RETHINKING THE MAU MAU IN COLONIAL KENYA

S.M. SHAMSUL ALAM

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To the memory of my much-beloved brother,
S. M. Shafiqul Alam (Baccho)

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Preface

The present work is neither a history of the Mau Mau revolt nor an attempt to review all works ever written on it. No attempt has been made to put the movement in its broad historical context. Such effort has been made numerous times by many scholars more able than I am. My work here is rather limited—to present a few chapters that deal with various issues and aspects related to the Mau Mau movement.

As a sociologist I am partial to theory, especially postcolonial theory. In this book, I have tried to "read" the Mau Mau "event" from a postcolonial analytical perspective. At first glance, the chapters might appear disjointed, but I hope that after a quick glance at the book, the reader will realize that the chapters are woven together by the theme of power and resistance against colonialism and an attempt to establish a free and just society in Kenya. Most importantly, the chapters show how in Kenya ordinary people came together, with limited experience and resources, to stand up against the overwhelming power of British colonialism.

In the past twenty years or so, the historical writings of anticolonial struggle have taken shape. Popularly known as the subaltern school, these writings managed to debunk both the Marxist view that the anticolonial movement was a "class struggle" and a prelude to establishing a "classless" society and the liberal/nationalist/colonialist historiography that sees the anticolonialist struggle as having "originated" in colonial rule and hence derivative to colonialism; proponents of the latter view believe political power should transfer to the indigenous nationalist elite. The present work follows a different path.

Over the years, the subaltern school went through two different phases of growth: in its first few years, it dealt with the issue of "autonomous consciousness of the subaltern" and how this autonomy leads to revolt. Of late, this emphasis has been abandoned in favor of textual analysis of the construction of the subaltern. I believe this shift has fundamentally altered the focus of the school and undermined the subaltern emphasis on revolt and resistance. The current work argues that the "autonomous consciousness" and the construction of the subaltern are not mutually exclusive and can both be interpreted without losing sight of either. For example, the book

contains chapters on the construction of the subaltern (the chapters on wa Thiong'o and subaltern autobiography) and autonomous consciousness (Chapters 4 and 6). Only this type of combination, so to speak, could capture the real essence of subaltern revolt and could make historical works more politically relevant.

Finally, I am not an Africanist nor was I born in Kenya. I was born in Bangladesh and currently live and teach sociology in the United States. My generation experienced colonialism, anticolonialist struggle, and disillusionment at the postcolonial situation. My publishing history is all on Bangladesh.

So why Mau Mau and why Kenya? Reasons for this are both personal and intellectual. My intellectual interests in sociology are in historical sociology and the third world liberation movement. Over the years, through the influence of the subaltern school, I became critical of nationalism and its ability to translate the discourse of freedom and justice through which anticolonial nationalism was articulated in the postcolonial situation. In Bangladesh, anticolonial euphoria soon gave way to authoritarian and corrupt rule. Kenya is no exception. The Mau Mau struggle, I believe and this book will show, stands outside of elite nationalism in Kenya. Though elite nationalism becomes the power broker in the postcolonial situation, Mau Mau nonetheless promised something different. Personally, I was eager to know how this liberation movement is different from those of Bangladesh, and how ordinary folks organized to fight the oppression and insults that come with colonial rule. It was my quest for a comparative angle.

Finally, a tale from Jalal-e-Din Rumi (1207–1273) illustrates my sojourn in Kenya. An ocean fish once came to visit a pond fish. The pond fish was eager to show the ocean fish its pond. It swam and dipped up and down and asked, "Have you ever been in water so deep?" Then it asked, "Tell me what the ocean looks like. Is it as deep as this pond?" The ocean fish could not find any words to describe the ocean to his friend. Instead, he said, "Please come visit sometime and I will show you around. Maybe you can swim in it."

My interest in Kenya has something to do with every human desire to leave his or her "pond" and be in the "ocean"—allegorically speaking, of course.

Until lions have their own historians, the tale of hunt will always glorify the hunter.

—*A Kikuyu Proverb*

The cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenges of poverty and oppression.

—*C. L. R. James*

Acknowledgments

People from three continents were involved in the production of this book. The bulk of the materials for the book were collected while I was a Fulbright Senior Fellow in Kenya (2000–2001, 2001–2002) and again as Fulbright Senior Specialist (July–August 2003). So first thanks goes to this organization. While in Kenya I was affliated with the Sociology Department, University of Nairobi, where I meet Dr. Octavian N. Gakuru, who was Chair of the Department at that time. We spent numerous hours talking about Mau Mau and Kenyan politics. A Kikuyu from Central Province, Octavian was acutely aware of Mau Mau's enigmatic place in Kenyan history and politics. Then there was Kimani, the electrician *extra-ordinaire*, who every morning (except Sunday, when he attends church) opened his small mobile electrical shop just outside my apartment building. We spent countless hours discussing Mau Mau and Kenyan politics while he worked, drinking tea and eating *mundazi*, the Kenyan version of doughnuts.

While I was in Nairobi, two U.S. embassy officials, Constance Colding Jones, Cultural Attaché and Dr. Justus Mbae, Cultural Affairs Specialist, helped me achieve a smooth transition into a wonderfully chaotic and hectic life there.

Margaret W. Gachihi of History Department of the University of Nairobi helped me to connect with Mama Cinda Reri, whose interview is included in Chapter 4. The interview was done in Kikuyu, and Margaret played the role of interpreter. I also benefited from Margaret's master's thesis on the role of women in Mau Mau, which she submitted to the department in 1986. The staff of the Kenya National Archives (KNA) helped to locate numerous primary documents on the movement. Without their help, this book might not have been possible.

While at the University of Nairobi, I taught a graduate a seminar on development and social change and happened to get to know a group of brilliant young Kenyans who were in that class. They include Charity, Roseanne, Hussein, Mwanza, and others. They systematically guided me through the various phases of recent Kenya politics and history.

My brother, Dr. S. M. Nurul Alam, Professor of Anthropology, Jahangir Nagar University, Bangladesh, has always shown keen interest in my works and inquired about the progress of the book. Some of my Texas-based Bangladeshi friends have shown interest in the book as well. We have discussed how the Mau Mau revolt somewhat paralleled Bangladesh's own struggle for independence in 1971 because our generation fought and witnessed the war of liberation. However, many of these discussions took place in different stages of inebriation and were abetted by Bengali cuisine and much merrymaking. These friends include Oli Ahmed, Mustafa Karim Farid, A. T. M. Munir, and Raihan Sufian. My friend Jim Salt came to visit me in Kenya, along with his brother Bob. With them I managed some respite from working on this book and was able to "play tourist" and watch cheetah hunt for gazelle in Masai Mara, Kenya!

My friend, Mwangi Njagi, of Stony Brook University, New York, and Kelly Walker, of Southern Oregon University read, corrected and commented on the first draft of the book. Mwangi, who is from Central Province, Kenya, corrected numerous factual errors in the book. Morgan Hunt edited the manuscript. Laura Beaton checked the index and glossary. Diana Maltz helped with various process of production of the book. Greg Jones, Karim N. Naguib, and Brian J. Wilson did the maps. The Interlibrary Loan Office staff of Southern Oregon University responded to my requests about obscure books and articles with great patience. Gabriella Georgiades, Joanna Mericle, Katie Fahey, Dale Rohrbaugh, and other editorial staff of Palgrave-Macmillan helped me through the various phases of the production process with great care to production values. Their professionalism and expediency made the entire process rather enjoyable.

My friend and partner, Samantha, and our daughter Anjali, have quite often reminded me that there are more important things in life than writing a book on Mau Mau, and I am glad that they did.

Finally, my thoughts turn to my much-beloved brother S. M. Shafiqul Alam (Baccho), a thoroughly good man who shared his too-short life with us. I hope that knowing him and loving him dearly made us who knew him and loved him better persons. With heavy heart and profound grief, I dedicate this book to his memory.

Maps

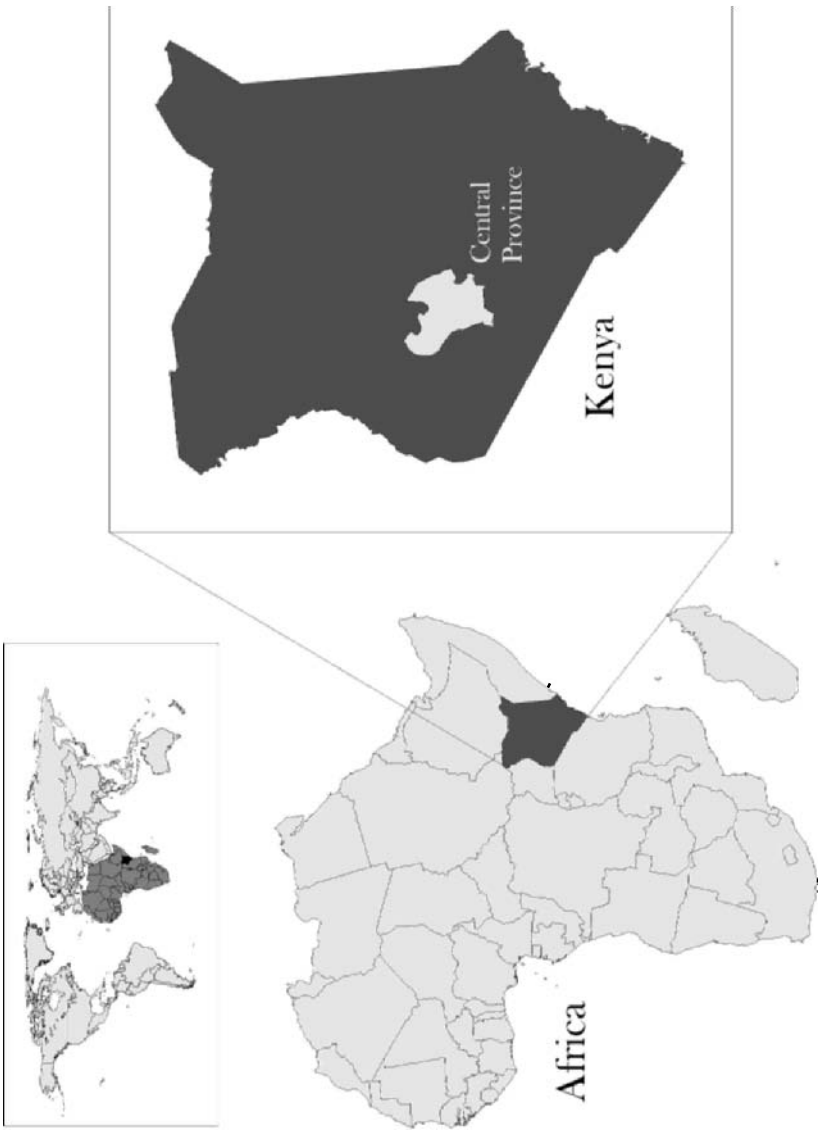
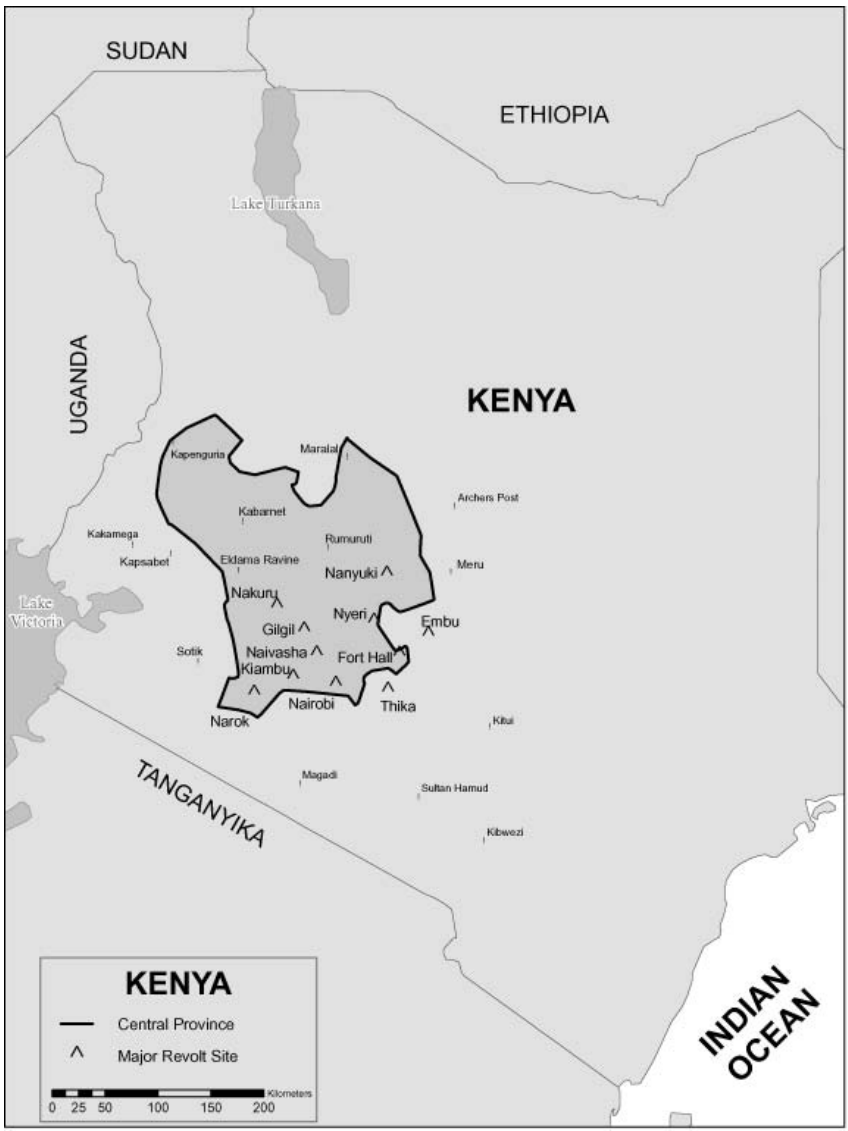


Figure 1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Kibwezi
INDIAN OCEAN
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Central Province
Major Revolt Site
Kilometers
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Figure 2

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1

Introduction: Hegemony and Counterhegemony in Colonial Context

The colonial presence in Kenya, in contrast to, say, India, where it lasted almost 200 years, was brief but equally violent. It formally started when Her Majesty's agent and Counsel General at Zanzibar, A. H. Hardinge, in a proclamation on in July 1, 1895, announced that he was taking over the Coastal areas as well as the interior that included the Kikuyu land, now known as Central Province. Formal Colonial rule ended when Kenya gained independence in 1963.

The proclamation, through which Kenya became a British colony, was made possible by two conferences in Europe: one in 1885 in Berlin, Germany, and the other in Brussels, Belgium. Known as the "scramble for Africa," these two conferences brought all the important European colonial powers together to divide African lands among themselves.[1] After the Berlin meeting, the first sharing of East Africa took place in 1886, and at the second meeting, all the boundaries of East Africa were demarcated. Uganda and Zanzibar were given to the British, its boundaries demarcated. By 1895, after Hardinge's proclamation, the whole of East Africa was shared out between the Germans and the British. Thus it is safe to say that colonialism started in Kenya during the "mature" phase of the European colonial experience in Africa and ended in 1963, when Kenya finally gained independence as part of the nationalist euphoria that swept across the colonial world in the post–World War II period. This euphoria and the subsequent postcolonial nation building perhaps started in South Asia, which gained independence in 1947; it was Kenya's turn to embark on such journey in 1963.

Whether it was the "early" or "mature" colonialism, Kenya experienced all the trappings of a colony, and its a project of "civilizing mission" to bring

the "savage native" to progres according to European modernist discourse. However, this apparent "good will" and "white man's burden" regarding the African did not fit well with the native Kenyan, and the brief history of colonialism in Kenya is also a history of revolts against colonial rule by the very natives whom colonial authorities sought to "civilize."

The present book is an attempt to examine a case of one such revolt—the Mau Mau revolt in colonial Kenya.[2] It aims to explain Mau Mau essentially as a revolt against colonial hegemony and an attempt to construct a counterhegemony. Furthermore, though the goal of the revolt was to end colonial rule in Kenya, it would be wrong to frame it in terms of a nationalist project propagated by Kenyatta, the nationalist leader who eventually became the first president of independent Kenya. And finally, though armed struggle was a part of the revolt, it was fought on myriad fronts—cultural, ideological and political; the Mau Mau rebels always had a clear-cut idea of what kind of postcolonial Kenya they wanted to establish. In other words, power—colonial power, to be specific—and its resistance are core concerns in this work. Here power and resistance are, as Haynes and Prakash (1992, 1) consider, "entangled" with each other.

It would be difficult to understand the notion of power in colonial Kenya without comprehending how the colonized subjects resisted it. Thus power and its strategies for deployment are constantly shifting, affected by the struggles of the subordinate colonial subjects. Following Haynes and Prakash (1991), we could argue that the British colonial domination in Kenya and the Mau Mau resistance must not be seen or explained in isolation or as autonomous; these two are intertwined in such in a way that it "becomes difficult to analyze one without discussing the other" (3). Similarly, this work also shows that since the colonial power and resistance to it are entangled with each other, it transformed both in the processes. Various forms of resistance—the Griamma uprising of 1913–1914 (Johnson 1981; Mugi-Ndua 2000), the Nandi revolt of 1895–1905, the Kikuyu opposition between 1880–1900—to mention a few, all in the early phase of British colonial rule—fundamentally transformed colonial rule in Kenya.

On Colonial Hegemony

The present section explains, in theoretical terms, the question of hegemonic power and counterhegemony in the colonial context. Although our discussion is informed by the colonial experience in Kenya, the overall thrust of the argument derives not only from Kenyan experience but also from such experiences of other colonized areas, particularly South Asia.

Colonialism, above all, is an exercise in power relations—a relation between the colonizer and the colonized, domination and subordination. This apparently simple statement is mired in complexities and theoretical quicksand. In order to understand the relationship, we turn to Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937).[3] We start with his concept of hegemony, which deals with the modalities of power relations between dominant and subordinate.

The idea of hegemony, though it can be found in Marxist literature, is commonly associated with Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971). The text was written and its idea formulated while Gramsci was incarcerated in Mussolini's prison between 1929 and 1935. Given the difficult conditions under which he wrote it, Gramsci avoided straightforward Marxists terminologies. For example, instead of "Marxism" he used the term "philosophy of praxis," and instead of "Karl Marx," Gramsci preferred "the founder of the philosophy of praxis." By introducing new terminologies to Marxism, Gramsci seems to accomplish two things (besides avoiding the prison censor): 1) He allows his reader to more than one reading of his text without sacrificing the complexities and uniqueness of the question addressed. 2) He provided a new meaning to the old, conventional aspects of Marxism.

As mentioned before, Gramsci wrote the text while in prison under great stress. His works are, therefore, seen as "notebooks" or "drafts" of a future book. Thus the notebooks or drafts contain contradictions, assumptions, ambiguity, and numerous theoretical presuppositions that Gramsci was unable to resolve. In other words, there could be more than one way to "read" Gramsci. Before we provide a working definition of hegemony, however, it is important to discuss the context in which Gramsci developed the concept.

It is important to keep in mind that Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony with regard to the State in a specific historical period, that of the monopoly and dominance of finance capitalism and imperialism. It was also formulated at the time of the consolidation of socialism in the Soviet Union and the response to a fierce debate among the European Marxists about the drift of the Soviet Union towards totalitarianism under Stalin; all these events influenced Gramsci's work, as did the defeat of European working-class movements that failed to seize state power in many countries. Thus, Gramsci's (1971) formulation is a response to a specific historical context. In this context, he attempted to offer a theory of the modern state that he defined as the hegemonic state "protected by the Armor of coercion" (263).

Gramsci used the concept of hegemony to convey two principal meanings: First, it deals with a situation within a dominant class in which the

leading faction has the power and ability to articulate the interest of the factions (Carnoy 1984, 70), and one faction manages to "speak for" the entire dominant class through moral and intellectual leadership. In other words, the leading faction has the power and ability to articulate the interest of the factions (Carnoy 1984, 70). Second, and because of the first, hegemony is a relationship between the dominant and dominated classes. This relationship involves moral, political, and intellectual leadership by the dominant class to establish its own world view "as all-inclusive and universal and to shape the interests and needs of subordinate groups" (Carnoy 1984, 70). This is essentially a "consent relationship." However, the so-called consent is neither given, nor is it fixed. It is riddled with contradictions and rifts, and it is subject to subversion and resistance from the subordinate classes (or, to borrow from Gramsci, the "subaltern classes") (Gramsci 1971, 44). In this situation, the tendency of those desiring hegemony, the hegemonic classes or hegemony-seeking classes, to use coercion and call it consensus often seems to be ineffective. We will return to this issue in the next section.

Hegemony, thus, speaks of a power relationship between dominant and subordinate classes that involves "both" consensus and coercion. Furthermore, if we consider this relationship in the context of production relations, this power relationship might exist in various modes. Indeed, Gramsci's overwhelming theoretical interest lies in the uneven and incomplete development of capitalism in Italy and the continuing remnants there of feudalism, landlords, and peasant relationships well into the early twentieth century. Here Gramsci emphasizes the peasant's belief and culture and calls for the need to understand them properly.

Therefore, if we follow Gramsci's formulation of hegemony, we find three main interrelated items: (1) It is a historically specific power relationship between dominant and subordinate groupings. (2) It involves both consensus as well as coercion, depending on the changing relationship between the State and society. To put it differently, there is dialectical interplay within hegemony as "consent" and the state as "coercion." (3) Different levels of development of production are related, which provides different modes of power relations between dominant hegemonic groups and subordinate categories. These three items are important to formulating the idea of colonial hegemony.

Perhaps the best treatment of the idea of hegemony in a colonial context comes from the writings of Ranajit Guha (1999). Using colonial India as a case study, Guha develops a construct, which he calls *dominance without hegemony*. The core idea of his construct is that the British colonial power appropriated and compromised traditional Indian values, *dharma*, in order to win the consent of the colonized Indians. According to the principle of

dharma, the ruler must not deny the basic necessities to his subjects; in time of famine the king should refrain from luxury, and he should distribute surplus grain among his subjects. If he fails to do so, he loses his legitimacy and it would then be legitimate for the subjects to revolt against the king (Guha 1997b, 35). Guha (1997b, 5) argued that that the British rule in colonial India was a combination of selective appropriation of *dharma* and failed modernity (5).

> Colonialism could continue as a relation of power in the subcontinent only on the condition that the colonizing bourgeoisie should fail to live up to its own universalizing project. The nature of the state it had created by the sword made this historically necessary. (Guha 1988a, 5–6)

It is true that Indian society was profoundly transformed under the impact of colonial capitalism, but bourgeois hegemony remained elusive. Thus, according to Guha (1997b, 35), the relation of power between domination and subordination was the result of the selective appropriation of tradition (*dharma*) and the non-existence of bourgeois hegemony. To Chakravorty (2002), this situation is "capitalist domination without hegemonic culture" (14), and to Guha it is *dominance without hegemony* (Guha 1997, 31).

Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (1993, 3) also address the issue of difference in bourgeois hegemony in the colonial context. Taking Gramsci's writings as a clue rather than a prescription, they argue that in colonial context "hegemony and legitimacy can never be taken as given, but are [. . .] always subject to contestation and manipulation" (3). And again,

> hegemony should not be understood as a Eurocentric concept, nor as implying that there is almost complete political and ideological control by elites; rather it suggest the ways in which colonial ideology served the ruling class by helping to make their rule appear natural and legitimate. (Engels and Marks 1993, 3)

At the same time, Engels and Marks (1993, 3) argue that it would be a mistake to see hegemony in the colonial context merely as a European import in colonial Asia and Africa, as colonial ideology always adapts to the specific material conditions of both dominant and subordinate classes. Sometimes this adaptation includes appropriation, incorporation, and transformation of the traditional, precolonial values and cultures of the colonized people. In other words, historical specificity as critical factor to the construction hegemony in the colonial societies should be emphasized. This emphasis on historical specificity allows Engels and Marks (1993, 9) to distinguish between what they call *violence direct* and *violence douce*.

Violence direct is the brute force of the state deployed through soldiers and policemen, while *violence douce* is a form of "mild violence" that transforms colonial people's perceptions and changed the day-to-day reproduction of hegemony under colonial rule in the name of civilization and reason (Engels and Marks 1993, 9). This *violence douce* is the context of persuasion within colonial hegemony, which in turn constitutes the apparently benevolent mission of colonial modernity, like the introduction of Western education, health care, penal systems, or railways. A specific example of the last was built in colonial Kenya and connects the eastern coast to Lake Victoria, etc., to the West.

Ajit Chaudhury (Chaudhury 1994) also addresses the issue of difference between colonial hegemony and what he calls "simple hegemony." By using a construct of "synthetic hegemony," Chaudhury argues that the power relations between colonial master and colonized servant "define a complex of complexes" (Chaudhury 1994, 46). The relationship involves an "idiom of power"—dominance and subordination; domination, however, exists in its explicit *other*, that is, subordination. Furthermore, dominance itself is a complex of persuasion and coercion, which is characterized by elements of collaboration and resistance. Thus synthetic hegemony, according to Chaudhury, is "ideological practice or *articulation* on the master's part, establishing a relation among elements (persuasion and coercion) such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (1994, 47; emphasis original). By describing synthetic hegemony (read: colonial hegemony), which is different from simple bourgeois hegemony, Chaudhury argues that colonial hegemonic classes adopt various strategies to win consensus from the subordinate classes, thus fobbing off their own interests as the general interest of the "entire" society (1994, 48). If this policy of persuasion fails, then the hegemonic classes revert to another strategy—coercion and violence. Colonial hegemony, thus, is a political practice that constitutes a dialectical interplay between consensus or persuasion and violence or force.

Thus, in order to formulate an idea of colonial hegemony, we need to keep in mind the modalities of transformation of simple hegemony to synthetic hegemony. This transformation involves persuasion as well as coercion of the colonial subjects, and persuasion calls for the appropriation of the subordinate class's code, language, and culture by the hegemonic class, which then redeploys it in such a manner that the new code conveys the message of persuasion to the subordinate class. Terrence Ranger (1983), in the colonial African context, has identified this process of appropriation as the "invention" of Africa by the dominant colonial forces. In other words, if this persuasion through appropriation fails, then the hegemonic class

reverts to coercion. Thus there is a dialectical relationship between persuasion and coercion; coercion in turn involves the interplay between *violence direct* and *violence douce*, depending on situation and context.

On Colonial Counterhegemony[4]

It is important to note, while conceptualizing the idea of colonial counterhegemony like that of simple bourgeois hegemony, that it is neither complete nor unproblematic. Following Gramsci's clue, we could argue that problems in colonial hegemonic projects come from two sources. The first is a disunity among the various fractions of the ruling class, where conflicting interests prevent them from agreeing on one unified hegemonic project.[5] This disunity essentially derives from the conflicting interests of various fractions. The second is the opposition from the subordinate or subaltern classes to hegemonic onslaught from the ruling class. These are the specific aspects of the hegemonic crisis in colonial Kenya that we are interested in in this book. Before we discuss the notion of colonial counterhegemony, however, let us begin by examining the idea of subaltern. For that, we once again turn to Gramsci.

Gramsci (1971, 219) addresses the issue in the context of bourgeois hegemony and the problem of the unification of the masses at the level of the state. For that he uses the term *subaltern* in two ways. First, he uses it to convey the proletarian class, which means that this class in a capitalist society is the subaltern class, which is exploited by the bourgeoisie. Most importantly, in this sense the subaltern class is subjected to hegemonic onslaught by the bourgeoisie. Secondly, he also speaks of subaltern categories in which the bourgeoisie social order is underdeveloped, where "subaltern" does not necessarily refer to the proletarian class, but rather to the historical outcome of power relations between domination and subordination. The core idea, in this sense of the term, is *power relations*, where the hegemonic class and the subordinate class stand in opposition to each other. Thus, the core of the Gramsci's notion of the subaltern is the *politics of the subaltern*.

> The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, [is] intertwined with that of civil society, thereby with the history of States and groups of State. (Gramsci 1971, 52)

This political concern of Gramsci, while conceptualizing the subaltern, lies in his critique of various Leninist tendencies within the European communist

movement. At this point it is important to define the concept of the subaltern. Gramsci uses the term subaltern interchangeably with "subordinate" and "instrumental," but the real connotation of the term includes not simply class oppression but "lacking autonomy, subjected to the influence or hegemony of another social group, not possessing one's own hegemonic position" (Sassoon 1982, 16).

This political concern of subalternity allows Spivak to identify the writing of the subaltern narrative as addressing the "crisis of hegemonic historiography" (Spivak 1988a, 4). The heart of this crisis lies in the notion of the subversive and insurgent politics of the subalterns. This subversive politics, most importantly, derives from the very idea of *autonomy of subaltern* he subaltern approach sought to describe the "contribution made by the people *on their own*, that is, *independently of the elite* [. . .] the hegemonic groups whether foreign or indigenous who monopolized the hitherto historiography of Indian nationalist movement" (39; emphasis original). This autonomy of the subaltern consciousness is the core of all subaltern historiography, as well as subaltern opposition to elite rule. This is also the core concern of our interpretation of the Mau Mau revolt in colonial Kenya.

The subaltern consciousness, however, is often contradictory in nature, as Gramsci (1971) has observed:

> (A subaltern's) theoretical consciousness can be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he was two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit and verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. (Gransci 1971, 333)

The contradiction between the implicit and the explicit aspects of the subaltern consciousness is a reflection of the contradiction between opposing social groups. In many third-world societies, the bourgeoisie tendency in the subaltern consciousness essentially derives from the "contradictory consciousness" that Gramsci referred to. How, the question may arise, can counterhegemonic and liberating consciousness be formed? Consider the following quotation from Gramsci:

> It signifies that the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action, but occasionally and it flashes—when, that is, the group is acting as an organic totality. But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its

> own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in "normal times"—that is, when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate. (Gramsci 1971, 327)

Here Gramsci has provided an important clue for analyzing the consciousness of the subaltern classes. However as mentioned earlier, since this consciousness is contradictory and fragmentary, the question remains as to how this fragmentation could be translated into a unified revolutionary counterhegemonic project. For that, Gramsci (1971, 333) introduces yet another original concept—common sense, which he defines in terms of time and space: that is, protest yesterday and subordination and collaboration today. But the very nature of contradiction is central to the subaltern class's own "being" as subaltern; that is, as a group subject to a broader hegemonic process (Gramsci 1971, 333). Furthermore, the idea of "contradictory common sense" in terms of time and space has two important theoretical implications: different forms of consciousness within the subaltern group remain at variance with one another, and the everyday forms of consciousness of subaltern categories may simply be dichotomous in character. In other words, "contradictory common sense" is "an ambiguous, contradictory and multiform concept" (Gramsci 1971, 243), as it formed and transformed in the course of a historical process, bringing dominant and subordinate classes into contact with each other. The contact ultimately results in subversion, protest, and revolutionary movements by the subaltern groups to form their own hegemonic projects. The subaltern school's formulation of the contradictory autonomous consciousness of the subaltern has come under fire from various scholars (O'Hanlon 2000; Brass 2000; Bayly 2000; Sarkar 1997; Bahl 2000; Singh 1998; Mallon 1994; Cooper 1994; Satyamuthy 1990). These scholars' critiques of the subaltern school could be summarized into three items: the notion of autonomous consciousness of the subaltern, the question of "structure" in subaltern consciousness, and the question of resistance.

These lines of critique were first formulated by Spivak (1988a; 1988b), who was not quite a member of the inner circle of the school but whose works and the works of the school remain mutually influential. Spivak raises two critical issues: First, the domain of subaltern politics could be located both inside and outside the parameters of the colonial state. It is outside as subalternity, as the "other" of the elite, and it is also inside because quite often subaltern categories adjusted themselves to the colonial power and used it for their own benefit; hence they internalized it.

Second, searching for autonomous subaltern subjects will merely replace the discourse of modernity's totalistic ideas like "citizenship" and "men"

with ___. For that reason, Spivak recommends that the subaltern historian abandon that search and concentrate on the "construction of the subaltern as the *other* of the elite" (1988a). Here "construction" means the representation of the subaltern in the official discourse by such colonial institutions as education, colonial medicine, and statistics.

Following the lead of C. A. Bayly (2000), Singh argues that the subaltern historian deals with autonomous consciousness as if the consciousness exists without and outside of the structure. According to Singh, the existence of subalternity rests on its resistance as subaltern, and resistance in turn is "governed by the ties (economic, political, cultural) that bind the subaltern and elite into a structural whole in a particular locality at a particular time" (1998, 237). This particular line of criticism seems to reproduce the classical dichotomy of "agency/consciousness vs. structure" from which the subaltern approaches tried to distance themselves. It is our contention that consciousness and structure should not be viewed as mutually exclusive or in a dualistic manner. Rather, they should be explained as mutually reinforcing each other.

Finally, the question of resistance raises concerns. In order to "recover" the subaltern history from elite influence, the subaltern historian puts particular emphasis on this aspect of subaltern identity. It is true that the group's idea of subaltern resistance derives from various, often disjointed, case studies materials. Based on these materials, is it possible to arrive at a general theory of subaltern resistance? Javeed Alam (1983) pointed out this problem by showing that the fragmentary and truncated nature of the subaltern consciousness severely limits the political action and resistance of the subaltern categories.

> In none of the studies do we find any evidence from which it could be inferred that the domain of peasant politics had come to acquire the character of a stable condition that defines the availability of concrete options and choices for these strata in a long sense. (Alam 1983, 47)

Here it is important to note that subaltern consciousness develops in their ability to initiate and carry on resistance in spite of temporary defeats.

> It was the absence of this ability that made it possible for the bourgeoisie reformist nationalist leadership to demobilize and disrupt many peasant movements, even while being able to draw the peasantry to itself. (Alam 1983, 47)

In other words, an autonomous domain of the subaltern consciousness "can never be an inherited condition of the exploited and oppressed masses

but a dialectical possibility born of struggle and revolutionary advance" (Alam 1983, 49). In response to Alam, Chatterjee (1983) argues that domination as a *relation of power* must be taken into account while identifying the autonomy of the subaltern classes. In other words, domination must exist within any relationship; that is, all relationships involve domination and subordination, and this leads to resistance.

> The dominant group, in their exercise of domination, do not consume and destroy the dominated classes, for then there would be no *relation of power*, and hence no domination. For domination to exist, the subaltern classes must necessarily inhabit a domain that is their own, which gives them their identity, where they exist as a distant (distinct?) social form, where they can resist at the same time as they are dominated. It is only then that one can talk about domination as relation, as a process, as a movement that emerges out of an opposition. (Chatterjee 1983, 59)

In our analysis of Mau Mau in colonial Kenya, we address all three concerns—that is, the issue of autonomous subaltern consciousness, the question of structure, and, finally, resistance. It is our view that in the context of Mau Mau these issues should be seen as dialectically linked and mutually reinforcing. For example, the present work deals with the British colonial state's role as the structural component of the resistance in the construction of the Kenyan colonized subaltern other. Here the colonial state constitutes one aspect of power relations. Furthermore, these power relations created the space for the autonomous subaltern consciousness, which leads the subaltern groups to resist colonial domination. As colonial rule in its deployment of power used different strategies and myriad means to colonize the subaltern categories, a colonized other grew heterogeneous and fragmented. In such conditions of fragmentation, the nexus of resistance, revolt, and subversion takes different shapes and forms. The Mau Mau could be explained as an anticolonialist struggle that fought in the political, cultural, and economic arenas, as well as in the ideological realm, using various tactics and strategies.

White Frogs and the Iron Snake: Colonialism in Kenya

Jomo Kenyatta (1999), in his book, *Facing Mount Kenya*,[6] described a prophetic saying of a famous Kikuyu seer—*Mogo, moro wa Kibiro* (Mogo, son of Kibiro). It went something like this: Kebiro was a medicine man who claimed that one night in his sleep, *Ngai* (a traditional Kikuyu god) had taken him and told him what would happen to the Kikuyu people. He said people like light-colored frogs would arrive out of large waters with dress

resembling the butterfly wings. They would carry a long strike stick that spits fire and later would bring an iron snake with many legs like *monyongoro* (centipede). The holy man warned about these strangers. He urged the warriors not to fight them, as their fire-spitting long stick was capable of killing from a distance. As well, the holy man urged the Kikuyu people to treat the strangers with courtesy and suspicion. He advised them not to invite them to their homes, because they would take all the land, whereupon a great catastrophe would befall the Kikuyu land.

We do not know when this prediction took place but the Kikuyu seer was an extraordinarily brilliant man. His premonition turned into reality on July 1895, when A. H. Hardinge, Her Majesty's Agent and Counsel-General at Zanzibar, announced that he was taking over, in the name of the great British empire, the administration of Zanzibar, the coastal areas, and all the countries inland as far as Kikuyu land. He proclaimed the East Africa Protectorate in Mombasa on July 1, 1895 (Mungean 1978, 66). Afterwards, a series of similar declarations was made to bring Lamu and other coastal areas within the new protectorate. It is well known that once the protectorate was claimed, the new British rulers acted on rudimentary information and incorrect assumptions about its newfound territories. Part of the reason for this was that there were very few European explorers who had ever explored in the interior of the new protectorate, largely because they were deterred by Arab stories of the ferocious Maasai warriors (Mungean 1968, 1). The new rulers depended largely on Arab and Swahili traders who ventured into the interior for ivory and slaves. Indeed, as Mungean (1978, 3) argues, Harding's theoretical knowledge about the protectorate essentially derives from the Arab and Swahili ruling class (Mungean 1978, 3). In other words, the protectorate was essentially an alien land to its new rulers. This unfamiliarity with the land caused the British to introduce poorly suited policies and political discourse, with disastrous consequences.

Sudipta Kaviraj (1991), in a theoretical essay on India, argues that in India there was a certain externality of colonial power, "a social conceptualization that was fundamentally alien to this arrangement (that is, colonial power)" (80).

As in India, the British colonial authorities in Kenya had neither a uniform policy for the colony nor any insight on how to govern this rather unfamiliar and hostile territory. This hesitance allowed the British to adopt a dual policy of military force and subtle diplomacy, which remained operational until Kenya's independence in 1963. It should be kept in mind, as argued earlier, that Kenya was colonized during the "mature" phase of British colonialism ("maturity" in the sense of historical time and space)—for example, by contrast, India was colonized almost 150 years before Kenya.

As in India, the British colonial forces in Kenya settled on one of the greatest epistemes of colonialism—the discourse of modernity. The relationship between colonial structure and colonial modernity necessarily involves not only a set of institutions but also a set of discourses, most importunately the connection between practices, institutions, and knowledge. Here discourse became the manifestation of the relationship between knowledge and power; the colonization of Kenya was viewed like that of India, as Europe's scientific advance. And again, perhaps most important of all, British colonialism attempted to introduce what Chatterjee (1988, 386) calls a "bourgeois mode of power" that sought to dispel the earlier "communal mode of power" in the Kikuyu land. These attempts were riddled with contradictions, astonishing ignorance, notions of racial superiority, and cruelty. In the Kikuyu land in particular, and in colonial Kenya in general, this objective was to introduce new modes of power in the context of the imperial state's attempt at establishing new and totally alien institutions, such as colonial chiefs and new land systems. Taking these two institutions together gives a general idea of he workings of the Kenyan colonial state and its technologies of the bourgeois mode of power.

The Village Headman Ordinance was enacted on October 23, 1902. It stipulated that:

1. Such headman shall be the representative of his village or villages, and an order made against him in his official capacity shall be enforceable against all the inhabitants of his village or villages.
2. The commissioner (the local British administrator), or by his direction the subcommissioner, may require any headman to keep order in any area adjacent to his village or villages and to keep public roads in good conditions and repair.
3. If any outrage occurs in any area in which a headman is responsible for the preservation of order and the perpetrator of such outrage cannot be discovered, the subcommissioner may in this discretion impose a fine upon such headman unless he proves to the satisfaction of the subcommissioner that the outrage could not have been prevented by reasonable vigilance on the part of the headman or his people.
4. The commission may make rules conferring upon any headman or any body of headmen in any village or group of villages the power to hear and determine petty native cases to such extent and upon such conditions as the commissioner may determine. (Mungean 1978, 91–92)

In other words, the village headmen—or colonial chiefs, as they at times were called—were subservient to the local administrator, who was the paramount local colonial state authorities. This began with an incorrect assumption by the British authorities that village headmen ruled Kikuyu

society and were the locus from which power emanated. This was, of course, incorrect, as explained earlier. However, after the British colonial state came to realize that, it continued to rely on these village headmen.

A Short History of Kikuyu Province 1900–1915, issued by the colonial state, described a few colonial chiefs in following manner:[7]

> He (Karuri wa Karuri), a colonial chief, gained his association with John Boyes [. . .] Ki-nja-Njahi, who used Karuji's spearmen to second his rifles in this raid. From October 1900, he fully accepted the Government's *authority* [. . .]. (KNA/PC/1/11; emphasis added)

In Nyeri District, Wambugu wa Mathangani was described by the same document as a "[. . .] [p]owerful, influential and *obedient* chief who renders very great assistance to the government by his wise advice. He is dissolutely *trustworthy* and *reliable*." (KNA/PC/1/11; emphasis added)

Another colonial chief was Kithai wa Ngiti. Kithai wa Ngiti

> proved useful to the government in Trans-Tana and Embu districts, revealing the hiding places of stock during patrols, and was promoted to paramount chief in 1905. He secured the obedience of his people through questionable methods. From the start he needed to be strongly supported by the government, and he is not popular with his people. He interferes with Kiama, dictating its judgments and acting as a Court of Appeal from them. He suffers from his low social standing to Njegga, the sub-chief in his district, who appears to have in no way accepted his authority. He supplies a good deal of labor and pays hut tax satisfactorily. He is swift, though making erratic decisions, but he sees them carried out (KNA/PC/1/11).

The leading colonial chief in Kiambu was Kinyanjui, a man of no traditional standing. Harry Thuku has argued that Kinyanjui was not a *Muthamaki* (chosen spokesperson) and doubted that the Kikuyu community would have selected him as paramount chief if the choice had truly been theirs (Thuku 1970, 26).

While doing transport and helping the British in numerous punitive expeditions Kinyanjui came under the attention of the British. After the Imperial British East Africa Company closed its base at Fort Dagoretti, Kinyanjui went to Mombasa and returned to Kiambu with one Captain Smith to open a new station in the Kikuyu territories. He became paramount chief in the Kiambu area when the earlier chief Waiyaki fell out of favor of the colonialists and was exiled by the British. The British felt the need for a strong native hand to establish its authority in Kiambu (Tignor 1976, 46). Thus the colonial chiefs were a creation of the new colonial technology of power. Subjugation and domination were part and parcel of this

process. To stay in office, the chiefs needed to show unconditional loyalty to the British authorities. It is true that chiefs sometimes enjoyed a certain measure of autonomy and might, which also allowed them to mount certain criticism of the colonial state (Ochieng 1972, 52), but their very existence and continuation in the office largely rested on in the hands of the British colonial state.

On a more theoretical level, colonialism in Kenya produced what Mudimbe (1988, 2) calls the *colonizing structure* of the African context. This may include the domination of physical space, the transformation of natives' minds, and the integration of the local economy into the Western capitalist system. This structure of *complementary* acts "completely embraces the physical, human, and spiritual aspects of colonizing experience" (Mudimbe 1988, 2). Let us explain these issues in turn.

The domination of physical space. As mentioned earlier in this section, the imposition of colonialism in Kenya begun with the declaration of the East Africa Protectorate in 1885. Initially it was seen as a diplomatic gesture aimed at the Sultan of Zanzibar, Germany, Italy and Ethiopia. But once Sir Arthur Hardinge had been named as the commissioner, he was charged with setting up an administration and a judicial system, and the dynamic of imperial logic was initiated. The creation of colonial chiefs, explained above, exemplified such logic. In this context it is important note that the British colonial state created geographic space and boundaries and invented "tribes" (Ogot 2000, 16). Ogot (2000, 20) further argued that there were three types of space that colonialism established:

1. *Inter-territorial boundaries*, arbitrarily determined by the colonial state, were created without any regard to historical antecedents and continuity.
2. In Kenya, the creation of boundaries, also created *segregated space* like the "White Highlands," "native reserves," "outlying districts," and "closed districts." Most fertile lands were given to the European settlers such that it segregated the Europeans from the natives, and different African groups from each other.
3. *Administrative boundaries*—sub-locational, locational, divisional, district, and provincial—were supposed to be self-sufficient, closed, static, linguistically homogeneous ethnic units. These closed boundaries restricted social, economic, and cultural mobility across the cultural zones and hence intensified and solidified ethnic consciousness.

The creation of colonial "tribes" should be attributed to the colonial space created by the colonial state. This invention of "tribes," as Basil Davidson (1992, 30) argues, caused great difficulty in forming "a nation-state" once colonialism ended.

The colonial modernity and the "transformation/civilizing of the Native mind": Once colonialism began in Kenya, the "civilizing mission" and transformation of the native Kenyans' mind began in earnest. This was legitimized by the discourse of modernity and its colonial transformation. Unlike in Europe, colonial modernity was characterized by its external features, as it did not result from the organic transformation of social structure; rather, it was imposed from above, that is, with the colonial technologies of power. Furthermore, the entire historical proposal of colonial modernity created major institutional changes that require explanation.

We have already discussed the official and administrative changes that the colonial state created in Kenya. In the economic realm, it created what could be termed the structure of colonial capitalism, an issue to which we will return later.

Besides introducing new political and economic changes, colonialism also represents a discourse. This issue is the crucial link between knowledge and power, so that at the end, colonial conquest in Asia and Africa can be seen as a consequence of Europe's scientific advancements. It shows that new institutions could only be operational if they worked through the new discourse of society and power. Likewise, colonial modernity explained its mission in terms of dichotomy, "modern, progressive Europe" versus "backward/savage/primitive Africans," and colonial modernity as a discourse with its linkages to power and knowledge managed to portray the Africans as the opposite of the European pole. Here the discourse of colonial modernity manifested itself in terms of racial superiority. This ultimately helped the colonialists to deploy other aspects of colonial modernity—education, colonial medicine, census, penal system, et cetera—to transform and civilize the colonized people.

The Structure of Settler Colonial Capitalism.[8] The economic aspects of colonial modernity in Kenya did not follow the construction of a classical capitalist economy. What we have instead is a degenerate version of capitalism that Andre Gunder Frank (1972), in the context of Latin American countries, called the "development of underdevelopment." Also, Kenya's role was that of a nation on the periphery of the world capitalist system, exporting cash crops, supplying cheap labor, and importing manufactured commodities. This was, however, as mentioned earlier, greatly boosted with the construction of the railway from Mombasa to Lake Victoria, which was completed in 1901. The major funding for the railway came from the British Treasury.[9] In order to recoup its investment, the British government adopted the policy of making the land productive, and for that the land was sold to European settlers at nominal prices from the colonial administration. The colonial administration saw these "alienated" lands

and white settlement in it as a source for of quick cash in return for the money it had invested in the railway construction. For that purpose it was proposed that the colonial state would earn revenues by carrying cash crops produced by white settlers to the coast for export (Leys 1975, 280). But from the beginning there was one problem. The white settlers had neither the money nor the knowledge to do large-scale agriculture. Moreover, these settlers were from aristocratic European stock, not peasant farmers. The solution for this was to make the Africans a source of cheap agricultural labor. With this end in mind, the colonial state imposed high taxes on the Africans, limited their ability to own land, and restricted their growth of cash crops such as coffee and tea.

> Africans had to be compelled to work, partly by force, partly by taxation, and partly by preventing them from having access to enough land or profitable crops to enable them to pay taxes without working for wages. (Leys 1975, 30)

An early white settler, Colonel Grogan, in the book *From Cape to Cairo*, was more honest about the need to have such a proper labor policy.

> A good sound system of compulsory labor would do more to raise the niggers in five years than all the millions than that has been sunk in missionary efforts for the last. Let the native be compelled to work so many months in the year at a fixed and reasonable rate and call it compulsory education, as we call our weekly bonnet parade, church. Under such a title surely the most delicate British conscience be may be at rest. (qtd. by Bailey 1993, 21)

Besides a massive Kenyan agricultural labor force, other social forces emerged in colonial Kenya. These included Indian traders and merchants, commonly known as *duka-wallah*[10] (shopkeepers), and squatters. Indian traders had already been doing business in the coastal areas, but their businesses expanded greatly during and after World War II as they took the advantage of the military supply system during the war and the world economic growth after the war. As a result, between 1948 and 1962 their numbers rose from 98,000 to 177,000 (Leys 1975, 44). They continued to prosper in business and trading even though they were barred from owning lands in the "White Highlands." In the early 1950s, they entered manufacturing and other related industries. In 1961 over 67 percent of all local industries were Asian owned (Leys 1975, 45). Politically, both Africans and Europeans viewed the Indians with suspicion. Colonial practices and the failure to incorporate Asians as full citizens when Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania gained independence led to the creation of the view that Asians are pseudo-citizens. And during the 1960s, the Kenyatta regime passed a

series of legislative acts that severely restrict the participation of Asians in politics and administration and relegated them to the singular role of entrepreneurs in the major cities. Parliament passed various acts that prevented Asians from holding high positions in the government and civil service, as well as preventing them from owning businesses and property in the rural areas and in the non-major urban centers. However, the hostility against the Asians reached its peck during the 1982 abortive coup attempt, when many Indian-owned businesses were destroyed and many Indian women raped.

The population of squatters was another important social force that emerged during the colonial period (Furedi 1990; Kanogo 1987b). Squatters were Kenyan Africans living, cultivating, and generally grazing on land that did not belong to them. This class of squatters emerged contemporaneously with land alienation. After the white settlers were given title to traditional African lands, they quickly realized that they owned more land than they could actually cultivate. To ensure a continuous supply of cheap labor, settlers agreed to let Africans live on and cultivate a certain amount of their land. This practice never improved the squatter farmers' overall economic situation, and by the early 1920s, the attraction of squatter farming was beginning to wane. The white settlers began to demand more and more labor. Furthermore, the squatters were not allowed to raise any cattle, because the white settlers were eager to protect their imported, exotic herds from diseases. And finally, during the 1940s, thousands of squatters were uprooted, creating a huge pool of extremely poor landless peasants with no access to education or any other alternative employment opportunities. Thus, it is not surprising that when Mau Mau finally broke, many of the active fighters were former squatters (Konogo 1987b).

The emergence of a working class in Kenya is also related to land alienation as well.[11] Stichter describes the process as proletarianization (1975, 25); she argues that the emergence of a working class can be traced in terms of the expropriation of African traditional means of production (land), as well as state-initiated mechanisms such as forced labor and administrative pressure to make wage-working mandatory for Africans (Stichter 1975, 23). In colonial Kenya the working class was diverse and heterogeneous. It includes factory workers, unskilled laborers, drivers, mechanics, and employees in shops, offices, and stores.

Fredrick Cooper, in his wonderful study, *From Slaves To Squatters: Plantation labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya 1890–1925* (Cooper 1980), exposes another dimension of emergence of the working class in Kenya. He argues that the conventional sense of proletarianization never took place in Kenya and Zanzibar, as it did not follow along the network in response to market conditions; rather it was based on "pressure

and coercion," which in turn connected with the colonial plantation economy (Cooper 1980, 235).

The composition of subaltern categories should be located in these various class and ethnic groups in colonial Kenya. However, construction of various subaltern categories directly related with what Ranger calls the "invention of tradition in colonial Africa," meaning that the tradition of nineteenth-century Europe that had been introduced in Kenya and throughout colonial Africa was part of the colonial "caviling mission" (Ranger 1983). The European "invented traditions" were characterized by "rigidity" and profound ignorance about African specificity; the Europeans believed that African societies were "living within an ideology based on the absence of change; living within a framework of clearly defined hierarchical status." Ranger argues that this belief is unfounded (Ranger 1983, 247). Simply put, the colonialist project in Kenya was grounded on profound ignorance and simple-minded rigidity, against which arose all anticolonialist struggles in Africa, including Mau Mau in Kenya.

Organization of This Book

This book is organized thematically. At first glance, it might appear disjointed, but the questions of domination, power, and resistance run through all of its chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the different forms and styles of writings on Mau Mau. Using Ranjit Guha's (1988a) interpretation of various cases of peasant revolt in colonial India, Chapter 2 provides a general critique of Mau Mau writings. The main argument of the chapter is that the knowledge production of Mau Mau writings was not void of power relations—or, to put the problem another way, the colonialist versions of the history of Mau Mau deliberately overlooked the question of power and were produced to perpetuate colonial power in Kenya.

Chapter 3 narrates the story of Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, supreme commander of the revolt. I attempt to place Kimathi, as well as the nationalist movement articulated by Jomo Kenyatta, in the context of colonialism. This chapter also includes the portrayal of Kimathi in Kenyan creative writings and describes how some of his comrades and fellow fighters viewed him.

Chapter 4 chronicles the role of women in the movement. Here an attempt is made to debunk the conventional myth that Mau Mau women were merely "passive" participants, engaged primarily in "support" activities like collecting and preparing food, cleaning, or taking care of the sick and wounded. The interview with Cinda Rei reveals that women were also engaged in combat duties as well.

Chapter 5 addresses the issue of nationalism. Following Fanon (1963) and Chatterjee (1993b), the chapter argues that Mau Mau stands outside of the mainstream nationalist movement led by the Kenya Africa Union (KAU) and Kenyatta. Furthermore, it attempts to show that Kenyatta's relation as a nationalist leader with the Mau Mau movement was one of ambivalence and suspicion, if not outright hostility, and that Mau Mau should be viewed as revolt by itself outside of the conventional nationalist movement. The Mau Mau revolt has produced, both in the West and in Kenya, a vast amount of creative writing.

Chapter 6 explains how one Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, interprets Mau Mau in both his fiction and his non-fiction works. Ngugi's writings are evaluated in the context of the postcolonial condition and the role of the organic intellectual in it.

Chapter 7 critically evaluates three texts by Leakey, Corfield, and Crothers, who attempted to explain the "origin" of Mau Mau, in order to suggest ways of preventing such things from occurring again in the future. The chapter argues that these texts are the products of knowledge in the service of colonial power—a main concern of the idea of colonial discourse.

Chapter 8 deals with three autobiographical texts written by three Mau Mau commanders—Karari Njama, Waruhiu Itote (General China) and Henry Wachanga. In these texts, we see a different interpretation of Mau Mau by those people who actually fought. The chapter suggests that subaltern autobiography could be a source for constructing a subaltern approach to Mau Mau.

In the conclusion, Chapter 9, I seek to explain Mau Mau in the context of the current socioeconomic conditions of Kenya. Here a few comments will be made to critique present day conditions in Kenya by using Mau Mau as a historical illustrative point.

2

Domination and Its Resistance: Writings on Mau Mau

The spectre of Mau Mau has haunted Kenya since the revolt's eruption in the early 1950s, and it has shown no sign of abating. As recently as November 24, 2000, Nairobi's *The People's Daily*, published on the front page a picture of Elosi Mukami, the widow of Mau Mau hero Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi. She was petitioning the Kenya Ministry of Health to exhume her husband's body from Kamiti Prison. The Field Marshal had been hanged and buried in an unmarked grave within the prison boundaries. The British colonialists had accused him of "evil against Her Majesty's kingdom." Apparently the colonialists thought that the Field Marshal was as dangerous dead as he was when alive and refused to hand over his body to his wife and relatives. The picture published in *The People's Daily* shows Elosi Mukami, the widow, with a weathered face and extraordinarily penetrating eyes, looking straight at the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Health, Julius Meme. A frown furrows her forehead. Her hair is covered with a stylish *kitambaa* (headscarf). Her supporters and relatives are looking at the PS rather suspiciously. Mukami's face is tired, sad, beautiful, and brave, as if telling the PS, "I do not believe a word you are saying." The body language and posture of the PS reveal the uncomfortable nature of the meeting. The neatly dressed PS is looking away from Mukami's gaze as if intentionally avoiding eye contact.

This particular meeting was the culmination of a strange debate over what to do with the Field Marshal's body. On Kenyatta Day, 2000, a handful of people, most of them veterans of the Mau Mau revolt, and their contemporary followers demanded that Kenyatta Day be recognized as Mau Mau Day. This led to a parliamentary debate between opposition Member of the Parliaments and the Minister of State in the Office of the President, Julius Sunkuli. The opposition attacked the government for ignoring freedom

fighters like Bildad Kaggia and others and demanded exhumation and reburial of the Field Marshal with due honors. During this debate, State Minister Sunkuli said an extraordinary thing. He argued that the Field Marshal belonged to what he called "an illegal organization" and then contradicted himself by saying that the government recognized the contribution that Mau Mau activists had made. He added that once independence was achieved, the Mau Mau "had served its purpose" (*The People's Daily*, November 24, 2000, p. 1). In other words, Mau Mau is past history and should now be safely put aside. The newspaper reports of this debate are interesting as well as confusing. The October 26, 2000, edition of *The People's Daily* was headlined, "No Kimathi Reburial, Sunkuli Tells the House," while the same day's edition of the *Daily Nation* reported, "Kimathi Reburial Possible."

These are seemingly minor and rather mundane details of a story, but they have serious implications. The Republic of Kenya had to come to terms with its own past and its inability to speak for itself. What was revealed was inability, ambivalence, and confusion. How did this strange piece of Kenyan history develop, and what can be done about it? Understanding the politics or narrative of the nation's history may bring insight. Using Ranjit Guha (1988a), this chapter critically evaluates the dominant trends of writing the history of Mau Mau. This chapter also contemplates a subaltern approach to Mau Mau history.

Prose of Mau Mau (Counter) Insurgency

Following the analysis of a peasant uprising in colonial India by Ranjit Guha (1988a), Mau Mau discourse could be classified into three broad categories based on time and conclusions (1988a, 47): primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Primary Discourse

Primary discourse is essentially official in character. This discourse includes such things as correspondence between colonial officials, monthly reports on "disturbances," and minutes. For present understanding of Mau Mau, official discourse includes the District Commissioner's Hand Over Report, official reports on Mau Mau, and the Ministry of Information newsletter, *Kenya Calling*. The Kenya National Archives (KNA) has a valuable collection of such reports. In the mid-1980s, the Public Records Office (PRO), London, released numerous "top secret" papers on Mau

Mau (CO822 East Africa Original Correspondence). The KNA has these documents available on microfiche. All of these are, indeed, official primary discourse on Mau Mau. They are raw, immediate, and rather unpretentious. This discourse routinely identified Mau Mau fighters as "gangs" and "terrorists" who were "savage, barbaric, primitive, and atavistic." Most importantly, they tended to view Mau Mau as a "Law and Order" issue and argued that it should be approached as such. Fighting Mau Mau became a career for many officials in the colonial Kenya of the 1950s.

Official primary discourse can be an invaluable documentary source for the type of history considered here; that is, genealogical history. This depends on a completely different approach to reading archival materials. Foucault (1984, 101) argues that instead of interpreting archival materials as such, a researcher must pose specific questions to archival materials and let them speak to the researcher. Following Foucault, Guha recommended reading archival materials between the lines to construct what he called "subaltern history" (Guha 1988b, 47–48). The following are a few examples.

In 1955, outgoing District Commissioner W. B. Raynor relinquished the post to District Commissioner J. A. Evimber of Meru with counsel that "the population has lost faith in the militant side of Mau Mau, although the political aspects of Mau Mau will obviously need close watching for many years, as the general aims of the society must appeal to all African populations, including the loyalist" (KNA/MAA-2/5/184). This extraordinary passage argues that even overcoming Mau Mau militarily by the colonialist state would not be enough because Mau Mau had political aspects that could affect all Kenyans, irrespective of ethnic affiliation. Does this indicate that Mau Mau fought a political campaign that enjoyed wide support? Official discourse took great pains to describe Mau Mau as exclusively a Kikuyu phenomenon, and various historical and sociological works (which can be called "origin-oriented") tend to reinforce that idea. At the same time, the reports described Meru people's participation in Mau Mau by using these paternalistic words: "they are a polite and friendly tribe being corrupted and indoctrinated by wicked and murderous Kikuyu" (KNA/MAA-2/5/184).

In his report on June 12, 1953 (KNA/MAA-2/5/183), Acting Native Commissioner L. F. G. Pritchard argued that the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru were participating in Mau Mau terrorist activities in large numbers, and that in order to combat these activities, the following measures should be urgently taken:

> No adult Kikuyu, Embu and Meru shall travel by train, motor vehicle or bicycle or other means of transport or conveyance from any place in the Central

> Province to any other place in such province except within the boundaries of a municipality or township or on such dates and between such hours as may be determined by an administrative officer. OR
>
> If employed upon any farm or in a forest area or if dependent on any person so employed, leave such farm or forest area unless he is in possession of a permit issued to him by an administrative officer or police officer. (KNA/MAA-2/5/183)

F. H. Windley, Provincial Commissioner, Nyeri, Central Province, in a report about district-wide support from the masses, said that the following measures must be taken:

> a) No motor bus or motor passenger vehicle shall carry an African passenger in the Central Province without a written permit from an Administrative or Police Officer.
> b) No African driven goods vehicle shall operate in the Kiambu, Meru, Embu, Fort Hall or Nyeri districts of the Central Province without a written permit from a Police or Administrative Officer. (KNA/MAA-2/5/183)

If this primary discourse on Mau Mau is read between the lines and against the grain, it reveals three things. First, although Mau Mau and Kikuyu areas were adversely and violently affected by colonial rule, Mau Mau had indeed enjoyed widespread support. Second, colonial authority was much more concerned about the political implications of Mau Mau than with defeating it militarily. Third, Mau Mau had enjoyed widespread logistical support from a wide range of population groups, and the colonialists made numerous major efforts to isolate the fighters.

Secondary Discourse

An offshoot of primary discourse, what Guha (1988a, 50) calls "secondary discourse," came from the "creators" of primary discourse, "historians" of a sort. These were groups of "historians" with or without formal training in historical craft, but their legitimacy as narrators essentially derives from the makers, or creators, of primary discourse. They were, in a way, the "witnesses to history." However, the history of Mau Mau described in secondary discourse supports the view of complementarity between colonialism and historiography. Indeed, in colonial and postcolonial societies, the history that is institutionalized in academic institutions is written very much from a colonial perspective and endowed "with dual character linked at the same time to a system of power and the particular members of its representation"

(Guha 1988a, 59). Here narrative knowledge becomes the source of deployment of power—that is, colonial power (Guha 1988, 59).

Thus the highly developed tradition of colonial discourse in Kenya and other parts of Africa was slowly replaced by a Western version of historiography that was initially propagated by the colonial administration. This group of historians included farmers, colonial administrators, military, and police and security personnel, who either shaped policies or who physically participated in military combat against the Mau Mau.

It should be kept in mind that secondary discourse has a different manifestation than primary discourse because primary discourse is the maker of secondary discourse, so to speak: historical narrators themselves create discourse. Sir Michael Blundell is a case in point. The Kenya National Archives hold the papers of Michael Blundell, which could be a vital source for primary discourse on Mau Mau. In 1964, Blundell wrote his memoirs, *So Rough a Wind: The Kenya Memoirs of Sir Michael Blundell*. Here the author draws heavily on primary discourse, such as letters, reports, position papers, and Hand Over Reports, as well as his own observations, although he never refers to them in his book. Peter Hewitt, on the other hand, was a police officer in pursuit of the Mau Mau fighters, and his narrative shows an intimate knowledge about how the counterinsurgency policy was formulated and operationalized. Blundell and Hewitt are not only the administrators or counter-Mau Mau security officials turned historians.

These historical narratives can be categorized into two types. The first are those specifically based on the experiences of participants in counter-Mau Mau activities. Besides Blundell and Hewitt, others included Ian Henderson (1958), whose troops apparently captured Kimathi, and William Baldwin, who wrote *Mau Mau Manhunt* (1957). The subtitle of Baldwin's book is equally interesting: *The Adventures of the Only American Who Has Fought the Terrorists in Kenya*.

Secondary discourse also comes from the administrators, colonial officials, and white men who were peripherally affiliated with the colonial state. This type of work has the aura of academic rigor and objectivity, and it tends to appeal to a wider audience. Most importantly, this version supports the idea that the Kikuyu people might have legitimate reasons for revolt. Two British inquiries shortly after the emergency—one by a parliamentary delegation and the other by a Royal commission—argued that the Kikuyu community did, in fact, have legitimate grievances such as racial partitioning of land, economic subservience to white planters, clashes with the missions, unemployment, and lack of health care and education. The solution was, therefore, to remove such conditions and support, for Mau Mau would then dwindle. These ideas were used by "patriotic workers." A

former British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations also wrote *The Answer to Mau Mau Causes of African Unrest Analysed: The Need for More Education and Better Living Conditions* (Gordon-Walker 1955).

Does this type of history making—that is, secondary discourse—achieve anything but opposition to Mau Mau? The answer is an unequivocal no. Consider *The Struggle for Kenya* by D. H. Radcliff (1954). To Radcliff, Mau Mau was "nationalistic and utterly African—an incredible blend of political idealism, pagan savagery, and witchcraft. It is a paradox that the societies of Mau Mau have their origin in the verge toward enlightment which is now surging through the vast African continent—in its fusion of nationalism and primitive supersition, Mau Mau has made its own unique contribution to the psychodynamics of revolution" (Radcliff 1954, 97). Radcliff rejected the idea of the breakdown of tribal sanctions due to the impact of Western civilization, condemning it as "sociological generalization"; he said that such breakdowns are the rule in most parts of Africa without producing insurrections. He called Mau Mau "a primitive and savage manifestation of [a] given doctrine as it was fought with a barbaric terror in the name of liberty and justice" (Radcliff 1954, 96). To him, Mau Mau "has been a ball between the forces of enlightened, civilized power and those of a primitive, superstitious people, of law against lawlessness, of orderly progress against frenzied nationalism" (Radcliff 1954, 96). Other studies of this genre of Mau Mau history making can be cited, including Louis Leakey's *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (1952) and *Defeating Mau Mau* (1954), F. D. Corfield's *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau* (1960) and J. C. Carothers' *The Psychology of Mau Mau* (1954).[1]

Guha, while analyzing peasant insurgency in colonial India, asked: "How is it that even the more liberal type of secondary discourse is unable thus to extricate itself from the code of counter-insurgency?" (Guha 1988a, 70). In the Kenyan context and in reference to Mau Mau, the answer for this is easy enough. These historians have access to all the necessary materials to create the flavor of neutrality. But in the final analysis, with all this sympathy for Mau Mau and the Kikuyu community, these works sided with the colonial state and its need for maintaining law and order by crushing Mau Mau with all its might. In this way, history, according to Guha, became complementary to colonial public policy (Guha 1988a, 70). This affinity between history and policy, or "policy historiography" (Guha 1988a, 70), is identify Guha as colonialist knowledge and by Said as *Orientalism* (Said 1979). That is, in the post-Enlightenment era, the European modernist interpretative strategy has been used to define and interpret newly discovered lands. In that way, Said informs us, they

managed to "reproduce" the non-Western societies sociologically, culturally, politically, economically and ideologically. Furthermore, this reproduction is not the representation of the non-West at all; rather, it is a juxtaposition and imposition of the West onto non-Western societies (Said 1979). Both Guha and Said were greatly influenced by Foucault's writings, and policy historiography is, indeed, the exercise of power and domination by the West over the colonized East.

Tertiary Discourse

Most of the tertiary discourse on Mau Mau comes from academicians or former officials who, at the time of writing, were no longer serving in official capacities. These writings present a complete chronological depiction of the Mau Mau revolt. Nevertheless, an essential question remains: Does this type of history manage to extricate itself from the follies of primary and secondary discourse?

The most important characteristic of this type of historical scholarship is that it frees historians from the partisanship of both primary and secondary discourse; tertiary discourse tended to side with the Mau Mau and hoped they would win. It was produced predominantly by academicians in both Kenya and the West. This is a popular genre, as almost every new book emerges written from tertiary discourse. It also serves a particular purpose as it chronicles the history of Mau Mau. However, most of these works tend to be what could be identified as "originistic" in nature, meaning they attempt to locate the origin, causes, or roots of the insurgency. One example is Tabitha Kanogo's book *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* (1987). Kanogo writes, "This is a study of the genesis, evolution, adaptation, and subordination of the Kikuyu squatter laborers, who comprised the majority of resident laborers on settler plantations and estates in the Rift Valley Province of the White Highlands" (Kanogo 1987, 1). In other words, Kanogo contends that formation of a squatter population through land alienation is directly responsible for the outbreak of the Mau Mau revolt.

A historian's task is to uncover discursive and non-discursive practices in their plurality and contingency in order to reveal the fields that render intelligible an otherwise heterogeneous collection. There is no foundational principle, no originating or final cause. Words like *origin, roots*, and *causes* should be abandoned in favor of interpretative criteria. This type of work on Mau Mau tends to establish the "laws" of causality as if history always follows a linear process of progression. This is, of course, the discourse of modernity, and the idea of "modern history" is essentially a colonial import.

The tertiary discourse on Mau Mau can be divided into two categories, liberal paternalistic and structural/Marxist/radical (SMR). Perhaps the best example of liberal paternalistic discourse on Mau Mau comes from Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham (1966). In *The Myth of Mau Mau*, they blamed the British colonial authorities for the Mau Mau revolt. In their introduction, they write,

> This book presents an alternative interpretation of "Mau Mau" in which we will be concerned with modern origins of African politics and their pattern of development, with particular emphasis on the politicization and mobilization of the Kikuyu people. In our view, the outbreak of open violence in Kenya in 1952 occurred primarily because of a European failure rather than an African one; it was not so much a failure of the Kikuyu people to adopt to a modern institutional setting as it was a failure of the European policymakers to recognize the need for a significant social and political reform. (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, xvii)

Here Mau Mau was identified as modern and nationalistic at the same time. This was an outburst of anticolonial struggle against the discrimination and inequalities inherent in colonial rule. The laws of historical causality are quite apparent.

Bruce Berman (1999), on the other hand, sees a paradox in Mau Mau, as the revolt was neither a nationalist agitation in the conventional sense of the term nor was it class-based revolution. Kenya-born historian, Wunyabari O. Maloba, in *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (1993), views Mau Mau as a nationalist revolt. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, whose numerous works fall within the SMR categories of Mau Mau tertiary discourse, cannot decide whether it was a nationalist movement or not (Berman 1999, 199). This association between Mau Mau and nationalism did not go well with two conservative Kenyan historians, William Ochieng (1976) and Benjamin F. Kipkorir (1977). Ochieng rejects the idea of Mau Mau nationalism, since it was not led by university and high school graduates and lacked ideology and vision:

> Mau Mau was definitely not a nationalist movement [. . .] [it] had no nationalist program [. . .] [further] the Central Committee that managed the Mau Mau movement contained no representatives from Murang'a, Nyeri, Embu, Meru, and Machakos. [. . .] It is therefore important to correctly evaluate Mau Mau as a primarily Kikuyu affair. (1976, 140–153)

Similarly, Kipkorir asserts that Mau Mau remained an exclusively Kikuyu matter as it failed to distribute its political program nationwide and that

merely standing up against Europeans could not be regarded as nationalism (Kipkorir 1977, 313–28).

The Rosberg, Nottingham, Maloba position on Mau Mau as a nationalist struggle and the dissenting views of Ochieng and Kipkorir are, indeed, similar. They complicate the discourse of nationalism in the colonial context. Let us briefly reflect on tertiary discourse, that in many ways suffers from the secondary discourse affliction of colonialist and orientalist knowledge. Here it remains within the nexus of power and knowledge vis à vis the Mau Mau insurgency; that is, the colonialists seek knowledge about Mau Mau in order to defeat it.

Recent discussions on nationalism perhaps started with Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). Anderson defines nationalism as "imagined communities" that sprang up during the demise of feudalism and the rise of the bourgeois social order. During that period newspapers, novels, and other new forms of communication created a means of shared culture, interests, and vocabulary. Furthermore, these communications were made possible by what he calls "print capitalism," which mechanically reproduced print languages. By enacting some vernaculars and modifying others, print capitalism thereby created certain common, standardized languages that could be used to reach diverse groups of people.

Anderson's is no doubt an interesting addition to an ongoing debate on nationalism; it is similar to the standard understanding of nationalism in the colonized world. It is as if Anderson is suggesting that Indians or Kenyans learned these ideals of freedom, justice, and self-determination from English books and literature. Partha Chatterjee, a prominent member of the subaltern studies group, repudiated Anderson's assertion of nationalism by arguing that the anticolonial and European relationship is structured by complicated borrowings and differences:

> If nationalists in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. (Chatterjee 1993b, 67)

Chatterjee here criticizes Anderson for treating nationalism and its implications on postcolonial nationalism as "part of the universal history of the

modern world." Chatterjee then distinguishes between nationalism as a political movement and nationalism as a cultural construct. Thus anticolonial nationalism is not merely a copy or imitation of metropolitan nationalism; it also incorporates notions of liberty, freedom, human dignity, and justice that differ from the West's. All over Asia and Africa, the claims of anticolonial nationalism worked in and around such a formula of a divided world (Chatterjee 1993a, 5). The depiction of Mau Mau as a nationalist revolt failed to acknowledge the complicated relationship between colonized and colonizers within the context of the former's revolt against the latter.

The other category of tertiary discourse is the structural/Marxist/radical (SMR) approach. This type of work offers some of the best description of Mau Mau. It breaks from the earlier primary and secondary discourse, attempting, as Guha puts it in a colonial Indian context, to break away from the code of counterinsurgency (Guha 1988b, 72). These works are highly sympathetic to the Mau Mau rebels, and some works that could be dubbed as Marxist pointedly state that the rebels should have won. However, SMR's emphasis on ideology failed to either break or abandon the European historical strategy of searching for the origin or roots of the conflict because it always failed to put a voice to the subaltern, the maker and subject of history. Consider David Throup's remarkable and highly original *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau* (1988). Throup identifies the main objective of his work in the following manner:

> Rather than attempting to identify a metropolitan grand strategy for the end of empire in Africa, in this book, I try to argue that it would be more rewarding to abandon such Euro-centric blinkers and to place the policy makers of the Colonial Office within the context of Africa, the continent with which they have to deal despite their limited knowledge of the complex social, economic and political context which confronted administrators in the front line. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the process of policy formation through the eyes of the local policy makers—the colonial governors, the Secretariats, the field administrators, and the various technical departments which dealt directly with Africans. (Throup 1987, 1)

Once again we see an attempt at historical causality informed by his quest for "social and economic origins of Mau Mau." The idea of "official mind," as Throup puts it, was framed in terms of "the character and policies of Sir Philip Mitchell," the subject of chapter 3 of Throup's book. Once again colonial administrators remain at the center of the description of the insurgency, while the actual Mau Mau insurgents remain at the periphery. This historical bifurcation brings Throup's book into the unfortunate

company of the school that gives a psychological interpretation of Mau Mau. The propagator of this school, J. C. Carothers (1954) in *The Psychology of Mau Mau*, argued that the reason for Mau Mau was the Kikuyu tribe's inability to cope with the rapid modernization brought by colonialism to their community.[2] While Carothers talks about the psychology of Kikuyu, Throup (1987) deals with the mentality of the colonizers. This follows the scheme of what Guha called the "context-event-perspective, that is, the linear process of the historical continuum"(Guha 1988a,74). The *context* of Mau Mau, according to Throup (1987), is the official mind of the colonial adminstration; the *event* is the Mau Mau revolt itself, and the *perspective* is described in his chapter 10, "The Drift to Mau Mau." The last phase of this linear historical continuum (perspective) is also analyzed in the last section of the conclusion, "Some Thoughts on Mau Mau."

The Marxist analysis of Mau Mau ensues from Maina wa Kinyatti (2000) and George Padmore (Padmore 1953, 662). In a slim book, *Mau Mau: A Revolution Betrayed*, wa Kinyatti includes various essays on Mau Mau. Clearly his aim is to put Mau Mau into the contemporary Kenyan political context. In the first essay, a theoretical intervention titled "Historical Materialism and the Writing of our History," he outlines the linear and what he calls "the objective laws in history." His aim is to position the Mau Mau revolt as the final phase of the historical progression of the establishment of a classless society in Kenya. George Padmore, the Pan-Africanist and close friend of many African nationalist leaders like Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, made a claim somewhat like that of the originist interpretation of Mau Mau, namely, that European policies caused the outbreak of Mau Mau (Padmore 1953, 362). Perhaps the best-known Marxist analysis of Mau Mau comes Beraman (1990) and Berman and Losdale (1992). These authors, both jointly and separately, have argued that British coloinial policies fundamentally altered the Kenyan social structures of such groups as the aspirant bourgeoisie, the middle peasantry, and the urban poor: "the conflict between these three groups and competition for leadership between them are essential to understand 'Mau Mau'" (Lonsdale, qtd. by Ranger 1968, 100–101). Here Mau Mau is reduced to a conflict within the Kikuyu community, a position that the colonial authorities sucessfully managed to portray. Furthermore, Ranger (1985, 183) reminds us that similar class formation could be located in settler countries like Zimbabwe, but Mau Mau-style insurgency never emerged that country. This Marxist interpretation turned the spotlight on the British colonial policies, but the criticism was framed by a "historical scheme that universalized Europe's historical experience" (Prakash 1994, 180). Thus it will be safe to argue that this type of interpretation, like the

nationalist interpretation of Mau Mau, privileges and universalizes the European experience. An authentic history of Mau Mau should involve what Chakrabarty calls the "provincializing of Europe"; that is, listening to and narrating the subjects and makers of Mau Mau as a historical event in itself (Chakrabarty 1997, 270).

However, after a relative lull in Mau Mau scholarship in the 1990s, the twenty-first century brought an emergence of and a major refocus on Mau Mau studies. Three major studies are worth mentioning in this rennassiance of sort: Elkins 2005, Anderson 2005, and Atieno-Odhiambo and Lonsdale 2003. Elkins's and Anderson's texts are an elaboration, though not new, of the British response to the revolt. Specifically, Anderson's text deals with the British colonial judicial system in Kenya, which hanged over 1,000 Kenyans between 1952 and 1959. Like many other texts on Mau Mau before, both texts reduce the Mau Mau insurgency to a mere civil war among the Kikuyu. This leads Anderson to conclude that all sides suffered badly in the conflict; he sympathizes also with the Home Guard, the group created from the Kikuyu community by colonial forces, who fought the Mau Mau. To Anderson, the Home Guards were merely victims. Elkins, on the other hand, focuses on the treatment of the Mau Mau insurgency in the hands of British officials. Calling the prison camps "Britain's Gulag," Elkins argues that the British alone should be blamed for the outbreak of conflict, as they refused to deal with moderate Kikuyu leaders like Jomo Kenyatta, hence indirectly encouraging radicals like Dedan Kimathi, the supreme commander of the revolt, to gain prominence. Both Elkins and Anderson contributed to Odhiambo and Lonsdale's (2003) text, along with veterans of Mau Mau scholarship like the editors themselves and Ogot, Jackson Jr., Clough, and others. Like many other edited texts, Odhiambo and Lonsdale's book lacks a clear focus. It is, perhaps, an attempt to introduce a new generation of Mau Mau scholars along with veterans. Blaming the British for the Mau Mau or treatment of Mau Mau combatants is not new; it has been done before, and in that way new scholarship does not contribute anything novel to the subject. Significantly, for our purposes, in Odhiambo and Lonsdale's book, the people who struggled and sacrificed remain mute and hidden.[3]

Mau Mau and Subaltern History

It has been argued that the existing discourse of Mau Mau has silenced and marginalized the voices of Mau Mau. The question now is how to recover the history of Mau Mau in the voice of the history makers themselves. The ideas here are basically developed from selective readings from Gramsci,

Foucault and the Subaltern School of History. Let me briefly review the issue of subaltern and subaltern history from Chapter 1.

The use of the term *subaltern* essentially derives from the texts of Antonio Gramsci. In his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), Gramsci addresses the economic interpretation of the term *class* in Second International Marxism. To Gramsci, the subaltern meaning of *inferior scale* refers to those groups in society who are subjected to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers, and members of other social categories denied access to "hegemonic power"(51). Since the history of the ruling classes is realized in state history, which is the history of states and dominant groups, Gramsci was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes (Gramsci 1971, 52). Furthermore, he was ultimately concerned with the process of the politics of the subaltern. He notes that "The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and can not unite until they are able to become a 'state.' History, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society and thereby with the history of states and groups of states" (Gramsci 1971, 52). This political concern and the historiography of the subaltern classes figures prominently in the subaltern school of South Asian history, especially in founding statements by Ranjit Guha, whose use of the terms is informed by the imperialist project in colonial India. Guha's interpretation of the concept in the context of colonial India is described by Spivak (1988b) in her description of the *elite* as the dominant foreign groups, dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level, and the dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels. Subalterns, then, are described differently: "The social groups and elements included in this category *represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the 'elite'*" (Spivak 1988b, 56; emphasis original).

Sumit Sarkar, in his analysis of militancy in Bengal from 1905 to 1922, specifies three categories of the subaltern (Sarkar 1988, 273). They are (1) tribal and low-caste agricultural laborers and sharecroppers, (2) landholding peasants, generally of intermediate caste status in Bengal, together with their Muslim counterparts, and (3) laborers in plantations, mines, and industries, along with urban casual laborers. Furthermore, Sarkar argues that the specificity of the subaltern approach lies in the "autonomous political domain with specific features and collective mentalities" (Sarkar 1988: 273). This aspect of the political specificity of the subaltern approach touches, and in a real sense signifies, a crisis of the historical narrative that Spivak identified as the "crisis of hegemonic historiography" (Sarkar 1988, 273). The connection between this crisis and subalternity is the core aspect of writing subaltern history.

So what is this crisis all about? The idea of crisis lies in both hegemonic historiography and the subversive politics of subaltern categories. Furthermore, subversive politics is governed by the autonomy of the subaltern consciousness. Ranjit Guha argues that the subaltern approach seeks to describe "the contribution made by *the people on their own*, that is, *independently of the elite*—hegemonic groups whether foreign or indigenous who monopolized the hitherto historiography of the Indian nationalist movement" (Guha 1988b, 39; emphasis original).

Thus, the core of subaltern historiography is the autonomy of subaltern consciousness—*autonomy* meaning that subalterns acted in history *on their own*, independently of the elite—and these policies constituted an autonomous domain that neither originated from elite policies nor depended on them. This process could indeed constitute a "subject construction." This consciousness has nothing to do with psychology but rather is a practice of anticolonial insurgencies and the subject's view of self. In colonial Kenya subaltern categories include: (1) squatters, peasants whose land were alienated; (2) uprooted peasants who were evicted from white farms; (3) wage earners in farms, mines, households, and ports; and (4) house maids.

The interpretation of the subaltern practices, that is, insurgent activities, should reveal the relationship between subaltern and elite, as well as between the subalterns themselves. Only that way does a subaltern historiography reveal the autonomous consciousness as an act of political practice. This section, mainly concerned with describing Mau Mau as a subaltern historical event, is guided by the assumption that the insurgents were acting autonomously. Through this insurgency, the subaltern event made its own historical and subject categories. For the purpose of constructing Mau Mau as autonomous action, we depend mainly on two sources, primary and autobiographical. These materials, which Guha calls primary discourse, include official records, minutes, official correspondence, and on-the-spot accounts (Guha 1988a, 47). Chapter 8 will critically analyze autobiographical texts by Waruhiu Itote (alias General China), Henry K. Wachanga, and Karari Njama. Reading these narratives and continuously cross-checking and cross-reading, one can arrive at Mau Mau autonomous subaltern constructions. The Kenya National Archive has a large collection of primary discourse materials on Mau Mau. The Public Records Office (PRO) in London recently began to release "top secret" papers on Mau Mau (Classes 00 822 East Africa, original correspondence). As argued earlier, these primary sources do not have any pretension of neutrality or objectivity. They are raw and primordially racist, immediate, and direct. How can anyone construct Mau Mau subaltern subjectivity based on primary discourse? It depends on how one reads the archival materials.

Foucault's approach is to describe history as genealogy, arguing that instead of reading archival materials as such, the researcher should pose clearly conceived questions on problematics to archival material and let the material "speak back" to the researcher (Foucault 1984, 90). Archival material needs to be studied differently, reading between the lines or reading against the grain, as, for instance, when reading archival materials of the anticolonial insurgents produced by the counter-insurgency members of the ruling classes and their armies and police forces (Guha 1999, 7). This approach emphasizes the need for the historian to develop a conscious strategy for reading archival materials, not the way a nationalist or Marxist historian would, but getting at the ways in which colonialist knowledge and modes of thought represented the figure of the subaltern, as well as subaltern conscience and policies, from the textual properties of these documents themselves. Failure to do such reading, Guha argues, causes the historian to arrive at the same conclusions as the elite historians because, not surprisingly, the elite historians extensively use the same archival materials (Guha 1999, 10). Now let us turn to archieval materials on Mua Mau kept at the Kenya National Archive.

During the Mau Mau revolt, colonial authorities debated the issue of controlling all Kikuyu within the reserves and restricting their movements. F. H. Windley (KNA, F. H. Windley, Hand Over Report, PC /10/55), Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, Nyeri, wrote on October 22, 1952, that no motor cars or motor passenger vehicles would be permitted to carry African passengers in Central Province without a written permit from an administration or police officer or administrative or political officer and that no African-driven vehicle transporting goods would be permitted to operate in Kiambu, Meru, Embu, Fort Hall or Nyeri districts without a written permit from a police or administrative officer. These official orders show the various repressive actions that the colonial state was taking against the Mau Mau, but a subaltern reading of the documents unequivocally shows widespread support for Mau Mau in late 1952. At the same time, it shows that Mau Mau became highly mobile in procuring logistical support as well as recruiting fighters. Again, during the entire period of Mau Mau, the colonialists framed Mau Mau as essentially a Kikuyu phenomenon or a civil war between traditional Kikuyu and modern Kikuyu. However, in the document "Infiltration of the Maasai by Mau Mau," there are the following entries: "The government and the Maasai had to make sure evil men [meaning Mau Mau] had no opportunity to rise and thus spread influence in this country [Maasai country] [. . .] Mau Mau was poison, make sure this poison does not spread here" (KNA/CE/NGO/1/58).

To colonialists, perhaps no other aspect of Mau Mau was so repugnant as oath taking. Both primary and secondary discourse see oath taking as repulsively anti-Christian, among other things, and rationalizes its violent suppression. An official text, "Mau Mau Oaths Ceremonies" (KNA/MAC/RED/215/1), used terms like *pagan, superstitious, atavistic, bloodthirsty, primitive beasts*. At the same time, however, some documents, if read alternatively, reveal a very different story. Maloba (1993, 102) argues that Mau Mau oath taking could be divided into three distinct but interrelated stages. As it evolved, confrontation with the colonialists intensified. First, the unity oath took place among the Kikuyu of Central Province. The terms of this original oath were:

> If I ever reveal the secrets of this organisation, may this oath kill me.
> If I ever sell or dispose of any [Kikuyu land] to a foreigner, may this oath kill me.
> If I ever fail to follow our Head leader, Kenyatta, may this oath kill me.
> If I ever inform against any member of this organisation or against any member who steals from a European, may this oath kill me.
> If I ever fail to pay the fees of this organisation may this oath kill me.
>
> (Maloba 1993, 102)

Once Mau Mau gained momentum, fighters realized that the original oath needed to be amended. New elements included, "If I receive any money from a European as a bribe for information, may this oath kill me. If I refuse to help in driving the Europeans from this country, may this oath kill me." The second oath, known as the "Batini" oath, started in the middle of 1952. According to Maloba, "The pace of administration of this oath to many young would-be warriors increased tremendously after the declaration of the emergency in October, 1952."[4, 5] The Batini oath includes, among other things, a clause about stealing firearms. The third oath, known as the advanced oath, was introduced after 1953 and was generally given to the forest fighters. This oath included: "Not to fall out with any Mau Mau, steal arms or anything else, steal money from Europeans, refuse orders from Europeans."

If read carefully, these official documents will reveal the fact that oathing is deeply rooted in Kikuyu culture and, most important of all, it was done for the purpose of achieving unity and solidarity for a specific political cause. According to Rosberg and Notthingham (1966, 244), the function of oaths was essentially to form social solidarity and raise the level of political commitment. They suggest, however, that oathing is not really unique to Mau Mau. They give Western examples of Bibles and national flags, which frequently sanctified oaths of allegiance or fidelity to a government or its laws. Such oaths were meant to bind the individual, through sacred

symbols and ritual, to a larger social entity. The loyalty oath in the United States was designed to distinguish trustworthy from untrustworthy employees; those who took the oaths stated explicitly and publicly their loyalty to the government. Thus, although the primary as well as secondary discourse on Mau Mau provide an impression of "atavistic voodooism" that is at first primitive and savage in nature, a subaltern reading of the same discourse will reveal the fact that oath taking was essentially part of the military strategy that emphasized group solidarity and social bond. This is no different from other cultures and societies, including Western societies.

Guha (1999, 28), in order to construct the autonomy of peasant subalterns in colonial India, argued that one of the most important modalities of peasant subalternity is negation. As argued before, the peasant subaltern achieved subaltern status by virtue of caste, class, and official position imposed on peasants by those who wielded power in Indian colonial society. The subaltern peasants were always aware of their subaltern position. From this position of awareness, they engaged in serious negations, that is, insurgent acts, to negate their own subalternity. During the Mau Mau, acts of negation involved carefully selected targets and execution of these acts with military precision. Targets included the colonial military positions, colonial military installations, colonial officials, white-owned farms and properties, tribal chiefs accused of collaborating with enemies, and loyal Kikuyu home guards. Through these acts of negation, Mau Mau fighters, as a subaltern category in colonial Kenya, developed the idea of domination and resistance as "basic elements of economic exploitation of the political superstructure which legitimated them" (Guha 1999, 28).

Inversion, as a modality of the insurgents' negation, takes the form of turning things upside down or appropriating or destroying the signs of authority of the hegemonic classes and the state. Mau Mau insurgency always involved the deployment by the insurgents of codes of dress, speech, behavior, and even organizational structure that tended to invert the codes through which their white colonizers dominated them in everyday life. In Mau Mau context, inversion of the symbols of authority was possibly their most important act of rebellion. For instance, Dedan Kimathi, the supreme commander of Mau Mau and Field Marshal of the Mau Mau army, declared he was the "king of the British Empire as well as President of Colonial Parliament." Other commanders, known as General China, General Mathenge, General Kassem, and so on, elaborated functions to endorse these titles, and the honors were strictly followed. Thus the insurgency attempted to subvert the symbols of their domination by appropriating them.

Guha (1999, 28) notes another aspect of subaltern rebellion in colonial India—*territoriality*, meaning the category of space and its correlate, a

sense of time. Insurgent consciousness is made up of a sense of belonging to both a common lineage and a common habitat, an intersection of two primordial referents. This territoriality has two aspects: (1) relations of consanguinity through sectarian, ethnic, or blood affinities, and (2) relations of contiguity or "local bond": the rebellious could lead followers of both one religious, ethnic, or tribal group and another in close proximity. So, "blood tie and local bond" are the core of the subaltern insurgency. The colonial policy in Kenya, especially in the Kikuyu land, had confirmed the struggle for achievement and status within very narrow economic and geographical limits. This struggle eliminated traditional ties and social bonds. Rosberg and Nottingham (1966, 244) argue that the dramatic increase of land litigation in the Kikuyu land was a sign of widespread disintegration and disunity. The Mau Mau oath sought to reinforce social bonds and unity. It is true that Mau Mau was overwhelmingly a Kikuyu phenomenon, but great efforts were made by the Mau Mau leadership to bring other ethnic groups into its fold, and a local bond was fostered among Kikuyu, Embu, Meru, and Kamba ethnic groups. *Kenya Calling*, a weekly digest of news issued by the Information Department of the colonial government, reported in various issues that the Kikuyu were making inroads among the Maasai. In issue number 58, 1954, it reported that Mundet ole Ngapiu, a Maasai, was captured by the security forces. He was replaced by his brother-in-law, Kerito ole Kisio, when he was killed (KNA/Kenya Calling/MUR/13/12). The political alliance between Maasai and Kikuyu could be an example of the territoriality that Guha discussed in the colonial Indian context.

Donald Barnett (1966, 61) argued that the oaths of unity that all Mau Mau fighters swore also fostered a local bond by forming administrative units known as *sublocations*. Residents of these units were highly interactive and obliged to respond to neighbors' alarms and help each other in various domestic and farming activities. In that way, Mau Mau managed to create a formidable support base. As Mau Mau expanded activities, friends, neighbors, and relatives were recruited through oath into various sublocations.

Perhaps the greatest source for subaltern historiography of Mau Mau comes from the activists themselves. Since independence quite a few Mau Mau fighters have themselves written accounts of their struggle, and many are waiting to be published. We will critically analyze four texts by three combatants as a source for subaltern interptretation of Mau Mau. In this chapter, we will confine ourselves to a few comments on women's role in Mau Mau.

Women's testimonies and autobiographies reveal extensive participation in the Mau Mau insurgency. Interestingly, there are certain silences in the narratives of women's roles in Mau Mau. There are gaps and contradictions

not only in official discourse and insurgent accounts but also in male insurgents' accounts as well. Women in colonial Kenya have had a long tradition of resistance against colonialism, which, unfortunately, quite often remains unaccounted and hidden. Before the Mau Mau revolt, an incident of women's revolt against the colonialists took place on March 14, 1922. On that day a nationalist leader, Harry Thuku, was arrested and put in a Nairobi jail. Over 8,000 people, including 150 women, gathered outside the jail demanding Thuku's release. Earlier negotiations between the colonial authorities and some male Kenyan leaders to free him did not produce much result. Angered by the male leadership's compromising attitude, Mary Nyanjiru used a traditional insult, *guturama* (exposing female genitalia), to the offending party (Roseberg and Notthingham 1966, 51–52). This symbolizes a challenge to masculinity, suggesting men's ineptitude to handle the situation. Nyanjiru shouted, "You take my dress and give me your trousers. You men are cowards. What are you waiting for? Our leader is in there; let us get him" (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 51). In her speech, Nyanjiru expresses resistance to both colonial authorities and masculinity. Kanogo argued that in that moment, leadership was passed to a woman (Kanogo 1987, 82). The crowd surged ahead and police opened fire. A group of whites were sitting on the balcony of the nearby Norfolk Hotel drinking; they joined police in firing on the crowd and killed some of the protesters. In that incident, 21 people, including four women, were killed. Nyanjiru was one of them.

Women's role in Mau Mau has recently drawn scholarly attention. Margaret Gachihi (1986) argued that women in Mau Mau performed tasks vital for the insurgency. These included ferrying food for the combatants in the forest as well as signals, transport, food preparation, hospital responsibilities and ordinance. A few women also participated in actual combat like Field Marshal Muthoni Karima.

Two works portray Mau Mau women vividly: *The Last Mau Mau Field Marshalls: (Kenya's Freedom War 1952–1963 and Beyond): Their Own Story* (Njagi 1993). This book analyses the contribition by Field Marshals Muthoni Kirima and Musa Mwariama in the revolt and *Passbook Number F.47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya* by Muthoni Likimani (1984). Kirima's reason for joining the Mau Mau was straightforward: "I grew up on a colonialist's farm. That is one of the reasons why I developed the need to fight for independence. My parents used to tell us that these people were foreigners and that was why they made us work like slaves" (Kirima 1991, 103). Kirima took an oath in the African reserve and then introduced her husband to it. He joined the forest fighters. When the loyal home guards found out about it, she faced torture at their hands. She

eventually managed to flee her village and join Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi. Kirima narrates her first battle experience in the following way:

> My first assignment in Kimathi's army was in the group that went looking for food. We would raid European settlers' farms for cattle, goats, and sheep. We once launched a raid from Rugoti bush (camp) into Karimino farm, which was guarded by the colonial soldiers. We had a heavy battle in which we killed one white soldier and two African Scouts. (Karima 1991, 103)

However, as Mugo argues (2004, 7), merely writing a book on women's participation in Mau Mau may not constitute a (gendered) subaltern subject construction. Furthermore, Mugo criticizes Njagi (1991) for explaining Kirima's contribution along with with a male leader, Field Marshal Musa Mwariama, hence devaluing Kirima's contribution.

> In Njagi's work, Muthoni wa Kirima is portrayed in a very shrunken and sketchy fashion. The second-class citizenry of the latter's existence in Njagi's world, placed as she is alongside the towering presence of her compatriot, Field Marshall Musa Mwariama, is most revealing. It is a compelling illustration of the patronizing manner in which women and their narratives are handled in male texts even when goodwill is the guiding motive. (Mugo 2004, 7)

Likimani's book is a different contribution to women's role in Mau Mau (Likimani 1984). Her book is wider in scope, attempting to narrate how women's lives were affected by the insurgency. Likimani's text contains nine different but highly integrated chapters. The strategy through which narrative moves from one chapter to another is highly innovative. They contain fictionalized accounts of various aspects of women's lives during Mau Mau. Although fictionalized, such stories are informed and framed by actual accounts and actual people. For example, the first account, entitled "Passbook Number F.479," used the author's own passbook number. In the story, Likimani describes a young woman, Wacu, and her trials and tribulations about a passbook. Like many women, mostly single and poor, she became a "passbook wife," living with a man who was not her husband just to acquire a passbook identity so the authorities would not harass her. Every chapter has an introduction to provide a clue to what follows. This narrative strategy that combines fact with fiction is described by Taslima Nasrim of Bangladesh as general subaltern narrative (Alam 1998).[6] Likimani's text on Mau Mau can be analyzed from this perspective, as can Gramsci's episodic narrative description of subaltern history.

Conclusion

In July 1990 Nelson Mandela visited Kenya. In a speech at the Moi International Sports Complex at Kasarani, Nairobi, he declared, "In my 27 years of imprisonment, I always saw the image of fighters such as Kimathi, China, and others as candles in my long and hard war against injustice." He added, "it is an honor for any freedom fighter to pay respect to such heroes" (*The Weekly Review*, July 20, 1900). Then Mandela chided the postcolonial state of Kenya for turning its back on the freedom fighters and wondered openly why Elosi Mukami, the widow of Dedan Kimathi, was not in the audience. It was an embarrassing moment for the KANU establishment, President Moi, and other high-ranking government officials in attendance.

Mau Mau seems to refuse to die. Even on Jamhuri Day, December 12, 2000, two Nairobi daily newspapers, *The Daily Nation*, December 12, 2000, and *The People's Daily*, December 12, 2000, published features about Mau Mau and their contributions to Kenya's independence struggle. Remembering Mau Mau has become a subverting act, and in this act of subversion, writing Mau Mau history by exploring the Mau Mau subaltern "autonomous domain" is even more dangerous. Said and Chakrabarty (Chakrabarty 1997, 130) called this "history as critique" (Said 1988, v–x). To quote Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993):

> History is subversive. And it is because it is actually subversive of the existing tyrannical system that there have been attempts to arrest it. But how can one arrest it? But how can one arrest the wheels of history? So they try to *rewrite* history, make up *official* history [. . .] then maybe *they* and *the people* will not hear the real call of history, will not hear the *real* lesson of history. (96–97; emphasis original)

Meanwhile, interest in Mau Mau by ordinary Kenyans shows no sign of ceasing. A leading Nairobi daily, *The East African Standard*, Jaunuary 20, 2002, began to publish a series of articles on General Mathenge, the "lost" General of Mau Mau. He disappeared during the warring days of the struggle. Now 80 years old, the "lost" General was located in the outskirts of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, according to the *East African Standard*, January 20, 21, 22, 2002). *East African Standard* issues on the "discovery" of the General were well received and all the issues were completely sold out by midmorning of the day of release.[7] Clearly, Mau Mau in popular memory often surfaces with great interest to ordinary Kenyans but with great discomfort and embarrassment to the postcolonial ruling elite. This is subversive indeed.

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Rebel Yell: The Field Marshal's Story

The establishment of colonial hegemony was never complete, nor was it absolute; it remains an ongoing process, precisely because counterhegemonic strivings by various colonial subalterns emerged as soon as colonial hegemony was established. These counterhegemonic activities, in turn, transformed the strategies by which the colonial state deployed its power. The case of Mau Mau illustrates this mutuality between colonial hegemony and subaltern counterhegemony. The Mau Mau insurgency shows the profound unevenness and many contradictions of British colonial hegemony in Kenya. The British colonial state's response to the Mau Mau insurgency was predictable—it mobilized unprecedented military might, and coordinated efforts were made to discredit the insurgency. Insurgency leaders were characterized as "law-breaking criminals and forces of darkness." Its supreme leader, Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, eloquently articulated the Mau Mau discourse during the period of struggle.

In this chapter we will discuss Kimathi's role in articulating the discourse of Mau Mau. The first section deals with the precolonial Kikuyu land and its transformation from the impact of British colonial rule. Though Kimathi was Kikuyu himself, he consistently sought to provide Mau Mau with a broad perspective on the anticolonialist struggle. The last three sections of this chapter consider Kimathi's pronouncements on the struggle, how his fellow commanders viewed him, and the portrayal of Kimathi in Kenyan creative writings.

The Kikuyu Land

During the time when Mau Mau was gaining in intensity, 1950–1952, J. M. Fisher (1952), a colonial administrator turned social anthropologist, submitted a report, *Reports on the Kikuyu*, commissioned by the Colonial

Social Service Research Council. The report was never published in book form, although Kenya National Archives has a typed copy of the report. The way the information for the report was collected and represented clearly shows that the report was intended for "internal consumption" or to be used as a training manual for colonial administrators. We need to keep in mind the time covered by the report (1950–1951) is the period of beginning and intensification of Mau Mau.

The text contains six chapters on what the author called a report; including an "introduction" and a "glossary." The introduction is of particular interest. It had seven subdivisions, namely: (1) "The Environment," (2) "The People," (3) "Social Structure," (4) "Age Structure," (5) "Territorial Groupings," (6) "Division of Labor Between the Sexes," and (7) "Cooperation in Labor." In section 2, the Kikuyu people are described as "temperamental, suspicious, secretive, and difficult to win into confidence, but these are not surprising characteristics when this past history is considered" (Fisher 1952). As for the difference between men and women, Fisher discovered that

> The women are much stronger physically than the men, as evidenced by their greater endurance in work and the heavy loads which they carry on the back, supported by a strap passing over the head. This practice has been the cause of women being described as nothing more than beasts of burden. But if a woman is asked about this she will reply with great scorn, "the men have not the strength of women and they cannot carry such load." In fact they take pride in carrying heavy loads, which may be anything up to 200 pounds or more. (Fisher 1952, 6)

Here Fisher almost sounds like a feminist, as if he is condemning male chauvinism. But careful reading of the passage will reveal that he is mostly concerned with the assessment of who is a better worker! Colonial policy for the so-called White Highlands was to guarantee the continuous supply of farm laborers for the white colonial farmers. In order to guarantee this steady supply of Kikuyu farm workers, the white settlers uprooted Agikuyu (Kikuyu people) from their land and transformed them into squatters on European-owned farms. Fisher, unknowingly perhaps, touched on this core idea of colonialism while describing the difference between men and women.

In section 3 of his report, "Social Structure," Fisher describes different aspects of Kikuyu social groups like "(a) the family, (b) the urban (c) the clans *mihiriga*" because "knowledge of the social structure of any *primitive* people is a prerequisite to an understanding of their total culture" (Fisher 1952, 7; emphasis added). In this section, Fisher painstakingly describes

physical aspects of the Kikuyu homestead like *thingira*, the husband's hut; *nyomba*, the wife's hut, and *ikumbi makumbi*, one or more grain stores. This section includes classification of families, age structure, and territorial grouping. However, the most revealing part of this section is entitled "modern Kikuyu society":

> modern Kikuyu society can be divided into following groupings:
> a) The old type, who still wear some of the traditional clothing and ornaments, and live in Micie conforming to the traditional pattern, although the huts may be constructed from modern materials. They are mostly of the older generations, and some may be found to cling tenaciously to the old customs and institutions of the tribe. They are among some of the most delightful Kikuyus to meet, completely unsophisticated, with a quiet dignity of manner.
> b) The Christians, who form a small percentage of the tribe. They have had to naturally discard many of the old customs which were in conflict with Christian tradition, such as initiation rites at puberty, and the construction of their huts differ in no way from those of the non-Christian Kikuyu.
> c) The "civilized" type who wear clothing of European design and like to live in modern huts. They are described as an in-between type, belonging neither to old Kikuyu nor to the Christian section. They constitute a group without a religion and without the security of established social custom. (Fisher 1952, 26)

Fisher argued that the old Kikuyu tradition was on its way out because of "the contact with western culture of the white settlers":

> The Kikuyu have the reputation of being the most disliked of the Kenyan tribes: they are difficult, suspicious, and secretive people. This is only partly the truth; it would perhaps be truer to say that they are a misunderstood people. Historical circumstances had not dealt kindly with them, and possibly any tribe, and even ourselves, if faced with a similar set of circumstances would have reacted in the same way and developed a similar attitude to the people contributing to these circumstances. Mau Mau seems to be culmination of misunderstandings in the past and a frustration with the present. The organizers and leaders of this movement, with a wide knowledge of the psychology of their own people, have played skillfully upon the grievances and problems confronting the tribe today, without stopping to consider some of the benefits bestowed upon them through contact with Europeans. Analysis would probably show that historical, social, economic, magico-religious, educational, political, and psychological factors, all closely inter-linked, have contributed to the growth of Mau Mau. Change, particularly economic and social change, has come too rapidly for the Kikuyu. There was no time for a period of adjustment, so essential for the establishment of some state of equilibrium between the old and the new, the past and the present, and the

> development of a healthy society taking pride in its past and in its future aspirations. It is in such maladjusted societies that movements like Mau Mau have ideal conditions for growth. Behind Mau Mau there is probably something more sinister than has as yet come to light, for it can be argued, there are other African societies in a similar state of change, and yet movements like Mau Mau have not developed in them. (Fisher 1952, 26)

Fisher's text on Kikuyu is an example of use of knowledge for the purpose of power. This is not to deny that information contained in the text is accurate, but it is being used for the consumption of the colonialist state: the timing of the report, as I mentioned earlier, was when Mau Mau was gaining momentum, and the text could be viewed as a "training manual" for counterinsurgency purposes. Another curious aspect of the report is that it has the aura of academic objectivity and thoroughness in it. But there is an important text on Kikuyu in late 1930s that Fisher failed to recognize, Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mt. Kenya* (1999). Reading these two texts side by side will reveal that Kenyatta's text represents the early discourse of Kenyan nationalism by bringing out the uniqueness of Kikuyu culture and tradition, which is in no way inferior to European culture and tradition.[1] Both of these works are anthropological and deployed similar observational techniques to collect and analyze information. The ideological and strategic purpose of the two texts is, however, diametrically opposite.

Fisher's text includes, among other issues "Child Development, Cost of Living, and Animal Husbandry." Missing on this rather extensive list is any discussion of either the political system or the power relations among the Kikuyu. This omission, perhaps intentional, indicates that Fisher's exercise in anthropological work has a political objective. Here, anthropological knowledge became central to the colonial state's struggle against the counterhegemonic revolt. The centrality of the nexus of power and knowledge, as described by Foucault, has implications in colonial situations. Lata Mani (1998) argues that in colonial India, the colonial state initiated projects of enumeration and classification of people and gathering and codifying information on land so that a proper tax policy could be formulated. Fisher's text should be seen from this perspective. An interesting question remains: What were the pre-British Kikuyu political systems and power relations?

Partha Chatterjee, a prominent member of the South Asian subaltern school, explained three modes of power: communal, feudal, and bourgeois (1988). The communal mode

> exists where individual or sectional rights, entitlements, and obligations are allocated on the authority of the entire social collectivity, that is, the community. Here the collective is a priori; individual or sectional identities are derived only by virtue of membership to the community. Institutionally,

> there may be various forms in which such authority could be exercised. It may consist of an assembly of all members of the community, but this is by no means a necessary institutional form. (Chatterjee 1988, 358)

In such a situation, authority is not located in one person; rather, it is exercised by a group of elders or even a chief, chosen by the community itself, who serve as mere functionaries of communal authority (Chatterjee 1988, 358). Here the idea of community gained logical priority over the institutionalized forms of power that came to be known as the state (Chatterjee 1988, 358–59). In other words, power in the communal mode is diffused and decentralized. This, indeed, was how power was exercised in the Kikuyu land before the advent of British rule.

The pre-British Kikuyu society was essentially an acephalous society where authority and power was widely diffused throughout this varied component (Muriuki 1972, 5). In other words, power was diffused widely throughout the entire society, so much so that it was difficult to determine the locus of power. This prompted Kenyatta to claim that it was based on true democratic principles (Kenyatta 1999, 186). In the context of this diffused, mode of power in the pre-British Kikuyu land, it is vital to understand the role of leadership among Mt. Kenya people, especially the Kikuyu.

When boys showed at a very early age some superior ability in various activities, especially dancing, they become junior warriors. When they showed bravery and skill, those young men achieved *athamaki* status. Muriuki argues that ranking in the warrior corps did not automatically translate into status as one of the elders—for that, community consensus was paramount (Muruiki 1972, 20). In other words, transformation of *athamaki* to *mugambi* or *muthamaki* (leader chosen from the council members) was a slow and lengthy process. To be *mutahmaki*, one needed to show "wisdom, tact, self-control and wide experience" (7). But most importantly:

> the *muthamaki* was no more than the chairman of a territorial unit or leader of his age mates. His powers were very circumscribed, and he could only act in accordance with the wishes of his peers, who delegated power to him. He was not a chief; the idea of chiefs had no basis in the political institutions of the Mt. Kenya peoples. (Muriuki 1972, 7)

This, indeed, was truly a communal mode of power, which was all but destroyed by the advent of the British colonialist.

The Rebel as Field Marshal

Located about 100 miles from Nairobi, Nyeri town was the spiritual headquarters of Kikuyu politics and culture. This proximity to Nairobi provided

a certain compactness and homogeneity among the Kikuyus (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 77). The Kikuyus of Nyeri are hardworking, progressive and independent-minded. Within a short time, the Nyeri Kikuyus cleared and transformed the forest land of Tetu and Mathira from a jungle into agricultural plots. Significantly, they farmed with their pastoral neighbors and adversaries, the Maasai, forming what Roseberg and Nottingham called a "sectional political alliance" (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 78).

Among other places within Nyeri, the Tetu division is well known for its early resistance. In November 1902, a company of East African Rifles were sent to Tetu after the Kikuyu killed several Indian tradesmen (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 78). As a result, Tetu was occupied by a large contingent of British Army. Kikuyus of surrounding areas joined the Tetu Kikuyus in resisting the British presence and in harassing the troops. Finally, in August 1906, the British troops were withdrawn from the district, and the new colonial administration was hardly effective "even within a mile or two of the Nyeri fort (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 78).

Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau Field Marshal, was born in the Tetu location of the Nyeri district.[2] The British police officer, Ian Henderson, responsible for capturing Kimathi, wrote a book called *The Hunt for Kimathi* (1958). The second chapter, entitled "Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau Field Marshal," begins this way:

> If the Kikuyu are the Germans of tribal Kenya, Kimathi was their Hitler. Like Hitler he had to wait until the fabric of society broke around his head, but then he was able to exploit the convulsion with throbbing, burning oratory. Financial chores and the threat of communism gave Hitler his chance. The corruption of the Kikuyu tribal customs by Mau Mau and the flight to the forest gave Kimathi his opportunity. (Henderson 1958, 22)

Kimathi's childhood was described in following manner:

> At the age of six he went on a hunger strike because his mother would not give him the sort of shield normally carried by an adolescent apprentice warrior. He killed some goats belonging to a friend of his mother with a bow and arrow. He refused to carry water for his mother. He broke his mother's maize-grinding stone. He refused to chase locusts away from the family crops, and pushed his youngest sister down on ant-bear hole. [. . .] Once he crept into a hut while all the adults were drinking beer, and tied up the penis of a baby boy. (Henderson 1958, 23–4)

This observation sounds like incoherent babbling of an inarticulate man, but what is clear is the extent to which the British disliked Mau Mau and its leaders.

> Consider a few observations Kimathi made about Mau Mau during the struggle: We will fight the white man until the end of the world unless he gives us back our land and freedom. That is the first point. I would like to remind you all that we are here in the forest not to hide or play but to fight, and we must fight with all our strength. With god's blessing we shall be saved by the prayers of our parents. (Wachanga 1991, 167)

And again, in the same speech, Kimathi argued, "Kenya Africans are ready for self-government. Even our forefathers governed themselves before the coming of the white man. We know all the systems of government, and we are capable of making our own laws" (Wachanga 1991, 169). Kimathi was a dedicated letter writer. He wrote many letters to people all over the world. From those letters we can also deduce he was a brilliant political thinker and tactician. To quote a few:

> If fighting for our land and freedom is a crime, then we shall fight to the last drop of our blood. We shall never give up until we have driven away these foreign murderers from our beloved country. We reject colonization in Kenya because it has turned us into slaves and beggars. (Kanogo 1992, 92)

Is this man the demon seen by colonialists, or a dedicated freedom fighter? Which perception is true? To understand the Field Marshal as a freedom fighter, we depend heavily on *Kimathi's Letters: A Profile of Patriotic Courage* (1986), edited by Maina wa Kinyatti. But before we proceed, a brief biographical sketch is in order.

Kimathi's childhood was difficult, and it prepared him as a forest fighter in later years. Young Kimathi wa Wachiuri was always keen to get a Western education, but his mother, as a single parent, was not in a position to afford the school fees. To go to school, Kimathi took various odd jobs and attended Karumaini Primary School at age 15. He was a brilliant student, excelled in English, poetry, and debates. During his second year in Karumaini Primary School, Kimathi opened a night school, teaching simple writing and reading to earn money to pay his school fees.

Many of his pupils could not pay in cash, and instead paid in kind with items like bananas, maize, and vegetables, which Kimathi would sell in the market to earn his school tuition. He later moved to Wandumi Primary School, and for school fees he sold tree seeds that he collected at the Aberdares forests. To save money for further education, Kimathi joined the army in 1941, at the height of the Second World War. His stint in the army was brief and he soon returned to school, only to drop out finally in 1944 due to inability to pay tuition.

After doing various odd jobs, Kimathi started his teaching career in Karumaini Primary School. This was also the beginning of Kimathi's political career. He carefully watched various anticolonial nationalist movements that were taking place in Central Province. By 1949, the colonial state was being informed about oathing, which was undertaken for the purpose of overthrowing the colonial state. At that particular time Kimathi had joined the Forty Group operating in the Kikuyu land (Central Province and Nairobi area). The Forty Group had become impatient with the slow pace of political negotiations conducted by the Kenyan nationalist leaders. Their aim was to wage an armed struggle against the colonial state. By 1952, Kimathi had become an important leader of anticolonial agitation. After the political assassinations of some white farmers and Kenyan loyalists, a state of emergency was declared on October 20, 1952. All of the Kenyan nationalist leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, Bildad Kaggia, Achieng Oneko, and Paul Ngei, Fred Kubai, Kungu Karumba, were arrested. The list also included trade union leaders Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh. Kimathi, after administering the warrior oath and collecting arms and ammunition, entered the Aberdares Forest with a big following, including his brothers and a brother-in-law. In the forest Kimathi quickly established himself as a brilliant military tactician, as well as political educationist. In October 1953, Kimathi issued a political leaflet that contained the following message:

> To all African comrades! General Ogutu, our Luo comrade, has been appointed to contact the leaders of all non-Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru (nationalists such as the Kamba, Abaluhya, Maasai and his own Luo nationality) and assess the strength of their forces. Ogutu is now in Nairobi discussing the details of his mission with the Kenya war council. (wa Kinyatti 2000, 81–82)

This leaflet is tactically brilliant: Kimathi was trying to establish that Mau Mau was essentially an anticolonialist movement in which not only the Kikuyu but all nationalities could participate.

Perhaps Kimathi's political thinking became clear through numerous letters he wrote to people like Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, W. E. B. Dubois, and the UN Secretary General. In one letter he wrote: "I consider myself a great African patriot, fighting not for the liberation of Kenya alone, but for East Africa and the rest of the continent" (qtd. by Kanogo 1992a). In a way, Kimathi was not only a Kenyan nationalist but a pan-Africanist who saw the continent of Africa being free from colonial bondage. He believed the anticolonialist struggle of Mau Mau was similar to the anticolonialist struggles in Nigeria, Algeria, and Ghana. With his writings Kimathi tried to educate Kenyans and the people of the entire

world about his actions. On numerous occasions, he tried to sell to many colonial chiefs the anticolonial element of Mau Mau. The letters written included both pleas for support and death threats for betraying the country.

On January 27, 1954, various colonial chiefs, colonial administrators, and church leaders, as well as two former leaders of KAU, James Gichuru and Harry Thuku, participated in a gathering to denounce Mau Mau (Maina 1977, 84). They condemned Mau Mau as the "greatest enemy of the Kenyan people" (Maina 1977, 84). Speakers at the meeting argued that Mau Mau slaughtered people—"drunk their blood and ate their flesh"—and Mau Mau was accused of "skinning people alive and slowing down the country's socioeconomic progress" (Maina 1977, 84).

A week after this loyalist meeting, Kimathi called an emergency meeting of the guerrillas in Nyandarua to denounce the "native traitors." In the gathering Kimathi gave a lengthy speech, portions of which follow.

1. These traitors said in the meeting that they are the leaders of Central Kenya. In the first place, nobody appointed them to be leaders of our people; in the second place, our people would not allow the traitors to be their leaders. Comrades, our people would not allow the traitors to be their leaders. Comrades, we know no other leaders in Kenya but those who are fighting and dying for the liberation of this country (loud applause).
2. The traitors said that Mau Mau are the enemies of the Kenya people and that they murder them, drink their blood and eat their flesh. Now we know what kind of people these are—they are outright traitors, the mortal and immediate enemies of our movement and the country. Their aim is to try to please their colonial masters so that they can get some crumbs. They can do anything, even sell their mothers, for material wealth. They are worthless people (wa Kinyatti 2000, 86).

In the same speech, Kimathi refutes the colonialist claim that Mau Mau have drunk human blood and eaten human flesh by arguing that sacred Kikuyu tradition forbids the wearing of clothing stained in human blood. Kimathi argued that Mau Mau therefore could not drink human blood or eat human flesh. Furthermore, Kimathi accused the colonialist administrator of burning schools, arresting teachers, and depriving students of education.

> Those of us who will be alive after the liberation will be respected and honored by the Kenyan masses for our heroic work courageously carried out in the name of our country. Do not think, comrades, that we shall all die in these mountains and that none will remain to narrate our revolutionary heroism to the Kenyan masses at a time when they shall be free to applaud them. Most of us will be there, but even if we will die our people will never forget

> us. With our blood, comrades, we have written a glorious chapter in history that will never be forgotten by our people and the progressive people of the world. (wa Kinyatti 2000, 90)

Kimathi concluded his speech by saying: "Go well, comrades. Remember always that we shall never leave these forests, these mountains, until our country is free. *It is better to die on our feet than to live on our knees*" (Maina 1977, 90; emphasis original).

In February, 1954, the Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA), the military wing through which Mau Mau was fought, converged at a congress at Karathi, Nyandarua, and approved the formation of the Kenya Parliament. The Parliament appointed Kimathi as president and spokesman. In that capacity he not only coordinated the military aspects of Mau Mau but also worked hard to explain the political significance of the movement and to express a vision of postcolonial Kenya.

> Once we have won this war and regained our freedom and independence, the land which now is being occupied by the Europeans settlers will be redistributed to our people—the landless, the poor, the squatters, and those of us who are fighting and dying in these forests and mountains. Our government will make sure that all the stolen land is returned to the owners. The European settlers will be expelled from our country and the Kenyan traitors will be arrested to answer for all the crimes and atrocities they have committed against the people. (wa Kinyatti 2000, 91)

Thus, by touring various camps between 1953 to 1954, Kimathi tried to provide the ideological context of Mau Mau, as well as his vision of the kind of postcolonial Kenya that he and his fellow Mau Mau fighters wanted to establish. At one point Kimathi said to his fellow fighters:

> I do not lead rebels, but I lead Africans who want their self-government and land. My people want to live in a better world than they met when they were born. I lead them because God never created any nation to be ruled by another nation forever. (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 299)

And again in a letter to his former teacher, an African, Kimathi seems to hint at a role for white people in postcolonial Kenya:

> We are not fighting for an everlasting hatred but are creating a true and real brotherhood between white and black so that we may be regarded as people and as human beings who can do to each and everything. (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 299)

Thus, Kimathi during the Mau Mau insurgency sought to provide political and ideological legitimacy for the movement. He responded vigorously to the colonialist interpretation of Mau Mau as "savage" and "primitive." To establish Mau Mau as a national liberation movement, Kimathi conceptualized Mau Mau as similar to movements in other colonized countries. Through the various speeches and numerous letters he wrote, Kimathi visualized a postcolonial Kenya, which, as we will see, not only challenged colonialism, but also transcended the bourgeois nationalist ideals of postcolonial Kenya.

The Field Marshal as Seen by His Comrades

"If the Kikuyu are the Germans of tribal Kenya, Kimathi was their Hitler." So said Ian Henderson (1958, 22), the man who captured Kimathi. As mentioned before, Henderson's book is the most important of works of colonial discourse on Mau Mau. Important for our purpose here are the second and third chapters of the book, respectively titled "Dedan Kimathi" and "Kinyanjui" (Henderson's Kikuyu name). Going through these two chapters chronologically, the reader soon realizes that Henderson thoroughly demonizes Kimathi and interprets him as a psychopath while considering himself, a *mazungu* (white man) born to Scottish parents, more "Kikuyu" than Kimathi himself.

In the second chapter, Henderson attempts to provide a biographical sketch of Kimathi. The main issue is framed with the very first sentence of chapter, where Henderson compares Kimathi with Hitler. On the one hand, Kimathi is described as "a psychopath," "unruly," "rough," "treacherous," and "one who went to the Aberdares Forest to write his 'Mein Kampf.'"

> Now Kimathi wrote out his "Mein Kampf," telling his men how they would take over the European farms, how they would kill all those—black, white, or brown—who stood against them. These pages were torn from a notebook and passed around the gangs. These odd sheets of paper were the sum total of Mau Mau literature in the forest, and they added immensely to Kimathi's reputation. No one now doubted his authority in the land of the trees. (Henderson 1958, 29)

On the other hand, Henderson argues that Kimathi was well versed with Kikuyu culture and devoted a great deal of time to learning Kikuyu rituals, which Henderson identifies as "barbaric" and a "manifestation of paganism" (Henderson 1958, 24). By reading this particular chapter of Henderson's book, one might get the impression that everything Kimathi did led to the

essential demise of Kikuyu traditional culture. In the following chapter, "Kinyanjui: The elder statesman," Henderson tries very hard to portray himself as a great admirer of Kikuyu culture and its way of life. This entire chapter, where he portrays himself as "honest" and "hardworking," is full of self-promotion and boastful hyperbole. Continuously referring to himself as "Mr. Henderson," he describes his entry into the forest to fight the Mau Mau. He argues that he alone knows the "thickets of the forest and the thickets of the terrorist mind" (1958, 41). And again, "in the words of Governor Sir Evelyn Barring, 'a number of people were giving us advice on what the Mau Mau would do next.' No one was right the whole time, but I, Henderson, was right more often than anyone else" (Henderson 1958, 41).

However, if we read the writings of Mau Mau combatants, a totally different Henderson emerges. For example, the memoir of H. K. Wachanga, *The Swords of Kirinyaga: The Fight for Land and Freedom* (1991), paints a very different portrait of Henderson.

> Henderson caused many of our people to be killed, both innocent and guilty. He shot many Kikuyu with his own hands [. . .] as well as the capture and hanging of Dedan Kimathi. Based on information later given to me by a man who worked with Henderson during the Emergency, it is my belief that he cheated the government of large sums of money. (Wachanga 1991, 161)

Since the colonialist had nothing good to say about the Field Marshal, we can perhaps gain a glimpse of the man from the writings of his comrades and fellow Mau Mau commanders. Hopefully this will further dispel the colonialist Henderson's description of Kimathi. For that purpose, we will rely on three texts: H. K. Wachanga's *The Swords of Kiriniyaga* (1991); Waruhiu Itote (General China)'s *Mau Mau General* (1967) and Donald L. Barnett and Karani Njama's *Mau Mau from Within* (1966).[3]

H. K. Wachanga

Henry Kahinga Wachanga was born in 1923 in Karega, a village in Nyeri District. He was educated up to Form II. After his education he was variously employed as a clerk for the Maize Control Board, salesman for the Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes, and finally as a dresser, grade two, at the Medical Department. After his last job, Wachanga began to observe the political climate of the country. Eventually, to "free our people from the white man's domination" (Wachanga 1991, XXII), he formed the "Aanake a 40," the Forty Group.[4] Wachanga entered the Aberdares Mountains, Kariani Forest, on January 23, 1952, almost nine months before the Declaration of

Emergency on October 20, 1952. At that time two leaders, Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge, were already in the forest. In his early life,

> Kimathi was about five feet ten inches tall and was one of the heaviest persons in the Aberdares. In 1953, in the Aberdares, he told me that he was born on October 31, 1920 in Kahigaini Village in North Tetu, Nyeri District. He was educated at Ihururu and then at the Church of Scotland Mission at Tumutumu and reached the grade of Standard Five (now equivalent to standard Seven). During that time, I sometimes saw him at Karatina on my way home, or sometime at Tumutumu during our holidays. He did not complete his primary school education. He was expelled from school as a troublemaker. (Wachanga 1991, 25–26)

According to Wachanga, Kimathi later joined the army, but soon deserted due to ill treatment and discrimination. He was a great leader:

> The Field Marshal was a very clever and intelligent person. He was a great orator. He could make people laugh at a meeting while he was educating them. He would explain about the other nations' politics and revolutions. He did not have a deep voice, but knew how to lead the people whether in debate or battle.
>
> [. . .]
>
> His eyes were like the eyes of a lion, and he was like a giant in size. When he was lying on the ground in the sun, one might think that he was a rhinocerous. He was as brave as *simba* and as clever as *sunguru*. He knew how to write a propaganda letter that would deceive the government. He would tell the government that he would visit them on a certain day at a certain place for a "tea party." When the day arrived and the government sent troops there, he would raid another place. His alias in the forest was "Kimathi." (Wachanga 1992, 26)

He was also immensely popular among the *itungati*:

> Kimathi visited all the camps in the Aberdares, traveling with his bodyguards and food carriers. He gave speeches to all *itungati* and their leaders and planned many raids. During the early part of the forest fight until mid-1954, Kimathi was liked and respected by all of his *itungati*.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Kimathi was a great hero. He was a superb leader during 1952–54, and everyone wanted to meet him. Kimathi's fame had grown rapidly, and some actions taken, by others were attributed to him. After a Mau Mau action, many times notes were left, claiming that the action taken had been by Kimathi. His name became even better known as result. I believe the colonialists feared Kimathi more than any other forest fighter. (Wachanga 1992, 26–27)

Unfortunately, things began to change in 1955 as Kimathi became dictatorial, "power hungry and jealous of the other leaders." He ordered his bodyguards to strangle several of his *itungati*, and once he executed a fighter without a trial (Wachanga 1992, 26–27). The worst of serious divisions emerged between Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge, another leader of the movement. Wachanga himself was very angry. Kimathi emerged as the spokesman for the negotiation with the colonial government and felt betrayed by Mathenge, Mbaria Kaniu, and Wachanga. He ordered his *itungati* to arrest all three. "Finally, Kimathi was left alone and remained so with only his girl Wanjiru until his capture" (Wachanga 1991, 27).

It is true that Kimathi and Wachanga drifted apart during the final phase of the movement, but in Wachanga's narrative we find Kimathi depicted as a brave and brilliant organizer and military strategist who also had human weaknesses and failures.

Waruhiu Itote (General China)

Waruhiu Itote, whose name means "one who always carves with a knife or sword," was born in the the village of Kaheti, Nyeri District, Central Province. After a brief period of schooling without a formal certificate, Itote moved to Nairobi during World War II. The British government was eager to enlist Kenyans in its military force to bolster its frontline battalion. In 1941 Itote was among hundreds of other young African men who were enlisted into the Kenya African Rifles at Langata Camp near Nairobi. Itote was sent to Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka) for combat training and then was assigned to Burma to fight the Japanese army.

Itote's political education began while he was in the army. He met a white soldier who questioned Itote's reason for fighting along with the royal army. He also met an African American solider named Stephenson, with whom he had a long conversation about the role Christianity played in enhancing and justifying colonialism in Africa. Stephenson talked with Itote about the various instances where black people fought and defeated their white masters. Later, while in Calcutta, India, on a rest and recreation trip, Itote met a Bengali nationalist who advised him to follow India's example to independence when he returned to Kenya after the war.

These conversations and encounters left permanent impressions on him. For the first time, Itote realized white people could be fought and defeated. He realized that the British Army had certain insecurities and vulnerabilities. Perhaps most importantly, Itote learned guerrilla military tactics and hit-and-run jungle warfare.

After the war, Itote took up various jobs and ventured into small businesses before joining the Kenya Railway. He became a trusted follower of the Mau Mau movement and oathing administration, and then in 1951, after resigning from the railway, Itote joined the Forty Group. In August 1952 Itote finally left home and entered the Hombe area of the Mt. Kenya forest, taking the combat name of "General China." Initially Itote did not stay in the forest; instead, he traveled widely for recruitment and training. After the Declaration of Emergency, Itote formed an army known as the Kenya Land and Freedom Army. The army was widely known as the Hika Hika battalion. According to Maina, there was only loose contact between Itote and Dedan Kimathi, the overall Mau Mau leader. The only contact was through a joint committee of Mt. Kenya and Aberdares Forest fighters (Maina 1977).

Itote wrote two autobiographies, "*Mau Mau*" *General* in 1967, and "*Mau Mau*" *in Action*, first published 1979. In the first book, Itote has very little to say about Kimathi, but in the latter, "*Mau Mau*" *in Action*, he devotes two chapters on the Field Marshal—"Dedan Kimathi" (8–13) and "More about Dedan Kimathi" (34–40). These two chapters contain no personal observations like those of Wachanga, who knew Kimathi intimately. Itote's description lacks personal observations because can be understood based on the fact that he and Kimathi belonged to different Mau Mau camps and committees. The Mau Mau generals barely knew each other, and the facts presented in Itote's two chapters essentially come from secondary sources and other accounts of Kimathi. Essentially, he describes Kimathi in a disinterested and aloof manner like an old-school academician, without injecting any emotion. After reading those two chapters, one might get the impression that Itote did not really like Kimathi that much.

In Itote's description two points are emphasized—Kimathi's disagreement with Stanley Mathenge and others as he attempted to control all decisions regarding negotiation with the government. When Kimathi found out that Mathenge had attended a meeting from which Kimathi's men had been barred, he ordered Mathenge to be arrested. Itote describes this incident in great detail, perhaps to make the point that Dedan Kimathi had become absolutely dictatorial. his eleventh chapter, Itote describes Kimathi as a brilliant organizer and charismatic leader who led many great battles during the Mau Mau campaign. In the chapter entitled "Mutino Nduri ndokeirwo Nuu [Bad Luck Can Come at Any Time]," Itote describes Kimathi's arrest and his presentation to the colonial government. Here Kimathi is described as a tragic hero who denied ever having been involved in any Mau Mau activities. Itote argues that Kimathi had stayed in the forest for eight years and had lived apart from those they called "his friends"

since 1954 and had become out of touch (1979, 39). Itote recounted Kimathi's confession that he wanted to surrender "because he had stayed in the forest for a long period" (Itote 1979, 40).

Kimathi said the pistol he was carrying in the time of his capture was given to him by a man named Wachira to protect him from being killed by the Mau Mau (Itote 1979 39). Itote also hinted that during the trial, Kimathi's mother was brought forward to testify that Kimathi suffered from epilepsy and he was not "normal." In other words, all of Kimathi's "misdeeds" were caused by this abnormality and not the aim of fighting to oust the colonial rule from Kenya. Itote says nothing to dispel this argument. Based on Itote's aloof and academic description of Kimathi, one might conclude there were serious disagreements among these two Mau Mau fighters. It is perhaps relevant to remember that once Itote was captured by the colonialists, he was used by them to motivate other Mau Mau fighters to put down their arms and surrender.

Donald L. Barnett and Karani Njama

Karani Njama was born on September 18, 1926, in the Laikipia district of the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. He was born into a squatter family and in his early childhood lived in a farm owned by a Boer family. Raised in relative affluence, Njama's childhood was comfortable. When the colonial authorities restricted how many cattle an African laborer could own while living in a white farm, Njama's father left for the Nyeri district, as he owned more cattle than the local authorities allowed. In the Nyeri district, Njama's father's home was situated on his grandfather's land. His grandfather would recall stories of resistance against the *chomba*—the Europeans who brought their magic fire (guns) that killed many people from a distance. He also told stories of land alienation, humiliation, and racial injustices. These stories had a long-lasting imprint on young Njama and stimulated his first political awareness.

After his education in Nyeri and Alliance High School, he tried his luck in business but failed. After living on a small farm for several years, he took a job as the headmaster of Nyeri Secondary School in 1951. Like many Mau Mau leaders, Njama attended the KAU rally at the Nyeri show grounds on July 26, 1952, where Kenyatta was the main speaker.

Njama's attendance served as a watershed moment for him. He soon took a unity oath for Mau Mau activity in October 1952. Shortly thereafter, colonial chief Waruhiu was killed and the colonial authorities declared the state of emergency.

Njama entered the Nyandarua forest as a Mau Mau fighter in early 1953. As an educated man, he was in charge of record keeping, taking minutes, keeping contact with other commanders, and corresponding with the government. After he took the leadership oath, he was allowed to attend important decision-making meetings. He was captured in June 1955. His autobiography, *Mau Mau From Within: Autobiography and Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt*, was published in 1966, jointly with an American anthropologist, Donald L. Barnett.

The last two chapters of this work are particularly important in understanding Njama's impression of Dedan Kimathi, though they deal mostly with the rift between Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge. It appears that Njama's objective in these two chapters is to narrate the process of the demise of the Mau Mau revolt, which to him resulted essentially from the strategic disagreement between Kimathi and Mathenge on the one hand, and Wachanga's unapproved negotiations with the colonial authorities on the other (Barnett and Njama 1966, 455–92). Kimathi was disturbed and felt that General China supplied the colonial army with valuable information on Mau Mau combatants.

In early 1955, a rift developed between Kimathi and General Stanley Mathenge, which was further complicated by General China's (Waruhiu Itote) surrender and subsequent cooperation with the colonialists. Kimathi called a meeting of the Kenya Parliament, political wing of the movement, in March 1955. At the beginning, Kimathi apologized for the absence of Mathenge, though he recognized the presence of many of his supporters. He then refused to be chairman of the meeting because he was already the secretary to the council. Eventually another person named Abdullah became the chair of the parliamentary meeting. In that meeting Kimathi criticized Mathenge for his failure to discuss issues with his officers and combatants. Kimathi was also critical of Mathenge for his failure to call for a fresh meeting to elect new leaders and advisers.

However, to avoid an eventual split from Mathenge and his supporters, Kimathi agreed that there should not be a new council meeting without Mathenge's participation. This might be construed as Kimathi's willingness to patch things up with Mathenge and form a united front against the colonialists.

In Njama's account, this fact emerged forcefully. Perhaps Njama's impression of Kimathi can best be gathered from the following part of the speech he made when Kimathi was promoted to Field Marshal:

> In the reserve Kimathi has organized how our fighters can be supplied their requirements. In the forest he has organized eight armies, has helped to instruct leaders how to keep different kinds of records. He has planned many

> attacks, has led Kenya Defense Council, Kenya Parliament, and founded the Kenya Young Stars Association. He has appointed leaders and issued ranks, has toured nearly all the camps in Nyandarua preaching unity, courage, obedience, and discipline; has sent various missions in and out of Nyandarua; has spoken to the government through letters and even to people abroad. [. . .] Has Kimathi stopped any leader from advertising himself to the world in his own words or actions? Why then are some leaders infested with jealousy and envy at Kimathi's success (cheers and great applause). (Barnett and Njama 1966, 449)

Although the passage contains not-so-a subtle criticism of Mathenge, it also shows Njama's regard for Kimathi. Njama genuinely seems to like Kimathi, as shown by his flattering comments about him. To Wachanga, as described earlier, Kimathi's dislike of any willingness to negotiate with colonialists was a sign of an increasingly dictatorial manner. But Njama offers the contrary opinion that Wachanga had become weak in body and mind and Njama "suspected that he might surrender with his *itungati*" (Barnett and Njama 1966, 464).

In Njama's account of the Field Marshal, Kimathi is depicted as a tragic hero, a brilliant organizer and strategist, but also someone caught in his own web when one by one his comrades deserted him. When Kimathi was arrested on October 21, 1956, he was all alone except for his female companion, Wanjiru, the daughter of Waicanguru.

These three accounts of Dedan Kimathi by three fellow commanders and allies show that Kimathi was, indeed, an enigmatic character. Kimathi appears to have been a brave, brilliant, and shrewd military strategist and a political organizer who at the same time was blinded by power and tried to control too many things. But all three accounts agreed on one thing: Kimathi was, indeed, a freedom fighter with normal human failures.

The Field Marshal in Kenyan Creative Writings

In the present chapter, Dedan Kimathi has been described as an enigmatic figure. People who knew him closely described him equally as brilliant and dictatorial, as well as a superb military strategist often prone to violence. Mwangi Chege, in an article in *The People Weekly*, December 22, 1995, argues that the depiction of Dedan Kimathi is subject to what he calls "double interpretation." This double interpretation is more apparent in the depiction of the Field Marshal in Kenyan creative writings. The fictionalized account of Kimathi as a historical figure also has its share of double interpretation. In this section we will critically review some of the creative accounts of Dedan Kimathi.[4]

For our current purposes, we use Kenneth Watene's play *Dedan Kimathi* (1974) and Sam Kahiga's book *Dedan Kimathi: The Real Story* (1990). A variety of songs and poems on Kimathi will also be analyzed to portray the various images of the Field Marshal in Kenyan creative writings.

Kenneth Watene's *Dedan Kimathi*

Kenneth Watene's play *Dedan Kimathi* (1974), with its single scene located in what is described as "a fortified den in the forest," opens with charges leveled against Kimathi by a female warrior. The warrior charges that he has "a penchant to destroy others" (Watene 1974, 7). Kimathi is made to justify the woman's allegations:

> *Kimathi*: It was necessary we have to protect ourselves from dissidents and cowards. It had to be done.
> *Lucia*: Necessary! Necessary! Had to be done! Boooooooooo! (Silence. She continues crying) You love Wahu, don't you? (Watene 1974, 7)

This slanted introduction prejudices the audience against Kimathi and perpetuates a negative perception of him throughout the play, thus undermining Kimathi's character by informing the audience that it is "necessary" to destroy others for a cause. This opening at the very beginning of the play was deliberately designed to debunk popular legends of heroism and noble deeds. The quarrel with his "distraught female compatriot" apparently has to do with Kimathi's preference for another woman Wahu, rather than the accuser. Now Kimathi discusses Lucia, the accuser, as "nagging nuts" (Watene 1974, 8). Thus, we encounter from the beginning a "destroyer," a womanizer, and a consummate egotist packaged into one. We are left to wonder whether these are the intimate ingredients of the character of Kimathi the liberation hero, or whether they are the products of the imagination of a writer of fiction. Watene's style from the onset deliberately seeks to set the audience against the protagonist and does not allow a "dramatic discovery" of Kimathi's character as the play unfolds. Kimathi's character is immediately removed after the first episode only to return at the end of the first scene to "confirm" various allegations voiced against him during his absence. Those allegations include being labeled a "power hungry psychopath obsessed with mystical powers." This image of violence and blood lust hits forcefully when the "bloodstained" fighters return from their mission, and Kimathi is portrayed as vicariously enjoying their descriptions of senseless violence and congratulating them for a job "well

done." The Mau Mau casualties are casually and callously discussed by an uncaring leader.

In the entire play, the one dominant thing that emerges about Kimathi is his obsession with the pursuit of personal power. Furthermore, the play shows that Kimathi's pursuit of personal power is through mystical forces which undermine and replace his human compatriots. Thus, Kimathi tells his fighters about the mystical elements of rituals. "They give you power to order, power to control people, power to see into the future" (Watene 1974, 47). This is the crux of Kimathi's relationship with others in Watene's play. Kimathi's quest for personal power and the pursuit of his "triumphant victory" undermines other humans. "Anybody who desires anything less than triumphant victory must be plucked from our midst. [. . .] He was a weed that had to be destroyed. Be on my side, I pray you!" (Watene 1974, 47).

Language symbols and metaphors that have been used in Watene's play inform the image constructed of Kimathi. They confirm the author's negative portrayal of the Field Marshal. Kimathi's hideout is described as a "fortified den" (Watene 1974, 7) in the forest. The associated meaning is quite apparent. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines "den" as "refuge for wild beasts or criminals and outlaws." The word allows Kimathi to be identified as a criminal, not a normal human being.

The negative image of Kimathi in Watene's play should be seen in terms of Kenyan postcolonial constructions that sought to undermine the image of Mau Mau. This was thought necessary because the forces that ascended to power after the departure of the colonialists in 1963 needed to consolidate their economic, political, and ideological hegemony in postcolonial Kenya. These class-based forces have been variously identified as petite bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie, and indigenous bourgeoisie. Without going into terminological acrobatics, it could be argued that politics in postcolonial Kenya paved the way for neocolonialism and the discouragement of nationalism as a unifying force in Kenya. In these neocolonial conditions, the metropolitan bourgeoisie managed to establish a strategic alliance with the national bourgeoisie as a junior partner. The national bourgeoisie has largely consisted of those who did not take part in the Mau Mau revolt (Maughan-Brown 1985, 150). Discrediting and denouncing Mau Mau was essential in the strategic alliance between metropolitan bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie.

> The provincial administration and civil service structure which Kenyatta took over were entirely staffed with "Loyalists" under colonialism, and was inherited intact at independence. The administration was, therefore, by definition, anti-Mau Mau. (Maughan-Brown 1985, 95)

This alliance also required political stability and national unity, mostly between the Mau Mau and the loyalists. This provided the discourse of nationalism after independence. Here nationalism is seen as a "unifying force" irrespective of whether individuals were Mau Mau activists, loyalists, Kikuyus, or members of any other ethnic group. Here "nation" and "nationalism" are seen as devoid of class consciousness or ideology. Thus Kenyatta proclaims in *Suffering Without Bitterness* (1968), "The most essential need which I have constantly sought to proclaim and to fulfill in Kenya has been that of national unity" (1968, ix). And again, "Nationalism rooted in loyalty to Kenya must come first and be made a living force that can impel and compel all men and women to defend their country against both aggression and subversion" (Kenyatta 1968, ix). Thus, "national unity" became a new hegemonic project for the postcolonial ruling elite. In this new hegemonic project, repudiation of Mau Mau was necessary. In Watene's play Dedan Kimathi is seen from the perspective of this broad postcolonial hegemony.

In 1976, a year after Watene's play was published, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Miano G. Mugo published the *Trail of Dedan Kimathi* (1976). Ngugi and Mugo attempted to reject the negative portrayal of Dedan Kimathi without mentioning Watene. This text attempts to restore the image of Kimathi as an anticolonial heroic figure. We will discuss this text and more of Ngugi's works in Chapter 6.

Sam Kahiga's *Dedan Kimathi: The Real Story* (1990)

Sam Kahiga's historical novel about Kimathi was published in 1990. In it Kahiga rejects both the negative portrayal of Kimathi in Watene's play and the heroic revolutionary hero spin of Ngugi and Mugo's *The Trail of Dedan Kimathi* (1976).

The opening scene in Kahiga's novel describes Kimathi's visit to one of the forest camps (*mboli*) as the overall commander, "Just to see how they are doing" (Kahiga 1990, 4). This initial introduction captures the attitudes of various insiders and their view of Kimathi's character and his role as leader. His stature and influence is emphasized from the beginning and throughout the novel. We are informed on his arrival:

> At the mention of the man Kimathi, the three guards at the entrance of the camp were suddenly agitated and quickly conferred among themselves. Two of them walked down to meet Kimathi while the third hurried into the camp to warn General Kaluku of the Field Marshal's sudden and unexpected arrival. (Kahiga 1990, 2)

From this initial description the reader learns that Kimathi is not an ordinary character.

After the introduction, Kahiga uses two narrators, Agnes Ndiritu and General Kaluku, to express different views about Kimathi. Midway through the novel we are told,

> Before coming to the forest her image of Kimathi had been of a man with a long sword going around the country like an angel of death, cutting down the enemy. Now she was used to the real man—a tired, rather lonely man with books and a stack of papers, obsessed not with killing but organizing the killing. (Kahiga 1990, 144)

Here Kimathi is shown from a double-edged perspective—on the one hand he's a thinker and strategist; on the other, he's an organizer of killings, albeit for a cause.

Later, Agnes Ndiritu narrates,

> I used to think Dedan Kimathi was a kind of a god; that he could change himself into a cat or a leopard. Now I know he is just a man. But he is not an easy man to know. He has changed. He has surprised me during this war—with his brain and energy, and power to control. (Kahiga 1990, 225)

This narrative helps Kahiga settle on a middle position between Watene's and that of Ngugi and Mugo. While Watene described the "way of the devil," Kahiga combines the mystical and revolutionary parts of Kimathi's character into his portrayal:

> It was as if, in his fierce determination to lead the people to victory, he could not afford to ignore any power, natural or supernatural, that might help him in the overwhelming challenge that he had set for himself—freeing the land through armed struggle against the British. (Kahiga 1990, 113)

In the passage we see Kimathi at the height of power and popularity among his compatriots, yet at the same time, Kahiga offers some not-so-positive human discussion of the character.

The plot is also indicative of Watene's and Kahiga's novels and provides us with different images of Kimathi. While Watene gives the impression of Kimathi as a "heartless killer," Kahiga speaks of a determined leader who instilled morale and a sense of patriotic determination among his young fighters. Even his enemies realized that Kimathi was "the great star of Aberdares" and "Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, the greatest star of all" (Kahiga 1990, 113). This idea of Kimathi as "great star" is constantly used

in Kahiga's text. The strong leader in Watene's text, who keeps close to the shadows and prefers to have darkness as protector (Watene 1974, 83), is Kahiga's Dedan Kimathi, the leader into light and salvation. The mountain is not a "den" but rather a secure camp from which to launch military action against the enemy.

The positive projection of the Field Marshal's image is built with great care. When certain weaknesses are mentioned, Kahiga describes them in such a way that they are overshadowed by the positive portrayal and are thus seen by the reader in the general context of the struggle. This is particularly true of those situations where Kimathi is under intense mental strain as the movement disintegrates due to betrayal by former comrades or when he is concerned for his personal safety and survival.

Kimathi in Freedom Songs

Besides published creative writings, Dedan Kimathi also appears in oral communications, especially in terms of songs and poems. Commonly known as the freedom songs, these represent the might of patriotic political consciousness expressed through an oral medium.

The images of Kimathi in these freedom songs are linked to the theme of the struggle. The best source for these songs is *Thunder from the Mountain: Poems and Songs from the Mau Mau* (1990), edited by Maina wa Kinyatti. In it, songs like "Our Leader, Dedan Kimathi," "The Fountain of Independence," "Kimathi, Save Us from Slavery," and "Kimathi Will Bring Our National Anthem" make it impossible to separate images of Kimathi the leader from Kimathi the person, or from Kenyan independence.

In "Our Leader, Dedan Kimathi," Kimathi appears as an altruistic person of heroic vision who has courageously accepted the burden of leading by example. He calls on others to make a similar commitment: accept and drink from his "cup of pain and suffering, a cup of tears and death":

> If you drink from the cup of courage
> That cup I have drunk from myself,
> It is a cup of pain and of suffering,
> A cup of tears and of death.
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 81)

In this song, the religious parallel is obvious. Here Kimathi's lonely suffering under the colonialists is parallel to the pain inflicted on Christ. Thus, after the pain comes salvation.

Even when they confiscate our property
And kill us
Do not ever despair:
Because of our faith and commitment
We shall defeat the enemy

You must take his courage and endurance
To courageously face tribulations on death
Knowing that you will belong
To the black people's State of Kenya.
(wa Kinyatti 1990, 81)

In "the Fountain of Independence," Kimathi's stoicism is interjected with life-giving qualities. He is perceived as symbolizing and personifying the future independent country.

The fountain of our Independence
Sprang from Kimathi
And he said it would be guarded by the Mau Mau Army
And it would be protected with stones erected around it.
We shall destroy you, the whites
Because you only know robbery and violence.
(wa Kinyatti 1990, 89)

And again:

Those with hearts of steel were made so by Kimathi.
He recruited Kago and then sent him to Nyandarua
To fight for our liberation,
We shall destroy you, the whites
Because you only know robbery and violence.
(wa Kinyatti 1990, 89)

These statements are a powerful voice and a strong indictment against colonialism and all that it represents. Humiliation, violence and deaths are blamed on colonialism and its vagaries. In this poem Kimathi is a life-giving fountain, a source of life to be carefully protected not just for his sake, but for the sake of the masses under the colonial yoke. The image here is self-reinforcing. The "fountain" (source of life) must be guarded "by the Mau Mau Army." The cause of death and suffering—"the whites"—and the colonial hegemonic system with its "robbery and violence" must be destroyed.

Symbolically, this song poses opposing images illustrating the relationship between Kimathi and social forces around him, that is, the "fountain"

Kimathi himself and "those with hearts of steel" who "were made so by Kimathi." This alludes to his role in life giving while at the same time inspiring forces to struggle against colonial oppression. Kimathi emerges as one who calls, ironically, for violence to affirm life against the threats of colonialism. "Kimathi Save Us from Slavery" and "Kimathi Will Bring Our National Anthem" further affirm Kimathi's roles in the struggle. "Go quickly Kimathi / And Save us from this Slavery. Kenya is filled with bitter tears / Struggling for liberation" (wa Kinyatti 1990, 90). And again: "Go now Kimathi / Bring us independence/ Kenya is filled with bitter tears / Struggling for our liberation"(wa Kinyatti 1990, 91).

"Kimathi Will Bring Our National Anthem" further confirms Kimathi's role in the struggle as a heroic leader:

> You shall see our people
> Who have so long been oppressed
> Seizing independence under Kimathi
> Kimathi will identify
> Those who have been oppressing us
> And the British will be driven out,
> Together with their African puppets.
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 91)

Kimathi is still very much "alive" in various poems. As recently as March, 1999, the Nairobi weekly, *The Crusader*, published a poem by an anonymous poet identified only as a patriot. The title of the poem is "Kimathi is Coming Again." In it the poet reinforces the "fighting Kimathi" image and offers a critique of postcolonial Kenya. Specifically, it stated that the dream and the "fruits of independence" that Kimathi fought and sacrificed his life for would not remain unfulfilled. The poem also used a "Halleluya" salutation to evoke conventional Christianity as well as to transcend it.

> Halleluya
> The cry of social justice is blooming again
> Kimathi is getting up
> From the grave of mass graves!
> And he is breaking in another town
> And crying loudly.
> What have you done
> To the poor?
> Why so much suffering?
> (*The Crusader* 1999, 23)

Here it is implied that Kimathi and other freedom fighters are still buried in mass graves ("mass buried") and are awaiting due recognition.

In this poem Kimathi is hailed as the "all-time hero," thus giving him a historical character. Thus, in the title of the poem, "Kimathi's in Here," the Field Marshal is seen not only as fighting colonialism, but also its neocolonial arrangement.

Halleluya! Comrades
Where is the land of squatters?
Who should have inherited the earth?
Where are the graves of freedom fighters?
And their poor families?
Gather them up for
Kimathi is coming again!
(*The Crusader* 1999, 23)

In the poet's vision the historical Kimathi is reified, "calling again for resurrection for a new dawn" (23). "He is coming back" speaks of betrayal of aspiration and objectives.

Kimathi is coming back
In our churches
No!
Where?
In the heart (s) of oppressed men!
The heart of
The worker who is exploited
Daily by foreign investors
And their agents!
(*The Crusader* 1999, 23)

In other words, promises of *uhuru* (independence) remain unrealized and "Kimathi Is Here" to accomplish the task. This is, indeed, a counternarrative to Watene's Dedan Kimathi.

Conclusion

In 1997 Ndirangu, the Kikuyu tribal policeman who shot and captured Kimathi, gave his only newspaper interview. He described his reasons for joining the Colonial Police as an attempt to ease the tension between the two sides. "I thought that being in the Tribal Police would help make

the white man understand the African's plight" (*Sunday Nation*, February 16, 1997).

Ndirangu vividly described what happened the day Kimathi was shot and captured. On October 21, 1956, in a village in the Aberdare Forest, Ndirangu saw a man carrying some sugarcane and trying to cross a ditch. He shouted at him to stop, but the man started running. After missing him twice, Ndirangu shot the man in the thigh, but the man continued to run. Nkirangu finally caught Kimathi, and the following conversation took place:

> "Who are you?" Ndirangu asked.
> "Kimathi," he replied.
> "What is your other name?"
> "Field Marshal."
> "Raise your hands!"
> "I can't because when you were chasing me, you shot me."
> (*Sunday Nation*, February 16, 1997)

After calling other Tribal Police patrol, Ndirangu described the man he had just shot again:

> He looked up at me. He did not even bother to plead with us to let him run away. He looked up at me and asked me:
>
> "Are you the one who shot me?
> "Yes," I replied.
> "*Ni wega* [It's all right]."
> (*Sunday Nation*, February 16, 1997)

After the capture of Kimathi, Ndirangu's fate began to change. As a reward, the man earned about Shs. 2,000. With it he bought a truck, which the villagers nicknamed *Muthirimo wa Kimathi*, meaning "Kimathi's thigh where he was shot" and refused to board it. He tried to use it as a *matatu* (minivan); again, the villagers boycotted it and would bang it on its sides. He tried to run a hotel, but the people refused to patronize it. His business struggled and eventually went bankrupt. The hotel buildings were eventually burned down under suspicious circumstances. The man's ten children were regularly harassed in school because their father had shot Kimathi. Ndirangu said, "I don't feel bad about what people said about me. Kimathi was polite and kind to me after I captured him. He had prophesied the day he would be captured" (*Sunday Nation*, February 16, 1997).

Postcolonial Kenya and its economic, political and ideological construction require that Mau Mau discourse be discredited. However, it appears that after all these years, the Field Marshal evokes enormous popular respect, even from the man who shot and captured him. The enigmatic but inspiring Field Marshal, it seems, is deeply ingrained in Kenyan popular memory.

4

Women and Mau Mau

with Margaret Gachihi

On March 14, 1922, a crowd of approximately 7,500 people, including 150 women, assembled in front of the Nairobi Central Police Station. They were protesting the arrest of Harry Thuku, a Kikuyu nationalist leader, and demanding his release. Some African male leaders tried unsuccessfully to get Thuku released while others tried to persuade the crowd to disperse. In the crowd there was a woman named Mary Wanjiru. She was angry because Thuku was not being freed and because male nationalist leaders were compromising their stand on releasing Thuku. To emphasize her point and displeasure with male leadership, Wanjiru adopted a traditional Kikuyu insult, *guturama*, an act that entails showing female nakedness and insulting the manhood of the men in the audience. Mary Muthoni Wanjiru declared, "You take my dress and give me your trousers. You men are cowards. What are you waiting for? Our leader is in there; let us set him free" (Roseberg and Nothingham 1966, 52). Hearing this, the entire crowd surged towards the police station, and police guarding the station opened fire. Wanjiru's challenge and the women's ululations seemed to empower entire crowd, which refused to disperse. Meanwhile, nearby in the exclusively white settlers' Norfolk Hotel, white revelers watched the commotion and eventually opened fire on the fleeing crowd, killing 21 people (other reports indicate between 25 and 250 people were killed), 4 of them women, including Wanjiru. A great many were injured.

This act of defiance was short-lived, and it failed to get Thuku released. However, some facts emerged from this spontaneous act of defiance. One such fact was that the leadership rested on a woman, who acted in opposition to men. Broadly speaking, this act showed that women could act decisively in a political situation. Significantly, it counters the myth that women in colonial societies are passive, docile, and submissive.

The colonial construction of the Kenyan woman as a "passive" sexual object and sight are intrinsic to colonial fantasy.[1] Another example of female resistance against such colonialist stereotyping was the case of Mekatilili wa Menza, the leader of Giriama people of the coast. During the early twentieth century, she organized the Giriama revolt against the British, which took colonialists three years to subdue (Wa Thiong'o 1981, 46–48; Mugi-Ndua 2000; Johnson 1981). Mekatilili spoke of the theft of their land and humiliation by the British. In the Giriama territory, she established a parallel government and appointed Wanji Wa Mandoro to run it. The Giriama patriots fought bravely. The British, instead of recognizing sophisticated military strategy and the political character of the struggle, branded Mekatilili as a "witch" (Wa Thiong'o 1981, 47). Mekatilili and Mandoro were captured in November 1913 and were exiled in Gusiiland, far from the coast. On January 14, 1914, Mekatilili helped her fellow detainees escape from prison. Already an old woman, she walked all the way to the coast to resume resistance against the British. She was eventually captured on August 7, 1914, and detained. However, "She remained proud, defiant and unrepentant to the very end" (Wa Thiong'o 1981, 48).

The main objective of this chapter is to further argue that women's participation in Mau Mau should be used to counter the representation and colonial construction of Kenyan women. The chapter will argue that it is a mistake to confine women's role in Mau Mau to "passive participation" and points out that women were also active combatants. We begin with the colonial construction of women.

Colonial Construction of Kenyan Women

Let us start with the Belgian Congo. The narrator of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1975) describes a woman when he encounters her on the shores of the Congo River.

> She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to her knees, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and

> mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (Conrad 1975, 87)

Here, according to Loomba (1998, 152), female bodies symbolized a conquered world. This symbolism was apparent in Kenya as well. In this section our primary objective is to offer a narrative analysis of the transformation that Kenyan women's lives have gone through under the impact of British colonialism. However, our emphasis will be to explore female commercial sexual activities, because the colonial discourse on women in Kenya always centers on this issue, making them an object of fantasy, surveillance, and control. Following Luise White (1990a, 35), we could argue that the impact of new means of economic production introduced into the conquered land fundamentally altered women's role in colonial Kenya and in turn compelled women to be engaged in commercial sexual exploitation.

Gavin Kitching (1980) has argued that during the period of 1905–18, while Britain established its foothold, the Kenyan social structure went through a rapid transformation. Kitching's main objective was to show, quantitatively and historically, the emergence of a new class in Kenya, which he identified as the "petty bourgeoisie," as an integral part of colonial transformation in Kenya (Kitching 1980, 16–17). In precolonial times, the African labor force was engaged in agricultural activities: livestock raising, hunting, and traditional economic activities. British colonialism changed all this. It created a new labor force associated with the colonial administration, including various kinds of service works like teaching, as well as semi-skilled and unskilled activities in the transportation sector. These new occupations, according to Kitching (1980, 120), further linked the new labor force to the newly installed colonial educational system. Kenyan agricultural land was now alienated from the native population and controlled by European settlers. Many in the new Kenyan agricultural labor force (squatters) were permanently settled on large European farms and were contractually obliged to live and work within the farms.[2] British colonialism also transformed Kenyan businesses and the trade labor force. It undermined nineteenth-century caravan trading and introduced "new" forms of tradition, like the retail sale of food and drink. All of these changes had a definite impact on Kenyan women's lives and economic positions. In precolonial times, women's economic activities included engagement in household economies, as well as both local and regional trade, and played a primary role in food production (Presby 1986, 256). All this changed with the arrival of colonialism. Colonialism introduced a new economy with widespread use of money and commercialization that transformed production not only for market, but production for surplus. It also introduced a new view of women's life and work.

> Thousands of Kikuyu women became involved in new forms of agriculture, labor, and the double burden of indigenous agricultural production and labor for European farmers became part of the economic realities of their lives. (Presby 1986, 258)

Kanogo (2005) in her recent studies of Kenyan women under colonialism argues that colonial law played an important role in the construction of women, which "boiled down to the issue of control" (Kanogo 2005, 33). Indeed, the imposition of new colonial law lent a veneer of "improving" women's status, but in reality it was an attempt to control women's employment and health, as well as an attempt to prevent the movement of girls and women to both urban and rural areas (Kanogo 2005, 33). To colonial authorities, "flight to Nairobi (on the part of Kenyan women) was perceived as an obvious route to prostitution" (Kanogo 2005, 33). We will return to this issue later in this section.

Another aspect of the process noticed by Norman Leys is that during the early phase of colonialism in Kenya, colonial authorities made every effort to "make him [the male wage laborer] leave home to work for alien and often absentee landlords" (1926, 306). These wage-earners, according to Leys, quite often failed to return home, and this led to the abandonment of tribal and village ties (1926, 308). At the same time, the colonial authorities adopted various draconian laws to make sure that male wage earners returned to work to ensure proper collection of taxes. This attempt was not entirely successful, but the process of forced recruitment of laborers continued (Van Zwanenberg 1975, 167). This process of the emergence and recruitment of wage earners has significant impact on the sexual construction of women in colonial Kenya. The emergence of Kikuyu women as wage earners in British agriculture plantations and the failure of male wage-earners have greatly facilitated the emergence of commercial sex workers in Kenya (White 1990, 37).[3]

Closely related to the process of the emergence of wage earners is the young men's access to cash with which they could purchase cattle as payment for bride wealth. With the increase of bride wealth, the price and demand for cattle also rose. Fathers increasingly felt that daughters would bring more livestock into the family, so the daughters were married off to suitors who could provide more cattle. For a young man, the only way to acquire bride wealth was through wage labor that the British introduced. This process however, was often lengthy and cumbersome.

According to White, this helped bring about "entrepreneurial prostitutes" who used their earnings from the repeated sale of sexual relations to acquire livestock (White 1990, 37). This connection between the colonial

construction of sexuality and prostitution is further elucidated in Nairobi during the last century.

> When we went to pick beans, we sometimes found these Kibura men, so it was extra money; we went to pick beans and had a man in secret. Sometimes a woman would go there just for the men, she would take a *gunnia* (gunny sack) so that no one would be suspicious, it looked like she was going to pick beans but she would use the *gunnia* as a blanket [. . .]. When they saw a woman lying on her *gunnia* they would take out their money, and she would motion for him to lie down with her. They paid us and sometimes they gave us babies, so we were rich, we had money and babies that way. (White 1990a, 41)

We began this section by pointing that "conquering land" by colonialism is equated with "conquering women's bodies," hence controlling them.

Thus, the management of colonized land involved domination and control. This, as Ann Laura Stoler informs us, was "fundamental to the colonial order of things" (1995, 4). This "colonial order of things" in Kenya was constructed according to particular relations of ruling that involved forms of knowledge and an institutional structure of sexual, racial, and class regulation and domination, which in turn shaped its resistance and subversion. In other words, a large part of the ideological construction of the *colonial order of things* designated white masculinity as the norm, with the corresponding racialization and sexualization of colonialized people (Mohanty et al. 1991, 15).

The colonialist project and *colonial order of things* were fundamentally of the patriarchal/masculine Europe self. This masculine "self" penetrated the colonial world, thus masculinizing colonization. This binary relationship between the colonial and colonized leads to particular relations of rule and forms of knowledge. The forms of knowledge are based on rigid and hierarchical division between the colonizers and the colonized. The physical, symbolic, and sexual relations between colonial master and the colonized subject were essential in maintaining social distance, power, and authority over the latter, that is, colonized subjectivity. The colonial master is represented as an "English gentleman" who embodied authority, discipline, fidelity, and chastity, as well as being one born to govern. Within these rigid social and sexual boundaries, the colonized were described not as simple and innocent but—especially in the case of colonized women—as promiscuous, loose, and immoral. This is the fundamental idea of the colonial construction of women. This explains the almost paranoid colonial obsession regarding prostitution and venereal diseases and the colonial state's stern warning against soldiers and administrators consorting with native women.

Helen Callaway (1987) reports that in 1909 Lord Gewe issued a confidential circular regarding "proper behavior" of colonial officers in Africa; the circular, known as the "concubinage circular," warned white colonial officers against socializing with native women because it would later affect their effectiveness as rulers. This is a good example of constructing and regulating sexuality of native women by dichotomizing between the "available native women" and "colonial administrators" or "white men." This dichotomy, once again, is created in terms of the overall colonial project. However, the colonial construction of sexuality in Kenya was also relayed through official attitudes towards prostitution and venereal diseases, which White (1990a) calls "a colonial obsession"(37). This connection between venereal disease and prostitution worried the colonial military authorities greatly.

A military intelligence report of October 1942, issued by the Central Province Provincial Commissioner's office, reported that:

> An unfortunate rumor went round two locations during the month that young native girls were about to be conscripted for immoral purposes into the military; as a result some 30 to 40 girls were reported to have bolted to Nairobi. A rescue party of one Tribal Police man and 2 Njamas has set out to find them and return them. (KNA/PC/CP/13/1/1)

The "obsession" with venereal disease was clearly a high priority on the colonial agenda, since venereal disease was seen as having a negative effect on the military, and the military was the main vehicle for maintaining colonial authority. Thus the 1942 military Intelligence Report by the Central Province's Provincial Commission's office read, "Venereal disease at Nanyuki continued to attract attention. The military have undertaken the treatment of women during the month and the results on the troops have been highly satisfactory" (KNA/PC/CP/13/1/1). And again,

> The problem of venereal diseases among the troops has been tackled during the month [October 1942]. The administration made available a plot in the native village, and a temporary E. 1. [emergency clinic] has been erected where the military treat the local prostitutes with drugs supplied. The incidence of the disease has been found to be appalling and once more this emphasizes the urgency for better medical facilities at Nanyuki. (KNA/PC/CP/13/1/1)

During the Mau Mau period, prostitution was connected with "law and order." Various attempts have been made to show that prostitutes, especially around the Nairobi area, were helping Mau Mau. In a letter to Nairobi's

Commissioner of Police, an informer who identified himself/ herself as "Jamay" wrote:

> I wish to inform you that near the post-office, Limuru, live some common prostitutes with their male friends. They sell Kikuyu Beer in great quantities and commit adultery with any one they find. One of the prostitutes is called Joyce. She lives with a Jaluo friend named Samuel. The other is called Valeli and she lives with a Jaluo named Otieno. Besides these two, there are many other Kikuyu prostitutes who also live there. The two prostitutes Joyce and Valeli are members of the Mau Mau Movement and supply Mau Mau gangsters with some foodstuff and that is why they are selling liquor in great quantities. (KNA/AM/1/13)

This is once again an attempt to connect sexuality, and specifically prostitution, with "law and order" in colonial Kenya, as combating the Mau Mau menace to the colonial authorities was definitely a "law and order" issue.

Thus the colonial construction of Kenyan women has two important aspects to it. First, the transformation of the colonial social structure transformed many women, especially Kikuyu women from Central Province, into wage laborers in white-owned farms; second, the creation of women wage earners also made numerous women, especially in urban areas like Nairobi, enter prostitution (White 1990). Thus, wage workers and sex workers are the two most important aspects of the colonial construction of women in colonial Kenya.

Women of Fort Hall, Central Province

Located a mile from the Mathioya River in Murang'a District of Central Province, the Fort Hall area is an important area of Central Province. It was established by a colonialist pioneer named Francis E. Hall, who in 1900 left Machakos with 40 armed porters and a company of East African Rifles to found a station to which he eventually attached his name. In 1902 Fort Hall was connected with other parts of Kenya when 100 miles of road were constructed linking Fort Hall with the Thika River and Tuso, Kiongu, and Mozera. Another road connected Fort Hall with Nairobi via Kiambu.

Trouble started in Fort Hall during the 1930s. In 1934, three people belonging to a secret society known as watu wa Mungu were killed by the colonial police. Although not much was known about the society, it could be argued that the society was aimed at establishing a covert political movement against the colonial authorities' soil conservation policies in Central Province, which included terracing, intercropping, and planting

trees on steep slopes. In 1934, an Annual Report by the District Commissioner (DC) of the Fort Hall area described the society in this manner:

> Enquiries carried out in Fort Hall District showed that though the movement was confined to a fractional proportion of the population, it had shown signs of a revival during the early part of the year. Steps were taken to quell the movement in the two locations to which it was confined. It is unlikely that this movement, which is a subject for division by the majority of the population, would even attract a large membership. (KNA/DC/FH/6/1)

Women's participation in Watu wa Mungu was not documented, although it can be safely argued that various soil conservation works initiated by colonialists adversely affected their lives. Both men and women were forced to work long hours with little pay. Moreover, because up to 50 percent of Kikuyu men were short-term migrant laborers, and so not always available to work on family plots, the bulk of the additional labor fell on women, and women's labor hours were dramatically increased (Kanogo 1993, 83).

Perhaps the first rebellion against this situation started on July 20, 1946, when a large meeting in the Fort Hall area was organized by the Kenya African Union (KAU).

> It was decided in the meeting that in future no women would take part in the terracing work of the district. This was unfortunate, since amongst the very considerable bands of persons who dug and conserved their soil, more than 50 percent were women. On Monday, July 21st, no women came to work and the men were left to carry on by themselves. It was obvious by the middle of August that not only did the men not wish to do so but also had generally decided that all work would stop. (KNA/DC/FH/1/26. Fort Hall Annual Report 1947, 1)

Various "harsh measures" were taken to ensure resumption of terracing activities, and by October and November, the District Commissioner reported that work had started but "the women had not returned" (1). This work stoppage continued in 1948, a year that the DC, in his Annual Report of 1948, described as the year of "the revolt of the women (KNA/DC/FH1/27. Fort Hall Annual Report 1948, 1). In this particular Annual Report on Fort Hall, some interesting facts emerged.

First, the report indicated collaboration of colonial chiefs with the colonial authorities in the policy of the colonial state; second, it detailed defiance by women of the colonial authorities. Chief Ndungu of Fort Hall area managed to persuade his "recalcitrant females to return" to work (KNA/DC/FH1/27. Fort Hall Annual Report 1948, 1). It was also decided at a local

native council (a colonial organ mostly organized by the state) that women "should return to soil conservation work" (KNA/DC/FH1/27. Fort Hall Annual Report 1948, 1). Women, however, felt otherwise.

> On the 14th April, 2,500 women arrived in the station from Chief Peterson's location and danced and sang and informed everyone that they would not take part in soil conservation measures mainly because they felt that they had quite enough to do at home. (KNA/DC/FH1/27. Fort Hall Annual Report 1948, 1)

The situation deteriorated rapidly. In early May of that year, women decided not to plant grass for purposes of soil conservation. Losing patience, colonial Chief Petersen arrested the women who refused to work.

> He (Chief Peterson) issued orders to certain women to plant grass on their own land and they refused. He proudly arrested them on May 4th and they were as quickly released by a large crowd of their own sex brandishing stickers and shouting Amazonian war cries. (KNA/DC/FH1/27. Fort Hall Annual Report 1948, 2)

This is a remarkable incident. It began as a fairly innocent "work stoppage," a potent weapon for subaltern militancy, which eventually transformed itself into a frontal assault, that is, freeing comrades from detention. The strategy was not static—it changed when state repression, that is, the colonial Chief's method of striking women, changed.

The Fort Hall Women's revolt continued until 1951, about the same time the Mau Mau rebellion began. At the beginning of the 1950s, colonialists began to inoculate stock against rinderpest. This might have been intended as a benevolent act on the part of the colonialist, but the villages from Fort Hall had a different interpretation of the situation because a large number of cattle began to die after they were inoculated.

> A particularly anti-government meeting was held in September and thereafter an anti-rinderpest inoculation campaign started. As a result large numbers of women from seven locations banded together to protest against inoculations during the first fortnight of November, ending up by burying 11 cattle carcasses. They were finally dispersed by the police and over 500 of them were convicted, many to a term of imprisonment. (KNA/DC/FH1/30. Fort Hall Annual Report 1951)

The anti-inoculation protest turned violent in Murang'a District, where hundreds of women descended on inoculation centers, burned down the cattle chutes, and chased away inoculation officials. Hundreds of women

were arrested in the mêlée and scores were injured. However, colonial authority was always reluctant to give credit to women's political consciences and activism. Thus the DC in his report of 1948 argued:

> There can be no doubt whatsoever that they (women) did not do this on their own and were spurred on to the demonstrations by a small clique of young men usually resident in Nairobi, who were and still are, determined to prevent any real progress in an area which for a gross display of over cultivation, lack of fertility and over grazing can not be better any where in the district. (KNA/DC/FHII/27. Fort Hall Annual Report 1948, 2)

The District Commissioner wanted to see women return to work and their political activism cease; however, women's participation in the Mau Mau revolt proved that women's political consciousness had, on the contrary, matured and expanded. This time their objective was bigger: the end of colonialism. To celebrate the Murrang'a (Fort Hall) women's protest against colonial authority, this song was composed:

> Women of Murang'a
> We, the women of Murang'a were arrested
> For refusing to have our goats and cattle poisoned.
> And because we rejected such colonial laws
> We were thrown into prison cells
> And our children were wailing
> Because they had no milk to drink.
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 60)

Women's Participation in Mau Mau: A General Analysis

H. K. Wachanga (1999) in his autobiography described Mau Mau as a battle near Mount Kenya beginning late 1953. There a Mau Mau battalion was formed by Generals China and Tangauika and Brigadier Rui. The battalion camped in Kiriumukuyu near the Tumutumu Mission. The following morning, a young woman named Kanguniu warned the Mau Mau fighters that the British security were aware of their presence and were moving towards them. General China's battalion fought the British soldiers, who attacked with planes and long range artillery, but the Mau Mau fighters reached the Tumutumu Hill camp, and from there the safety of Mt. Kenya forest base. The Mau Mau lost 21 soldiers; the British lost 61. The report by the young girl Kanguniu saved more than a thousand lives (Wachanga 1975, 70). A song that the Mau Mau fighters wrote to commemorate the success goes in part,

> Good luck came through one girl
> Whose name was Kanguniu with her warnings to us.
> She saved many of our lives.
> (Wachanga 1999, 70–71)

Kanguniu was not an actual combatant in the war, but her timely warning saved a thousand combatant lives, which is no less important than the actual fighting. While describing women's role in the Mau Mau revolt, this is a very important issue to keep in mind.

The prelude of any revolt against oppression starts with a great deal of organization and the accumulation of logistics like weaponry in a situation of armed struggle. Oathing was preparation for the Mau Mau. The clandestine Mau Mau oath, as Gachihi informs, began in 1947 in the Rift Valley, and the Central Province followed suit in 1952 (Gachihi 1986, 107). The oath, despite being described in colonial state propaganda as "vile savagery" with "disgusting perversions" was to become the strongest binding factor that created a common bond of secrecy and defiance among those who took part in it. And women of Central Province actively took part in Mau Mau oathing.

Women not only took an active part in these oath-taking ceremonies but also were bound by them. The District Commissioner, Embu, records that the women took the oath in the Baricho area after all the men had done so (KNA/ARC/(MAA)-2/3/36VII Central Province Annual Report 1953, 3).

However, it should be pointed out that oathing does not translate into participation in actual combat. Some of the women were further categorized and assigned to different tasks in the movement:

> It is from this broad spectrum of "members" through the administration of oath that recruitment was carried out in the urban as well as the rural areas, among the squatters in European farms, in villages, in Government offices and in European households, in the police and military force and even among the ranks of the infamous Home Guards. (Gachihi 1986, 109)

Recruitment and participation of both women and men in the revolt should be categorized as follows: (1) recruitment through oathing; (2) oath takers who showed considerable commitment to the cause were given active roles including participation in combat duties. This distinction between the "passive wing" (support wing) and the "military wing" should be seen in this conceptual distinction in recruitment and participation. At the beginning of the chapter we provided an example of women's political agitation in colonial Kenya, long before the outbreak of Mau Mau. This political agitation against different policies of colonialism continued and

finally culminated in their participation in Mau Mau. Indeed, women's participation in both combat and support wing were vitally important in the guerrilla war situation. However, women's participation in Mau Mau can be seen through different conceptual lenses. In any military campaign, there are two interrelated strategies: (1) actual combat or frontal assault of the enemy with armed cadres and (2) network or support systems. The latter usually involve intelligence gathering (especially on enemy troop movements), providing shelter and food, and other logistics. In guerrilla war situations, that often involves ambushing and hit-and-run attacks. The importance of this second strategy cannot be overestimated.

Women and the Passive Wing of Mau Mau

Santorou (1996, 256) distinguishes the women who participated in the Mau Mau revolt in two categories, as discussed above: the passive wing and the military wing. "Passive" is essentially a term that colonialists used to identify and describe women's participation, meaning the network that was established among the population to give support to the "military wing" that did the actual combat.

The colonial government was informed about the activities of the "passive wing." "The part played by women to aid the terrorist was considerable. [. . .] [They] carried food to gangs in the forests and some were caught dressed as *askaris*" (KNA/ARC/(MAA)-2/3/36. Central Province Arrival Report 1953). And again, "In September, the Chura location appeared to become a center of the Mau Mau central committee, and every Itura had its own sub-committee, nor did they lack a women's section. The latter [. . .] may well be described as 'the eyes and ears of Mau Mau'" (KNA/AR/326/KBU/44. Annual Report, p. 1).

Though the government was quite aware of women's role in Mau Mau, it was unable to pinpoint exactly what role they played in the revolt. Quite a number of women were identified as "spies" and "couriers" and the "eyes and ears of Mau Mau." That might be so because quite a few women were also active in the military wing as well. In the Mwathe meeting at the Aberdare forest in August 1953, it was decided that women should be commissioned "up to the ranks of colonial women officers" on the basis of their abilities as warriors, which they were henceforth to be considered, along with the men (Barnett and Njama 1966, 227). As early as 1953, the colonial government had realized that women were not only active members of Mau Mau, providing essential commodities or acting as food carriers, but also that some of them were actually combatants in the Mount Kenya and Nyandarua forests. In a government press release quoted in the then most

widely read daily, the *East African Standard*, a commentary, typical of many others that decried the active participation of women in the Mau Mau struggle, ran thus:

> Mau Mau women terrorists struck for the first time in Fort Hall reserve when a gang, of which they were members, killed three men, five children and a woman in a night raid in Muriani [. . .].We have known for sometime that there are women terrorists just as bad as the men, operating with some gangs. They are real hardcore Mau Mau fanatics. This is the first time, however, we can definitely state that they have killed. (*East African Standard* October, 1953)

Whereas it is undisputed that the Mau Mau fighters received substantial support from a large percentage of the population in the Kikuyu reserves, the contribution of the women in the struggle who were part of the guerrilla forces in the forest should not be overemphasized. The major reason for this is that generally, and in comparison to their male fighters, women fighters—those who actually went into the forest—were very few. It is in this light that one must assess their contribution.

Not all women who took to the forest were considered to be combatants. This arises from the mistaken assessment of fighters solely on the basis of their military potentialities. Interestingly enough, it is the male fighters, in their accounts, who are ambivalent. They do not state clearly whether or not women were actually fighters. Instead, they relegate them to an auxiliary corps that only facilitated men guerrillas to fight more efficiently by carrying out largely "domestic" duties in the forest. It must, however, be stated quite clearly that women, regardless of whether they entered into actual combat, played an essential role in support activities such as transport, signals, medical corps, and ordnance. Disregarding the importance of these tasks to the struggle is a serious omission that disregards the role played by women in Mau Mau and thus undermines the role they played in the revolt. Preseley argues,

> Women did, indeed, provide a backbone for Mau Mau. Since the women's chain of command had been established as early as the 1940s, the leadership in the hierarchy knew the degree of commitment of women in the entire district and had an efficient means of increasing the numbers of women who were associated with Mau Mau. (Preseley 1992, 131)

The so-called passive wing of Mau Mau women includes their participation in transportation activities as well. Women did this in conjunction with the men. Combatants were rarely idle in a camp. When they were not

engaged in combats or raids for food in the reserves or in the European-settled areas, they would be constructing hideouts or moving into new ones or cleaning their weapons. Medical provisions had to be obtained somehow. Some camps even had their own hospitals full of drugs obtained from drugstores where Mau Mau fighters had reliable allies. Women often aided the doctors by not only looking after the stock but also by helping to nurse the sick and injured fighters.

When the time came to move camp, everything would be packed, and women were often used to transport loads to the next destination; many forest fighters remembered women transporting essential camp equipment. The bulk of women in the camp clustered around the actual fighters as support wings. They had an assortment of duties according to the priorities of each camp. There were cooks, those who went on food-gathering missions, couriers, transporters, and so on.

Anna Wamuyu Kabubi, alias Cinda Reri, argues that women who found themselves as a part of the passive wing were often willing allies. According to her, most women in the forest were tough and could not be used by other fighters against their will. Quite clearly arguments often arose among group leaders as to what the role of women should be, and some felt that women should not have been allowed to stay in the forest in the first place. Others felt that women were welcome to stay in the forest as long as they did so purely as supporters. The great Mwathe meeting of August 18, 1953, clearly reflects this conflict. Some of the 56 leaders present demanded that chores allocated to women should be domestic. In their own words they said, "Their work in camps would include fetching wood, cooking and serving the whole camp, cleaning utensils, mending warriors' clothes" (Barnett and Njama 1966, 240). Mathenge, on the other hand, proposed that no differentiation be made between the male fighters and women participants. On the whole, it appears that camp leaders made independent decisions on how duties were allocated in their own camps.

Another passive role that women played in the struggle was in the security of the camps. The easiest way that the colonial troops could catch the fighters was by following trails that showed signs of recent activities in an area. Therefore, after the fighters had evacuated a camp, for one reason or the other, it was important that all traces of previous occupation in that camp be totally wiped out. This applied more so in situations where the fighters were being pursued by colonial troops. The quick action of Mau Mau fighters often saved them. Women and men who were unarmed would be called upon to dismantle the camp and obliterate all signs of recent habitation. Given that some of these camps were rather elaborate, with underground dugouts, fireplaces and stores, leveling it was not such

an easy task. Indeed, moving camps at a moment's notice became a common feature of life in the forest. Survival in the forest clearly depended on many factors, and whatever role each member played contributed to the good of the whole camp and, in turn, to the success of all the freedom fighters in their struggle. Indeed, in the Mau Mau struggle the activities of the "passive wing" were as vital as those of the military wing for the survival of the revolt itself.

Women and the Military Wing of Mau Mau

As the following interview with Cinda Reri in the next section will reveal, alongside the women in the support wing were some women in the forest who did actively engage in military combat. Actual participants tell of years spent in the forest, not just as supporters of the male fighting forces but as *itungati* (warriors), the term used explicitly to refer to the actual fighters. Their male counterparts have given varying versions of the usefulness of women in the forest. Karari Njama, for example, goes as far as saying that women, in fact, posed problems for other fighters by becoming more of a liability than an asset in the forest operations (Barnett and Njama 1966, 240). There are other cases where it is outright denied that women had been involved in any of the skirmishes. This latter suggestion is immediately refuted by several sources of evidence and accounts of events that tell of some heroic deeds in which women fighters were engaged. Much of this evidence has been preserved in Mau Mau songs (wa Kinyatti 1990). In one such song, for example,

> Kimathi's wife was the secretary
> Of the gallant fighting women's wing
> Bren-gunned in their hideouts by the enemy.
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 103)

In this stanza alone, it is quite clear that there were women combatants in the forest comparable to men. Indeed, individual women emerged as outstanding fighters. A woman like Njoki Waicere from Murang'a, for example, was recognized among the fighters for her courage (Itote 1979, 139, 140). She and five other young women had tricked the Home Guards out of their guns in the Uhuru Camp in Maragua, where almost two thousand fighters were detained. Njoki and her colleagues were consequently welcomed to remain with the forest fighters, where they took weapons and fought many battles. As mentioned earlier, women in Kairo, Murang'a, helped Mau Mau freedom fighters to escape by destroying a camp at Mathioya

and razing it to the ground. They further destroyed a bridge to prevent colonial troops from crossing the river.

Renowned women fighters—such as Marshal Muthoni and Cinda Reri—made names for themselves as combatants. Marshal Muthoni, born in 1931, went into the forest in 1953 at the age of 22 and remained there until December 12, 1963. In her own words, she states that while she was in the forest, she did not think of herself as a woman but operated as the other fighters did—"to fight and to struggle."[4] In other words, there was no distinction between the tasks she had to perform and what the male fighters were doing. Another example is Cinda Reri. This courageous fighter is perhaps best remembered for her active participation in the great battle of the Rui Ruiru River, in which the enemy forces mistook her as the leader of the Mau Mau fighters because of her expert handling of the gun. These two women fighters and others are a clear indication that there were women in the actual fighting force.

Cinda Reri alone had 200 women under her command, a fact that is easily verified by those who were in the forest with her. Such women were allocated duties which included transporting luggage, fetching firewood and water, mending clothes, and delivering messages to the reserves. At times when the situation became desperate, they would also be sent to the reserves to collect food.

Many of the women fighters, however, fled into the forest after finding life in the reserves unbearable, especially those who were in the Home Guards' "bad books." Women in the Mau Mau villages were often beaten by the Home Guards. Those who could no longer stand this chose to go into the forest. Home Guards were the women's worst enemies in the reserves, and they made life particularly difficult for women they were attracted to. Women like Cinda Reri, Nyawira Githinji, and Nyaguthi Theuri decided to flee to the forest after their activities as contacts became known to the authorities. But a large group of both men and women also found themselves in the forest unwillingly. These are the ones who had been surprised by colonial authorities during oathing ceremonies and had consequently fled into the forest to avoid the suffering that inevitably followed.

By whatever means and for whatever reasons, women had gone into the forest. If they were to survive, they had to learn some basic warfare and, more importantly, how to adapt to life there. This, of course, was also true of the other fighters, since the roles that women played were also closely related to those assigned to men. New recruits, whether men or women, learned basic warfare, especially how to handle and clean guns. Not all fighters were involved in actual combat. Since there were relatively very few guns, recruits were also taught other skills, such as how to camouflage

themselves and the art of hiding and erasing evidence of their presence to avoid detection. Women in particular were often given the job of clearing a camp and eradicating all traces of recent habitation before fighters left one camp for another. They would also learn, and this was very important, how to look after injured fighters in a camp, thus acting as a kind of medical corps. For example, Grace Nyaguthii, alias "Mwago," who entered the forest on March 17, 1953, claims that even as early as this in the struggle, she found other women who had long been there. Mau Mau contingents in the forest were generally organized into platoons. Most of the recruits lacked any military training, but some of the leaders were ex-servicemen, and they therefore employed the model drawn from their military and civil experiences (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 297).

Women rarely rose to positions of overall leadership; nevertheless, some groups of women had their own leaders. These women were useful as representatives of women's interests, especially in general meetings. This was unlike the situation in the reserves, where women contacts and leaders were well established, with equal responsibilities equal to their male fellow commanders. Women leaders in both the reserves and the forests, however, had one thing in common: they rose to positions of prominence in the movement because they distinguished themselves in the tasks allocated to them. They were not usually nominated or chosen to positions of leadership by Mau Mau leaders but rather had risen to such positions by proving their capability. Courage, decisiveness, and initiative were qualities sought in women leaders. It was generally recognized that lack of these qualities could lead to a tragic end for many fighters.

The story of Cinda Reri is an example of a fighter who became recognized through her acts of courage, which earned her the leadership of over 200 women in the forest. Details of her life in the forest reveal that her involvement with Mau Mau began as far back as 1951 when she became a Mau Mau contact in Nyeri. Prior to this she had acted as a contact in Karatina, a few miles from her home village, where she received supplies for the movement from a Luo sympathizer, Odede, who was a locomotive train driver and who helped smuggle provisions for the Mau Mau from Nairobi.

She became an even more established activist in the movement when she decided to take to the forest. This decision was partly made for her by circumstances because she came under increasing pressure when the authorities became suspicious of her activities.

Her entry point into the forest was at Kiganjo, Nyeri, in 1953. According to her, her greatest political education was acquired in the series of Mau Mau oaths that she participated in. After the first oath, which she took in

1951 and which aimed at initiating recruits into an understanding of how the land was appropriated by the white men, Reri was convinced that it was necessary—in fact, vital—to use force to regain the stolen land. The oath was an effort to provide some rationale behind the use of violence, forging political unity and mobilizing the masses. Initiates were taught the rightful political boundaries of Kenya and how these boundaries had been usurped by the Europeans. Owing to their relatively small numbers, the contribution to the effectiveness of the movement of the majority of women who went to the forest was not so much in the battlefield but rather in their selfless sacrifice in the support wing. Women who helped transport military supplies and victuals, those stationed to care for the sick and wounded, and those who delivered messages, thus providing a link between the forest and the reserves or between the various camps, surely were performing as important a task as the actual combatants in Mau Mau. Sometime women's participation in revolt transformed from "passive wing" to combat position, as illustrated by Cinda Reri's case.

The problems that might have arisen over their relationship with the male fighters were not so significant as to have been detrimental to their assigned tasks. In any case, it was inevitable that such friction should arise, because all these fighters lived as one entity in the forest. Conflict between male fighters was because there were so many grounds for friction. Gachihi (1986), by interviewing many female Mau Mau combatants, forcefully refutes Karari Njama's assertion that 70 percent of all the women in the forest had been lured or abducted by Mau Mau fighters and that their presence was more detrimental to the cause than it was positive. Indeed, the following interview with Mau Mau commander Cinda Reri will further refute Njama's assertion and prove that women's presence in the revolt was very much an asset for the cause.

A Fight of Her Own: A Conversation with Anna Wamuyu Kabubi, Alias Cinda Reri[5]

Her name is Anna Wamuyu Kabubi, and her Mau Mau name is Cinda Reri. She is 68 years old but looks like she is in her late 50s in her nice skirt and stylish *kitamba*. Her physical build is like any other Kikuyu peasant woman—strong, forceful, and lively, with a strong sense of self-confidence. She speaks very little English, though she understands more than she speaks. As a proud Mau Mau veteran, she is acutely aware of Mau Mau's role in Kenya's independence, women's participation in it, and how to preserve it for future generations.

Q. Mama Reri, thanks for meeting with us to share your Mau Mau experience. First of all, could you please tell us something about yourself and your family background?

A. I was born in 1934 at the village of Kariuthi, Ruguru location. The village is in Mathira division of Nyeri district, Central Province. It is located at the foothills of Mt. Kenya. Karatina is the nearest town to my village. My parents, now deceased, were Mundu Gakuru (father) and Thigia Gakuru (mother). My father was a subsistence farmer who owned about five acres of land and grew coffee, fruits, beans, and vegetables. My mother was a housewife. I have one brother and one sister and I am the oldest. Both of them are alive. I was married to Duncan Kabubi in 1957 when I was 24 years old. My husband was a soldier in the King's Africa Rifles (KAR). He was like my father, a peasant who grew coffee and fruits. My marriage to Duncan was not a happy one. My in-laws never accepted me in their family due to my Mau Mau background. I had five children with Duncan—two sons and three daughters, as well as ten grandchildren. Duncan and I separated in the 1970s and he passed away in 1984.

Q. Tell us something about your education.

A. I went to school at Goramo Private School near my village in 1947. At thirteen I was to be going to a primary school. I went until class five. My education was disrupted by the advent of Mau Mau. The Christian missionaries ran the school. At that particular time, the independent school movement was also running a school nearby and we had close contact with the students and teachers there.

Q. What was your initial contact/experience with whites?

A. My family was quite removed from the white community; we did not live on alienated white-owned land as squatters. My father had very small amount of land, and this land was not alienated. But we were quite aware of white rule in Kenya and how it affected ordinary Kenyans. We lived in constant fear that we might be relocated. At this particular time, a large number of Ngong Masai were relocated in Laikipia area, where I was growing up. This relocation of Masai made them suffer greatly, and they experienced a huge cultural dislocation. We all observed this firsthand. We were scared and always lived with the fear that we might be relocated like the Ngong Masai, to a far away place. That fear was my first experience with colonialism and perhaps the first phase of my political education. As I mentioned before, my father owned a little land, so land alienation was not a threat, but the fear of relocation was overwhelming for a little girl.

Q. Mama, could you please tell us something about your early political education?

A. As I mentioned, my initial political awareness was the fear of relocation, and while I was going to school, we maintained close contact with an

independent school. At that time, the independent school was an important political site. But the most important person who influenced my political awareness was Gakaara Wa Wanjau.[6] He was a traveling agitator of sorts. At that time he was editing an important Kikuyu journal. I was 16 years old when I first met Gakaara. We discussed colonialism, somewhat focusing on South Africa. I remember a hymn that at time my friends and me would sing:

I dream last night that
Kikuyu and Mumbi (traditional Kikuyu god) were in chains
In front of a big ocean.
And [a] big ship is slowly approaching
To take the visitor home and Kikuyu and Mumbi are finally free.

Q. Did the issue of female circumcision arise in your early political education?

A. To me this is not an issue. The politicians who are the enemy of the Kikuyu politicized it. It was designed to create a rift among the Kikuyu. Before the outbreak of the Mau Mau revolt, female circumcision was not a political issue. Politicization of this issue is most unfortunate, and I will not allow my daughters to go through it.

Q. When did you take the oath? Could you please tell us something about it?

(One of the important things about the oath was its vow of secrecy. More than 50 years after Reri took her oath, she was reluctant to disclose the details of the oath. She was visibly uncomfortable when the question was asked).

A. When Kenyatta returned home from London in 1946, there were many political activities taking place, and lots pf people were taking the oath. I took oath in 1948 and was among the first group of people who took oath. In my group there were many girls who took oath. That was essentially a KAU (Kenya Africa Union) oath. It was not a call for arms oath. The main objective of the oath was to recruit other girls into the movement and get them to take the oath. It was to create a political consciousness. The oath was administered differently based on what specific role an individual was assigned to play in the movement. My role was to recruit girls for the movement.

Q. Mama, in your opinion, what is the real objective or aim of the oath?

A. I understand the whole topic of the oath is very controversial, and colonialists tried to belittle the Mau Mau movement by using the oath as a weapon. But to me the oath was very important for the movement. It was meant to bind people together around a political cause. It was a binding force to create a sense of solidarity and friendship among the people.

Q. Was it the only oath you took?

A. No. As I mentioned before, I took the unity oath, which was to recruit girls for the movement to oust the colonialists from Kenya and to establish unity and solidarity among the activists. In 1951 at the Goramo village, Central Province, I took the *batuni* oath (warrior oath). That was a call for arms oath, and it was designed to recruit fighters for the guerrilla movement. At the time I took this oath, we felt that the only way to drive out the colonialists was through military means. This view was confirmed when Kenyatta was arrested with others on October 22, 1952.

Q. The colonialists argued that during the oathing ceremony many bestial things like the drinking of menstrual blood and putting of the penis through a she-goat's genitalia were performed. Please comment.

A. Mau Mau was also a cultural movement and it represented a cultural conflict with colonialists. Oaths were very much connected with the Kikuyu culture. I understand some aspects of the Mau Mau oath were disturbing, but it had to be that way.

Q. I understand that you were in the Nyeri town meeting in 1952. Who spoke at that meeting? What was discussed?

A. Yes, I was at that meeting. All of the important KAU leaders spoke. Kenyatta was under intense pressure from both sides—colonialist and Mau Mau. The colonialists wanted him to denounce Mau Mau, and Mau Mau people wanted him to support their movement. So Kenyatta started talking "double speak." For example, he said Mau Mau should "disappear." But we all knew what he meant. He was referring to the Mikongoe tree roots that were disappearing as they were taking root in the ground. Kenyatta was saying that Mau Mau should go underground. In that meeting, Senior Chief Nderi spoke. He denounced Mau Mau and argued that colonialists did lots of good for Kenya and their rule should continue. He said Kenyans were not ready for independence. We were angry with Senior Chief Nderi, and violence erupted in the meeting. Soon after the meeting, the Senior Chief was murdered by the Mau Mau. To celebrate his demise, we composed the following song:

Nderi sold his people.
Now he is gone and
Left all his possessions behind.

Q. There is a historical record to prove that Dedan Kimathi was in that meeting. Did he speak in that meeting? Can you recall what did he said? Can you evaluate what Kenyatta and Kimathi said?

A. I do not know whether Dedan Kimathi was there or not. But Stanley Mathenge was there. In their speech both Kenyatta and Mathenge supported Mau Mau.

Q. What did you do after your 1951 oath?

A. After the oath I took a maid's job in a white settler's house in Ndarangwa. The Mau Mau leadership put me there. I cannot remember the name of the settler, but his Kikuyu name was *Kihara*, meaning the "bald one." My responsibilities were to take care of his aged mother. We Mau Mau fighters knew that Kihara had guns, and I was given the responsibility to locate the guns in the house. Very quickly I figured out where the guns were located. Then a Mau Mau fighter came to visit me, posing as a relative. I gave the signal to him. At night the Mau Mau fighters raided the house and took away the guns. I also left with them to avoid arrest by the police. After that assignment, I took another job in the house of another white settler named Hines. Within a month I knew the location of his guns. Eventually Mau Mau fighters raided that house as well and took all the guns. In 1953, I was posted near the Nanyoki Airport and was involved in gun running. This assignment allowed me to go back and forth to the forest camp at Mt. Kenya. Once we had such a big cache of guns that we needed a railway wagon to transport them. There a Kamba man named Musoka, who had taken oath, helped us. At that time he was working for the Kenya railway. After that mission, I entered the forest permanently to join the forest fighters.

Q. In your gun running operations, was any one killed?

A. No.

Q. When did you permanently enter the forest?

A. At the end of the 1953, when the villagization began.[7]

Q. What was the name of the battalion you joined initially?

A. It was called the *Hika Hika* (go quickly, go quickly) battalion. Waruhiu Itote (General China) was overall commander of the battalion. Other top ranking commanders were General Tanganyika and General Kariba. Both of them were captured and later hanged by the colonialists. This battalion was also known as the Mount Kenya/Mathathi Army and it incorporated the Nyeri, Embu and Meru areas.

Q. How many women were there in the Hika Hika battalion? What was their role? What specifically was your role?

A. In the *Hika Hika* battalion, there were 30 women combatants who were engaged in various types of activities, like the collection of provisions like food and guns. My role specifically was spying on the colonial army movement. As you know, unfortunately, a large number of anti-Mau Mau forces were constituted of Kenyans, both Kikuyu and non-Kikuyu. So I

concentrated my spying on native colonial police forces. In the camp, food was always scarce, so as a ration commander, my responsibilities were to distribute food among the combatants.

Q. Tell us about your military training.

A. I was, like all the Mau Mau guerrillas, trained by a World War II veteran. His name was Mbithi Manyuira. I was trained in the use of the 303 Enfield rifle, the Bren gun, and the Sten gun, and also in *gaturauhoro*—"a big gun to kill elephant."

Q. I understand that you fought in the Rui Ruiru River battle. Could you tell us something about the battle?

(The battle took place in June 1953, at the banks of the Rui Ruiru River in Mathhira division of the Nyeri district. A large contingent of Mau Mau fighters had trekked from Aguthi to Kaaruthi and was proceeding unsuspectingly into an ambush by the British soldiers. Undoubtedly, it would have been a very disastrous clash for the Mau Mau, as they were unaware of the enemy's presence. Luckily an elderly woman hurriedly contacted the Mau Mau fighters and informed them that the British troops lay in wait. As it turned out, this was one of the most heroic battles that the Mau Mau fought against the British. To celebrate the victory, a song, "Battle of Kaaruthi Valley," was composed [wa Kinyatti 1990, 110–11].)

A. The battle took place in the Kirimukuyu location, presently known as the Ngorano location of Nyeri. That day General Kariba convened a meeting, and about 100 fighters were going from Aguthi to Kaaruthi to attend. The fighters spotted an enemy convoy and soldiers waiting. I was sent to check on what was going on. The enemy soldiers were in a combat position, and a fire fight broke out immediately. The enemy soldiers tried to encircle and isolate us. I am from that area, so I knew the area very well. I was given the responsibility of hoisting the flag to provide safe directions for the fighters. Following my directions, the fighters crossed the river safely and fought their way back to the forest. There were lots of shots fired.

Q. Did you carry a gun that day? What kind of gun? How many rounds did you fire?

A. I was carrying a 303 Enfield rifle. I was given the responsibility of carrying the flag, so I gave my gun to another person.

Q. It was known that an old lady alerted the combatants about the presence of the enemy. Is it true? Who was she? Was she from the same area?

A. Yes! I remember her very well. She was a very brave lady. That time she was my age now (early 70s). After the incident, everyone started calling her "the mother of freedom fighters." I knew her son very well. We are from the same area.

Q. What were the enemy causalities?

A. One village collaborator named Kibariuri was killed, and six African *Askaris* and two "Johnnies" [British soldiers] were killed.

Q. And Mau Mau causalities?

A. Eight freedom fighters were killed and two wounded.

Q. How many guns were recovered?

A. Two Bren guns, a few 303 Enfield rifles and many types of ammunition were recovered.

Q. Tell us something about the Iriani battle.

A. This battle took place in December 1954. The mission was to eliminate Colonial Chief Eliud, a collaborator. He managed to escape, but we engaged in a firefight with the soldiers who were guarding him. In our group there were 20 male and 5 female combatants led by Chotora Kirwa. In the battle five Mau Mau combatants and 15 government soldiers were killed. We managed to collect five guns, many *pangas* (machetes), *simis* (swords), bows, and arrows.

Q. Tell us about the Gichuthini battle.

A. Yes. That battle took place in January 1954 in Gichuthieri of the Mathira division. That was the battle where General China was wounded and captured. I was carrying a shotgun that day. After attending a battalion meeting, our fighters were ambushed by the colonial forces. Fierce firefights broke out, and I was injured in the leg. (Showing her left ankle where there is a deep dent).

Q. What did you after you were injured?

A. After I was injured, I was taken to a Mau Mau sympathizer's home. His name was Gachau Mwanga from Thungoma village. From there I was taken to a Mau Mau field hospital. It was a cave-like structure. The fighters would bring their wounded to the hospital, and sympathizers would bring medical provisions.

Q. How long did you stay in the hospital, and what did you do afterwards?

A. I stayed in the hospital for a few weeks. I was carrying some important documents for Dedan Kimathi. Those documents were given to me by our commander, General China, to pass on to Kimathi.

Q. Did you know what were in those documents?

A. Yes. Registration of fighters, their names, where they came from, things like that. I thought they were important documents and if they fell in enemy hands, the families of the fighters would be in big trouble. I managed to give the documents to Kimathi later.

Q. What happened to General China's battalion after he was captured?

A. It was dispersed and I was moved to the Nyandura battalion under Kimathi.

Q. Did you know Karari Njama? What was his role in the movement?

A. Yes, I did know Karari Njama. He was an official recorder, and in that capacity he managed to observe a great many things. He was also an educated man, which might be the reason he was appointed as the official record keeper. He was a very quiet man and not at all outgoing. He was not a very good orator. He lacked leadership qualities and was very subservient.

Q. In his autobiography, he mentioned that women in the forest were a liability and an inconvenience. Your comment, please.

A. I do not know why he said this. There was strict ban on men sleeping with women. That might explain his remark. In all the battles that I participated in, women carried guns and fought side by side with men. At the battle in which General China was captured, five women fighters were also captured. Many other women lost their lives in other battles. So I disagree with Karari Njama that women in Mau Mau were liabilities.

Q. Please describe your impression about General China, your commander in the Hika Hika *battalion*.

A. General China was a great leader and organizer. Due to his military background during World War II, he was a great military strategist. He was also the only child of his parents. He personally led and fought many battles. He was a fair-minded leader and always insisted on fair trials for lawbreakers among the Mau Mau fighters. But we always wished that China would be killed in battle rather than captured because we knew that if he were captured alive, he would talk to the enemies, and he did.

Q. Which battalion were you assigned to after China's capture and the dispersal of his battalion?

A. I was assigned to a battalion in the Nyandaru area under the leadership of Nderitu. He was a sub-leader under Dedan Kimathi.

Q. It is well known among Mau Mau historians and Kenyans that there was a serious disagreement between Dedan Kimithai and Stanley Mathenge. What was your interpretation of the disagreement?

A. Yes, there was disagreement between these two Mau Mau leaders. The disagreement was based on style of leadership and military strategy. We all viewed Mathenge as an imposter because he was very close to the Kenya Africa Union (KAU) and its leadership, and we all knew that the KAU leadership was against Mau Mau. Whenever there was a vote on some issue, everybody would side with Kimathi. Mathenge's lack of education always went against him. He was also a very bad- tempered man. We all disliked him.

Q. Mathenge always complained that Kimathi attempted to kill him. Do you know much about it?

A. No. I am not aware of that. There was always a fierce rivalry between those two leaders; that much I do know.

Q. Could please tell us about your impressions of Dedan Kimathi?

A. I had the opportunity to observe him very closely. He was a charismatic and spellbinding orator; very soft spoken and very feminine in his mannerisms. At the same time, he was an extremely jealous person and was dictatorial in nature. If he disliked someone based on his first impression, he would not change his mind. He was very confident about his abilities as a leader, but he was arrogant, unreasonable, and cruel. For example, one day a man went into the forest camp to preach salvation. Kimathi instantly disliked the man and ordered the man to be killed. Other freedom fighters intervened and helped the man to escape.

Q. Was Kimathi supportive of women combatants?

A. No, he did not care much for women combatants. He was not concerned about them at all.

Q. Is it true that although Kimathi was married during the struggle, he was living with a mistress in forest camp?

A. No, I am not aware of that.

Q. Did you manage to get some idea about Kimathi's vision of postcolonial Kenya?

A. Yes. Kimathi was a very smart man. He always had his eyes on the big picture and had a broad political perspective of the struggle. He was a visionary leader who could see far ahead. He talked quite often about the Kenya he'd like to see once whites were driven out. He talked about establishing a monument to commemorate the Mau Mau revolt. He was also concerned about who would fill the official positions once Europeans were gone, as Kenyans were not well educated. To me, Kimathi was a contradictory man, a great visionary leader, brave man, great organizer but also a cruel and jealous man.

Q. Could you please comment on the Kimathi and Kenyatta relationship?

A. Kenyatta never supported Mau Mau. He always supported the home guards created by the colonialists to fight the Mau Mau. Kenyatta always felt that Kimathi was a threat to his leadership. I believe that had Kimathi lived, he would have overthrown the Kenyatta government. I also believe that Kenyatta could have saved Kimathi from hanging, because the colonialists contacted Kenyatta after Kimathi's capture and wanted to know what to do with Kimathi. Kenyatta said the British should do with Kimathi what they usually do with murderers. Kenyatta did not intervene to save Kimathi's life, for he knew very well that as long as Kimathi lived, he was a threat to Kenyatta's life. Kenyatta called a meeting in 1963 at Ruringu that many Mau Mau fighters attended. Kenyatta insulted the Mau Mau fighters and

said that Mau Mau fighters would not be awarded and they would not be part of the government. I know all this because I was at that meeting, and I was taking minutes. I was very angry with Kenyatta. About 400 men and women fighters attended the meeting. Afterwards, all 400 of us formed an organization called Wa Kirinyga to upheld Mau Mau ideals. Another meeting of the organization was held at Nyandaru in late 1963. In late 1963 or early 1964, I can not remember, Bai Munge, a Meru Mau Mau fighter and a leader of wa Kirinyga was killed. I know who killed Bai Munge. (Mama Cinda Reri refused to elaborate).

Q. What happened when you were assigned to Nedritu's battalion?

A. Those were very new surroundings for me. I was not familiar with the area. While I was in that battalion, I did not participate in military action as I had before. My responsibilities were record keeping, intelligence gathering, and arms collection. In that capacity I came across two Kikuyu colonial policeman. One of them was from my area and knew me well. They are still alive and I see them quite often. [She laughs.] I told them I came to surrender, which was a lie, because I came to steal their guns. I was interrogated in the Sagana camp at the Marwa location. The authority lacked any evidence to prosecute me, so I was put in restrictive duty in my home area. After that I was allowed to go home and was reunited with my family, and that was the end of my life as a Mau Mau combatant.

Q. In Mau Mau historical books, in general, women's contributions are not properly acknowledged. Why is that?

A. I think this is basically for cultural reasons. Culturally, women are viewed as submissive, and they are not supposed to take up arms and fight.

Q. You participated in the struggle. Are you happy about the Kenya that emerged after independence?

A. No, not at all. I was very disappointed. It was like a football game where after the victory the players are not rewarded. It was the spectators who got all the rewards and benefits.

Q. What kind of Kenya, do you think, would have come if Mau Mau had succeeded?

A. I think land distribution would have been given priority. The government posts would have been filled by the patriots who fought for independence, not by loyalists who collaborated with the British.

Q. Do you think Mau Mau was a failure?

A. No, it was not a failure. It accomplished what it aimed for; to kick the colonialists out, and it did that. Unfortunately, all the ideals on which Mau Mau fought for did not materialize.

Q. Do you think Mau Mau was a Kikuyu affair?

A. Somewhat. Embu and Meru fought and supported Mau Mau. Some Masai also fought for Mau Mau causes. Some Luo nationalist leaders like Oginga Odinga and Ohieng Oneko supported Mau Mau. But it remained largely a Kikuyu affair.

Q. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of Mau Mau?

A. To me the lack of unity among the top leaders was the single worst weakness of the movement. There were many self-appointed leaders with no leadership qualities at all. These self-appointed leaders looked down on other leaders elected by the combatants. Women were always put in the background, and that was not fair. Earlier we talked about Karari Njama, who said women were a liability for the movement. This is not true at all. Many women were left in the reserve to raise children while the men were fighting. To me these women were also Mau Mau fighters. In the camp, women fighters did everything, fighting by carrying guns, cleaning, cooking, and taking care of sick and wounded. The disunity among the Mau Mau fighters continued. That is why Mau Mau did not have any definite impact on Kenya's history after independence. That is why Mau Mau ideals did not materialize.

Q. Did Mau Mau hasten or delay Uhuru *(independence)*?

A. To me Mau Mau hastened *Uhuru*. If not for the Mau Mau, the colonialists would have stayed longer.

Q. How could Mau Mau contributions to Kenya's independence be preserved?

A. There should be full official recognition of Mau Mau fighters after independence. There should be a Mau Mau museum and monuments.

Q. In your opinion, what are Mau Mau's legacies?

A. It paved the way to independence and created the conditions of freedom that all Kenyans enjoy today.

Q. How can the younger generation be taught about the legacy of Mau Mau?

A. How can that be taught when it is not preserved? The history of Mau Mau should be collected and records should be properly kept and relevant materials should be published. Only then will people appreciate what Mau Mau did for Kenya.

Q. Thanks, Mama.

Conclusion

For any revolutionary movement to succeed there must be plans both organizational and military. Mau Mau was no exception. It was a revolutionary movement against colonial oppression. The first phase of the movement involved establishing a network, contacts and a support base. Afterwards, the

revolt was gradually transformed into a military campaign. These two phases are inseparable. Indeed, the success of the latter depends on the former. Women participated actively in both phases of the movement. The rigid distinction between the so-called "passive wing" and the "military wing" may be misleading, since women participated in both of these activities.

In a way, the women's role in the revolt is more prominent and noteworthy because they were active in both the passive wing and the military wing, as suggested by Cinda Reri's testimony. They carried guns and fought, and they were also involved in the intelligence work, as well maintenance of the forest camps, thus debunking the persistent colonial myth that women in colonial situations are merely sexual objects. I believe Cinda Reri's testimony shows the need for the construction of "autonomous gender subjectivities" that need to be incorporated while writing the history of Mau Mau.

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Mau Mau and the Critique of Nationalism

As argued at the end of the previous chapter, among all other forms of resistance against colonialism or formulating countercolonial discourse, "nationalism," or the idea of "nation," remains paramount. Essentially an ideological construct, nationalism encompasses economic, social, and cultural dimensions of anticolonial resistance. After the departure of the colonial power, significantly, the postcolonial ruling elite adopted nationalism as "nation-building" or, to echo Gramsci, a hegemonic project. This was exactly the case in Kenya. In colonial Kenya, the idea of "nationalism" went through various transformations (Ogot 2000, 6). It was first articulated in 1944 by the Kenya African Study Union (KASU), which was became the Kenya African Union (KAU) and finally, in 1960, all these morphed into one single organization, the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU). After independence in 1963, KANU ruled postcolonial Kenya continuously until it was ousted from power in December 2002. Despite these changes in different political organizations that demanded independence, the idea of "nationalism" and "nation" remain central both in the colonial and postcolonial context. How did the KANU idea of "nationalism" and "nation building" differ from Mau Mau discourse? Is KANU "nationalism" the *same* as Mau Mau's demand for independence? What perspective should we use to describe Mau Mau in its relationship with KANU and its leadership like Kenyatta? This chapter addresses these issues.

Furthermore, theoretically this chapter critically interrogates the views of both Fanon (1979) and Chatterjee (1993b) on nationalism in the colonial context. Briefly, nationalism for Fanon provided a false hope for postcolonial governance as nationalism leads by what he called a nationalist elite, which in turn is essentially the creation of the colonial rule (Fanon 1979, 154–55). Chaterjee, on the other hand, view nationalism

as a continuation of colonial modernity in colonized and postcolonial situation (Chatterjee 1993b).

On the Discourse of Nationalism: Fanon and Chatterjee

Franz Fanon, in his highly influential work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1979), describes in detail the role of the nationalist elite or what he called the "national middle class" (1979, 149), in the anticolonial struggle. Fanon, of course, was not an armchair theoretician. He was born in the Caribbean island of Martinique, a French colony, and studied medicine and psychiatry in Lyon, France. After his education, he took a job in a mental institution in Algeria, also a French colony at the time, and became aware of the psychological harm colonialism caused for colonized peoples. While in Algeria, Fanon got involved in the anti-French colonial struggle and sought to provide an intellectual and theoretical support for the struggle. Fanon thus came to know the role played by nationalist discourse in the fight against colonialism.[1]

To identify the promoters of nationalism in the colonial situation, Fanon (1979) simultaneously used terms like "national middle class" and "national bourgeoisie," which in turn he identified as "the underdeveloped middle class" (149). This class, Fanon argued, never got involved in the production process (economic sector); rather, they played the role of "intermediaries." Essentially a heterogeneous social ensemble, they engaged in diverse professions such as small-scale business, teaching, legal representation, and medicine (154). This is a "go between" class, serving as an intermediary between the colonial masters and the colonized masses. The ideology that provided a glue to bind all these diverse factions of the "national middle class" was nationalism, or what Fanon calls "national consciousness"—which he explains:

> National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. (Fanon 1979, 148)

After independence, the "national middle class" equipped with a "national consciousness" ascended into the state, replacing the colonial elite. Their nationalism needed to be transformed into a postcolonial technology of power. This class adopted a policy of nationalizing of key economic sectors as a vehicle for economic growth and for consolidation of its economic and

political power base. This strategy, however, was not meant to "place the whole economy at the service of the nation and to satisfy the needs of the nation." For them, nationalization meant governing the state with regard to the new social sectors whose growth it had decided to encourage. In other words, nationalization quite simply meant the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages that were a legacy of the colonial period. The "national middle class" after independence, Fanon argued, became the defenders of foreign economic interest and "ex-colonial companies" that paved the way "into a new colonialist line" (Fanon 1979, 167).

Fanon's book was initially published in French in 1961. It is a theoretically sophisticated book based on the writer's experiences with anticolonial activism in Algeria. At that particular time, a fierce battle was raging regarding the role of the "national bourgeoisie" in the anticolonialist struggle in colonial societies. This debate was perhaps further complicated by Mao Zedong's distinction between "national bourgeoisie" and "comprador bourgeoisie." During the anticolonialist struggle, the "national bourgeoisie" participated with the nationalist forces, hence playing a positive role. Once independence was achieved, however, and the country was marching towards socialism, this class, that is, the "national bourgeoisie" should be regarded as an enemy. Fanon, perhaps, tried to debunk this positive role of "national bourgeoisie."

Though Fanon was critical of the nationalist elite, he was aware of the necessity and beneficial nature of the discourse of nationalism, while elaborating on the need for violence in the decolonization process. Here nationalism, according to Fanon, fosters a "vertical solidarity between the peasantry, workers, capitalist feudal land owners and the bourgeoisie elite" (Fanon, qtd. by Gandhi 1998, 111).

This consolidated counteroffensive through nationalism politicized and revolutionized the worst victims of colonial subjugation. Though Fanon was highly critical of the nationalist elite, he remained committed to what Leela Gandhi calls the "therapeutic necessity of anticolonial national agitation" (Gandhi 1998, 111), which serves as the principal remedial means whereby the colonized culture overcomes the psychological damage of colonial racism (Gandhi 1998, 111).

In other words, Fanon seems to attribute to nationalist discourse the capacity to heal the historical injury inflicted on colonial subjects by colonial masters. Thus Fanon is, on one hand, critical of the "national middle class" in colonial and postcolonial conditions, and on the other, he seems to agree with the ideology of nationalism and its healing capabilities.

Perhaps this apparent contradiction or ambivalence in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* allows Henry Louis Gates Jr. to suggest a different

reading of Fanon, what he terms "critical Fanonism" (Gates 1991). Gates criticizes the attempt to describe Fanon as a global theorist of anticolonial resistance and feels that this would be a very narrow reading of Fanon. Fanon's *oeuvre* is much more complicated due to his complicated subject position and Fanon should be read differently based on different political necessities.

As mentioned earlier, Fanon was born in Martinique, a French colony. He married a French woman and ultimately joined the Algerian resistance against the French colonialists. Thus Fanon's work on nationalism reflects the multifaceted and complex nature of his own subject position. Whatever the case, in terms of its therapeutic potential, he failed to put forward an epistemological critique of the discourse of nationalism. In colonial and postcolonial conditions, his critique shows the continuity of colonial modernity imposed by colonial subjugation and "anticolonial" nationalism.

The works of Partha Chatterjee on nationalism address this issue (1993a; 1993b). Before discussing Chatterjee's idea of nationalism in postcolonial countries, let us briefly summarize another important work on nationalism by Benedict Anderson (1991). Chatterjee's books, besides raising other issues, carry a refutation of Anderson's central thesis.[2]

To Anderson the nation is essentially an imagined political community and nationalism is an imagination or consciousness. This imagination has its roots in Western Europe and arose during the demise of feudalism. When capitalism emerged, the bourgeoisie managed to form an alliance within a confined geographical territory. That tied various populations together who never shared the same sense of community before. In this "bonding" process, newspapers, books, and other print materials played a major role in formulating a shared culture of interests and ideas. Calling this "print capitalism" Anderson believed the "mechanically reproduced print languages" modified and transformed the channels of linguistic communication in such a way that diverse populations formed "imagined communities" (1991, 98). Anderson argues:

> The convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation. (Anderson 1991, 49)

It was after such a formulation that Anderson attempted to frame the emergence of nationalism in Europe. In Europe, national consciousness was fostered by language used by the educated middle class and intelligentsia. While doing so it managed to debunk feudal tyranny and authoritarianism.

Furthermore, Anderson talked about anti-imperialist nationalists in the post-Second World War colonial world. But this nationalism is an extension

of European "official nationalism" (Anderson 1991, 80–103): native anticolonial intellectuals are bilingual and are quite well informed in European political and intellectual history. In other words, the anticolonial nationalist movement was the construction of already modular forms of "imagined communities," that is, nation-states.

In his first work on the discourse of nationalism, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial Work: A Derivative Discourse* (1993b) Chatterjee praised Anderson for subverting the deterministic formulation of nationalism by refusing to define a nation by a set of external and abstract criteria because it is "imagined," "thought out," and "created" (1993b, 19). Furthermore, Chatterjee argued that Anderson posited the problem of nationalism as a central ideological construct in various national liberation movement. In doing this, he also highlights the social process of creating modern language communities. Yet, instead of pursuing the varied and often contradictory political possibilities interacting in this process, Anderson seals up his theme with a sociological determinism (Chatterjee 1993b, 21). This critique of Anderson's thesis of being too deterministic continues in Chatterjee's next major book on nationalism, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993a).

In this book, Chatterjee attempts to avoid the deterministic interpretation of nationalism, particularly in India, by locating the problematique in terms of the politico-ideological as well as the cultural construct. In the politico-ideological context, nationalism changed the structure of the colonial state politically, but in the cultural realm the nationalists managed to argue for their cultural past, difference, and autonomy.

Following this argument Chatterjee (1993a, 5) put forward a thesis that stated that the imaginations of nationalisms in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity with but rather on a *difference from* the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West (5). That difference rests on anticolonial nationalism a "creation of its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it began its political battle with the imperial power."

This was accomplished in terms of "dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual."

> The material is the domain of the "outside" of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. (Chatterjee 1993a, 6)

The implication of this observation by Chatterjee is that the spiritual domain of the colonial world is a sovereign territory and that the colonialists should not have intervened in it. The formulation of the spiritual or cultural domain as sovereign territory is the first task of the nationalist discourse. Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* and justification of female circumcision against the colonial European church's opposition should be seen in this perspective. We will return to this issue in the next section.

This brings us to the issue of the applicability of Chatterjee's observation in the Kenyan context. Although Chatterjee's thesis is based on colonial Bengal, it nonetheless helps us to understand the centrality of culture in the discourse of nationalism, whatever the differences in the historical context of territorial nationalism might be. Most importantly, it helps us to posit gender issues in nationalism. Meyda Yegenoglu in her *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998) attempted this task in terms of veiling in Turkey and Algeria. In her discussion, veiling became a signifier. The colonialist wanted to ban it, calling it "primitive," but women's veiling and unveiling should be used by the resistance movement of anticolonialists and native modernizers (Yegenoglu 1998, 121–43).

Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* and the Pitfalls of the Cultural Construction of Nationalism

Following Chatterjee's argument, we have described the discourse of nationalism in terms of the selection and difference between material and spiritual. This distinction was essentially for "an ideological justification for the selective appropriation of western modernity" (Chatterjee 1993a, 120) without jeopardizing existing social relationships between men and women.

> Applying the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living separate the social into *ghar* and *bahir*, the home and the world. The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world and women are its representation. And so one gets an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*. (Chatterjee 1993a, 120)

In the Kenyan context, this dichotomy of *ghar* and *bahir* makes its strange presence in Tom Mboya's *Freedom and After*. First published in 1963, a few months before political independence, the book is an important nationalist

text. Partly an autobiography and partly a reflection on political tactics to win freedom, this is a good representation of the liberal dilemma regarding the so-called woman question in political mobilization for independence. It also contains a blueprint on how Mboya would have liked postcolonial Kenya to move ahead. The woman question appears briefly at the end of two chapters—chapter 4, "National Mobilization," and chapter 7, "Preparing for Independence." Here is an extended quotation:

> There is room for a mass movement of women, not as a separate political entity, but as an enormous pressure group for advancement in a certain field. There was a very successful Kenya Women's Seminar in 1962, and the Uganda Council of Women has been a most lively body in the field of adult education. Its "Knowledge through English" course in reading and discussions on such topics as "Sharing Responsibility for the Family Budget" and "Nutrition—or Feeding the Body Engine" may be described as pious and worthy by people who affect sophistication or hanker for crime-stories. Personally, I found the tales of Mary Mukasa, the schoolteacher's wife, who looked after four young children, kept her house spotless and put on a clean dress before her husband returned home, and who pleaded with him at budget seasons for an increase in the milk vote, both charming and worthwhile. I would agree with the description of her coined by her husband Augustine—"Flower on the Home." If there were many such Flowers in East Africa, we could revolutionize the homes of 25 million people. I hope it may still be possible to form a mass movement of women, who will challenge the government and the men in each district to give them greater facilities, and who will seek out every woman in a gigantic campaign for literacy and self-improvement. That will be the best preparation of all for consolidating independence. (Mboya 1963, 161–62)

The distinction between *ghar* and *bahir* is quite obvious here. During the period of struggle for independence, Mboya commented on women's role in it. This once again is consistent with the *ghar* and *bahir* dichotomy.

> Women have similarly played a most important role, and the illiterate women contribute as much as, if not more than, the literate. African women are one of the most important supports a nationalist movement can have. They are more amenable to discipline and ready to accept leadership than the men; *once a leader is accepted, most women will give him undying loyalty and confidence*. Their ability to propagate the party's views in the homes and market places and everywhere else is the greatest asset a national leader possesses; in the months before the Emergency, Kenya women showed their skill as public relations "men." (Mboya 1963, 92; emphasis added)

Of particular interest in this quotation is in the middle sentence "once a leader is accepted, most women will give him undying loyalty and confidence." Here not only has a man's leadership already been established, but women are required to be loyal and disciplined! Perhaps no other text than Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* is so important when it comes to describing the dichotomy between the inner/spiritual/cultural/traditional world and the outside material world.

Facing Mount Kenya, published in 1938, was first submitted as seminar papers at the London School of Economics for a postgraduate degree in anthropology. These papers were eventually submitted as a master's thesis under the supervision of functionalist anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, who also wrote the laudatory introduction of the book. Through Kenyatta, Malinowski found a new breed of young African intellectuals who are comfortable in both worlds, Western and African. On the book and on its author, Malinowski wrote,

> It is one of the first really competent and instructive contributions to African ethnography by a scholar of pure African parentage. Through his upbringing Mr. Kenyatta combines to an unusual extent the knowledge of Western ways and Western modes of thought with a training and outlook essentially African. As a first-hand account of a representative of African culture, as an invaluable document in the principles underlying culture-contact and change; last, not least, as a personal statement of the new pioneering achievement of outstanding merit. (Malinowski in Kenyatta 1999, xiii–xiv)

Malinowski was a functionalist anthropologist. Briefly, the theory of functionalism emphasizes equilibrium and order, where "parts" are linked with the "whole." It cannot be grasped until focus is placed on the whole, because the "parts" are linked and comprise the "whole." Thus, Kenyatta, perhaps, as an acknowledgement to his supervision argued,

> In concluding this study it cannot be too strongly emphasized that various sides of Gikuyu life here described are the parts of an integrated culture. No single part is detachable; each has its context and is fully understandable only in relation to the whole. (Kenyatta 1999, 309)

Kenyatta perhaps was not keen on making a theoretical contribution to the functionalist school of social anthropology through his works. But as Berman informs us, Makinowski used Kenyatta to advance his own agenda for functionalist social anthropology (Berman 1996). Kenyatta had another for plan in the book.

He began with a discourse on Kenyan nationalism. More specifically, this was "a text in Cultural Nationalism" (Roseberg and Nottingham 1966, 131). Indeed, in the text Kenyatta tried to accomplish what Shaw (1995, 67) called "twin pressure," that is, to provide an antinationalist text, and out of respect for his mentor Malinowski, describe the precolonial Kikuyu society and culture from a functionalist theoretical perspective. Before describing this "twin pressure" in Kenyatta's text in more detail, it is important to describe the connection between the British colonial empire and the anthropological functionalism that Malinowski represents.[3]

According to Gouldner (1970), British anthropological functionalism had its main concerns "not with domestic English society but with its colonies elsewhere" (1970, 126). Furthermore, the British evolutionary anthropology that the functionalist anthropology replaced "had been shaped in the period of English dominance, during the consolidation of Empire" (Gouldner 1970, 127). Thus,

> [anthropological] Functionalism, [. . .] arose following the World War I, which is to say, against the backdrop of a violent challenge to English dominance and Empire, it arose when English precedence was no longer taken for granted, when the English could no longer feel confident that their own society represented the culmination of an evolutionary process from which they might look down benignly upon "lower people." Following World War I, the English future was felt as uncertain and not to be savored in anticipation: doubtful prospects foreshortened future-oriented thinking. In this setting, the prospect was not the inevitable uplifting of backward colonies in their common evolution toward the future; the task was now to hold on to the colonies and to keep them under control. The sanguine expectation of progress gave way to the grim problem of order. (Gouldner 1970, 127)

Thus, the British functionalist anthropology, in which Malinowski was a prominent figure, should be seen in the context of consolidating and maintaining *order* in the colonies.[4] Malinowski's enthusiasm for Kenyatta's text lies in the broad "functions" of the functionalist anthropology. Having said that, let us return to Kenyatta's text.

In the preface, Kenyatta puts forward his agenda for the book, refuting the idea that Africans cannot speak for themselves until their ideas are interpreted by the well-meaning European "expert" on Africa.

> My chief object is not to enter into controversial discussion with those who have attempted, or are attempting, to describe the same things from outside observation, but to let the truth speak for itself. I know that there are many scientists and general readers who will be disinterestedly glad of the opportunity of hearing the Africans' point of view, and to all such I am glad to be

> of service. At the same time, I am well aware that I could not do justice to the subject without offending those "professional friends of the African" who are prepared to maintain their friendship for eternity as a sacred duty, provided only that the African will continue to play the part of an ignorant savage so that they can monopolize the office of interpreting his mind and speaking for him. To such people, an African who writes a study of this kind is encroaching on their preserves. He is a rabbit turned poacher. (Kenyatta 1999, xvii–xviii)

With this task ahead, Kenyattta challenged the "white man's" view of African history. He attempted to refute the western assumption that Africans are inferior to Europeans and that Europe has a divine mandate to civilize the "backward" and "inferior" African "race" using the tools of anthropology learned in that Western higher institution, the London School of Economics (LSE). Kenyatta offered an alternative view of the African past. Far from "primitive" and "savage," the African past (read: Kikuyu past) was characterized by order, virtue, and self-sufficiency. Before European modernity sought to replace this golden past, the Kikuyu lived in harmony and had a way of life that was different from the white man's view of the world. Kenyatta's thesis in the book is that Kikuyu tribal customs and various social institutions were cohesive and maintained the order and equilibrium of the society before it was disturbed by colonialism.[5]

As mentioned earlier, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1999) is first and foremost a nationalist text and, as Jeremy Murray-Brown puts it, a "masterly propaganda document" (Murray-Brown 1973, 191). Malinowski, who held the view that anthropological work should be scientific and objective, had no problem with this dimension of the book.

Malinowski welcomed the thrust of the book. In Kenyatta he saw a spokesman for the educated, intellectual, and minority Africans, usually dismissed as "agitators," who were "catalyzing" an African public opinion, even among tribesmen. The process of disintegration and the West's idea of progress, argued Malinowski, must both be repeated in Africa (Murray-Brown 1973, 191).

In chapter 6, "Initiation of Boys and Girls," Kenyatta presents a clear and unconditional support for female circumcision (Kenyatta 1999, 130–54). The chapter begins with a summary of various attacks, especially by the Christian church, against the practice. Calling them "religious fanatics," Kenyatta argues,

> On the other hand, the Gikuyu look upon these religious fanatics with great suspicion. The overwhelming majority of them believe that it is the secret aim of those who attack this centuries-old custom to disintegrate their social

> order and thereby hasten their Europeanization. The abolition of *irua* will destroy the tribal symbol which identifies the age-groups, and prevents the *Gikuyu* from perpetuating that spirit of collectivism and national solidarity, which they have been able to maintain from time immemorial. (Kenyatta 1999, 135/italics original/iura (circumcision))

Here Kenyatta emphasizes the role of the community, that is, the Kikuyu tribe, by de-emphasizing the individual. The individual does not exist outside the community. Individual inconvenience and even bodily harm could be tolerated as long as it served a communal purpose. However, Kenyatta did acknowledge some Kikuyu might prefer not going through this practice. Identifying them as "detribalized" or "semi-detribalized" Kenyatta argued that they no longer belong to the community (Kenyatta 1999, 132).

Furthermore, if any "semi-detribalized" man married an uncircumcised woman and tried to return to his community, he would be required to "divorce the wife married outside the rigid tribal custom and then marry a girl with approved tribal qualification [i.e., circumcised]" (Kenyatta 1999, 133). If someone failed to do so, he would be disinherited. Once again tribal/communal requirements take precedence over those of individuals.

A formidable nationalist, Kenyatta attempted to initiate an image of a postcolonial new woman in terms of its Kikuyu precolonial historical project. As he did so, his nationalist project was not at all a negation of the modernist project but rather an attempt to reframe it within the traditional past. This could be explained in terms of the rising new class, that is, western educated intellectuals like Kenyatta himself, finding a place in a society dramatically transformed by colonial forces. Here the crucial fact is the nascent indigenous social class striving for class hegemony. Without such class hegemony, the nationalist project that Kenyatta upheld would have been confirmed as an abstract idea with no significant impact at the societal level. Kenyatta's defense of female circumcision should be seen from this perspective.

Another important lacuna in Kenyatta's text is its inability to address another crucial question—the changing power relations within the Kenyan society under colonial domination. Kenyatta's text failed to see the modalities of the deployment of power in the colonial context and within it how the dominant culture was received and how it transformed the Kenyan "subordinate culture" under colonialism.

Thus what Kenyatta is proposing in his text is a new image of the Kikuyu woman. That new image was brought by colonialists who attempted to undermine "traditional culture, of which female circumcision was part, by banning the practice altogether." This dissection is inward-oriented. This inertia was, however, taking place at a time when a frontal political assault

was restively absent, a fact that had not escaped the eyes of colonial authorities. In 1924, a Native Affairs Department official described the political situation in Kikuyu in the following manner:

> The native population has remained peaceful and one perhaps—contented. The year's crops have been good and their prices have remained high; no epidemics have been reported; wages for labor have slightly increased, and perhaps in consequence upon these fortunate circumstances, no political disturbances have taken place. [. . .] It must not, however, be supposed that the general prosperity of the year has killed the awakening political conscience in the people; to assume so would be merely to confess a misapprehension of the thoughts and aspirations of the rising generation. [. . .] The whole Kikuyu tribe is in a state of intense anxiety about the security of its land tenure. (Report of the Native Affairs Department 1924, sect. 2, para. 2)

Although in the preceding 1924 report the colonial native affairs authorities asserted that relative prosperity was responsible for political calm, in the previous year's (1923) report, it expressed the opinion that suppression of "political demonstration" or the so-called Harry Thuku's riot had had much to do with the political calm in the province (Report of the Native Affairs Department 1923, sect. 2, para. 2).

> The year 1923 had happily been free of any serious political unrest among the native population. [. . .] A few Kikuyu agitators, followers of Harry Thuku, who was deported after his activities, and who were not eliminated in the riot of 1922, still endeavor to carry on propaganda, but their activities are of course pursued with greater secrecy. There is reason to believe that Thuku still carries on a continuous correspondence with his principle sympathizers through the medium of the Indian Shop-keepers at Kismayu. (Report of the Native Affairs Department 1923, sect. 2, para. 2)

If we read these passages concurrently as an important colonial text, we get the impression that the relative calm was not going to last long. Indeed, from the early 1920s until the late 1920s, the political situation in the Kikuyu land could best be summarized, using a phrase from the same text, as "suspicious wastefulness" (24). During this time, Kenyatta collected the information contained in *Facing Mount Kenya*, which he wrote and presented in the early 1930s in graduate seminars at LSE and which was published in book form in 1938.

Following Chatterjee, we have argued (1993b) that, before the frontal political assault on the colonial authorities, native intellectuals were busy creating a separate political space vis-à-vis colonial authority. *Facing Mount Kenya* and Kenyatta's justification of female circumcision should be seen in

this light. This issue put western liberal defenders of Kenyatta in an awkward position.

Guy Arnold's book, *Kenyatta and the Politics of Kenya* (1974), for example, contains a detailed analysis of chapter 4 of *Facing Mount Kenya*. Arnold devotes a rather short paragraph to the issue of female circumcision.

> Initiations always excite European interest, and the female circumcision controversy at the end of the 1920s was headline news. Kenyatta was a central figure in the whole affair, and his defense of the custom both excited the antagonism of the missionaries and became a nationalist weapon in his hands. As with all the nationalist movements in Africa, a defense and resuscitation of pre-European customs was an inevitable ingredient in any attack upon colonialism. Thus Kenyatta employs the technique of praising a Kikuyu custom and denigrating a European one: "Unlike Europeans who are fond of kissing in public places, the Gikuyu consider such public displays of affection vulgar." Instead, the Kikuyu only fondle. (Arnold 1974, 77–78)

In this passage Arnold in no subtle way argues that Kenyatta's defense for female circumcision was a "nationalist weapon in his hands." Arnold's book is a sympathetic-liberal portrayal of Kenyatta's role in Kenya's political history. So it cannot just rehash the colonialist position, nor can he support Kenyatta's position in it. He thus stated this is for all nationalist causes.

On the other hand, Jeremy Murray-Brown's biography on Kenyatta (1973) also has a chapter, "Female Circumcision" (chap. 11, 155–76), and another chapter (chap. 16, 220–25), titled "*Facing Mount Kenya*." In the chapter on female circumcision, Murray-Brown details the debate and controversy on the issue but does not discuss Kenyatta's stand on it. And again, in the chapter on *Facing Mount Kenya*, he identifies the book as a "propaganda tour de force," saying, "no other African had made such an *uncompromising stand for tribal integrity*," (Murray-Brown 1973, 192; emphasis added). Even Roseberg Jr. and Nottingham (1966), who authored one of the early sympathetic accounts of Mau Mau by putting it into a broad sociopolitical context, failed to critically examine Kenyatta's position on female circumcision.

> He (Kenyatta) claimed that the missionaries failed to see the connection between clitoridectomy and initiation; between the admittedly painful operation of *irua* and the whole Kikuyu culture. Circumcision, Kenyatta argued, is an institution which makes the boundary between childhood and adulthood and is hence of great social and educational significance. (Roseberg, Jr and Nottingham 1966, 133)

All uncritical explanation by western liberal interpreters attempted to show Kenyatta's position in terms of Kenya's struggle for independence. This makes women a convenient sacrifice in the nationalist struggle. The dilemma of the liberal discourse is that it failed to side with the colonialist position on female circumcision, echoing the Christian missionaries' stand on the issue, which treated it as primitive and barbaric. On the other hand, this discourse tended to support nationalism in Kenya and Kenyatta's role in it, which made them overlook one of the most important follies of cultural nationalism, that is, the question of gender and patriarchy.

For Kenyatta and Kenyan nationalists, it was an attempt to create a cultural space and establish a difference from colonialism. This cultural space or difference, as we will see in the next section, is not a wholesale rejection of colonial modernity but rather a strategic use of it, which I believe made the nationalist discourse quite different from the discourse of Mau Mau.

Clearly to undermine the Mau Mau's contribution in Uhuru, President Kenyatta said in his speech on Kenyatta Day 1967,

> Sometimes I hear of freedom fighters described as those who brought Uhuru. But I want to emphasize that freedom could not have been brought up by one person, or by a single group of people. Freedom came (to us) through *African Unity*. It was all of us being united [. . .] we were all seeking freedom (together), and therefore it is not right to discriminate, saying that one man served to bring freedom while another man did something else. (Kenyatta 1968, 341–42)

Here Kenyatta's main emphasis was to forge "national unity" in the postcolonial period; for this purpose, it was important to de-emphasize the role of Mau Mau in the independence struggle. To the postcolonial state ruling class who finally established neocolonial relations with the former masters, Mau Mau might have been seen as a divisive factor.

Kenyatta's relationship with Mau Mau is complicated. The colonial authorities branded him "the manager of Mau Mau" but, as Montagu Slater has argued, they never managed to prove that Kenyatta was indeed an organizer or even a member of Mau Mau. Based on postcolonial perspective on the discourse on nationalism, it is difficult to argue that Kenyatta was intimately involved with Mau Mau.

After his return from England, Kenyatta participated in oathing ceremonies on various occasions, although he was opposed to violence, perhaps out of fear of losing his grip on the movement. At the same time, Kaggia (1975, 113) argues that Kenyatta intentionally chose to know very "little of what went on in the Mau Mau Central Committee meetings." Buijtenhuijus (1973), on the other hand, argues that Kenyatta was initially

opposed to Mau Mau but afterwards let it run its due course, although leadership was never in his hands. Our contention about the relationship between Kenyatta and Mau Mau is this: he liked the anxiety and nervousness that Mau Mau was causing to the British Colonial Authorities yet at the same he was opposed to the movement both on political and ideological grounds. This opportunistic stand showed clearly in the speech that Kenyatta gave at Nyeri, Central Province, on July 26, 1952.

> 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 the fat removed to feed others. He who has ears should now hear that KAU 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. KAU speaks in daylight. He who calls us the MAU MAU is not truthful. We do not know this thing MAU MAU. (Murray-Brown 1973, 284–85)

When asked about his involvement in Mau Mau, Kenyatta's answer was:

> I think Mau Mau is a new word. [The elders] do not know it [. . .]. KAU is not a fighting Union and does not use fists and weapons. If any of you here thinks that force is good, I do not agree with him. Remember the old saying that he who is hit with [a] club returns, but he who is hit with justice never comes back. I do not want people to accuse us falsely that we steal and that we are Mau Mau. I pray that we join hands for freedom, and freedom means abolishing criminality. Beer harms us and those who drink it do us harm and they may be the so-called Mau Mau. (qtd. in Murray-Brown 1973, 285)

This ambiguous statement was perhaps meant to create confusion among the white settlers and the colonial authorities. Indeed, settlers tried unsuccessfully to convince the colonial state to declare that a call for independence along peaceful nationalist lines was "itself seditious" (Murray-Brown 1973, 285).

However, when it became quite apparent that the government was about to declare a State of Emergency in late 1952, a secret central committee was formed and a decision was made to set up clandestine guerrilla bases in Mount Kenya and Aberdare Mountains. On August 15, 1952, Waruhiu Itote (General China), who later became an important leader of the Mau Mau military campaign, went (along with eight other young men) to see Kenyatta in his Gatundu, Central Province home. When briefed by Itote about the decision to launch a military campaign, Kenyatta said:

> Look, my sons, you have come to me because you want to select some young people to work for your country. But you must realize that to be a leader is not an easy role. You don't become a leader simply because someone points at you and says "you will be a leader." Those who are equipped to lead our people must know it in their hearts. They themselves must be the first to recognize that they possess the qualities and determination that is needed.

And further:

> Some of you too, will be imprisoned, and some of you will be killed. But when these things happen, my sons, do not be afraid. Everything in this world has to be paid for—and we must pay for our freedom with our blood.

Finally, Kenyatta turned to Itote and addressed him:

> You learnt many things in the army, my son, and now you can lead our people. If you had died in Burma, no one would have remembered you, for you were fighting for the British. But should you die tomorrow in your struggle, you will die for your own people and your name will live in our hearts. (Itote 1968, 45)

A careful rereading of the conversation between Itote and Kenyatta indicates that nothing could have been more general and deliberately vague. Here Kenyatta says that "sacrifice" and "leadership" are necessary to eject the colonialists but fails to mention Mau Mau or whether he supports armed struggle for independence. But Itote took Kenyatta's words and interpreted them to mean (he) Kenyatta supported Mau Mau. A few days after his meeting with Kenyatta, Itote, along with several other young men, entered the Mount Kenya forest to form what he called "the nucleus of an Army of Liberation" (Itote 1967, 47). Itote describes how he interpreted Kenyatta's conversation with him:

> Yet during these hard years to come the memory of this meeting with Kenyatta, and of the many serious things we discussed, stayed with me. Often, when I was discouraged or doubtful, I recalled Kenyatta's words, and above all, his confidence in our victory gave me strength. (Itote 1967, 47)

This message contains important clues for the formulation of a subaltern history of Mau Mau. As pointed out before, Kenyatta's relationship with Mau Mau was dubious and contradictory. Although the colonial authorities tried to portray him as the leader of Mau Mau, Kenyatta was reluctant to put his support behind it wholeheartedly for various reasons, mainly because the leadership of the Mau Mau came from a different class background than

his, which is quite apparent in *Facing Mount Kenya*. Kenyatta was inherently a conservative person whose overwhelming concern was stability and order, whereas revolutionary violent decolonization was the key strategy of Mau Mau.

Another large meeting was held in Kiambu, Central Province, on August 24, 1952, with direct approval of the authorities, because the colonialists felt that if Kenyatta were pressured, he would denounce Mau Mau. Various anti-Mau Mau leaders from among the Kikuyu attended the meeting, namely, Senior Chief Koinange, Harry Thuku, Eliud Mathu, and various colonial chiefs.[6] In the rally, Kenyatta announced:

> This meeting is of the Kikuyu elders and leaders who have decided to hold a public meeting and see what disease affects Kikuyu land and how it can be cured. We are being harmed by a thing called Mau Mau. Who wants to curse Mau Mau? (Murray-Brown 1973, 249)

When Kenyatta asked this rhetorical question, almost every hand in the crowd went up. Afterwards Kenyatta declared, "Mau Mau has spoilt the country. Let Mau Mau perish forever. All people acted on a search for Mau Mau to kill it" (Murray-Brown 1973, 249).

Before these two meetings where Kenyatta denounced Mau Mau, in early 1951, the Kenya Citizen's Association, of which he was member, urged Kenyatta to denounce Mau Mau. He did so on February 5, 1951, in his meeting, where he declared:

> We members of the African Union have no association whatever with Mau Mau. It is the duty of the government to seek out the beast called Mau Mau. We object very strongly to any attempt to associate our union with Mau Mau or any other bad society. (Arnold 1974, 118)

The colonial authorities were uncertain about what to make of all the remarks that Kenyatta made on Mau Mau. F. D. Corfield, who provided an official view of Mau Mau, wrote that Kenyatta "invariably evaded the issue with great skill and cunning" (Corfield 1960, 58). Many other Europeans felt that Kenyatta's denunciation of Mau Mau was insincere and he was playing with words and engaging in political double-talk.

The colonial authorities and the colonial state-controlled media tended to believe that Kenyatta's condemnation would work and yield a positive effect on combating the "menace" of Mau Mau. A member for "law and order" wrote to the colonial office on September 2, 1952,

> For the time being it looks as if the thugs, who are the militant element in Mau Mau, have got their heads down. Last Sunday Jomo Kenyatta himself publicly condemned Mau Mau at a meeting of 30,000 Kikuyu, all of whom held up their hands at his request to signify that they approved his denunciation of Mau Mau. If this resistance movement gathers strength, then I think we shall succeed in rolling back the Mau Mau Movement before too long. (Murray-Brown 1973, 250)

Here, the colonialists saw Kenyatta as an important ally in their strategy to combat Mau Mau. Bildad Kaggia (1975) in his autobiography further argued that Kenyatta was neither a member of Mau Mau's central committee nor a member of the inner circle. After the colonial authorities felt that Kenyatta's denunciation of Mau Mau had begun to bear fruit, they organized a series of public meetings to offer platforms for Kenyatta to further denounce Mau Mau. After hearing this, the Mau Mau Central Committee summoned Kenyatta and asked him to cancel all meeting organized by the authorities, as his condemnation appeared too strong. After a lengthy protest Kenyatta agreed to do so. However, Guy Arnold (1974, 120n13) explains that this incident provided an important clue to the issue of Kenyatta's association with Mau Mau and its Central Committee.

> Kenyatta was not a member of the committee; Kenyatta did not know the composition of the committee and was clearly surprised to find who was in it; he was not prepared to proceed with a course of action when he found the committee was opposed to it although he apparently argued at length before giving way. (Arnold 1974, 120n13)

As we have argued, Kenyatta's position regarding Mau Mau was opportunistic. On the one hand, he was not in the inner circle of the Mau Mau decision-making process, but he clearly approved of the worries and anxiety that were caused by Mau Mau activities. At the same time, he was quite vocal, and at the urging of the colonial authorities denounced Mau Mau in clear terms. While Kenyatta's stand on Mau Mau during the emergency was ambiguous, his stand became quite clear after independence when, as the country's first president, he began a wholesale denouncement of it. We will return to this issue in Chapter 7.

For Mau Mau, Kenyatta was a powerful symbol of resistance and a messiah. H. K. Wachanga (1991) described a prayer in early 1953 when cruel bombardment on the Mau Mau position by the colonial forces had intensified. Stanley Mathenge led the following prayer:

> O, our God, do not let us be defeated. If they defeat us, they have also defeated you. If they are defeated, you have defeated them. They are robbers and

> thieves who came as friends but are now more like the Arab and the Camel. We pray that you will lead us as you led your servant Moses and the children of Israel across the Red Sea from Egypt. Guide Our Messiah *Mzee Jomo Kenyatta wherever he is sent by our enemies and guard his life*. We are here fighting for both land and freedom. Look down in mercy and help us to overcome our enemy. (Wachanga 1975, 77; emphasis added)

Here Kenyatta is regarded as a messiah, a powerful symbol of the struggle against oppression. This symbol is used by the subaltern groups, here the Mau Mau militants, in such a way that it transcends its meaning. The Mau Mau militants use Kenyatta as a symbol of the struggle and resistance, but as they do so, they aintain what subaltern historiography has identified as the "autonomous domain" of subaltern consciousness (Alam 1993, 438). Indeed, the Mau Mau discourse, in all its connection with KAU nationalism and with Kenyatta, remained outside of of elite nationalism ias it defined and interpreted the meaning of independence in its own terms. The strategy of exploring the autonomous domain of subaltern consciousness by using nationalist leaders as signifiers could find meaning in the works of Shahid Amin (1988) and Gyan Pandey (1988) on colonial India.

Amin (1988) has argued that during the early 1920s the villagers of Gorakpur district, Uttar Pradesh, India, decoded Congress and Gandhian messages in their own way, rather than following Gandhi and the Congress Party blindly. The peasant consciousness arose in such a way that the idea of *sawarj* (home) was framed within the villagers' popular belief and religious culture, providing a vision of a millennial world quite separate from the world view of Gandhi and the Congress Party, who represented the nationalism of the (nationalist) elite in colonial India (Amin 1988, 319). In his analysis of the Kisan Saloha Movement in Awadha, India, Pandey (1988) reconstructs the peasants' appropriation of the image of the Mahatma, who drew on their own lived experience, to voice their discontent against the excesses of local landlords. The consciousness ultimately produced a locally grown movement known as Eka in 1921, which was not organized by either Gandhi or his Congress Party, but was rather the product of the experience of the subalterns themselves. This subaltern militancy dismayed Congress leadership because they envisioned a broad-based class coalition to form a state of national unity (Pandey 1988, 227).

However, talking about the autonomous domain of Mau Mau militancy poses certain methodological problems. Spivak, while discussing subaltern historiography in general, cautions against dealing with such consciousness as a positivist project, as it entails something that cannot be disclosed or discovered (Spivak 1988b, 10). Instead, consciousness here should be

seen as a historicized political subject, that is, a subaltern subject (Spivak 1988b, 11).

Furthermore, this historically specific nature of the subaltern consciousness, in the hands of its practitioners, becomes "negative consciousness." Subversion, resistance, and revolt against domination are essential ingredients in the formation of "negative consciousness." Mau Mau, through their resistance, not only against colonial domination but also against the nationalist project, attempted to formulate such negative consciousness.

Conclusion

It is true that the KAU version of nationalism as an anticolonial discourse is far from a homogenous political ideology. It contains different currents and thoughts. One of those groups of "radicals" who posed a formidable opposition to Kenyatta's leadership within KAU was Kaggia, a Kubai group whose political view came from the labor movement during the colonial period. Keeping the essential heterogeneous ensemble of social forces within KAU vis-à-vis its relationship to Mau Mau has important theoretical implications.

Gramsci, in his explanation of the formulation of counterhegemony, talks about various moments of the political situation during bourgeois ascendancy (Gramsci 1971). He argues that for an underdeveloped bourgeoisie or Fanon's national middle class, a frontal assault on the state power, which he terms a "war of movement" (or maneuver) is unlikely (Gramsci 1971, 229). Instead, it is likely to adopt a "war of position," "a kind of political trench warfare waged on a number of different fronts" (Chatterjee 1993b, 45). Chatterjee elaborates on the concept of a "war of positions":

> Its strategy would be to attempt a "molecular transformation" of the state, neutralizing opponents, converting sections of the former ruling classes into allies in a partially reorganized system of government, undertaking economic reforms on a limited scale so as to appropriate the support of the popular masses but keeping them out of any form of direct participation in the process of governance. (Chatterjee 1993b, 95)

Kenyatta's text and his brand of nationalism in regard to its relationship to Mau Mau is a classic case of "war of position"/"passive revolution." It sought to portray an anticolonialist image but was profoundly worried about the subaltern militancy that Mau Mau stood for. Kenyatta was eager to show that he, indeed, supported Mau Mau, but being from an underdeveloped

national middle class, he was always careful not to lose control of the forces of change and at the same time he was careful to appease the "enemy," that is, the British colonial authorities. Kenyatta's role in Mau Mau is quite consistent with the character of the "national middle class" that Fanon has so eloquently described in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

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6

Writing as Subversion: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau

Mau Mau, although a politico-historical phenomenon, has also attracted the attention of creative writers. David Manghan-Brown categorizes most of Mau Mau fiction as colonial fiction, which he also identified as "settlers' novelists" (Maughan-Brown 1985, 106). This group of writers includes E. Harley and Richard Ruark. He also refers to "liberal fiction" from the metropolis, including the works of M. Cornish, V. S. Reid, and G. R. Fazakerley, among others. These fiction writers, although critical of colonial rule in Kenya, remain hostile to Mau Mau and its political objective. To them, the movement was a savage and brutal form of extreme nationalism. After *uhuru*, we witness the emergence of new novels that tackle the issue of Mau Mau as a political movement. These novels, which Manghan-Brown identifies as "novels of Freedom" (1985, 206), include Meja Mwangi's *Taste of Death* (1975), G. Wachira's *Ordeal in the Forest* (1968), and Charles Mangua's *A Tail in the Mouth* (1972). All were written between 1967 and 1975, reflecting a time in Kenya when the neocolonial bourgeoisie consolidated its power. According to Maughan-Brown:

> [. . .] all three novels [. . .] ultimately (whether deliberately or not) represented Mau Mau in just as negatively equivocal a manner as the politicians and businessmen whose political and commercial interests were most obviously served by the tactic of retrospective "criminalization" of the movement. (Maughan-Brown 1985, 206)

Given this context, the intervention of Ngugi wa Thiong'o (b. 1938) in Mau Mau fiction writing is exemplary. His Mau Mau fiction and his entire body of works could be identified as subversive. He intends to displace both colonial and metropolitan liberals, as well as different varieties of "novels of freedom." Wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau and other writings represent

a critique of the postcolonial consolidation of political power by what Fanon calls the "national middle class," represented by Kenyatta and the KANU leadership. Thus, wa Thiong'o's work represents a rebellious voice that subverts the postcolonial condition in Kenya.

His literary use of the historical phenomenon of Mau Mau should be viewed as having a *subversive intent* toward the postcolonial condition. The main objective of this present chapter is to interrogate wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau within the context of the postcolonial condition. We are not arguing that wa Thiong'o's works emerged reductively from the postcolonial condition, nor that wa Thiong'o's work is derivative of the postcolonial condition. The relationship between wa Thiong'o and Mau Mau is contested and evolving as wa Thiong'o continue to write. However, it is important to keep in mind that wa Thiong'o was quite direct about the relationship between writer, writings, and literature:

> Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction, and even area of concern by social, political, and economic forces in particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism, and Neo-colonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background. (wa Thiong'o 1972, xv)

And again:

> Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship: one is writing about somebody for somebody. (wa Thiong'o 1981, 5)

Against reducing literary works to a mere reflection of social reality, wa Thiong'o writes,

> At the same time literature is more than just a mechanistic reflection of social reality. As part of man's artistic activities, it is in itself part of man's self-realization as a result of his wrestling with nature; it is, if you like, itself a symbol of man's creativity, of man's historical process of being and becoming. (wa Thiong'o 1982, 6)

This chapter is divided into sections. Using Michel Foucault's idea of governmentality, we will elaborate on the postcolonial condition in Kenya. Section Two will explain, conceptually and theoretically, the problematic of postcolonial African organic intellectuals. Antonio Gramsci's idea of

organic intellectual will be the point of departure. In the last section, we will critically interrogate wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau writings both, fiction and non-fiction, to show that wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau writings constitute a subversion of postcolonial condition in Kenya.

Governmentality and the Postcolonial Conditions in Kenya

To Foucault, governmentality is "contact between technologies of domination of others and those of self" (Foucault 1988, 5). In more general terms, Foucault argues that "government" is the "conduct of conduct," the "form of activities aiming to shape, guide, or effect the conduct of some person or persons" (Foucault 1988, 87–104). Thus, though Foucault addresses the issue of state in terms of relations of self to self, he is most concerned with control and guidance within social institutions and communities, and with their exercise of political sovereignty and with different forms and meaning of government.[1]

> [Foucault] was interested in government as an activity or practice, and in arts of government as ways of knowing what that activity consists of, how it might be carried on. A rationality of government will thus mean a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is, what or who is governed), capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to practitioners and to those upon whom it was practiced. (Gordon 1991, 3)

More specifically, to Foucault the essential feature of the "art of government" is "introduction of economy into political practice" (Foucault 1988, 87–104). Foucault's writings in general, and on governmentality in particular, deal with the European historical experience. How does this experience translate in the context of colonial and postcolonial governmentality? Both Partha Chatterjee (1995) and David Scott (1995, 1998) address this issue in the context of India and Sri Lanka respectively. Scott formulated a concept, political nationalities of colonial power, which he defines in terms of "historically constituted complexes of knowledge/power that give shape to colonial projects of political sovereignty" (Scott 1995, 191–200). Scott further comments:

> A colonial political nationality characterizes those ways in which colonial power is organized as an activity designed to produce the effects of rule. More specifically what I mean to illuminate are what I should like to call the *targets* of colonial power (that is, the points of power's application, the object or objects it aims at, and the means and instrumentalities it deploys in

> search of these targets, points, and objects); and the field of its operation (that is, the zone that it actively constructs for its functionality. (Scott 1995, 199–200; emphasis original)

Chatterjee, on the other hand, uses the concept to offer a critique of a liberal state in postcolonial India and to explain the rise of Hindu fundamentalism that challenged the core of the liberal state (1995, 11–39).

However, in order to formulate a conception of postcolonial governmentality in postcolonial Kenya, it is important, for our purpose, to trace interrelated concepts from Gramsci—the historical bloc, hegemony, and passive revolution.

To Gramsci (1971), the historical bloc is the complex relationship of class and class factions in a given society and its even more complex relationship to the state power. Furthermore, it connotes a historically crystallized formation of popular groupings and their subjective sense of political identity. For a historical bloc to be successful in ruling, it must enact hegemony, that is, a process of consensus within the historical bloc and across the society. Indeed, as Sassoon (1982, 14) puts it, hegemony is the glue that binds the different factions of a historical bloc.

To explain the limits of the bourgeois historical bloc, Gramsci (1971), in his famous *Notes on Italian History*, introduced another original concept—the "passive revolution of capital." To Gramsci this concept means that a new historical bloc lacks the political ability to launch a total war against the old social classes; instead, it adapts a gradualist approach to social reform and compromise in such a way that it will not be overrun by the subaltern classes (Gramsci 1971, 114). Chatterjee explains Gramsci's idea in the following manner, which has significance in the Kenyan postcolonial situation:

> [. . .] In situations where an emergent bourgeoisie lacks the social conditions for establishing complete hegemony over the new nation, it resorts to a "passive revolution," by attempting a "molecular transformation" of the dominant classes into partners in a new historical bloc and only a partial appropriation of the popular masses, in order first to create a state as the necessary precondition for the establishment of capitalism as the dominant mode of production. (Chatterjee 1993a, 30)

Ever since the early 1960s, when British colonialism in Kenya was replaced by the rule of the indigenous elite, the governmentality of the state proposed by the postcolonial historical block was "universalism/homogeneity," translated in official discourse as "national integration/national unity." The "universalism/homogeneity" as governmental rationalities of the postcolonial historical bloc of Kenya include three interrelated themes. Besides

political nationalities, it has its own cultural and economic nationalities. However, though these rationalities are presented separately, they are, indeed, related and interconnected.

Economic Rationalities: The Emergence of Neocolonialism

In May, 4, 1965, Tom Mboya, the Minister for Economic Planning and Development, presented sessional paper No.10 to the Kenyan parliament. It had a very lofty title, *African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya* (Mboya 1970). The sessional paper was passed unanimously by the National Assembly in May 1965, and the paper was hailed by Kenyatta as "Kenya's economic Bible" (Leys 1975, 221). Following Colin Leys (1975) we could summarize the main features of the sessional paper in following manner:

1. African socialism should be formulated keeping in mind the African cultural context.
2. Thus traditional African society and culture do not exclude the private ownership of capital, but it should be used for collective good.
3. A large inflow of private foreign investment is essential for the rapid economic growth of Kenya.
4. Nationalization and the public sector should be discouraged, and no private property be expropriated without proper compensation.
5. Distinction of wealth as well as class division should be prevented through "vigorous implementation of traditional political democracy" and through "sensitive controls" over the use of privately controlled economic resources.
6. Foreign enterprises should be controlled in terms of Africanizing its management, and Africans should be allowed to buy shares.
7. All logistics support should be available to encourage the development of private enterprise.

The fifth characteristic that calls for "sensitive controls" includes:
limitations on the size of individual landholding,

a) Protection of consumer interest by state-controlled marketing boards,
b) highly progressive taxation policy, including capital gains tax and inheritance tax.

The sessional paper by Mboya could be analyzed in different ways. It is essentially a text for a postcolonial route to the bourgeoisie's quest for hegemony. However, for a postcolonial bourgeoisie, domination within a historical block is always a tricky issue, creating a bumpy road to follow. As a class, the bourgeoisie is internally heterogeneous and fragmented,

characterized by European and Indian, as well as black Kenyan, factions. Mboya's text serves the purpose of consolidatation and articulation of a unified hegemonic project. However, this hegemonic quest led the Kenyan state solidly into the camp of neocolonial economic order. Fanon outlines the dilemma of "native bourgeoisie":

> This native bourgeoisie [. . .] will realize, with its mouth watering, that it lacks something essential to a bourgeoisie: money. The bourgeoisie of an underdeveloped country is a bourgeoisie in spirit only. It is not its economic strength, nor the dynamism of leaders, nor the breadth of its ideas that ensures its peculiar quality of bourgeoisie [. . .] this bourgeoisie class will always reveal itself as incapable of giving birth to an authentic bourgeoisie society with all the economic and industrial consequences which this entails. (Fanon 1979, 143–44)

This dilemma of an underdeveloped bourgeoisie in Kenya leads to neocolonialism in the Kenya context. This neocolonialism, however, as Odinga informs us, is "centered in a vacuum" (1967, 256).

> The object of neocolonialism is to ensure that power is handed to men who are moderate and easily controlled political stooges. Everything is done to ensure that the accredited heroes of colonial interest capture power. This explains the pre-independence preoccupation of the colonial power with the creation of an African middle class and the frenzy to corrupt leaders at all levels with the temptations of office and property, and preferably both. (Odinga 1967, 256)

Here, in the context of an underdeveloped bourgeoisie paving the way for a neocolonial grip, was adopted a strategy of what Gramsci called "passive revolution" (Gramsci 1973, 44).

> [. . .] the new claimants to power, lacking the social strength to launch a full-scale assault on the old dominant classes, opt for a path in which the demands of a new society are "satisfied in small doses, legally, in a reformist manner"—in such a way the political and economic position of the old feudal classes is not destroyed, agrarian reform is avoided, and popular masses especially are prevented from going through the political experience of a fundamental social transformation. (Chatterjee 1993a, 211)

Thus, "passive revolution" is a historical model to provide a framework for capitalist transformation where attaining a bourgeoisie hegemony is not quite forthcoming. It is an attempt to form a broad-based coalition between capital, precapitalist class forces, and popular masses.

Tom Mboya's "African Socialism" is essentially a political-ideological program by which the largest possible alliances could be formulated against the colonial power and articulation of a bourgeoisie hegemony in a given postcolonial situation.[2] However, in this particular postcolonial condition, this alliance involves two closely related themes. First, it did not dismantle the "national" aspect of colonial authority, as the postcolonial state is solidly built on that state authority. Secondly, to win the support of the masses, "African Socialism" emphasizes the "Africanness" of postcolonial society.

> The practice of African socialism involves trying to use what is relevant and good in these *African Customs* to create new values in the changing *world of the money economy*, to build an economy which reflects majority of the people. (Mboya 1963, 167; emphasis added)

However, we believe Chatterjee's observation on passive revolution in postcolonial India is also relevant for the postcolonial Kenyan context.

> The object of the strategy of passive revolution was to *contain* class conflicts within manageable dimensions, to control and manipulate the many dispersed power relations in society to further as best as possible the thrust toward accumulation. (Chatterjee 1993a, 214; emphasis original)

To put the issue differently and frame it in the Kenyan context, for the undeveloped Kenyan bourgeoisie, passive revolution paves the way for capitalist accumulation, and the attempted strategy is used to win the support of the subordinate masses. However, the strategy began to crack immediately after it started. This takes us to the political rationalities of the postcolonial governmentality in Kenya.

Political Rationalities: Discourse of Counterhegemony.

In Gramsci's (1971) writings, the concept of hegemony has two principal meanings. First, it is a process within a civil society where a faction of the historical block tends to establish control over other factions within the block through moral and intellectual leadership. The leading faction, then, imposes its own ideology to other factions. Secondly, it signifies a relationship between the dominant and dominated (subaltern classes). Here hegemony becomes a process through which the dominant class, that is, the historical block, establishes moral authority over subaltern classes through political, moral, and intellectual leadership. This relationship is not static; it continuously shifts and transforms based on the subaltern mobilization from

below as well as renewed rivalry among various factions within the historical bloc.

The nationalist movement that ushered in Kenyan independence during the early 1960s enjoyed overwhelming popular support. Like many anticolonial movements in third world countries, it was not a unified movement. The Kenyan bourgeoisie class (actually, predominantly petite bourgeoisie), was ideologically fractured and politically weak. Kenyatta's KANU bears all the features of a fractured and heterogeneous petite bourgeoisie–dominated ruling class. The picture grows even more complicated if the ethnic dimensions of Kenyan society are introduced. The emergence of the Kenya Africa Democratic Union (KADU) and its subsequent merger is a clear sign of heterogeneity in the Kenyan historical bloc.

It is well known that KANU was a party of Kikuyu "notables" and their closely related neighbors, Embu and Meru (Leys 1975, 212). Furthermore, KANU was "an anti-imperialist movement representing Kenya's national aspiration. It was the constitutional inheritor of all the previous anticolonial Kenyan organizations" (wa Thiong'o 1995, 52).

Meanwhile, in April 1960, the Kalenjin-speaking people (the Kipsigis, Nandi, Suk, Tugen, and Marakwet) formed the Kalenjin Political Alliance. Along with this, various ethnic-based political groupings like the Masai United Front, the Coast African Political Union, and the Somali National Association, emerged. Finally all these groupings came together in 1960 and formed the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) as a rival to Kikuyu dominated KANU. However, the ethnic dimensions of KANU and KADU should not be exaggerated, because the question of land and economic interest was prominent in the formation of the KADU Gertzel 1970, 10). Wa Thiong'o describes the politics of KADU:

> The Kenya Africa Democratic Union (KADU) was [. . .] the main political instrument of foreign interests, and accommodation of imperialism. It was the black front of most of the interests previously catered for by the European colonist associations: from Grogan-Delamere conventions in the 1920s to Blundell's supposedly multi-racial New Kenya Group in the 1960s. Like Muzarewa's African National Council in the fictitious Zimbabwe—Rhodesia, KADU was backed internationally by the White Settlers and externally by the British Imperialist bourgeoisie. (wa Thiong'o 1995, 51–52)

Indeed, Leys argues that KADU received substantial assistance from colonialists in its early days, and when it started advocating "regionalism"—the division of the country into various regions along ethnic lines—Blundell, the white settlers' leader, and his New Kenya Group endorsed KADU and its policies (Leys 1974, 213). In 1963 KADU was soundly defeated when it

went to the polls separately, and in December 1964, the demand of regionalism was abolished, and KADU was "suddenly and painlessly dissolved" (Leys 1974, 212). This merger had profound impact on the hegemonic intention of the postcolonial historical block, who sought power as colonial pwer waned, as KADU was influential in removing the so-called radicals like Bildad Kaggia and Oginga Odinga from the ruling KANU historical block. The KADU leaders came from that part of Kenya where wage labor and cash-crop production were insignificant (Leys 1974, 214). The leadership was a strong supporter of private property and capitalist development. The "radical" faction, on the other hand, called for the confiscation of European firms and distribution of the lands among the landless peasants. The struggle between these two factions was a struggle of hegemony. The "radical" faction wanted its own hegemonic imprint on postcolonial Kenya. Opposition came from what wa Thiong'o (1982, 52) calls "comprador bourgeoisie" interest. Strengthened by joining the KADU, this faction led by Kenyatta and Mboya managed to eject the radical faction from KANU and hence consolidated the neocolonialist path for postcolonial Kenya.

The hegemonic crisis within the historical bloc was also hastened by the mass mobilization and demands imposed by most ex-Mau Mau fighters. Their main demands (wa Kinyatti 2000, 58) included:

- return all lands confiscated by the British to their owners with compensation;
- recognition of the Kenya Land Freedom Army as a national army and dismantling of the colonial coercive structure;
- arrest of all collaborators during the Mau Mau struggle;
- free education for all Kenyans;
- the building of a memorial for Mau Mau warriors and assistance for the children of martyrs.

Of course, these demands were firmly rejected by the Kenyatta regime: "*Hakuna cha bure* [there is nothing for free]. Those who want free things should go either to China or Tanzania" (Kenyatta, as quoted by Main wa Kinyatti 2000, 59). With this intensification of counterhegemony from below, the Kenyatta regime's response was wholesale repression and selective political assassination. Pio Gama Pinto and General Bamuingi were murdered (wa Kinyatti 2000, 59). Finally, at a highly manipulative KANU conference in March 1966 at Limuru, Odinga's association with the party ended when his post of party vice president was abolished. Later Odinga and supporters formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU), and Daniel Arap Moi succeeded Joseph Murumbi as Kenya's vice president. Incidentally,

Moi, a KADU leader from the Rift Valley, was instrumental in removing "radical" factions from KANU and consolidating the neocolonial course in Kenya.

Thus, immediately after independence, the political rationalities of Kenya were characterized by attempts in hegemonic construction by a widely diverse historical bloc. The crisis of hegemonic construction derives from the historical bloc's inability to become a unified hegemonic project, as well as an inability to establish techniques to deploy power.

Cultural Rationalities: "We Are All Kenyans"

Partha Chatterjee (1993b), in his influential *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, has argued that although Gramsci's theoretical concern was with the possibility of socialist revolution in advanced capitalism, his idea of "passive revolution" nonetheless provides us with a perspective on "the general form of the transition from colonial to postcolonial national states in the twentieth century" (Chatterjee 1983, 50). This transition has various stages of what Chatterjee called "movement," which, as a historical phase, has its accompanying ideological content (50). Using this interpretive criterion in the Indian context, Chatterjee divides

> [. . .] the presumed unity of nationalist thought into three stages or moments. I call these, respectively, the moments of departure, maneuver, and arrival. The argument is that for nationalist thought to ascertain its paradigmatic form these three are necessary ideological moments. (Chatterjee 1993b, 50)

The moment of departure occurs at the formation of a nationalist consciousness and knowledge created by post-Enlightenment nationalist thought. It also accepts the essential cultural difference between East and West. The progress of the East is in synthesizing the material of the West with the spiritual superiority of the East. Chatterjee uses the writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay to illustrate this moment (Chatterjee 1993b, 50–51).

Gandhi characterizes the moment of maneuver as the time of the mobilization of the popular elements in the cause of an anticolonial struggle and a simultaneous distancing of those elements from the structure of the state. (Chatterjee 1993b, 51). It combines both "war of movement" and "war of position." "Passive revolution," however, remained the overall strategy in Kenya.

In the Indian context, Chatterjee includes Jawaharlal Nehru in the moment of arrival. Here anticolonial discourse became a *single, unified* voice, in which all the social conflicts were effectively ignored. This apparent *unity* became an important aspect of the postcolonial situation (Chatterjee 1993b).

The cultural rationalities of postcolonial Kenya closely followed the moment of departure. The unified discourse of postcolonial nation building and "economic development" is the notion of *harambee* (pronounced haa-raam-bay), which means "Let us pull together." This idea is not a product of Kenya's independence; it actually pre-dates it. During the colonial period, in the central province, the *harambee* movement took the form of the Kikuyu independent school movement, and in Western Nyanza Province, the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO) was a prominent *harambee* project. In the Kikuyu land, the colonial authorities argued that the colonial state could not provide schools, so the Kikuyu started raising money to provide schools and teachers. The school movement became a protest movement and means of political mobilization for the Kikuyu masses. LUTATCO, on the other hand, operated exclusively within the economic arena and raised capital for commerce and trade. These two initiatives were grassroots attempts to pool resources to provide services identified by local people as otherwise insufficient for the community as a whole.

After independence, however, *harambee* took a whole new dimension. At the beginning of the postcolonial era, the official discourse of *harambee* was viewed as a community development effort to create participatory mechanisms for the people at the grassroots level. Terms like "participation" and "social confidence" became important words with which to characterize the official discourse of *harambee*.

Holmquist (1984), however, has offered a totally different interpretation of *harambee* by using Marxist class analysis. To Holmquist, *harambee* characterizes the class coalition two-segment petite bourgeoisie, that is, the rural petite bourgeoisie and its urban counterpart.

Holmquist (1984, 80) has argued that immediately after independence a protracted struggle waged by an alliance between the rural petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry meant that the bureaucratic segment of urban petite bourgeoisie lost its power base in rural Kenya, resulting in the rural petite bourgeoisie becoming the patrons and brokers of rural politics. Therefore, the bureaucracy and the party would have to deal with these petite bourgeoisie in their relation with the peasants. Thus *harambee* is an attempt on the part of the urban bureaucratic elite to penetrate rural areas politically as well as economically.

Without rejecting Holmquist's "class analysis," Njuguna Ng'ethe (1981) has offered "a modified hypothesis"(1981, 90). The need for such an attempt was precipitated by the second election of 1969, which ushered in a new phase of Kenya's socioeconomic development—the emergence of a bourgeoisie and the subsequent erosion of the petite bourgeoisie's power structure, both rural and urban. Unlike the petite bourgeoisie, this "new" class had direct access to foreign capital and different avenues for capital accumulation. However, the bourgeoisie's dependence on *harambee* remained crucial. This is also true in the context of the "*Nyayo*" philosophy in 1980s during the Moi era (Moi 1986). In fact, "*Nyayo*" was designed to offer the Kenyans a continuation of Kenyatta's *harambee*.

> While all intelligent, human actions are normally motivated by a purposeful spirit, directed and energized by an ambient philosophy, our national *Harambee* has always been directed and energized by this fundamental motivating spirit which comprises peace, love and Unity. This spirit is fundamental and of critical importance to African societies. Therefore, our *Harambee* has found a driving spirit somewhere. It derived its supporting philosophy from a source. And the 'somewhere' of that source is the fundamental African spirit which I call *Nyayo*. *Nyayo* is the spirit, and Nyayoism is the philosophy. (Moi 1986, 18)

Thus, *harambee* was redefined during the 1980s as *Nyayo*. It remained the same, with one exception; here Moi brings out the concept of "African spirit" and "community" in an attempt to provide *harambee* with a strong religious bent.[3]

However, as cultural rationalities of postcolonial Kenya, *harambee* and its subsequent reinvention as Nyayoism were essentially nation-building processes and quests for hegemony. In this quest, nationalism in the hands of an underdeveloped bourgeoisie became a potent weapon. Within the strategy of "passive revolution," this historical block tried to thwart opposition to its hegemonic project from below, as well as by uprooting those factions of the bourgeoisie class that appeared to threaten the very idea of bourgeoisie hegemony.

However, opposition to the hegemonic construction in the postcolonial situation comes from various sources. In the next two sections of the present chapter, we will interrogate one such attempt, that is, the life, time and writings of Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Postcolonial African Organic Intellectuals

Wa Thiong'o is a writer and an intellectual. His creative intervention still continues, and because he is an intellectual, it derives from the specific

historical experience of Kenya's colonial past and postcolonial present. Thus wa Thiong'o's opus is derivative to his "socioeconomic background" or perhaps he enjoys, as his writing might indicate, certain autonomy from societal conditioning. How has wa Thiong'o negotiated this tricky question? We will try to answer by explaining the intellectuals' relationship to his/her society. For that we borrow heavily and freely from Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said.

Gramsci (1971, 9) argued that the distinct social category of intellectual, an entity independent of class position, is a myth. After such opposition, Gramsci set forth his ideas about the role of the intellectual in terms of that role's "social function" (Gramsci 1971, 3), distinguishing two types of intellectuals: The first is "traditional" intellectuals, those whose position in the "interests" of society has a certain interclass aura about it, but who actually are derivative of class relations (Gramsci 1971, 9), such as teachers, priests, and administrators. The second is "organic" intellectuals, who are directly attached to classes or enterprises that "[use] intellectuals to organize interest, gain more power, and get more control" (Said 1996, 4). Thus "organic" intellectuals are distinguished "less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (Gramsci 1971, 3).

Following Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual, Said further elaborates on the nation's organic intellectuals:

> [. . .] the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional, a competent member of a class just going about her/his business. The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. (Said 1994, 11)

In other words, in contrast to traditional intellectuals, organic intellectuals are actively involved in society, striving to change it rather than to maintain traditions and existing power relations. While traditional intellectuals "remain in place," organic intellectuals "are always on the move, on the make" (Said 1996, 4). Perhaps most importantly, the organic intellectuals' role is to uphold certain human universal values such as speaking the truth to power. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (1999) have described Said's position on intellectuals:

> The intellectual must be grounded within his or her particular society and seek to expand the space ascribed to them, to become relevant to those on

> the margins, the disadvantaged, and at the same time, maintain a distance that allows critical engagement. (1999, 144)

How does Gramsci and Said's problematization of the role of the intellectual apply to the postcolonial intellectual? This question is important, as we have attempted to frame wa Thiong'o in terms of postcolonial organic intellectuals.

First and foremost, the postcolonial organic intellectual needs to be aware of what Said, on another occasion, called the "gravity of history" (Said 1993, 336–37). Wa Thiong'o's sense of the "gravity of history" was formed in terms of colonialism and neocolonialism, and resistance to both.

Wa Thiong'o argued that an African writers' sense of being derives from three phases of African history (1993, 60–75): the age of the anticolonial struggle, the age of independence, and the age of neocolonialism. The first phase was characterized by "the decade of tremendous anti-imperialist and anticolonial revolutionary upheaval occasioned by the forcible intervention of the masses in history" (wa Thiong'o 1993, 60–61). The African writer "was born on the crest" of the "anticolonial upheaval" and worldwide revolutionary ferment. The anti-imperialist energy and optimism of the masses found its way into the writing of the period (wa Thiong'o 1993, 61). Wa Thiong'o includes, among others, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*. Examples of writings in this phase of African history, according to wa Thiong'o, led to disillusionment and pessimism in the next phase, that is, the age of independence, due to an inadequate grasp of the role of imperialism and the class forces that it generated.

The "age of independence" brought political independence throughout Africa but failed to effect fundamental changes in society. Echoing the arguments of Fanon (1979) in *The Wretched of the Earth*, wa Thiong'o argued that the class that came to power in independent African countries was an underdeveloped middle class "which was not interested in putting the national economy on a new footing, but in becoming an intermediary between western interests and the people, a handsomely paid business agent of the western bourgeoisie" (1993, 65). Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, and Okot P'Bitek's *Song of Lawino* are exemplary texts of this time. Though wa Thiong'o praises the quality of writings of this phase, these works nevertheless are characterized by sense of despair, individualism, and cynicism (1993, 68).

The third phase, according to wa Thiong'o, is the age of neocolonialism (1993, 68) and is characterized by "the transition of imperialism from the colonial to the neocolonial stage" (1993, 68):

> A neo-colonial regime is, by its very being, in its refusal to break with the international and national structures of exploitation, inequality, and oppression, gradually isolated it from the people. Its real power base resides not in the people but in imperialism and in the police and the army. To maintain itself it shuts all venues of democratic expression. [. . .] All democratic organizations are outlawed or else brought under the ruler, in which case they are emptied of any democratic life. [. . .] Any democratic expression in the area of culture becomes a threat to such a regime's very peculiar brand of culture: the culture of silence and fear run and directed from police calls and the torture chamber. (1993, 71)

Wa Thiong'o's organic intellectual sensibilities developed in relation to these three historical phases and their gravities. Wa Thiong'o came to life during some of Africa's and Kenya's most tumultuous times. He was born one year before the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent intensification of anticolonial struggles throughout the colonial world. Within the Kenyan context, the anticolonial Mau Mau revolt of the 1950s was a watershed moment in wa Thiong'o's life, as it was in Kenya as a nation.

Socially, Wa Thiong'o came from a peasant family. His landless father had four wives and no land. Wa Thiong'o's (1964) sympathetic explanation of Ngotho's polygamous home in *Weep Not, Child*, might reveal the fact that wa Thiong'o grew up in a warm, communal, and close-knit polygamous family. On the other hand, he saw his father working on the white settlers' land and watched the dehumanization of the colonial self under the yoke of colonialism. Wa Thiong'o never escaped the influence of this stage of his life. In *Homecoming* (1972) he recalls the fertile land alienated by the white settlers while native peasants were left without any legal right to the land which they had once owned:

> I grew up in a small village. My father with his four wives had no land. They lived as tenants-at-will on somebody else's land. Sweetened tea with milk at any time of day was a luxury. We had one meal a day late in the evening. Every day the women would go to their scruffy little strips of shamba. But they had faith and they waited. (wa Thiong'o 1972, 48)

Wa Thiong'o then talks about the "sprawling green fields" owned by the white settlers (1972, 48) and develops his points about the unequal distribution of land and wealth under colonialism:

> Just opposite from the ridge on which our village was scattered were the sprawling green fields owned by the white settlers. They grew coffee and tea and pyrethrum. I worked there sometimes, digging the ground, tending the settlers' crops, and this for less than ten shillings. Every morning African

> workers would stream across the valley to sell their seed for such meager sums of money, and at the end of the week or month they would owe it all to the Indian trader who owned most of the shops in our area for a pound of sugar, maize flour, or grains, thankful that this would silence the children's clamoring for a few days. (wa Thiong'o 1972, 98)

These early experiences informed wa Thiong'o's politics. They instilled in him a sense of alienation and dispossession, which became the most potent symbol of all his writings, fiction as well as non-fiction. This is revealed in his first written novel, *The River Between* (1965), which insistently evokes the Kikuyu land before its alienation to strangers. Through an effective presentation of Kikuyu myth and ancestry as a living reality, wa Thiong'o accomplishes a clear sense of the importance of land in the life of his people. In his second novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), wa Thiong'o returns to this issue of land dispossession and people's determination to fight in order to get their facts. In all works of wa Thiong'o, land remains a symbol of communal life, giving rise to a sense of belonging and solidarity. This bond was reinforced by wa Thiong'o's extensive knowledge of Kikuyu culture. Through sensitive and artistic presentation of Kikuyu customs, rituals, and ceremonies, wa Thiong'o calls attention to the centrality of land in Kikuyu life and society. This sense of dispossession and alienation formed the very core of wa Thiong'o's politics. Generally speaking, his egalitarian politics and resistance to hegemony, both colonial and postcolonial, are the result of the historical forces that "created" his own individual subjectivity.

Wa Thiong'o's literary world view comes close to what is usually known as "socialist realism," but politics, for him, was not an abstract theory, it was an integral part of his subject and of his peasant background. This is confirmed by wa Thiong'o's lifelong commitment to the causes of Kenyan peasants. His concerns for their betterment went beyond the demands of the commitment called for by the East African intellectual, including direct involvement in their problems, especially where land issues became pivotal. His view of what a writer can achieve reflects the stand that informs his writings:

> I believe that African intellectuals must align themselves with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national ideal. Furthermore, we must strive for a form of social organization that will free the manacled spirit and energy of our people so we can build a new country, and sing a new song. Perhaps in a small way, the African writer can help in articulating the feelings behind this struggle. (wa Thiong'o 1972, 50)

Wa Thiong'o's "organic" link to the peasant community, expressed in his writings both fiction and non-fiction, certainly explain the plight of the Kenyan peasantry and how to overcome it. In this respect, wa Thiong'o performs an important role as a spokesperson in an emerging literature, establishing and defining the status and identity of the African in general from the standpoint of a well-informed, interested insider.

This is important because Africa has been previously explained and chronicled mainly through the eyes of Europeans and has produced Eurocentric ideas and colonial discourse. These writings and its fictional evocations tend to put "whiteness" at the center and African characters at the periphery. Robert Ruark, Elspeth Harley, and Isak Denison (Karen Blixen) all tend to explain African/Kenyan people. But a close reading of these texts will reveal depersonalized and stereotypical images of Africans, indicating a moral and cultural superiority of whites. Wa Thiong'o's entire opus could be seen as a subversion of this tradition.

When wa Thiong'o writes about Kenyan peasants, he depicts them the way an insider with intimate knowledge would. This is more pronounced in his use of rich Kikuyu oral tradition as the cultural framework for his stories. Wa Thiong'o's background also accounts for some of the structural and formal characteristics of his novels. This is illustrated by certain stylistic features in his first two novels, *The River Between* (1965) and *Weep Not, Child* (1964). In these novels, the author covers a whole community, and when he deals with individuals, he places them within a long lineage that includes several generations. It is from the point of view of this group and its values that the story unfolds, and not from the soul-searching of a single consciousness. Much of the effectiveness of the author's performance in these novels depends on the skill with which he weaves traditional tales into the fabric of the narratives, exploiting the viewpoint of the audience in a way that helps heighten the dramatic essence of the relevant themes (Nureldin 1988, 43–44).

His intimate knowledge about peasant life and its subjugation under colonialism paved the way for his unequivocal support for Mau Mau. Wa Thiong'o was fourteen when the Mau Mau war erupted and a State of Emergency was declared in 1952. This historical phase led, in turn, to the author's personal involvement with the Mau Mau movement. The keen impact of those traumatic events on the mind of young wa Thiong'o helped, to a large extent, to shape his later attitude toward imperialism and the meaning of independence. In his preface to *Secret Lives*, wa Thiong'o recalls some of the memories that haunt his vision in *Weep Not, Child* (1964), and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967):

> I remember the nights of fighting in my father's house [and] my mother's struggle with the soil so that we might eat, have decent clothes and some schooling; [I remember] my older brother Wallace Mwangi, running to the cover and security of the forest under a hail of bullets from colonial police—murdered because he had taken the oath. (wa Thiong'o 1975, xi)

In *Homecoming* (1972) wa Thiong'o describes post-*uhuru* Kenya by posing a question that becomes central to his works after independence was won: What have these peasants gained from *uhuru*? Has our ruling elite tried to change the colonial social and economic structure? Are the peasants in control of the land they fought for? (wa Thiong'o 1972, 49).

However, as Cook and Okenimkpe argue (1997), "Ngugi's articulation of ideological revolutionary socialist commitment reaches a new peak in the still ongoing period of exile from 1982, during which he was forced to lived outside his homeland" (212). This commitment has been expressed in three books of essays: *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-colonial Kenya* (1983), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), and *Moving Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom* (1993). Though they occasionally discuss Mau Mau and other colonial conditions, wa Thiong'o's main contention in these books is that the masses under neocolonialism are little better off than they were under colonialism. Among them, *Moving the Centre*, originally published in 1993, is worth mentioning. Here one observes the emergence of a "new wa Thiong'o." This book, I believe, exemplifies his postcolonial text. Implicitly influenced by Foucault and Said (though these two names did not appear in the index of this particular text), the author tackled the issues of culture, cultural hegemony, and resistance. The book is divided into four sections: Freeing Culture from Eurocentrism, Freeing Culture from Colonial Legacies, Freeing Culture from Racism, and Matigari, Dreams, and Nightmares (wa Thiong'o 1993).

These four sections contain several chapters each and are interwoven with the idea of displacing the centrality of Europe and Eurocentrism by the hitherto marginal, peripheral postcolonial culture, and by democratic and humanistic cultures and values. In the context of revolutionary displacement of the centrality of Europe, wa Thiong'o argues:

> In terms of social change, the present face of the twentieth century is a product of the struggle between two contending forces. On the one hand, imperialism which saw the elevation not simply of the non-producer but of the parasitic non-producer into the dominant ruling power not just over people from one country but over several nations, races and countries. On the other has been social revolution which for the first time in human history sought

> change and often fought for power on behalf and from the standpoint of the producer working people. (wa Thiong'o 1993, 109–10)

The passage reads like old fashioned Marxist-Leninist theory of socialist revolution. Now consider the following passage from the chapter titled, *In Moi's Kenya, History is Subversive* (1993, 96).

> History is subversive. And it is because it is actually subversive of the existing tyrannical system that there have been attempts to arrest it. But how can one arrest the wheels of history? So they try to *rewrite* history, make up *official* history; if they can put cotton wool in their ears and in those of the population, maybe they and *the people* will not hear the *real* call of history, will not hear the *real* lessons of history. (wa Thiong'o 1993, 96–97; emphasis original)

And, again,

> History is subversive because truth is [. . .]. The masses know it. So, too, do the ruling comprador bourgeoisie. Hence, the continuing repression and its opposite—resistance. The 1990s will see the conflict played out to its logical conclusion—liberation from neocolonialism. (wa Thiong'o 1993, 100–101)

Of course, it would be simply unfair to confine wa Thiong'o within a specific political function of writing. Indeed, his works always convey a certain degree of aesthetic autonomy, as has been forcefully argued by Simon Gikandi (2000, 248). This aesthetic autonomy has been at the very center of his thinking about literature and culture in one form or another. To wa Thiong'o, writing has a social and aesthetic function that cannot be reduced to specific political categories. According to Gikandi:

> Even in the preface to *Homecoming*, which was written when Ngugi had fully embraced a Marxist aesthetic ideology that seemed to subordinate the art object to productive forces, he would still insist that literary works could neither be abstracted from, nor subsumed in, political economy: [. . .] (Gikandi 2000, 248)

Wa Thiong'o articulated his aesthetic autonomy forcefully in *Writers in Politics* (1981). In the essay titled "Literature and Society," wa Thiong'o described the origin of literature:

> Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship: one is writing about somebody for somebody. At the collective level literature, as a product of men's intellectual once imaginative activity embodies, in words

> and images, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. It is a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative planes, of a community's wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life, food, clothing, shelter, and in the process creating and recreating itself in history. (wa Thiong'o 1981, 5–6)

And again:

> [. . .] Literature is more than just a mechanistic reflection of social reality. As part of man's artistic activities, it is in itself part of man's self-realization as a result of his wrestling with nature; it is, if you like, itself a symbol of man's creativity, of man's historical process of being and becoming. It is also an enjoyable end-product of man's artistic labor. (wa Thiong'o 1982, 6)

Here wa Thiong'o offers what Gikandi calls a "metaphysical interpretation of relationship between writings and society or text and context" (2000, 13). Although Gikandi traces this "metaphysical" element in wa Thiong'o's writings in terms of the influence of Mathew Arnold, F. R. Leaves and D. H. Lawrence, it should be argued that this relationship between text and context in wa Thiong'o's works never remains static, nor is it taken for granted. It is transformed and still transforming. Earlier in this section of the chapter, following Gramsci, we noted that the organic intellectual is characterized not by their profession or what they do for living, but rather by the "function" of their intellectual activities. This "function" should not be confined to any specific ideology or "party line," though organic intellectuals must voice the concerns of the downtrodden and marginalized. More importantly, an organic intellectual always posts an oppositional critique of dominant culture and aspires to certain universal human values. For wa Thiong'o, it is human dignity and justice. A critical review of wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau works will, hopefully, reveal that wa Thiong'o is, indeed, a postcolonial organic intellectual.

Writing Mau Mau, Writing Resistance

In an interview Michel Foucault was asked about the role of the intellectual in local struggles as the specific site of confrontation with power. In response, he conceptually distinguished between what he called the "universal" intellectual and the "specific" intellectual (Foucault 1980, 125–33).

Foucault rejects the idea that intellectuals should be given a privileged position because they are "speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice" (1980, 126). According to Foucault, the masses are quite capable of articulating knowledge, but their voices are often ignored, discredited, and

disqualified by the institutions and regimes of power. According to Barry Smart (1990, 165), with this idea Foucault implicitly displaced the historically privileged position of the intellectual ("universal" intellectual) functions, that is, master of truth and justice. In its place, Foucault talks about "specific" intellectuals who "reveal the truth to those unable to see or speak it" (Smart 1990, 165), which Foucault calls the "insurrection of the subjugated knowledge" (Foucault 1980, 81).

However, according to Smart (1990, 165), this distinction between "universal" and "specific" intellectual is secondary to Foucault's politics, as he was more concerned with the relationship between truth and power. And Foucault is much more interested in the struggle over truth and the regime of power.

> It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony—social, economic, and cultural—within which it operates at the present time. (Foucault 1980, 133)

This idea of non-privileging the "universal" intellectual in Foucault's writings also extended to "authorship" and its connection to text. Here, in contrast to the "universal" intellectual, "specific" intellectuals include the one "who, along with a handful of others, has at his disposal, whether in the service of the state or against it, powers which can either benefit or irrevocably destroy life" (Foucault 1980, 130).

The "author function," as Foucault puts it, is to ask the question "what is an author?" (Foucault 1984). A "specific" intellectual is to produce discourse; "authors" are the "founders of discursivity." He specifically mentions Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Thus, "specific" intellectuals and authors

> [p]rovide a paradigmatic set of terms, images, and concepts which organize thinking and experience about the past, present, and future of society, doing so in a way which enigmatically surpasses the specific claims they put forth. (Foucault 1984, 25)

Now if we summarize Foucault's notion of the "specific" intellectual and "author function" as a "founder of discursivity" and juxtapose them with Gramsci's idea of organic intellectual conclusions, we arrive at the following conclusion:

1. The writer's or intellectual's duty is to produce a discourse, more specifically, a discourse of protest.

2. The discourse a writer/intellectual produces reveals "author function" and is linked with the historical, cultural, and political context, with which the writer/intellectual is "organically" linked.
3. The "organic" attachment of writers/intellectuals may be reflected a specific political position, but relations between text (writings) and context (historical situation) enjoy a certain degree of aesthetic autonomy.
4. That aesthetic autonomy frees writers/intellectuals from various institutional constraints, but the ultimate goal of the writer/intellectual is to speak truth to power and to provide a voice to the voiceless and marginal, and to speak the unspoken.

With these concepts in mind, let us turn to wa Thiong'o's writings on Mau Mau. Wa Thiong'o was born in 1938 in Limuru, Kenya. He came of age during the State of Emergency (1952–61) declared by the British colonial state in order to quell the Mau Mau revolt. Wa Thiong'o's family was directly affected by the revolt, as well as by the state response to it. His deaf and dumb stepbrother was shot under mysterious circumstances in 1955. In the same year, wa Thiong'o's elder brother, Wallace Mwangi wa Thiong'o, a carpenter, left home to join Mau Mau in the forest until 1956. As a result wa Thiong'o's mother was detained:

> In 1955 she [wa Thiong'o's mother] had to bear three months of torture at Kamirithu home-guard post because of my elder brother, who had joined the Mau Mau guerrillas. Throughout the 1950s she had to carry the burden of not knowing if he would come out of the mountains, and later out of detention, alive. (wa Thiong'o 1995, 109)

Again, "My writing is really an attempt to understand myself and my situation in society and in history" (wa Thiong'o 1995, 3). However, as mentioned earlier, the relationship between wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau writings (text) and the event (context) evolved over the years. Following Gitahi-Gititi (1980) and Gikandi (2000), we can identify three closely related phases of the relationship between wa Thiong'o's Mau Mau writings and Mau Mau as a historical event. These phases, though not distinct from each other, focus on colonial and postcolonial conditions and the evolution of wa Thiong'o's political thinking. Keep in mind, however, that the primary focus in all of his writings, including his Mau Mau writings, was modalities of power and resistance to them.

Having said that, let us describe the phases.

1. The early stage is characterized by the publication of *The River Between* (1965), *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and some of the early stories collected in *Secret Lives* (1975). Gitahi-Gititi has characterized it as a state of cultural

conflict, education, and the messianic concept (1980, 24). To Gikandi, the relationship between Mau Mau and the works of wa Thiong'o was not characterized by "heroism or patriotism, but by fear and doubt" (Gikandi 27). The images used are of shadows, darkness, and death. Maughan-Brown (1985, 232) is of the opinion that *Weep Not, Child* (1964) is indistinguishable from novels by Mwangi, Wachira, and Mangua, where Mau Mau is depicted in a negative manner, and that depiction is close to the fictionalized account of colonial discourse of Mau Mau, notably Robert Ruark's *Something of Value* (1955) and *Uhuru* (1962).

2. The second stage began with the publication of *A Grain of Wheat* (1972), which depicts Mau Mau on the eve of decolonization and first years of *uhuru*. It shows that *uhuru* has not resulted in better living conditions—social, economic, and political—for the *wananchi* (ordinary masses), the neglected heroes and heroines of the *wananchi*. In other words, it represents "the motif of return and betrayal" and "postcolonial disenchantment" (Gikandi 2000, 29).
3. The third stage is represented by the publication of *Petals of Blood* (1977) and performance of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976, with Micere Mugo) at the Kenya National Theater in Nairobi. In this phase Ngugi began to deploy Mau Mau as a "defining moment in Kenyan recent history" (Gikandi 2000, 29). In this stage we observe wa Thiong'o's use of Marxist historiography and its deployment. In *Petals of Blood* (1977) we see a departure of wa Thiong'o's works from an earlier political procurement. This "break" according to Gikandi (2000, 31–2) happened due to the decisive influence of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, especially the chapter "Pitfalls of National Consciousness," and the consolidation of neocolonial rule in Kenya under Kenyatta. Similarly, the play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) also shows the pitfalls of the nationalist elite regime and consolidation of the neocolonialist grip in Kenya by showing how the neocolonial government has betrayed the ideals of Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau supreme leader and hero of the anticolonialist struggle.
4. The fourth stage alienation and disenchantment began with wa Thiong'o's exile from Kenya in 1982.

Between the publication of *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), wa Thiong'o published a number of works both fictional and non-fictional. They include *Devil on the Cross* (1982), *Detained* (1981), and *Writers in Politics* (1981), as well as the play *I Will Marry When I Want* (1982, with Ngugi wa Mirii). At the time of publication of the English editions of *I Will Marry When I Want* and *Devil on the Cross*, wa Thiong'o was already in exile in Britain (Gikandi 2000, xii).

Besides publishing a number of his essay collections, wa Thiong'o'o in this phase published *Matigari* (1980) and *A Story of Loss and Longing* (Gikandi 2000, 229). As a writer, his life was characterized by exile in the

West, the culture responsible for much of Kenya's colonial and postcolonial predicament. He acquired a sense of alienation and disengagement, yet at the same time he longed for the "traditional identity" he'd left behind.

The Wa Thiong'o's works we are about to interrogate are not "on" Mau Mau or "about" Mau Mau. To wa Thiong'o, Mau Mau was a historical episode and could be used as an heuristic device to illustrate a number of colonial and postcolonial conditions, and he used both fictional and nonfictional strategies to accomplish this objective. Mau Mau was a subversive and insurrectionary strategy against colonial power and its postcolonial rearrangement and deployment under Kenyatta and Moi. Wa Thiong'o explicitly purports to show the different modalities of power, how *wananchi* was subjected to power, and how to resist such power. For wa Thiong'o, writing in all its different phases became a strategy to resist power in all its manifestations.

Phase One: Colonial Modernity and Creative Ambivalence

According to Gikandi (2000, 39), Wa Thiong'o's career was characterized by three powerful institutions that British colonialism bought in Kenya: the protestant church, the mission school, and the emergence of cultural nationalism identified by the independent school movement and the female circumcision issue. These issues created the first concerns within the idyllic Kikuyu community. Wa thiong'o's first novel is an expression of this business.

From the perspective of time and setting *The River Between* (1965) deals with the initial stages of the advent of colonialism and the introduction of Christianity in Kenya. It opens up to the readers two villages in the Kikuyu area and narrates the history of their conflicting relationship. The conflict starts in tribal rivalry for leadership and ends up in ideological antagonism between the adherents to traditional tribal life, as embodied in the character Kameno, and those who support Christianity, rooted in the character Makuyu.

Although wa Thiong'o talks about cultural synthesis in *The River Between* (1965), the text itself attempts a sympathetic distillation of the essence of traditional Kikuyu life before the coming of the white man and a portrayal of the consequences of that "coming" in terms of land alienation, division within the community, and the ultimate disintegration of communal values. Thus the author is concerned with the social, cultural, political, and religious consequences at both the societal and individual level. He displays these concerns by weaving three interconnected "events" within the text. These are: 1) the baptized Muthoni, who decides to

undergo the rite of circumcision; 2) the founding of the Kikuyu independent school by the western-educated Waiyaki; and 3) the romance between tradition-bound Waiyaki and christianized Nyambura. These "events" or "episodes" in the text were dramatized in terms of symbols and images. *The River Between* (1965) starts with the following passage:

> The ridges lay side by side. One was Kameno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kameno and Makuyu were many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan. They were like any sleeping lions which never work. They just slept, the big deep sleep of their creator. (wa Thiong'o 1965, 102)

The "ridges" symbolize the land alienation and struggle around it. The text also ends with a reference to the "ridges."

> The land was now silent. The two ridges lay side by side, hidden in the darkness. And Honia River went on flowing between them, down through the valley of life, its beat rising above the dark stillness, reaching into the heart of the people of Makuyu and Kameno. (wa Thiong'o 1965, 152)

According to Maughan-Brown (1985, 232–33), *The River Between* (1965) illustrates wa Thiong'o's position on Mau Mau in two respects. First, Kiama, the group dedicated to overthrowing the colonial regime, is vaguely similar to the structure and objectives of Mau Mau. The relationship between Kiama and the major characters of the story is characterized by ambivalence and ambiguity, as if the characters cannot quite decide what to think of Kiama. Secondly, the character Waiyaki is portrayed in purely individualistic terms and is more concerned with his personal ambition and desires than with serving the community so devastated by colonialism.

Wa Thiong'o's second novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), revisited the issue of land alienation and loss of community under colonialism. On the second page of the novel, wa Thiong'o introduces two landlords, the European Howlands and the African Jacobo. Here wa Thiong'o shifts from cultural conflict and introduces the conflict between white settlers and their black stooges on the one hand and a deprived *wananchi* on the other.

In the next text, *The River Between* (1965), wa Thiong'o introduces a community disintegrated by alien forces and the collapse of communal values under white rule. Where in *Weep Not, Child* (1964), we see the people continuing the struggle, in *The River Between* (1965) they preserve their identity and regain their land. As colonialism and its rule intensified, wa Thiong'o depicted a nation torn apart by violence, horror, and strife, in contrast to the idyllic and fertile land.

As in *The River Between* (1965), the themes of *Weep Not, Child* (1964) are brought to life in the experiences of three central characters who entertain different and clashing viewpoints on the Kenyan political landscape and whose fate becomes closely interlocked with that of the protagonist of the novel. Ngotho, Howlands, and Jacobo are representatives of different classes. The way wa Thiong'o treats each character cogently brings out the viewpoint of each class and sheds light on the themes of the novel. Through their experiences the author examines the separate but interrelated themes of land alienation, the divisive effect of Christian policy within the Kenyan society, and the alienating effect of western-oriented education on Kenyan youth. The examination of these themes runs more or less parallel to and mingles with that of Njoroge's life.

The depiction of Mau Mau in *Weep Not, Child* (1964) is similar to that in *The River Between* (1965). Manghan-Brown (1985, 234–35) argues that Mau Mau was depicted in a "neutral" manner. For example, the "brutality" of Mau Mau was juxtaposed with the brutality of the "security forces," as if atrocities committed by the colonialist forces were justifiable as responses to Mau Mau atrocities. Furthermore, Mau Mau was depicted by how "[. . .] as the years went and [Mwihaki] heard stories of Mau Mau and how they could slash their opponents into pieces with pangas, she became afraid" (wa Thiong'o 1964, 89).

In the text, the character Boro is the representative of Mau Mau, but he fails to articulate the political objectives of Mau Mau. That failure allowed the colonialist forces to portray Mau Mau leaders as criminals. Boro declares that his reason for joining Mau Mau is to seek revenge, a purely personal reason:

> Boro had always told himself that the real reason for his flight to the forest was a desire to fight for freedom. But this fervor had soon worn off. His mission became a mission of revenge. This was the only thing that could now give him fire and boldness. If he killed a single white man, he was exacting a vengeance for a brother killed.
>
> "And freedom?" the lieutenant continued.
>
> "An illusion. What freedom is there for you and me?"
>
> "Why then do we fight?"
>
> "To kill unless you kill, you'll be killed. So you go on killing and destroying. It's a law of nature. The white man too fights and kills with gas, bombs, and everything." (wa Thiong'o 1964, 102–3)

Manghan-Brown (1985, 236) also points out that when Boro visits his dying father to ask forgiveness for his misdeeds, and then after his father's death, Boro "ran quickly out, away from the light into the night" (wa Thiong'o

1964, 125). This, according Manghan-Brown (1985, 236), mirrors the Eurocentric Christian symbols of light and darkness. Boro's coming and going are even organized around this symbolic opposition.

In brief, wa Thiong'o's depiction of Mau Mau in his two early works of fiction was not positive. Indeed, as Manghan-Brown (1985, 255) reminds us, they are quite similar to other "Mau Mau fiction" like the one by Ruark and others. How do we explain this?

Wa Thiong'o's childhood was deeply Christian, and he went through western education, first at Alliance High School, Nairobi, later at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, and then at Leeds University in the U.K. All along, however, wa Thiong'o was critical towards colonialism. This relationship to colonial modernity remained, at least in the early two novels, one of conflicted ambivalence. This is most apparent regarding the role of colonial education. In both *The River Between* (1965) and *Weep Not, Child* (1964), education is considered the means by which an individual can beat the colonizer at his own game. But education also becomes a means of self-aggrandizement. Education alone was perceived as something that elevated the individual above the rank and file. Njoroge's mother, Nyokabi, is filled with longing to read and write and wants to some day be like Jacobo's children, who had every opportunity to go abroad for further studies. Nyokabi argues,

> If Njoroge could now get all the white man's learning, would Ngotho even work for Howlands, and especially as the wife was reputed to be a hard woman? Again, would they as a family continue living as Ahoi in another man's land, a man who clearly resented their way? (wa Thiong'o 1964, 16)

Njoroge vows that with the education he would gain he would never become a carpenter like his brother Kamau, to whom he already feels superior. In other words, education is the key. This, I believe, makes wa Thiong'o ambivalent about colonial modernity and may explain his rather negative portrayal of Mau Mau in these two books.

Phase Two: A Grain of Wheat *(1967) and the Chimera of Decolonization*

When wa Thiong'o entered Leeds University, he had already published his first two novels commented on above. During his Leeds days, he wrote and published his third novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). "At Leeds he is influenced by Prof. Arnold Kettle as well as by fellow students, one of whom, Grant Kamenju, introduces him to Frantz Fanon's writing; he 'avidly' reads

Marx and Engel and finds Lenin's imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, an 'eye-opener'" (Sicherman 1989, 6).

Taken together, these influences created the time and style of the text. Following Fanon, wa Thiong'o became aware of the "empty shell" of decolonization led by the "national middle class." Gikandi identified this phenomenon as *arrested decolonization* (2000, 98). Furthermore, Gikandi (2000, 100) argued that the radical transformation of wa Thiong'o in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) was based on the contrasts between the romance of land and the prophetic narrative discourse and between lyricism of prose to uncertainty and disconnection. In his early two novels, wa Thiong'o showed great interest in genealogies and "origins," but in *A Grain of Wheat* he adopts a narrative style of historical closures and "the problems they present to those engaged in the politics of nationalism" (2000, 100). "*A Grain of Wheat* was both a celebration of independence and a warning about those (its) pitfalls" (wa Thiong'o 1993, 3).

Years after its publication, wa Thiong'o expressed the reason for writing *A Grain of Wheat*:

> In the area of culture, the struggle to move the centre was reflected in the tricontinental literature of Asia, Africa and South America. It was more dramatic in the case of Africa and the Caribbean countries where the post-war world saw a new literature in English and French consolidating itself into a tradition. This literature was celebrating the right to name the world and *A Grain of Wheat* was part of that tradition of the struggle for the right to name the world for ourselves. (wa Thiong'o 1993, 3)

In other words, *A Grain of Wheat* intends to subvert, that is, to move the center. Like many others, wa Thiong'o sees the colonial situation in Kenya, or more particularly the Mau Mau liberation struggle with the attendant State of Emergency, as an event as disruptive and devastating as any other in history. Death, suffering, bitterness, and hatred marked the years of the struggle, as did fear, desperation, and national hope for better days to come. The struggle demanded that people take sides—either as collaborators on the side of British imperialists or as full-fledged supporters of the war of liberation. There could be no neutrality, although Mugo in *A Grain of Wheat* thought that he should be left alone to realize his own dreams, free from all responsibility and involvement. Like many others, Mugo was unwilling to risk his security and comforts by participating in the war of liberation. The author-narrator sides with those who fought against colonialism for land, political freedom, and economic equality. The text graphically depicts the hostilities of the colonial administration and their collaborators and commends the heroism and solidarity of the struggling

masses of peasants and workers. While *A Grain of Wheat* deals directly with the events of the war, it also tells us what happened to the psyches of all involved, regardless of their allegiances. The psychological state of the minds of individuals is painstakingly explored, and this leads us to the realization that though the liberation struggle was eventually successful, the attainment of *uhuru* sobered the society with knowledge of its own weakness and failures. Having covered the whole gamut of human actions and the psychological burden of guilt that each bore, wa Thiong'o invites society and the reader to re-examine the past in order to rededicate themselves to the current task of reconstruction.

In this text, three characters—Kihika, Gikonyo, and Mugo—are posed against the backdrop of the Mau Mau revolt. Kihika joined the Mau Mau before the emergency and entered the forest, leaving behind everything including his beloved fiancée. In the text, he possesses heroic characteristics: he is brave, courageous, and without guilt.

And we have Gikonyo, also with Mau Mau, having joined the movement before the emergency and taking the colony oath. After he is imprisoned, he is betrayed and becomes a traitor. Wa Thiong'o does not condemn Gikonyo's betrayal because he did it to be with his wife, Mumbi.

The third important character in the text is Mugo, the solitary farmer without any family. He is apolitical and only interferes when a pregnant woman is whipped by a Home Guard. His intervention lands him in a detention camp, where he becomes a hero because he leads a hunger strike and endures torture and beatings. As the story deepens, the reader gradually realizes that Mugo is not really the hero he seems; he is the one who betrayed Kihika to the British.

However, wa Thiong'o never criticizes or put a negative spin on any of the characters in *A Grain of Wheat*. Even the character Karanja, a Home Guard and colonial chief, Kihika's foil, never experiences the wrath of the villagers on the eve of independence; rather, he is pitied that is, the one whose actions and character provide a contrast to those of Kihika. This tendency, However, as Buijtenhuijs (1973) has argued, this tendency to comprehend both sides of the conflict might prevent him from focusing exclusively on the Mau Mau fighter (1982, 101).

This theme of "hesitancy" regarding Mau Mau fighters in *A Grain of Wheat* is further explained by Manghan-Brown (1985, 238–44), who holds that the images of Mau Mau in the text are not unequivocal. First, examining the question of Mau Mau, "brutality," the story describes Jackson's death: "His body was one morning found hacked with pangas into small pieces. His house and property were burnt to charcoal and ashes" (wa Thiong'o 1972, 99). Here the violence and brutality are devoid of any political

context or reason. Indeed, Mau Mau violence is shown as an individual act. Thus, in *A Grain of Wheat*, the second phase work, it seems wa Thiong'o has not quite managed to shed his ambivalence toward Mau Mau. Although dealing with arrested development in postcolonial Kenya, his portrayal of Mau Mau remaines hesitant and ambivalent.

Phase Three: Underdevelopment and Postcolonial Conditions

After a long absence, wa Thiong'o published *Wizard of the Crow* (2006), where he continually shows his interest in postcolonial Africa. Written originally in Kikuyu and translated by the author himself, the text has the stated goal "to sum up [the] Africa of the twentieth century in the context of 2000 years of world history" (2006, Book Jacket).

Based on a fictional country called Aburiria, which could be Kenya or any other postcolonial country, the book juxtaposes two narratives, one about a postcolonial ruling elite headed by a leader who remaines unnamed throughout the book and is simply known as "the Ruler," and the other about a young couple named Kamiti wa Karimiri and Grace Nyawira. These two narratives are linked together by such various themes as indigenous African folk tales, tricks, and magic. Borrowing heavily from Latin American "magic realism"—as a matter of fact, "the Ruler" looks and behaves exactly like various Latin American dictators portrayed by Gabriel García Márquez—wa Thiong'o depicts the Ruler and his cronies as buffoons and clowns. For example, the Ruler's Foreign Affairs minister travels to London to enlarge his eyes, "to the size of a electric bulb" (2006, 13), and the Minster of State also goes abroad to enlarge his ears so that he can

> hear better [. . .] and therefore be privy to the most private of conversations between husband and wife, children and their parents, students and teachers, priests and their flock, psychiatrists and their patients—all in the service of the Ruler. His ears were larger than a rabbit's and always primed to detect danger at any time and from any direction. (wa Thiong'o 2006, 14)

And finally, another aspiring minister goes to Paris to enlarge his tongue to echo the Rulers command and threats. But after the surgery, the "tongue, like a dog's, now hung out way beyond his lips, rendering speech impossible" (2006, 15). To remedy this, the aspiring minister goes to Berlin, "where the lips were pulled and elongated to cover the tongue, but even then not completely, and the tongue protruded now just a little" (wa Thiong'o 2006, 15). Wa Thiong'o tells us that these three people get their jobs after their surgeries, which greatly impressed the Ruler. These

grotesque transformations of individual are an allegory of greed, power, and corruption in postcolonial in Kenya and in Africa as whole.

In *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) wa Thiong's attacks international aid organizations for their role in "the Free Republic of Aburiria." In the text the World Bank becomes the "the Global Bank" that agreed to fund hilariously meaningless projects like "Marching to Heaven" to praise and glorify the Ruler's reign, whereas many ordinary citizens like Kamiti wa Karimiri, the central character in the text, though highly educated, remain unemployed.

In a speech given at the formal launching of the novel *Petals of Blood* (1977), wa Thiong'o explained the relationship between what he called "imperialist culture" and literature (1981, 94–98). "In trying to understand the distortion of Kenya's culture of imperialism, I have come to realize that no people can develop a meaningful national culture under any form of foreign economic domination" (1981, 96). And again, "No country, no people, can be truly independent for as long as their economy and culture are dominated by foreigners" (1981, 96). He described his purpose for writing *Petals of Blood* (1977):

> This was what I was trying to show in *Petals of Blood*: that imperialism can never develop our country or develop us Kenyans. In doing so, I was only trying to be faithful to what Kenyan workers and peasants have always realized, as shown by their historical struggles since 1895. (1981, 97)

It is true that wa Thiong'o in his various essays explained that his main objective in writing was to show the relationship between writing and the societal material foundation and the contemplation of an individual free from various dominations, both colonial and postcolonial. At the same time, as we have already observed, in the first two phases of his artistic career, he showed hesitancy and ambivalent suspicions regarding the "solution" to the problematics of domination. This is apparent in his view of Mau Mau and its use of "violence" and "brutality." In a way, he showed "neutrality" in this context by juxtaposing Mau Mau "violence" with colonial state violence. However, in *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *The Trail of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), all that changed.

The ending of *A Grain of Wheat* forecasts the themes of the coming of *Petals of Blood* (1977). The text is essentially about postcolonial Kenya and the conditions of underdevelopment. It is an attempt to develop what one may call "a poetics of underdevelopment" (Gikandi 2000, 137). In typical Fanonian fashion, the text begins with a critique of the postcolonial nationalist elite and their utter disdain for the welfare of *wananchi*. Thus *Petals of Blood* starts where *A Grain of Wheat* ends and goes on to give us a

comprehensive picture of what the author regards as the misrule and the evils pervasive in Kenya under the postcolonial nationalist elite.

It must be clear by now that wa Thiong'o's entire textual authority conforms to the linear historical process initiated by colonialism in Kenya and in Africa as a whole. Land and freedom lost under colonialism and the possibility of regaining it through education and political activities and armed struggle, have been, to various degrees, the central issues in all of wa Thiong'o's novels. In the first two stages, as we have argued, life under colonialism was depicted. In contrast, *Petals of Blood* deals with life under postcolonialism.

The setting on which this theme of postcolonial underdevelopment is projected has a dual nature, with the village Ilmorog and Nairobi representing the countryside and the city. The novel evokes the plight of Jemorog's community as it crumbles under the influence of the modernizing forces of the city. This is shown through gradual revelation of incident, character, motive, and psychological make-up, during which twelve years of Ilmorog's history are spanned.

The first part introduces us to the protagonists of the novel—Munira, Karega, Abdullah, and Wanja—all under arrest in connection with the murder of the three African directors of the Theng'eta Breweries, which are owned by an Anglo-American international corporation. The novel takes the form of Munira's recollections as he sits in his cell writing "a mixture of autobiography, confessional, and some kind of prison notes" (wa Thiong'o 1977, 190) for Inspector Godfrey. In the text, the author relates the experiences of these four characters from the time of their arrival from Limuru and their accidental connection in Jemorog twelve years earlier to the two crucial events that drive the thematic movement of the novel. The first event is the severe drought that hits Jemorog and threatens famine. The other is the journey to Nairobi taken by villagers to seek the help of their Member of Parliament for the area, Nderi wa Riera. Along with his use of imagery, allusion, and other forms of indirect reference, Thiong'o utilizes these two events symbolically in a way that makes them an integral part of the framework of the exposure of what he sees as repugnant in contemporary Kenya and the possibility of regeneration through collective effort.

Petals of Blood (1977) is a case study in the "poetics of underdevelopment" and a critique of bourgeois modernity in the postcolonial condition unleashed by the nationalist elite. In the text, the torchbearers of bourgeois modernity are Chui, Mzigo, and Kimemia. They constitute the postcolonial ruling elite, whom Fanon characterized as "not engaged in production nor in invention, nor building, nor labor; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type" (Fanon 1979, 149–50). At the end of the

text, we observe that this elite has taken over Jemorog and transformed it into "western type" of location. Kavetsa Adagala (1981) has described the process of modernization of Jemorog in terms of "transformation of peasants into workers—the process of proletarianization" (Adagala 1981, 15). This violent and painful process touches the life of Wanja, Karega, and Abdullah, and to a limited degree, Munira. Their lives, loves, and aspirations develop in relation to "new social relations in the changing material conditions in colonial and neocolonial Kenya" (Adagala 1981, 15).

In *Petals of Blood* (1977), wa Thiong'o abandons the idea of "neutrality" and a "balanced" view of Mau Mau. Rather, he provides for the first time a detailed account of the economic and political goals of Mau Mau through the words of Abdullah, the forest fighter:

> [. . .] [t]o redeem the land: to fight so that the industries like the shoe factory which had swallowed his sweat could belong to the people. So that his children could one day have enough to eat and wear under adequate shelter from rain. (1977, 136)

Perhaps the most important work by wa Thiong'o that showed his political affinity with Mau Mau was in the play he co-authored with Micere Mugo, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. Published in 1976, it was partly written to counter the image of Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi in other literary works like Kenneth Watene's play *Dedan Kimathi* (1975). The play completed wa Thiong'o's journey from the liberalism of his early works to the Marxism of *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*.

Wa Thiong'o and Mugo described their objective in writing the play:

> We agreed that the most important thing was for us to reconstruct imaginatively our history, envisioning the world of the Mau Mau and Kimathi in terms of the peasants' and workers' struggle before and after constitutional independence. (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 976, viii)

Mugai Kamau (2000, 114–23) puts forward four different "trials" as images of Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi and the Mau Mau struggle in wa Thiong'o's play: (1) Kimathi versus classical colonialism, (2) Kimathi against cultural-economic subjugation, (3) Kimathi against neocolonialism, and (4) Kimathi as the living spirit of resistance.

In the plot structure that Kamau dissects into these different "trials," wa Thiong'o and Mugo return to Fanon's idea of decolonization and the establishment of a postcolonial regime under the nationalist elite. In the first "trial," we observe this encounter between Judge Henderson (the representative of classical colonialism) and Kimathi:

Kimathi: (angry, grabs him by the neck)
Life, my life: Give up my life for your life.
Who are you, imperialist cannibal, to guarantee my life?
My life is our people
Struggling
Fighting
Not like you to maintain
Slavery
Oppression
Exploitation
But
To end slavery, exploitation,
Modern cannibalism, Out. Rat,
Go back to your masters:
And tell them:
Kimathi will never sell Kenya
To the British or to any other
Breed of man-eaters, now or in the years to come.
(wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, 35–36)

In writing the play, the authors were motivated first by their conviction that "imperialism was the enemy of all working peoples" (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, v). But of greater magnitude to them were the questions like,

> Was the theme of Mau Mau struggles exhausted in our literature? Had this heroic peasant armed struggle against the British Forces of occupation been adequately treated in our literature? Why was Kenyan Literature on the whole so submissive and hardly depicted the people, the masses, as capable of making and changing history? (wa Thoiong'o and Mugo 2000, v)

They were concerned that imaginative artists did not pay due tribute to the heroes and heroines of Mau Mau histories and to their epic deeds of resistance, and they were disturbed because historians and creative artists were not writing anything positive about the resistance of the Kenyan people, who fought foreign forces of exploitation and domination.

> Our historians, our political scientists, and even some of our literary figures, were too busy spewing out, elaborating, and trying to document the same colonial myths that had it that Kenyan people traditionally wandered aimlessly from place to place, lugging in purposeless warfare: that the people readily accommodated themselves to the British forces of occupation. (wa Thiong'o and Mugu 2000, vi)

The authors took upon themselves the task of imaginatively reconstructing their "history, envisioning the world of the Mau Mau and Kimathi in terms of the peasants' and workers' struggle before and after constitutional independence" (wa Thiog'o and Mugo 2000, viii).

They are careful to point out from the start that the play is not a reproduction of the fascist "trial" at Nyeri. It is rather an imaginative recreation and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasants and workers in their refusal to break under 60 years of colonial torture and ruthless oppression by the British ruling classes and its continued determination to resist exploitation, oppression, and new forms of enslavement (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, viii).

One of the overriding concerns, it seems, is to assess the achievements of the present, if any, against the hopes and aspirations of the past. The authors also wish to humanize and to correctly analyze the raison d'être of Mau Mau and other forms of resistance to colonial domination in Kenya, as well as, by implication, in the third world. The play transcends the limitations of time and freely takes us from one historical moment to another—past, present, and future. It also seeks to bring to the fore those qualities that improve human life and to renounce those base instincts that degrade it. Equally, the play ridicules the notion of "the human condition" that parades weakness, equivocation, greed, despair, et cetera as the true nature of the human being instead of seeking to promote strength, consistency, hope, and selflessness as the ideals that humans should pursue.

Mau Mau was in the background of the play. Though it centers on Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, it is far from being a eulogy of Kimathi as an individual. There is no attempt by the authors to promote any individual at the expense of the group. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* dramatizes the struggle, aspirations, ordeals, and physical and spiritual agony of the freedom fighters as a whole, and Kimathi merely represents the most dedicated, determined, and politically conscious of these fighters, serving as a kind of rallying point. Kimathi becomes the epitome, the spirit, of the group, and his role as a hero is, in fact, deliberately downplayed so that the collective fighting mass of the people becomes the hero.

This is the historicized version of Kimathi, the personification of the people's will and desire to free themselves from domination. The trial of Kimathi, which is a documented historical fact, becomes not the trial of one man but the trial of the faith, of the commitment to the cause, and of the collective struggle between oppression and the collective oppressed. As the women say in the first act, the trial is "the trial of our strength, our faith, our hopes, our resolve, the trial of loyalty, our cause (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, 14).

Through Kimathi and the Mau Mau struggle, the authors critique colonial and postcolonial situations. Kimathi castigates colonial and postcolonial injustices and emphasizes that it is those who labor who ought to enjoy the fruit of their sweat and labor, those who make the earth yield:

> [. . .] Us
> Those who make the factories roar
> Those who wait and groan for a better day tomorrow.
> The maimed
> Their backs bent
> Sweat dripping down their shoulders
> Beaten
> Starved
> Despised
> Spat on
> Whipped
> But refusing to be broken
> Waiting for a new dawn,
> Dawn on Mount Kenya.
> (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, 26)

Keeping in mind the colonial and postcolonial class inequality, in the play Kimathi strongly rejects the fallacy that there are no classes in Africa and that "we are all freedom fighters" and is very critical of and contentious against the nascent comprador bourgeoisie. In the "third trial" Kimathi is visited in his solitary cell by a business executive and a politician, both of whom he calls "neo-slaves." They go to great pains to persuade Kimathi to plead guilty and thus save his life, but Kimathi rejects the plea. In the "second trial," Kimathi is visited by a trade-cum-businessman's delegation, one of whom is a white banker, who epitomizes the money-owning class of imperialist Europe; the second is an Indian; the third is an African who does not speak at all but, we are told, keeps nodding his head in agreement. The banker's opening gambit, during the second trial, is this:

> Time is money. I am, or rather, we are from the Banks, the Insurance companies, the industries. You can call us [. . .] the representatives of the business community. You see, Dedan, this war is holding back investment, the flow of money, development. (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, 38)

These representatives of the nascent bourgeoisie arrogantly call themselves the makers of modern Kenya. They have made it, they say, in various ways such as establishing banks and financing the railway, which accelerated the coming of Delamares, hunters, and soldiers.

Kimathi dismisses the lie that money is synonymous with development, stating,

> [My people are the] oppressed of the land [. . .] all those whose labor has transformed this land. For it is not true that it was your money that built this country. It was sweat. It was our hands. Where do our people come in your partnership for progress? (wa Thiong'o and Mugo 2000, 45)

This banker's attitude is quite similar to that of the "national" bourgeoisie described by Fanon:

> The national bourgeoisie will be greatly helped on its way towards decadence by the western bourgeoisie, who come to it as tourists avid for the exotic, for big-game hunting, and for casinos. The national bourgeoisie organizes centers of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the western bourgeoisie. (Fanon 1979, 123)

Furthermore, Fanon argues that the aim of the nationalization project by the postcolonial native elite is to consolidate its political and economic base. Since they do not have any base of their own, they tend to play the intermediary between western comprador bourgeoisie and the people. Sembene Ousman's novel *Xala* described this as the "clodhopper" class that aims to be the western bourgeoisie (Ousmane 1976).

During the conversation between the banker and Kimathi, an Indian businessman also appears, showing the ignorance and anxiety of the aspiring petite bourgeoisie. To him independence involves having a national flag, a national anthem, and freedom to exercise one's religion. He agrees with the idea of social inequality by saying that it is an accepted fact of life that there will always be Brahmins and untouchables.

Thus, both in *Petals of Blood* (1977) and in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (2000), wa Thiong'o described Kenya's postcolonial conditions. Though Mau Mau was a revolt against colonialism, wa Thiong'o used the trial of Mau Mau hero Kimathi to critique postcolonial conditions. In these two works, Mau Mau remains, as in all of wa Thiong'o's work, central.

The Exile: Alienation and Disenchantment, or Rebel as an Outsider?

Before wa Thiong'o finally went into exile, he was imprisoned in 1977. In prison he drafted the text of *Devil on the Cross* (1982), published first in Kikuyu in 1982. Wa Thiong'o during this incarnation worked on the non-fictional account of his prison experience—*Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981). These two texts together, as Cook and Okenimkpe (1983,

115) argue, signal a new departure in wa Thiong'o literary career. His critique of Kenyan postcolonial conditions became sharper and more confident, as well as angrier. Consider the following passage from *Detained*, when a priest comes to visit the author and welcomes him to ask God's forgiveness;

> "Hold it!" I cried out, "who needs your prayers, your Bibles, your lives of holiness—all manufactured and packaged in America? Why do you always preach humility and acceptance of sins to the victims of oppression? Why is it that you never preach to the oppressor? Go. Take your Bibles, your prayers, your leaves of holiness to them that have chained us in this dungeon. Have you read *Ngaahika Ndeema*? Did you ever go to see the play? What was wrong with it? Tell me! What was wrong with Kamirithu peasants and workers wanting to change their lives through their own collective efforts instead of always being made passive recipients of *Harambee* charity meant to buy peace and sleep for uneasy heads? Tell me truthfully: What drove you people to suppress the collective effort of a whole village? What has your borrowed Christianity to say to oppression and exploitation of ordinary people?" (wa Thiong'o 1995, 24–25; emphasis original)

Wa Thiong'o's prison recollection, like any other recollection, is essentially an exercise in the subjective experience of the author. To Gikandi (2000), this subjective experience of the author is an integral part of wa Thiong'o's oeuvre: "[it is] because of the centering of the self in a narrative of imprisonment that Ngugi is able to allegorize his own experience and turn them into fables of the struggle in the postcolony and the incomplete history of decolonization" (2000, 200).

As mentioned before, *Devil on the Cross* (1982) was initially published in Kikuyu. That, according to Gikandi, caused certain sense of alienation, because he tried to subvert "the institutions of literary production in the European languages and generic traditions" (2000, 210). At the same time, his deepest anxiety comes from the certainty regarding the form of a Kikuyu novel. As a result, he observed a shift in wa Thiong'o's literature style, a "major turn in orality" (Gikandi 2000, 210), that is "the appropriation of the novel into oral tradition" (1986, 83).

> [*Devil on the Cross*] is a work that wants to maintain its generic identity as a novel in the European sense of the word while rejecting the central ideologies that have made this form what it is, including assumption of an elite audience. (Gikandi 2000, 210)

According to Gikandi, both *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1986) show wa Thiong'o's "troubled relationship with his British liberal education and Kikuyu cultural nationalism"(Gikandi 2000, 210). In other words, the pull is this "double identity." As Gikandi asserts, *Matigari* (1986) is "considered to be Ngugi's most successful attempt to transform the nature of the novel in Africa" (2000, 210).

This "troubled relationship" or "double identity" created a sense of alienation and disenchantment not only in wa Thiong'o's subjective consciousness; its potent presence was also found in the characters constructed in both *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1986). Most important was how these alienated subjects dealt with issues of rebellion and subversion in postcolonial situation. This idea of subversion in *Matigari*, I believe, should be seen from within the overall postcolonial condition.

Following Gikandi, (2000, 242–45) we can divide *Matigari* into three parts. The first, Matigari's journey, can be read as a quest or journey to his subjective experience in the postcolony. At the end of the book, Matigari is confronted by all the dangers of postcolonialism: economic decline, the abuse of political power, and the crisis of culture. The second part deals with Matigari's search for moral or ethical values, especially truth and justice. Here wa Thiong'o deals with the failure of nationalism, and his journey compels him to rethink the culture and economy that emerged after independence. At the end, Gikandi informs us that Matigari's quest for truth and justice is not so important as to create an alternative discourse by presenting a counter-discourse of truth and justice to undermine the postcolonial official discourse. The last phase could be described as the "descent to disenchantment." The reader observes Matigari's abandonment of a peaceful quest and his return to armed struggle to redeem the postcolonial conditions of injustice. Gikandi reminds us that the text also shows a significant shift in authorial narrative. The story is broken up into "montages and other forms of dispersed lexical units, each denoting a set of values and series of meaning in competition with one another"(Gikandi 2000, 245).

As mentioned before, *Matigari* was initially published in Kikuyu. This is how wa Thiong'o described the book's reception by the Kenyan ruling elite:

> The novel was first published in Kenya in October 1986. Soon after, reports reached President Moi that peasants in Central Kenya were talking about a man called Matigari who was going round the country demanding truth and justice. Moi ordered the man's immediate arrest.
>
> The police reported that Matigari was only a character in a book. Still, in February 1987, Matigari was "arrested" and removed from all the bookshops in Nairobi and from the publisher's warehouse. (wa Thiong'o 1993, 157)

Conclusion

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), the connection between imperialism and cultural forms has gained new currency. Within these cultural forms, historically speaking, the writing of novels and other literary works has coincided with the quest for empire and the establishment of colonialism. Said goes even farther by saying that without the colonial empire, there might not be any European novel. Viswanathan argued that in colonial India, teaching about English novels was institutionalized long before it was present in the British educational institutions (Viswanathan 1989). Thus, writing novels not only coincided with the European quest for empire, but the teaching of the novel was also a part of the colonial technique of power.

Wa Thiong'o is the child of this historical situation. What makes wa Thiong'o's contributions worthwhile is that he retained a European style of writing and by doing so, used his writings to subvert and displace colonial power and its postcolonial reincarnation. He seems to problematize the European style of writing by incorporating indigenous oral tradition within its narrative construction. Wa Thiong'o used the historical episode of Mau Mau as a tool to probe resistance to colonial and postcolonial techniques of power. His works speak eloquently and powerfully about the creation of national identities and the simultaneous construction of insurgent and subversive subjectivities.[4]

7

Mau Mau in and as Colonial Discourse

In Chapter 2, while critically evaluating various discourses on Mau Mau following Guha (1988a), we identified the broad categories of primary, secondary, and tertiary discourse. Our purpose in this chapter is to deal with secondary and tertiary texts. Taken together, these two types of discourse constitute *the colonial discourse on Mau Mau*.

While colonial officials saw Mau Mau as a problem of "law and order" and blamed irresponsible Kikuyu leaders for the violence, Liberal/nationalist discourse, on the other hand, blamed it on "rapid social change" and the "Kikuyu inability to adopt modernization for their own good." Radical historians, on the other hand, shared the continuum with liberal/nationalist historians and viewed Mau Mau as a "class struggle" aspiring to achieve a "classless Kenya." Missing in all these discourses is an acknowledgement of the subaltern subjectivity and agency of the insurgents as the makers of their own history and, most importantly, the idea of colonial power and control. Taking these two items together constitutes the main thrust of colonial discourse on Mau Mau. To illustrate these and other related issues, we turn to four important texts, *Historical Survey of the Origin and Growth of Mau Mau* (1960) by F. D. Corfield, L. S. B. Leakey's *Defeating Mau Mau* (1954) and *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (1954), and J. C. Carothers's *The Psychology of Mau Mau* (1954).[1] Before we put these texts under the critical lens, let us begin with the context of colonial discourse in Africa.

Colonial Discourse in Africa

With the publication of Edward Said's highly influential book *Orientalism* (1979) the study of colonial discourse entered a new phase. Influenced by Michel Foucault's treatise on the juxtaposition of knowledge and power,

Said defines Orientalism in terms of a "style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the orient' and (most of the time) 'the occident'" (Said 1979, 2). Above all, Said views Orientalism as a practice of power and "western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1979, 3). Furthermore,

> My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the Post-Enlightenment period. (Said 1979, 3)

Here Said's analysis focuses on how the western strategy to represent the "Oriental other" is interlocked with its will to power. In other words, as Yegenoglu tells us, by showing the configurations of power, Said also "emphasizes that Orientalism is an apparatus of knowledge with its will to truth" (Yegenoglu 1998, 15). By exploring the power/knowledge nexus, Orientalism introduces a new kind of study of colonialism.

Indeed, Mani and Frankenberg argue that Said's conception of Orientalism hints at the "complicity between Orientalism and imperialism" and how Orientalism has informed and shaped the colonial enterprise (Mani and Frankenberg 1985, 176). Similarly, Robert Young has argued that Said's project on Orientalism justified and helped the successful operation of colonialism (Young 1990, 129). In other words, Orientalism in Said becomes a fresh analysis of colonialism by putting it in the power/knowledge nexus. However, Said's position on this issue, connecting it to Foucault's idea of power/knowledge, has come under criticism by various authors.

Ahmed (1992), for example, argues that Said, by homogenizing the West, failed to connect Orientalist knowledge production to the history of colonial regions and its connections with the development of the capitalist mode of production. Yegenoglu (1998) argues that Said's position on Orientalism fails to incorporate gender subjectivity to colonialism and also fails to extend "to historical periods that exceeded territorial colonialism" (Yegenoglu 1998, 15).[2] To Clifford, Said's conceptualization of Orientalism is inherently flawed and suffers from what he calls "redundancy," as the methodological thrust of the work derives from Said's reliance on Foucault's idea of discourse (Clifford 1988, 266–76).

However, in recent years, studies on colonial discourse have been transformed by emphasizing subversion, ambivalence, and resistance, thus fundamentally altering the very definition of colonialism. Here the discourse becomes the connection between the hidden and the visible and between

the dominant and marginalized/subordinate. "It allows us to see how power works through language, literature, and culture and the institutions which regulate our daily lives" (Loomba 1998, 97). Here the idea of discourse—or colonial discourse, to be specific—received new resonance by emphasizing the contradictory and oppositional effects of colonial discourse. Said seems to be aware of this effect in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), where he masterfully demonstrates discourse production by colonized people, which he identifies as a form of resistance.[3]

Perhaps these oppositional aspects of colonial discourse are explained more forcefully by Homi Bhabha (1990, 1984). Using terms like ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity, Bhabha makes the point that colonial discourse is inherently vulnerable, because the relationship between colonizers and colonized is never complete. Neither is it given. For example, the idea of ambivalence, a crucial term in Bhabha's theory of colonial discourse, a term borrowed from psychoanalysis, shows

> [the] [c]omplex attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer. Rather than assuming that some colonized subjects are "complacent" and some "resistant," ambivalence suggests that complacence and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject. Ambivalence also characterizes the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonized subject, for it may be both exploitative and nurturing, or it may represent itself as nurturing, however remaining ambivalent. (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 2000, 12–13)

To situate colonial discourse in the African context, we are confronted with an additional problem, that is, reliance on the Foucaultian concept of discourse, as Foucault's oeuvre was more concerned with European episteme and failed to see how colonialism may effect the power/knowledge nexus in a colonized situation. Both Chatterjee (1988) and Spivak (1988b) have spoken of this issue. In the African context, Megan Vaughan (1991) has perhaps demonstrated the problems of formulating a colonial discourse of Africa in her analysis of bio-medicine in Africa. Vaughan asserts that Foucault's idea of a "productive" notion of power has hardly any relevance in Africa because "power" was hardly "modern" in colonial Africa and relied mostly on a repressive mechanism (8–10).

In order to have an African colonial discourse theory, we need pay attention to a critique of Said's idea of colonial discourse for its apparent homogeneity and all-inclusiveness by showing its internal contradictions and ambivalence. In other words, an African colonial discourse theory must

argue that the African people have an alternative, autonomous historical experience, though it remains subject to colonial influence and transformation. For that, I believe, Cohen and Odhiambo's *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (1989) is an exemplary text. The authors have attempted to interpret the history of a particular "tribe," the Luo of Western Kenya, not through the prisms of colonialism and colonial capitalism, though both of these constructs remain central to the Luo land. Rather, the authors chose to approach the history of colonial capitalism in Luoland through local Luo discourse, which makes the text contribute to specific African colonial discourse.

Cohen and Odhiambo (1992) continue this kind of inquiry in their next two collaborative works, *Burying S. M.: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa* 1992), and *The Risk of Knowledge: Investigations into the Death of the Hon. Minister John Robert Ouko in Kenya, 1990* (2004). In *Burying S. M.* (1992), instead of falling into the usual trap of "modernity" vs. "tradition" regarding the burial of prominent Nairobi lawyer S. M. Otieno, the authors instead focus on the "production of history," which they define in terms of "the forces underlying interpretation and contentions, emotions, and struggles that evoke and produce historical texts and historical literature" (Cohen and Odhiambo 1992, 20).[4] Otieno, when alive, was a cosmopolitan man who enjoyed reading Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw, Perry Mason, and the Bible, but his relationship with his traditional Luo culture remained ambivalent and contested. Though according to Otieno's wife, Wambui Otieno, her husband denounced his tribal Luo identity, Otieno's relatives, who wanted to bury him in the Luo land, brought grave diggers who testified in court proceedings that, observing Otieno's brother's graveside, S. M. Otieno had requested the grave diggers to prepare a grave for him, as he'd liked to be buried near the grave of his father in Siaya district, Western Province, in Luo land (Cohen and Odhiambo 1992, 22). In other words, the dichotomy of modern and tradition is not quite complete. It is riddled with ambivalence and contradictions, and a distinctly African colonial discourse should address such issues.

Our purpose in this chapter is to critically analyze texts on colonial discourse on Mau Mau. Keeping in mind the problems of applying Foucault's power/knowledge nexus in the African context, this chapter purports to show that these texts on Mau Mau are essentially knowledge produced to perpetuate colonial power. These texts present a dichotomy between the "civilized," modern colonial state and the primitive, savage customs of the colonized people. Furthermore, we will show that knowledge contained in these texts is seen not only in the formation and perpetuation of colonial power but also in its demise and dismantling. These are examples

of 'epistemic violence' against colonized people at the same time; these texts will be evaluated to produce a counter-discourse, to show the inherent vulnerability and ambivalence of those texts.

F. D. Corfield: *Historical Survey of the Origin and Growth of Mau Mau*

In late 1957, when the Mau Mau revolt was finally quashed, the colonial government commissioned F. D. Corfield, a colonial administrator, to undertake a major study on the "origins" and the "causes" of Mau Mau. Corfield had served in various capacities as a colonial administrator in Sudan, Palestine, and Ethiopia. During the Second World War, he served as a Major in the King's African Rifles. At the time of his retirement in 1952, he was serving as the Governor of the Upper Nile Province and Khartoum province.

After his retirement he lived in England for 20 months, only to return Kenya early in 1954. After a short stint on contract with the Kenyan colonial authorities, Corfield was commissioned by the colonial authorities to write a report on Mau Mau, which he published in 1960.

The reception of the report was predictable. The colonial authorities praised the report highly. Sir Patric Renison, Governor of Kenya wrote a forward to introduce F. D. Corfield, and in June 1960, supported a resolution in the Kenya Legislative Council, moved by member, Sir Charles Markhan, to note "that this House record its appreciation to Mr. F. D. Corfield for his report entitled 'Historical Survey of the of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau,'" and hoped that the Kenyan government would learn "the valuable lessons contained in this report" (qtd. in Mboya 1963, 44). Another member, Major Day, praised the report as 'Comprehensive, detailed, and excellent (Mboya 1963, 44).

The nationalist elite's response was predictable Kenyatta dismissed the report when it is published as "a pack of lies collected from needy informers" (Odinga 1967, 121). However, Tom Mboya's rejection of the report is interesting. While condemning it as "one qualifying either for the waste-paper basket or just being burnt" (Mboya 1963, 46), Mboya's criticism is directed towards its finding's influence on Governor Sir Patric Renison. Mboya tends to argue that the government decided not to release Kenyatta from prison at that particular time because the Corfield report argued Kenyatta was the key man behind Mau Mau. Furthermore, Mboya argues that the report talks about the violence by Mau Mau but never mentions violence by the colonial authorities: "if we must condemn the violence of the Mau Mau, we must condemn British violence against it" (Mboya 1963, 9). Mboya's was a typical liberal nationalist response to the report, highly selective to push its own nationalist agenda. Thus he failed to see it in terms

of the overall colonialist project. In this section we will look critically at the report as a gathering of knowledge for the pursuit of colonial power.

The whole report was divided into sixteen chapters. The chapters included a wide variety of topics, from the psychological and sociological background of the revolt to the origins and growth of Mau Mau. It also includes chapters on the oath, the role of the Kikuyu independent schools, and the vernacular press. There are also chapters on the firearms used in the revolt, the spread of Mau Mau to other tribes, external and internal influences on Mau Mau, et cetera. According to Corfield, however, the most comprehensive and important chapters of the report aimed at covering the origins and growth of Mau Mau and its impact on the future of law and the public security of the colony (Corfield 1960, 5). Hence Corfield's entire endeavor is to provide suggestions or recommendations to the colonial authorities on how to avoid such "turmoil" in the future. Thus Corfield's aims and objectives of the report are:

> a) To examine and report on *Mau Mau*, including the circumstances that permitted the movement to develop so rapidly without the full knowledge of the government;
> b) any deficiencies that made themselves apparent in the Government machine. (Corfield 1960, 1; emphasis original)

Corfield was aware that the spread of Mau Mau had many things to do with laxity in government, rather than a colonized people longing to be free. He was hoping that his report would prepare the government to handle such issues better at home and abroad than it did during the outbreak of the revolt:

> It is a strange if not ironic, fact of history that the British peoples, who have had so much experience of the trails which have beset the spread of its civilizing influence in so many countries, appear to forget so easily the lessons to be learnt from insurrection, local or national. In 1934 an excellent treatise—"Imperial policing," by Major-General Sir Charles Gwynne—analyzed the faults and mistakes made when dealing with 12 major insurrections dating from the Amritsar Riots in 1919 to the troubles in Cyprus in 1931. So often it was a case of "too little and too late." It is therefore as important that the lessons of Mau Mau should be learnt by those directing or influencing colonial policy in United Kingdom as it is that those lessons should be learnt by those in colonies who have to implement those policies. (Corfield 1960, 5)

Here Corfield's agenda became clear. He equated Mau Mau as a law and order issue similar to other colonized countries like Cyprus and India, where similar "disturbances" were more successfully managed. Corfield's

hope in the report is that his findings would help the colonial authorities to "run" its business well. While they did so, if any "troubles" and "disturbances" emerged, he hoped, his findings would provide necessary materials to deal with this once for all. Corfield's attempts are a good example of gathering knowledge for the purpose of power in colonial Kenya. Since Corfield identifies the objective of the report as spelling out the growth and origin of Mau Mau, let us begin with this issue first.

In chapter 5, Corfield describes in great detail the origins and growth of Mau Mau. He presents his "findings" chronologically, that is, presentation began in 1946 and ends in 1952, the year the Mau Mau revolt reached its peak. Sources for Corfield's chronology are consistent with the main thrust and objective of the report. It derives solely from the annual report by the Provincial Commissioner, the District Commissioner's report, and other official sources that we have no reason to suspect were sympathetic to the Mau Mau cause. The entire chapter is arranged in a dual track manner. In the first track he tells us, of course based on official records, that all was well in Central Province and the Kikuyu were experiencing unparallel prosperity and growth.

> There is no doubt that during the last few years the native reserves have experienced an unparalleled wave of financial prosperity, with increased prices of agricultural produce, increased wages, and large sums of money coming from military sources [. . .]. (Provincial Commission's Report, Central Province, qtd. by Corfield 1960, 65)

In this passage the benevolent role of colonialism is quite obvious. Indeed, the main concern of chapter 5, where on the one hand, based on various provincial commissioners' reports, the British role is continuously praised, while on the other hand, in parallel, the entire chapter portrays the political activities in a very negative term. Corfield blames "outsiders" and unscrupulous politicians like Kenyatta for bringing trouble in the Kikuyu land.

So what were the real causes, according to Corfield, of Mau Mau? To answer this question, he embarked into psychological and sociological exegesis, seeing Kenyan society and African society in general before the coming of the white colonialist as primitive, characterized by savagery and witchcraft. In this context, colonialism bought certain degree of modernity and change in Kikuyu society:

> No society remains static, but the rate of change or evolution is related almost directly to the degree and nature of outside cultural contacts. Provided these contacts remain gentle and primitive society survives, and this is the case in central Africa which has remained cloistered for centuries,

> and the rate of evolution has therefore been slow; but the sudden arrival of an alien culture based on a fundamentally different attitude to life can have a most devastating effect. The great danger lies in [the] transitional stage; the strain on both the tribe and the individual is very great.
>
> [. . .]
>
> This rapid transition has also produced a schizophrenic tendency in African mind—the extraordinary facility to live two separate lives with one foot in this century and the other on witchcraft and savagery. (Corfield 1960, 8, 9)

It is true that during the colonial period, the great majority of Africans were in a stage of transition from a culture where explanation is in terms of external "wills" acting on the life of the subject, who therefore has little if any responsibility for her/his actions, to a European system, in which explanation is in terms of "natural" causes and there is insistence on personal responsibility over a wide and not always comprehensible field of choice. They were, we are told, men of two worlds and responded differently according to the society in which they find themselves. This may account for the case with which the Kikuyu may accept the "irrationalism" of Mau Mau, as they cannot comprehend Hegel and Kant!

Accordingly, Corfield lamented that Kenyatta talked about moderation while he talked with the European but from there he would go straight to his Kikuyu people and give inflammatory political speeches. This political double talk schizophrenia, however, is not unique to the African exclusively. Consider the following account of a European from Nyasaland after his arrest in 1959:

> I feel bitter because most of the times those Europeans whom I have taken into confidence and trusted have always let me down. I refer to the civil service Europeans and others I have met outside college. They pretend so much and so well—but now I know that at the bottom, behind all these facades, stood the secretariat circulars marked "confidential—policy on behaviors towards Africans!" I have heard echoes of the gossip at the clue. I have faced the muzzles of guns from those I felt I was making headway with—impersonal faces leading us to prison without a ward for the child left behind. [. . .] impatient because my African friends can now say, "we told you so—you can never trust these fellows." (quoted in *Around Mt. Kenya*: comment on Corfield by Makerere Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru Students Association, Makerere College, Kampala 1960)

Furthermore, Corfield seems to be influenced by the "psychological interpretation of Mau Mau" popularized by J. C. Carothers (1954), who wrote a

pamphlet titled "The Psychology of Mau Mau." (We will return to Carothers and his psychology of Mau Mau next section).

Corfield acknowledges Carothers's influence on his thinking (Corfield 1960, 8); however, he frames his psychological interpretation in terms of cultural "differences" between European and African Social System. In a highly deterministic manner Corfield argues:

> There is [. . .] a fundamental difference between the European and the African Social System. In the European System the customs and laws are based primarily on the right of the individual, and although the individual is a member of a nation or group, it is as an individual that he contributes to the well-being of the community; original modes of thought and action are the very life blood of a western society. But in an African society the individual is of importance only in so far as he is a member of a group and conforms to the accepted patterns of behavior of the group: it is the group which counts. This attitude is bound up with the necessity for protection; not only against hostile neighbors, but also against the unseen powers that dominate his world and which can be kept at bay only by the point action of the members of the group. This group, or tribal system, has thus kept the African secure, but at the very heavy price of social and mental stagnation. (Corfield 1960, 8)

Thus the differences between the psychology of Africans and of Europeans are culturally based, and African and European personalities seem to develop, according to Corfield, differently and that differential growth caused "social and mental stagnation" in the "African Mind"(Corfield 1960, 8).

The attempt to transform such stagnation was bound to cause stress and would create a new frame of mind. To Corfield, the *batuni* oath was an attempt to do that. To him *batuni* oath is a combination of "magical forms with unheard of bestialities, and has transformed a human being into a new frame of mind which has rarely, if ever, been witnessed before" (Corfield 1960, 163).

Oathing was consistently pointed to to demonize Mau Mau by showing the "savage" and "bestial" aspects of it. Corfield, like other colonialist interpreters of the oath such as Leakey (1952; 1954), to whom we will return, soon chose to separate oathing from traditional cultural and social practices solidly rooted in "traditional Kikuyu Society" (Barnett and Njama 1966, 55).

As mentioned before, there were two types of oath that took place: the oath of unity and the *batuni*, or warrior's oath. The unity oath was an elaborated ceremony through which the individual became a full fledged member of the tribe. It was through this process that the individual became integrated and part of the group.

> The ceremony (unity oath) itself was a modern synthesis incorporating various and often modified features of the traditional initiation ceremony (e.g., passing under the arch, sipping a distasteful mixture of symbolic elements and uttering sacred vows) and customary oaths and curses (e.g., the sacred and awesome number seven, the use of sheep's chest meat and seven holes of the *ngata*, derived respectively from the "oath of the sheep" and the *githathi* oath, and the curses calling for divine punishment should an initiate violate his vows), together with an element of Christian symbolism (i.e., the cross drawn on the initiate's forehead), and modern political objectives contained in the vows and instructions calling for a return of the stolen lands and freedom, which were held to be achievable against a hostile white community only through an unbreakable African Unity. (Barnett and Njama 1966, 59–60)

Furthermore, the unity oath was also used for recruitment purposes and to "prevent outsiders or non-members from gaining any knowledge of the Secret Society, its aims or its members, prior to their own initiation" (Bennett and Njama 1966, 60)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the *batuni* oath, on the other hand, was a more advanced oath, exclusive to the real combatant. It was highly symbolic act to unify all the combatants, as well as to make them fierce fighters. It used many symbols, including swearing by the soil while facing Mount Kenya to invoke the help of *Ngai*, the traditional Kikuyu god. It also involved insertion of the penis into a goat's thorax, a practice that Corfield identified as bestial (1960, 165). Corfield, however failed to note that this was not a conventional practice of sexual intercourse by a deranged man; rather it was deeply rooted in Kikuyu culture. Muchai informs us that the uncastrated goat that was used was called *kihei*, and the men who were taking the oath were also known as *kihei*—which also means "Uncircumcised Youth" (Muchai 1973, 19).

According to Maria Green, the ritualistic installing of a young man into the lowest grade of eldership, once his years as a warrior were finished, involved slaughtering a male goat. The penis of the goat was slit and placed as a bracelet on the right wrist of the candidate, signifying that the sexual motive behind fierceness was symbolically cut. This brings the man closer to the ancestors and brings a sense of power and control. Thus the *batuni* oath symbolically associated young men with masculinity and ferocity and re-emphasized manhood (Green 1990, 79).

Corfield, like many other adherents to the government line, spoke of the *batuni* act as "unspeakable act of savagery of a primitive mind" and failed to place it in the broad cultural context of Kikuyu society, thus failing to see the oath as a process of bonding to create a sense of solidarity that was crucial in combat situations.

O. W. Furley in his "Historiography of Mau Mau" argued that the Corfield report was "something of an apologia for the Government's action" (110). The government's employment of a single government official, that is, Corfield, instead of a professional historian or a group of civil servants greatly compromised the nature of the work, marking it as inevitably biased. Similarly we could argue that Corfield offered an explanation that the Government wanted to hear. Furthermore, the year of the publication of the report, 1960, is also worth mentioning: After the Mau Mau revolt, the demand for independence gained momentum, and Kenyatta became its undisputed leader. The report relentlessly portrays Kenyatta as the person behind the revolt. Almost on every page Kenyatta is mentioned, and it could easily be argued that the entire exercise was geared towards justifying Kenyatta's continuous detention by colonial authorities.

Furthermore, Corfield's report was also critical of the government's failures to gather intelligence on Kikuyu political activities before the outbreak of Mau Mau, and it hence reproduced the idea that Mau Mau essentially symbolized a breaking down of law and order by some unsavory characters. In the final analysis, Corfield's historical report is an example of colonial discourse where knowledge is put to use for the perpetuation of colonial power.

L. S. B. Leakey: *Defeating Mau Mau* and *Mau Mau and Kikuyu*

In 1936 L. S. B. Leakey published a book titled *Kenya: Contrasts and Problems*. While all his previous works dealt with pre-historic Kenya, Leakey here, perhaps for the first time, attempts to address the "problems" of the "native" of Kenya. He has the mandate to do so because

> I was born and bred in Kenya, and I have spent the greater part of my life there. As the son of a missionary, I have always been intensely interested in problems which concern the welfare of the natives, and my work has given me every opportunity to study those problems from the native point of view. I learnt the Kikuyu language as a child, and it became almost my native tongue. Even now I frequently find myself thinking in Kikuyu instead of English. In many ways I am more a Kikuyu than English, for I am a member of the mukanda age group and an initiated first-grade elder. (Leakey 1936, vii)

Here Leakey seems to provide a justification for his right to speak of Kenya and Kenyans, as he often claimed himself as "white Kikuyu Kenyan." Before I make critical comments on this particular text by Leakey, let me provide some biographical information on him. For that purpose I draw heavily from Berman and Lonsdale (1991).

Lois Seymour Bazett Leakey, a missionary's son, was born in 1903 in the Kikuyu land, in his father's thatched mission house. During his childhood and adolescent period, he was entirely surrounded by the Kikuyu and entered the *mukanda*-age set, a collective identity that was an important influence on all Kikuyus; during his late teen period, young Leakey had already attained a leadership position among the Kikuyu youth. However, as he became more integrated with the Kikuyu, he became alienated and marginalized from white settler society. This in-between world, according to Berman and Lonsdale (1991, 150) provided a clue to his latter achievements and failure. This is more pronounced during his stay in England.

At the end of First World War, Leakey entered a British school. His boarding school life was unhappy. He entered as an older boy and was undereducated (Berman and Lonsdale 1991, 150). He also lacked the necessary "sophistication" that the British upper class lads posses because he was more comfortable with the Kikuyu and with the "natives." After his unhappy boarding school experience he entered Cambridge University to study archaeology and anthropology.

He did very well in his courses, but controversy soon started. His first wife, Frida, left him soon after the birth of their first child. Soon after, he married May Nicole, a fellow archaeologist. Academically, his scholarship came under attack. Percy Bosell, professor of geology at Imperial College, Cambridge University, challenged Leakey's findings, which led Leakey to admit that he was careless about dating and recording his findings, which in turn led to doubt about Leakey's dating of early hominids in East Africa (Berman and Lonsdale 1991, 151). This seemed to be a disaster for his career, and ended the possibility of him getting a teaching position at Cambridge University.

Although Leakey managed to reclaim his reputation as a paleontologist during the next decade or so, the paleontological community always received his work with great deal of suspicion and doubt, and he never regained scientific credibility. Leakey's ethnographic work is equally interesting. According to Berman and Lonsdale (1991, 158), his ethnographic works, could be analyzed as a product of the three-way relationship between him, Kenyatta, and Bronislaw Malinowski.

Leakey's approach to ethnography could easily be identified as "veranda" ethnography, where understanding "primitive" societies largely depended on summoning a few key "native" informants and interviewing them one by one in detail to gather information. This type of ethnography was challenged by the new Social Anthropology school represented by Malinowski and A. R. Radcliff-Brown, who called for a "scientific" approach to anthropology that included staying in the field for expended periods of time

to participate and observe. This approach was directly in opposition to Leakey's approach. Malinowski was full of disdain for Leakey and his works as an ethnographer, although he supported Leakey's quest for funding for his works on Kikuyu ethnography (Berman and Lonsdale 1991, 158–59). While Malinowski never thought highly of Leakey, he (Malinowski) nonetheless began to mentor another young Kikuyu, Jomo Kenyatta, who was sent to Britain by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) to promote Kikuyu interests in Britain. In Kenyatta, Malinowski found the emergence of an educated "native" class that might provide the leaders of their country once colonialism ended.

Although Kenyatta never had any formal qualification in Anthropology, Malinowski nonetheless admitted him for a postgraduate diploma in anthropology at the University of London. On November 14, 1935, Kenyatta was presenting his findings on female circumcision in Malinowski's seminar, and Leakey happened to be there. He accused Kenyatta of plagiarizing from his work on the subject, and at one point they started shouting at each other (Murray-Brown 1972, 192). Kenyatta at that particular time posed a serious challenge to Leakey's expertise on Kikuyu anthropology, as the former was engaged, under the tutelage of Malinowski, in his own study of Kikuyu anthropology. There is another reason for Leakey's dislike for Kenyatta. As mentioned earlier, Kenyatta was in England on behalf of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) to voice Kikuyu grievances to the British government. Leakey, like his father, Canon Harry Leakey, disliked the KCA intensely and saw Kenyatta as a dangerous troublemaker (Murray-Brown 1992, 192).

Leakey, after returning to Kenya, managed to collect a huge amount of materials on Kikuyu culture and customs, some 7 million words in all, but he never managed to publish them in his lifetime, and his authority on the Kikuyu had been effectively challenged in the 1930s by many, including Kenyatta.[5]

At that particular time Leakey was in dire financial need, and prospects of making a scholarly living were quite remote. Also during that time, the Kenyan colonial state, recognized Leakey's expertise on Kikuyu and felt that his knowledge could be used to understand the Kikuyus' growing political militancy and how to pacify them. Leakey enthusiastically joined the Kenya colonial state's intelligence services. For our purpose, this is the crucial point because Leakey's knowledge was used, with his acquiescence, by the colonial state to perpetuate power. In this context, Leakey's book, *Kenya: Contrasts and Problems* (1936) was published.

The book is a strange combination of personal travel description (chapter 4) to more serious matters like the missionaries' role (chapter 6) and "Science

and the African" (chapter 8). It also contains criticisms of various aspects of the British colonial role in Kenya. Let us turn to these criticisms first.

In chapter 5, titled "Administration and the Native", Leakey embarks on the issue of colonial administration vis-à-vis, the natives. From the beginning of the chapter, Leakey starts with the description of colonial administrators as good and well-meaning people who understand the African point of view rather well. The colonial administrators also, according to Leakey (1936, 64) wanted to change the life of a backward people. If so, what is the root cause of friction between, as Leakey puts it, "Kenya natives and Government officials?" (1936, 64). On the government officials' inability to communicate with the natives in their vernacular, he comments,

> The District Commission holds a "baraza" or general meeting of the elders of the tribe, to talk it over. He addresses the meeting in Swahili. Possibly the chief and a few of the elders can understand him, but the mass of those present cannot, and his words have therefore to be translated. As often as not the officer himself finds it very difficult to make his points clear in Swahili, partly because that language probably does not led itself to a discussion of the matter in hand, and partly because he often does not know Swahili quite well enough to be able to think clearly in it. He therefore has to think his points out in English, then translate them into Swahili, after which they have to be further translated and mutilated in the process—into the vernacular. (1936, 66–67)

Here the power is translated into learning "native language" to communicate properly with the native population. Similarly, as Carolyn Martin Shaw (1995) puts it, Leakey's knowledge of the "native language" and his claim to be a "white Kikuyu" had many things to do with the British society, the source of colonial power in Kenya.

> [. . .] Leakey's claim to being Kikuyu had much to do with his sense of being an outsider in British society, the feelings of belonging and freedom he had as a child at the mission on the Kikuyu reserve, and the pride he derived from his privileged position among his Kikuyu contemporaries. These sentiments spring from the relationship between the colony and the metropolis as much as from the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. As a colonialist Leakey desired the respect of metropolitan Britain and sought after its rewards. But also as colonialist, he found freedom from metropolitan conventions and the possibilities of a return to the ideals of the preclass, preindustrial world. (Shaw 1995, 102)

It was mentioned before that Leakey's father was a missionary and he was born in his father's church. So it was surprising to many white settlers that

Leakey could be critical of missionaries' works in Kenya. In chapter 5, Leakey argued that the church policy of converting natives to Christianity in order to save their souls was wrong, a stand that surely made his missionary parents uncomfortable. Leakey's objection is essentially based on the issue that the "Kenyan tribal" religion is very much ingrained with its social customs:

> Of all the tribes of Kenya it is fair to say that their religious beliefs and practices are so completely interwoven with their social organization that it is very hard to say where religion begins and social customs end. (Leakey 1936, 86)

While describing the social customs, Leakey mentions marriage and Kikuyu attitudes towards sexuality, et cetera. The entire chapter is full of contradictory remarks by a person who could not decide the real impact of Christianity on Kenya. He argued that white man's religion gave the African "a severe shock," but he did not want missionary work to stop; he even liked to see Christian missionary works continue:

> The African is essentially a religious person, he must have religion of some sort, and I, for one, am convinced that he should be given Christianity rather than Mohammedanism. By Christianity I mean essential Christianity and not all the British social custom that is linked on to it, but which is not an essential part of it. (Leakey 1936, 99)

Leakey did not specify the reasons for his preference for Christianity over Islam. However, while he mentioned that Kikuyu religion is deeply rooted into Kikuyu custom, his depiction of Kikuyu social customs is deeply problematic. Being a veranda anthropologist, Leakey largely depended on a few key informants for materials on Kikuyu social customs. Although Leakey discussed the "missionary and the Africans," bulk of his material on "Africa social customs" comes from specifically Kikuyu social customs. This, to an author who has minimum knowledge about Kikuyu social customs, would indicate that Leakey is making inappropriate generalization about Kenya and Africa. As mentioned before, the timing of the collection of materials and the publication of Leakey's Kenya is worth mentioning.

It is well known that the European colonization of the highlands of Kenya in the early years of the twentieth century had a significant impact on the Kikuyu land. The European colonization and early white settlements on the Kikuyu land were largely facilitated by the construction of Kenya-Uganda railway from Mombasa to Lake Victoria, completed in 1902. With the construction of Kenya-Uganda railway, communication problems were solved, and this greatly facilitated the settlement in the interior, especially on the Kikuyu land. With the settlement, the British colonial

state adopted various policies to make sure settlements remained white, and land alienation from the Kikuyu people began in earnest.

Initially, European settlement through land alienation began along both sides of the railway lines between Nairobi and Limuru, and it later spread northwards to the Nairobi–Fort Fall areas (Sorenson 1967, 16) in 1903 to 1905, when 60,100 acres of the most fertile Kikuyu land in the Kiambu-Limuru area were alienated (Sorenson 1968, 18), and these trends continued for the next three decades. With this process of land alienation, colonial policy was to effectively prevent any Kikuyu from owning land so that the Kikuyu had no other economic alternative but to work for the white settlers.

Meanwhile, Nairobi began to expand. In 1923, the African population of Nairobi was about 12,500; it had increased by 1939 to 41,000. Although majority of these early Nairobians were Kikuyu, there were members of other ethnic groups working as watchmen, clerks, messengers, and railway workers. Thus Nairobi began to take the shape of a cosmopolitan urban center (Sorenson 1976, 36–37).

With all these changes, early political consciousness and organization building began. The first overt political organization was formed in 1920, comprised of most tribal chiefs like Koinange and other headmen. Their main concerns were to fight land alienation and to protest colonial labor policy (Barnett and Njama 1966, 36).

In June 1921, a young telephone operator named Harry Thuku helped form and headed a new organization called the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA). Besides expressing demands on land related issues, the YKA also demanded abolition of the *kipande* system—the labor registration system enacted in 1920 that called for all African males aged sixteen and above to be fingerprinted and to carry an identification and employment card, failure to do so making one liable to a prison sentence (Bannett and Njama 1966, 36).

As the YKA began to gain momentum in 1922, the colonial authorities imprisoned Thuku and banned not only other YKA activities but the East African Association (EAA), which had also been established by Thuku to provide YKA a national character by incorporating various other non-Kikuyu communities. When Thuku was arrested on March 15, 1922, in Nairobi, a large crowd gathered, demanding his release. In the course of the demonstration scores of people were killed.[6] After the banning of the EAA and deportation of Thuku to Kismayu without trial, the EEA was reincarnated in 1924 with the formation of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). This also paved the way for the various organizations representing various other ethnic groups in colonial Kenya, like the Kamba, Luhya, and

Taita, to emerge. The demands of the organization representing the groups coincided with KCA demands. These included title deeds to lands owned by Africans, compulsory primary education for all African children, and abolition of the *Kipande* system.

All this political activism also coincided with other activities in the spheres of education and religion. During 1922–1930, the KCA organized attacks on Christian missionaries who objected to the African practices of polygamy, "pagan" dances and rituals, and female circumcision. Out of this conflict, and to educate Kenyan children properly, there emerged two independent school movements, the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA) and the Kikuyu Karing'a (that is, "pure") Educational Association. In addition to independent schools, KISA also established the African Independent Pentecostal church and the African Orthodox Church. These churches reconcile the Old Testament with traditional beliefs and practices (Barnett and Njama 1966, 38), like polygamy and female circumcision, which the Old Testament never condemns. Thus these African independent church movements rejected the Eurocentric interpretation of Christianity.

> The independent church-school movements, standing openly opposed to any interference or intervention by the white missionaries, reflected the growing anti-European feelings. Efforts to gain a redress of African grievances through constitutional means were repeatedly frustrated by an intransigent settler elite and colonial administration. (Barnett and Njama 1966, 38–39)

Leakey's book was published in this volatile economic, social, and political situation. What is Leakey's solution for Kenya's problem? He states it candidly in the preface of his book:

> If Kenya is ever to be a great supplier of raw materials to British and world markets, I believe it will only be through the development of native agriculture. And further I believe that the time will soon come when the native agricultural tribes will have to be given a great deal more land that they are at present allowed to possess, or the aim will not be achieved. (Leakey 1936, x)

Here Leakey advocated providing more lands to "native" agricultural tribes, mostly Kikuyu, so that they could provide raw material for British industries. This does not contradict the classic colonialist stand vis-à-vis colonized territories. To Leakey another goal of colonialism is its "civilizing mission":

> Koinange did not come into contact with civilization until after he was a grown man, but he is exceedingly progressive and exceptionally keen on the development of his people. I can remember quite well when he lived in a village consisting of a number of *dirty, windowless huts*; now his house is a *well-built stone one*. But it is not of his house that chief Koinange is most proud, but of his *flower garden*. Not many years ago the idea of cultivating plant except as food or for other economic purposes was utterly foreign to the Kikuyu, but today many of them have quite good flower gardens, and chief Koinange's garden stands out as one of the best. Roses and carnations are the flowers he prefers, but when he was in England recently, he was so struck by the display of tulips in Hyde Park that now he wants to grow tulips, too. Unfortunately, tulips like many other European bulbous plants, do not like African conditions, and his tulip bed is not a success. The contrast between chief Koinange's house, with its clean, airy rooms, its flower and fruit garden, and the houses, or rather huts, of some of his relations who are his neighbors, is so striking that one can hardly believe that he and they were brought up and educated in the native sense together. (Leakey 1936, 12–13; emphasis added)

This long passage is astonishingly paternalistic, where contact with the "civilized world," meaning England or Europe, means well-built stone houses and flower gardens (excluding the tulips, of course).

Furthermore, from Leakey's description it might appear that chief Koinange went to England to be "civilized" by learning "flower gardening," but Koinange and his other colleagues had gone to England in 1931 to plead with the British government that Kenyan people were oppressed and that white settlers had taken their lands away—and he had "spoken out fearlessly for his people" (Koinange 2000, 54).

The British Labour party MP visited Kenya at the height of Mau Mau. During his stay in Kenya, Brockway paid a visit to ex-chief Koinange. The ex-chief told Brockway,

> When someone steals your ox [. . .] it is killed and roasted and eaten. One can forget. When someone steals your land, especially if it is nearby, one can never forget. It is always there, its trees which were dear friends, its little streams. It is bitter presence. (Brockway 1955, 87–88)

Brockway explained the ex-chief's words:

> [. . .] The land on the other side of the lane once belonged to the ex-chief. It now belonged to a European farmer. It was appropriated for European possession with the rest of the White Highlands, and the only compensation offered was the value put upon its trees. The ex-chief declined the accept

> money: that would have been to recognize the right of the theft. (Brockway 1955, 88)

In other words, though he might have "learnt" flower gardening and living in an airy stone house, he was painfully aware about the thieving of colonialism as well. Leakey missed this point all together.

Leakey's *Kenya* (1936) is a conscious intervention during a time of what Sorenson identifies as "official myopia" (1976, 52) and the period of "the gathering storm"(1976, 72), published against the background of growing political activism among the Kikuyu that culminated in the early 1950s into Mau Mau. However, once again, Leakey intervenes in the Mau Mau period with two widely read books on the issue of Kikuyu and Mau Mau and recommendations on how to defeat them. But most important of all, he participated in Mau Mau as an intelligence operative for the colonial state.

Leakey's series *Kikuyu and Mau Mau* consists of two books, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (1952) and *Defeating Mau Mau* (1954). Let us discuss these two books in turn.

We have argued before that Leakey's authority as an archaeologist was challenged in the early 1930s and was never regained. After that time, Leakey turned his attention to ethnography, especially Kikuyu ethnography. Toward this end, he managed to collect a massive amount of information in the 1920s and 1930s, although this information was published posthumously in 1977. In *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (MMK), he used many of this hitherto unpublished information's on Kikuyu ethnography. MMK is divided into two parts: Part 1, The Kikuyu before the Coming of the Europeans, and Part 2, The Kikuyu Today and the Mau Mau Movement. The first part deals with Kikuyu ethnography. Let us make some observations on the methodology that Leakey used to collect information on Kikuyu ethnography. As mentioned earlier, Leakey adopted veranda anthropology to collect information that already, in the late 1930s, had been rendered obsolete due to the emergence of a more scientific approach to ethnography, which became "Anthropology: the 'Science of Man.'" Leakey described his method in following manner.

> My method of work was as follows: using the information that I already possessed as a basis, I sat with groups of senior elders and took down from them detailed notes on the various subjects I wished to deal with. After obtaining notes on, for example, birth customs, from such a group, I worked over these notes with a small committee of selected elders and prepared a first draft of my chapter on that subject. (Leakey 1977, xii)

After first draft was prepared, Leakey then would sit down with another group of elders distinct from the first group, who had been invited to comment on the first draft; this would lead to a certain amount of correction and elaboration (1977, xii). In other words, the only source for information was mostly elderly chiefs, often appointed by the colonial state. As mentioned earlier, this veranda approach to ethnography was on its way out, to be replaced by Malinowski and Radcliff-Brown's "scientific" approach to anthropology. This new approach, also mentioned before, calls for "participant-observation" through living in the research site and conducting "intensive fieldwork."

What Leakey's veranda approach produced is an ahistorical, contextless, isolated description of Kikuyu custom and culture. It is clear that Leakey in this book and *Defeating Mau Mau* addresses himself to a white audience, and both books sold briskly, both in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The first part of MMK contains a positive portrayal of the Kikuyu community of Central Province. Its main goal was to describe Kikuyu social organization, customs, and beliefs before they were interrupted by the advent of colonialism. The ordinary Kikuyu, Leakey asserts, had genuine grievances, but they were never in a position to protest violently, as Mau Mau was doing. As the Kikuyu community's legitimate grievances remained unaddressed by the colonial authorities, they become an easy target in the hands of an "unsumptuous few" (1954, 85). Leakey did not mention any names but it is obvious he had Kenyatta's name in his mind!

After describing Kikuyu culture in the second section, Leakey arrives at his main concern in the book, that is, to show that Mau Mau was not an outcome of those grievances but rather a perversion of civilized Kikuyu tradition. However, his main argument in this book shares the premise of his earlier book, *Kenya* (1936), that European civilization brought progress, prosperity, and modernity to Kenya.

The surprising thing about the Kikuyu is not how little they had gained from European civilization, in the short space of fifty years, but how much they had absorbed and learned. It is probably because the speed of progress had been too rapid that it has made a part of the population unbalanced in their outlook and thus paved the way for movements like the Mau Mau, in the hands of an unsumptuous few (Leakey 1952, 84–85).

This view of the role of Europeans as a civilizing force in Kenya allowed Leakey never to question the very idea of colonial power, an issue to which we will return; rather, he justifies his hawking of knowledge about Kikuyu for the perpetuation of colonial rule in Kenya.

Defeating Mau Mau was published in 1954. This book is entirely on the denouncement of Mau Mau. Here Leakey's main concerns were the ideology, organization, and strategy of Mau Mau, which, in the final analysis, according to Leakey, had never been a part of the Kikuyu culture and never existed before the state of emergency.

Although Leakey was a confessed atheist, he views Mau Mau as an anti-Christian movement to recover stolen lands, to introduce "ancient customs," and to obtain self-government (1954, 21). Chapter 3 of the book, titled "Mau Mau Organization," states that Mau Mau was synonymous with the KAU (1954, 32). "It has since been established and proved in the courts of the country that the Kenya African Union during 1951–2 was being used, at least in Kikuyu country, as a cover for Mau Mau propaganda and activities" (1954, 32). Here Leakey was obviously arguing that Kenyatta and the KAU were the main "troublemakers" and instigators behind Mau Mau. This assertion is very much of the colonial state's line as well. We argued in Chapter 5 that Kenyatta's relationship with Mau Mau was one of opportunism, and there were fundamental differences between Kenyatta's vision of nationalism, as it has been framed in the postcolonial situation, and Mau Mau's idea of an independent Kenya.

Leakey's denouncement of Mau Mau took a sinister turn when he was appointed a court interpreter in the trial of the Kapenguria Six—Achieng Oneko, Fred Kubai, Paul Ngei, Kungu Karumba, Bildad Kaggia, and Jomo Kenyatta. Defense lawyer Pritt denounced the interpreter for having animosity against the Kikuyu and for writing books condemning Mau Mau (Kaggia 1975, 128). Kaggia argued that Leakey was putting words in the mouth of prosecution witnesses to the extent of substituting a "yes" for a "no" in the testimony (1975, 128). After Defense Counsel Pritt confronted and termed Leakey a "partial interpreter;" he left the courtroom and refused to return (1975, 129). Here Leakey, definitely helped by his knowledge about Kikuyu language and customs, unlawfully attempted to help the British with this knowledge.

In addressing the question of what Mau Mau was, Leakey suggested that Mau Mau, while to some extent synonymous with earlier political parties, "was in fact a religion and that it owed its success to this fact more than to anything else at all" (Leakey 1954, 41). It was this new religion, he continues, of which the oath ceremony formed only a small part, that was turning thousands of peace-loving Kikuyu into murderous fanatics (Leakey 1954, 130). According to Leakey, Mau Mau was a religious doctrine of utter wickedness that was introduced by the leaders of the movement to deceive the masses; it was a new religion totally alien to traditional Kikuyu society. By identifying Mau Mau as a "wicked" and "new" religion, Leakey purports

to show both Kikuyu and Europeans that it is necessary to fight against it (Leakey 1954, 130).

As mentioned earlier, Leakey accused the leaders of the KCA of creating the religion due to their opposition to missionary Christianity. In this light, Leakey viewed what he termed "Mau-Mauism" as an independent church that was comparable to "communism," which he also saw as a religion (1954, 130). Though Leakey claimed he had thorough knowledge of Kikuyu culture, subsequent research has shown that the Mau Mau oath, on which Leakey based his claim that Mau Mau was a religion, was not something new to Kikuyu society but was based on traditional Kikuyu symbols, rituals, and other practices as well as various Christian symbols like cross (Barnett and Njama 1966).

However, in order to cast blame on the KCA leaders and their opposition to missionary Christianity for the emergence of Mau Mau religion, Leakey argued that Mau Mau represents a "strange blend of Pseudo-Christianity and utter paganism" (1954, 40). But Githige has argued that there was no such blend existing in the Mau Mau oath (1978, 14). Leakey's accusation certainly was constructed to oppose the KCA's nationalist political project and their opposition to Christianity in its onslaught on traditional customs like female circumcision.

> If they could set up a religion which would fulfill the need for a faith, and fill the vacuum, they could achieve much of which they had never achieved before. [. . .] [P]eople, once they have faith, will fight for that faith and die for it. [. . .] And so the religion of Mau Mau was born. (1954, 47)

In other words, Mau Mau and its military campaign were essentially a campaign to uphold a "new" religious faith that was separate from Kikuyu customs and, as argued earlier, a blend of paganism and pseudo-Christianity.

In both texts, Leakey offers a "solution" to the Mau Mau problem so that this "evil" will not revisit Kenya. In *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*, Leakey offers a "solution" in chapter 12 titled, "Outlook for the Future." Here Leakey begins with a typical colonial myth, saying that all the alienated land that has been occupied by the white settlers was never part of Kikuyu territory (1954, 106). This myth, however roundly refuted by much historical research, supported colonial settlers' stand regarding land, and Leakey supported that claim. In reality, the alienated land was quite large. By 1934, 6,543,360 acres of land was alienated by 2,027 settlers, averaging 2,534 acres per occupant (Barnett and Njama 1966, 32). Most significantly, alienation and uprooting of Africans from land had another colonial motive, more sinister than land grabbing: Lord Delamere, settler spokesman, argued in 1912 that in order to reduce Kenyans/Kikuyus to working for the

white settlers, the colonial state must guarantee that Africans did not possess enough land to grow crops and survive.

After upholding the view that Kikuyus were not the sole owners of the land, Leakey, in a highly paternalistic tone, argues for setting aside land for Kikuyus who wanted to be agriculturists (1954, 107). After this suggestion, Leakey recommends on how to improving race relations between Kenyans and white settlers by, among other things, teaching the Kikuyus hotel manners and the whites, native languages!

The last two chapters of *Defeating Mau Mau* (1954) are devoted to "solutions" in terms of "religious, educational, and economic reforms" (chapter 11) and "social and political reforms" (chapter 12). These reforms deal with continuing the European civilizing process by introducing birth control in the Kikuyu land, making Christianity more African, daily payment for urban Kenyan workers, et cetera. If these reforms were institutionalized, he claims, the Mau Mau menace could be eradicated. However, his "political solution" never touches the issue of the colonial power that Mau Mau combatants were fighting. Leakey's intervention on Mau Mau was essentially a liberal white settler's view of colonial power that criticized the colonial officials for not speaking the language or not paying enough wages to Kenyan urban workers but showed absolute faith in the western process of civilizing Kenya and all its ethnic groups. Nowhere in Leakey"s text does he question the legitimacy of colonial rule in Kenya. He saw Mau Mau as a "new religion" that disrupted the otherwise good relations between white settlers and native Kenyans, thus posing serous law and order problems, and he saw it as the colonial state's responsibility to restore law and order. Leakey's text is an example of colonial discourse showing the connection between power and knowledge in colonial Kenya.

J.C. Carothers: *The Psychology of Mau Mau*

The colonial discourse on Mau Mau is not a homogenous body of works. Though unified by the context of colonial power and its reproduction, Mau Mau colonial discourse took different shapes and forms. The three texts analyzed so far, one by Corfield and two by Leakey, deal with various aspects of Kikuyu life before and during the Mau Mau revolt. Leakey, it should be clear from the earlier discussion, argues that Mau Mau is a barbaric interpretation of otherwise civilized Kikuyu tradition and culture. Corfield, on the other hand, deals with all the aspects of Mau Mau—that is, the political, social, and economic, as well as ideological, aspects of the movement. While Corfield pays his intellectual debt to Carothers, who provides a psychological interpretation of the movement, Leakey comes

with an anthropological interpretation of Mau Mau. However, Leakey alludes to the mental conditions and inability of the Kikuyu to adapt to the rapid pace of social change in the Kikuyu land triggered by British colonialism. This psychological interpretation of Mau Mau was forcefully brought by J. C. Carothers with an aura of academic exercise and objectivity. But in the end, his analysis, too, remains couched within the parameters of colonial discourse, because it is intrinsically related to idea of colonial power. In that way, Carothers thesis is, indeed, similar to both Corfield and Leakey. Before we critically analyze Carothers' thesis, let us briefly discuss colonial psychology, or what McCulloch has called "colonial psychiatry" (McCulloch 1995).

The discourse of colonial psychology emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century. Its objective was to explain the relationship between race, culture, and the psyche. Interestingly, colonial psychology emerged in France to treat what is known as "degenerative pathology" among the French working class, poor peasantry, and vagabonds. Psychology and psychiatry were developed as sciences to study the "pathology of the dangerous class" (Verges 1999, 88). The ultimate goal of the project was "turning peasants into Frenchmen" (Verges 1999, 88); in other words, civilizing the uncivilized and the uncouth. This psychology later transformed itself into colonial psychology when it was extended to the colonial territories. According to Vergas, Gustav Le Bon proposed the idea of "psychological race," influenced by Gobineau's racist theory (1996, 88). Le Bon argued that there is a connection between gender and race, and "proof of female inferiority and of similarities between women and Negroes" was provided by a craniologist (Verges 1996, 88). However, colonial psychology argued that it was necessary to learn about the traditions, languages, and cultures of colonized societies. Indeed, colonial psychology always gets its information from colonial ethnographers, who are always, in turn, the colonial administrators. Colonial psychologists insisted that clinical observations led them to conclude that colonized people are inherently inferior and that it is the responsibility of colonial forces to lead colonized people to adulthood and maturity; in other words, to "civilize" them. Colonial psychology claimed to "describe" what it "exactly saw" and claimed that its exactitudes were based on information "collected" from the "natives," thus guaranteeing the neutrality and objectivity of their scientific approach. However, Foucault argues that the language of colonial psychology

> is charged with dual function: by its value as precision, it establishes a correlation between each sector of the visible and an expressible element that corresponds to it as accurately as possible; but this expressible element operates, within its role as description, a denominating function which, by

> its articulation upon a constant, fixed vocabulary, authorizes comparison, generalization, and establishment within a totality. By virtue of this dual function, the work of description ensures "a prudent reserve in rising to general views without lending reality to abstract terms" and a "simple, regular distribution, invariably based on the relations of structure or the organic functions of the parts." (Foucault 1994, 113–14)

In 1954, during the height of its Mau Mau revolt, the Voice of Kenya, the colonial government's propaganda wing, released a pamphlet entitled, "The Kikuyu Tribe and Mau Mau: Some Factors Causing the Rise of Mau Mau" (KNA/PC/201). The pamphlet offered an explanation for what it called the "psychological causes of Mau Mau." They were:

1. "General failure of Kikuyu to sustain the impact of a mechanistic civilization" (1954, 3). Here "mechanistic civilization" means European society.
2. "Removal of tribal customs under the impact of civilization has left a vacuum in which there is no discipline of tribal customs. Little of family or clan authority and no change for the young male to prove his manhood except in chivalry, thuggery, and reversion to primitive savagery" (1954, 3).
3. The arrival of pax Britannica "destroyed the big game" and "removed the status of warrior class" [. . .] "This removal created a vast class of Kikuyu who, instead of working for the European farmers and colonial administrators, choose to be agitators and troublemakers" [. . .] "it caused boredom and fear for a warrior class removed." And this feeling of boredom is filled by other activities introduced by the Europeans, like church activities, voting, committee work, and "public hygiene" (1954, 4). The Kikuyu tribe always had "semi-religious" and "semi-magical" attitudes toward land, and its dispossession created havoc in the Kikuyu psyche.

It was not known whether Carothers had any input in writing these colonial government documents, but the issues in the pamphlet are surprisingly similar to Carothers' text *The Psychology of Mau Mau*.

At the beginning of 1953, at the height of the Mau Mau revolt, the Governor of colonial Kenya, Sir Evelyn Barring, formed an advisory committee to guide the government regarding how to combat and as well as rehabilitate Mau Mau activists. Members of the committee included Dr. Louis Leakey, Dr. J. C. Carothers, Harry Thuku (originally a Kikuyu radical, now a Leakey man and vigorous opponent of Mau Mau), and Tom Askwith, a former Municipal Affairs official in Nairobi. Governor Barring had sent Askwith to Malaya in early 1953 specifically to study the work of rehabilitation of the Malayan guerrillas (Elkins 2003, 197). This so-called sociological committee recommended that the government establish 50 rehabilitation camps during 1953–1959. In those camps sadistic torture

was applied to inmates. Countless stories of castrations, forced sodomies, and gang rape were recorded. Women were sexually abused with broken bottles, snakes, and vermin, and repeatedly raped in front of their families. Many more died of hunger when the government withheld food in an attempt to bring Mau Mau fighters into submission (Elkins 2003, 191–226; *The Sunday Standard*, November 17–24, 2002).

The second recommendation made by the sociological committee was "villagization"; that is, Kikuyu living in dispersed villages were forced to move into protected villages. Present homesteads were destroyed so that the Mau Mau fighters could not use them as shelter. Protection through villagization meant areas surrounded by barbed wire and ditches, where four or five families were squeezed into one house. Twenty-four-hour surveillance was imposed, making food procurement impossible. Significantly, living in protected villages, where extreme discipline and control became the reality, was contrary to Kikuyu social customs. Thus villagization and rehabilitation camps became classic examples of the surveillance and gaze that Foucault talks about. J. C. Carothers, among others, was the main architect of these policies.

John Colin Carothers was born in Simonstown on the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, in 1903. After he passed his matriculation examination in 1921, he entered the University of London to study biology and medicine. After graduation, Carothers applied to the British Colonial Office for a job as a medical officer in Kenya. He arrived in Kenya in August 1929 and was first appointed as the District Medical Officer, and in 1938 he was appointed as psychiatrist, at the Mathari Mental Hospital near Nairobi. In 1951, Carothers took early retirement and returned to England to work as a psychiatric specialist at St. James Hospital, Portsmouth, England. In 1952, the World Health Organization (WHO) commissioned Carothers to prepare a study on the mental health of the African people. The WHO report, *The African Mind in Health and Disease*, was published in 1953. In 1954, the British colonial government in Kenya commissioned him to work on a report on the psychological causes of Mau Mau. The report, *The Psychology of Mau Mau*, was published in 1954. By 1955 it had gone through eight impressions.

In this first book, Carothers developed what he called the idea of the "African mind" where he argued for the inferiority of Africans compared to Europeans. This inferiority, according to Carothers, was caused by the underutilization of the brain's frontal lobes (Carothers 1953). In *The African Mind* (1953), Carothers includes a section called "Psychology in Relation to Environment," where he addresses the African child's development in a cultural context. He argues that until ages seven or eight, an African child

developed as the same way as the European child, but that development stops as the child grew older and his/her life begins to be influenced by what Carothers called "prehistoric rules, networks, and taboos"(Carothers 1953, 102). Such regulation integrated the African child within the community, but stunts his or her intellectual development (1953, 102). In other words, integration with the community for African children is antithetical to individual growth. However, Carothers is gracious enough to identify some "good qualities" for African adults, like the ability to sing and dance, their self-confidence, their loyalty, et cetera. But in the final analysis, Carothers settles on the following characterization of the African mind:

> The African accordingly has been described as conventional; highly dependent upon physical and emotional stimulation; lacking in spontaneity, foresight, tenacity, judgment, and humility; inept for sound abstraction and for logic; given to phantasy and fabrication; and in general unstable, impulsive, unreliable, irresponsible, and living in the present without reflection or ambition or regard for the rights of people outside his own circle. (Carothers 1953, 87)

To put it simply, Carothers's idea of the African mind is a conception not necessarily of African mental health, but rather a theory of modern citizenship, of economic behavior, of Africa's moral failings, and most importantly of "African inferiority" (McCulloch 1995, 61). Thus it is safe to say that when Carothers was commissioned by the British colonial government to study the "psychology" of Mau Mau, he brought this idea of African inferiority to Europeans with him.

Carother's text is divided into four chapters and a synopsis. Chapter 1 is "General Mental Characteristics of Untouched Rural Africans"; chapter 2, "The African in Transition"; chapter 3, "Mau Mau"; and chapter 4, "Discussion and Recommendations." The first two chapters deal with psychology and the "mental condition" of Africans and the problems they face during the transition from tradition to modernity. The last two chapters explain the psychology of Mau Mau and offer recommendations on how to avoid the Mau Mau menace in the future.

In his first chapter, in order to provide general mental characteristics of Africans and a theory of an African mind, Carothers offers a construct of what he called "forest psychology." Carothers argues that the Kikuyu always lived at the edge of the forest and remained vulnerable to attack by the tribes from the open country, like the pastoral Masai. That threat pushed the Kikuyu deep into the forest, where they became agriculturists by clearing the forest. This, according to Carothers, makes the Kikuyu suspicious of new people as well as new ideas (1954, 4–5). Thus the forest,

for the Kikuyu, represents forces that are alternatively protective and threatening. This has created a Kikuyu mentality that is prone to violence. These are the formative traits of the "forest psychology" of the Kikuyu.

Furthermore, describing African personality as childlike, without the ability to sustain anxiety for long, Carothers argues:

> The sustainment of anxiety depends on the development of a personal mental integration in which all elements of one's situation—past, present and future—are assessed and reconciled in such a fashion that one's immediate desires can be subjugated to one's long-term interests; on the development of a personal synthesis based on some general principles. In the absence of this development, and where the anxiety cannot be allayed by ritual procedures, action must follow. And this action in individuals often takes forms which are marked by the highest degree of unconstraint and violence—a common experience in psychiatric practice in Africa. (Carothers 1955, 3)

According to Carothers, despite the European cultural presence in Kenya, traditional African culture remained very strong. This traditional culture, Carothers argues, shaped the mind of an African adult equal to that of a European child. As African traditional culture remained very oppressive, the individual who adapted to European culture would remain unintegrated, treated as an outsider, and would not enjoy any rights (Carothers 1955, 5).

After establishing an idea of the African mind, Carothers then postulates what happened to the Kikuyu culture when it came into contact with European culture. He argues that this contact with "superior" European culture had a dramatic influence on the Kikuyu and that they are unable to adopt European culture because of their rigidity and oppressive manner. Furthermore, the material success of European culture caused the Kikuyu in particular, and Africans in general, to lose faith in their traditional god as well as in their traditional culture. The Mau Mau revolt, Carothers argues, was a revolt of a confused mind unable to cope with changes that were brought by the European colonization (1955, 6–15).

Like other writers of the colonial discourse interpretation of Mau Mau, Carothers displays interest in the Mau Mau oath, devoting the bulk of chapter 3 to it (12–20). He was utterly appalled by the Mau Mau oath, which he identified with medieval European witchcraft (16). In the same chapter, Carothers classifies the oath into different levels by its effect on individuals. Finally in chapter 4, Carothers offers recommendations to prevent further outbreaks of Mau Mau–type rebellions (21–35).

As mentioned before, one of the recommendations was the villagization program. Modeled after the Malayan program during the insurgency and later adopted by Americans in Vietnam, this program called for uprooting

the Kikuyus from their traditional villages and putting them into "new villages" under strict control and surveillance. McCulloch described Carothers's idea of villagization in following manner:

> The village so created could become the foundation for a new society; the establishment of light industries could provide employment and halt the drift of young men to the cities, where few could find work. Keeping the young men at home would also strengthen the family and help to bridge the gulf separating men from women, a gulf Carothers believed had contributed to the rise of the rebellion. (McCulloch 1995, 70)

As mentioned earlier, Carothers was a member of the Committee to Inquire into the Sociological Causes and Remedies for Mau Mau appointed by the colonial government. Like other texts on colonial discourse of Mau Mau, Carothers's text is also an exercise of knowledge in the service of colonial power. Carothers refused to accept that Kikuyu might have legitimate grievances against the colonial authorities. Instead, he entirely focused on the problems that individuals experience when making a transition from tradition to modernity and the personal stresses such a transition caused. His concentration on the stresses that the Kikuyu experienced during the transition from tradition to "modern civilization" completely ignored the experience of social dislocation that the Kikuyu as a community might have felt with the advent of colonialism. Carothers "solution" for the stress was to build "a new man" by concentrating on positive childhood development and proper childhood practices. To McCulloch this is similar to the "emergence of a healthy, mature individual of the kind produced by middle-class British families" (McCulloch 1995, 71). Most importantly, perhaps, Carothers ignored the racial and racist aspects of the colonial enterprise.

To Fanon, there are two types of colonial racism (Fanon 1979, 249). Vulgar racism is exemplified by Carothers's argument that Africans are inferior to the Europeans because they do not use the frontal lobes of their brains. Cultural racism involves the invalidations of certain people's entire way of life, including language, food, dress, and the entire corpus of their accepted social mores. Thus, according to Fanon, colonized people were subjected to both vulgar and cultural racism that makes their national culture "uninhabitable" (McCulloch 1983, 122). This condition caused numerous mental disorders among the colonized people. Indeed, the last chapter of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1993), entitled "Colonial War and Mental Disorders," Fanon, describes numerous case studies of mental disorders suffered by colonized people that were attributable to the consequences of colonial racism. Carothers missed this issue.

Besides Fanon, perhaps Ashis Nandi has most forcefully diagnosed conditions of the colonized self under colonialism. Taking India as a case study, Nandi argues that modern colonialism in India created "secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order" (Nandi 2003, I). These hierarchies produced psychological dislocation among the colonized people as the culture of the Indian colonized people was seen as "inferior" and hyper-masculine over-socialized aspects of European personality had been gradually supplanting the cultural traits that become identified with femininity, childhood, and later on, "primitivism." As a part of a peasant cosmology, these traits had been valued aspects of a culture not wedded to achievement and productivity (Nandi 2003, 37).

Thus colonialism did create mental disorders among the colonized people but not, as Carothers suggests, because of the colonized people's (Kenyans') inability to cope with rapid progress and modernization; rather, it was because of psychological injury, a sense of inferiority, and the colonial racism inherent in the very idea of colonialism. The Mau Mau revolt was an attempt to rise up against all of these.

Conclusion

In conclusion we could argue that Edward Said was intellectually indebted to Michel Foucault's discourse theory when he originated his notion of Orientalism. To put it briefly, colonial discourse in Orientalism speaks of "knowledge" of the "Orient" that was popularized in post-Enlightenment Europe, which was an intellectual soul mate of colonial power. However, since the publication of Said's text *Orientalism* in 1979, the literature on colonial discourse theory has undergone profound change (Loomba 1998, 51). It is no longer yet another word for colonialism.

> [. . .] [I]t indicates a new way of thinking in which cultural, intellectual, economic or political processes are seen to work together in the formation, perpetuation, and *dismantling* of colonialism. It seeks to widen the scope of studies of colonialism by examining the intersection of ideas and institutions, knowledge and power. (Loomba 1998, 54; emphasis added)

The apparent emphasis on the dismantling of colonialism within the text of colonial discourse could be identified as a countercolonial discourse that focuses squarely on subverting, dismantling, and resisting the colonial power/knowledge nexus that, once again, is the kernel of colonial discourse. This countercolonial discourse theory has numerous facets as well. For the subaltern historian, it is the "recovery" of the "voice" or "agency" of

colonized people. For Ngugi wa Thiong'o, it is Mau Mau fiction, and so on (chapter 6). The selected colonial discourse texts, which we critically evaluated in this chapter, unwittingly created a space where countercolonial discourse could be formulated. Among all the instances of countercolonial discourse, nationalism, perhaps, remains of paramount importance. The anticolonial political and ideological battles, commonly known as "national liberation struggles," were organized all over the colonial world in terms of nationalism, which paved the way for "nation building" and the "nation state" once colonial forces were defeated. However, this idea of "nationalism and "nation building" still remain a contested construct and a highly problematic idea. We return to this issue in our next chapter.

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8

The Subaltern Writes Back

One of the important interventions of subaltern history is to argue that the discipline of history itself is in deep crisis. The discipline of history that emerged during and the aftermath of colonialism and that continues to exist is connected with the colonial technology of power. That history becomes an integral part of dominant colonial culture, whose main goal is to consolidate and perpetuate colonial power. That is why, perhaps, early historians of colonial societies are often colonial administrators: their version of written history, apart from its partiality to the colonial elite, is partial to the indigenous elite as well. When colonial powers descended on colonized countries, for example, in Kenya or India, these societies and their social regulations and geography were unfamiliar to the colonizers. In order to have smooth sailing, a colonial power requires the creation of an indigenous upper class whose making and workings are a part of history. If we look at the official deliberations on the creation of the colonial chief in Kenya or of an English-educated middle class in India, it is easy to observe the bias for this class by the colonial power. The history that emerges from this class definitely ignores the history of the subaltern people who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This "dual crisis" and the "way out of it" are the main concerns of the subaltern history. How should legitimate subaltern history be created? This chapter addresses this question. More specifically, we interrogate selected Mau Mau autobiographies and argue that these texts, along with a different reading of archival materials, problematize the subaltern history of Mau Mau.

Sources of Subaltern History

We have noted that Gramsci uses the term "subaltern" in two ways. First, subaltern classes are synonymous with the proletariat in capitalist classes. Here proletariat is to be contrasted with the bourgeoisie, which is a hegemonic class. Gramsci uses the term "subaltern" in a more general sense as

well; that is to say, subalternity could be located not only in relation to the capitalist class but also in the context of the overall nature of class society. Here Gramsci is interested in power and its distribution between dominant and subordinate classes. Furthermore, this relationship between domination and subordination is essentially contradictory, and this contradiction creates a political space in any class society. Thus politics and political creation are the core elements of subalternity. Consider the following quote from Gramsci:

> The subaltern classes, by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States. Hence it is necessary to study: 1. the objective formation of the subaltern social groups, by the developments and transformations occurring in the sphere of economic production; their quantitative diffusion and their origins in pre-existing social groups, whose mentality, ideology, and aims they conserve for a time; 2. their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations, their attempts to influence programmes of these formations in order to press claims of their own, and the consequences of these attempts in determining processes of decomposition, renovation or neo-formation; 3. the birth of new parties of the dominant groups and to maintain control over them; 4. the formations which the subaltern groups themselves produce, in order to press claims of a limited and partial character; 5. those new formations, which assert the autonomy of the subaltern groups, but within the old framework; 6. those formations which assert the integral autonomy, [. . .] et cetera. (Gramcsi 1971, 52)

This politics of subalternity as the source of its formation is riddled with methodological complexities if we explain it in the context of colonial formations. When we speak of the "modern" period in colonial situations, the politics of subalternity needs to be explained in terms of transition from precolonial formations to colonial capitalism. That period of transition, according to Marxism, is characterized by domination of the feudal lords, peasant subordination, emergence of capitalist agriculture, fragmentation of the peasantry, et cetera. In urban areas, we observe the growth of a bourgeoisie with its individualism and rationalist thought: equality, fraternity and freedom-based representative forms of government. This historical experience was essentially European. However, those areas of the world—Asia, Africa, and Latin American countries—where capitalism arrived late and came with the baggage of colonialism, "pure" capitalism was absent. We have, on one hand, a theoretical paradigm, and on the other, specific contexts of historical transformations. The main issue is the emergence of uneven contradiction in social relations.

This uneven contradiction is apparent when various aspects of social structure evolve differently. For example, dominance of a particular class in the economic sphere might not translate to simultaneous dominance in either the political or cultural realms. Likewise, the development of class confrontation might vary on the basis of regional and geographical differences as well. That means the idea of class formation and class contradictions becomes complicated, and the European model becomes inapplicable to explaining a given specific historical situation. The idea of subalternity has emerged from these historical complexities. It shows that the development of capitalism in colonial situations is different from the European historical experience and should be studied using different interpretative strategies. Here it is necessary to study the production relations, but also colonial state power, religiosity, folk culture, et cetera. These particularities necessitate a different approach to the study of the subaltern, the examination of power relations. That is, domination and subordination are tied together by a matrix of power relations. In other words, the contradictory power relations between dominant and subordinate classes are the focus of the construction of the subaltern, and these power relations provide the materials for subaltern history.

However, examining the writings of subaltern groups can be a complicated project. Consider another assertion by Gramsci:

> The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of the ruling group, even when they rebel and rise up: only "permanent" victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately. In reality, even when they appear triumphant, the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves (a truth which can be demonstrated by the history of the French Revolution at least up to 1830). Every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian. Consequently, this kind of history can only be dealt with monographically, and each monograph requires an immense quantity of material which is often hard to collect. (Gramsci 1971, 54–55)

What Gramsci is saying in this brilliant passage is this: subaltern consciousness, though separate, is always under the influence of the dominant class and its hegemonic onslaught, and these classes still have the power to construct the subalternity. This poses a real contradiction in writing a subaltern history, and subaltern history should be formulated by exploiting this

contradiction. In traditional history, the historical materials and their representation have always been done for the interest of the dominant classes. Accordingly, subaltern categories are always seen as inactive, scared, and submissive. Here a subaltern historian's main task will be to restore the subaltern history as the autonomous consciousness of the groups in the context of both its submission and its revolt. The revolts, as Guha (1999) states, seem sudden or spontaneous, but in reality, they are not that way at all. Behind every revolt, there were long processes of organizational, strategic, and other forms of preparation. In other words, any subaltern revolt should be traced in the context of an autonomy/negation schema (Guha 1999, 18).

If, as mentioned in Chapter 2, it is wrong to depend on elite or mainstream historical materials when constructing the subaltern history of the Mau Mau revolt, how and what sources can we use to write that istory? We also argued in Chapter 2 that the major sources of Mau Mau subaltern history can be found in different and strategic reading of Mau Mau archival materials, as well as in Mau Mau autobiographies and testimonials. Here the emphasis should be placed on *different* reading of the materials. Following Foucault (1984) and Guha (1988), we propose that instead of reading the archival material as such or as given, a researcher should *ask* the material specific questions and let the materials respond to the researcher. Guha (1988), for example, proposes reading of archives through the silences, gaps, and contradictions.

Throughout this text, along with the selected use of secondary published materials, we have attempted to construct the subaltern history of the Mau Mau revolt. Furthermore, in Chapter 4, we included an interview with Cinda Reri, a woman commander of a Mau Mau brigade, because that interview can also be a good source for Mau Mau history. In the present chapter we critically evaluate three Mau Mau autobiographies and with them try to construct a subjective subaltern interpretation of the Mau Mau revolt.

Writing subaltern history is always riddled with problems. If subaltern history aims at "recovering" the subaltern as "a full-blooded subject agent," then the project of writing subaltern history would be unsuccessful because subaltern categories are always subject to hegemonic position, relegated to a "minor" status (Prakash 2000, 287). To state the problem differently, subalternity implies a "lack" of one's own hegemonic project, subjugation to an elite hegemony, or both. But at the same time, the construction of subalternity is also intractable, meaning subalterns are not easily governed, managed, or directed by the elites and their hegemonic project. So the question becomes, how, in the context of "lacking" and "intractability," can subaltern history be written? Prakash proposes that

> [. . .] we should understand subalternity as an abstraction used in order to identify the intractability that surfaces *inside* the dominant system—it signifies that which the dominant discourse cannot appropriate completely, an otherness that resists containment. But precisely because dominance fails to appropriate the radical incommensurability of the subaltern, it registers only the recalcitrant presence of subalternity, records impressions of that which it cannot contain; it never captures subalternity itself; which can be rescued by the subalternity scholar. Quite simply, I wish to suggest that subalternity erupts within the system of dominance and marks its limits from within, that its *externality* to the dominant system of knowledge and power surfaces *inside* the system of dominance, but only as an intimation, as a trace of what eludes the dominant discourse. It is this partial, incomplete, distorted existence that separates the subaltern from the elite. This means that the subaltern poses counterhegemonic possibilities not as inviolable otherness from the outside but from within the functioning of power, forcing contradictions and dislocations in the dominant discourse and providing sources of an immanent critique. (Prakash 2000, 288; emphasis original)

Thus between "lack" and intractability the recovery of subaltern subjectivity and the autonomous consciousness of the subaltern categories serve as the pivotal points when writing subaltern history. This issue was first raised by Ranajit Guha (1988b). While defining subaltern classes as the demographic differences between "people" and the elite—both colonial and national—Guha speaks of "politics of the people," and "this was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter (Guha 1988b, 40; emphasis original). This is precisely the autonomous domain of the subaltern consciousness. Spivak reminds us that this autonomous consciousness "is not consciousness in general, but a historicized political species," and "a historical specificity to consciousness" (Spivak 1988a, 11). This separate domain of subaltern consciousness, according to Guha (1999), leads to politics of the subaltern that are quite different from the elite's politics. Elite politics involves what Guha called "vertical mobilization," both legalistic and constitutional, and thus reflects "reliance on Indian adaptations of British parliamentary institutions" (Guha 1999, 109). Subaltern politics, on the other hand, involves horizontal mobilization that incorporates various kinship ties and territorialities. Subaltern politics involves resistance to elite domination. By using numerous instances of peasant revolt in colonial India, Guha (1999) argues that subaltern horizontal political mobilization reflected autonomous consciousness and thus subaltern politics. The subaltern historian, however, was aware of the problem of identifying the autonomous consciousness of the subaltern. With this recognition, the subaltern historian more or less abandoned the project of tracing the autonomous subaltern voice.

Following the suggestion by Spivak (1988b), the current concerns of the subaltern historian seem to be the construction of the subaltern as the *other* of the elite, with emphasis on the techniques and rules of the construction of subalternity by the elite. According to Chatterjee (1998), a particular shift of the school can be identified, after which the representation of the subaltern became pivotal. This emphasis highlights the fact that subaltern history is fragmentary, incomplete, and episodic, and any search for "pure" subaltern consciousness is futile. Thus the project evolved to asking what the nature of the subalternity that is the subject of elite discourse is and how it can be represented (Chatterjee 1998). However, it is our contention that the autonomous subaltern consciousness and representation of subalternity are not mutually exclusive. This is significant for our purpose, which is writing the subaltern history of Mau Mau.

As quoted earlier, Gramsci argues that the history of subaltern groups is fragmented and episodic. Instead of history in its usual sense, we have what Gramsci called "traces" of history (Gramsci 1971, 54). So what the subaltern historian needs to do in order to construct the history of subaltern revolt is to work on those "traces," "fragments," "gaps," and "silences" that can be located in what Pandey (1988, 282) calls "suppressed narrative." The Mau Mau "suppressed narrative" can be located in state archives. But these archival materials, as Pandey reminded us, "belong overwhelmingly to the ruling classes and owe their existence largely to a ruling class's need for security and control" (1988, 282). To put it differently, materials located in the state archives are produced by the hegemonic classes for the purpose of power deployment. The Mau Mau archive is an example of this.

Most of the Mau Mau archival materials can be located in the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, and the British Museum. These materials include, among others, Hand Over Reports prepared by the departing colonial district commissioner for the incoming commissioner, describing the situation of the district. We examined one such Hand Over Report in Chapter 2 and concluded that, based on *different* reading of the colonial discourse of Mau Mau, a subaltern history of Mau Mau could be formulated by establishing a dialogue between the archives and the researcher. This different reading of the archive comes from the insight of Foucault, who argues that instead of reading archives as is, a researcher needs to put specific questions to the material and let it answer. That dialogical reading of archives allows a researcher to addresses the gaps, silences, and omissions by bringing submerged historical knowledge to the surface. Foucault called this the *insurrection of the subjugated knowledge* (Foucault 1980, 81). This insurrection is concerned with historical knowledge of struggles between erudite and

popular knowledge against the "tyranny of globalizing discourses" (Foucault 1980, 83).

The reading of Mau Mau archives "between the lines" and "against the grain" to liberate the submerged voice of history is indeed an insurrectionary act. But when this insurrectionary act is performed, the representation of the subaltern and its autonomous consciousness can be merged.

Subalternity and Mau Mau Autobiography

Besides different reading and "rescuing" of archival materials, can autobiographies and personal testimonies also serve as sources for subaltern history? If so, how should such autobiographies be approached, in order to construct a subaltern history of Mau Mau? Before we engage this issue, let's investigate how subaltern consciousness develops and is reflected in autobiography.

Malavikar Karlekar in her important study on Bengali women's narrative, *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Woman* (1991), analyzes various women's autobiographies to construct what she calls "the emergence of feminine consciousness, a search for an identity and construction of femininity" (Karlekar 1991, 5). Karlekar asserts that Bengali women started writing their autobiographies in the period of great social change brought by colonial modernity. In the cultural realm, this social change known as the "Bengali renaissance," though remain solidly patriarchal, calling for a new role for women in society. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, women began to write autobiographies, poems, fiction, and essays that reflected their own lives. In doing so, they started producing discourse; that is, feminist consciousness and construction of femininity developed in those writings as a separate entity, outside the domain of patriarchy both native and colonial. This subject formation, through the production of discourse, was subversive because the women attempted to author their own subalternity. Mau Mau autobiographies can also be seen from this perspective.

Mau Mau autobiographies can be classified into two groups. The first group comprises those autobiographies that explain Mau Mau as an event in the process of eventual independence but in which the writer himself was not a forest fighter and lacked firsthand knowledge about actual combat and life in the forest camps. Notable examples of this genre are J. M. Kariuki's *Mau Mau Detainee* (1963) and Gakaara wa Wanjaru's *Mau Mau Author in Detention* (1988). Both of these authors took the Mau Mau oath and were active in national politics but never entered the forest. Thus their memoirs reflect a lack of actual combat experience. Since the British

authorities during the Mau Mau period felt that every Kikuyu was a potential Mau Mau activist, both Kariuki and wa Wanjaru were suspected of Mau Mau activities and consequently detained. Their autobiographies chronicle their experiences in detention.

The second group of texts includes autobiographies of Mau Mau combatants and organizers in the forest and in the urban areas like Nairobi. These works include Wambui Otieno's *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (1998), Mohamed Mathu's *The Urban Guerrilla* (1975), J. Kiboi's Murithi's *War in the Forest* (1971), H. K. Wachanga's *The Swords of Kirinyaga* (1991), Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama's *Mau Mau from Below* (1966), and *Mau Mau General* (1967) and *Mau Mau in Action* (1990) by Waruhiu Itote (General China). These writers not only took Mau Mau oaths; they actively organized, participated in, and fought the war. Although Kariuki and wa Wanjaru's texts, along with Kaggia's (1975) and Odinga's (1968) autobiographies offer a unique interpretation of Mau Mau distinct from the official accounts, they lack a direct and firsthand account of the struggle.

To construct subaltern accounts of Mau Mau, we will critically interrogate the texts by Wachanga (1991), Njama (1966), and Itote (1967 and 1979). Interrogating these texts will help debunk the colonialist as well as the nationalist myth that Mau Mau was a primitive, atavistic revolt against the speedy modernization process that was brought on by the colonial rule in Kenya. The analysis will also challenge the view that Mau Mau was essentially a nationalist movement and that its goal was the same as that of the nationalist elite who came to power once the British left the country.

Henry K. Wachanga: *The Swords of Kirinyaga*

Born in 1923 in the Nyeri District, Central Province, Kenya, Wachanga became politically involved in 1943 when he formed *Anake a 40* (the Forty Group) (Wachanga 1991, xxii). The political objectives of the group were:

(a) To stop forced digging of contours
(b) To stop the injection of children delivered in hospitals
(c) To stop the selling of girls to white settlers as farm labor
(d) To boycott tax payments, including the poll tax
(e) To stop forced cattle-dipping
(f) To prevent people from attending government meetings
(g) To stop government arrests in the reserves
(h) To collect a tax for the group from everyone at the rate of shs.1/- per month.
(i) To prevent the theft of Africans' property
(j) To steal weapons and other government property
(k) To stop policemen from entering the reserves at any time

(l) To continue the circumcision of girls
(m) To block attendance of Sunday church services in foreign churches
(n) To burn all kipandas in defiance

(Wachanga 1975)

A quick glance at the political agenda of the Forty Group will reveal its radical character. Indeed, it was, as Furedi (1990, 90) puts it, "the radical wing of the nationalist movement in Nairobi." To push forward their demands, the Forty Group organized various meetings and rallies throughout the Central Province, inviting to one such meeting the Nyeri District Commissioner, a man named Osborne. The Commissioner did attend the meetings, but he managed to disrupt it through a tactical maneuver (Wachanga 1975). After that failure, Wachanga and other leaders of the group tried to organize more gatherings, but were unsuccessful. Wachanga blamed this failure on Kikuyu disunity:

> *Anake a 40* were unsuccessful in their remaining aims and goals. This failure was largely due to the division within the Kikuyu tribe itself. The reliance upon the whites by the Christians and government Civil Servants made our activities in these other areas ineffective. However, we had shown the people that they could be brave and could oppose the government. They saw that the colonialist government was not all-powerful. This knowledge made it possible for our struggle to take an even militant direction in the years to come. (Wachanga 1975, xxxix)

Wachanga's next political awareness took place in the context of Olengurane.[1] To Wachanga, the Olengurane event was essentially a Kikuyu oath and preparation for an all-out confrontation with the colonialists. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the oath was a subaltern strategy for unity and solidarity among Mau Mau combatants. It was demonized and described as barbaric and primitive cultural revivalism by the colonialists, but to an anticolonialist Kikuyu, the oath was a conscious political act of unity and solidarity, bringing anticolonial forces together under a common cause. No wonder, according to Wachanga, when the State of Emergency was declared in October 1952, the colonial authorities took a firm stand against oath taking.

> Between August and December 1952, the government acted against oath taking. It mounted a cleansing campaign. People suspected of taking the Mau Mau oath were made to go through this *cleansing* ceremony. *Andu ago* (witch doctors) presided over some of these ceremonies. They used banana leaves as basins to hold the cleansing water, made with arrowroot leaves and other types of tree leaves. The people *cleansed* were told that if they had

> taken the Mau Mau oath, it would go out of their mind and heart. (Wachanga 1991; emphasis original)

In the second chapter of his book, Wachanga describes how Mau Mau fighters were preparing for an all-out war with the colonialists, as well as oath-taking incidents. It describes the assassination of the colonial chiefs Waruhiu and Nderi by the Mau Mau fighters. Wachanga entered the Aberdare forest in January 1952, and in early 1952 he was designated as the General Secretary of the overall Mau Mau movement by the supreme commander of the movement, Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi and by General Stanley Mathenge. And finally, in October 1953, he was promoted to General (Wachanga 1991, 17). In his capacity as Secretary General, Wachanga traveled widely with Kimathi and Mathenge while they were organizing tours and kept records of the movement and its actions. Thus he had quite a different interpretation about the Mau Mau movement than did the colonialists.

> Most of the books written by the Europeans have praised the work done by the colonialist troops. They have not shown any of the work done by the Mau Mau. To a degree, the latter is also true of the books written by ex–Mau Mau. Most leaders operated in one small area only and therefore knew what happened in other locations by hearsay only. The story of Mau Mau actions has been distorted as a result. The great work that we did in those years in the forest is a marvelous story. We killed many security forces and raided many guns, medicines, livestock,etc (Wachanga 1975, 31)

While making his point, Wachanga describes an ambush by Mau Mau fighters led by General Ndaya in 1953, in which a convoy of 200 British troops traveling from Nairobi to Nantuki was attacked between Sagana and Karatina, Central Province. In that ambush many British soldiers were killed, but this incident was recorded neither by the colonialists nor the historians sympathetic to the Mau Mau cause (Wachanga 1975, 31). In chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6, Wachanga describes numerous skirmishes between the Mau Mau and the British forces, where the Mau Mau fighters showed great courage, military sophistication, and determination.

Wachanga also described women's role in the Mau Mau movement.

> The role of Kikuyu women in our fight for land and freedom was a very important one. They were able to move quite freely in the beginning and even later had more freedom of movement than the men. In the towns they worked hard at collecting ammunition, weapons, food, medicines, and clothing for the forest fighters. They became expert at hiding weapons, sometimes

> putting them in pots of cooked *ugali* and taking them to the forest in their *ciondo* (Kikuyu baskets). It became increasingly difficult for any of our people to go from the city to the Reserves because of the frequent roadblocks and check points. (Wachanga 1975, 51)

Perhaps one of the more intriguing aspects of Wachanga's autobiography is found in chapter 7, "Negotiations" (96–136). In early 1955, food and other supplies became scarce as procurement from the reserve grew increasingly difficult. Top Mau Mau leaders decided to move the combatants from the Aberdares Forest hideout to a new location in the Rift Valley. This coincided with several skirmishes with government troops, in which scores of Mau Mau fighters were killed. However, at that time Wachanga argued for opening a channel of negotiation with the government. In one of the letters written to the leader of the British army, Wachanga stated that the following conditions must be fulfilled before the Mau Mau fighters would begin negotiations and lay down their arms:

1. Order all your security forces to come out from the forest and disarm them and send the British soldiers back to England.
2. Disarm all home guards and send them to the detention camps.
3. Release all our people who are in prisons and detention camps.
4. Stop all communal work in Central Province, which is bringing many deaths to our children, old men, and women because of hard work through the day.
5. Make an end of the 24-hour curfew orders throughout Central Province.
6. Make an end of all passbooks that Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru are forced to carry at all times both in reserves and towns.
7. Remove all our people from the villages, which they have been forced to build and stay in like slaves.
8. Cease-fire must be seen in all parts of the forest reserves and towns, and stop bombing forests by Lincoln jets and Harvards (Wachanga 1975, 104–5).

However, this series of negotiations between Wachanga's team and the colonial authorities failed to convince the Mau Mau fighters to lay down arms and take advantage of amnesty offered by the government and surrender. Disappointed and fearful that the colonial authorities might arrest him, Wachanga, along with a few other fighters, decided to leave Kenya for Ethiopia. Eventually he was captured by the colonial army in an ambush and subsequently tried and jailed. Wachanga never mentioned in his memoirs when he was released, but it is suspected to have been on the eve of independence in 1963. His memoirs were first published in 1975.

Waruhiu Itote (General China): *Mau Mau General* and *Mau Mau in Action*

Itote's political education began on the Burma front during World War II. He was serving in the British army, fighting the Japanese. While in Burma, he met a white soldier who informed Itote that both of them should not be fighting on the same side: the white soldier was fighting to preserve the British Empire, but Itote should have been fighting for the independence of Kenya from the British. Afterwards, he met an African-American soldier named Stephenson, who told him about slavery, racism, and fighting racism and colonialism. While in Calcutta, Itote engaged in a long discussion with an Indian couple about colonialism and the Indian independence struggle. They informed Itote that in exchange for the promise of independence for India from the British, the Indian nationalist leaders had decided to support the British in their war efforts. These incidents left a great imprint in Itote. So, too, did Itote's war experience. He learned the guerrilla tactics that the Japanese and the British used on each other. Of even greater import, perhaps, was that he learned that the British were not invincible; they could be fought and defeated.

The exact date of Itote's birth is not known, but based on his statement that he enlisted in the King's African Rifles (KAR) in 1941 and at that time he was 21 years old, his year of birth would be 1910 (Maina 1977, 75). His birthplace was the Nyeri District, Central Province. After various odd jobs and wandering around Kiambu, Central Province, and Nairobi, Itote finally joined the British colonial army in 1941, and with that his political education began in earnest. The colonial army was also a site of intense color discrimination.

> Life in the Army training depot quickly revealed some of the humiliating absurdities of color discrimination. There was a large difference between the pay packets of European and African corporals, although both of them had the same responsibilities. We shared the same chances of death and salvation but used separate messes and separate lavatories. (Itote 1967, 23)

After his military training was over, Itote's battalion was first posted in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) then transferred to the Burma-India border to fight the Japanese army. As mentioned before, Itote learned valuable political and military lessons.

> The Japanese knew how to fight, especially in the jungle. Their snipers always fired on our leaders—the officers, the sergeants and corporals—and

> so we removed all arm chevrons and wore wristbands of rank in their place. We developed extra instincts for danger. The Europeans covered their faces with black boot polish for no one wanted to stick out in any way. We all wanted to merge into an anonymous group. [. . .]
>
> I learnt many useful things about the spirit of men under the strain of fighting. In a crisis, the caliber and courage of the leaders are all-important. The Indians we placed had poor officers and they were steadily defeated. Our colonel and his subordinates were excellent and we held our line, though at a heavy cost in men's lives and bodies. The Japanese split up into small groups and, as a result greatly increased their effectiveness in this type of country. A group of three or four people can easily achieve the same results as a full company by rapid movement and careful shooting. The Japanese knew how to conceal themselves. They dug pits well behind our lines, camouflaged them with living grass, and used them as ammunition dumps and food stores and also as shelters. In order to survive anything at all a soldier must carry enough food and ammunition. Once he has lost either of these he becomes useless. (Itote 1967, 24–25)

Later, during the Mau Mau revolt, Itote used all of these lessons against the British with devastating effect. During his stint in the military, Itote also learned about military organization.

> I have learnt much, too, about military organization. I was now familiar with the procedure and conduct of pre-battle meetings. I realized the importance of establishing a Headquarters in every camp as centre for communications, reports, discipline, and control. Information, not only about the enemy, but also about your own forces and their positions, is crucially important in war, especially in guerrilla fighting. (Itote 1967, 27)

After taking Mau Mau oath in the late 1950s in Naivasha, Itote entered the Mount Kenya forest and immediately started recruiting and training fighters by setting up a camp called "Barafu 25" (Itote 1967, 63).

> While the camp was being set up, I returned to the "Reserves" to gather recruits. I eventually found 150 men, whom I placed under a leader, Kiama, and ordered them to go to our new camp. Staying in the "Reserves" at the time was dangerous, for we could trust only those who had taken the oath, and many had not yet done so. During the day we remained hidden in the homes of our collaborators. There were disadvantages, too—none of the homes there had indoor toilets, and before crossing the open ground to use the communal latrines we had to dress up as women, keeping our heads covered with shawls when we went out. (Itote 1967, 63–64)

Itote's well-known combat experience took place in early 1953, when Mau Mau troops attacked the Naivasha police station. Both guns and ammunition were taken.

On January 14, 1954, Itote led 60 men to the Mathira division to collect arms and ammunition from a deserted house. The police and KAR soldiers were tipped off about the Mau Mau presence in the area, and a fire fight broke out. Itote was shot through the chin and neck and was captured the following day. After recuperating from the wounds in a government hospital, he was bought to trial and eventually given the death sentence on February 3, 1954. After hearing his sentence, Itote described his feelings:

> With the sentence uttered, I felt relaxed. I chatted and joked with the constables guarding the dock. Outside the court room I passed by crowds of people hoping for a chance to see me. Under a heavy guard of well armed Europeans I was taken back to Nairobi police station on the same day, February 3rd; the authorities still feared an attempt to rescue me. (Itote 1967, 184)

After the sentencing, the authorities, on February 14, 1954, moved China from Nairobi to Nyeri, where he was instructed to start negotiating a surrender of the Mau Mau leaders. Through the negotiation a cease-fire agreement was reached. To finalize the agreement, another meeting was scheduled on April 10, 1954. However, the cease-fire agreement was broken before it really started. On April 7, a skirmish between Mau Mau fighters and colonial troops took place, and the Mau Mau leaders announced that they would not attend the scheduled meeting. Thus, Itote's role as peace negotiator collapsed, and on April 14, 1954, he was moved to Lokitaung prison, where he met Jomo Kenyatta, who was incarcerated there. After numerous moves from one prison to another, Itote was finally released in July 1962. After independence he was commissioned in the Kenyan Army and sent to Israel for military training. He became Assistant Director of the National Youth Service in 1967 and died in 1993 of natural causes.

Besides *Mau Mau General* (1967) Itote also wrote *Mau Mau in Action* (1990). While the first book is an autobiography, in which the General figures prominently, the latter text has different goals. There, instead of focusing on his own role in the revolt, Itote addresses specific issues concerning Mau Mau, descriptions of different battles, and various Mau Mau personalities. Significantly, Itote responds to questions that Mau Mau historians, both nationalist and colonialist, had raised. For example, in the chapter entitled "*Wakinenuo ndwiruaga* [[translation in roman font in single square brackets]]" (Itote 1979, 90, 193–98), Itote responds to the distorted interpretation of Mau Mau in Ian Henderson's book *The Hunt for Kimathi*

(Henderson 1958). Itote disputes Henderson's claims that Mau Mau fighters burned people alive; arguing that it was the British army that was responsible for cutting down and burning alive innocent people (Itote 1990). Furthermore, he argues that the British army was responsible for burning alive two prominent Mau Mau leaders, General Kago and General Kubukubu (Itote 1990, 193–94).

In this book, as in his earlier book, Itote defends the practice of oathing, claiming the practice was very much a traditional Kikuyu cultural practice. During the Mau Mau revolt, oathing was used to forge cohesion and solidarity among the combatants. In this context, he rejects Henderson's interpretation of Mau Mau:

> The author of *Hunt for Kimathi* went on to say that Mau Mau took the "oath" from a mixture of dead people's blood, bed bugs, and dead goats. This is also not true. From long ago, Kikuyus have buried their cut hair and been treated with local medicines. He also had to stay for seven days without sleeping at his home. This is because he was considered to be bewitched. (Itote 1990, 194)

The General ends his text by making the following observation:

> Our freedom fighters had done a great job and when the fighting ended the politicians took over again. They brought the emergency to an end and worked for Jomo Kenyatta's release and the release of other detainees. The colonial government was unable to do anything and on 12 December, 1963 independence was ours. (Itote 1990)

This remarkable passage distinguishes between freedom fighters, that is, Mau Mau combatants, and the politicians. Maybe the good general is saying, "We fought for *uhuru*, and the politicians, like Jomo Kenyatta, took over."

Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama: *Mau Mau From Within: Autobiography and Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt*

First published in 1966, Karari Njama's text, written with collaboration with U.S. anthropologist Donald L Barnett, was perhaps the first Mau Mau memoir by a forest fighter. After a general introduction written by Barnett, which provides the broad historical and political context of the movement, the text by Njama is divided into two parts: the first is his description of his childhood, his early political awareness, and his various business and professional activities; the second is his description of his

participation in "The Fight in the Forest," his observations, and his capture, as well as other events.

As we have argued throughout this book, the colonial authorities successfully managed to contain the revolt within the Kikuyu land and thus made credible the idea that Mau Mau was essentially a Kikuyu affair, which, if it succeeded, would bring discrimination or worse to the other ethnic communities. Barnett addresses the issue of why Mau Mau began in Central Province (the Kikuyu land) and remained overwhelmingly a Kikuyu affair. While narrating on white farming settlements and the overall colonization process, Barnett argues,

> The Kikuyu figured prominently in this process. Of the large agricultural tribes in Kenya, it is unquestionably the Kikuyu who were affected most immediately and deeply by European settlement. As Kenya's largest tribe, occupying the rich highlands regions to the East and South of the Aberdares Range, the Kikuyu provided considerable portions of the land and most of the labor upon which the European farming economy was based. (Barnett 1966, 33)

Barnett painstakingly debunks the colonialist interpretation that oath, as an initiation ceremony for all Mau Mau fighters, was savage and primitive:

> [. . . The] oath of unity was an elaborate initiation ceremony, with the initiate becoming at one and the same time a member of the movement and a full-fledged, and in a sense, reborn, member of the tribe. One could not, it was felt, be considered fully and truly of "Gikuyu" without taking the unity oath. The ceremony itself was a modern synthesis incorporating various and often modified features of the traditional initiation ceremony (for example, the sacred and awesome number seven, the use of the sheep's chest meat and seven holes of the "nagata," derived respectively from the "oath of the sheep" and the "githathi" oath, and the curses calling for divine punishment should an initiate violate his vows), together with an element of Christian symbolism (that is, the cross drawn on the initiate's forehead) and modern political objectives contained in the vows and instructions calling for a return of the stolen lands and for freedom, which were held to be achievable against a hostile white community only through an unbreakable African unity. (Barnett 1966, 59–60; emphasis original)

Barnett's introduction, though sympathetic to the Mau Mau cause, suffers from what Guha (1988) might call elitist historiography in which subaltern contributors, in this case actual warriors, remain marginalized. Njama's memoirs should be read as a corrective to Barnett's introduction, or the two should be read side by side to recover the subaltern voice.

Karari Njama was born on September 18, 1929, in the Laikipia district of Rift Valley Province. His parents, though squatters on a white farm, were well-off owners of 600 goats and sheep. As a child, Njama observed the workings of colonialism when, in 1936, the authorities passed a law forbidding Africans to own cattle in the White Highlands. Njama's father took all of his cattle in the Nyeri Reserve and sold them at a low price (Barnett and Njama 1966, 84). Again, in 1936, the authorities passed yet another law that restricted any African from owning more than 30 goats or sheep. Ultimately, the number was adjusted to 50 (Barnett and Njama 1966, 84). With all these restrictions imposed, Njama's father finally moved his family to Nyeri, Central Province, where Njama's political education began in earnest. Using the best of Kikuyu oral tradition, Njama's grandfather discussed the loss of land and power at the hands of the white colonialists. After attending a meeting of the KAU, in which Jomo Kenyatta spoke of lost land and daily humiliation that ordinary Kenyans faced at the hands of the colonialists, Njama felt something must be done. In early September 1952, Njama took the unity oath and formally entered the movement to liberate Kenya. However, during the first few months of the open revolt, from February through May, 1953, Njama, like many other ordinary Kenyans, lived what Barnett (1966, 135) calls a "double" or "sphinx-like" life. During the day, Njama, like many other peasants, expressed allegiance to the colonial authorities by going through the daily routine, but during the night he would attend meeting and oath ceremonies and collect food and weapons for the fighters. Seeing, as he put it, "no alternative in the middle," Njama entered the Aberdares forest to join the fighting (Barnett and Njama 1966, 149). In Aberdare, Njama was escorted to the Kariaini camp that was Mau Mau headquarters (HQ).

Njama described the HQ as a well-organized, smooth-running operation. In it Mau Mau fighters established hospitals, food collection and storage facilities, and effective sentry posts to guard against colonial army intrusion. The camp also contained many bomb shelters to protect warriors from the frequent aerial bombings.

However, Kariani HQ was short lived. A new British commander in chief, General Eskine, arrived, and the state strategy for dealing with Mau Mau changed significantly. Both air and land raids on the HQ were intensified. Finally, in mid-1953, the HQ was moved to a new camp in the Rift Valley, as the Mau Mau fighters were unable resist the all-out colonial army attack on their camps.

The most significant event in the new HQ took place when a general meeting of the Aberdare fighters was called near the banks of the Mwathe stream. Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau supreme commander,

sent a letter to all the commanders to attend the meeting. However, when Njama carried the letter to General Stanley Mathenge and read the letter to him (Mathenge was illiterate), Mathenge refused to accept Kimathi as the overall commander of the movement and refused to attend the meeting (Barnett 1966, 288). It appears that a serious rift between these two commanders emerged, with severe consequences for the revolt. However, the primary objective of the Mwathe gatherings was to establish the Kenya Defense Council—headed by Kimathi and recognized by all the forest fighters. Barnett described the objective of the Kenya Defense Council:

> The Kenya Defense Council represented the first attempt by Aberdare leaders to bring the guerrilla units operating in the four major regions of Nyandarua (that is, Nyeri, Muranga, Nderagwa and North Kinangop) under a unified military command and to integrate all of the revolutionary forces both within and outside the forest under a central governing council. At Mwathe a number of steps were taken to accomplish this task: eight land and freedom Armies were named, together with their commanders and areas of operation; formal military ranks were issued—following the British pattern: an overall military strategy was agreed upon, as well as a uniform set of rules and regulations; and a unified record system was devised and men assigned to administer it. (Barnett and Njama 1966, 255)

In his a capacity as the leader of the Kenya Defense Council, Kimathi started extensively touring the various forest camps to coordinate attacks and other activities. Njama was an educated man, and he became Kimathi's record keeper and Secretary. Soon the Kenya Defense Council experienced serious problems in coordinating military action because communication between the council and the military hierarchy at the ground became impossible. The Kenya Defense Council was in charge of formulating military strategy but lacked the capacity to convince field commanders to adopt its recommendations. This, in fact, made the council ineffective. Thus in February 1954 the Kenya Defense Council was replaced by the Kenya Parliament, headed by Dedan Kimathi and twelve elected members with the aim "to establish itself as the legitimate interim African government of Kenya" (Barnett and Njama 1966, 329). It goals were:

1. To establish its authority and legitimacy among Aberdares guerrilla groups
2. To initiate a new military offensive, aimed at enemy property
3. To separate itself from the military hierarchy and dissociate its members from particular sections or territorial groupings
4. To demonstrate its national character and gain added military support by extending the revolt to other tribes and regions

5. To organize and assume authority over the civilian population in the reserves (Barnett and Njama 1966, 329).

These goals quickly proved difficult to accomplish. Njama gives two reason for this. First, within the Kenya parliament, the Nyeri Kikuyu were overrepresented, and they were also educated, which created an unfortunate rift between uneducated, non-Nyeri Kikuyu, and educated Kikuyu from Nyeri. Second, an overall change in government military strategy hindered the goals. When General China was wounded and captured, he was thoroughly interrogated by the authorities (1966, 334). Based on the information he provided to the authorities, they adopted what Barnett and Njama (1966, 331) call a two-pronged strategy to isolate the forest guerrillas from their sources of food and supplies from the reserve and from Nairobi. The first prong, Operation Anvil in April 24, 1954, rounded up and detained almost 100,000 people, the entire African population of Nairobi, which was a major source for food, arms, and other supplies for the forest fighters. The other prong consisted creation of so-called safe villages by destroying traditional isolated villages and combining them into well guarded prison-like settlements. These "safe villages" were usually located near roads, Home Guard camps, and army posts so that they could be constantly watched. These two strategies proved devastating to Mau Mau fighters, as their supply sources and military maneuvers became severely restricted. By May 1955, the rift between Mathenge and Kimathi turned into open hostility, and Mathenge accused Kimathi of wanting him killed (Barnett and Njama 1966, 370).

An ex–Mau Mau leader, Henry Wachanga, was sent by the colonialists to negotiate surrender of all the fighters. Njama never surrendered and was eventually captured by two Home Guards. He was detained and released on the eve of independence.

Mau Mau Songs and Subaltern Consciousness

Following Gramsci (1971, 243), as explained in Chapter 2, subaltern consciousness tends to be contradictory and fragmented because this consciousness, though unique, is often colored by the dominant class hegemony and never follows clear-cut, linear patterns of emergence. Instead, as Chatterjee (1989, 170, following Gramsci) argues, it "is formed, and transformed, in the course of a historical process which brings dominant and subordinate classes into relations with each other" (Chatterjee 1989, 170).

> Common sense, therefore, is the contradictory unity of two opposed elements: one, the autonomous element which expresses the common understanding of the members of a subaltern group engaged in the practical activity of transforming the world through their own labor, often at the behest and certainly under the domination of the ruling groups, and the other the element which is borrowed from the dominant classes and which expresses the fact of the ideological submission of the subaltern group. (Chatterjee 1989, 170–71)

Thus locating subaltern consciousness is a very difficult task because it does not follow specific rules or patterns. For that reason, Gramsci (1971) insists on placing special emphasis on folk culture and oral tradition to locate the uniqueness of the subaltern consciousness and how it asserted itself at the time of revolt. We also argued in Chapter 2 that in a class society the relationship between domination and subordination is essentially an oppositional and negative relationship and that subaltern consciousness is always opposed to the dominant class consciousness. Based on this oppositional and contradictory nature, the subaltern class often uses various strategies to oppose domination. These strategies are quite often more profound and complicated than the usual politics of revolt and law, and they might change because of the experience of the subaltern, though the confrontation between domination and subordination remain the same. As Chatterjee (1998, 4) argues, in new circumstances, the subaltern forces read the changed situation, and expression of revolt and resistance become different. Thus it could be argued Mau Mau songs composed and sung by the fighters were an expression of oppositional consciousness. They were designed to mobilize and solidify support for the revolt against the hegemonic power, that is, the British authorities.

Perhaps the best expression of subaltern consciousness through song could be Jamaica-born reggae singer Bob Marley. Marley was influenced by Rastafarianism, which views the idea of God to be at once both "divine and human" (Horace Campbell 1998, 95).

> [Rastafarianism] involves expression of self-confidence, affirmation of one's Blackness and personhood, a rejection of Eurocentric understanding of black people and their cultures, and a longing for liberation and ultimate redemption of the black people of the world [especially the oppressed][. . .] [Rastafarians] are characterized by a strong sense of purpose, pride in their African heritage, racial solidarity, racial sovereignty, and self-reliance. (Hutton and Murrell 1998, 36)

Thus Rastafarianism is a discourse of resistance and liberation. It is an idea for an organized and spontaneous campaign against racial subjection

and a desire to be free from all forms of domination—social, economic, and political.

The connection between Africa and Rastafarianism through Ethiopia and its former Emperor, Haile Sellasie, a prophet and spiritual leader of the movement, is well known. The connection between Rastafarianism and Mau Mau is less well known but quite significant. Mau Mau fighters always wore beards and dreadlocks. Neil J. Savishinsky (1998, 143) argued that Mau Mau fighters vowed not to cut their dreadlocks or shave until the colonialists were defeated, and the Rastas in Jamaica started wearing dreadlocks after watching a Mau Mau fighter whose dreadlocks had become a symbol of resistance and liberation.

> This potent image of the African freedom fighter, capable of instilling fear in the hearts of those who would dare oppose him in his struggle against racism and colonial oppression, took physical shape in the Rastas' appropriation of the lifestyles of these "dread" African warriors. During the 1950s, the term Mau Mau came to represent the ideal of defiance in Jamaica among the younger generation. One group of Rastas, the Youth Black Faith, proved particularly active in promoting the cause of this anti-colonial guerrilla force. These Rastas identified so closely with the Mau Mau that they organized a protest demonstration in support of the Mau Mau throughout the course of their own ongoing battles with Jamaican authorities and let their hair mat into locks. (Savishinsky 1998, 133)

Born in 1945 in a poor neighborhood in Kingston, Jamaica, Bob Marley's immediate politics and musical inspiration comes from his encounter with colonialism and the desire to free from it. Consider the song "No Woman No Cry":

> No woman no cry
> 'Cause I remember when we used to sit
> In the government yard in Trenchtown
> Oba, ob-serving the hypocrites
> Mingle with the good people we meet,
> Good friends we have, oh good
> Friends we've lost along the way.
> In this bright future you can't forget
> Your past
> So dry your tears, I say.
> (Marley, *Songs for Freedom*)

This song is an expression of a woman with personal grief and a lamentation for life that has gone, never to return. Notably it is an imaginary

reconstruction of life in Trenchtown, a poor neighborhood, and it also depicts a space that has been destroyed. The political nature of the song comes from the struggle between the "good people/good friends" and "hypocrites." Here Marley talks about the battle between right and wrong, where righteous Rastas (the postcolonial world?) are good people and "hypocrites" signifies the oppressors.

Marley returned to this political theme again in his 1974 song "Belly Full," alternatively entitled "Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)."

> Them belly full but we hungry
> A hungry mob is an angry mob.
> A rain a-fall but the dirt it tough;
> A pot a-cook but the food no 'nough,
> We're gonna dance to Jah music, dance
> We're gonna dance to Jah music, dance
> [. . .]
>
> Cost of living get so high
> Rich and poor they start to cry
> Now the weak must get strong.
> (Marley, *Songs of Freedom*)

In this song Marley returns to the binary logic of "No Woman, No Cry," where the polarity was between good Rasta men and the hypocrites; in "Belly Full," class-based opposition replaces it—rich people equal "belly full," and the poor equal the hungry and angry mob. Marley hints at the possibility of insurrection and revolt in the line, "a hungry mob is an angry mob." This is a good example of music as counterhegemonic discourse.

As explained in Chapter 2, the Mau Mau songs could be used in order to gauge the subaltern consciousness and revolt that leads to all-out insurrection. The elitist version of Mau Mau history, both offical colonialist and nationalist, always depends on orthodox sources that are readily available. The same chapter also argued that sources for construction of subaltern history always remain hidden and silent and a *different* reading strategy and approach needs to be deployed to construct subaltern history so that subalterns are seen as the makers as well as agents of history. Folkloric materials—songs, rhymes, ballads, and anecdotes—could fill the gap of subaltern silence. Guha (1999, 14), who laid down the fundamental outline of the subaltern history project in the context of Indian peasant revolts, downplays the usefulness of folkloric materials, calling them "meager" and "insignificant" (Guha 1999, 14). However, that might not be true of Mau Mau songs and their historical use. Africa in general and

Kenya in particular have a rich oral tradition. Vansina (1992) informs us that oral materials could be legitimate sources for historical research. Furthermore, various attempts have been made, notably by wa Kinyatti (1990), to collect and analyze Mau Mau songs.

The British colonial authorities recognized the subversive potential of Mau Mau songs. During the trial of Jomo Kenyatta and other Kapenguria Six, an issue of a Mau Mau song emerged.[2]

The Crown's prosecutor submitted various songs identified as hymns to argue the defendant's association with Mau Mau (Slater 1990, 89). The court was interested in "Hymn Number Nine," entitled "On the Night Dedan Mugo Was Being Arrested." Dedan Mugo, a treasurer of the KAU, was convicted of Mau Mau association and for taking an "unlawful oath."

> On the night Dedan Mugo was being arrested
> In order that he might be given sorrow or
> Oppression by his enemies
> He was not afraid.
> [. . .]
>
> A number of VIPs had gone to his place with the Europeans.
> Many police *askaris* carried guns but Mugo was not afraid.
> And he said to them:
> It is my body which I give over
> freely to be oppressed or to be made sad because
> of *ruriri* our people).
> And in order that you should remember continually
> And do the same until my return.
>
> (Slater 1990, 89)

From a Mau Mau perspective, these songs or hymns were powerful tools in the call for action against colonial oppression, as Bildad Kaggia (1975, 85), one of the defendants at the Kapenguria trial, explains:

> The popular song books or *nyimbo*, mostly in Kikuyu, had also started circulating. These *nyimbo* also carried the message of African grievances and aspirations. They were to arouse people in KAU meetings and other assemblies. Kinuthia Mugia was one of the chief authors of the songs, and Gakaara Wanjau and Muthee Cheche did a lot to collect and put them into books.
>
> Some of these song books figured in the Kapenguria trial. The prosecution relied on them alone for information about the aims and objects of Mau Mau. After the government failed to curb the influence of our news papers and song books, it decided to ban them. (Kaggia 1975, 85)

Perhaps the best attempt to collect and analyze Mau Mau music was by Maina wa Kinyatti (1990), who arranges the songs in three broad categories: "Mobilization songs" (13–48), "Detention Songs" (53–77), and "Guerrilla Songs."

The "Mobilization Songs" are particularly important as tools for locating subaltern consciousness. Here great past heroes and previous battles against colonial oppression are recalled. Take, for example, the song entitled, "The Song of Waiyaki":[3]

> I love being told the history of this land
> When Waiyaki used to live upon this our land
> And how he so liked to see African people's progress
> And I wish he were still amongst us today.
> I would rejoice if he had shown us the tactics
> That he used to agitate for our freedom
> Or if I could just know his freedom for struggle
> To make us all realize that he was a true patriot.
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 13–14)

By evoking history, this song recalls the past instances of anticolonial struggle, and connects them to the struggle of that moment, as Waiyaki's legacy was passed to Mau Mau generations. The past is recalled to announce a not-so-subtle threat to the Kenyan collaborators who sided with the colonialists against the masses, by saying that one day the British will leave Kenya and the traitors will have nowhere to go. The song, "The Curse of Waiyaki," includs this item:

> Our people! Waiyaki died
> And he left us a serious curse:
> We should never sell out our land.
> And yet we are now giving it away!
> The whites are foreigners
> They will one day leave this our country
> Where will you traitors run to
> When the Kenyan masses gather in victory?
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 15)

This strategy of recalling the past in order to explain the present is forcefully used in the song "When the British Came," (wa Kinyatti 1990, 18). Specifically, this song contains a critique of the education that the British introduced as part of their civilizing mission in Kenya in particular and Africa in general.

When the British came here from Europe
They told us they only brought us learning
And we received them with suspicion.
Wuui, iiya [cries of suffering] they only came to oppress us!
Those who hate their fellow Africans
And claim they love the British,
They will be punished the day
We regain our freedom.
Whenever African people gather
There are some traitors
Who rush information to the oppressor
Very much like the Judas of old.

This song is remarkable as it involves a cultural struggle against colonial education, which is seen as a tool of colonial hegemony, and it trains Kenyans to hate other Kenyans.

Songs were also composed in support of creating genuine Kenyan schools, such as "The Need For Spears Is Gone":[4]

This is the time to struggle:
Kenyans come forward
And build many revolutionary schools all over Kenya
We have suffered enough. (wa Kinyatti 1990, 20)

And again, in "We Are Building Our Own School," we find the following passage:

Go to Githunguri to see the school of Kenyan people
It is in a four-story building.
The builders are Kenyan
The chief overseer is a Kenyan
The building committee is Kenyan
And the money has been contributed by Kenyans.
The seer predicted that
The base of the liberation of Kenya
Would be at Githunguri.
(wa Kinyatti 1990, 21)

Here in the song we see not only a denunciation of colonial education but also counterhegemonic striving toward a separate educational system that would educate Kenyans, not in the service of colonialists, but to help liberate Kenya and establish its independence. No wonder the colonial authorities

always viewed the independent school movement with suspicion and claimed that these schools were breeding grounds for Mau Mau recruitment.

It has long been argued that revolt against oppression has always been localized and geographically specific (Guha 1999, 278). In Kenya, the British colonialists managed to confine the revolt within the Kikuyu territories (Central Province) and more or less succeeded in portraying Mau Mau as a Kikuyu affair. They managed to convince other ethnic groups that if the Kikuyu ever drove the British from Kenya, the non-Kikuyu Kenyans would experience discrimination and prosecution. Guha (1999, 279) introduced the concept of *territoriality*, meaning "an intersection of two primordial referents," that is, "common lineage (consanguinity)" and "common habitat (contiguity)," and identified territoriality as a common attribute of all subaltern uprisings. By examining numerous case studies of peasant revolts in colonial India, Guha (1999, 279) argues that territoriality is *not* a negative attribute of subaltern consciousness. Furthermore, the colonial power in India and elsewhere in other colonial territories, who engaged in subaltern revolt, though specific to a certain locality, made various attempts to connect with other localities, groups and strategic alliances, hence providing a different interpretation of territoriality. Mau Mau songs, such as "Inheritance of Gikuyu," reflect this territoriality and go beyond it:

> Ngai [traditional Kikuyu god] created Gikuyu and
> Mumbi [female creator Kikuyu tribe]
> And we gave them land for their children
> Which has now been stolen by foreigners
>
> [Chorus:]
> *Wuui, children were wailing*
> *Because of being oppressed.*
> *Wuui, let us weep for Gikuyu and Mumbi*
> *Are we all going to perish*?
>
> He who only thinks of his own personal gains
> Must remember that Kikuyu once said that
> Such a person will never benefit the people.
> (wa Kinyatti 1990, 24; emphasis original)

And again, "Book of Kikuyu":

> The book of Kikuyu is holy
> It helps me to be honest
> It is my political guide

When I join the people's army.
The book of Mau Mau
It shows me the way
To fight for the liberation of my country
And free it from British slavery.
(wa Kinyatti 1990, 43)

The last song is particularly interesting, for while it refers to a Kikuyu book, at the same time, it argues for independence of *all* of Kenya. Similarly, various Mau Mau songs also expressed a desire to eschew localism, such as "We Shall Never Give Up":

All our land, Kenyan people,
Was taken by foreigners,
And we and our children
Have persisted in crying.
[. . .]

Tears fell the day we were taken to detention,
But Ngai gave us courage
Until we would be victorious!
(wa Kinyatti 1990, 59)

This attempt at de-territorialization to forge alliances across the local experience of revolt, giving it a more national character, can be found in the following song, "The People's Soldiers":

The soldiers of our nation
Are all the African people of Kenya.
Beautiful, beautiful people in unity!
To defend what we inherited from our ancestors,
Ngai in us,
We will triumph.
The railway line has reached to the Great Lake
As foreseen by the old prophets.
Now you whites must realize
We shall drive you into the sea.
Kenyan people, take up the leadership!
Wake up all those who are now asleep.
We must be at one with our fighters
For they will surely bring our liberation.
(wa Kinyatti 1999, 86)

Thus, various Mau Mau songs reveal that though Kikuyu experience features prominently in the uprising, there was always an attempt to forge alliances with various other ethnic groups who reside outside of Central Province, the Kikuyu land. Guha (1999, 287) hints at this dual character of territoriality. Citing the great armed insurrection of 1852–58, Guha argues that if historians view the role of the colonial state as a counterinsurgency force rather than a vehicle to enforce law and order, then they will see that the Mau Mau insurrection, though restricted within a specific geographical area, intersected with a social space that produced numerous instances of insurgency by all religious and social groups. The Mau Mau songs indicate that while revolt against colonialism was primarily confined to Kikuyus and the Kikuyu land, it also created a contested social space that supported the defeat of colonialism not only in Kenya, but in all of colonial Africa.

9

Conclusion: A Presentist Approach to Mau Mau

> History is not the past: it is a consciousness of the past used for present purpose.
>
> —*Greg Denning*

Why write a book on Mau Mau so many years after the revolt? The need to write and rewrite the history of Mau Mau has become even more urgent. In a recent review article, Michael Chege (2004) has argued that scholars have yet to decide on the precise nature of the revolt. Forty years have passed since it gained independence, but Kenya still struggles to define in which direction, as a "modern" nation-state, it should move. In 1992, after years of Moi dictatorship, Kenya held its first election based on multi-partism, and the second such election took place in late 2002. In that election Moi's KANU was roundly defeated, and the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), a loose coalition of old KANU operatives and various ethnicity-based political parties, formed the government. This new government never found a proper strategy of governance, neither did it articulate a hegemonic project that might serve as "glue" to bind all these diverse groups and interests together. The ubiquitous presence of the "ethnic dimensions" of modern Kenyan politics makes governance even more complicated. This "crisis of governance" is not unique to Kenya; it is, indeed, symptomatic of all postcolonial societies. Risking the danger of oversimplification, I argue that this crisis has a long gestation period that can be located in the context of how the war against colonialism was fought and how, after the departure of the colonial forces, the nation-state was formed. In other words, the roots of the present predicament of Kenya are located within its colonial past. Here, history, as Foucault might say,

becomes the strategy with which to understand, illuminate, and critique the present.

Definitely the Mau Mau revolt was a glorious phase of Kenyan history, but if we were to safely bury Mau Mau in the past and fail to learn from it, we would greatly dishonor the thousands of fighters and ordinary Kenyans who sacrificed their lives for independence and social justice. Thus, understanding Mau Mau is essential to understanding the present condition of Kenya.

Meanwhile it seems that Mau Mau continues to makes its presence felt even in Western popular culture and media. In a recent film, *Bamboozled* (2000), directed by African American film director Spike Lee, a rap group calls itself "Mau Mau," as they oppose the depiction of "blackness" in a derogatory manner in a TV show. Maureen Dowd, the *New York Times* columnist, referring to the Bush administration's underhanded attempt to link Sadam Hussein with Al Qaida, identifies it as "shameless mau-mauing" (Dowd 2006). It seems Mau Mau still occupies a rather peculiar place in the Western imagination.

In Kenya, meanwhile, debate on and around Mau Mau continues with no end in sight and follows a line of ambiguity and confusion similar to that hinted at in the beginning of this book. Conservative columnist William Ochieng, in a column published in *The People*, a Nairobi daily (November 3, 1999), openly argues whether the Kenyans have the time to discuss freedom fighters like the Mau Mau. He was reacting to the demand that Kenyatta Day be changed to either "Mau Mau Day" (urged by a Kikuyu named Ngonya wa Gakonya) or "Heroes Day" (recommended by a Member of Parliament from Western Kenya, Dr. Shem Ochuodo, who happens to hail from the Luo ethnic community). To Dr. Ochuodo, Kenyatta Day ignores the contribution that other Kenyans (read: meaning non-Kikuyu) made. Like Dr. Ochuodo, Ochieng, it should be mentioned, also comes from the Luo community.

This minor squabble over the name of a national holiday—Kenyatta Day, Mau Mau Day, or Heroes Day—has, I believe, extremely important historical and political implications; that is, it highlights the persistent ethnic dimensions of Mau Mau and the politics of postcolonial Kenya. As mentioned, both Ocheng and Ochuodo belong to the Luo community, and Mau Mau leaders such as Dedan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge, and Waruhiu Itote (General China) came from the Kikuyu community. Mau Mau arose predominantly in the Kikuyu land of Central Province. As argued in the book, the colonial authorities at the outbreak of the revolt managed to paint it as predominantly a Kikuyu affair and told other ethnic groups that they would suffer if Mau Mau came to power by overthrowing the British.

In postcolonial Kenya, the Mau Mau historical heritage has been selectively used for the most opportunistic purposes. This was apparent when Mwai Kibaki led the NARC to power by defeating Moi's KANU in late 2002. Suddenly a new appreciation of Mau Mau began in earnest. On July 1, 2003, another Nairobi daily, *The Nation*, reported that an official search had already begun to exhume Dedan Kimathi's body from Kamiti prison. He was to be reburied at a site near Langata Road, Nairobi, to be named the Heroes Arch, and a museum would be established in Nyeri, Central Province, to honor Kimathi. On the eve of the forty-fifth anniversary of the execution of Dedan Kimathi, yet another Nairobi daily, *The Daily Standard*, published a long article titled, "The Hunt for Kimathi: How the Hero Was Felled," by Peter Alexander. Highly sympathetic in tone, the article described Kimathi as a brilliant organizer and military tactician who had a clear vision of what kind of nation-state postcolonial Kenya should be. And finally, the Kenyan government in August 2003 dropped a colonial era ban on Mau Mau that had been introduced in 1950 by the colonial authorities. Calling it a "militant African nationalist movement that originated in the 1950s among the Kikuyu people of Kenya," National Security Minister Chris Murunugaru argued that by lifting the ban on Mau Mau, the Kenyan state officially recognized their contribution (News 24.com). However, the minister's depiction of the nature of the revolt seems to reproduce the old ambiguity even today.

Perhaps most interesting twist on Mau Mau history emerged regarding the issue of "finding" General Mathenge. General Mathenge, a prominent Mau Mau commander, was banished during the waning days of revolt, leaving no trace of his whereabouts. In early 2002, the entire country became transfixed with news that the General had been found alive, living on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, according to the *East African Standard*, January 20, 21, 22). After the Kibaki government came to power in 2003, General Mathenge was brought to Nairobi and put up at a posh hotel paid for by a Nairobi newspaper. The Kibaki government planned a state reception for the "last Mau Mau" General. Then the bombshell exploded: the General was revealed to be an Ethiopian peasant who spoke neither Kikuyu nor Swahili. Plans for the state reception were scuttled, and the government launched an investigation, for which the report was never released. The entire matter proved to be nothing more than an elaborate hoax. This brings us to the selective use of Mau Mau history.

As indicated earlier, all the major leaders of Mau Mau were Kikuyu, as is the new president, Kibaki. The wholesale rewriting of the Kikuyu's role in Kenyan history has been revisited, reversing the previous direction of Moi, who belonged to the Kalanjin ethnic group and who had maintained a

negative projection of Mau Mau and the Kikuyu role in the country's independence. The new respectability of the Mau Mau revolt, as always, has been unfortunately framed in an ethnic context. This is what the "presentist approach" to Mau Mau is all about; that is, the Mau Mau revolt, still informs and influences the politics of postcolonial Kenya.

History should be seen as critique—more specifically, critique of the present. So how could the Mau Mau historical experience be used to critique present-day Kenya. Before we address this question, a brief digression is needed.

The strategy of history as critique is closely related with the Foucauldian notion of control and repression. In colonial India, for example, the British authorities, in order to construct a strategy to deploy colonial power, initially collected a massive amount of survey research data on culture, history, language, and other social aspects of the Indian people. In other words, the writings of history were never far from the technologies of colonial power. The desire for history as critique began by showing this connection between knowledge and power. In this craft of the historical past, as Chakravarty has argued, Europe has always been "universalized" (2000, 43). Thus far, most of the writings of Mau Mau history remain an exercise in that "universalization." The present work is an attempt to reverse it or, following Chakravorty again, to "provincialize Europe" and to provide a critique of the European mode of writing history.

Finally, *The Daily Standard*, on January 19, 2005, published an interesting picture. It showed Elsie Mukami Kimathi, widow of Dedan Kimathi, accepting an award at the Norfolk Hotel from the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights for her lifetime achievement in human rights work. The Norfolk Hotel is a symbol of colonial rule in Kenya; it was established at exactly the same time that colonialism began and has been associated with colonialism's excess. The widow of such a potent anticolonial agitator accepting an award in that hotel is, indeed, ironic.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. For a good historical analysis of the "scramble for Africa," see Pakenham 1991.
2. The word Mau Mau is neither Kikuyu nor Swahili. H. Wachanga, a Mau Mau fighter, explained the origin of the word:

> During our secret meeting and oath-taking ceremonies, we often used small boys as our spies and lookouts. The government soldiers did not suspect them. If the government approached our oath-taking ceremonies, boys of five to seven years would signal to us. They did this by whistling, and we would disperse. The children were also responsible for our movement's name, *Mau Mau*, a code word or anagram the children used as a warning signal. They used it when they were doing something they wished kept secret from their parents. If they had used *uma uma*, which means "to go or get away quickly," their parents would have realized that they were up to something. At Naivasha and Nyeri, the early oath-takers also used the children's phrase *mau mau* as a warning signal. When the *askaris* heard "*mau mau*," they assumed it was the name of our society. The European newspapers then popularized the name. Ironically, our people only learned to use the term *Mau Mau* from the Europeans. (Wachanga 1991, 18–19)

3. Gramsci died in prison, but before his death he managed to smuggle his notes out of prison. The world came to know about the existence of the manuscript only during the 1950s (Gramsci 1971).
4. Some parts of this section first appeared in Alam 1993.
5. A description of disunity among the colonial ruling elite, the colonial state, and the white settlers in colonial Kenya can be found in Throup 1988.
6. This book was first published in 1938. We have used the 1999 printing by Kenway Publications, Nairobi, Kenya.
7. Kenya National Archive (KNA) PC/CP/1/11.
8. For a detailed account of settler colonial capitalism, see Leys 1975; Swainson 1980; Zwanenberg 1975; Sorrenson 1968; and Brett 1992.
9. For a lucid historical account of the construction of the railway, see Miller 1971.
10. For a historical description of the South Asian community in Kenya, see Mangat 1969; for its role in Kenya's independence movement, see Seidenberg 1983

11. For an analysis of land relations and the emergence of a working class in colonial Kenya, see Sandbrook 1975; Kitching 1980; and Stichter 1975.

Chapter 2

1. We critically evaluate all these texts in Chapter 7.
2. See Chapter 7 for a critique of Carother's text.
3. After Anderson's text was published, the British High Commission in Nairobi, Kenya, organized a symposium on the book where many dignitaries, British and Kenyan, were in attendance. Though the book is highly critical of the British policy of response to Mau Mau, it seems that the text is safe enough to discuss at the center of both past and present British power in Kenya, the High Commission. And then, in 2005, Gordon Brown, the British Secretary of Exchequer, after visiting a few African countries, including Kenya, argued that Great Britain does not need to apologize for colonialism as it helps to spread all over the colonized world what he called "British Values," like freedom, democracy, and progress. It seems that the use, abuse, and selective appropriation of history continues!
4. There is a controversy whether the third or advanced oath really took place or it was made up by the colonialist for propaganda purposes. See Maloba 1993, 98–113.
5. For details of women's role in the Mau Mau revolt, see C. A. Presley 1986; 1992; L.White 1990a; M. Santouru 1996; Tabitha Kanogo (1987a), Kathy Santilli (1977–1978), M. Likimani (1984), and Njagi (1993).
6. Taslima Nasreen is Bangladeshi feminist writer. In 1993 she published a book tiled *Lajja* (Shame) where she presented a fictionalized account of Banhladeshi Muslim men raping Bangladeshi Hindu women as retaliation for the alleged 1992 destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodha, India, by Hindu fanatics. Various Islamic fundamentalist organizations accused her of blasphemy and demanded her death. Nasreen now lives in exile. For detailed analysis see Alam 1998.
7. However, this "discovery" soon proved to be unfounded or maybe an elaborate hoax. In 2003, a local newspaper brought the person to be "General Mathenge" to Nairobi and put him and his entourage in a posh Nairobi hotel. Soon it became clear that the "General" was an Ethiopian peasant, did not speak Kikuyu, and denied that was the lost "General."

Chapter 3

1. We will return to Kenyatta's text in Chapter 5.
2. This biographical information is essentially derived from Konogo 1998, Maina 1977, Durani 1986, and Wandi 1990.
3. In Chapter 8, we will more fully evaluate these texts. Here we will concentrate only on the observations these authors made about Kimathi.

4. The Forty Group began as a political organization that was directly connected to Mau Mau. Though many of the members of the Forty Group did not become Mau Mau fighters, nor did they take the Mau Mau oath, the political objective of the Forty Group and Mau Mau (that is, ending colonialist domination in Kenya) was the same.

Chapter 4

1. For an analysis and photographic representation of colonial (native) women as a sexual fantasy for the colonialist, see Malek 1986.
2. A squatter as understood in South Africa was an African permitted to reside on a European farmer's land, usually under the condition that he work for the European owner for a specified period. In return for his services, the African was entitled to use some of the settler's land for the purposes of cultivation and grazing (Kanago 1987, 10).

   Kanago (1987, 10) further argues that by July 1910, 11,647 Kikuyu squatters on the Kiambu-Limuru area were cultivating 11,300 acres of white plantations, land that was once owned by the squatters themselves.
3. For further analysis of this process, see White 1990a, chap. 2.
4. For a detailed analysis of Marshal Muthoni's experience in the Mau Mau revolt, see Njagi 1993.
5. This interview is a detailed account of our conversation with Cinda Reri. We talked with her for about ten hours spread over four days in June and July of 2002. The conversations took place at the office of Margaret Gachihi, Lecturer, Department of History, University of Nairobi. Since I have very limited or no background in either Swahili or Kikuyu, I asked the questions in English; Margaret translated them to Mama Reri in Kikuyu, and her answers were translated to me in English.
6. Gakaara wa Wanjau is a Kikuyu nationalist and author. He was detained by the British colonial authority in October 1952 as a Mau Mau collaborator. His book, *Mau Mau Author in Detention* (1988) chronicles his experience in detention. He died in 2003.
7. Villagization means removing all the scattered Kikuyu villages and confining their residents in a single well-guarded place, where the inhabitants can be put under state surveillance. In that

Chapter 5

1. For a good analysis of Fanon's work, see Gordon et al. 1996 and Gibson 2003.
2. For a critical analysis of Anderson's work, see Culler and Cheah 2003.
3. For detailed analysis, see Gouldner 1970.
4. Talal Asad's edited text (1973) contains some useful papers on the connection between British social anthropology and colonialism or what Asad called "colonial encounter."

5. In a recent study Lonsdale has argued that Kenyatta sacredly used both modernity and god (read: tradition) for political purposes. On one hand he understands the subversive aspects of modernity, but he also uses the Kikuyu tradition to challenge colonial modernity. See Lonsdale 2002.
6. Senior Chief Koinange's role in Mau Mau is indeed unclear, although according to his grandson, he was "Mau Mau's misunderstood leader" Koinange (2000).

Chapter 6

1. For an analysis of Foucault's governmentality and its application to modern society, see Dean 1999.
2. The document was actually prepared by an American economist working for the Mboya's ministry (Leys 1975, 22).
3. However, it could be argued that the KANU and Luo domination of the National Democratic Party (NDP) merger in 2001 signifies a reinvention of Nyayo tyranny (*The People*, March 25, 2002). Echoing Fanon, it could be argued that the merger signifies the final phase of the Nyayo comprador dictatorship, where all pretenses of nationalism and patriotism were abandoned in favor of ethnic parochialism and hegemony. However, the KANU/NDP merger faltered when Moi chose Uhuru Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, to succeed him and the NDP made an election alliance with the Kikuyu-dominated Democratic Party and removed KANU from power in late 2002.
4. In August 2004, after twenty years of exile, wa Thiong'o and his wife Njeeri returned to Kenya. Although their return was widely hailed, misfortune has befallen them. On Wednesday night, August 11, 2004, thugs attacked them in their flat, robbed them, and raped Njeeri (*East African Standard*, August 13, 2004, online edition).

Chapter 7

1. Choice of these texts is quite arbitrary. They are, however, well known and significantly influenced the colonial state's policy on Mau Mau during that period.
2. Said seems to be aware of this issue of lacking the gender dimension in his study of Orientalism, and he recognizes and supports the feminist critique of his works. Said 2001.
3. Said continues to focus on the idea of resistance by subordinate people in construction and transforming the very notion of Orientalism as colonial discourse. See Bayoumi and Rubin 2000; Said 1993; Said 2002.
4. S. M. Otieno, a Luo and prominent Nairobi lawyer, died of a heart attack on December 20, 1986. He was married to Virginia Edith Wambui, a Kikuyu. After Otieno's death, a fierce legal tug-of-war took place as to where Otieno, popularly known as "SM," should be buried. Wambui argued that since SM was a thoroughly modern man who denounced many of his Luo tribal customs, he should be buried in Langata, Nairobi, because the wife had the sole custody of the body.

SM's brother, Joash Oching Ougo, represented the Umira Kager clan of Luo. He argued that SM's body belonged to the tribe and he should be buried in his ancestral place in Western Province. For a few weeks the entire country of Kenya was transfixed, and the matter was taken to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the clan, Umira Kager, which buried SM in Western Province. For details, see Cohen and Odhiambo 1992; Ojwang and Mugambi 1989; Otieno 1998.

5. His collected materials were published in three volumes in 1977 by Academic Press in the United States.
6. See Chapter 4 for details.

Chapter 8

1. The Olengurane factor is the common name for the confrontation between Kikuyu squatters and white settlers. This confrontation during the 1940s further radicalized the Kikuyu peasantry. Throup argues that the genesis of Mau Mau can be located within the Olengurane confrontation. For details, see Furedi 1990; Kanogo 1987; Throup 1987.
2. The members of the Kapenguria Six were Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai, Paul Ngei, Achieng' Oneko, Kungo Karumba, and Jumo Kenyatta.
3. Waiyaki was a great Kikuyu warrior who fought the British (1890–1892) at Dagoretti, Central Province, where he burned down a British fort. He was captured and killed by the British and entered Kenyan history as an example of early anticolonial struggle.
4. For more on the Independent School movement and its role in Kenyan independence, see Rosenberg and Nottingham 1966.

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Glossary

athamaki—lowest sub-grade of senior elders (actually, *athamaki* means "rulers," while *athuri* means "elders")

Dharma—(Sanskrit) in Hindu tradition: one's religious and social responsibilities; in Buddhist tradition: cosmic truth, and teaching concerning the ultimate order of things

ikumbi/makumbi—one or more grain stores

itungati—warriors

kipande—identification cards issued to the Africans only and carried everywhere; if not carried, one could be arrested and/or fined

kitambaa—headscarf

matatu—small bus

mihigira—clans

mugambi—village crier

munyongoro—centipede

muthamaki—chosen spokesperson

Ngai—traditional Kikuyu god

nyayo—footsteps

nyomba—hut or subclan

shamba—garden

simi—sword

thingira—the husband's hut

uhuru—(Swahili) freedom

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