Achieving Uhuru? Mau Mau, Collective Memory, and the Construction of Post-Colonial Kenya during Kenyatta's leadership, 1952-1978

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MA Thesis – Cites, Migration and Global Interdependence

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Word count (excluding bibliography): 18,996

Universiteit Leiden

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List of Abbreviations

FLN – *Front De Libération Nationale* (National Liberation Front)

KAU – Kenya African Union

KADU – Kenya African Democratic Union

KANU – Kenya African National Union

KCA – Kikuyu Central Association

KPU – Kenya People's Union

Introduction

In June 2014 in Nairobi, a bemused crowd gathered to watch Dedan Kimathi's grandson chain himself to the freedom fighter's monument, protesting the neglect his family have endured from the Kenyan government. He asserted that the Kimathi family were a 'forgotten family', despite Dedan Kimathi being a key figure in the Mau Mau Rebellion against colonial domination.[1] Kimathi, who to many is the symbol of colonial resistance in Kenya, was one of the leading figures of the Mau Mau rebellion until he was tried and executed by the British colonial government in 1957.[2] The calls of being a 'forgotten' family and the visible confusion from the crowd does well to encapsulate the complexity of Kenyan collective memory surrounding the Mau Mau Rebellion. The collective memory of this rebellion, often characterised by suffering, has been suppressed by the post-independence government for a more inclusive narrative of unity - which was only challenged through the production of Mau Mau memoirs and the increasing secondary literature on the topic.

[1] Kenya CitizenTV, *Dedan Kimathi's Grandson Chains Himself To Monument*, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSAutMfoa4I> [accessed 22 March 2021].
[2] Lauren Brown, 'This Mau Mau Leader Must Be Given His Rightful Place in History', *The National*, 2020, <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18389514.mau-mau-leader-dedan-kimathi-must-place-history/> [accessed 18 July 2021].

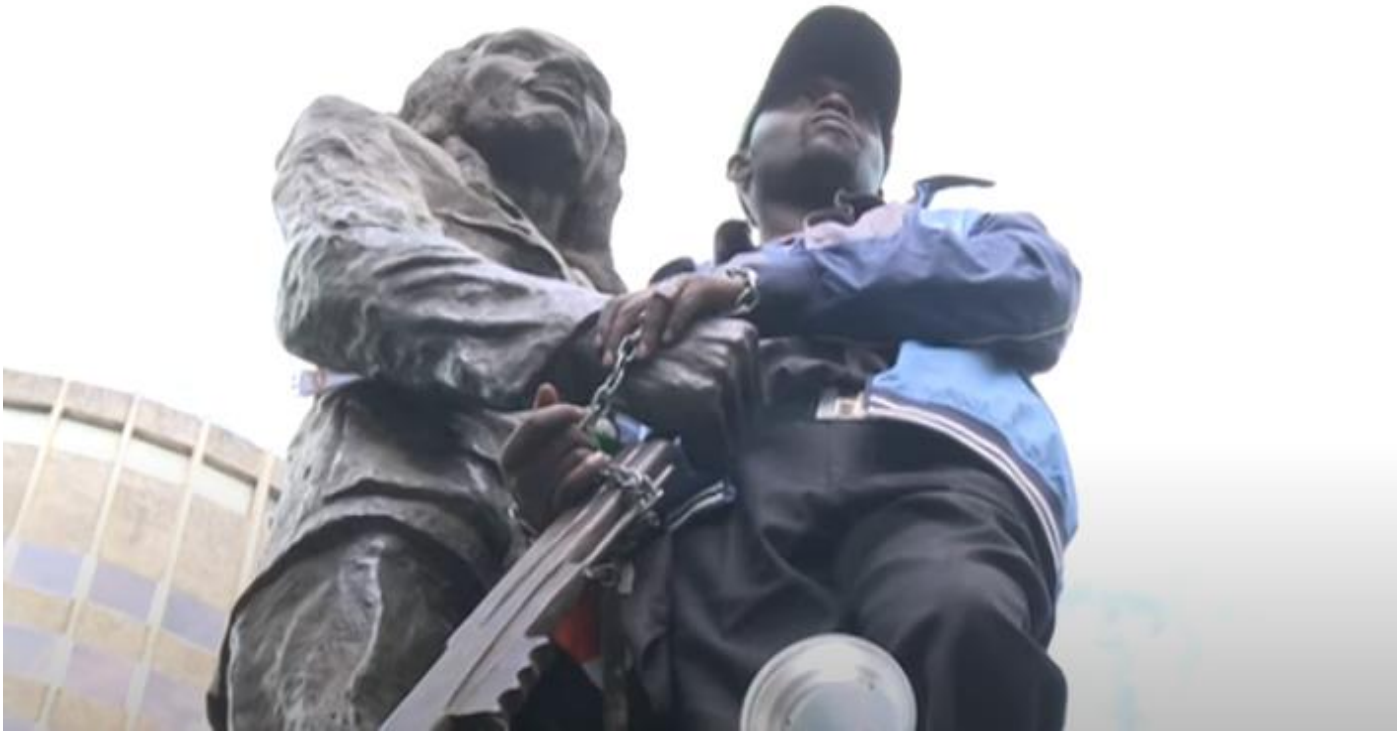

Fig 1.1 –*Dedan Kimathi's Grandson Chains Himself to Monument*, 2014, Video Still, KenyaCitizenTV. Reproduced from KenyaCitizenTV on YouTube, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSAutMfoa4I> [accessed 22 March 2021]

In this thesis, collective memory will be recognised largely using Maurice Halbwachs' framework, regarded as one of the leading ideas in the discipline of memory. It is not just the memory of the shared past in a collective. Halbwachs argues that memory cannot be separated from the collective context, and that memories are acquired and influenced through social groups one occupies in the present.[3] Lewis Coser, who has translated some of Halbwachs writings, succinctly illustrates Halbwachs' notion: 'our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems', adding 'collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present.'[4] Regarding Mau Mau, collective memory varies depending on one's position in Kenyan society. Mostly, this study will focus on the collective memory of the Kikuyu as this was the group most involved in the rebellion and from where the primary sources derive. Kikuyu collective memory was in some ways unique - as Gretha Kershaw illustrated in her fieldwork during the Emergency. She attested that 'facts take significance from the framework in which they are posited. It is quite acceptable to present an event one way in 1930, another way in 1950 and perhaps differently again in 1995. For the Kikuyu, history is revisionist by nature [...] In each period, men must follow what the ancestors show to be important.'[5] Thus, Kikuyu collective memory is mutable and in line with Halbwachs' notion that memory, and in turn the production and reproduction of history, is influenced by one's group. The changing and ancestor-based focus of Kikuyu history is valuable and must not be disregarded, because as Michel-Rolph Trouillot states that the view that non-Westerners are ahistorical is due to the assumption that 'history requires a linear and cumulative sense of time that allows the observer to isolate the past as a distinct entity'.[6] In the realities of colonialism, it is impossible to isolate this past as a distinct entity as it has continually shaped the colonised society.

[3] Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory*, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[4] Sarah Gensburger, 'Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary "Memory Studies"?', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 16.4 (2016), pg. 399.
[5] Gretha Kershaw, 'Mau Mau from Below: Fieldwork and Experience, 1955–57 and 1962', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 25.2 (1991), pg. 292.
[6] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), pg. 7.

Additionally, the term 'nation-building' will refer to the process where 'the boundaries of the modern state and those of the national community become congruent', where differing communities are homogenised into the new nation state.[7] Similarly, it will also be understood theoretically as a modernising process alongside industrialization, urbanization, and social mobilization.[8] In the case of Kenya, it will be assessed in an abstract way through Kenyatta's use of nationalism, but also through concrete means such as the development of the economy and how the state was shaped.

This thesis will postulate that the Mau Mau rebellion was a largely Kikuyu-dominated revolt that came about as a response to the economic subjugation of British colonialism. It was restricted in its scope, seen through its reliance on Kikuyu oathing rituals and its failure to spread to other indigenous groups, yet this was partly due to the declaration of the State of Emergency. Its revolutionary potential cannot be denied. It was not an outcome of Kenya's anti-colonial nationalist lineage, more a reflection of the frustration towards Kenyan nationalism's slow progress before the 1950s. Despite this, Mau Mau's Kikuyu origins made it problematic to insert into Kenya's historical memory, as a brutal anti-colonial struggle perpetrated exclusively by a singular ethnic group could not be placed at the centrepiece of the national narrative preceding independence, particularly in such an ethnically divided society. Yet Mau Mau collective memory could have played a constructive role in the nation-building process, but was ultimately sidelined, as the second chapter elaborates.

The second chapter argues that the collective memory of Mau Mau, marred by violence, was ironically used to push Mau Mau and its rhetoric to the margins of society. In the short term, the government's attempt to suppress Mau Mau memory constituted a true Kikuyu response to a traumatic event and helped

[7] Harris Mylonas, 'Nation-Building', *Oxford Bibliographies*, 2020 <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0217.xml> [accessed 4 July 2021].
[8] *Ibid.*

avoid outbreaks of further violence. However, the suppression of Mau Mau was replaced with an inclusive nationalism where all Kenyans were credited for independence, led by the transcendant 'Father of the Nation' Kenyatta, whose character and rhetoric will also be assessed. The historical amnesia towards Mau Mau and its values, and this inclusive nationalism the new Kenyan nation was built upon, was altogether detrimental to the nation-building process. This section will largely criticise the nation-building process in Kenya post-independence, where power and resources were concentrated around a Kikuyu elite through the colonial institutions of provincial administration. Despite political stability and economic growth, Kenyatta's tenure was tarnished by economic inequality and authoritarianism, where political opponents were repressed or killed. This was combined with a state contestation of memory where Kenyatta's personal role in gaining independence was emphasised, while Mau Mau memory was localised and suppressed. This chapter will rely on Kenyatta's speeches and autobiographies of those involved in government nation-building, such as Oginga Odinga's.

Lastly, the thesis situates Mau Mau and its memory in the wider Pan-African context. In this context, Mau Mau is venerated as an inspirational liberation struggle akin to that of Algeria, juxtaposing with the diminished status it received in Kenya itself. Employing speeches and writings by post-colonial leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Nelson Mandela, one can posit that the Kenyan state memory of Mau Mau was contested outside of Kenya. The liberation struggle in Algeria, occurring at a similar time, will be used comparatively to showcase a nation that built upon the memory of the anti-colonial conflict. The section will conclude that although this was beneficial to the Algerian nation, the brutal violence that followed independence illustrated that centering the anti-colonial struggle can be damaging to nation-building, and that no post-colonial nation-building is infallible.

Context

The Mau Mau uprising was an anti-colonial rebellion perpetuated mainly by the Kikuyu, a major ethnic grouping in Kenya. It was mostly caused by economic marginalisation as a result of settler colonialism, whose impact was strongest in the fertile Central Highlands where tension arose due to land disputes occurring concurrently with the politicisation of the Kikuyu.[9] Land occupied a crucial role in Kikuyu life, as not only are the Kikuyu a primarily agricultural people who rely on land for livelihood, but their socio-cultural system with marriage ceremonies and youth initiations also involved the exchange of livestock.[10] Furthermore, it was Kikuyu custom that land could not be acquired by conquest, but by inheritance, which had spiritual significance.[11] Thus, when European settlers arrived and began to colonise the land in the early twentieth century, codified by laws such as the 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance making the Crown sole owners of the land, the Kikuyu ended up on overcrowded reserves or as exploited labourers of these settlers.[12] It is estimated that 60,000 acres of land was taken from the Kikuyu.[13] The politicisation of the Kikuyu was therefore heavily intertwined with land grievances, and the first mainstream nationalist party under Harry Thuku, the Kikuyu Central Association, was formed in 1922 with the intention of recovering Kikuyu 'lost lands'.[14] Nationalism in Kenya developed throughout the 1930s and 1940s with the creation of the Kenya African Union, but its slow progress led to more radical members opting towards militancy.[15]As a result, oathing ceremonies were used to secretly recruit members into 'Mau Mau', who would begin a campaign of attacking settler farms and political opponents in the early 1950s. By October 1952, the British government declared a state of emergency and moved troops into Kenya. This involved the

[9] 'Mau Mau Uprising: Bloody History of Kenya Conflict', *BBC News*, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-12997138> [accessed 17 June 2021].
[10] Louis Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), pg. 11.
[11] *Ibid*, pg. 3.
[12] Towett J. Kimaiyo, *Ogiek Land Cases and Historical Injustices, 1902-2004*, Ogiek Welfare Council, 2004, <https://freeafrica.tripod.com/ogiekland/book/Chapter06.htm> [accessed 11 July 2021].
[13] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Hachette UK, 2011).
[14] Louis Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*, pg. 86.
[15] 'Mau Mau Torture Victims to Receive Compensation', BBC News.

arrest and detainment of key figures thought to lead Mau Mau, including Kenyatta. Groups of forest gangs were formed in Aberdare and Mount Kenya where they would engage in a guerilla war against the colonial forces. The state of emergency would last until 1960, however the rebellion was largely crushed by 1955 due to large-scale sweeps of the forest and the mass screening, relocation and detention of thousands of Kikuyu in procedures such as Operation Anvil.[16] By the end of the conflict, the official death toll from the insurgency stood at 11,000 Mau Mau, although more recent census research by John Blacker suggests that almost 25,000 Kikuyu may have been killed due to the violence.[17] There is a consensus amongst scholarship that Mau Mau hastened independence, with the British government spending vast sums of money in the pacification process for upholding a small settler population - within a context of decolonisation occurring around the world. In 1960 at the first Lancaster House Conference, the application of majority rule was accepted and speedily pushed through.[18] It was clear by then that independence was inevitable, where it was formally declared on December 12th, 1963.

Methodology

When researching Mau Mau and collective memory, I initially looked to British archival source material, but this was difficult to access and focused more on the British perspective on the rebellion which was less relevant to Kenya's nation-building. Realising the collective memory of the Mau Mau themselves would be the most valuable, I began to study these memoirs. I accessed these memoirs over a period of three months through the Leiden Library Catalogue, and the African Studies Centre Library. I would have liked to have used more archival material to support my arguments, however the constraints of the pandemic made access to archives such as the International Institute of Social History difficult. This study

[16] 'What Was The Mau Mau Uprising?', *Imperial War Museums* <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-mau-mau-uprising> [accessed 5 July 2021].
[17] John Blacker, 'The Demography of Mau Mau: Fertility and Mortality in Kenya in the 1950s: A Demographer's Viewpoint', *African Affairs*, 106.423 (2007), pg. 226.
[18] Mordechai Tamarkin, 'The Impact of the First Lancaster House Conference (1960) and the Kenyatta Election (1961) on Urban Politics in Nakuru, Kenya', *Transafrican Journal of History*, 10.1/2 (1981), pg. 30.

has included six memoirs of former Mau Mau fighters, including *Mau Mau Detainee* by Josiah Mwangi Kariuki (1963), *Mau Mau from Within* by Donald Barnett and Karari Njama (1966) *'Mau Mau' General* by Waruhiu Itote (1967), *Freedom Fighter* by Joram Wamweya (1971), We *Fought for Freedom* by Gucu Gikoyo (1979), and *The Boy is Gone: Conversations with a Mau Mau General* by Laura Lee Huttenbach (2015). There are various other memoirs including for example *Muthoni wa Kirima: Mau Mau Woman Field Marshal* by Micere Mugo Githae (2004), which would have been a useful addition to understand the gendered aspect to the uprising, yet they could not be found in my repositories. Furthermore, these six memoirs are written across a varied time period, from 1963 until 2015, which helps us understand how collective memory has changed over time, but also the memoirs published later critique the post-independent government which is invaluable to a thesis that focuses both on Mau Mau and the Kenyatta regime. These memoirs also originate from those who held different positions in Mau Mau hierarchy, for example Itote who was a general to Wamweya who simply joined the lower ranks and fought. Six memoirs was not sufficient for my study - I wanted to use a variation of primary source material to enrich my arguments, particularly when focusing on nation-building and the international perception of Mau Mau. Thus, I also drew upon autobiographical material from those not involved in the Mau Mau conflict itself but those who were both involved in the nationalist movement and subsequent independence government. This includes Jomo Kenyatta's *Suffering Without Bitterness* (1968), Bildad Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom* (1975) and Oginga Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967). These personal accounts from some of the proponents of Kenya's nation-building process are invaluable to understanding the internal workings of the post-colonial state and how they perceived the memory of Mau Mau. Fieldwork, images and articles will also be used to buttress existing primary source material and create a varied source base to which I can evidence my arguments with.

Memoirs, when used correctly, can be a potent resource that allows the reader to gain insight into historical events that are not present in archival evidence or statistics. The Mau Mau memoirs provide a

detailed account into the individual's motivations and actions during the rebellion, and allow us to intimately understand the inside of the Mau Mau rebellion through the veterans' depictions of events. Philosopher of history R.G Collingwood makes a distinction between the 'outside' and the 'inside' of a historical event, with the former being the movement of bodies in a historical moment and the latter consisting of the thoughts of historical agents.[19] He suggests that true historical understanding is understanding this 'inside' history, which is accomplished through 're-enacting past thought'.[20] To truly understand the collective memory of the Mau Mau uprising, these memoirs are perhaps the closest we can get, through analysis of why the Kikuyu rebelled against the colonial state and their memory of the rebellion itself. The use of memoirs is particularly pertinent for post-colonial scholars, where official evidence and statistics hides the brutal impact of colonialism or is skewed in favour of the colonialists - the burning of an estimated three tonnes of 'embarrassing' Mau Mau evidence in the days before independence by the colonial government is an example of how this memory has been silenced.[21] Thus, Mau Mau memoirs are indispensable in this study as they allow greater understanding of the rebellion through the perspective of historical actors, and they have also allowed the Kikuyu to challenge the official narrative of the rebellion and immortalise their collective memory of it. As Kariuki remarked in his memoir, 'May this book [...] be a small part of their [freedom fighters] memorial.'[22]

Memoirs must also be treated with care and not taken as historical 'truth' too keenly. They differ from the diary, which is written to give an account of the writer's experience in a given day, and is often an act of 'intimate communication the diarist is having with him or herself'.[23] The Mau Mau memoirs on the other hand, are often a retrospective recalling of the rebellion, remembered years after the uprising. This means

[19] Jennifer Wallach, 'Building a Bridge of Words: The Literary Autobiography as Historical Source Material', *Biography*, 29 (2006), pg. 447.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] Ben Macintyre, 'British Burnt "Embarrassing" Mau Mau Files by the Ton', *The Times*, 2012, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/british-burnt-embarrassing-mau-mau-files-by-the-ton-zms782ptx62> [accessed 17 July 2021].
[22] Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *'Mau Mau' Detainee: The Account by a Kenya African of His Experiences in Detention Camps, 1953-1960* (Nairobi: Transafrica Press, 2009), pg. 182.
[23] Irina Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', *The Russian Review*, 63.4 (2004), pg. 564.

that the author's memory of events may have distorted over time, and will be less of a reflection of historical reality than diaries are. Furthermore, many Mau Mau memoirists lacked a Western education despite being skilled oral historians, thus the majority of the memoirs required a third-party to either transcribe or translate their ideas into a book format. This can mean they are subject to interference by the co-author, who may have their own political intentions. The memoirs can thus be subject to outside influences and may not be a true reflection of the fighters' beliefs - for example, Donald Barnett's radical politics can be argued to have influenced the presentation of the memoirs he edited.[24] Furthermore, although they certainly challenge the scholarship, the audience to these memoirs were largely Europeans who were looking to challenge shocking myths they heard about Mau Mau - Ken Walibora Waliaula states that 'the copies of these memoirs in Kenya [...] are known for gathering dust', meaning that they do not 'form an integral part of the accessories of the collective memory of the Mau Mau experience.'[25] Therefore although the memoirs are valuable for historians, they did not really shape the collective memory of Kenyans themselves regarding Mau Mau.

The assertion that memoirs and autobiographies are a more biased source type, where events can be misremembered, exaggerated, or changed in accordance to the author's beliefs, is not always a negative notion. In fact, using Hallbwachs' notion of how memory is always informed by one's social group, we can see how the Mau Mau rebellion and postcolonial Kenya has shaped the memoirists through their recollections. For example, Waruhiu Itote's descriptive remembering of the Kenya Parliament meetings can illustrate his desire for Mau Mau to be seen as a legitimate political movement alongside an armed rebellion. Thus, historical bias can have utility. As Luise White says, 'for historians, the invented account is at least as good as the accurate one, because dissembling is perhaps the most pointed telling we have.'[26] Kikuyu history is also collective by nature, due to those in traditional African societies perceiving

[24] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics* (Boulder: L. Rienner, 1998), pg. 19.
[25] Ken Walibora Waliaula, 'Remembering and Disremembering in Africa', *Curator*, 55.2 (2012), pg. 123.
[26] Jennifer Wallach, 'Building a Bridge of Words', pg. 450.

themselves not as individuals but as identifying with the history and values of their clan.[27] Thus, the memoirs and autobiographies can be seen as representative of the Kikuyu experience as a whole, which although discounts individual experience, is ultimately crucial in a study of collective memory.

With this in mind, I attempted to use the memoirs and autobiographies in two main ways. After reading through a number of them, I identified certain trends on particular topics. For example, the sense of poverty and economic inequality in the colonial system is felt almost ubiquitously within the memoirs, which lended support to my argument that the economic impact of colonialism was the main impetus behind the rebellion. Due to the idiosyncrasies of memoirs as a source, I not only looked for their depiction of historical events but also the biases of the historical actors and why they occurred, such as the criticisms of the Kenyatta government by Gikoyo which thus illustrates the discontent the landless Kikuyu felt due to their neglect during the post-indpendence period.

The other way I used the memoirs involved finding juxtapositions between how certain events are depicted and how they are presented in other sources and scholarship. This is where memoirs are useful, as they can undermine dominant historical interpretations. For example, a more nuanced view of Kenyatta's attitude to Mau Mau was created when studying Kaggia and Odinga's autobiographies, where his radical speeches in the 1940s and deliberate ignorance to Mau Mau meetings contradicts those who frame him as consistently conservative and opposed to Mau Mau. Once I found trends and similarities amongst the memoirs and autobiographies, I grouped my ideas into the three chapters: definitions of Mau Mau, collective memory and nation building, and finally used primary sources from outside of Kenya for my international chapter.

[27] Carol E. Neubauer, 'One Voice Speaking for Many: The Mau Mau Movement and Kenyan Autobiography', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 21.1 (1983), pg. 113.

Historiography

Understanding the historiography of the Mau Mau rebellion is vital to understanding the construction of the independent Kenyan nation itself. This section will trace the historiographical debate of how Mau Mau has been categorised by historians, with particular focus on works that helped shift the debate. Initially, the historical narrative surrounding Mau Mau was dictated by the British colonial forces themselves. Until the 1960s, Mau Mau was sensationalised in popular culture due to its violence and spiritual nature, 'a variety of of populist and pseudo-intellectual theories and discussions' were 'disseminated through the press' by conservatives which seemed to affirm racial stereotypes of Africans as savages - supporting the need for colonial intervention.[28] Mau Mau was viewed by Louis Leakey, an anthropologist and honorary Kikuyu elder, as a result of disintegration of traditional and religious norms due to colonisation's impact.[29] This was the liberal interpretation, which was furthered by works such as Dr J.C. Carothers' *The Psychology of Mau Mau* published in 1954, which pathologized the rebellion as a sort of collective psychosis created by the juxtaposition between Kikuyu culture, their 'magic' modes of thinking and contact with an 'alien' Western culture.[30] Although this 'liberal' view diverged from the conservative racial view in its intent, both interpretations succeeded in depoliticising Mau Mau as a reactionary or atavistic movement.

This changed following the publication of the first Mau Mau memoir *Mau Mau Detainee* by Josiah Mwangi Kariuki in 1960, which was supported by the scholars Carl Roseberg and John Nottingham in their 1966 book *The Myth of Mau Mau.* This was a watershed moment in Mau Mau historiography, as the text placed Mau Mau as an integral part of historically developed Kenyan nationalism - instead of it being

[28] Joanna Lewis, 'Nasty, Brutish and in Shorts? British Colonial Rule, Violence and the Historians of Mau Mau', *Round Table*, 96.389 (2007), pg. 206.
[29] Dane Kennedy, 'Constructing the Colonial Myth of Mau Mau', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25.2 (1992), pg. 252.
[30] J.C Carothers, 'The Psychology of Mau Mau', *University of Florida Digital Collections*, 1955 <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00023305/00001/3j> [accessed 23 March 2021].

portrayed as reactionary violence of the Kikuyu, it was portrayed as a European failure to significantly reform the colonial system. This exposed the initial British depiction of Mau Mau as the 'European myth', and along with the harrowing depictions of brutality in *Mau Mau Detainee,* would move the historiographical debate away from the colonial administration and opened the door for more nuanced and balanced interpretations.

Although this was undoubtedly beneficial for the scholarship surrounding Mau Mau, both Marshall Clough and Robert Buijtenhuis have urged caution. The publication of *The Myth of Mau Mau*, amongst various other memoirs that began to be published after the mid-1960s, were said to have 'glossed over or explained away' 'controversial or troublesome aspects of the revolt', and interpreting the revolt as a culmination of Kenyan nationalism is problematic due to Mau Mau primarily being a Kikuyu affair, and this excluded Kenyans who fought for the colonial government.[31] Thus, what Clough terms the 'African myth' cannot be fully integrated into Kenya's historical memory. This thesis will use ideas from the *Myth of Mau Mau*, yet it is rather out of date and lacked the nuance of publications that would come later.

A example of this is the comprehensive evaluation of the rebellion by Robert Buijtenhuijs in *Essays on Mau Mau* and *Mau Mau: Twenty Years After*, which considered various historical interpretations of Mau Mau and subsequently produced a three-pronged line of argument that paints Mau Mau as an ambiguous movement that renewed culture, revolted against colonialism and pitted Kikuyu against each other in a civil war. Despite this, Buijtenhuijs' rejection of memoirs as a useful source and his over-focus on the 'tribal' tenets of the movement also it is not the strongest part of the thesis' historiography.

In the 1980s and early 1990s however, scholars such as Tabitha Kanogo and Greet Kershaw conducted extensive research on Kikuyu communities and produced their own nuanced findings on the origins of

[31] Marshall S. Clough, 'Mau Mau: Modern Kenya's Ambivalent Legacy', ed. Robert Buijtenhuijs, *Africa Today*, 26.3 (1979), pg. 60.

Mau Mau. The use of fieldwork and focus on pre-Mau Mau Kikuyu history means it is stronger than that of Buijtenhuijs, as oral history and memory of the collective occupies a central part of tradition and the understanding of their history. In 1989, Frank Furedi classified Mau Mau as much more localised and economically motivated in its origins. Essentially presenting it as the zenith of what was an 'agrarian struggle', Furedi places emphasis on the Kikuyu squatters as the most acutely impacted group by colonialism, which explains why the rebellion occurred in Kikuyu areas such as the White Highlands. Instead of seeing Mau Mau as a culmination of Kenyan nationalism, Furedi alternatively argues that it was the underdevelopment of Kenyan nationalism itself that 'drove thousands of Kikuyu outside the framework of legitimate protest'.[32] He specifically identifies the growing divergence between militant activists and those pursuing moderate reform as a decisive theme.[33] Furedi's line of argument depicts Mau Mau as a localised response to the primarily economic pressures of colonisation, which, used alongside Kanogo and Kershaw, is perhaps the most constructive literature in this thesis' understanding of Mau Mau.

It is important to acknowledge the historical debate occurring in Kenya as well, which was revived in the 1980s. The debate is perhaps best exemplified by the 1981 meeting of the Historical Association of Kenya, where historian B.A. Ogot chastised 'radical' historians Maina wa Kinyatti and Ngugi wa Thiong'o for not being thorough enough in their Marxist critique of Mau Mau, in particular failing to realise capitalism's uneven penetration of the Kenyan countryside in the interwar years.[34] The debate typified the divisive legacy of Mau Mau in Kenya, where historians of all ethnicities and classes have ascribed their interpretations of the movement, which has pitted 'bourgeois' against 'radical' scholars and ultimately failed to advance the debate to how Mau Mau can fit into Kenya's 'usable past'.

[32] Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, Eastern African Studies (London: Currey,1989), pg. 6.
[33] *Ibid*, pg. 7.
[34] E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo, 'The Production of History in Kenya: The Mau Mau Debate', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 25.2 (1991), pg. 300.

This brings us onto Maina wa Kinyatti, whose position on Mau Mau has been subject to critique by various scholars including Buijtenhuis and E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, yet his position on the topic is valuable and must be considered. Kinyatti, most prominently in his 1992 book *Mau Mau: A Revolution Betrayed*, uses a Marxist framework to suggest that Mau Mau was a revolution and the apex of Kenya's historical struggle against imperialism. Kinyatti extends this to a critique of the post-independence governments, calling Kenyatta's approach a 'progressive surrender of the interests of the Kenyan people to neocolonial interests.'[35]Perhaps overly focused on the movement's nationalist dimensions, Kinyatti's approach has been refuted numerous times, but his impact on the scholarly debate has been undeniable.

Since the Kenyan debate, the scholarship around Mau Mau has continued into the 1990s and 2000s, most notably through Marshall Clough's 1998 *Mau Mau Memoirs*, a crucial book in the historiography that built on existing scholarship through comprehensive analysis of the memoirs. Coinciding with refreshed interest in the rebellion following the election violence of the late 1990s in Kenya as well as the Kibaki government's attempts to restore this 'forgotten history', a number of works have arose concerning the memory of the conflict and its implications on Kenya's post-independence nation-building period.[36] These include works such as *State And Nation-Building Processes In Kenya* by Waiyego Mwangi et. al, and *Remembering and Disremembering in Africa* by Ken Walibora Waliaula. The increased focus on the Kenyatta years and its treatment of Mau Mau is incredibly useful for any historian dealing with collective memory and its impact, and thus these texts have been beneficial to this thesis.

[35] Maina wa Kĩnyattĩ, *Mau Mau: A Revolution Betrayed*, 2nd ed. (New York: Mau Mau Research Center, 2000), pg. 58.
[36] Evan Mwangi, 'The Incomplete Rebellion: Mau Mau Movement in Twenty-First-Century Kenyan Popular Culture', *Africa Today*, 57.2 (2010), pg. 93.

Chapter 1: Oathing, The Multiple Definitions & Meanings of Mau Mau and its Implications

Introduction

In order to understand the collective memory of the Mau Mau Rebellion and how it impacted the Kenyan nation-building process, understanding the movement and its ideology is a crucial first step. Much of Kenya's ambivalence towards Mau Mau and its memory stems from the complexity of defining the movement, therefore this chapter will initially use the case study of oathing. Oathing was a cornerstone of the veterans' initial understanding of the movement, and this section will assert that the use of traditional Kikuyu symbols restricted the movement as fully nationalist, yet were extremely effective in its evocation of familiar rituals. The section will then examine Mau Mau's many definitions, from a civil war to a revolution, and illustrate that it was a largely Kikuyu-based revolt in response to colonial economic pressure. Despite this, its revolutionary potential and nationalist links meant it could have occupied a space in Kenya's historical memory, which was never realised.

1.1- Oathing

Oathing, due to its crucial role in mobilising thousands of Kikuyu towards the Mau Mau struggle as well as the central position it has in the memoirs, means it is an essential component in defining both the ideology and scope of the rebellion. Oathing was an already established part of Kikuyu tradition, where it was previously used for initiation ceremonies when the young become part of adult society, as well as in economic and judicial matters.[37] Colonial exploitation of the Kikuyu settlers in the Olenguruone area saw

[37] Chris VanArsdale, 'Mau Mau - The Politics of Revitalization and the Revitalization of Politics', 1987 <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/mau-mau-politics-revitalization-and-revitalization> [accessed 17 May 2021].

the transformation of the oath as a tool for political mobilisation as early as 1943, coinciding with the Kikuyu Central Association utilising an oath to ensure the loyalty of its formerly detained members.[38] This can be said to be the genesis of the Mau Mau 'oath of unity', where established rituals were used to rally the Kikuyu along the Mau Mau demands for land and freedom. By utilising memoirs, we can outline the key tenets and motivations behind the oath, which as a precursor to joining the Mau Mau movement can help us understand its ideology further.

In J.M Kariuki's 'Mau Mau Detainee', he remembers the first oath as follows:

> *I speak the truth and vow before God*
> *And before this movement,*
> *The movement of Unity,*
> *The Unity which is put to the test*
> *The Unity that is mocked with the name of 'Mau Mau'*
> *That I shall go forward to fight for the land,*
> *The lands of Kirinyaga that we cultivated,*
> *The lands of which were taken by the Europeans*
> *And if I fail to do this*
> *May this oath kill me,*
> *May this seven kill me,*
> *May this meat kill me.*[39]

We can see that unity and mobilisation are underlying themes of this oath, where 'the movement of unity' is evoked alongside the generalised demand for land. The oath would have been given in Swahili, and the 'vow before God' is not describing a Christian God but an undefinable deity, often their 'high God' Ngai

[38] Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905 - 63* (London: Currey, 1987). pp. 116-125.
[39] Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *'Mau Mau' Detainee*, pg. 24.

who lived on Mount Kenya.[40] Here we can see Kikuyu drawing upon an alternate deity in their lineage that subverted the Western attempts to introduce Christianity which was often intertwined with colonialism. Arguably, this emphasis on unity supports Mau Mau's nationalist dimensions, which is apparent when Kariuki argues that the unity oath 'intended to unite not only the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru but all the other Kenya tribes'.[41] This suggests that the oath was intended by some to encompass tribes beyond the Kikuyu, which illustrated Mau Mau's potential to become a nationwide revolt. However, this notion is contradicted by the oath's vow to fight for the 'lands of Kirinyaga that we cultivated', drawing upon the Kikuyu's historical claim to the Kirinyaga lands - something which reduces the nationalist dimension of the revolt that scholars such as Carl Rosberg attempt to stress. The oath's use of Kikuyu identity is furthered following Kariuki's recollection of the *batuni* oath, where he asserts 'my initiation was complete and I had become a true Kikuyu with no doubts'.[42] This notion is supported by Robert Buijtenhuijs, who asserts that the oath was a form of Kikuyu cultural renewal - 'In the mind of Mau Mau leaders, it meant initiation into a new and purified Kikuyu tribe, proud of its past and its personality, and freed from European domination and foreign influences'.[43] The theme of purification and the oath as an external spiritual force are apparent in Japhlet Thambu's memoir, who saw the oath as polluting the human brain. 'A human being is wonderful [strange]. He can do anything he likes, but if one is poisoned by the oath - ah. The oath kills human thinking, and it plants something new. From what you were - you are taken away completely. Fully. Oathing does that.'[44] The framing of the oath as an transcendent process where the old version of the self is purged and renewed reiterates the spiritual and 'tribal' element of the Mau Mau movement, yet is also a testament to its effectiveness as a mobilising tool.

[40] Robert W. Blunt, 'Kenyatta's Lament: Oaths and the Transformation of Ritual Ideologies in Colonial Kenya', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3.3 (2013), pg. 181.
[41] Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *'Mau Mau' Detainee*, pg. 27.
[42] *Ibid*.
[43] Robert Buijtenhuijs, *Essays on Mau Mau: Contributions to Mau Mau Historiography*, (Leiden: African Studies Centre Library, 1982). pg. 83.
[44] Laura Lee P. Huttenbach, *The Boy Is Gone: Conversations with a Mau Mau General*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), pg. 100.

This was largely accomplished through the ceremony itself, where one was typically made to pass through an arch consisting of banana stems seven times, while in both Njama's and Kariuki's accounts they had to bite the meat or lungs of a goat.[45] This was accompanied by the use of goat's blood and the mixing of the participants' blood, symbolic of the oath takers' mortality and the threat of death if one were to betray the oath. The removal of clothing and metal due to it being manufactured by Europeans, combined with Barnett and Njama's description of holding balls of soil while facing Mount Kenya during the recitation, illustrates how the key Mau Mau tenets of land and freedom from colonial oppression were evoked symbolically during the ceremony.[46]

Despite this, one must be careful in stressing the spiritual and 'tribal' aspects of the oath in order to delegitimise the wider dimensions of the Mau Mau movement. As previously mentioned, oathing played a significant role in traditional African societies and was employed for many different reasons, specifically initiation ceremonies for the sexes in Kikuyu society.[47] Thus, it would make sense for a movement such as Mau Mau to draw upon traditional practices in order to reiterate the group's identity in the face of colonial oppression. As Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham claim, 'for an oath to be an effective instrument [...] it had to employ the symbols that all Kikuyu recognised as common to their people'.[48] Using Maia Green's argument that rituals have 'the main burden of carrying ideology', and that explaining African resistance movements primarily through tradition essentially depoliticises 'actors motivations and levels of awareness', it can be said that oathing was an effective method for mobilising the Kikuyu towards the Mau Mau demands of land and freedom.[49] This is apparent in analysis of the memoirs, exemplified through Joram Wamweya stating that after the oath 'one had to surrender one's

[45] Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *'Mau Mau' Detainee*, pg. 26.
[46] Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), pg. 118.
[47] Maia Green, 'Mau Mau Oathing Rituals and Political Ideology in Kenya: A Re-Analysis', *Africa (London. 1928)*, 60.1 (1990), 69–87, pg. 78.
[48] Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The Myth of 'Mau Mau': Nationalism in Kenya*, (New York: Praeger,1966), pg .259.
[49] *Ibid*, pg. 83.

body, mind and soul to the fulfillment of the cause' [50], while Barnett and Njama assert 'though the oath clung on Kikuyu traditions and superstitions, yet the unity and obedience achieved by it was so great that it could be our only weapon to fight against the white community.'[51] Considering that the divide-and-rule tactics and economic exploitation was so extensive under colonialism, the use of Kikuyu tradition may have restricted the Mau Mau movement to an extent but was an extremely efficacious method of transmitting their core demands of land and freedom. This is evident through the oath's power, seen through notions of spiritual rebirth mentioned in the memoirs, such as in Kariuki and Thambu's accounts. Although oathing was restricted to the Kikuyu and their specific demands, this does not limit its mobilising power, and this section has attempted to show that oathing was an effective and valid method of making people adhere to Mau Mau demands through the use of familiar rituals and symbols.

1.2- The Multiple Definitions & Meanings of Mau Mau

In order to understand its collective memory and its impact on Kenyan nation-building, the paper must consider interpretations of and subsequently define Mau Mau itself. This section will assess the movement's tribal aspect, its potential as a revolution, its nationalist characteristics and then finally create a more nuanced picture of Mau Mau as a revolt with revolutionary potential that can primarily be explained by the economic subjugation of the Kikuyu. As an economically motivated and Kikuyu-led rebellion, it was inherently difficult to fully use within Kenya's historical memory, yet this revolutionary potential and links with nationalist tradition meant that it deserved to be acknowledged as a key contributor to Kenya's independence.

[50] Joram Wamweya, *Freedom Fighter* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), pg. 54.
[51] Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within,* pg. 121.

Firstly, we must consider the Kikuyu tribal element to the Mau Mau movement. As spoken about in the previous section, much of the oathing ceremony and rhetoric in the primary sources suggests the rebellion was centered around Kikuyu identity and drew from tribal practices and traditions. In Gucu Gikoyo's recollection of a key reason for his rebellion, it reads:

> 'One elder told us that their land was ours from eternity and we could not let anybody allocate for himself any part of it. We would rather die than see the burial grounds of our forebears violated by foreign insolence [...] He told us that Waiyaki died for this country. When he died, he left a curse that we should never sell our land or let it be taken from us. We had come to a point, he said, where we must fight, or reap the bitter fruits of that curse. We [...] assured him that we were ready to fight and die for the land of our forefathers.'[52]

Here we can see the elder drawing upon Kikuyu tradition, citing the Gikuyu chieftain Waiyaki Wa Hinga. Waiyaki's rule in the late nineteenth century coincided with Kikuyu migration into the fertile lands near Nairobi, and he fought with and was killed by British forces due to tensions with European settlers - a story that has a number of parallels with figures such as Kimathi in the Mau Mau struggle.[53] Many Kikuyu drew upon the group's history to vindicate the Mau Mau struggle against colonialism, which can limit the scope of the rebellion to some extent. This in turn has had implications for its position in Kenya's usable historical memory, as specific Kikuyu dimensions excluded other ethnic groups from involvement in Kenya's anti-colonial struggle. Robert Buijtenhuijs asserts that Mau Mau was a tribal movement, yet was not hostile to other ethnic groups, being a case of 'tribalism serving the Nation.'[54] This is a useful interpretation for placing Mau Mau within Kenya's usable memory, as it acknowledges

[52] Gucu G. Gikoyo, *We Fought for Freedom,* (Nairobi: East African publishing house, 1979). pg. 35.
[53] Godfrey Muriuki, 'Waiyaki Wa Hinga', *Oxford African American Studies Center* <https://oxfordaasc.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.001.0001/acref-9780195301731-e-50194> [accessed 19 May 2021].
[54] Robert Buijtenhuijs, *Mau Mau: Twenty Years After: The Myth and the Survivors* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), pg. 84.

Mau Mau's 'tribal' nature while simultaneously acknowledging it was a rebellion that attempted to liberate Kenya. It must be said that it is not unusual for national movements to begin from a specific regional base. Furthermore, the Corfield Report suggests that by 1952 the Mau Mau movement had spread to groups such as the Kipsigis and the Luo, particularly in Nairobi.[55] Despite this, it is clear that the Kikuyu dominated the Mau Mau rebellion itself. We can see this through the death statistics - out of the 14,000 officially estimated to have been killed during the Emergency, using A. Clayton's *Counter-insurgency in Kenya*, almost all were Kikuyu.[56] This has also been seen through the Kikuyu's historical ownership of the rebellion. Thus, the Kikuyu slant of Mau Mau cannot be ignored.

Although Buijtenhuijs' 'tribal' aspect of Mau Mau cannot be understated, particularly in regards to oathing and use of Kikuyu tradition in mobilisation, it would be overly simplistic to characterise it as a tribal movement or a civil war, and the scope must be widened. The semantics of Mau Mau are hotly debated, as Bildad Kaggia stated 'Mau Mau will stand in history as one of the greatest liberation struggles in Africa', Anthony Clayton describes it as a 'essentially a protest [...] a Peasant Revolt against an unequal economic structure', Oginga Odinga calls it 'a time of revolutionary war in Kenya', Barnett talks of 'Mau Mau Revolution', while Buijtenhuis concludes Mau Mau should be a 'revolt'.[57] This section will consider the revolutionary aspect of Mau Mau, and suggest that although it had revolutionary potential, it cannot be considered as a revolution due to its limited demands and lack of an politically educated vanguard.

Primary source material has highlighted how the Mau Mau rebellion cannot be confined to a tribal affair; one only has to look at one of the Mau Mau patriotic songs to glimpse its revolutionary characteristics:

[55] F. D. Corfield, *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau*, (London: HSMO, 1960), pp. 202-218.
[56] John Lonsdale, 'Mau Mau through the Looking Glass', *Index on Censorship*, 15.2 (1986), pg. 20.
[57] D. A. Maughan Brown, 'Social Banditry: Hobsbawm's Model and "Mau Mau"', *African Studies*, 39.1 (1980), pg.77.

The Message of the Workers

The workers will be happy
When we seize our freedom
Because they are the pillars of our country

And Kaggia with Achieng will rejoice
Since they are the true patriots of the Kenyan masses.[58]

The fact that a song primarily used for mobilisation centers the workers as the 'pillars of our country' who will 'seize freedom' is indeed revolutionary and is similar in content to the revolutionary songs of the Spanish Civil War and *The Internationale* in the dichotomy it creates between the 'we' working masses and the oppressors. Maina Kinyatti provides scholarly backing to the revolutionary nature of Mau Mau, citing it as the apex of the anti-imperial struggle in Kenya. Responding to the tribal depictions of Mau Mau, Kinyatti argues that 'revolutionary upsurge always starts with the most politically conscious elements, groups or sections in any country [...] The early leading supporters of the Chinese Revolution were the Han nationality. Why then should our national struggle, because of its national uniqueness and development, be condemned and damned as a tribal insurrection?'.[59] This line of argument must be acknowledged, as many revolutionary movements across the globe began with a restricted regional base, so why must Mau Mau not be treated as revolutionary at least in its intent? The answer lies within the movement's key aims and demands. Mau Mau could be regarded as having revolutionary potential, yet using Dick Kauffman's appropriation of Eric Wolf's model, Mau Mau did not attempt to fundamentally re-organise society itself and lacked an politically educated leadership.[60]

[58] *Maina wa Kinyatti, Thunder from the Mountains: Mau Mau Patriotic Songs (London: Zed Press, 1980).* pg. 13.
[59] Maina-Wa-Kinyatti, 'Mau Mau: The Peak of African Political Organization and Struggle for Liberation in Colonial Kenya', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 12.3 (1983), pg. 115.
[60] Dick Kauffman, 'Mau Mau - Peasant War or Revolution?', *Kenya Historical Review*, 5 (1977), pp. 177-180.

Looking at the movement's ideology, the two tenets of land and freedom are the central demands of the Mau Mau movement. This is seen through the analysis of the primary source material. In Gikoyo's account, land is a key motivation for his involvement in Mau Mau, shown through an influential conversation he had with an elder who told him 'the land of our forefathers has been grabbed from us [...] if you wish to let it go and condemn your children to slavery, that is your affair'.[61] Similarly, Thambu's memoir reiterates the value of land to those who joined Mau Mau through his assertion 'People without land are without anything. They are nomads. Here, once you have water and property - just an acre or two - you survive.'[62] Lastly, Itote decries the Europeans, asserting that they 'encircled us and stuffed us into cages' which 'cut off half of our life', the almost omnipresent burden of British colonialism pervades his and all of the memoirs, along with the subsequent frustration and rage that motivated those to go into the forest and wage war against the colonial state.[63] It must be understood that the majority of those who joined Mau Mau did so not out of a politicised ideology but one that largely lay in opposition to the colonial state and its oppression. If we continue to use Eric Wolf's model where he defines a rebellion as a 'movement aimed at the redress of wrongs', it is clear that Mau Mau aligns more with a rebellion through the memoirs, as they all outline the pervasive subjugation and poverty they faced from colonialism and their building frustration towards this.[64] The two crucial demands of Mau Mau, land and freedom, thus limit claims of the movement being a full revolution or culmination of nationalism in the fact it did not fundamentally attempt to reorder society or install a new social order. Indeed removing the colonialists would have changed society in a revolutionary manner, yet the very fact the Mau Mau was crushed in 1956 without fully altering the social order further limits its scope as revolutionary, and suggests it was more of a revolt in nature.

[61] Gucu G. Gikoyo, *We Fought for Freedom*, pg. 37.
[62] Laura Lee P. Huttenbach, *The Boy Is Gone: Conversations with a Mau Mau General*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), pg. 44.
[63] Waruhiu Itote, '*Mau Mau' General* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), pg. 34.
[64] Dick Kauffman, 'Mau Mau - Peasant War or Revolution?', pg. 180.

Despite these limitations, the nationalist dimensions of Mau Mau are well documented. This section will assess claims that the Mau Mau rebellion was essentially a continuation of nationalist tradition in Kenya dating back to those such as Harry Thuku in the 1920s. It is a compelling notion, supported by primary source material from Oginga Odinga and Bildad Kaggia, however it is clear that Mau Mau arose more from the moderate nature and failures of Kenyan nationalism rather than as a continuation of it. Regardless, there is ample evidence of Mau Mau participants who draw upon Kenyan nationalist tradition to ideologically justify their means. For example, after taking his oath, Njama recalls a speech made by the oath administrator:

> 'He remarked that the struggle for the alienated land started as long ago as 1920 by Harry Thuku and the Kikuyu who attempted to fight for the land [...]. He said that the KCA was the society that had been struggling for the return of our alienated land. He told us that we had been initiated so as to strengthen the African struggle for the alienated land—the chief African demand. [...] We are going to shout to the Kenya Government [...] until we are heard or else their eardrums would burst. We are going to pursue our demands through reasons and if this fails we would not hesitate to revolt.[65]

Here we can see Githinji Mwarari, the administrator, drawing a clear thread between the oath-taking of Mau Mau as the progression of a struggle towards land that began in 1920 under Harry Thuku. Thuku was an early Kenyan nationalist and Pan-Africanist who toured the countryside to rally the people against the Kenya Colony of the 1920s, forming alliances with differing ethnic groups and organising meetings in which over 20,000 once attended.[66] The oath administrator and the KCA have inherited Thuku's struggle, and Mau Mau is placed as the latest stage in the lineage of Kenyan nationalism. Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham describe Mau Mau as 'an integral part of an ongoing, rationally conceived nationalist

[65] Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within*, pg. 120.
[66] Clive Gabay, 'Decolonizing Interwar Anticolonial Solidarities: The Case of Harry Thuku', *Interventions*, 20.4 (2018), pp. 549-554.

movement'.[67] More specifically, they argue that after 1951 a new revolutionary force in the KAU - propelled by oathing and led by militants - lay the foundations for the rebellion to erupt, and KAU committees had propelled the agrarian disobedience which culminated in people going to the forest to conduct a campaign of guerilla resistance.[68]

Oginga Odinga in his autobiography asserts a similar nationalist trajectory:

> 'Thuku was sent into exile and the Young Kikuyu Association was banned. But the people were not cowed [...] they met secretly in the forests in groups of three and four to discuss how to raise money to pay lawyers, to have Thuku released, to reform their banned movement. This lesson in how to organise an underground political movement was to prove vital political experience a critical twenty years later [...] After some years it re-emerged as the KCA'.[69]

Odinga draws a direct parallel between the underground activities of the KCA and the Mau Mau movement that would emerge two decades later, a statement that clearly places Mau Mau in line with nationalist tradition in Kenya. However, the meeting of small groups clandestinely in the forest twenty years before Mau Mau erupted is not sufficient enough to explain the movement, and likely had a infinitesimal effect. Odinga goes as far to suggest that it was not the declaration of the state of Emergency in 1952, but the banning of the KCA in 1940, that was the event that sparked the armed revolt.[70]

Furthermore, there were certainly figures involved in Mau Mau that understood and attempted to uphold it as a part of Kenyan nationalism - most notably, Bildad Kaggia. Kaggia outlines the radicalisation of nationalist politics in Nairobi, where there was a considerable overlap between the Mau Mau oathing

[67] Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The Myth of 'Mau Mau': Nationalism in Kenya*, pg. 270.
[68] *Ibid*, pg. 274.
[69] Oginga Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru: The Autobiography of Oginga Odinga* (London: Heinemann, 1967), pg. 28.
[70] *Ibid*, pg. 96.

process and the KAU office in Kiburi House, which he described as 'the centre of the circle of our national liberation movement'.[71] Kaggia himself states that 'Mau Mau was an organisation formed by KAU militants who had lost faith in constitutional methods of fighting for independence.'[72] The general sentiment echoes Furedi's comments that 'it was precisely the underdeveloped character of the nationalist movement that led to the emergence of Mau Mau', yet Kaggia suggests the impetus from Mau Mau came from within the militant sect of the KAU while Furedi suggests it had begun outside of it, in the rural areas.[73] Either way, Kaggia makes sure to distinguish the radical, more revolutionary stream of Kenyan nationalism from that of Kenyatta. Athough there certainly was overlap between the Mau Mau movement and Kenyan nationalist organisations, in particular the militant wing of the KAU around Nairobi that began to use oathing in the early 1950s, we cannot argue that Mau Mau was a progression of nationalism in Kenya, in fact it arose due to the ineffectiveness of nationalist politics at the time.

If Mau Mau was a rebellion, why was it mainly confined to the Kikuyu community? Furthermore, why were its demands consistently centered around land and freedom? A more nuanced picture must be created in order to further understand the movement and answer these questions. Frank Furedi, writing fifteen years after Buijtenhuijs' 'tribalist' assertions, frames Mau Mau as a culmination of a prolonged agrarian struggle that was largely unique to the Kikuyu.[74] British colonialism unevenly penetrated Kenya, with some areas facing more extensive socioeconomic repression than others. Furedi suggests that the Central Province was rapidly enveloped into the capitalist system, where the agrarian settlers came under intense pressure or were evicted, while the system also produced a number of educated and entrepreneurial Africans - both repressed and empowered, this led to the Kikuyu becoming the most 'politicised African community in Kenya'.[75]

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[71] Bildad M. Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom, 1921-1963: The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), pg. 68.
[72] Bildad M. Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom,* pg. 112.
[73] Frank Furedi, The Mau Mau War in Perspective, (London: Currey, 1989), pg. 6.
[74] Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, pg. 8.
[75] *Ibid*, pg. 5.

The economic repression under British colonialism pervades the memoirs, with Waruhiu Itote summarising the growing frustrations of the Kikuyu - 'We could not earn the money we desperately needed to drag ourselves up by our bootstraps [...] We could not make it either off our land or by trade. I felt so frustrated and furious that I could have done anything to anyone at that time.'[76] With sentiments such as 'I could have done anything to anyone', it is easy to see why these increasingly stifled Kikuyu took the oath and were willing to engage in guerilla warfare with the colonial state. This is evoked in Njama's account, where he stated 'I looked at the work Africans were doing on these farms for very little wages and how the settlers exploited our energies. My uncle had been employed by this Boer for 23 years and his wage was only 22s. a month. It was impossible for me not to hate them.'[77] These are just two examples from the memoirs, with almost every memoir from Mau Mau veterans making a reference towards economic exploitation influencing their begrudgments with the European colonialists. Tabitha Kanogo goes further than Furedi by finding a strong inverse correlation between socio-economic status and response to Mau Mau amongst squatters, suggesting that the majority of Mau Mau leadership among squatters was developed from the grassroots, or those who occupied the lowest level of the settler-created 'stratification system'.[78] Based on the analysis of memoirs and the more nuanced literature from Furedi and Kanogo, this section is attempting to make clear that the impetus for the Mau Mau revolt was far more influenced by disproportionate economic pressure the Kikuyu faced rather than any tribal or nationalist factors.

Thus, this section will assert that Mau Mau was a majority Kikuyu-led rebellion, where their symbols and traditions were evoked during mobilisation. Despite its tribal make-up, where Kikuyu rituals were recollected in the primary sources, this explanation can only partially explain Mau Mau. The rebellion

[76] Waruhiu Itote, *'Mau Mau' General*, pg. 34.
[77] Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within*, pg. 109.
[78] Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905 - 63*, pp. 130-131.

certainly had revolutionary potential, and may have spread around Kenya if not for the Declaration of Emergency, yet its demands of land and freedom were more reactive to colonial oppression rather than an attempt to create a new society. There is overlap between the rebellion and Kenya's history of nationalism through organisations such as the KCA and KAU, with sources suggesting that militant KAU members had a considerable influence over the movement, yet the section has shown it was largely limited to the Kikuyu themselves and came about due to nationalism's failures rather than its progress. Lastly, the section aligns with the pervasive sense of economic disenfranchisement in the memoirs to suggest that Mau Mau arose from the effects of colonial capitalism being most strongly felt in areas such as the White Highlands, a notion that has been supported by both Furedi and Kanogo. Therefore, Mau Mau has elements of 'tribalism' and was largely restricted to the Kikuyu, but was more a reaction to the colonial economic system than the Kikuyu trying to outcompete other ethnic groups. The sheer number of interpretations of Mau Mau is a testament to the complexity of the movement, yet its position as a Kikuyu-centered revolt brought about by economic subjugation is the most fitting. This does not mean it cannot be used in Kenya's historical memory however, as there is enough evidence of the movement's revolutionary potential and links to nationalist tradition for it to be recognised as an anti-colonial revolt that helped bring about independence, yet as will be explained in the next chapter, this was disregarded by Kenyatta for a narrative of unity in his nation-building process.

Chapter 2: Collective Memory, Kenyatta & Nation Building

Introduction

After defining Mau Mau, this chapter will establish the general Kikuyu collective memory of Mau Mau after the conflict was defeated, suggesting that the government's 'selective amnesia' was beneficial in the short term and constituted a proper Kikuyu response to suffering. Despite this, the neglect of Mau Mau collective memory has been largely detrimental to Kenya's nation-building process in the early to mid-1960s period. Kenyatta, heralded as the figure who brought Kenya to independence and in charge of the nation-building project, will be scrutinised, as well as his approach to Mau Mau in government. It will be argued that Kenyatta employed 'selective amnesia' regarding Mau Mau, and when he did acknowledge it, it was localised and used primarily for political gain. This was combined with the promotion of a unifying nationalism led by Kenyatta as the 'Father of the Nation', which in turn has led to a nation-building project with limited successes that has largely served a Kikuyu elite to the detriment of his political opponents and Mau Mau sympathisers.

2.1- Kikuyu Collective Memory

In Michael Kammen's *Mystic Chords of Memory,* a study of collective memory and national identity in the United States, he states 'Memory is more likely to be activated by contestation', while 'amnesia is more likely to be induced by a desire for reconciliation'.[79] Following a period of intense conflict, memory has the potential to resurrect feelings of hatred and trauma. The dominant Kikuyu collective memory of the Mau Mau rebellion was that of suffering and destitution, with the villagisation programme and mass

[79] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), pg. 13.

executions meted out by the British state causing untold misery, as well as violence from the Mau Mau against the 'loyalists'. Buijtenhuijs attests that when speaking to Kikuyu, he heard several times people saying 'these were hard times' but rarely 'these were heroic times', suggesting that the collective memory of the rebellion focuses on hardship and suffering as opposed to heroic anti-colonial action.[80] Thus, Buijtenhuijs asserts that the government was correct in focusing on national unity, as apparent favouritism or empowerment of Mau Mau could have restarted the cycle of violence and revenge particularly on former 'loyalist' forces.

Gretha Kershaw's fieldwork conducted during and after the Emergency is invaluable in attempting to define the collective memory of Mau Mau. Kershaw suggests that in 1956, the Kikuyu did not categorise Mau Mau as necessarily bad or Home Guards as necessarily good, but overwhelmingly that all violence against Kikuyu was bad.[81] Kershaw notes a shift in Kikuyu collective memory of Mau Mau between 1955 and 1962, following the period where Mau Mau memory was being suppressed in independent Kenya. After a 'period of hesitation' where people were waiting for signs of 'what should or should not be remembered and said', the unity of the Kikuyu became a priority, which meant that words that emphasised division were dropped in favour of togetherness.[82] Thus, Kershaw suggests that although Mau Mau was a source of pride, the Kikuyu collective memory proceeded to follow the independent government's approach to Mau Mau - suggesting that this was the correct approach in the short term. This led to contemporary commentators to praise Kenya's political stability, and the inter-ethnic violence that would characterise the Moi and Kibaki election periods in 1992 to 1997 and 2007 respectively was largely absent during Kenyatta's tenure. Thus, the shunning of Mau Mau in the name of unity can in fact be seen as in line with Kikuyu collective memory, and contributing to greater stability with less inter-ethnic violence than in later decades.

[80] Robert Buijtenhuijs, *Mau Mau: Twenty Years*, pg. 110.
[81] Gretha Kershaw, 'Mau Mau from Below: Fieldwork and Experience, 1955–57 and 1962', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 25.2 (1991), pg. 289.
[82] *Ibid*, pg. 290.

2.2- Kenyatta, 'Father of the Nation'

As independent Kenya's first President, entrusted with building the nation after eight years of Emergency and being imprisoned himself for his so-called involvement in Mau Mau, Jomo Kenyatta is the most significant figure in this paper. Using the primary material, we can trace Kenyatta's changing rhetoric towards Mau Mau, where during the rebellion he was fully aware of its existence yet tentative due to British pressure, however as he entered the position as Kenya's first independent President, he denounced the movement and attempted to distance it from the government. Yet, we see a softening in rhetoric towards Mau Mau later on in his nation-building period.

Jomo Kenyatta receives lavish praise in the primary material, illustrating his symbolic importance as the 'elder statesman' figure entrusted to lead Kenya into independence. This is most evident in Kariuki's memoir, who after talking to Kenyatta after his release proclaimed:

> 'There are a few Africans who hold other things dearer than their love of country ; God, peace, wealth, drink, or women. These few might genuinely say that they do not like Mzee [...] But the living, throbbing, bustling, laughing, crying, bursting mass of our people love him more than anything else they know.'[83]

Kariuki captures the sheer adoration that surrounded Kenyatta during ndependence, and stresses the national pride and passion that people had following decolonisation underway, as postcolonial states underwent the process of nation-building for the first time. This sense of optimism is captured well, and Kariuki makes no distinction between the love of one's country and the love of Mzee - to love Kenyatta is to love Kenya itself. In the same passage, Kariuki asserts 'he is greater than any Kenyan, he is the greatest African of them all', illustrating a near-divinization of Kenyatta.[84] This was by no means an outlying

[83] Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *'Mau Mau' Detainee,* pg. 149.
[84] *Ibid*.

opinion - the throngs of people that lined the streets for his return from detention and Independence Day speech are a testament to his symbolic power as a figure. Furthermore, Gikoyo credits Kenyatta for Kenya's independence itself, stating that 'had it not been for him, the African would have never known how to deal with the foreign invader'.[85]

This praise is typical and a result of the manipulation of Kenya's collective memory. Kenyatta became a figure that transcended politics, who single-handedly led Kenya into independence, where the narrative attributed the nation's freedom on the shoulders of a single 'father of the nation' figure. An example is the celebration of Kenyatta Day on the 20th of October, where Kenyatta's arrest overshadowed the declaration of Emergency of the same date, as he had come to symbolise the struggle and sacrifice the Kenyan nation faced prior to independence.[86] Hélène Charton outlines how the national memory centering Kenyatta as the progenitor of Kenyan independence was cemented, where from 1965 October 20th became the official celebration of Kenyatta's birthday alongside the state of Emergency, symbolically tying the independence struggle with the destiny of Kenyatta as the nationalist hero and 'Father of the Nation' in popular memory. This echoed Rousso's 'Gaullist resistancialism', where memories of popular resistance were discarded for the glorification of the national hero who personified the struggle of a nation.[87] The centering of independence around Kenyatta as the 'Father of the Nation' illustrates an attempt to steer Kenya's collective memory away from the subversive elements of Mau Mau and towards a state-sanctioned and inclusive notion that would guarantee unity and stability. To understand why Kenyatta undertook this process, his attitudes to Mau Mau will be examined.

[85] Gucu G. Gikoyo, *We Fought for Freedom*, pg. 323.
[86] Hélène Charton, 'Jomo Kenyatta and Kenyan Independence: The Twists and Turns of Memory', *Vingtieme Siecle. Revue Dhistoire*, No 118.2 (2013), pg. 50.
[87] *Ibid*, pg. 53.

2.3- Mau Mau: Kenyatta's Rhetoric & Approach

Kenyatta was consistently ambivalent towards Mau Mau, decisively silencing it to move it out of the political arena during his nation-building years, and later periodically using it for political gain. This section will trace Kenyatta's approach to Mau Mau specifically, asserting that Kenyatta initially embraced the radicalism of the KAU and was aware of the Mau Mau movement before the Emergency, yet pressure from the British authorities and his political interests meant he would openly denounce the movement and suppress its memory. Interestingly, in Oginga Odinga's memoir he says 'Kenyatta's speeches in Kisumu had moved me deeply. 'The tree of freedom is planted', he told the people. 'For it to grow it needs the water of human blood.', adding that 'in some areas his hot language frightened the people'.[88] This is perhaps the most radical position that Kenyatta undertook, where he alluded to violence being necessary in order to achieve freedom. This contrasts to the staunch anti-violence position he held later on, with his use of the Kikuyu proverb 'sickness of the soul cannot be cured by the knife but by debate' at Kiambu in 1952, suggesting that Kenyatta was unsympathetic to violent action despite moments of vigour.[89] Kaggia suggests Kenyatta was not entirely opposed to Mau Mau, as although they 'looked upon Kenyatta as the national leader', it was not under his control - however it was clear that he was aware of the Mau Mau Central Committee meetings that occurred in the KAU headquarters and 'deliberately' knew little of these meetings to preserve its anonymity.[90] In the period preceeding the Emergency, Kenyatta found himself trapped between the lack of progress that moderate reform was bringing and the risk of reprisal from the British authorities, thus his ambivalence to Mau Mau at the time was understandable. His radical sentiments expressed in speeches, his involvement in the KAU oathing process and his meetings with young Kikuyu entering the forests highlighted that Kenyatta was not always opposed to Mau Mau radicalism, and trod a fine line between violent and non-violent action in the period preceding the

[88] Oginga Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, pg. 101.
[89] Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House etc, 1968), pg. 53.
[90] Bildad M. Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom, 1921-1963*, pg. 113.

rebellion.[91] Following the Emergency and his detention, Kenyatta's 'above-party' position and the mystery of his association with Mau Mau propelled him into a nationalist symbol particularly after 1958, and by the early 1960s it became clear that Kenyatta was the man to lead Kenya into independence.[92]

Around this time, Kenyatta would make it clear to distance himself from Mau Mau. At Maralal in 1961 in a statement to the press he referred to Mau Mau as 'gangsters', and in September 1962 at Githunguri he furthered this when he said 'We shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya [...] Mau Mau was a disease which had been eradicated, and must never be remembered again'.[93] Mirroring the British lexicon used to tarnish Mau Mau at the time, Kenyatta completely disregarded Mau Mau's role in Kenya's independence struggle, and replaced it with a unifying narrative that called to forget the past. Above all, Kenyatta valued unity - the 1969 declaration of Kiswahili as an official language alongside the promotion of oral literature exemplified him building national consciousness through togetherness.[94] The brutal violence that characterised the State of Emergency is reflected in the official statistic that almost 2,000 Kenyans working for the British were killed while the number of settlers killed numbered just thirty two.[95] This violence combined with pre-existing ethnic tensions in Kenya meant that cohesion as a country was a priority during nation-building. Kenyatta in his first Kenyatta Day address in 1964 showed a desire to suppress memory:

> 'Let this be the day on which all of us commit ourselves to erase from our minds all the hatreds and the difficulties of those years which now belong to history. Let us never refer to the past. Let us instead unite,

[91] Charles Hornsby, Kenya: A History since Independence (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pg. 43.
[92] Anaïs Angelo, *Power and the Presidency in Kenya: The Jomo Kenyatta Years*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2019), pg. 66.
[93] E. S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale, *Mau Mau & Nationhood: Arms, Authority & Narration* (Ohio State University Press, 2003), pg. 255.
[94] Susan Waiyego et al. 'Nationalism and the Nation-Building Project in Kenya, 1963-2014: An Appraisal' in S*tate And Nation-Building Processes In Kenya Since Independence: Remembering The Marginalised And Forgotten Issues And Actors*, ed.Omondi Opongo, Waiyego Mwangi, and Ephraim Wachira Wahome (Bemanda: Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2019), pg. 104.
[95] Finlo Rohrer, 'Bloody Uprising of the Mau Maus', 12 October 2006 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6042524.stm> [accessed 17 June 2021].

> in all our utterances and activities, in concern for the reconstruction of our country and the vitality of Kenya's future.'[96]

Kenyatta was advocating for a sort of historical amnesia towards Mau Mau, rejecting the collective memory of the past conflict in order to establish unity and cohesion amongst the Kenyan populace. In line with Kammen's assertions, he synonymises memory with conflict and hatred, and forgetting with harmony and unity. The most surprising thing about this speech is not what Kenyatta does say, more what he does not - he fails to mention Mau Mau once. For such a cataclysmic event in Kenya's recent history that played a large role in hastening independence, omitting it entirely is telling. Yet as mentioned previously, for a period so wracked with violence and suffering, the promotion of unity was a priority. Furthermore, with a country so ethnically divided, any mention or selective praise towards Mau Mau could easily have looked like ethnic favouritism towards the Kikuyu - something which other ethnic groups were wary of Kenyatta for already. The suppression of Mau Mau memory was thus beneficial in the short term, but would ultimately hinder the nation-building process.

In 1967, we notice a softening in rhetoric towards Mau Mau, perhaps due to the fact that Kenyatta had by then consolidated his power to which Kenya was essentially a one party state with firmer controls over its institutions. In his Kenyatta Day Speech of 1967, although he continues to reject the role Mau Mau had in catalysing Kenya's independence, instead arguing that 'freedom could not have been bought [...] by a single group of people. Freedom came through AFRICAN UNITY', there is a noticeable change in attitude.[97] Most prominently, Kenyatta concedes 'without October 20, 1952, we would still be chained and handcuffed by the colonialists'.[98] Previously failing to mention Mau Mau altogether, this comment illustrated a turning point to which Kenyatta credited the events of the Emergency as inseparable from

[96] Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee!: The Prime Minister of Kenya's Speeches 1963-1964 from the Attainment of Internal Self-Government to the Threshold of the Kenya Republic* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964), pg. 2.
[97] Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering without Bitterness*, pg. 341.
[98] *Ibid*, pg. 340.

colonial liberation. This is perhaps the closest acknowledgement that Mau Mau gets in shaping independent Kenya and its nation-building process. Despite this, Kenyatta simultaneously refuted Mau Mau's role in independence, and continued the narrative that every Kenyan, including those on both sides of the conflict, had equally fought for the abolition of colonialism. The softening of rhetoric towards Mau Mau coincided with action from Kenyatta to build a localised collective memory of the rebellion. For example, the restoration of the Hola name for the camp where eleven Kenyans were massacred in 1959, the use of local funds to build Kimanthi Library in Nyeri, and the placement of a marker where Kimathi was captured, all illustrate tentative attempts to reintroduce Mau Mau back into popular memory in the mid-1960s by Kenyatta.[99] However, in 1966 the KANU government was facing a challenge by the Kenya People's Union, a populist and socialist party led by Oginga Odinga who drew support from the Luo population and the landless Kikuyu - thus, there was political utility to draw upon Mau Mau memory in Kikuyu areas.[100] Therefore, when Kenyatta softened his rhetoric and attempted to build a collective memory of Mau Mau, it was extremely localised to Kikuyu areas and had ulterior political motives.

2.4- 'Forgotten' Fighters?

Despite the clear adoration for Kenyatta himself as a leader, the neglect deployed by his government when dealing with Mau Mau memory post-Independence is felt clearly in the memoirs. Many of the memoirs evoke a deep sense of disappointment, largely due to the inability of the government to reimburse former fighters financially or with land. Waruhiu Itote complained of a 'basic apathy towards the plight of those who fought and sacrificed', citing children whose fathers died during the Emergency where little has been done to help them yet politicians 'claim in public that we all fought for Uhuru', an

[99] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs*, pg. 51.
[100] *Ibid*, pg. 52.

obvious critique of Kenyatta's unifying approach.[101] Guco Gikoyo similarly states that 'I have never wronged our African government. In fact, I can claim to be one of its architects. But right now I stay unrecognised, having neither land on which to make a living [...] or a job to do to maintain myself.' [102] Even Gikoyo, who elsewhere in his memoir essentially deifies Kenyatta like Kariuki does, is eager to note the continuing neglect he has faced from the post independence government. It is interesting how those writing memoirs position themselves as the sole progenitors of the independence struggle, particularly with Gikoyo suggesting he is one of the 'architects' of the independent government. In their collective memory of the Mau Mau struggle, the majority of the veterans see themselves as the virtuous and righteous defenders of the Kenyan nation, unwavering in their efforts. Memoirs are one of the only sites of memory that has successfully managed to challenge the state-sponsored narrative of Kenya that valorises Kenyatta while 'forgetting' the Mau Mau.

2.5- Nation-building - Government Structure

Kenya's dismissal of the landless Kikuyu did not extend to the whole indigenous group itself, however. It will be argued that Kenyatta defeated or silenced those aligned with Mau Mau in the political arena to create what was essentially a one-party state where the Kikuyu had hegemony over the government apparatus. This section asserts that there has been considerable continuity between the colonial state and the post-independence government, where Kikuyu elites were given vast amounts of power and resources. Ironically, this Kikuyu hegemony has been formed at the expense of its most politicised community who launched an anti-colonial rebellion and have been largely forgotten by this government.

[101] Waruhiu Itote, *'Mau Mau' General*, pp. 270-271.
[102] Gucu G. Gikoyo, *We Fought for Freedom*, pg. 325.

In 1960, when the 'winds of change' meant independence was becoming tangible, two main nationalist parties were formed - the KANU, composed of the largest ethnic groups in Kenya that defended a centralised state authority that overcame ethnic differences, and the KADU which gathered smaller minority communities in fear of domination by the larger ethnic groups, and who in pre-independence proposed the decentralisation of Kenya and gained the support of European settlers.[103] Essentially, it was Kenyatta's KANU that represented an inclusive nationalism against KADU's ethincally based regionalism and it would be KANU's ambitious Pan-African approach that would defeat the cautious *majimboism* of KADU in 1961 and again in 1963.[104] However, one must be careful to paint KANU as the party of Mau Mau and progressive socialism. Although Mau Mau detainees and sympathisers were involved in Kenyatta's KANU, including Kaggia and Kariuki, KANU was also the party among Gikuyu and Luo who vehemently opposed Mau Mau.[105] Furedi argues that the Kenyatta regime was 'composed of politicians hostile to Mau Mau'. [106] Thus, the post-indepence neglect of Mau Mau can be seen within a broad KANU party composed of both Mau Mau and 'loyalist' elements.

In a speech given on the eve of Kenyan indpendence, Kenyatta attacked the two party structure of democracies:

> 'We reject the blueprint of the Western model of a two-Party system of Government, because we do not subscribe to the notion of the Government and the governed being in opposition to one another, one clamouring for duties and another clamouring for rights.'[107]

[103] David M. Anderson, '"Yours in Struggle for Majimbo". Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonization in Kenya, 1955-64', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40.3 (2005), 547–64, pg. 547.
[104] *Ibid*, pg. 547.
[105] *Ibid*, pg. 549.
[106] Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, pg. 4.
[107] Jomo Kenyatta, Suffering without Bitterness, pg. 217.

Here we can see Kenyatta rejecting the two-Party system of Government as a Western institution, incompatible with the nation-building process in Independent Kenya where unity is essential. The one party, unifying approach was certainly influenced by the Mau Mau rebellion and the conflict that characterised the years of Emergency. Bethwell Ogot argues that anti-colonial movements are products of 'a temporary convergence of various sectional, economic, regional and ethnic interests in getting rid of the colonial masters', thus once independence occurred this 'temporary convergence was lost'.[108] Unlike in Europe, many in African states lacked an attachment to the emergent nation post-Independence, thus the nationalism of post-colonial states including Kenya aimed to subsume all prior identities under allegiance to the state which was considered the embodiment of the nation.[109] Furthermore, the 'elder statesman' image that Kenyatta had acquired, seen in the memoirs, allowed him to transcend politics, in which the political party was an obstacle to his building of a cohesive nation. Kenyatta and the KANU government as Ogot's 'embodiment of the nation' attempted to construct a historical narrative where every citizen in Kenya was congratulated for fighting for 'Uhuru', even those who were attempting to uphold the colonial system. During the Uhuru Day celebrations of December 1963, a triumphant affair that centered Kenyatta as the architect of Kenya's freedom, he stated:

> 'It is right that we who are assembled at this historic ceremony today [...] should remember and pay tribute to those people of all races, tribes and colours who - over the years - have made their contribution to Kenya's rich heritage: administrators, farmers, missionaries, traders and others'. [110]

In Kenyatta and KANU's presentation of Kenya's heritage, even non-Africans and those in colonial 'administrative' positions are credited during the formal achievement of Independence in Kenya. This has significant implications to Kenya's usable historical memory and its nation-building process, as Kenyatta

[108] Bethwell Ogot, 'The Kenyan Nation and the Historiography of Nationalism' in *State And Nation-Building Processes In Kenya Since Independence*), pg. 33.
[109] *Ibid*, pg. 34.
[110] Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee!: The Prime Minister of Kenya's Speeches 1963-1964*, pg. 15.

essentially erased the Mau Mau rebellion from national collective memory and instead credited those who upheld the brutality of colonialism. This had obvious political utility for a leader who depended on settler cooperation and Western investment, yet the construction of a historical narrative that centers the colonisers and collaborators while excluding those who struggled against the colonists and hastened independence is obviously problematic. Atieno Odhiambo argues that 'Mau Mau played a constructive role, albeit unwillingly, in that the military defeat of Mau Mau militants cleared the political arena and enabled the loyalists to re-emerge as nationalist politicians in a postcolonial society.'[111] Thus, Mau Mau memory indirectly placed Kenyatta as the progenitor of Kenya's nationalist struggle and allowed an inclusive nationalism to be created to which Mau Mau was largely absent.

Alongside this rhetoric during the early 1960s, Kenyatta and KANU utilised a 'carrot and stick' approach, holding out promises and patronage to defecting KADU members while freezing out opposition during the distribution of public services.[112] This forced KADU to merge into KANU by the end of 1964, where Kenya became a *de facto* one-party state and altered the constitution to become a republic.[113] Even after the consolidation of KANU power in 1967, a similar message was being used in his foreword to *Suffering Without Bitterness*, where a broad reaching nationalism was placed at the centre of his philosophy. 'The most essential need which I have constantly sought to proclaim and fulfil in Kenya has been that of national unity; nationhood and familyhood must be contrived out of our many tribes', adding that 'Nationalism rooted in loyalty to Kenya must come first'.[114] Kenyatta's nation-building project was thus rooted in an all-encompassing nationalism, channeled through a singular party and through himself as the 'Father of the Nation' who had come out of detention to lead Kenya to freedom. Despite Kenyatta's limited concessions regarding Mau Mau mentioned earlier, his ideological consistency and focus on unity

[111] E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'The Formative Years 1945- 1955' in *Decolonization & Independence in Kenya, 1940-93* ed. Bethwell A. Ogot and W. R. Ochieng, (Nairobi: Ohio University Press, 1995), pg. 42.
[112] Joel D. Barkan, 'Kenya: Lessons from a Flawed Election', *Journal of Democracy*, 4.3 (1993, pg. 86.
[113] *Ibid.*
[114] Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering without Bitterness,* pg. ix.

meant the KANU nationalism that excluded Mau Mau memory remained into the late 1960s and 1970s. One would think that Kikuyu nationalism would be inherently linked to support of Mau Mau and the dispossessed freedom fighters, yet as Ogot argues that 'Kikuyu nationalism, one of the oldest anti-colonial movements, was now being used by Jomo Kenyatta to kill Kenya nationalism, and by extension, Kenya nation.'[115] The nationalism that Kenyatta was promoting helped him build a state with similarities to the colonial era, but did this serve the nation as a whole? Although no postcolonial nation-building is perfect, encouraging a national identity, modernising infrastructure and improving the needs of the population would largely take a backseat to state-building processes in Kenya.

Despite the promotion of this inclusive nationalism, secondary literature shows that in reality this nation-building ethos was more like Susan Waiyego Mwangi's 'imperial state building project' where the major aim was not to benefit the populace but to ensure control of the state and its resources by a small clique around the executive.[116] Kenyatta centralised power around a largely Kikuyu elite where job positions and financial incentives were allocated amongst themselves, and where those who had fought to hasten Kenya's independence were left forgotten. For example, by 1974 seven out of twenty cabinet ministers were Kikuyu, with five being from Kenyatta's home district of Kiambu, while in the University of Nairobi the top ten administrative positions were all held by Kikuyu.[117] Mordechai Tamarkin illustrates that the Kenyatta government had blessings of economic growth and political stability which has made Kenya 'a showpiece in Africa', yet this came about through Kikuyu having 'a large measure of control over all instruments of coercion in Kenya', the political neutralisation of the militant Kikuyu masses, and reliance on both patron-client relationships and a provincial administration inherited from the colonial government.[118] An inclusive nationalism was being used to serve an increasingly ethnicised elite. In the

[115] Bethwell Ogot, 'The Kenyan Nation and the Historiography of Nationalism', pg. 46.
[116] Susan Waiyego et al. 'Nationalism and the Nation-Building Project in Kenya', pg. 96.
[117] Godwin R. Murunga, 'The State, Its Reform and the Question of Legitimacy in Kenya, Identity', 2004 <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/85895> [accessed 3 July 2021], pg. 187.
[118] M. Tamarkin, 'The Roots of Political Stability in Kenya', *African Affairs*, 77.308 (1978), pp. 297-316.

latter years of colonial rule and process of decolonisation, sympathetic African elites were recruited to the provincial administration, won seats in the legislature and became large farmers and traders.[119] This was to be the group that would benefit the most from independence and the subsequent nation-building project in Kenyatta's government. In the primary material, Itote voices his frustration at the emerging bureaucracy: 'Some of our leading politicians seemed less concerned with building up our 'soon-to-be-free' nation with building up their own positions. What I had fought for was almost a reality, and yet I began to see it as only the beginning of a much longer fight for a better life for all the people of Kenya.'[120] One of the few Mau Mau fighters to have been given a position in Kenyatta's government and thus would be sympathetic to the regime, Itote critiqued the self-serving elites that occupied the state and saw the discrepancy with the nationalist struggle that he fought for. This process partly stemmed from Mau Mau itself, as the creation of a loyal middle-class to break the peasant alliance of Central Province was one of the cornerstones of colonial anti-insurgency policy, and the passing of the state to a multi-racial alliance of elites while granting economic rewards to loyalists illustrates how the threat of Mau Mau was weaponised to ensure that independent Kenya served a neo-colonial bureaucratic elite.[121] With terrible irony, Mau Mau hastened independence but set into motion a process in which the freedom fighters and disenfranchised in Kenya would be forgotten. The nation-building process has thus been undertaken by a Kikuyu dominated state relying on colonial provincial administration and patron-client relationships which has benefitted the elites, yet the outcomes of nation-building will need to also be assessed.

[119] Daniel Branch and Nicholas Cheeseman, 'The Politics of Control in Kenya: Understanding the Bureaucratic-Executive State, 1952-78', *Review of African Political Economy*, 33.107 (2006), pg. 15.
[120] Waruhiu Itote, *'Mau Mau' General*, pg. 233.
[121] *Ibid*, pp.18-19.

2.6- Nation-Building: African Socialism

Kenyatta's 'African Socialism', his approach to the land question and his actions towards Mau Mau and political opponents are the three tenets of the nation-building process that will be assessed in this section. Particular focus will be placed on the initial nation-building years of the early to mid-1960s. Kenyatta termed his economic project 'African Socialism', and this was realised in policy through a 1965 paper of the same name, which in fact committed Kenya towards a mixed economy where private capital played a key role - leading scholars such as Donald Savage to state that it was a 'stroke of semantic genius' to term it socialism.[122] Thus, we can see another example of Kenyatta's ambiguity - where his nation-building rhetoric did not correlate with actual policy decisions. In a 1964 speech, Kenyatta proclaimed that he was 'determined to develop Kenya as a democratic African Socialist country', yet later on in the same speech he outlined that 'our aim is to establish a mixed economy', to where 'the role of private enterprise and that of Government are complementary to each other'.[123] The move to label these economic plans 'African Socialism' was used to quash the radical socialist elements that arose alongside the Mau Mau movement and who existed on the fringes of the KANU government, such as Oginga and Kaggia, showing that the militancy that underlay Mau Mau still held weight in the government at this time. Kenya's African Socialism rested on the pre-colonial African values of the absence of private property, a sense of community, and mutual social responsibility - based more in Julius Nyere's 'attitude of mind' as opposed to property ownership.[124] It combined elements of a free market economy with strong government control and the nationalization of key sectors, and was to be realised through the Africanization of the economy and industrial growth.[125] In terms of economic growth, the policy was an initial success. The 1960s were in fact a largely positive time for Kenya's economy. Faced with a difficult

[122] Donald C. Savage, 'Kenyatta and the Development of African Nationalism in Kenya', *International Journal*, 25.3 (1970), pg. 520.
[123] Harambee, pg. 78.
[124] Daniel Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism": Developmental Knowledge Claims and the Explanatory Limits of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 33.3 (2009), pg. 460.
[125] *Ibid*, pp. 457-458.

task, the government succeeded in growing the economy by 6% annual growth in GDP from 1964 until 1969, perhaps one of the biggest successes of the early nation-building period.[126] Thus, at least initially, Kenyatta's economic side of the nation-building process produced steady growth which must be regarded as a success, particularly after emerging from colonialism. However, the 1965 Sessional Paper's principal goals were social justice and humane living conditions for all citizens - goals which were largely unrealised in this period.[127] When considering who this African Socialism actually benefitted, we can see that Kenya's economic policy encouraged the growth of an African middle and upper class who provided a support base for the regime, exemplified by Finance Minister Kibaki stating in 1977 'Kenya will not pursue a policy of social justice at the expense of individual freedom', where equality of opportunity was equated with equality of income.[128] Post-colonial Kenya has been characterised with high levels of economic inequality, and although this has been typical of many post-colonial states, the fact that overall inequality increased from 1964 to 1971 under a programme that aimed to redress social injustice must be seen as a failure of nation-building.[129]

2.7- The Land Question

The centerpiece of Mau Mau ideology, there was a great expectation to how the Kikuyu 'Father of the Nation' would approach the land question. Kenyatta and his government's rhetoric towards the land would be outlined in a September 1964 speech entitled 'Back to the Land', in which he stated 'Our greatest asset in Kenya is our land [...] In land lies our salvation and survival. It was in this knowledge

[126] Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History since Independence*, pg. 182.
[127] Daniel Speich, 'The Kenyan Style of "African Socialism"', pg. 458.
[128] M. Tamarkin, 'The Roots of Political Stability in Kenya', pg. 312.
[129] Arne Bigsten and others, *Incomes, Inequality, and Poverty in Kenya: A Long-Term Perspective, Growth and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2016) <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198744795.001.0001/acprof-9780198744795-chapter-15> [accessed 18 July 2021].

that we fought for the freedom of our country.'[130] Kenyatta illustrates the importance that land has to Kenyans, and alluded to the Mau Mau rebellion by linking the significance of land to the freedom struggle. This reiteration of the historical importance of land to Kenyans, and given the historical process in which vast amounts of land had been taken from the Kenyan people by European settlers, one might expect an effort to remove land from settler control. Despite this, in May 1963 Kenyatta had told European farmers 'There is room for everyone, of whatever origin, who lives in this land.'[131] One only has to look at the Mau Mau mobilisation songs to grasp the sentiment towards land among the Kikuyu underclass. With stanzas such as:

> 'As for those who sell our land
> To the foreign invaders
> You will put your anguished heads together
> And plot their downfall.'[132]

The dehumanisation of the settlers to 'foreign invaders' and the foreboding tone towards those accused of 'selling' Kenya's land to the Europeans underlay much of the radical nationalism of the early 1950s that would culminate in Mau Mau, and this can be juxtaposed with Kenyatta's welcoming of European farmers in 1963. The struggle over land was the key tenet of Kikuyu anti-colonial nationalism, and thus Kenyatta's inclusion of the former 'foreign invader' into his land reform plans was seen as a betrayal of this ideal. Thus, there was considerable pressure from both disenfranchised Kenyans and European settlers in regards to land. In actuality, the government introduced the Million-Acre Scheme, which aimed to transfer 1.2 million acres of formerly European-owned farms into the hands of African smallholders,

[130] Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee!: The Prime Minister of Kenya's Speeches 1963-1964*, pg. 60.
[131] Donald C. Savage, 'Kenyatta and the Development of African Nationalism in Kenya', *International Journal*, 25.3 (1970), pg. 519.
[132] *Maina wa Kinyatti, Thunder from the Mountain,* .pg. 22.

which took in over 35,000 African families.[133] These land reallocation schemes were an initial success, and largely quelled the discontent that presented itself over the land question post-independence. Kenyatta in June 1964 himself stated that 'More than 60,000 people have been given land on settlement schemes, on land which used to belong to settlers.'[134] It did lead to the intended effect of transferring lands to African hands - it is estimated that by the early 1970s some 500,000 people had been resettled on over one million acres.[135] Thus, despite his settler-friendly rhetoric, we can see that the progress made in resettling Africans onto the land was one of the key successes of Kenyatta's nation-building period.

However, the Million Acre Scheme faced criticisms from former KANU members, most notably Bildad Kaggia who resigned over the land question in 1964.

> 'Everyone in the country is very well aware of the landhunger that has existed among Africans as a result of the robbery of their land by the British Colonial Imperialists. The logical method to solve the problems passed by this robbery would have been to nationalise all big estates owned by Europeans [...] or hand them over to cooperatives formed by landless Africans.'[136]

Kaggia uses a radical tone for a member of a KANU government that continued to align itself with Western interests, where collective memory of the Mau Mau conflict permeated his rhetoric of African land being 'robbed' by the British imperialists. Kaggia pointed to evictions that were occurring on farms in Naivasha, where over 400 families were removed in a month, which had disturbing parallels with the repatriation scheme during the Emergency years.[137] The fact that Kaggia resigned from his position while evoking Mau Mau rhetoric illustrated how its memory continued to influence the post-independent state.

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[133] Christopher Leo, 'Who Benefited from the Million-Acre Scheme? Toward a Class Analysis of Kenya's Transition to Independence', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, 15.2 (1981), pg. 201.
[134] Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee!: The Prime Minister of Kenya's Speeches 1963-1964*, pg. 73.
[135] M. Tamarkin, 'The Roots of Political Stability in Kenya', pg. 317.
[136] Oginga Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru,* pg. 264.
[137] *Ibid.*

The land resettlement scheme, despite its successes, was also subject to critique by Oginga Odinga at the time. He asserted that the entire scheme rested on borrowed money from the British government, and that the settlement scheme covered only one-eighth of the land formerly held by Europeans.[138] Furthermore, Odinga was less optimistic about its results. Using reports, he suggests that over half the land that was transferred in the Million Acre Scheme was acquired by Europeans themselves, and that 70 percent of the total land area sold to individual purchasers was also acquired by Europeans.[139] While this was occurring, Kikuyu elites were gaining large tracts of land and farms, including the Kenyatta family themselves. Thus, although Kenyatta could not grant Mau Mau full access to their former land which would have looked like ethnic favouritism in the face of his inclusive harambee approach, the Million Acre Scheme was subject to valid criticism for its reliance on European capital and its failure to enfranchise landless Africans that Mau Mau had attempted to empower. This was seen as one of the major betrayals of the nation-building movement in terms of Mau Mau, and was felt strongly in the Kikuyu collective memory of the post-independence years. Despite the neglect of Mau Mau veterans, the resettlement of thousands of Kenyans onto settler land as Kenyatta promised must be seen as one of the genuine successes of the nation-building period.

[138] *Ibid*, pg. 260.
[139] *Ibid*, pg. 261.

2.8- Symbolic Recognition & Political Repression

This section previously illustrated Kenyatta's rhetorical ambivalence towards Mau Mau, and now Kenyatta's actual actions towards the movement and its adherents will be assessed as part of his nation-building period. This section will highlight that Kenyatta's rhetoric towards Mau Mau may have looked like a blanket feeling of collective amnesia, but the reality was a more nuanced process of symbolic recognition and repression. Kenyatta's attitude on Mau Mau and its memory during nation building centers around Anaïs Angelo's summary that Kenyatta's 'ability to command authority among Kikuyu depended upon his ability to be both a Mau Mau and an anti-Mau Mau at the same time'.[140]

[140] Anaïs Angelo, 'Jomo Kenyatta and the Repression of the "last" Mau Mau Leaders, 1961-1965', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 11.3 (2017), pg. 450.

Fig 2.1 - Jomo *Kenyatta and General Mwariama, Photograph*, 1963, AP Photo. Reproduced from Quartz Africa Website < https://qz.com/africa/1802135/why-kenyas-mau-mau-gave-up-their-fight-for-jomo-kenyatta/> [accessed 8 July 2021]

Figure 2.1, depicting Kenyatta meeting with the Meru General Mwariama, certainly undermines the notion that Kenyatta advocated for complete 'historical amnesia' towards the Mau Mau rebellion. It actually shows quite the opposite - a deliberate photo opportunity that symbolically places Kenyatta adjacent to the Mau Mau. The visit was accompanied by a gathering in Ruringu Stadium in Nyeri, for Mau Mau to leave the forests and surrender their weapons.[141] Followed by the press and culminating in the above image, it was part of a tactful process to challenge the memory of Mau Mau that excluded Kenyatta. For someone who had termed Mau Mau 'gangsters' less than two years earlier and who had spent this period relegating Mau Mau collective memory outside of Kenya's historical narrative, why was Kenyatta then attempting to place himself in the memory of the conflict? It is clear that Kenyatta did not want to fully 'forget' or silence Mau Mau. He was an astute politician, and must have considered that completely silencing Mau Mau was futile due to the sheer impact it had on Kenyan society and memory. Instead, he ethnicised and localised Mau Mau, relegating it from an anti-colonial and even revolutionary movement to a period of history confined to Kikuyu areas. Winfried Speitkamp suggests that Kenyatta did not want to eradicate Mau Mau memory but 'give it regional and ethnic connotations in order to marginalise the Mau Mau warriors and ultimately defeat them.'[142] This source undermines Clough's notion that the Kenyatta government's treatment of Mau Mau started with distancing themselves from it until 1966 and then carefully reconciling and using memory afterwards - in fact, he was contesting memories of the uprising in a localised manner pre-1966.[143] His actions to center himself within the collective memory of the Mau Mau conflict while speaking against it in public seems contradictory, but it was in this contradiction that allowed Kenyatta to succeed politically.

[141] Ibid, pg. 445.
[142] Winfried Speitkamp, '"Forgive and Forget"?: The Mau Mau Uprising in Kenyan Collective Memory', in *Sites of Imperial Memory: Commemorating Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, by Dominik Geppert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pg. 217.
[143] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau*, pg. 250.

Kenyatta combined localised rememberence and co-option of Mau Mau with severe repression to both former Mau Mau and political opponents who fought for the landless. In the early to mid-1960s, Mau Mau was a persistent threat in Kenya - a 1972 British report highlighted Kenyatta's fear of remaining Mau Mau in pushing the 'Kikuyu have-nots' into the forest, where they could organise and potentially assassinate ministers and public servants.[144] Thus, the Kenyatta government's approach not only served to challenge the collective memory of Mau Mau, but also to repress former Mau Mau and those aligned with the movement. After the rift in the KANU party grew, culminating in the departure of both Oginga Odinga and Bildad Kaggia alongside former KADU members, the KPU was formed. Critical of the regime's descent into 'neo-colonialism', they again contested the historical memory of Kenya by presenting themselves as the heirs of the nationalist struggle, aligning themslves to fight for what the Mau Mau demanded.[145] Charles Hornsby described this as the 'final break between socialism and nationalism.'[146]

Kenyatta briefly dispalyed the authoritrian tendencies that would characterise his government in this period in a 1967 speech:

> 'I am telling those KPU members who are present to mark what we are saying, so they can go and tell their friends that, as from today, we call them snakes. And if any of them dare to bring their nonsense here, we shall crush them like snakes.'[147]

The hostile tone of this passage contradicts the triumphant and humble tone that pervaded Kenyatta's other speeches. The dehumanisation of the KPU to 'snakes' evoked the colonial lexicon that would have been used to describe the Mau Mau, which dehumanised the subject in order to justify violent action

[144] Ibid, pg. 452.
[145] Hélène Charton, 'Jomo Kenyatta and Kenyan Independence: The Twists and Turns of Memory', *Vingtieme Siecle. Revue Dhistoire*, No 118.2 (2013), pg. 51.
[146] Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History since Independence*, pg. 159.
[147] Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering without Bitterness,* pg. 344.

against them. This rhetoric was matched with repression, with the government harassing the KPU by refusing permission to hold meetings, deporting KPU-supporting Asian citizens, and disqualifying candidates in local elections.[148] The period ended in 1969 with the banning of the KPU, with Oginga detained without trial.[149] The government, with its network of patronage and concentration of resources, saved the worst subjugation for former Mau Mau and those who fought for the landless. With Oginga forcibly detained, Bildad Kaggia was beaten up near Thika in 1968 with his assailants not being convicted.[150] The violence did not stop there however. The decade following independence was marred by a series of assassinations, with the murders of radical Goan Pio Gama Pinto in 1965, the leading Luo KANU politician Tom Mboya in 1969, and the champion of the landless J.M Kariuki in 1975 being unexplained but all widely assumed to be linked to senior figures in the government.[151] Radical opposition politicians, who stood for similar ideas that Mau Mau fought for, posed a political threat to the KANU government and so were met with coercion, harassment, detention or even violence. This violence can be seen as a continuity from the colonial apparatus, as 'for a new cohort of Kenyan administrators, the assertion that only they could authorize legitimate violence was just as important as it had been to their British predecessors.'[152] The killing of civilians by government forces for protesting Kenyatta's visit following Mboya's 1969 murder and the subsequent banning of the KPU illustrates a regime that was not prepared to build a nation on an inclusive philosophy of harambee, more an authoritarian state that crushed any threats to its political dominion at the time.

This violence was accompanied again by attempts to contest the memory of Kenya's national struggle. In 1969 an oathing campaign was utilised by the KANU government to drum up support, alongside the use

[148] Donald C. Savage, 'Kenyatta and the Development of African Nationalism in Kenya', pg. 527.
[149] Omondi Opongo et al., *State And Nation-Building Processes In Kenya Since Independence: Remembering The Marginalised And Forgotten Issues And Actors* (Bamenda Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2019), pg. 7.
[150] Donald C. Savage, 'Kenyatta and the Development of African Nationalism in Kenya',pg. 527.
[151] Justin Willis, '"Peace and Order Are in the Interest of Every Citizen": Elections, Violence and State Legitimacy in Kenya, 1957-74', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 48.1 (2015), pg. 101.
[152] *Ibid.*

of the Kikuyu ethnocentric slogan 'the flag of Kenya shall not leave the House of Mumbi'.[153] The revival of Kikuyu traditional practices and rituals, with strong associations to the Mau Mau movement, illustrated how the government was drawing upon the historical Kenyan struggle and subverting it for their means. The use of the oath in 1969 is a testament to the power that Mau Mau continued to have in Kenya's collective memory, and how Kenyatta's KANU placed themselves as the heirs of this nationalist lineage. This was echoed in the primary material, as in the same 1967 speech where he denounced the KPU Kenyatta asked 'Who are the KPU leaders? [...] Ask them where (and how) they were fighting for Uhuru [...] Apart from Ochieng, who was with us at Lokitaung, and maybe Kaggia [...] what did they do? Nothing!'.[154] Kenyatta draws upon his own detention at Lokitaung in order to validate his role in the fight against colonialism. Despite his self-proclaimed non-involvement with the Mau Mau rebellion, Kenyatta utilises his imprisonment to contest the historical memory that KPU members are the true descendants of the nationalist struggle. Thus, repression was met with a contestation of memory. Therefore we can see that in the Kenyatta nation-building period, he did not simply advocate for amnesia towards the Mau Mau rebellion. He actively contested the collective memory of the conflict to which he placed emphasis on his role in the fight for independence, while relegating the Mau Mau memory to a more local and ethnic scale. The incorporation of Kikuyu rituals and symbolic amnesty tours can be seen as propaganda. Meanwhile, Mau Mau and those who supported the landless challenged Kenyatta's supremacy in the arena of national memory and similarly challenged his political standing, and thus he combined contested memories with often violent repression. This juxtaposition between Mau Mau repression and encouraging a government-friendly collective memory was ideologically inconsistent but politically effective, and as Angelo states, 'ambiguity was crucial for Kenyatta to satisfy diverging expectations on the eve of independence'.[155]

[153] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs,* pg. 55.
[154] Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering without Bitterness,* pg. 343.
[155] Anaïs Angelo, 'Jomo Kenyatta and the Repression of the "last" Mau Mau Leaders', pg. 453.

Chapter 3 - Mau Mau & Memory in a Pan-African Context

Introduction

After defining Mau Mau and illustrating how the conflict's collective memory unwillingly but negatively impacted Kenya's nation-building process, this section will attempt to place the Mau Mau rebellion in a wider cross-African context. Mau Mau gained an inspirational Pan-African status in the collective memory outside of Kenya itself, and was praised by other African leaders. Assessing this praise illustrates an alternate narrative of Mau Mau as a heroic liberation struggle, and shows how other nations incorporated Mau Mau into Kenya's historical narrative while Kenya failed to do so itself. This chapter will also use the case study of Algeria to illustrate the positives and negatives of a nation that was built on the memory of its national struggle, in contrast to Kenya where the nation was built by suppressing this struggle.

3.1- Postcolonial Leaders, Contested Memories?

Nelson Mandela embarrassed the Moi regime in 1990 when on a visit to Kenya he requested to visit Dedan Kimathi's grave, to visit Kimathi's widow Mukami Kimathi, and to meet General China.[156] His visit illustrated an attempt to honour the Mau Mau rebellion as a just struggle against colonialism, which juxtaposed a government that had attempted to discard the collective memory of figures such as Kimathi,

[156] 'Nelson Mandela Was Inspired by the Gallant Struggle Put up by the Mau Mau in Kenya to Defeat Colonial Rule', *New African Magazine*, 2013 <https://newafricanmagazine.com/4120/> [accessed 28 February 2021].

symbolised by his grave location remaining unknown even decades after the conflict's end. During his visit, Mandela said in a rally held at the Moi International Sports Complex in Nairobi:

> 'I have come to pay homage to freedom fighters who waged a liberation war against the British colonialists [...] In my 27 years of imprisonment, I always saw the images of fighters such as Kimathi, China and others as candles in my long and hard war against injustice. It is an honour for any freedom fighter to pay respect to such heroes.'[157]

This was a provocative political statement, publicly embarrassing a regime that would not honour the Mau Mau rebellion by using rhetoric that honoured the Mau Mau fighters as the key actors in the struggle for Kenyan independence. The description of the key figures of Kimathi and China as 'freedom fighters' and 'candles' illustrates how the collective memory of the rebellion is different outside of Kenya itself, and lies in direct contrast to how the Kenyan governments of Kenyatta and Moi attempted to localise, silence or use this memory of the rebellion for political gain. Furthermore, Mandela's memory of Mau Mau remained largely unchanged from the 1960s until the 1990s, as Ronnie Kasrils recalled a 1962 meeting with Mandela where he referred to the importance of African resistance figures such as Kimathi.[158] This came a year after Kenyatta had referred to Mau Mau as 'gangsters' in Maralal 1961, illustrating the Kenyan government's inability to control Mau Mau memory and the narrative that they were the apex of anti-colonial agitation in Kenya. There always existed a parallel memory of Mau Mau that contradicted the government's line, and ironically the movement was revered more in the collective memory outside of Kenya than within it. Mandela drew a parallel to South Africa's struggle against apartheid, building a sort of Pan-African collective memory of anti-colonial struggle. This rhetoric was not just confined to South Africa, as the Ugandan Prime Minister Milton Obote in a 1963 speech at

[157] *Ibid.*
[158] Gideon Mendel, 'My Moment with the Legend Nelson Mandela', *The Nelson Mandela Foundation* <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/my-moment-with-the-legend-nelson-mandela/BALSftUxZdByKA> [accessed 13 July 2021].

Kenya's independence celebrations said 'Today is the day when Kenya joins Algeria at the high rank of being the hero of colonial Africa'.[159] Like Mandela, Obote contradicts the Kenyan state through his reverence of Mau Mau, suggesting that the rebellion should be recognised across Africa as an example of successful colonial liberation. His comparison to Algeria, where independence came about as a direct result of the National Liberation Front's (FLN) efforts, shows that Obote blatantly affirmed Mau Mau's role in bringing Kenyan independence, which was a narrative that Kenyatta was trying to suppress. The fact that Obote undermined Kenyatta's historical narrative that credited the whole of Kenya for independence and made no mention of Mau Mau during the independence celebrations shows how contested the collective memory was in this period. This took place within a context of a breakdown in a proposed federation of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in 1963 so there were existing political tensions and reservations between the two nations, which could potentially explain why Obote chose to honour the Mau Mau struggle alongside Algeria much to Kenya's embarrassment.[160] Although he was deposed by a coup earlier in the same year, the first Prime Minister and President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah stated in 1966 that the 'Mau Mau uprising in Kenya brought even closer Ghana's attention to the struggle of our brothers in Kenya', illustrating another instance where the collective memory of the rebellion was being honoured more outside of Kenya than within it.[161] This quotation was taken from an introduction for Oginga Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru*, and the fact that Nkrumah wrote for a political rival of Kenyatta and said that 'the people of Africa are ahead of their governments' while complaining of 'neocolonialism', affirms a trend where leaders of other African states subscribed to the memory of Mau Mau as a true expression of the Kenyan people's nationalism - memory which the Kenyan state was trying to suppress. Thus we can see how two differing narratives of memory existed and were contested; with Mandela, Obote and Nkrumah all inspired by the Mau Mau rebellion as a heroic national struggle that could be used

[159] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs*, pg. 46
[160] Godfrey P. Okoth, 'Godfrey P. Okoth, 'Intermittent Tensions in Uganda – Relations: Historical Perspectives', *Transafrican Journal of History*, 21 (1992), pg. 74.
[161] Oginga Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, pg. xiv.

to promote an anti-colonial and Pan-African narrative, while the Kenyan state who saw it as a divisive and localised conflict that was sidelined for a narrative of unity.

3.2- Nation Building on an Anti-Colonial Struggle: The Case Study of Algeria

This section will use the case study of the Algerian War of Independence, which bore many similarities with the Mau Mau rebellion. Both were long periods of protracted anti-colonial struggle that utilised guerilla warfare against colonial states who responded with mass killings, torture and detention without trial.[162] Furthermore, a key characteristic of both conflicts was the 'strategic resettlement' of civilian populations, where from 1952 until 1962 1.2 million Kenyans and up to 2.3 million Algerians were forced into strategic villages for multiple years.[163] Thus, for the majority of the involved population, most of the brutality and suffering in the collecitve memory of the conflicts took place within this sphere. Despite these similarities, both Kenya and Algeria have utilised the memory of their conflicts in very different ways, with the Algerian state exercising a monopoly of control over the conflict's memory. In Algeria, the liberation struggle of the National Liberation Front (FLN) was placed at the heart of Algeria's national identity, and the ethos behind the struggle formed the key political values that the state wanted to promote. The post-independent state used the collective memory of its anti-colonial conflict as a crucial political resource that had massively influenced the structure and values of the emergent Algerian nation post-1962.[164] So much so, that the FLN victory in the War of Independence was enshrined in the 1963 Constitution of Algeria:

> 'The Algerian people have waged an unceasing armed, moral and political struggle against the invader and

[162] Moritz Feichtinger, 'A Great Reformatory: Social Planning and Strategic Resettlement in Late Colonial Kenya and Algeria, 1952–63', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52.1 (2017), pg. 46.
[163] *Ibid.*
[164] Raphaëlle Branche, 'The Martyr's Torch: Memory and Power in Algeria', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 16.3 (2011), pg. 432.

> all his forms of oppression for more than a century following the aggression of 1830 against the Algerian State and the occupation of the country by French colonial forces.
>
> On November 1,1954, the National Liberation Front called for the mobilization of all the energies of the nation, since the battle for the independence had reached its final phase of realization.'[165]

The Constitution created a narrative in which centuries of French colonial occupation were justifiably met by the FLN's mobilisation in late 1954 when they began the armed struggle. The FLN are solely credited for bringing about independence, where the victors of history are able to center themselves as the progenitors of national liberation. The fact that the FLN victory is mentioned at the beginning of the constitution shows how significant memory is to post-independence Algeria. Much like figures such as Kaggia and Kinyatti desire to present the Mau Mau rebellion as, the Algerian War of Independence and the FLN are seen as the culmination of anti-colonial sentiment and nationalism. Like in Kenya, unity and togetherness were evoked. But instead of unity being promoted around a rejection of the past and the struggle's collective memory like Kenyatta advocated for, the population was instead being asked to rally around the state sanctioned memory of the Independence War. In Kenya, the state rejection of collective memory was seen as pivotal to the nation-building process, while in Algeria, the new nation had to be built on the collective memory of the struggle and its values. The Algerian state has reinforced this through the 1964 Algiers Charter where it says that 'Objective knowledge of the history of Algeria is a fundamental obligation for all militants', reinforcing the notion that adherence to state memory of the conflict is essential - as Raphaëlle Branche states, 'memory and history were considered synonymous, and under state control.'[166] The FLN flag becoming the national standard, and Kassaman, a battle song that praises armed combat as necessary to win independence, becoming the national anthem, further illustrate the centering of the independence struggle in nation-building.[167] Thus, the case study of Algeria is useful

[165] 'Constitution of Algeria (1963)', *Marxist History Archive*, 2001 <https://www.marxists.org/history/algeria/1963/09/constitution.htm> [accessed 12 July 2021].
[166] Raphaëlle Branche, 'The Martyr's Torch', pg. 433.
[167] *Ibid*, pg. 432.

as it shows how a nation with a contextually similar national struggle has embraced the collective memory as opposed to disregarding it. The memory and narrative of the conflict has been tightly controlled and dictated by the state in a top-down process, while in Kenya it has been up to Mau Mau veterans and associations to promote a collective memory of its conflict in the face of state neglect.

This section will assert that the commemoration of anti-colonial conflict, as is the case in Algeria, was largely a more effective approach than attempting to ignore or localise it like in Kenya. It gives the nation a stronger sense of national identity, largely coalescing around anti-colonial struggle, and allows victims and veterans of the conflict to mourn and commemorates their efforts towards the formation of the nation. The Algerian state also compensated and rehabilitated veterans, widows and orphans of the conflict - something that Kenya made no serious efforts to do.[168] Regardless of how one approaches the collective memory of a conflict, the persistent neglect of Mau Mau veterans who fought the colonial powers is one of the more punitive consequences of the Kenyan government's approach.

Despite this, one must be careful when comparing Algeria to Kenya, as their use of collective memory was also influenced by contextual factors. Foremostly, the Mau Mau rebellion was brought under control by the British authorities in late 1954, which left a nine year period under British control before independence was formally achieved in 1963.[169] Unlike Algeria, where Independence occurred straight after the war's end in 1962, the nine years of British rule before Independence created a detachment between Mau Mau and the liberation of Kenya within the collective memory. Thus, the direct link between the conflict and the formation of the new nation state was more apparent in Algeria which explains why the war was so commemorated in Algeria's historical memory. In Algeria, the Guardian reported on the 4th of July 1962 that 'Demonstrations of almost hysterical enthusiasm greeted M. Ben Khedda, the Prime Minister of the new Algerian Republic, on his return to Algiers today, the first day of Algerian independence', and that 'The countryside seemed to be covered with Algerian flags and

[168] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs,* pg. 62.
[169] Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, pg.3.

everyone from small children to elderly veiled women and bent men were waving frenziedly.'[170] Here we can sense a ubiquitous sense of sheer joy, a moment where years of struggle have made way for the formation of a new nation. The scale of the celebration can also be understood, where even in the countryside peripheries, the FLN flag was almost inescapable. This emotional climax that swept through Algeria was not as present in Kenya, suggesting that the collective memory of independence was less a result of the anti-colonial struggle and was reflected in a more grudging process that involved the passing over of power by the British administration. Thus, there was less reason for Kenyatta to center Mau Mau as the liberation movement that climactically brought independence. The lack of political dimension to Mau Mau, which did not have a revolutionary party organisation or an intellectual leadership like the FLN did, combined with the arrest of nationalist leaders in 1952 leading to a focus on armed conflict, further explains why it was difficult for the Kenyan state to place the rebellion within the usable historical memory like they did in Algeria.[171]

Lastly, the enfranchisement of former FLN fighters and the commemoration of the anti-colonial struggle which was enshrined in the national narrative through the Consitution and various other monuments of memory, did not always have a beneficial effect on the emerging Algerian nation. One only has to look at the brutal and symbolic violence enacted against the *harkis* after independence to illustrate the pitfalls of promoting a national narrative where there are clearly defined anti-colonial victors against the 'collaborators', who are thus presented as the enemies of the national liberation movement. It is estimated that reprisal killings of pro-French Algerians after independence caused between 10,000 and 150,000 deaths, and the violence was especially brutal in nature.[172] Reprisal killings amongst the populace can be seen as a distinct failure of the nation-building project. The violence against the *harkis* was symbolic, tied

[170] Clare Hollingworth, 'From the Archive, 4 July 1962: Algiers in Frenzy of Joy Following Independence', *The Guardian*, 2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2012/jul/04/archive-1962-algiers-algeria-independence> [accessed 15 July 2021].
[171] Fabian Klose, Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence, Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pg. 193.
[172] Martin Evans, 'Reprisal Violence and the Harkis in French Algeria, 1962', *International History Review*, 39.1 (2017), pg. 91.

to notions of strengthening and purifying the emergent nation-state by cleansing it of traitors. This is seen through the violence itself taking place in the public sphere and involving acts of humiliation through mutilation and sexual violence.[173] It was partly this fear of reprisal violence towards the Kenyan Home Guards or 'loyalists' that led to Kenyatta suppressing the Mau Mau narrative and replacing it with one of unity. The general lack of violence following Kenyan independence can be seen as a success, and further suggests that in the short term Kenyatta's strategy was a correct one. Although as historians, we seek to uncover the truth about events and therefore want to promote their collective memory, there is obvious political utility in suppressing or modifying the past. The violence against the *harkis* is just an example of a failure in Algeria's nation-building, which is too extensive to be analysed in this thesis, but the Algerian state's 'desperate attempt' to return to the nation's origins, through establishing memorial sites and through laws defining the state as protectors of martyrs as they slipped into civil war in the early 1990s, is another testament to the link between memory and state legitimacy.[174] Therefore, a point that must be made is that there is no completely successful nation-building project following colonialism in regards to collective memory. By looking at the two divergent examples of Algeria and Kenya, with the former building the new nation upon the memory of their anti-colonial struggle and the latter neglecting and localising the memory of a similar struggle, both have had benefits and shortcomings because of this. Regardless of how it is approached, the collective memory of anti-colonial struggles is a potent device in shaping the nation, and how Kenya and Algeria have interacted with this has had considerable implications for the nation's unity and thus the nation-building process.

[173] *Ibid*, pg. 101.
[174] Raphaëlle Branche, 'The Martyr's Torch', pp. 432-434.

Conclusion

In October 2020, *Kenyanews.go* produced a story of a Mau Mau widow named Mama Miriam Kisio, who at almost 90 years old continues to languish in poverty despite the involvement of the Mau Mau Veteran Association on her behalf.[175] She said 'I would like the government to consider the plight of all those Mau Mau war veterans who suffered and dedicated their lives for our beloved country.'[176] This comes over half a century after Kariuki dedicated his memoir as a memorial to Mau Mau fighters, stating that 'torture and their pain were the hard travail of a nation.'[177] The fact that two Mau Mau members have attempted to reiterate the same sentiment fifty seven years apart is a testament to their forgotten position in Kenyan society. With many Mau Mau veterans succumbing to old age as this thesis is written, their history risks being lost forever. The legacy of the historical narrative created under Kenyatta continues to exclude those who risked their lives to contribute to the nation's independence.

The Mau Mau rebellion is an inherently complex struggle - its Kikuyu make-up within a multi-ethnic Kenyan society, its lack of a distinct political ideology, and the gap between its military defeat and the granting of independence, has posed difficulty in commemorating it within the national historical memory as freedom struggles like the Algerian War of Independence have. Yet, even if the Mau Mau cannot fully be credited as the progenitors of Kenyan independence, their history must be heard and their values of social justice considered. Ironically, much of the historiography on Mau Mau has only served to obfuscate the voices and demands of those who struggled and sacrificed. In order to address this historiographic imbalance, through its use of memoirs and autobiography as sites of collective memory, this thesis has attempted to undermine historical narratives and illustrate the importance of listening to those dispossessed under colonial and neo-colonial hegemony.

[175] Ann Salaton, 'A Maasai Freedom Heroine Who Lives in Abject Poverty – Kenya News Agency', 2020 <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/a-maasai-freedom-heroine-who-lives-in-abject-poverty/> [accessed 5 July 2021].
[176] *Ibid.*
[177] Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *'Mau Mau' Detainee',* pg. 182.

It has been a central argument to this thesis that the collective memory of the rebellion, rife with violence and suffering, unfortunately enabled the colonial authorities and more moderate politicians to replace their militant demands for land and freedom with Kenyatta's inclusive *harambee* nationalism, which in turn meant these demands were not realised. Instead, the Kenyan nation-building period had a remarkable degree of structural continuity with the former colonial state during Kenyatta's premiership, where power and resources were increasingly allocated among a Kikuyu elite and those who dissented were silenced or pushed to the margins of society. However, one must ask if there exists a perfect nation-building project, particularly after centuries of colonial domination, and the economic growth and stability that Kenya initially saw under Kenyatta, as well as the resettlement of thousands of landless Kenyans, must be credited. Furthermore, one can argue that Kenyatta's application of a historical amnesia towards Mau Mau was the best short-term solution in order to avoid further conflict, and constituted a balanced Kikuyu response to a traumatic event. Yet, the suppression of Mau Mau and its memory in post-colonial Kenya has been overwhelmingly negative for nation-building during Kenyatta's tenure, which has been characterised by economic inequality, political repression under a one-party state, and the symbolic 'forgetting' of the group that struggled for colonial liberation.

Placing the Mau Mau rebellion within a Pan-African context, where we see it being praised by anti-colonial leaders and figures such as Nelson Mandela and Kwame Nkrumah, illustrates an alternate narrative of Mau Mau as a just liberation struggle that is inspirational to anti-colonial movements around the continent. From this perspective, we can see how the Kenyan historical memory that sidelined Mau Mau was not a dominant narrative, and was not only being contested by Mau Mau veterans but by prominent African leaders as well. Comparing Mau Mau with Algeria, whose nation-building project was centered around the triumphant struggle of the FLN, illustrates that while those who fought were not 'forgotten' and a greater national consciousness can be developed, it can also lead to violence against

those on the other side of the struggle, seen through the brutality towards the *harkis.* Thus, centering the anti-colonial struggle in nation-building post-independence is not without risks.

Despite the historically disputed nature of Mau Mau, and whether independent Kenyan governments approve or not, the collective memory of the rebellion occupies a crucial position within the national narrative. Suzanne Vromen, echoing Halbwachs, argues that 'society interprets the past only through the present [...] Thus, collective memories are also chains of judgments'.[178] If 'society only interprets the past through the present', then the Kikuyu collective memory of the Mau Mau rebellion will continue to be one of suffering and neglect as the Kenyan government has suppressed its role in challenging colonialism and persistently left them disenfranchised. Rousso's 'unfinished mourning', where collective resolution of the conflict's memories is prevented, becomes apparent.[179] This thesis is not advocating for Mau Mau to be centered as the apex of the Kenyan national struggle, as those such as Kinyatti insist, rather that both state support and recognition for a group who played a decisive role in hastening Kenya's independence should certainly be undertaken. The legacy of election violence in 1992 and in 2007, where clashes mainly between the Kikuyu and Luo tribes left over a thousand dead and hundreds of thousands displaced, can be partly seen through how the 'harambee' strategy of the post-independence government and failure to address historical amnesia has done little to quell the tension and violence that characterised the Emergency years.[180] As Marshall Clough argues, 'it is futile for a regime to impose historical amnesia, it is important to allow people to mourn', and most importantly, 'it is constructive to use the past to model popular political values for the present'.[181]

[178] Joseph R. Llobera, 'Halbwachs, Nora and "History" versus "Collective Memory": A Research Note', *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes*, 1 (1995), pg. 38.
[179] Lynn A. Higgins, 'Unfinished Business: Reflections on the Occupation and May '68', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 33.1 (1993), pg. 109.
[180] James Brownsell, 'What Went Wrong in 2007?' <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2013/3/3/kenya-what-went-wrong-in-2007> [accessed 6 July 2021].
[181] Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs,* pg. 257.

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