Q. What was the main aim of Mau Mau?**

**NWK:** To fight for our stolen land and independence.

*Were you fighting for the liberation of Kenya or for the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru?*

What we had in our minds was a fight to get rid of the British imperialist rule of exploitation and domination. We were not thinking of ourselves; that would have been too narrow, selfish and unpatriotic. We fought and died for Kenyan independence.

*Was this war only fought by the people of Central Kenya?*

No, many others were involved, notably the Kamba and Maasai. In fact, even among the people of central Kenya, not every one participated in this great struggle. There were homeguards who sided with the British against us. The majority of educated people in central Kenya did not even support the movement. We used to call them *taitai*.

*Now that we have 'expelled' the Mzungu (European), 'regained our stolen land' and 'acquired our freedom', are you satisfied?*

No! first, the *Mzungu* is still here; many of them are still occupying the land they stole from us. Secondly, no land was distributed to the poor, dispossessed and suffering masses after independence; instead, the land was given to the former homeguards and big politicians.

*So the people who are enjoying the fruits of uhuru are former traitors and*

politicians?

Yes. They are now our new rulers.

*What punishment do you think those former homeguards should have received after independence?*

They should all have been killed, detained, or expelled from Kenya.

*Does this mean that you don't believe in the policy of 'forgive and forget'?*

Precisely! How are we expected to forgive—leave alone forget—such traitors who were responsible for the killing and suffering of so many Kenyans? My son died during this struggle—killed by one of these traitors. I will not forget this as long as I live nor will I ever forgive the killer.

*Do you think that we could have attained our uhuru without the armed struggle?*

No. The argument and strength of Mau Mau dismantled the colonial myth of a white man's country. In fact, the Mau Mau struggle forced the British to relinquish their role over our country.

Nyeri District  
20 August 1978

**Person Interviewed:** MWK. He was a key homeguard and a vicious killer.  
**Social Status:** A prosperous peasant farmer. By rural standards, he is very rich.

I approached MWK hoping to get his own views on the Mau Mau struggle as a former collaborator and killer of our people. However, he made it quite clear to me that he was not prepared to talk about the subject. He personally felt that this whole affair should be forgotten now that we had become independent. After my insistence, however, he agreed to answer a few of my questions.

*Q. Does it mean that you still think that people still consider you and the others who supported the British during the Mau Mau struggle their enemy, in spite of the fact that Mzee Kenyatta has consistently told us to forgive and forget?*

Oh yes. As far as I know, they have not forgotten or forgiven us. That is why I even don't feel secure mixing freely with them, especially in drinking places. This is why I stopped drinking.

*Do you think there were genuine reasons why the people went to the forest?*

As I told you from the beginning, I am not prepared to answer anything concerning that subject. After all, why bother about distant events like Mau Mau? We now have *uhuru* and the white man has sold his land to us, Black people; I think we should be more concerned with national development rather than spending our time discussing politics. Don't you think I have a point there?



*You were supporting the British during the Mau Mau struggle, what was the reason for doing so? Didn't you want land and freedom?*

I am not prepared to answer that question either, and if you don't mind, I have a lot of work to do.

*What do you think of Dedan Kimathi? Wasn't he a great patriot?*

No comment.

Nyeri District  
24 August 1978

**Person Interviewed:** WK. He was a Mau Mau General.

**Social Status:** A peasant-worker.

*Q. When did you join the Mau Mau struggle and why?*

WK: I joined in 1952 to fight against British oppression, exploitation and tyranny.

*Which camp were you operating from?*

Nyandarwa.

*Did you know Kimathi personally, and if so, how can you characterize him as a leader of the movement?*

As a Mau Mau General, I knew Marshal Dedan Kimathi well, since we used to meet in the Nyandarwa mountains to discuss the progress of the war. Kimathi had great charisma and extraordinary qualities of leadership. He organized and coordinated the entire struggle, despite the hardships we faced in the forest, mainly communication problems. He was fair and democratic in all his revolutionary duties.

*How was the fighting organized?*

First, discipline was a crucial factor in our success. Those who proved disloyal, cowardly, bandit-like, or failed in the execution of their duties were tried before the KLFA military tribunal. If they were found guilty, they were severely punished. At the same time, all the guerrillas were required to obey their army commanders without any hesitation. We also discussed our war strategy collectively before we launched an attack. Because the British army was equipped with sophisticated weapons, we used hit and run tactics to fight it.

*How did you get food in the forest?*

It was brought to us by peasant women, otherwise we fed on European cattle and sheep.

*Are you saying that the women were the backbone of the movement?*

Yes, the struggle could not have succeeded without the women who provided us with food, medicine, clothing and strategic information. Some of the war committees, which were the material base for the struggle in the

villages, were run by women. Women spied on the activities of homeguard traitors and were also used as baits to induce a homeguard wanted for murder to go to a strategic place. Because of their patriotism, many women were subjected to all sorts of atrocities by our enemy.

*How did you get weapons?*

The main source of our weapons was the enemy himself. We also made our own guns. But we also had our *pangas* which proved to be very important weapons.

*How did you treat the traitors, spies and informers?*

Mercilessly! Most of them were hacked to death with *pangas*. I personally cut off the head of one of the homeguard traitors, cut off his penis, and put it into his mouth like a cigar. We had to be ruthless with our enemies to strengthen our position.

*Were you fighting for the liberation of Kenya or Central Province?*

In organizing our struggle, we had in mind the freedom and good living conditions for all Kenyan Africans.

*You fought hard for the liberation of this country. Are you satisfied with the results?*

I am not prepared to comment on that.

*Why?*

I am afraid of the consequences. Maybe I will speak on this subject in the future, but not now.

*Why did General Bamuingi decide to return to the forest with his force after his meeting with KANU government officials?*

Well, I don't really want to talk about that either. [After I insisted that he should answer this question, he told me:] General Bamuingi disagreed with the government's policy, particularly about the land question. He also wanted the KANU government to recognize the Mau Mau army as a national army. All his demands were rejected. As a result, he decided to go back to the forest to fight for these demands.

*What about you? Why didn't you follow General Bamuingi back to the forest? Does it mean you supported the government's land policy?*

This is the same question which I said I will not answer for the time being.

Nakuru District  
3 September 1978

**Person Interviewed:** NK. He was a firm supporter of the movement.  
**Social Status:** Ordinary peasant.

*Q. What was the main cause of the Mau Mau struggle? and was Mau Mau a terrorist organization?*

**NK:** Mau Mau was organized to fight for our stolen land and our country's independence. It was a patriotic, anti-imperialist movement.

*Did the Mau Mau struggle delay uhuru?*

No! without Mau Mau, Kenya would not have attained her *uhuru* in 1963. The *Kabuuru* had entrenched themselves and were here to stay. They had taken large tracts of our land, built permanent houses and a strong military machinery. Without armed struggle, they would not have listened to our demands.

*Now that we have the 'land and uhuru', are you happy about these 'achievements'?*

Not at all. My main disappointment is that the people who fought got no land, and their contribution to the fight for independence was not recognized. The land, which we expected to be distributed free to the poor and landless, was grabbed by the former homeguards and the big politicians. I feel that our government should have at least helped the widows and children whose husbands and fathers died in the forest.

*Was the Mau Mau movement betrayed then?*

Yes. First, those who fought and died for *uhuru* were not given national recognition. Secondly, most of the beneficiaries from our glorious struggle are the former collaborators, and not the legitimate freedom fighters. Who runs the government body? Isn't it the sons of former colonial chiefs and white settlers?

*Do you agree with the philosophy of 'forgive and forget'?*

How can we forget our glorious struggle? We cannot forget that we fought and died for this land. We cannot forget our history. It is not human to forgive those who killed us, those who opposed our struggle for national independence with blood and fire. In fact, we hoped that these traitors would be punished for their treacherous acts by our government, but instead they were rewarded; they are now our rulers.

*What future do you see for the majority of Kenyans?*

As things stand now, the future for them, for us rather, is grim and unpromising. The political system in our country must be re-adjusted, since too few have too much, otherwise. . .

*What do you mean by 'otherwise'?*

You know, if the situation continues to worsen, our children will be forced to fight—to fight for the same things we fought for. I don't know whether I am making myself clear, but I really get myself disturbed when I see poverty and starvation anywhere in this republic.

Nakuru District  
5 September 1978

**Person Interviewed:** GWK. He was a guerrilla fighter.

**Social Status:** A prosperous farmer in the former White Highlands.

**Q. Why did you join the Mau Mau guerrilla army? Where were you in the forest?**

**GWK:** I was in Nyandarwa. I joined the guerrilla army to fight for our country's independence.

**Did you know Kimathi in person? What do you think of him as a leader?**

I did not know him personally; I only knew he was our undisputable leader and the supreme commander of all KLFA forces. He had good organizational skills. In fact, the success of the movement depended on his firm leadership.

**When did you join the guerrillas in the forest?**

Early 1954.

**How many battles were you engaged in during your stay in the forest?**

Many, but the main one I was involved in was the Battle of Othaya. Under General Mathenge's command, we attacked the Othaya Police Station. We fought hard, but we lost the battle.

**How was life in the forest, and how did you get your food?**

Life in the forest was very difficult, and hadn't it been for our commitment to the struggle, we would not have persevered. The rain and cold were devastating. Food was another problem. Without the support of the peasants, we would have died of starvation or given up the struggle.

**Do you know what role General China (Waruhiu Itote) played after his capture?**

No.

**The whole struggle was difficult and bloody, are you really satisfied with its results?**

To a great extent yes, I am satisfied. There is no more forced labour, no more colour bar, and we don't carry *kipandes* any more. In addition, the white man has no power any more, we have our own government. Above everything else, we have regained our stolen land. These are the things we fought and died for.

**Some of your comrades (General Bamuingi and others) decided to go back to the forest after uhuru. Why do you think they made such a serious decision?**

They were misguided and I don't support them at all.

**By the way, how did you get this farm, and what do you think about the majority of freedom fighters who were not as lucky as you were?**

I bought it; but how and where I got the money is my own business. As for the others you talked about, they could have tried to raise money and buy their own land. As our leaders have been consistently telling us, they should not expect free things.

Nakuru District  
15 September 1978

(Source: Kinyatti, 1987: 119-32)

## Annex III

### Speeches

#### **I. Jomo Kenyatta's<sup>1</sup> speech at the Kenya African Union Meeting at Nyeri, 1952**

(Excerpt)



July 26, 1952

---

... I want you to know the purpose of K.A.U. It is the biggest purpose the African has. It involves every African in Kenya and it is their mouthpiece which asks for freedom. K.A.U. is you and you are the K.A.U. If we unite now, each and every one of us, and each tribe to another, we will cause the implementation in this country of that which the European calls democracy. True democracy has no colour distinction. It does not choose between black and white. We are here in this tremendous gathering under the K.A.U. flag to find which road leads us from darkness into democracy. In order to find it, we Africans must first achieve the right to elect our own representatives. That is surely the first principle of democracy. We are the only race in Kenya which does not elect its own

---

<sup>1</sup> Jomo Kenyatta (1889–1978) was born Kamau wa Ngengi in the Gatundu Division of Kiambu (North-West of Nairobi) around 1889. He was later baptized a Christian with the name of John Peter, which he changed to Johnstone Kenyatta. First President of Kenya (1964–78), he was influential throughout Africa and intolerant of dissent in Kenya, outlawing some opposition parties in 1969 and establishing a one-party state in 1974. He followed a non-aligned foreign policy and died in office on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1978 at the age of 89.

representatives in the Legislature and we are going to set about to rectify this situation. We feel we are dominated by a handful of others who refuse to be just. God said this is our land. Land in which we are to flourish as a people. We are not worried that other races are here with us in our country, but we insist that we are the leaders here, and what we want we insist we get. We want our cattle to get fat on our land so that our children grow up in prosperity; we do not want that fat removed to feed others. He who has ears should now hear that K.A.U. claims this land as its own gift from God and I wish those who are black, white or brown at this meeting to know this. K.A.U. speaks in daylight. He who calls us the *Mau Mau* is not truthful. We do not know this thing *Mau Mau*. We want to prosper as a nation, and as a nation we demand equality, that is equal pay for equal work. Whether it is a chief, headman or labourer we needs in these days increased salary. He needs a salary that compares with a salary of a European who does equal work. We will never get our freedom unless we succeed in this issue. We do not want equal pay for equal work tomorrow-we want it right now. Those who profess to be just must realize that this is the foundation of justice. It has never been known in history that a country prospers without equality. [...]

(Source: Cornfield, 1960: 301-308)

## **II. Harold Macmillan's speech to Members of both Houses of the Parliament of the Union of South Africa, Cape Town, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1960.**

### ***The Wind of Change Speech.* (Extract)**

It is, as I have said, a special privilege for me to be here in 1960 when you are celebrating what I might call the golden wedding of the Union. At such a time it is natural and right that you should pause to take stock of your position, to look back at what you have achieved, to look forward to what lies ahead. In the fifty years of their nationhood the people of South Africa have built a strong economy founded upon a healthy agriculture and thriving and resilient industries.

No one could fail to be impressed with the immense material progress which has been achieved. That all this has been accomplished in so short a time is a striking testimony to the skill, energy and initiative of your people. We in Britain are proud of the contribution we have made to this remarkable achievement. Much of it has been financed by British capital. ...

...As I've travelled around the Union I have found everywhere, as I expected, a deep preoccupation with what is happening in the rest of the African continent. I understand and sympathise with your interests in these events and your anxiety about them.

Ever since the breakup of the Roman Empire one of the constant facts of political life in Europe has been the emergence of independent nations. They have come into existence over the centuries in different forms, different kinds of government, but all have been inspired by a deep, keen feeling of nationalism, which has grown as the nations have grown.

In the twentieth century, and especially since the end of the war, the processes which gave birth to the nation states of Europe have been repeated all over the world. We have seen the awakening of national consciousness in peoples who have for centuries lived in dependence upon some other power. Fifteen years ago this movement spread through Asia. Many countries there, of different races and civilisations, pressed their claim to an independent national life.

Today the same thing is happening in Africa, and the most striking of all the impressions I have formed since I left London a month ago is of the strength of this African national consciousness. In different places it takes different forms, but it is happening everywhere.

The wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.

Well you understand this better than anyone, you are sprung from Europe, the home of nationalism, and here in Africa you have yourselves created a free nation, a new nation. Indeed in the history of our times, yours will be recorded as the first of the African nationalists. This tide of national consciousness which is now rising in Africa is a fact, for which both you and we, and the other nations of the western world are ultimately responsible.

For its causes are to be found in the achievements of western civilisation, in the pushing forwards of the frontiers of knowledge, the applying of science to the service of human needs, in the expanding of food production, in the speeding and multiplying of the means of communication, and perhaps above all and more than anything else in the spread of education. As I have said, the growth of national consciousness in Africa is a political fact, and we must accept it as such. That means, I would judge, that we've got to come to terms with it. I sincerely believe that if we cannot do so we may imperil the precarious balance between the East and West on which the peace of the world depends.

The world today is divided into three main groups. First there is what we call the Western Powers. You in South Africa and we in Britain belong to this group, together with our friends and allies in other parts of the Commonwealth. In the United States of America and in Europe we call it the Free World. Secondly there are the Communists – Russia and her satellites in Europe and China whose population will rise by the end of the next ten years to the staggering total of 800 million. Thirdly, there are those parts of the world whose people are at present uncommitted either to Communism or to our Western ideas. In this context we think first of Asia and then of Africa. As I see it the great issue in this second half of the twentieth century is whether the uncommitted peoples of Asia and Africa will swing to the East or to the West. Will they be drawn into the Communist camp? Or will the great experiments in self-government that are now being made in Asia and Africa, especially within the Commonwealth, prove so successful, and by their example so compelling, that the balance will come down in favour of freedom and order and justice? The struggle is joined, and it is a struggle for the minds of men. What is now on trial is much more than our military strength or our diplomatic and administrative skill. It is our way of life. The uncommitted nations want to see before they choose.

(Source :

[http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/p/wind\\_of\\_change2.htm](http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eraindependence/p/wind_of_change2.htm))

## Annex IV

### Resolutions

**Here are two resolutions from the sixth Pan-African Congress of Manchester, 1945.**



## DECLARATION TO THE COLONIAL POWERS

The delegates believe in peace. How could it be otherwise, when for centuries the African peoples have been the victims of violence and slavery? Yet if the Western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom, even if force destroys them and the world.

We are determined to be free. We want education. We want the right to earn a decent living; the right to express our thoughts and emotions, to adopt and create forms of beauty. We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this One World for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation.

We are not ashamed to have been an age-long patient people. We continue willingly to sacrifice and strive. But we are unwilling to starve any longer while doing the world's drudgery, in order to support by our poverty and ignorance a false aristocracy and a discarded imperialism.

We condemn the monopoly of capital and the rule of private wealth and industry for private profit alone. We welcome economic democracy as the only real democracy.

Therefore, we shall complain, appeal and arraign. We will make the world listen to the facts of our condition. We will fight in every way we can for freedom, democracy and social betterment.

## DECLARATION TO THE COLONIAL PEOPLES

We affirm the right of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control, whether political or economic.

The peoples of the colonies must have the right to elect their own Governments, without restrictions from foreign Powers. We say to the peoples of the colonies that they must fight for these ends by all means at their disposal.

The object of imperialist Powers is to exploit. By granting the right to colonial peoples to govern themselves that object is defeated. Therefore, the struggle for political power by colonial and subject peoples is the first step towards, and the necessary prerequisite to, complete social, economic and political emancipation. The Fifth Pan-African Congress therefore calls in the workers and farmers of the Colonies to organise effectively. Colonial workers must be in the front of the battle against imperialism. Your weapons—the strike and the boycott—are invincible.

We also call upon the intellectuals and professional classes of the colonies to awaken to their responsibilities. By fighting for trade union rights, the right to form co-operatives, freedom of the Press, assembly, demonstration and strike, freedom to print and read the literature which is necessary for the education of the masses, you will be using the only means by which your liberties will be won and maintained. Today there is only one road to effective action—the organisation of the masses. And in that organisation the educated colonials must join. Colonial and subject peoples of the world, Unite!

(Langley, 1973: 135-137)

**Kenya Parliament**  
**Income and expenditure record**

<b>Year 1953</b>			
<i>Income</i>		<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Balance</i>
shs. 47,662.51		shs. 42,906.39	shs. 4,756.12
<p>The following income and expenditure account was sent by Commander Ndiritu, one of the KLFA unit leaders, to the Kenya Parliament for auditing.</p>			
<b>Year 1953</b>			
<i>Month</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Balance</i>
February	shs. 4,096.71	shs. 3,293.00	shs. 802.71
May	shs. 20,460.46	shs. 20,149.85	shs. 310.61
August	shs. 6,665.06	shs. 6,452.00	shs. 213.06
October	shs. 275.56	shs. 197.00	shs. 78.56
November	shs. 658.00	shs. 580.00	shs. 78.56
<i>Total</i>	<i>shs. 32,155.79</i>	<i>shs. 30,671.83</i>	<i>shs. 1,483.50</i>
<b>Year 1954</b>			
<b>Kenya Parliament Income and Expenditure Record:</b>			
<i>Income</i>		<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Balance</i>
shs. 6,637.66		shs. 6,313.92	shs. 323.74

**Money contributed by the peasants to the movement from May 1954 to November 1954.**

May:	shs. 1,388.60
June:	shs. 155.80
July:	shs. 2,410.56
August:	shs. 200.00
September:	shs. 500.00
October:	shs. 600.00
November:	shs. 45.00
<b>Total Contributions:</b>	<b>shs. 5,309.96</b>

**Money Distributed to the KLFA Leaders**

On 22 April 1954, the Kenya Parliament distributed the following amount of money to the leaders of the army and the Chania guerrillas' hospital:

1. Karari wa Njama:	shs. 100.00
2. Major Ndururi:	shs. 20.00
3. Commander Abdullah:	shs. 30.00
4. General Roy:	shs. 30.00
5. Commander Nyaga:	shs. 20.00
6. Colonel Ruanjane:	shs. 30.00
7. Commander N. Thuita:	shs. 20.00
8. Colonel Wangura:	shs. 30.00
9. Chania Hospital:	shs. 40.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>shs. 320.00</b>

(Source: Kinyatti, 1987: 115-16)

## **ABSTRACT**

To review Kenya history over the past seventy years is virtually to call to mind the colonial period. Under British rule, some parts of East Africa, which later became Kenya underwent destructive changes and mutations. Such changes affected the life of the autochthons on different planes, be they social, economic, political, educational or religious. Four chapters make up this thesis. Chapter one covers the era which served as a prelude to colonial rule. During that period, the international context and the African one are brought under review for the sake of understanding the factors (mercantilism, the need to control sea routes, etc.) which facilitated the contact between the alien forces and the locals, a contact which subsequently resulted in confrontation. Chapter two centres on the implementation of British colonial machinery and its impact on the locals. One explains here how land deprivation, combined with the repressive machinery of control, ignited a radical sentiment which culminated into a more structured movement of resistance. Chapter three is about the exogenous and endogenous factors which led to the rise of nationalism. Then was the moment for a new and modern form of people's organisation, including trade unions and political parties. And the main concern of Chapter four is the Mau Mau struggle and the road leading to nationhood.

If nationalism is mostly about claims put forward on behalf of a nation, one tries to answer through an analytical approach the following queries: What were the nationalistic claims like in Kenya? How were they formulated? And above all, how did Kenyan militants bridge the gap across the barrier of history between resistance movements of the past and modern consciousness?

## Mots clefs

Britain

Colonialism

Consciousness

Elite

Independence

Kenya

Land

Mau Mau

Nationalism

Nationhood

Parties

Policy

Resistance

Struggle

Tribe