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Impact of Mau Mau Movement on The Family Unit: A Case Study of Nyandarua County From 1952 to 1963

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01 August 2024 After the establishment of colonial rule, colonial land, labour, racial and other exploitative policies forced the Africans to take arms against colonial oppression. This led to Mau Mau War of Liberation. This war had far-reaching effects on the family unit. The purpose of this research is to identify the impact of the Mau Mau war on children and the family unit a case of Nyandarua County from 1952-1963. The social conflict theory has been used to explain how family unit endured heart trending consequences during the period of Mau Mau war. The Mau Mau war disrupted African child's formal education. Independent schools were closed as the colonialists perceived these areas as breeding grounds for the guerilla fighters. School-going children who underwent the oath ritual were collected from schools. Teachers had done their assignment of indoctrinating them. Majority of these young children joined the forest fighters. Those who were left at home did nothing substantial with their days. Some spent their days singing freedom songs, others lazing around. Apparently, those who were from parents of collaborators continued attending the mission schools. They too had their fair share of agony. Learning too was disrupted after the Africans were moved into the villages where families were congested leaving no space for learners to study. The Mau Mau fighters looted them leaving them devoid of valuable teaching and learning essentials. At the peak of the Mau Mau war, colonialists turned schools into torture camps. Hard cores were brought to schools and tortured, women were sexually assaulted, while others bit the dust as a result of the colonial bullet. All this happened as learners were watching. This affected them psychologically. The study shall further illustrate how the war psychologically affected members of the Kikuyu families, especially the children. The view of dead bodies was horrendous to the children. Some of the informants of this study have never been able to shed off these effects even to date. The war separated family members. Some parents lost their children during the war. Others, their parents entered the forest leaving their families in the villages. Unfortunately, most Africans never returned home as they were killed by the colonial bullets. Women were forced to take up roles traditionally performed by men. Colonialists forced women to dig trenches, build bridges and roads. Furthermore, women were forced to take up security roles formally done by men. Physical violence meted on Africans, has forced some people to live with physical incapacitation; some with broken limbs, pierced eyes and broken jaws. Women were the more susceptible to the colonial wrath. Most were sexually abused leaving them with permanent physical and mental scars. In

the home front, Africans suffered during the war period. Food was never enough, houses could not accommodate the growing number of Africans and property was confiscated by the Europeans.

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INTRODUCTION

African resistance in Kenya started immediately after the Europeans attempted to impose colonial rule on Africans. For instance, between 1895 and 1905, the Kalenjin people put up an all-fired bloody resistance against foreign intruders (Kinyatti, 1992). In other parts of the country, Waiyaki wa Hinga, among the Kikuyu, Mekatilili wa Menza in the coastal region, Mwana wa Muka commander of the Akamba forces did resist colonialists after they established a colonial settlement and political domination over Africans (Kinyatti, 2008). Since these early resistances choreographed by the above commanders were isolated, uncoordinated and weak, the people were defeated (Kinyatti, 1992). Besides the failures to form a united front, these forces of resistance were using comparatively primitive weapons while the enemy had sophisticated weapons of the time. Inevitably, colonialists established their rule.

Having fully subdued Africans' resistance, imperialists embarked on a mission to establish European settlements which were enhanced by colonial policies on land and labour. These policies left Africans disgruntled. The Mau Mau struggle, which officially erupted in 1952 after the

declaration of the State of Emergency crystallized around these imperialists' policies and laws.

On the eve of the Mau Mau war, a large number of the Kikuyu had taken the Mau Mau oath of unity, pledging their lives for Mau Mau movement and its demand for land and freedom (Elkins, 2005)

Between 1953 and 1960 the colonial government in Kenya initiated retaliatory attacks against the Mau Mau fighters and sympathizers. This study focused on the impact of the Mau Mau uprising on the socio-economic organization of the people of Nyandarua County. The objective of this study was the impact of the Mau Mau movement on children and the family unit. The impact of the Mau Mau movement shall be discussed under the following headings; disruption of formal education, psychological effects, separation of children from their families, changing gender roles, children's added responsibilities, physical violence and disrupted family relationship and interactions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using the descriptive research design. This research design was significant as it offered a chronology of events as

they occurred during the period under study. A qualitative approach facilitated an in-depth collection of data to determine the attitudes and opinions encompassing the topic under research. This study was carried out in Nyandarua County, which is in the former Central province of Kenya. The county has an area of 3245.2 Km². The area is inhabited by members of the Kikuyu community and a few other communities from the neighbouring communities such as the Maasai from Laikipia, which is in the north of Nyandarua County. The County is divided into five administrative constituencies namely; Kinangop, Kipipiri, Ol'Kalou, Ol' JoroOrok and Ndaragwa. This study was confined in three of these constituencies; Kinangop, Kipipiri, Ol'Kalou. This study derived its data from both primary and secondary sources. Data from primary sources was obtained from the Kenya National Archives and Oral Interviews. The KNA documents included annual reports, handover reports and secret files from various administrators in the Rift Valley province. They provided data on the socio-political and economic aspects of the Rift Valley region, during colonial period. Oral data was obtained from oral interviews conducted in three constituencies in Nyandarua County namely Kinangop, Kipipiri and Ol'Kalou. During the colonial period, Kipipiri and Ol'kalou constituencies were a part of the Wanjohi Valley or The Happy Valley Set. Both male and female informants were interviewed. Oral interviews were conducted in the homes of the informants. A question guide with open questions was formulated as a guide for conducting the oral interviews. The researcher used a smartphone (Samsung Galaxy Ace) as a backup storage in case some of the information given was omitted in the process of note-taking. Interviews were conducted in Gikuyu language. This was inevitable as this was the most appropriate language the informants could use to effectively articulate events. Consequently, a Kikuyu language translator was hired to translate the content in English and more so clarify several Kikuyu technical terminologies the researcher was not conversant with. Secondary sources such as books, journals, theses, dissertations,

newspapers as well as the internet gave an imprint of secondary data. The study adopted the purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Thirty informants were interviewed. The researcher interviewed ten informants in each constituency in Nyandarua County (Kinangop, Kipipiri, Ol'Kalou) thus ensuring that the entire county was well represented. The study targeted informants above 70 years of age for the purpose of soliciting information on the effect of the Mau Mau war on the family unit. Individuals within this age bracket were targeted solely because most of them must have experienced the devastating human pain of the Mau Mau war. Although individuals at advanced age were targeted, that does not necessarily imply that they were knowledgeable of the events. However, age limit was significant as it provided a sample group of individuals endowed with information on Mau Mau war.

The data collected (in vernacular) was translated to English. A comparative analysis of the information from various respondents was conducted where similar ties and differences were noted. Documents review analysis method was employed to interpret primary and secondary documents and determine their validity to this study. The collected data were analyzed thematically and periodically in line with the study objectives. The presentation of the analyzed data was in form of narrations and included first-hand quotations from oral interviews.

Disruption of Formal Education

One of the major damaging effects of the Mau Mau war was the disruption and destruction of the African child's formal education. Before the declaration of a state of emergency in 1952, the African child had the liberty of joining either independent schools or mission schools. In these schools, children were introduced to elementary education, with the prospect of proceeding to pursue University education. In early 1950's, this opportunity, they were denied. Teachers, most of whom had already taken the oath, spent much of the children's school time, radicalizing them against colonialists. A teacher at Gakurwe

primary school in Muranga is quoted saying, “I was using all my afternoon hours teaching my students how to sing Mau Mau songs and to explain to them why our people had taken arms to fight for land and freedom. I told them about the sweetness and beauty of freedom and the evil and cruelty of colonial slavery” (Kinyatti, 2008:140). Exposing young minds to such tutelage only increased their chance of dropping out of school and joining the struggle for independence.

Mwangi Kamunye (O.I, 29/12/2015) was in an independent school in 1952. He explains how he together with other students took the Mau Mau oath while in school.

We could be taken from schools to the dens where the oath was being prepared during the day or evening. Our teachers received orders from Mau Mau leaders to let us have the oath. They obliged as most of them had already undergone the same ritual too. During the day and evenings, when we were meant to have our own studies, students under oath would group themselves and sing freedom songs. Some of these songs were revolutionary as they highlighted the plight of Africans and inspired courage to rescue their country from the jaws of colonialism.

All these activities altered negatively children’s formal education with the ultimate consequence being dropping out of school. It is not surprising that after the declaration of the state of emergency, Mwangi Kamunye and several of his classmates got into the forest and they never attended school again.

By 1953, most independent schools had been closed down. Some were razed to the ground by imperialists and African accomplices. School-going children suffered immensely. They could neither study nor have any guarantee of their safety. Gunshots were everywhere and lost lives and property. When the war climaxed, children forfeited their education and sought refuge in churches (Wanjiru Njuguna, O.I, 14/11/2015). Although no learning would take place from then

onwards, at least children were safe with their mothers from British shotguns.

Informants, whose parents had resisted colonial intrusion, confirmed to the researcher that their learning ended with the declaration of a state of emergency. The only children who were lucky were those whose parents had become ‘loyalists’ to the colonial government. Mumbi Gikonyo’s father was a loyalist and thus lucky to study up to the university. She was one of the few who benefited from Tom Mboya, air lift Africa project that sponsored students to America for further studies after independence (O.I. 27/12/2015). It’s worth noting Mumbi Gikonyo (O.I, 27/12/2015), was among a few girls who had an opportunity to study. From the face of it, before the eruption of the Mau Mau struggle, girls were barred from acquiring education as it was alleged they would engage in prostitution. Mary Waithera, born in 1938, notes that, no girl of her age went to school. They assisted their parents at home, tasks they performed even during the war period.

On the other hand, Harun Kirikiru (O.I, 17/04/2016) had the opportunity to attend school. He attributes this privilege to the fact that he hailed from a family that welcomed colonialists. He notes that when missionaries came, his grandparents allowed them to construct an Anglican Church on their farm. Through this arrangement, they were attached to the mission school directly. While in the mission school, Kirikiru had the opportunity to study English, Mathematics, Agriculture and Artwork.

After the eruption of the Mau Mau war in 1952, those studying in the mission schools had their education disrupted also. Although the schools never closed down, the political temperatures suffocated learning. Harun Kirikiru (O.I, 17/04/2016), identified the following factors which according to him played a leading role in disrupting education during the emergency period. To start with, the people were evicted from their land and bundled into villages. This stained learning. The villages were crowded and noisy thus there wasn’t a conducive learning environment. The villages were also very noisy.

Secondly, children feared the tension created by Mau Mau fighters. They were confounded in a thicket of anti and pro-Mau Mau thorns. Lastly, the only easily available and affordable source of energy for Africans was the sun and after sunset there was no meaningful learning due to lack of lamps.

Schools were never safe from looting, orchestrated by Mau Mau patriots. More often than not, learners adjourned their classes everyday at 4 pm and were accompanied home by home guards. Schools were left unattended. With ease, forest fighters had their way in vandalizing anything and everything that was of substance and value to them. Harun Kirikiru notes, "Mau Mau only invaded our schools at night. When they did invade they would take away teaching material mostly carpentry tools" (O.I, 17/04/2016). These items were used to make homemade guns and other weapons of war.

As a result of this continuous vandalization of school property, colonialists hired security officers to curb the vice. Security stations were erected within the school compound. They were an abode for the hired school guards. However, as the war intensified colonial guards converted these stations within the school compound into torture camps. So daring were they, that they harassed Africans in broad daylight in the full view of learners. Harun Kirikiru witnessed this;

At some point, to offer security to the mission school I schooled, an army was brought in and camped in the school. These officers were a blend of African nations- Luo, Kamba among others. During the day, they would make rounds in the villages and arrest anybody they came across and suspected him or her of being a member of the Mau Mau movement. They were dragged to the school compound where they were tortured in an attempt to extract information about Mau Mau's whereabouts. Most of them were hard nuts to crack and rarely relayed to them any information. As a result, most of them were shot dead, while women were sexually assaulted. As all this was happening, we

would watch from our classroom windows. This had a great psychological effect on us, the learners (Harun Kirikiru, O.I, 17/04/2016).

On the other hand, Mathenge Waweru the son of a peasant reported that he was not lucky to study. He notes that after the declaration of state of emergency, all independent schools were closed and learners were forced to stay at home. He further states, at some point the colonialists realized that Kikuyu children were assisting the Mau Mau, they began to gather all the children at one location where children spent their day singing and competing in games, in order to be away from their villages. In the evening, they would be taken back to their homes guarded (O.I, 17/04/2016).

Education during the emergency period was characterized by favouritism. Passing exams was directly related to whom one's relatives were. Those that hailed from families of common labourers were guaranteed to fail in government exams, which were a prerequisite in order to join secondary school. The system favoured sons and daughters of chiefs. A class eight certificate marked the end of learning for other African children (Harun Kirikiru, (O.I, 17/04/2016).

Economic constraints frustrated academic development of the African child. They had no source of income. Some of them were passionate and enthusiastic about education but could not support their children's education. Instead, children were expected to participate in the process of food production. Those who devised mechanisms to deviate from the norm were apprehended and severely punished. Tabitha Wangui (O.I, 21/04/2016) notes,

At the beginning of the insurgence, we used to farm sorghum. It was required that from early morning we (children within the family) were to guard sorghum from the birds. We would at times hide and go to school but our father would come for us, beat us mercilessly and take us back to the farm.

The Mau Mau struggle left Africans impoverished. Their economy collapsed in the time of war. They were left languishing in poverty unable to even support their children's education. Mathenge Waweru explains that, "when the war subsided a priest came seeking for children willing to study. Those that went to school were taught reading and arithmetic". Mathenge a bright student passed the common examination and proceeded to 'the intermediate.' Unfortunately he lacked Shs 35/= required to join school at that level. That became the end of his schooling life" (O.I, 17/04/2016).

Mathenge represents many people today living a miserable life because the Mau Mau war ruined their only opportunity to study and increase their chances of a prosperous life.

Psychological effects

At the start of the Mau Mau war, many African children did not understand the reason for the war. Furthermore, they did not fathom why they were missing grown men and women in their lives, why the brutal evictions from their native homes and the attacks on their schools and teachers. Subsequently, this led to high rate of depression and anxiety amongst them (Mwangi Kamunye, O.I, 29/12/2015). In fact, it would be insulting to assume that children were 'passive victims' of the Mau Mau war of independence. In lieu, due to their innocence and vulnerability, children were at the epicenter of effects of the liberation war.

Mau Mau war had far-reaching psychological effects on the general populace. Children depend on the care, affection and attention offered by parents, relatives and the entire community. The disruption of these attachments through the loss of parents, and humiliation of parents and elderly members of the community in the presence of children, led to high rates of depression and anxiety for these war-affected children. Esther Kameme (O.I, 18/01/2016) notes that the home guards and British soldiers had the tendency, to force the members of the public to view the dead bodies. Dumbfounded, no one was spared. Children, young as they are were expected there.

At one time, Esther Kameme remembered how home guards murdered four members of a neighbouring family and all Kikuyu in the village were forced to go and see the cadavers. Esther, a twelve-year-old girl then was in the midst of the assembly that was forced to see the remains of the dead neighbours. She informed the researcher that, from that time, to date she has never been comfortable viewing a dead body (O.I, 18/01/2016).

After British soldiers had fought with Mau Mau forest fighters, especially at the later stages of the insurgency, guards usually made numerous patrols in a battle area. They always came back for two main reasons; one, to ensure that forest fighters had strictly no access to that area and secondly, to collect fingerprints of the corpse for identification. They could not carry the whole body for identification, boys were collected and coerced into cutting out the hands of the dead patriots at the wrists. After this gruesome disheartening detachment activity the white soldiers could now carry the hand for identification (Kennedy Kungu, O.I, 02/02/2015). Kairu Ngugi (O.I, 24/01/2016), further notes that the chief and D.O. would collect young courageous boys, ferry them with their Land Rover and on arriving at the scene of war, they (boys) would be asked to cut off the fingers of the dead body.

An informant, who was once commissioned for the same job, remembers the day with torrents of tears, trauma and deep regrets.

I remember, I was asked to cut off the hands of three young men, my relatives. They had been shot dead by British soldiers as they patrolled our village to siphon out Mau Mau. They were shot dead next to a pit latrine. One of them was a driver of a bus muigwithania. I had never done this before. Upon hesitating, I received a heavy blow followed by a command to cut the wrist. With tears running down my cheeks, I cut their wrists. For what they did to me, I shall never forgive them (Mathenge Waweru O.I, 17/04/2016).

That horrifying event became a turning point for the informant. He became susceptible in engaging in treacherous acts. To this day, the informant has been in prison not once but severally for crimes relating to murder and robbery. All of which he confessed to have committed. This inhumane character trait fixated as a result of being subjected to that particular savagery act.

Young children had an annihilating emotional effect when their parents separated. At times, children would demand to see their father, who was in the forest and rarely came home. To calm them down their mothers composed and taught them songs: among them

Nii muraigua rugano rwa mwana aakiuria nyina

Hooya hooya ngai ndangikua

Baba atwarirwo nakuu

naake nyina akimwira

Thoguo atuikire njamba atetagire ruririi

Hooya hooya ngai ndangikua

Have you heard a story of a child asking the mother

Pray, pray God he cannot die

Where did they take my father

The mother told him

Your father became a brave warrior petitioning on behalf of the people

Pray, pray God he cannot die.

(Mwangi Kariithi, O.I, 07/01/2016).

The children were sorrowful and remorseful especially if they did not see their father, mother or both. However, the members of the family, in a formidable system of goodwill took care and assisted these children in every way possible.

Separation of children from their families

The separation of children from their parents was one of the major effects of the 1952-1956 War of

Liberation. The war displaced many families. In the process, members of the same family were separated, never to see each other again. Others died in the process. Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015) recounts how she lost her children. She elaborates that, after the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952, they were deported from Ol'Kalou where they were earning a living in a farm owned by a white man, to Nyeri. The colonialists had been informed that they had taken the oath. Attackers went into their houses, torched them forcing them (Wanjira and her family) to run away. Unfortunately, her two sons were in the house sleeping and were burnt to death as the house went up in flames. The pain of losing her two sons has never ceased to pain her to date.

In many occasions, children were separated from their parents after their fathers went into the forest to pursue the oppressive colonialists later dying in the war. During this period of separation, children were hit hard. Their growth and development was negatively altered due to insufficient basic needs, basic health care, and parental love. In the most instances, children were left under the care of the aged in the society or the elder sisters and brothers if both parents were actively involved in the war.

It was very unfortunate that women leaders of the unarmed wing of the Mau Mau used vulnerable children to make deliveries in risky zones. The innocent, unsuspecting children who the society had an obligation to protect as part of their future were put at the mercy of the colonial authorities' insensitivity and ignorance. Mary Waithera (O.I, 12/2/2016), who was a leader of Mau Mau unarmed wing notes that;

in case, we wanted to communicate with others in a different ridge and the home guards were in patrol we used to send orphans, whom we had adopted either because their parents had been killed or had been imprisoned.

Although the innocence of these children disguised the guards on patrol, this remained a very unfortunate state of affairs.

Changing Gender roles

The Kikuyu family existed in a patriarchal society. Traditionally men were and still are the head of the family. Men were decision-makers, responsible for enhancing security within the family. Women and children within the family were socialized and programmed to obey and respect the man. Traditionally, the main obligation of the husband within the household was to economically provide for his family. The woman stayed at home performing domestic chores- preparing food, cleaning the house and generally tending the home- as well as taking care of the children. Grown-up daughters assisted their mothers in performing these tasks.

With the Mau Mau insurgency, this traditional arrangement was disrupted. Women acquired new roles, as ones who brought home 'bacon', a role that was added to their normal chores. Majority of young energetic men were in the forest, colonialists employed women to dig the trenches around the villages where squatters were confined. They dug the trench-implanted traps in a way that no one could get in or go out in any other route apart from the main gate (Mary Wanjiku, O.I, 06/12/2015).

People worked under the supervision of brutal home Guards. They were given neither time to rest nor time for their children. Children were restricted in the villages as their parents dug the trenches. Often, they had nothing to eat. Just like their parents, they went without food during the day (Gathoni Waweru, O.I, 07/03/2016). This inhumane treatment of Africans coupled with the brutality of home guards was perceived as a means of condemning Africans to death. In fact as they dug the trenches they sung;

Kiragu wa kagai

Niokire kwirorera mutaro

Akiuria wariahe mukaburu

Niworaga aciari na mitaro

Kiragu the son of kagai

Once came to see the trenches

He asked to wariahe the supervisor

You have decided to kill our parents,

with the digging of the trenches?

(Gathoni Waweru, O.I, 07/03/2016)

Apart from digging trenches, African women in the villages were forcefully involved in other forms of communal work. They were involved in clearing bushes and vegetation in the aim of destroying Mau Mau hideouts. They were never paid but it was prohibited to miss a day's work.

Traditionally, among the Kikuyu society the role of protecting the community against external aggression was a prerogative of young men who had been circumcised. The imposition of a foreign rule on the Kikuyu disrupted this societal organization. All members of the Kikuyu community; men and women, boys and girls, young and old were angered by the oppressive policies propagated by the colonial rules. To liberate themselves, women joined young men in the forest to ouster the imperialists from their land. However, having not been traditionally socialized for the task at hand, women ended up committing military blunders. Not once did they lose track of other forest fighters. Wanjira Kimathi explains that, she was in the forest for three and a half years. One day they were ambushed and twenty-five soldiers of her troop were arrested, she ran away, alone. For two days, she had neither water nor food. On the second day after the ambush, she continued looking for her other Mau Mau fighters with no success (O.I, 10/11/2015). Wanjira Kimathi further explains that women who got into the forest not only carried guns but also fought. She remembers of a woman, Muthoni who lived at NYS Naivasha. She was fearless. She had a title meaning she was a leader of the Mau Mau. She was a general. Together they were taught how to fight, how to hold guns and shoot. Muthoni's brother had taken her to the forest because of her dexterity in the use of guns. Muthoni became one among those who trained women in survival skills and how to fight mainly using a gun.

So naïve were these women in their new roles as forest fighters in that, they could not distinguish between a Mau Mau cave and wild animals' dwellings. Nonetheless, God-given survival instincts kept them alive. Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015) narrates her ordeal as a freedom fighter;

That evening I came across a big thick bush. There was a little path leading in to it. I walked in and found a well-swept spot. I thought it was a Mau Mau hiding place. I relaxed, and lay in wait for the Mau Mau to come. I fetched some green leaves to camouflage. Darkness fell. The Mau Mau did not turn up. The bush was a lion's den. Instead of the Mau Mau coming in, it's the lion that came. It turned its back on me wafting its tail. It is by God's grace that I had lived in the forest for some time and the human scent was gone. I was an animal. No scent to recognize me as human. I held my mouth and breath. I could not walk in the night for if I stepped on a dry stick on my way out that could have been the end of my life. Morning came. I was glad; I made a tiptoe walk out of the cave and the lion never realized I had slept there. I walked over to a huge stone and slept there due to cold and hunger. Later after a brief sleep, I regained my strength, crossed a river and went up the ridge. My health was still frail. I could not whistle so I hit a tree thrice. Other Mau Mau heard the echo and hit thrice. At three pm that day, I met my husband again.

Women in the forest had to adapt to the extremely harsh environments they found themselves in. For their own survival as well as that of other forest fighters, women found themselves adopting roles traditionally bestowed on men. This was not an easy task, as Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015) explains;

Accidentally, my husband was shot in the leg. It did not fracture but he couldn't move. I had to carry him on my back like a child. I hid him in the thick bushes at night as I slept in the open grassland on the lookout. We had a matchbox containing a single matchstick with which I lit the fire that I preserved for three months. I used a Mutamiyu tree that would

smolder underneath ash, as the sign of smoke was a signal of our whereabouts. In the three months, we stayed in the bushes not knowing the whereabouts of other Mau Mau. I was responsible for nursing the wound on my husband's leg. I had tied the wound using mukeu tree fiber. He used his urine as medicine to cure the wound since we did not have any other type of medicine and fortunately, when he recuperated; he helped me hunt for food.

Couples in the forest experienced the worst days of their lives. Apart from being on the lookout for colonial security, they had a responsibility to and for each other. The end of the war was a great relief for them.

As has already been mentioned above, the provision of basic needs to members of the family and other amenities was a prerogative of men. Women and children were perceived as more consumers and less of contributors had the responsibility of feeding the Mau Mau fighters. Africa's experience with colonialists had increased these Africans' roles. Women solicited food and other consignments for the fighters. Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015) explains,

that we set out to buy these grains in Kikuyu land. The Mau Mau in the villages welcomed us, and gave us water and soap to shower. They then gave us their clothes to wear to the market. The Woman walked at a distance from us so as not to raise an alarm led us. We bought all we wanted, stayed in different homes for the day. At nightfall, the fighters in the forest came for us. This freedom was not bequeathed to us on a silver platter. We fought for it.

At home, women were charged with the responsibility of constructing houses now that most men were in jail, in the forest or dead. During morning hours home guards whistled. The whistle was an oral permit for the Africans to go out and gather the day's food, those not gathering food would gather rafts and grass to build the houses.

Young boys were not spared either. They were also engaged before they went to school. They assisted their parents in making rafters, posts and threads from wattle tree to build their houses.

Children Additional Responsibilities

Traditionally children were supposed to assist their parents in their domestic duties. In the colonial period and especially during the Mau Mau war, children became economic contributors in their households. This was precipitated by the fact that the war had given birth to many single parent families. For survival, elder children had to work and bail out their families. Gathoni Waweru (O.I, 7/03/2016) explains the predicament she went through during the war as a young girl.

My father had passed on; he had been jailed severally for non-compliance with the hut tax of sh. 30. He died while in jail. The most unfortunate thing is that we cannot tell where he was buried. To support our big family (nine siblings) my mother was employed to pick and weed pyrethrum in a settler's farm. We were very poor; my siblings and I went to collect wild fruits and foodstuff in the forest and by the roadside. Later as men and women went picking pyrethrum, we would distribute the splits to the already prepared ridges. We did all this to get food and other basic amenities.

These young children were deprived off their childhood. They were subjected to strenuous duties at a tender age when they were supposed to be either in school or at home playing with or learning the culture and traditions of their community from the elders.

The war instilled a parenting instinct in older children. This was precipitated by parents' (male and female), disappearance to the forest from their homes, to evade colonial brutality. As the eldest child in her family, Njeri Mbugua says:

Yes, it is we, children who were left behind to take care of the livestock and cook for the young children. Our parents went into hiding to escape the beating and harassment from the home guards. (O.I. 26/02/2016).

In families where there were no middle aged children, the young kids were left to survive by themselves, a condition which Wanjiru Njuguna (O.I, 14/11/2015) loathed. They had to literally take care of their basic needs including their security. She notes,

When our mother took food to the forest, we were left alone (referring to herself aged 9 and two younger brothers). I had to carry and take care of them. This was because in the forests there were small thatched houses where those who took food spent a number of days before returning to the village. Sometimes while our mother was away, we had terrifying nights especially when the Mau Mau fighters collided with government fighters and there was a fierce exchange of fire. During such instances, we spent the entire night braving in the cold and the heavy rains in search of safety. These encounters were characterized by indiscriminate loss of life.

When the war intensified, children, (both young and old) were not safe. They were never spared when the guards swept the villages in pursuit of Mau Mau gangs, neither were they safe from those who frequently attacked villages to sweep out collaborators. In most instances, children were forced to sleep in the cold with absolutely nothing to eat. Njeri Mbugua (O.I, 26/02/2016) again notes,

with time we fled the village in fear of being razed in our hut by the Mau Mau an act that had become a routine any time they suspected that one of the villagers was a supporter of the guards. We slept in trenches dug in 1950 along the slopped land to prevent soil erosion. During the day we went gathering food in the vacated farms.

Unfortunately, Njeri Mbugua (O.I, 26/02/2016) states that when the war ended in 1956 only her mother returned from the forest. They have never heard from their father since.

Physical violence

As part of a counterattack against Mau Mau fighters, British soldiers in collaboration with home guards employed different forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence to suppress the enemy. This was in the form of bastardizing Africans, maiming members of a family unit, all in the name of wiping out the Mau Mau rebellion. It is also pivotal to note that women and girls in various villages became British soldiers and home guards' 'collateral victims' due to their immense contribution in running errands on behalf of forest fighters. Most of the women informants in painful reflections described the inhumane acts they were subjected to by colonial masters.

Children often witnessed mutilations and murders of their family members and neighbours during the war. They were also occasional victims. Elkins (2005: 246-247) notes that, women suspected of continuously feeding Mau Mau guerillas were sometimes brought into village squares, shot or hanged as an example to the rest. Sometimes, they were beaten first with clubs and rifle butts and later raped. On other occasions, members of the security forces would capture Mau Mau fighters, tie them to the back of a Land Rover and drive them around the villages leaving bits of body parts in their trail. Young children were slaughtered and their remains skewered on spears and paraded around the village square by home guards. Most women were not fortunate. White and black members of the security forces sometimes raped mothers and daughters together in the same hut. At gunpoint, others were given the choice between death and rape.

Due to the genius arrangement of the Mau Mau leaders as had been discussed in chapter three, it was extremely difficult to apprehend oath administrators or the participants. Again, it was unlikely to ambush participants red-handedly undergoing the ritual. As a result, they resulted into intimidating villagers to get confessions on those engaging in oathing activities as well as their knowledge of all Mau Mau activities. Regrettably, women became their number one target. Sometimes, home guards took a ferocious initiative of squeezing and mutilating women's

breast using pliers. Pushing vermin and rifles into their vagina, and forcing them to run naked around the inside of the post while carrying buckets of excrement on their heads. Resistance could lead to a summary execution or further torture before reconsideration of a life or death judgment (Elkin, 2005:244).

Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015) had such a similar experience with colonial police. She explains that after her arrest she was taken to *Ihururu*, the chief's village. She met her father who had been arrested before her. The following morning she was taken to Nyeri in a truck. That is where her torture began. They electrified her breasts. She described the incidence as a painful ordeal. She wailed and cried immensely. They wanted her to tell them where she had taken the oath, who took the oath with her and who administered the oath to them. She wailed and asked them to remove the plugs as she could tell them all they wanted to know. They removed the plugs. That was a relief but she was under the oath. She had pledged her allegiance to the oath. She told them that she knew nothing new apart from what she had told them earlier. They plugged her breasts again. Torture was endless.

In addition, Maina Ndungu (O.I, 21/12/2015) notes, colonial administrators were brutal, if they got any information that a certain woman had links with the Mau Mau, they arrested her and beat her to a state of unconsciousness. The beatings made others sleep facing down due to the pain in their backs. Some gave in and spilled the information while others proved hard to crack. They could not utter a word. They had torture houses in the post where they carried the beatings. The inmates buried those who died at the post. Some people were beaten and thrown into water drums so that they could give out information about the oath. They were told to hold a nine-inch stone while standing. This coerced them to give away their secrets. Despite these despicable ordeals, the Mau Mau women remained steadfast; on very isolated cases, would they give in and confess. Women just like other family members were placed in between a hard place and a rock. If they failed to confess, the security forces would

kill them on the other hand, if they confessed the Mau Mau would revenge by murdering them at night.

Majority of the Africans arrested would be arraigned in court and charged for being members of the outlawed Mau Mau movement. As most informants asserted, few Africans would be released. Most of them were imprisoned. Hard cores were incarcerated at Kamiti prison. Men and women were detained separately. The following day after their sentencing, inmates were made to wear neck chains with card numbers like dogs. They were given numbers that replaced their nametags. In case they died the only identity that would be sent back to their families were the detention numbers (John Kibe, O.I, 01/01/2016).

The intention of colonialists was to harass the inmates enormously and possibly kill them. If achieved, this would serve as a manifestation that prison life was tougher than Mau Mau adherents that prison had not only managed to break them down but also kill them. That is why Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015) explains, “one day, a snake was cut into pieces, mixed with beans and cooked overnight. The sole aim of this was to poison all Mau Mau prisoners. We queued the following day for lunch. As *kadogo* the cook prepared to serve the meal, we saw chunks of cooked snakes. We did boycott that lunch. The repercussions were grave. We were almost beaten to death until the guards had no morale of more violence. They were tired. They professed that we would eat the food in the coming days. We were bleeding profusely from the beatings.”

After having composed more than half of the members of the Mau Mau movement, men became the target prey for imperialists. Many of them died leaving their wives widowed and their children fatherless. Few of those incarcerated returned back to their families. Many of them died in prison as Mwangi Wainaina (O.I, 20/11/2015) explains, “in prison, Tuesdays and Thursdays were two unforgettable days. Every Tuesday forty-five men were hanged. Every Thursday another fifty-five faced the guillotine. In three years, thousands or hundreds of African men were

killed at Kamiti prison. We used to bury them in mass graves with the utmost humane respect we could gather in that wretched place. Their bodies used to be incised horizontally; they could take out all the contents of the abdomen and then sew them up again. However, when being ferried in dumping trucks to the mass graves, the cuts would open up again. We used to bury them in coats of blood. The sites were few. We used to pile the bodies in shallow graves. If one of the dead men was tall, we could break his limbs to make his corpse fit in the grave”. They were killed not because they were guilty of any offence but because of this land.

It is also worth noting that the level of patriotism was sky high. Many Mau Mau men were killed with gulps of soil in their mouth. They cursed that if anyone betrayed a son of his father and mother or his relatives may the soil drill him to death (General Wamugumo O.I, 28/11/2015). It was dangerous because the dying man died without taking back his words thus that solemn declaration was bound to live and afflict the offender.

Most of the fighters who survived the torture were left physically incapacitated to this day. Kairu Ngugi who was in the forest for three years had a bullet removed from his leg later after the end of the war. To date, he cannot support himself with his two legs for long, due to the wound that developed from the gunshot. Prior the war, Mary Waithera had her two fully functional eyes but today she can only use one, as the other one was pierced while she was at Kamiti prison by a prison ‘Askari’. Mwangi Kariithi has one side of his mouth injured. He cannot use that injured side to chew food. He sustained a gunshot wound that left the right side of his cheek incapacitated. After three and a half years in the forest, Wanjira Kimathi was arrested in Nyeri. She was beaten mercilessly. She allowed the researcher to feel scars on her back. She has a twisted bone in her right leg and a dislocated bone in her right hand. All these injuries were occasioned by brutal treatment meted on her by the inhuman colonialists and their African accomplices. It was a painful ordeal for her and to proof that beyond

reasonable doubt she allowed the researcher feel the permanent marks.

Torture was not only inflicted on Africans who sided with the Mau Mau fighters. People who disapproved the warring factions were never safe from colonial wrath. Wanjiru Njuguna (O.I, 14/11/2015) notes that, her father suffered immensely because he was not in the forest and not with the colonial government. He was later detained. While in detention, he was greatly tortured and lost his eyesight, a problem he suffered from until his demise.

Girls were easy prey of home guards. They collected them at will and subjected them to sexual violence. They were lustful. If they accidentally admired particular girls during their frequent patrols in school, they took them home. At home the girls would be sexually assaulted and eventually raped by different security officers (Wanjiru Njuguna, O.I, 14/11/2015). Young girls had to conceal their physical appearance from the irresponsible security officers. Wanjiru Kamau notes, "My younger sister was light-skinned. My mother used to tell her to smear her face with soot and masquerade as an old woman. She did this to prevent home guards (*ngati*) from getting attracted to her."

Family Relationships and Interactions

A family consisted of a man his wife or wives and children all living together. All family members had well-defined roles, which they were expected to perform diligently for the well-being of the family as an entity. Those roles complemented each other. The encroachment of African land by Europeans altered the family structure. Africans ended up becoming slaves in their own land. Families' life was affected especially during the period of the Mau Mau War of Liberation (1952 - 1957). Individuals within the family were forced to adapt emerging lifestyles they were not used to. Mothers became widows, children became orphans and widowers emerged.

Colonization completely disorganized and fractured the African family system. The basic family structures brought forth a large pool of

poor Africans. The system of communalism that existed before among people in the African communities was replaced with individualism. Nobody cared about what predicaments his or her neighbours were encountering. The Mau Mau war aggravated this unfortunate situation. Africans were evicted from settlers' farms in the White Highlands, this exercise was conducted abruptly and majority of the victims had no time to pack and put their affairs in order. As a result, they were only able to carry with them household's items and little food, which could only last them a few days. Most of their properties: livestock and furniture were looted by home guards. Upon arrival in their deportation regions, majority of the deportees were never welcomed. In fact, their family members saw them as a threat to scarce resources around and rejected them. Those who were welcomed remained safe for as long as the little food they had carried lasted. They were left to survive independently (Wambui Mwago, O.I. 29/01/2016). Wambui Mwago further noted that,

my brother's wife led a life of misery in the reserves more than anyone else. She had separated with her husband who was in jail. She went looking for work to get money in order to purchase food for her children. Her clothes were torn beyond repair; her breast went uncovered as she only covered her waist. No one could give her clothing as she was seen as a visitor, a stranger (O.I. 29/01/2016).

Mau Mau fighters' families languished in poverty. On the contrary, colonial home guards families were in a safe haven. In spite of them living among other Africans, the socio-economic gap between them and Mau Mau families was overt. They never worked, their children were being educated. This was the group that greatly benefited. *Ngati's* wives were the most loyal of all wives. They were pampered, they only ate and drunk. There was abundance in their homes as property stolen from the Mau Mau families was given to them (Wanjiku Kamau, O. I, 22/11/2015).

The relationship between the Mau Mau and home guard families deteriorated. The good

neighbourliness that existed before the war turned into hatred and animosity between the two warring parties. They blamed each other for their predicaments. At the height of the war, the Mau Mau families stripped themselves off any association with the home guard families. They even developed mechanisms to help them identify the enemy. Ruth Macharia (O.I. 16/12/2015) notes that, in case one entered a house and all the occupants were Mau Mau adherents, the Mau Mau had a way of discovering whether the entrants was with them or not. They used coded language to talk of the entrants. *"iii gukuri gutiraikarika ni thuuya. This place is inhabitable because of the lice. The visitor could then say "guuku gutire thuuya nie ndi mugikuyu karing'a kuuma ruchuiri rwa mutwe nginya kaara ga kuguru ".There are no lice in this house. I am a Kikuyu by right and birth from the strand of my hair to the toe of my foot. "Where were you circumcised at?" " I was circumcised in the home of " They thus knew that the visitor belonged to the Mau Mau.*

The colonial government built villages to ensure that forest fighters had no access to food and other basic amenities from those left in the farms. All Africans were conscripted into some villages where life was inadmissible and disdain of humanity. Apparently, even before they moved into these villages life in the farms was also unbearable. Home guards were at the epicenter of creating 'a hellish life' for Africans. Njeri Mbugua (O. I, 26/02/2016) narrates her encounter with the home guards.

At some point, all our homesteads were burnt down by the home guards. As they did this, they also carried with them cattle, goats and every valuable asset they found. The elder child in the homestead was ordered to carry the loot to their post. We stayed in our neighbour's house although we were never allowed to sleep in huts for they feared we might attract home guards. Instead, we slept in the trenches earlier dug in the slopped land to prevent soil erosion.

Informants who lived the villages remember their experiences with hate and pain towards imperialists. Wanjiru Njuguna (O. I, 14/11/2015) narrates;

The village had only two gates. Curfew had been imposed. A whistle would be blown and when it was, we knew it was time to go the shamba, fetch water or firewood depending on a family's need. Some guards accompanied us. We were only allocated one hour in the morning between 7 am to 8 am after which another whistle would be blown to signal the time to retire regardless of whether one had gathered enough of what he or she needed.

Time allocated was never enough to gather all household items required to sustain a family. As a result, families were forced to accommodate new living habits for example taking only one meal a day. Harun Kirikiru (O. I, 17/04/2016) notes that, before going to school in the morning him, together with his siblings assisted their parents in gathering food. After sometime, they exhausted crops in the farms. Europeans began giving out foodstuff (yellow maize) in rations depending on the size of each household. They, in isolated occasions gave beans and fish. During the day after children had gone to school, parents were left in the village. Most of the daytime they were forced to provided communal labour. In other times, they spent their day doing virtually nothing but playing indoor games just to pass time. Traditionally being workers, Africans found this state being torturous.

Colonialists had neither the regards nor respect for the old. With little contribution to make to the society, their fate was prematurely decided. They were killed long before they died. In the village, a section was set up far apart from where other families had erected their houses where the old were living. It was an unfortunate situation for them that in their sun set days, their accompaniment were sheep, goats and cows they salvaged from their farms (Tabitha Wangui, O.I, 21/04/2016).

For Africans living in 'European farms' a portion of the White man's land was set aside for the creation of a village. Here, Africans were apportioned a plot of land where they erected their houses. In cases of a Polygamous family, two plots were allocated to the man, only for small-scale subsistence farming. Africans spent much of their time working for the colonialists (Wanjiku Kamau, O.I, 22/11/2015).

Non-resident Africans in European farms' villages were confined in fortified villages. A trench was dug around the villages with only two guarded access points to control movement of Africans. The two gates were opened once in a day between 7.00 am and 8.00 am. Africans used this time to looking for food to feed on and fetch firewood until the following day when the gates would be opened (Harun Kirikiru, O.I, 17/04/2016).

A number of Africans who could not withstand life in the village ran to the forest; it was not rare to find a husband and wife in the forest. Children were left under the custody of the elderly or sometimes on their own. These people in the forest had a tough and rough period. Acquiring basic needs and medical supplies was a problem. They suffered. Newcomers suffered more. They were not used to hunger. You can imagine what they felt like suddenly having nothing to eat; what it felt like to leave home, where despite everything there was enough food to eat all the time, what it felt like to have no idea whether one will get anything to eat (Kabira and Ngurukie, 1997: 43).

Return to the highland (1957-1963)

After the arrest and execution of the de facto leader of Mau Mau Dedan Kimathi on February 18th 1957, (Kinyatti, 2008:334) the Mau Mau war subsided. Afterwards, relative calmness was experienced. Forest fighters who sought refuge in the mountains without being actively engaged in the war surrendered. However, a number of forest fighters remained in the forest and only came forth after Kenyatta pleaded with them after his release and Kenya had been granted independence (General Wamugumo, O.I, 28/11/2015).

Africans from the forest settled dutifully among the fellow kinsmen. They together with people from the reserves embarked on the process of searching for employment, including those in the reserves. The reserves were overpopulated. People had no viable means of earning their livelihood. They were poverty-stricken and life became unbearable. They had to travel to Rift valley and be employed in settler's farms. Moreover, settlers were in dire need of labour. They were willing to employ Africans from the reserves especially those who had passbooks. That is how majority of Africans came back in settler farms in Kinangop and Wanjohi valley (Wambui Mwago, O. I, 29/01/2016). The forest department joined settlers in recruiting labour from the three Kikuyu districts –Fort Hall, Nyeri and Kiambu to various forest stations in Naivasha District; South Kinangop forest station, North Kinangop forest station & Geta forest station. By January 1958, they had recruited enough labour and only Geta had 34 families waiting for recruitment (KNA/PC/FOR/13/13/1/139).

Due to the challenges experienced during the Mau Mau war, the forest department became very cautious. They instituted an administrative system that ensured that forest labour was under 24-hour surveillance and any slightest rebellion was dealt with at the initial stage before it became infectious.

The forest department had an organization hierarchy. The Forester was the topmost officer. He was in charge of all forest activity including labour. He was therefore, in practice, strictly responsible for all operations in his area of jurisdiction. In addition, he was responsible for the execution of the 'policy of general cooperation' and lastly he was supposed to stand in on behalf of the District Officer in minor administrative matters, except disciplinary actions against the headman and the tribal police. A number of headmen deputized the forester. They reported to both the forester and the divisional district officer in charge of security, order and general welfare of the village and everyone in it (KNA/FOR/13/13/1/93). In particular, the headman was responsible for:

Law, order and security particularly passing information to the forester.

Village discipline including the control of women and juveniles and visitors in the village.

Security and care of property generally within the village. (KNA/PC/FOR/13/13/1/160).

The tribal police acted under the orders of the headman. Their duties were similar to those of tribal police in the settled areas. They included:

To act generally as the village police officers under the order and supervision of the village headman and in support of the forest department, Kenya police and administration police.

Generally assisting in enforcement of law, order and discipline in the village.

Enforcing compliance with local laws and by-laws and collection of tax.

Controlling and supervising communal or “*gitati*” labour in respect of the village and health maintenance clause (KNA/PC/FOR/13/13/1/93).

After Africans were granted independence, imperialists embarked on the process of vacating their illegally acquired land. With the departure of colonialists, a vacuum was created. Africans would finally get an opportunity of repossessing their land. As Kennedy Kungu (O.I, 02/02/2016) points out, land was not given free, lands were given out to the people in terms of loans.

The people were also given barbed wire to fence their lands and cows formerly belonging to the white man. The African government purchased lands and property formerly owned by the whites. As the white man was going back to his country, he went with his property in monetary terms. The government paid him. The people, who were given land and cows, milked the cows and took the milk to the government dairy societies but they weren't paid. The people also harvested pyrethrum and supplied the pyrethrum board with their produce. The money was used to settle the loans. This included people who got lands through the helps of regional schemes. They all paid the loans back from proceedings of farming those lands.

Conclusion.

The involvement of children in the Mau Mau rebellion was inevitable. The socio-political and economic environment in the highlands left the young disgruntled and susceptible in boarding the immediate wagon headed to evict imperialists from their native land. They participated immensely and wholeheartedly in the fight to expel white invaders by supplying food and other consignments to forest fighters; furnishing them with the much-needed intelligence, and risking their lives by spying for the forest fighters. The social conflict theory has been used to explain how family unit endured heart trending consequences during the period of Mau Mau war. Among them included; physical, psychological and sexual violence, disruption of their children's schooling and disorganization of the family structure. By early 1957, the Mau Mau struggle had come to an end. Impoverished, Africans had to seek employment to enable them to acquire basic amenities. In the process of seeking employment, quite a number of them who had been repatriated to Central Kenya found themselves back in the Rift Valley. This was facilitated by the white's need of labour. In 1963, Kenya was officially granted independence and imperialists, vacated African lands. Africans in the Rift valley were considered first when the distribution of lands began.

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Esther Kameme 18/01/2016

Gathoni Waweru 07/03/2016

General Wamugumo	28/11/2015
Harun Kirikiru	17/04/2016
John Kibe	01/01/2016
John Mwangi Kariithi	07/01/2016
Kairu Ngugi	24/01/2016
Kennedy Kungu	02/02/2016
Maina Ndungu	21/12/2015
Mathenge Waweru	17/ 04/2016
Mary Waithera	12/02/2016
Mary Wanjiku	06/12/2015
Mumbi Gikonyo	27/12/2015
Mwangi Kamunye	29/12/2015
Mwangi Wainaina	20/11/2015
Njeri Mbugua	26/02/2016
Ruth Macharia	16/12/2015
Tabitha Wangui	21/04/2016
Wanjiru Kamau	22/11/ 2015
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