

The Land Question and the *Mau Mau* Revolt in Kenya, 1952- 1956

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Abstract

The British colonial enterprise in Africa which took effective root from the beginning of the twentieth century was attended by spatial responses some of which assumed militant and revolutionary proportions by Africans. The Mau Mau revolt was one of such militant responses. Premised on indigenous land appropriation by the British, indigenous Kenyans, with the Kikuyu at the vanguard, momentarily engaged the British colonial authorities in fierce guerrilla battles between 1952 and 1956. Dizzied by ferocious and persistent attacks on their farms and settlements, the British colonial authorities declared a “State of Emergency” in Kenya through the instrumentality of Sir Philip Euen Mitchell, the colonial Governor, with the express support of the colonial office in London. To be sure, the “Emergency” meant the suppression of the insurrection with unprecedented impunity. It also harvested many human lives in its wake with the indigenous Kenyans in preponderance. Gleaning information from secondary source materials, this paper notes their nuances both in content and presentation. The Mau Mau revolt, by and large, expressed a vitriolic repudiation of foreigners’ encroachment, domination and expropriation of ancestral lands of the Kikuyu and indeed, indigenous Kenyans. The aftermath of the revolt reverberated in all spheres of life in Kenya and rendered life conditions and relations between the indigenous people and the British colonials checkered until Kenya’s independence from Britain in 1956.

Keywords: Emergency, Mau Mau, Revolt.

Introduction

The primacy of land to human existence and sustainability is not in doubt by every imagination. To an African and indeed, the Kikuyu in Kenya in specific reckoning, land is synonymous with life. Its alienation from indigenous owners and by extension, its appropriation by “non-indigenes” is unimaginable. The colonial enterprise in Kenya which took effective root from the beginning of the twentieth century had far-reaching impact on the land question. Expectedly, it was attended by spatial responses some of which assumed militant and revolutionary proportions. The *Mau Mau* Revolt between 1952 and 1956 was one of such responses. It was indeed a full-scale war in terms of organization and prosecution against British imperial design in Africa. To be sure, the Revolt expressed a total repudiation of foreign conquest, domination and expropriation of the land of the Kikuyu people and their ancestors,

deities and their gods. The tenacity with which the Kenyans persecuted the war accordingly gave it a world-wide renown in their vitriolic effort to checkmate the suzerainty of the white settlers in Kenya. In point of fact, the *Mau Mau* Revolt attempted to restore and conserve the fortunes of ancestral land ownership of the Kikuyu people especially, in spite of international censure at the instance of the white British settlers.

In this paper, three key issues are of vital importance. These are “Land”, “*Mau Mau*” and “Revolt”. In concert with the academic tradition, they need to be conceptualized for purposes of clarity and comprehension.

Conceptualizations

Land

Land is arguably regarded as nature’s free gift to mankind. It is a protrusion of the continental crust of the earth above sea level.¹ As maintained by Ekong Ekong

the ‘term’ land is often used in the physical or geographical sense to refer to a wide variety of natural resources found in a profile from the atmosphere to some meters beneath the soil surface. It embraces the soil up to the root depth, vegetation, fauna, water and surface minerals.²

Land determines and facilitates human existence on account of its ramifying importance. It is reckoned as a crucial factor of production. Arguably, other factors of production predicate on land and virtually, human activities in the areas of production, manufacturing, technological escapades, politics, social relations are all acted out on land.³ Land is therefore a ramifying resource for human existence and sustainability across the globe. To an African, especially the Kikuyu, land was and still is very crucial as it provides the liaison between the past, the present and future generations.

Etymology of *Mau Mau*

The etymology of the name “*Mau Mau*” has been variously canvassed. Whereas it is presented in some monographs as a mistransliteration of “*Uma Uma*” meaning “Get out, Get out”,⁴ it is also held by others as an acronym for “*Mzungu Aende Ulaya- Mwafrika Apate Uhuru*” in Swahili which means “Let the white man go back abroad so that the African can get

¹ Alan Strahler, *Introducing Physical Geography* 6th Edition (Boston: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2013), p. 607.

² Ekong E. Ekong, *Rural Sociology*, Third Edition, (Uyo: Dove Educational Publishers, 2010), p. 91.

³ Norman Pounds, *Success in Economic Geography*, (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1981), p. 83.

⁴ <http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/mau-mau>. Accessed on 20/11/2023

his independence.”⁵ To *Mau Mau* members, the name was a derogatory creation of the British as contained in their creed during oath taking thus:

I speak the truth and I vow before God
And before this Movement
The Movement of Unity
The Unity which is put to test
The Unity that is mocked with the name “*Mau Mau*”
That I shall go forward to fight for the land
The lands of Kirinyaga that we cultivated
The lands which were taken by the Europeans.

“Oath of Unity” *Ndemwa Ithatu*
And if I fail to do this
May this oath kill me
May this seven kill me
May this meat kill me

I speak the truth that I shall be working together
With the forces of the movement of unity
And I shall help it with any contribution for which I am asked,
I am going to pay sixty-two shillings and fifty cents and a
Raw for this movement
If I do not have them now I shall pay in the future
And if I fail to do this
May this oath kill me.⁶

As shown in the creed, it seems plausible that the name “*Mau Mau*” found entry into the political lexicon of Kenya during and after the eruption of the revolt proper. To the natives, it was simply *Muingi*, (The Movement), *Muigwithania* (The understanding) or *Muma Uiguano* (The Oath Unity).⁷ In official documents, the revolt is presented as an “Emergency.”⁸

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Josiah Nwangi Karuiki “The Mau Mau Oath” in Elie Kedourie (ed.) *Nationalism in Asia Africa* (London: George Weidendeld and Nicholson Ltd., 1971), pp. 463- 464.

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mau-mau>. Accessed September 21, 2023.

⁸ A. T. Grove, *Africa South of the Sahara* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 188.

Background to *Mau Mau* Revolt

The littoral of East Africa in the period very early on, had played host to a vast number of different nationals on account of maritime trade and political expansion. By the tenth century, Persian and Arab traders were well established in East Africa. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Europeans had begun to penetrate the hinterland. In 1887, the Imperial British East African Company- a private concern took possession of a ten-mile wide strip of land along the coast from the Omani monarch, Seyyid Said.⁹ The company was a bonafide property of William Mackinnon.¹⁰

Presaged by German exploits in nearby Tanganyika, British interest in the area that came to acquire the name Kenya, was aroused. Before the end of 1895, the East African Company's interest was taken over by the British government and territories as far as Lake Naivasha were proclaimed as the East African Protectorate. Before 1900, the British had consciously and concertedly imposed her suzerainty over Kenya and her peoples on the highland with harsh conditions.¹¹ In 1920, the area was declared a Crown Colony. and with this declaration, character and shape was given to effective British colonial enterprise in Kenya culminating in land appropriation, forced labour, taxation, racial discrimination and political domination of the Kamba, Maasai and the Kikuyu especially. These "new" condition of affairs collectively constituted the *raison d'être* for the outbreak of the revolt. It is therefore germane to ventilate on these accordingly.

Land Appropriation

To agrarian people such as the Kikuyu, land is not only a factor of production but also a means of subsistence and *ipso facto*, existence. In a classic study of communal societies, Akin Mabogunje in his book, *The Development Process: A Spatial Perspective* notes that communal land holding considerably borders on both ethical and philosophical orientations. Ethically, tenural practices ensure that nobody is denied this means of subsistence through the principles of "partible inheritance". Philosophically, land is held to belong to ancestors, a current generation and posterity.¹² This typology also applies *mutatis mutandis* to Kenya's land holding profile.

The active incursion of European white settlers in Kenya occasioned a corresponding expropriation of land from the Kikuyu especially, who occupied two-thirds of the rich high

⁹ B. A. Ogot, "Kenya under British Rule" in B. A. Ogot (ed.) *A Survey of East African History* (Nairobi: Longman Kenya Ltd., 1973), p. 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹² Akin L. Mabogunje, *The Development process: A Spatial Perspective* (London: Hutcherson & Co. (Publishers Ltd., 1980), pp. 73-74.

rising plateau and the well-watered topography on either side of the rift valley.¹³ From 1903, through hook and crook, together with forceful acquisition, white settlers who were mainly Britons and white South Africans acquired land from native chiefs who “sold” it in violation of native laws and customs without realizing the nature of the transactions.¹⁴

In 1915, Crown Lands Ordinance was enacted and it declared native reserves to be Crown Lands and the Kenya Colony Order in Council of 1921 emphasized that land reserved for use by an ethnic group was also vested in the Crown.¹⁵ This provision automatically transformed the Kikuyu into squatters on their ancestral land. In reaction, the Kikuyu Central Association sent a petition to the East African Commission in 1924 stating thus:

We wish to state most emphatically that no chief, headman or person has any right or has ever had any right, according to our customs to arrange or agree to arrange on his own authority to the transference of any land; that is a matter for owning families or individuals concerned.¹⁶

Similarly, no *Gethaka* (individual holding) holder under Kikuyu law had the right to dispose of any land to a non-Kikuyu.¹⁷ The land, they reckoned, harboured their gods and the gods gave them the land which offered accommodation and also ensured its fertility.¹⁸

By 1933, a block of 12,000 square miles known as “White Highlands” was reserved for 12,000 white farmers. It included a large part of the best land and higher well-watered area. In contrast, the Kikuyu were allocated only 50,000 acres of less fertile land to eke out a living. This was a far cry from the size of their population and needs. Moreover, they were restricted from moving out of the reserves. Africans who lived on the white farmlands had to obtain squatters rights and were compelled to carry along a document for identification known as *Kipande*.¹⁹

In 1948, the number of Africans on European farms had risen to about 150,000 with the Kikuyu constituting about two-thirds in population. This state of affairs gave impetus to unmitigated bitterness of feeling against the white settlers. A vivid picture is presented by Jeremy Murray-Brown in his book, *Kenyatta*, on Koinange, a respectable Kikuyu chief who

¹³ Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, Vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1965), p. 305.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 309.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁷ Josiah Karuiki, “The Mau Mau Oath”, pp. 463-464, For a comparative analysis, see also J. A. Umeh, *Compulsory Acquisition of Land in Nigeria: Law in Africa No:34* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1973), p. 9.

¹⁸ Josiah Karuiki “The Mau Mau Oath”, p.463.

¹⁹ *Ibid* Jeremy Murray- Brown, *Kenyatta* (London: George Allen & Unwill Ltd., 1972), pp.85-86.

lamented the division of his land by road for the convenience of the white settler who cultivated coffee. He could see the settler's coffee quite luxuriant on his ancestral land which harboured the graves of his father and grandfather.²⁰ The land question was no doubt the touchstone of Kenya's indigenous relations on the one hand and British-Kenyan relations on the other. To be sure, the new British land policy therefore occasioned the dislocation of Kenyans from their culture area and fashioned them into destitution.²¹

Labour

For reasons of strategic economic exploitation, the British constructed a railway line which linked Mombasa with the Protectorate and ensured its completion in 1903. Railway construction entails intensive manual labour. Consequently, Africans were conscripted to work alongside Indians who were brought in to augment the high demand for labour. During the construction of Uasin Gishu railway in 1924, the British government ensured untrammelled supply of labour to the contractors through the conscription of natives. Food rations, accommodation and mode of recruitment were all vested in the Native Affairs Department.²²

As expected, the contractors were indifferent to the plight of the workers. Food was not regular and wages were unfairly slashed on frivolous excuses while daily tasks were usually tiresome. The same situation was re-enacted during the construction of Fort-Hall-Nyeri line to Uganda for strategic reasons. The point to note is that Uganda was of paramount importance to Great Britain since it harboured the source of River Nile and she desired to control it to advance her interest in the immediate inter-lacustrine region, The Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt. A railway line from Kenya to Uganda was therefore considered a requisite liaison towards the accomplishment of British obvious desire. Recourse to this ambition was to prospect for, and indeed, forcefully conscript Kenyans to lay the rail lines.

The debilitating conditions of the Kenyan worker followed the prescription of Governor Northey who on October 21, 1919 declared that "the white man must be paramount for the good of the country and for his own welfare, he (the native) must be brought to work".²³ "Legalized" methods were concomitantly fashioned out to force the "natives" to work at the instance of the government. Children were not spared from conscription. For instance, a local white official at Kiyambu issued a circular declaring his intension to "arrange for a temporary supply of child labour from the reserves"²⁴ even in the face of remonstrations by leading

²⁰ Jeremy Murray- Brown, *Kenyatta* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1972), pp.85-86.

²¹For an expose on the concept of Culture area, see M. A .Onwuejeogwu *The Social Anthropology of Africa: An Introduction* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1975), p.9.

²² Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problems in Africa*, p .332.

²³ For more details on the concept of a culture area, see M. A. Onwuejeogwu *The Social Anthropology of Africa: An Introduction*, p. 9.

Ibid. 333 see also Raph Uwechue, *Africa Today* (London: Africa Books Ltd., 1991), p.1061.

missionaries in East Africa. The resettlement of white ex-soldiers as farmers in Kenya further compounded the labour problem which was already acute. They were given alienated farmlands from the indigenes and assured of constant supply of Kenyan labour by the colonial authorities. Kenyan labourers who worked on European farms with make-shift accommodations were transformed into, and officially designated as “squatters” with precarious conditions of existence. However, as living conditions became unbearable for the “squatters” on the European farms, some of them moved into nearby Nairobi to seek for better fortunes that never came.

Threats to British economic hegemony by Kenyans were visited with impunity. In June, 1921, for instance, the British government decided to slash wages by one third as a retrenchment measure. Harry Thuku, a former telephone operator at the government treasury who had formed the Young Kikuyu Association in 1920 organized series of protests under the aegis of the East African Association, from June 24, 1921, in reaction to the wage cut.²⁵ Rumoured to be financed by local Indians, he became increasingly vociferous in his condemnation of British labour policies. The British authorities reacted by arresting Harry Thuku and other leaders in March, 1922 amidst more widespread protests. To be sure, these pandemic protests were a culmination of reactions to the provisions of an earlier ordinance enacted in 1909 called “Removal of Natives Ordinance”. Many Kenyans were killed by the British authorities in their bid to quell the protests. Raymond Leslie Buell records eighteen casualties²⁶ but Jeremy Murray - Brown records twenty-one casualties including several women and a fifteen-year old boy.²⁷ At an inquest later, Harry Thuku and other leaders were deported to Jubaland while other protesters suffered graduated penalties.

Taxation

The history of British colonial rule in Africa is replete with the vexatious issue of taxation. In Kenya, it became a veritable instrument of submission to British overlordship. The British government officials and the settlers employed taxation as a means to force the natives to seek employment. In response to demands by White Farmers Association, the government collected taxes during the coffee picking season to induce the “natives” to work. Sir Percy Girouard, the colonial governor remarked in the affirmative that “taxation is the only possible method of compelling the natives to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work...”²⁸ The point to note is that the wages the Kenyans drew were hardly adequate to sustain them, let alone being left with the surplus value to pay the requisite taxes.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.374 Murray – Brown, *Kenyatta*, p.84.

²⁶ Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problems in Africa*, p. 376.

²⁷ Jeremy Murray Brown, *Kenyatta*, p.376.

²⁸ Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problems in Africa*, p. 331

Racial and Political Domination

The configuration of race relations in Kenya in the period up to the outbreak of the revolt was characterized by racial and political domination. The white settlers regarded themselves as super human beings while the Africans were reduced to mere chattels behind the rung of second-class citizens. With the setting up of the Native Courts under Native Court Rules of 1913, the subjugation of Kenyans was a *fait accompli*.

The Native Court was composed of a Council of Elders who were to adjudicate in minor disputes in property ownership and try petty criminal offences arising from native laws and customs. The warrant chiefs or headmen were appointed without recourse to traditional values, stipulations and requisite indigenous rituals. Their principal work was to maintain law and order and transmit instructions from the British administrative officials to the people. They were deprived of judicial powers and the legitimacy to collect taxes

By 1920, European settlers were allowed to elect representatives into the Legislative Council. In 1924 and Indian and Arab representation in the council was legitimated. It was only in 1944 that the first African was appointed by the governor into the Legislative Assembly. This was almost a belated sequel to an earlier petition written by Jomo Kenyatta to the *Times of London* in 1930 at the instance of the Kikuyu Central Association. He reiterated the following demands:

- a. Security of land tenure and return of lands alienated by Europeans;
- b. Increased educational facilities;
- c. Repeal of hut taxes on women, which forced some to earn money by prostitution;
- d. African representation in the Legislative Council; and,
- e. Non-interference with traditional customs.²⁹

Jomo Kenyatta concluded that the absence of these measures meant “a shortsighted tightening up of the safety-value of speech which must inevitably result in a dangerous explosion - the one thing all sane men wish to avoid”.³⁰ These stated grievances readily set the stage for the *Mau Mau* Revolt.

The Composition of the *Mau Mau*

In official documents, the *Mau Mau* is presented as a tribal insurrection as well as a peasant revolt,³¹ yet, it had the paraphernalia of a pan-Kenyan organization. Apart from the Kikuyu who, of course, were preponderant, it embraced the Embu, Maasai, Meru, Kiambu, and all other ethnic groups in Kenya.

²⁹ <http://en.Wikipedia.org/Wiki/Mau-Mau>. accessed on 20/11/2023.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Jeremy Murray Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 225.

Mau Mau was essentially formed by radicals within the Kenyan African Union (KAU) who had lost faith with its “undue constitutionality” through which they pressed for the independence of Kenya. The radicals also included ex-servicemen who had fought in the Second World War. During their military campaigns overseas, servicemen of Kenyan origin mixed with other nationals from America, Europe, Asia and fellow Africans from different cultures and were accordingly exposed to their nuances.

Of particular note was the *Anake Wa 40* or the “40 Group”. These were recruits who belonged to the same age grade who underwent initiation in 1940. Their military campaign overseas opened their eyes to racial discrimination as practiced by white soldiers, who, contrary to widely held views, were also very vulnerable in the battlefield like black soldiers. This group played a significant role in Nairobi politics in the late 1940s.³² Its ranks were further swelled by former members of the East African Trades Union Congress (EATUC) which was proscribed by the colonial government after its general strike on May 16, 1950. With this development, members went underground and became *Mau Mau* die- hearts. Small land holders and landless men who lived as squatters on white farmlands; those who rejected the authority of headmen appointed by the colonial government to enforce communal labour, and urban radicals who received considerable education from the colonial school system all enlisted in the “Movement”.

Members of the *Mau Mau* went through elaborate initiation rites called “*Ndemwa Ithatu*” (Oath of Unity). The initiation period lasted for several days. Strong consanguinal relationship was emphasized. The wordings of the oath elicited strong nationalist feelings and they collectively called themselves “The Land Freedom Army”. The *Mau Mau* had local central committees called “*Athuri a Kikira*” which ensured mass recruitment of members across Kenya.³³

The Revolt Proper

From The late 1940s, *Mau Mau* members had begun to stockpile ammunition and medicine. The Nairobi Central Committee or the “War Council” as it was called, co-ordinated war efforts at the incipient stages. Mathare valley, a Nairobi suburb with thick African population became the headquarters of the *Mau Mau*. From there, supplies of ammunitions such as pistols, and improvised guns made from water pipes, medicine and food were made available to the forest fighters. The *Mau Mau* killed opponents who collaborated with the British government in broad daylight while European houses were set ablaze and their livestock destroyed.

³² Ali Mazrui and Michael Tidy, *Nationalism and New States in Africa: From About 1935 to the Present*, (Heineman Educational Books Ltd., 1984), p. 199.

³³ Josiah Karuiki, “The Mau Mau Oath”, p. 469.

On August 17, 1952, Henry Potter, the colonial governor, informed the London Office about the seriousness of the *Mau Mau* rebellion for the first time. Accordingly, on October 6, 1952, Sir Evelyn Baring arrived Kenya to take over as governor. His arrival was greeted by the assassination of Tom Mboleta, a Nairobi city councillor and a senior chief, Waruhui by militants on account of collaboration with the colonial authorities. Governor Baring reacted swiftly and declared a “State of Emergency” over Kenya on October 20, 1952.³⁴

The *Mau Mau* however, was not caught napping as the Central Committee in Nairobi had got wind of the impending “Emergency”. Orders were issued to the guerilla forces in the forest to take independent action on October 19, 1952.³⁵ Waruhui Itote, a Second World War veteran codenamed ‘General China’ led the fight against the British in Mount Kenya forest.³⁶ Thousands of guerilla fighters in the Nyandura and Kenya mountains went on the offensive, killing government loyalists, post guards, chiefs and headmen as well as tribal police in the reserves. In their nocturnal onslaughts, they attacked several European farms and killed many of them.

In March 1953, they raided Navasha police station, released 173 prisoners and seized much ammunition. Dedan Kimathi, a former teacher, tried to centralize the resistance and led the fighters in Nyandura mountains. With the spirit of oneness and unity of purpose, the rebellion became a long drawn one to the consternation of the British authorities. As observed by Jeremy Murray-Brown “Kikuyu reserved areas were clearly in the hands of the *Mau Mau* and Fort Hall was held “as virtually a Kikuyu Republic.”³⁷

Colonial Government’s Response

At the declaration of a “State of Emergency” on October 20, 1952, a military operation code-named “Jock Scott” was correspondingly put in the works. Swift arrests of leaders and members of the *Mau Mau* were made in Nairobi, yet, the rebellion was sustained. In other areas, the British forces resorted to scorched earth military policy by burning down farmlands on the fringes of the forests, cutting down trees to uncover the fighters and provide clear firing ranges. An ammunition depot at Mathere valley in Nairobi was discovered and destroyed by the British forces in 1953. In the same year, Jomo Kenyatta was arrested, tried at Kapenguria for “managing the *Mau Mau* terrorist organization” and subsequently sentenced to seven years imprisonment with hard labour.³⁸ In keeping with the principle of divide and rule, the colonial

³⁴ Raph Uwechue, *Africa Today*, p. 1062.

³⁵ Jeremy Murray – Brown, *Kenyatta*, see also Ali Mazrui and Michael Tidy, *Nationalism and New States in Africa: From About 1935 to the present*, Educational Books Ltd, 1984, p. 252.

³⁶ Jeremy Murray Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 255.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 276. See also Raph Uwechue, *Africa Today*, p. 1062

government formed the King's African Rifles made up of Kikuyu loyalists and non-Kikuyu to attack the 'rebels'.

On April 24, 1954, the colonial government launched "Operation Anvil" at the instance of Colonial National War Council and Nairobi was put under siege. The government brought in re-enforcements of Lancashire Fusiliers from the Middle East; a battalion of Kings' African Rifles was also brought in from Uganda and two companies from Tanganyika. The Royal Air Force sent pilots and Handley Page Hastings aircrafts. A cruiser curiously christened "Kenya", brought the Royal Marines from Mombassa. In all, a total of 55,000 troops were fielded by the colonial government in the course of the conflict. The *Mau Mau* revolt eventually succumbed to the superior firepower and tactics of the imperial authorities in 1956.

Consequences

The *Mau Mau* revolt was attended by far-reaching consequences. British military reaction to the rebellion was quite ferocious. In "Operation Anvil" alone, thousands of Africans were detained and all Kikuyu between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five were imprisoned. Bruce Berman in *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, has it that by the time the revolt was put down in 1956, 11,503 "terrorists" were killed, 2,585 captured, 2,714 surrendered; 95 Europeans killed (35 civilians), 127 wounded; 29 Asians killed (26 civilians), 48 wounded; 1,920 loyal Africans killed (1,819 civilians) and 2,385 wounded.³⁹

Several other *Mau Mau* members, especially the Kikuyu were detained in camps where they were debriefed to abandon their nationalist struggles.⁴⁰ Dedan Kimathi was eventually apprehended and hanged.⁴¹ In the course of the war, the *Mau Mau* rebellion was decimated as a result of isolation, starvation and superior fire power. Warihui Itote (General China) was captured in February, 1954 while Dedan Kimathi who was apprehended in October, 1956 by Kikuyu Tribal Police at Nyeri, was subsequently hanged in 1957.⁴² At the end of the "Emergency", the British government had spent about fifty-million Pounds Sterling.⁴³

The revolt in its aftermath also brought about a lot of reforms to the advantage of the Kenyans. Under the Swynnerton Plan, the Kikuyu were allocated land holdings and allowed to cultivate coffee which, hitherto, was an exclusive preserve of the whites. In 1959, farm areas under cultivation by Africans stood at 89,000 *vis- a- vis* 4,000 acres that were cultivated in

³⁹ Bruce Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya* (London: Games Currey Ltd, 1990) p. 353.

⁴⁰ Jacob Safra, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (London: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2002), p. 949.

⁴¹ Raph Uwechue, *Africa Today*, p. 1062.

⁴² Ali Mazrui and Michael Tidy, *Nationalism and New States in Africa: From About 1935 to the present*, p. 123.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

1954. These Africans, of course, were those who allied with the colonial government. On the other side of the flip, the “freedom fighters” in the forests were allocated worst areas or none.

In the political sphere, the colonial government made concessions to Africans. By 1956, when the storm was over, six African members were elected into the Legislative Council. A new constitution was put in place in 1958 and it increased the number of African seats to fourteen.⁴⁴ Sequel to the Constitutional Conference at London in 1960, the principle of universal suffrage *viz*; one man-one vote, was acceded to the Kenyans in principle. This development presaged the formation of political parties in Kenya, namely, Kenya African National Union (KANU) led by “Mzee” Jomo Kenyatta and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) led by Ronald Ngala. Kenyan African National Union (KANU) came to represent militant African nationalism. It was essentially pioneered by the Kikuyu with strong support from other ethnic groups such as the Luo, Kamba and Meru. Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) gave expression to the moderates. It drew its support from immigrant communities of European, Arab and Indian origin as well as from other smaller ethnic groups in Kenya. Be that as it may, both parties namely, KANU and KADU were united in the objective purpose of vigorous pursuit of independence for Kenya. On June 1, 1963, Kenya became an independent nation with Jomo Kenyatta as Prime Minister and by December, 1964, Kenya became a Republic with “Mzee” Jomo Kenyatta as its first President.

Conclusion

In this paper, the *Mau Mau* Revolt which raged between 1952 and 1956 was a diametrical response of the Kikuyu and indeed, Kenyans to the seizure and appropriation of their ancestral land and the gradual but steady imposition of *pax Britanica* on Kenya. With the Kikuyu leading the vanguard, British overlordship was stoutly resisted and this culminated in the imposition of a “State of Emergency” on Kenya which correspondingly, routed indigenous resistance. The revolt was long drawn and led to untold hardship and loss of lives on either side the divide.

Howbeit, a lot of changes were occasioned in the aftermath of the revolt. With the colonial government considerably hamstrung, these changes birthed the election of Kenyans into the legislative council, the formation of political parties and subsequent political independence of Kenya on June 1, 1963. By December 1964, Kenya assumed a republican status and administration.

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