

**AT THE PERIPHERY IN MAU
MAU DISCOURSE: A CASE OF THE MBEERE OF EMBU COUNTY,
KENYA, 1952-2014**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Education and Social Sciences in Partial
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DECLARATION

Declaration by the candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for examination, award of degree, or publication. Where other people or my work has been used, this has been acknowledged and referenced following Karatina University requirements.

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DEDICATION

To the Kanyingĩ family, my lovely wife Mwĩhaki, our children Kanyingĩ, Ndũng'ũ and
Mũgũre.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAO	Assistant Agricultural Officer
ADC	African District Council
ALDEV	Africa Land Development Board
BAT	British American Tobacco
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CMS	Church Mission Society
DAO	District Agricultural Officer
DEB	District Education Board
D.O	District Officer
DOI	Department of Information
DC	District Commissioner
EAA	East African Association
EAP	East Africa Protectorate
EEMO	European Elected Members Organization
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEMA	Gikuyu Embu and Meru Association
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAPE	Kenya African Primary Examination
KAU	Kenya African Union
KAR	King's African Rifles

KCA	Kikuyu Central Association
KEM	Kikuyu Embu and Meru
KKM	Kĩama Kia Muingi
KISA	Kikuyu Independent Schools Association
KLFA	Kenya Land Freedom Army
KNA	Kenya National Archive
KNADC	Kenya National Archives and Documentation Centre
KPU	Kenya People’s Union
KPR	Kenya Police Reserve
LNC	Local Native Council
MMWVA	Mau Mau War Veteran Association
MP	Member of Parliament
NARC	The National Rainbow Coalition
NDEFFO	Nakuru District Ex-Freedom Fighters Association
OBE	Order of the British Empire
TNA	The National Archives
YKA	Young Kikuyu Association

ABSTRACT

The ambiguity of Mau Mau discourse led to multiple narratives about the movement. The elusiveness was evidenced by voices of the past mixing with current views, discovery, access to migrated archives and reparation cases. The reparation case ignited debates on participation in the Mau Mau struggle. In the Mau Mau discourses, the movement was considered Kikuyu, Embu and Ameru affair, disregarding communities' contribution on the fringes of Mt. Kenya like the Mbeere. To show the contribution of peripheral communities, there was a need to deconstruct the pedagogy of misinformation and represent an accurate picture for collective memory. This study sought to examine the missing narrative of the Mbeere in Mau Mau discourse. The following specific objectives guided the study: to establish the role of the Mbeere chiefs in colonial penetration and administration; to assess the evidence of the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle; to examine the reasons for exclusion of the Mbeere in Mau Mau discourse and lastly to evaluate the recognition and compensation of the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans by the Kenya government and the British government, respectively. The Post-colonial theory informed this study that critically examines the post-colonial experience of Third World societies. Both primary and secondary data were sourced and used in the study. Archival data was obtained from the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Centre in Nairobi, Nakuru and The National Archives in the United Kingdom. Oral data was collected from informants in Kyeni South, Mbeere North and South in Embu County. This study used focus group discussions and in-depth interviews for data collection, where 59 participants were interviewed. In interviews, purposive sampling was employed where the chiefs pinpointed Mau Mau veterans in their wards. Then snowball sampling strategy was used to identify more respondents knowledgeable about the Mau Mau movement. Respondents for focus group discussions were selected through purposive sampling based on the participation of those above 70 years and who participated in the insurgency. Data were analysed using NVIVO 12 to extract themes that answered the research questions. Selected secondary sources informed the theory, while others complemented data from the primary sources. The proposed study provided a counterpoint to literature that lauded the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru as key participants in the Mau Mau struggle for independence by identifying the Mbeere as (active or passive players) in the war of decolonisation. Additionally, the study findings noted that the Mbeere were left out in the reparation process, but they are hopeful for reparation and memorialisation. The Mau Mau debates will not end soon with the growing attention of the marginalised narratives. The Mbeere involvement in the Mau Mau insurgency as seers was deeper than assumed; they utilised an unmarked villagisation process by scavenging food for the Mau Mau insurgency. They used non-KEM status to evade detection as a tactic of war for insurgency's sake. These two areas need further research for posterity. Thirdly this study can be replicated in other peripheral communities in Kenya to retell their past. Also, there is a need to rewrite the history of the Mbeere and show nuances of the Mbeere marginalisation in resource allocation and how it intersects with the history of decolonisation. Lastly, review the state of non-Embu (the Kikuyu *ahoi* and the Kamba) who claimed to have been born into the Embu tribe while the colonial government, the Embu elders and ADC members expressed in 1961 that there was no place for them in the District.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The name “Mbeere” is derived from a position, *Mbere* meaning the first. Therefore, the Mbeere refer to themselves as the first people (*andu a mbere*) to have entered the lands south and east of Mt. Kenya. The Mbeere people's initial contact with early visitors in Kenya dates to 1849, when Dr Johann Krapf found them buying poison for arrows from the Akamba (Mwaniki, 1973). In the 1870s, Swahili and Arab traders searching for ivory, rhinoceros horns and ‘hippopotamus’ teeth arrived in Mbeereland, where they engaged in barter trade. In return, the Mbeere received shells, beads and cotton clothes. The contact also culminated in the slave trade, though on a small scale, since the Embu and the Mbeere never favoured slave trade and sold only captives of other ethnic groups.

The historical genesis of the Embu and Mbeere are intimately related because they originated from the Northeast of Mount Kenya (Tigania and Igembe). In the latter half of the 15th and 16th centuries, the two groups split off and dispersed in different directions (Mwaniki, 1973). After crossing Thuci River (near present-day Ishiara), the Embu split off, and the Mbeere continued southwards to Kiambere Hills. Due to a similar point of origin, the Embu and Mbeere are culturally and linguistically related. However, their variation is attributable to a way of life and a contrasting environment. Mwaniki (2005) argues that ‘Muembu and ‘Mumbeere’ are similar in the sense that *kigongana kiao ni kimwe*, (their ritual is the same). As noted by Strayer (1978), the assumption is that the ethnic identity of the existing communities emanated on arrival

in their current areas of jurisdiction. Ambler (1988) holds that by the 1880s, approximately 20,000 people lived in Mbeere land that stretched East and South from the base of Mount Kenya up to the Tana River. Few people had settled permanently near the Tana River. However, these people were not self-sustaining agriculturally as compared to their neighbours. For many years, the Mbeere depended on the nearby communities of Mount Kenya to meet their food needs and labour. The neighbouring communities also relied on the Mbeere for livestock. Mwaniki (1973) contends that the earliest records of Ludwig Krapf's visit to Kitui in Central Kenya in November 1849 portray the ability to accurately approximate boundaries and record ethnic communities' names, a depiction of how ethnic division was acknowledged and communities aware of their ethnicity.

With the intrusion of European traders, they were relentlessly seeking concession from a British Commissioner for East Africa Protectorate, Sir Charles Norton Elliot, to occupy Embu and exploit forest resources. Eliot, a progenitor of European settlement, accepted their wish for selfish interests. He wanted the Embu crushed for accessibility of the Mount Kenya region. So, they burnt huts, killed people, captured women and compelled the Embu to surrender (Mwaniki, 1974). Nevertheless, the Mbeere did not resist the Europeans when they arrived. First, the Mbeere had been warned not to retaliate by seers Mbogo wa Kirangi and Njue wa Kambuba (Mwaniki, 1974). Second, the Mbeere prophets had foreseen strong people with a 'rod' which, when shaken, caused people to fall and that "those with sons will cry, then something will be planted at Kanyuambora" (Mwaniki, 1973, p.160). Mwaniki further posits that the prophecy came true and due to fear, the Mbeere community had no option but to welcome the white man as opposed to the Embu, who repulsed them.

Mwaruvie (2011) argued that destitution from Maasai raids and plagues of 1890 made the Mbeere request a British pioneer administrator Charles William Hobley for collaboration. Mwaruvie further posits that the exposure of Kugariura wa Cewa and Rubia wa Ngotho (wa stands for “son of”), who had seen the power of the white man’s weapons and benefits of association, made the Mbeere reconsider and collaborate. Secondly, the Europeans did not show interest in the Mbeere country, which was not viable to white settlement and hence classified as a Native Reserve. The Mbeere, therefore, did not feel the intense pressure of land alienation compared to the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru living in desirous arable lands (Mwaruvie, 2011). However, Mwea was a point of contention between the Ndia and the Mbeere. In the process, the colonial government annexed some territories of Mwea and converted them into a rice-growing irrigation scheme and later a detention camp (Kareithi, 2018).

The Embu were annoyed with the Mbeere for aligning with the British and as retaliation, the Embu raided caravans going to Mbeere with Mbeere’s delegation to Mbiri in Murang’a District. The frequent attacks on the Mbeere resulted in the Embu military expedition of 1906, executed by British soldiers under the guidance of the Mbeere. The military expedition created tension between the Embu and the Mbeere, who were previously close (Mwaruvie, 2011). The Mbeere were colonised in 1906 (Mwaniki, 1974). In 1907, the colonial administration compelled the Mbeere to pay taxes, which angered them since the Mbeere could no longer grasp the white man’s rationale for friendship. Consequently, in subsequent years, resistance was evidenced in the Mbeere regions. Berman (1990) holds that as much as the Mbeere welcomed the white man, they were against conversion, which they feared would destroy their

preserved structures and disturb indigenous production and industries. For years, the Mbeere remained undisturbed, unlike the Embu, Ndia and Gichugu.

The Embu region did not face land shortages in the 1930s, but they were aware of situations in Kikuyu land. Nervousness was manifested among youths in Embu when they heard how the Kikuyu lost land to settlers. The Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) capitalised on their fear to recruit new members. KCA won the first converts in the District over the land question because it propagated to protect African land. However, due to land alienation and harsh taxation, the condition in rural areas was unbearable to many Africans. As Anyamba (2011) noted, in 1941, the population of Africans in Nairobi was around 50,000. Ten thousand worked for the government, approximately 22,000 worked for private employers, and at least 1500 Africans were self-employed. Those who were not employed numbered around two to three thousand. Apart from dwellers of the cities, about 2000 from Central Province came daily to trade in Nairobi (Furedi, 1973). Most of the African population were the Kikuyu, who dominated certain occupations and many street sweepers hailed from Embu District (Lughod & Hay, 2007). Most of the city dwellers (lowly paid, unemployed workers and petty traders) were unhappy with their way of life, resulting in the formation of *Anake a 40* (40 Age group), to unite its members, performed mass oathing to establish hegemony over the African locations. The 40-age group also carried out armed robberies on Asian, African merchants and colonial government. Its hallmark was noticed after assassinating Tom Mbotela and Senior Chief Waruhiu, culminating in a state of emergency in October 1952 (Furedi, 1989).

The Declaration of State of Emergency did not leave the Mbeere immune from British battalions (Lancashire Fusiliers) and King's African Rifles (KAR). The campaign against the Mau Mau movement was characterised by random sweeps in the Central and Eastern Province. For example, in the Nairobi sweeps, KAR rounded up many Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and Mbeere suspected of supporting the movement. In 1953, the troops failed to isolate the Mau Mau; therefore, many people in Central and Eastern Province suffered indiscriminate attacks (Wanyumbari, 1993). However, in Mbeere locations, colonialism was less intense than in Embu or the Kikuyu land. As a result, the Mbeere grievances against colonial power were less severe. For example, the Mbeere never faced punitive villagisation or land consolidation, therefore almost rejecting the Mau Mau oath (Glazier, 1970, p. 1985). As a result, the Embu, already bitter with the Mbeere from past demeanour, invaded Kanyuambora in 1954, killing 15 Mbeere on the accusation of their unwillingness to join the Mau Mau insurgency. As a response, Chief Mwandiko Ngira and Mbeere warriors invaded Kathunguri in Kyeni South, allegedly burning a few children in school (Glazier, 1985).

The Mau Mau consciousness led to a state of crisis in the Embu District. Due to the situation, many Kenyan communities, especially from the expansive Mount Kenya, were demonised and repatriated back into manageable administrative units in their villages. Within the Kikuyu Land Unit (KLU), communities such as the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and the Mbeere were regarded as Kikuyu sub-tribes whose cultures were related. Clough (1998) asserts that Mau Mau is a past that will never pass away, and the consensus is neither a desirable option. Clough postulated that the Mau Mau historiography would never be uniform and new ideas would emerge due to new research. Therefore, for a long time, Mau Mau historiography has been viewed from

one dimension. Studies have glorified the Embu, Kikuyu and Meru as the main actors rather than a collective action against increasingly problematic situations created by British colonial administrators. Nevertheless, within the Kikuyu Land Unit, the Mbeere community co-existed and suffered similarly to the other communities. Therefore, depending on the geographical space and positionality, the Mbeere community was able to play a critical role in the Mau Mau struggles depending on their ambitions and needs.

The British officials were confused with a loose social formation and fluid ethnicity when they conquered Kenya (Bandyopadhyay, 2010). Within the Kikuyu Land Unit, ethnic groups were identified with physical space. Parsons (2012, p. 67) holds that “by official imperial thinking, these ‘tribes’ had a common language, uniform social institutions and rigid customary laws based on the perception of kinship.” Haugerud (1997) asserts that the communities within Embu and other Highland Bantus always assumed new identities through intermarriage, commerce and migration and, therefore, the issues of clearly demarcated space on British official maps were incoherent. Under the Embu reserve, the Mbeere, Gichugu and Ndia were always mistaken as Kikuyu because of shared oral traditions of migration centuries earlier (Gathogo, 2013). Therefore, a lack of clear understanding of Central or highlands identities’ complex arrangements made colonialists in Kenya view all Highland Bantus as Kikuyu or combine them as Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (KEM). The three ethnic groups were dominant in the Mau Mau struggle, yet the contribution and suffering of ‘smaller tribes’ like the Mbeere were similar and immense. As colonialists identified the Embu more as Kikuyu, their position in the independence struggle is well documented than the Mbeere. The Mbeere community was an independent ethnic group; they had an identity expressed by a big name, “Mbeere,” which subsumed names of particular clans and

lineages. The Mbeere also had a territory whose boundaries were defined, separated by rivers and accepted by neighbouring ethnic communities (Embu, Tharaka, Kamba and Ndia).

The colonial Embu District had four divisions namely: Mbeere, Embu, Gichugu and Ndia. The Royal Boundary Commission recommended that Ndia and Gichugu be hived from Embu District to form Kirinyaga District (Mbogo, 2015). The recommendation was highly contested by the late cabinet minister Jeremiah Nyagah, who wanted the two Divisions to remain under Embu District (Mbogo, 2015). Nyeri leaders also liked the two Divisions to be part of Nyeri. However, Kirinyaga's professional protests bore fruits after Kirinyaga District was formed in 1962. The Mbeere Division was subdivided into two, Mbeere North and South, but it remained in Embu, thus naming all residents as people of Embu. Glazier (1985) argues that Mbeere Divisional headquarters were in the town of Siakago. During the KANU regime, loyalty to the party played a critical role; hence Embu District was split to create Mbeere District. Mbeere District retained Siakago and Gachoka constituencies, while Embu District retained Manyatta and Runyenjes constituencies that supported the opposition party (Muchiri, 2012).

Within the defined boundaries, the Mbeere exercised sovereignty in the sense that clans and lineages that made up the Mbeere had the right to appropriate and exploit the land as a means of existence. Secondly, the Mbeere did not involve outsiders in solving bloody conflicts between its members. Subaltern scholars like Guha (1982) asked how secondary discourse could not extricate imperialists' written history. In the Kenyan context, despite the historian having access to all necessary materials, they failed to

create a flavour of neutrality in their writings. Their final analysis discusses the Mau Mau movement through the lens of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities, making a history that sided with the colonial state. Said (1979) argues that they were guided by European modernist interpretative strategy to impose the West onto non-western societies. Therefore, the Mbeere community suffered a ‘double periphery’ between the colonial state vis-à-vis the Embu people. Mwaruvie (2011, pp. 173-174) posits that “The Mbeere remained a backwater in Embu District; development was directed towards Embu people despite their initial resistance. The Embu people monopolised jobs and were near Kirimari boma . . .”

British administrators executed a governing system through ‘tribes during the colonial period. They believed each ‘tribe’ was distinct, drawing rigid lines between Kenyan communities where some received preferential treatment while others suffered. Osborne (2008, p. 2) noted, “Ethnicity was directly connected to financial and other incentives which the colonial government could provide and “Divide and Rule” was the order of the day.” Consequently, in post-independence Kenya, the first president Jomo Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, converted independent Kenya into a state resembling its former ruler. Kenyan politics were centred on ethnicity and sporadic use of repression. He enhanced ethnic favouritism by forming the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association (GEMA). An ethnic-regional welfare organisation formed for economic and political interests. Bias was notable in politics and academia, especially in writing Kenya’s history (Osborne, 2008). There was overemphasising prominence of the Embu in Kenya’s colonial history, where the Mbeere as an ethnic group is overshadowed or minimally studied. As a result, the Mbeere are excluded from scholarly works, especially on the Mau Mau narratives and their response to colonialism. The exclusion

of the Mbeere community gradually accelerated from the 1950s to the independence period, leading to the intricate pattern of cooperation, contest over politics, representation and resource allocation in Embu County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Mau Mau historiography appears to have ignored or marginalised the Mbeere community. The 1962 African population census by the British colonial government classified the Mbeere as an ethnic group in Kenya. Nevertheless, literature has mentioned little of their contribution to the Mau Mau struggle. Most Mau Mau literature focuses on large ethnic groups and ignores smaller groups such as the Tharaka and the Mbeere. In Embu District, the Mbeere's role in the Mau Mau movement is obscured by the Embu's role. There was evidence that the Mbeere lived within colonial Embu District and that the Mbeere suffered evacuation from Kirimari *boma*. In addition, during the Mau Mau period, there was a fight between the Embu and the Mbeere at Kanyuambora market on allegations that the Mbeere had not taken the Mau Mau oath prompting the Embu to invade with the intent of administering the oath. Chief Kombo of Mavuria-Mbeere South was claimed to have been the first chief to begin the de-oathing process on those who had taken the Mau Mau oath. Very little research on the role of communities living at the periphery has been done hence the study on the role of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle for Kenya's independence.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study's main objective was to examine the missing narrative of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau discourse.

The following specific objectives guided the study:

- i. To establish the role of Mbeere chiefs in colonial penetration and administration.
- ii. To assess the evidence of the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle.
- iii. To examine the reasons for the exclusion of the Mbeere in Mau Mau discourse.
- iv. To evaluate the recognition and compensation of the Mbeere people by the Kenya government and British government, respectively.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

- i. What role did the Mbeere chiefs play in the colonial penetration and administration?
- ii. What evidence shows the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle?
- iii. What were the reasons for the exclusion of the Mbeere community in the Mau Mau narrative?
- iv. How have the Kenya and British governments recognised and compensated the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The British colonisers created the Kikuyu Land Unit as a settlement for the principal players of the Mau Mau movement. In the land unit, there were the Ameru, Embu, Kikuyu and Mbeere. Yet, the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle appeared either deliberately ignored, marginalised or forgotten. Even in the latest works of literature on the Mau Mau, especially after the classification of ethnic groups, there was hardly any mention of the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle. The dearth of scholarship about the Mbeere limited understanding of how the Mbeere

related with other ethnicities involved in the struggle, particularly the Embu, the British colonisers and what hindered their inclusion in the Mau Mau narrative. Therefore, as the British government compensated the Mau Mau veterans, the Mbeere veterans were left out, creating a cleavage among the veterans and injustice to those left out. For the eventual healing process to occur among ethnicities involved, there was a need to fully understand all the players passively or actively engaged in the struggle for research justice. In addition, with the enactment of the Kenya Heroes Act (No.5 of 2014) by the Kenya government, when persons are identified as heroes/heroines, there will be privileges such as publications of books showing the role they played whereby the Mbeere veterans will be recognised. Lastly, the study added novel literature on Africans' response to colonial rule in Kenya, showing the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The Embu County comprises five sub-counties: Embu North, Embu East, Embu West, Mbeere North and Mbeere South. Since the current study aimed to examine whether the Mbeere participated in the Mau Mau struggle, fieldwork was conducted in Mbeere North and South and Kyeni South in Embu East, where the Mbeere retaliated against the Embu during the Mau Mau movement struggle. In addition, however, references were made to areas outside Embu County where deemed appropriate to illustrate the collaboration between the Mbeere people and the Mau Mau movement operating outside the area. This study focused on the period from 1952 to 2014. The year 1952 was when a state of emergency was declared in the country, leading to intensified resistance.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study relied on Kenyans who participated in the Mau Mau struggle, most of whom are elderly. The surviving few were elderly and in poor health. Due to poor health, some participants faced memory lapses hence inconsistencies in their narratives. The researcher overcame the problem by interviewing more participants to create a collective memory that entailed creating memories about the historical facts shared among the Mau Mau veterans in the current study area. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim the same day after the interviews to avoid recall bias. For accurate translation, the study used a back-translation method where two bilinguals were used. First, one translated the *Kimbeere* transcript to English. Then the other bilingual independently translated English to the source language. It was done for comparison and reconciling the differences in meaning, functions, or concepts until convergent evidence occurred. The researcher also corroborated the informant's collective memory with archival and secondary data.

Due to the old age of the participants, the researcher guided the Mau Mau movement veterans by using an interview guide and a translator to overcome the language barrier. However, the accuracy of information depended on the memory of the informants and self-reported data could be disputed. To minimise the problem, the researcher corroborated sources used to ensure objectivity. Another limitation the current study faced was that some Mau Mau veterans feared revealing the Mau Mau- related content due to the vows made in oath-taking rituals.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Aembu/Embu: Refers to the people of Embu.

Ambeere/Mbeere: A term referring to the people of Mbeere.

Embu: Denotes the land of the Embu or people of Embu.

Double Periphery: Mbeere people were placed at the margins of the British colonisers and the Embu.

Freedom fighters: Means people who engaged actively or passively in liberating Kenya from the chains of colonialism.

Land Unit: A collection of lands that made up the reserves and used by particular ethnic groups.

Mau Mau: Refers to Africans who took up arms to fight in the forest, supporters of the movement who supplied food, and information, women who slept with British soldiers for bullets, double agents and ordinary people in the movement.

Mau Mau Discourse: Refers to historical narratives on primary, secondary and tertiary discourse.

Mbeere: Refers to the land of the Mbeere or people of Mbeere. Other scholars use the terms interchangeably. In the thesis, Mbeere refers both to the land of the Anbeere and the Mbeere people.

Nationalism: Advocating for land and freedom and eventual Kenya independence

Periphery: It means placed at the margins in Mau Mau roles, which also means being far away from Mt. Kenya.

Reserve: Means collection of the land unit set exclusively for Africans by the British government to protect them from European settlers' encroachment.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a review of relevant literature on the war of decolonisation in Kenya to identify the contribution of scholars and the gaps that made this study relevant. For a long, scholars debated whether the Mau Mau movement was an ethnic affair or Africans struggling to deal with modernity as portrayed in European myths (Lonsdale, 1990). By showing the revolt as ethnic, there has been a tendency for a single interpretation discouraging scholars from engaging in complex discussion and coming up with an overarching history of the Mau Mau movement. Conversely, the movement was portrayed as a nationalist revolt, but the Kikuyu centrality in the struggle against the colonial government still prevails.

Scholars have barely addressed the nationalist nature of the Mau Mau because the contributions of some communities in areas profoundly affected during the emergency are rarely mentioned. Yet, the contribution of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru are voluminous. The dearth of literature on the contribution of those communities limits the understanding of their role in Kenya's decolonisation process. The omission of their contribution, especially in contemporary Kenya, is grave when the Mau Mau veterans are recognised and compensated for torture carried out by the British government. The literature review approach was synchronic, acknowledging the contribution of scholars and identifying gaps to be filled.

2.2 The Role of Mbeere Chiefs in Colonial Penetration

Lovatt (2005) discusses the role of headmen and chiefs in opposing the Mau Mau movement. He argues that there were Kikuyu who remained stoically faithful to the

colonial government. The Mau Mau adherents tried to win them over, but without success; the only option was to eliminate them. This group included chiefs and headmen. The first sign of elimination began with senior chief Waruhiu of Kiambu, who vehemently opposed the Mau Mau movement leading to his death. Chief Nderi wa Wang'ombe of Nyeri was also not spared when he tried to disperse an oath-taking ceremony organised by Dedan Kimathi. The Mau Mau adherents ambushed and hacked him (Lovatt, 2005), illustrating that the Mau Mau was determined to annihilate any person or community against their aims. Yet, no evidence exists of any Mbeere chief being killed as purported collaborators.

Lovatt further observed that chiefs were also involved in the de-oathing process where a person who had taken the oath was made to pronounce a curse against the Mau Mau movement as what was done by Chief Kombo of Mbeere. In addition, Lovatt suggests that chiefs provided a headache to the Mau Mau movement organisers. Chiefs were determined to side with the government that appointed and paid them, although some secretly leaned towards the Mau Mau movement's aims of driving the white man out and winning back the land. Lovatt's book is helpful in this study as it shows the situations chiefs were faced with and how they reacted, either siding with the government or playing double agents. Since appointed chiefs led the Mbeere community in the colonial period, this study endeavoured to establish their role in the imperialists' penetration.

Mwaruvie (2011) examines the organisation of the Mbeere in the production and distribution of their resources from 1500 to the advent of the First World War. The study traces the establishment of colonial rule in Mbeere and how the Mbeere agreed

to collaborate with the colonialists but not accept British domination. Furthermore, Mwaruvie elucidates how previous devastating experiences informed the Mbeere leaders' decision to collaborate and how calculating they were after weighing that going to war with the white man would incapacitate them further. Mwaruvie mentions a leaders' meeting at Mavuria. Such leaders included Nthawa leaders seeking approval of whether to engage with the white man or not. Other leaders, he mentions included: Munyiri Kinuku, Kinani Murumbi and others. After lengthy consultations, the leaders agreed to collaborate and took the initiative to inform the Embu of their decision, but the Embu rejected the Mbeere proposal. Finally, Mwaruvie observes that the former council of elders and war leaders were made chiefs in 1906. Therefore, it is essential to establish what role these chiefs played in the colonial penetration in Mbeere locations.

Gatheru (2005) relates a series of events leading to Kenya's colonisation by the British. He portrays Kenya as a British colony where economic and political stratification was promoted at the expense of Kenyan African majorities, leading to suspicion. The mistrust deepened when the British created new chiefs who were considered moderates and amenable to British influence. Similarly, Shamsul (2007) argues that the British had to ensure a solid native hand to establish its authority for the British government to rule effectively. Therefore, the colonial chiefs were a creation for subjugation and domination. Shamsul's book acknowledges the chief's power, which was against the subjects' wishes. To retain their position, the chiefs had to show absolute loyalty to the British authority. By doing so, the chiefs enjoyed some autonomy and power. Reactions to European annexation varied among communities; therefore, it was not the Kikuyu, Meru or Embu alone who had a cause for complaint about injustices. The institution of

the chiefs directly altered the political fabric; hence, a need to establish the role of the Mbeere chiefs in colonial penetration in Mbeere.

Gatheru's (2005) book is essential to this study because it acknowledges the high population of the Kikuyu, making them possess a greater power of protest leading to the violent opposition compared to other actors. He also portrays other natives' concerns about European annexation. Gatheru argues that the Mau Mau rebellion was a revolutionary expression of national feeling led by the largest ethnic communities. The book reviewed is essential because it acknowledges the Mau Mau insurgency led by the largest ethnic groups like the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, who lived within the Kikuyu Land Unit and the presence of chiefs in these communities with similar mandates. This study endeavoured to establish the Mbeere chief's role in colonial penetration within their jurisdiction.

Glazier (1985) acknowledges the presence of chiefs in Mbeere and alludes that the Mbeere chiefs were able to keep the Mau Mau insurgency at bay because issues such as land alienation agendum of the Mau Mau movement never occurred in Mbeere. In addition, Mbeere chiefs were mighty, Glazier argues, at the onset of colonial rule. District Commissioner Horne instituted a system of tribal retainers (*Njama*) with the power to arrest individuals on the chief's behalf. Glazier further posits that the institution of chieftaincy weakened the council of elders, and there was no room to underestimate the power vested on Mbeere chiefs. Some prominent leaders in Mbeere included Munyiri Kinuku, the father of Chief Kombo Munyiri of Mavuria and Mwandiko Ngira of Evurore. Glazier also notes that eight Evurore chiefs served from the beginning of colonial rule to the eve of independence. Due to the chief's role, the

District Commissioner (DC) Lambert of Embu reported that the Mbeere area was least affected by politics. No branch of the Kikuyu Central Association appeared in Mbeere. In the 1950s, the colonial officials also reported Mbeere's loyalty and support to the British government's hostility towards the Mau Mau movement. Glazier (1985) further asserts that the Mbeere people were promised employment as Home Guards and police officers during the emergency. In addition, they were promised a detention camp for the accused persons to be built in Ishiara in lower Mbeere. The current study endeavoured to establish the role played by each of these chiefs in colonial penetration.

Njeru (2016) discusses how Mbeere peasants from Embu County have emancipated themselves from poverty by improving fruit and dairy farming. The author traces peasantry from colonial origins to understand the origin of Mbeere farming innovation. He argues that the Mbeere were not active participants in the freedom struggle. However, their three colonial chiefs, Kombo Munyiri, Rubia wa Ngotho and Mwandiko Ngira, were collaborators. He further alludes that these chiefs were able to internalise virtues of colonialism like education. Therefore, they viewed education as the way out of poverty rather than the peasantry. In addition, Njeru contends that these chiefs were also known for enforcing recommendations of the Swynnerton Plan, which involved soil conservation and planned farming. Of interest to this study is how the author shows inequalities in the Mbeere community, where the chiefs and the council of elders occupied the top of the social hierarchy, indicating that chiefs within the Mbeere community existed and determined the fate of the community. Njeru further alludes that the Mbeere were not active participants in the freedom struggle, yet the Mau Mau movement comprised the active and passive participants in Kenya.

Ndubai (2016) holds that there were categories of allegiance to the Mau Mau movement: active supporters (fighters, oath administrators, Mau Mau committee members and couriers) accounting for 10%. Passive supporters (groups that aided the Mau Mau) accounted for 70%, while the actively anti-Mau Mau (Home Guards, government servants, Christian missionaries) 10%. Lastly, passively anti-Mau Mau group, accounting for 10%, those Africans who had acquired responsibility in the colonial administration, their degree of allegiance to the Mau Mau movement was complicated to gauge as they played double roles.

The passive support group and passively anti-Mau Mau insurgency group need to be recognised in the liberation struggle. Without their efforts, the forest fighters could not have made progress. Njeru (2016) further posits that the colonialists viewed the Mbeere as passive groups as they were not entirely into the Mau Mau movement. Not being fully into the Mau Mau does not qualify dismissal that the Mbeere people did not participate in the Mau Mau struggle. They suffered similar working conditions as Kikuyu and Embu as they participated in the colonial economy as suppliers of cheap labour on the European settler farms. As much as the Mbeere chiefs are termed collaborators, there is a need to interrogate their role in colonial penetration. Did they manage to control massive recruitment of the Mbeere into the Mau Mau movement, or some of them were serving two masters, one during the day and another at night? Ambler (1988) gives an example of Chief Kombo of Mbeere, who is reported to have said, he belongs to the Mbeere tribe, the Mbeere section of the Kikuyu tribe. The Kikuyu, by then, were tackling land issues, and he saw it wise to attach himself to the Kikuyu identity.

Ndubai's (2016) work aimed to establish the role of the Ameru people in the Mau Mau movement. He avers that the Mau Mau struggle's written history tends to cover the Agikuyu more than the Ameru, despite their contribution to Kenya's independence. He further argues that the Ameru are just mentioned casually; hence the struggle for Kenya's sovereignty seems to be selective and exclusively a Kikuyu affair. Similarly, Kaburu (2012) contends that colonisation denied Africans the opportunity to attain their basic needs; hence, a violent uprising was imminent. For the Ameru to achieve the necessities, they struggled to sustain themselves, which had a long-lasting impact. Of interest to the proposed study is how he conducted oral interviews with the chiefs who served in the colonial administration. According to the response of one paramount chief, he argues that those days were difficult for the chiefs because they had to be sympathetic to the Mau Mau movement's cause while exposing themselves to the dangers of disloyalty to their master. He also quotes the Meru District Annual report of 1944, which shows how the British government was optimistic that for her Majesty's government to be functional, they had to rely on chiefs; without their cooperation, it would be difficult to govern. Thus, in Meru, chiefs played a critical role in mobilising the local people to fight for the British government.

The District Annual report for 1940 shows that the Meru people, led by Chief M' Angaine and other chiefs, contributed 231 bulls to fund the British participation in the Second World War. Chief Angaine's contribution made him recognised and awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE). To make colonial chiefs in Meru influence decisions, they were selected to the Njuri Ncheke to favour the government. The appointment of some of Njuri Ncheke's elders to the ranks of the chiefs was perceived as interference with Meru's traditional systems. The author alludes that the Mau Mau

movement was active towards the end of 1947. In 1948, the Mau Mau oathing ritual was ongoing in Central Kenya and urban centres among the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities. He further argues that the oath united the community from children to elders except for the chiefs and headmen. To counter the Mau Mau oath previously taken, the colonial chiefs engaged in de-oathing processes in the Meru region to change their allegiance to the Mau Mau movement. Colonial chiefs were influential as they were tasked to ensure natives followed all government policies without question. Nevertheless, others sympathised with the Mau Mau movement's cause and offered support discreetly.

Ndubai further argues that despite the submissiveness of chiefs to the colonial government, Chief M' Tuerando of Abothuguchi location questioned government policies, which he thought, were not beneficial to the people. Chief M' Tuerando is portrayed as far-sighted and development-oriented, able to enforce development projects in their jurisdiction. He was able to foresee the construction of roads, bridges, churches and commercial centres. Therefore, this study endeavoured to establish the role of Mbeere chiefs in the penetration of colonial administration and find any similarities or differences.

2.3 Assessment of the Contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau Struggle

Appadurai (2006) points out that minorities and majorities are recent historical inventions tied up with ideas about nations, representation and enumeration. In the contemporary world, political participation underlays the views of the majority and minority. Appadurai also discusses predatory identities that emerge due to long histories of close contact and mixing. He contends that predatory identities sometimes claim to require the extinction of another for their survival. In addition, Appadurai

alludes that small numbers represent a tiny obstacle to the majority, creating the anxiety of incompleteness. In explaining the anxiety of incompleteness, Appadurai uses India as an example where Hindus view themselves as ultimately defining India but not totally. Therefore, the presence of others leads to incompleteness. Due to a sense of incomplete purity, in some cases, there are efforts to eliminate the minority or assimilate them and disregard their contributions to activities of national glory.

Schlee (2007) focuses on identity games in Northern Kenya, where the Ajaran of Kenya in the colonial period were regarded as Oromo and later claimed to be Somali, denying any association they had with the Oromo. Schlee further argues that the re-identification occurs in a contested environment in the form of water and pasture. So, identity games are made on considerations based on political and economic needs. Re-identification is also connected with niche creation, where boundary lines between ethnicities are drawn, leading to fixed territories. Schlee's work is essential to the proposed study. It shows how the identity game is associated with the memory of past identification, especially in societies with a steady deterioration of relationships beyond resources but on collective memory. In identity games, one community is celebrated at the expense of the other, hindering their contribution to suffice.

Mwaruvie (2011) posits that the Mbeere economy, like any other Kenya economy, was integrated into the colonial metropolitan economy. The Mbeere were compelled to facilitate the colony's development through different taxation forms, offering free labour. Revenue collection, especially of hut tax, angered the Mbeere, who never saw the rationale of paying taxes for the house they built even before the white man arrived in their area. Mwaruvie (2011) further argues that tax collection was brutal and often

involved raping, caning, and confiscating properties in Mbeere. The chiefs in Mbeere also demanded more than the required three rupees and engaged in the appropriation of livestock. British capitalist system penetration into Mbeere profoundly impacted their peasant mode of production and culture. Therefore, although the Mbeere never felt land alienation like the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, their freedom (weiyathi) was curtailed by colonial state mechanisms. So imperialist capitalist pressure was felt by people in high potential areas and marginal places like the Mbeere. Thus, they reacted to colonialism, hence assessing evidence of their contribution to the Mau Mau movement's struggle.

Mwaruvie also elucidates that the Mbeere history has been underresearched for a long time. Hence treated as an appendage of their neighbours, the Embu. He demonstrates how the Mbeere engaged in barter trade with their neighbours. Of interest from the reviewed book is how the Mbeere war leaders guided the British to the Embu expedition of 1906. This act broke the relationship of previously close friends who shared the loot after raids and how Chief Rumbia, Munyiri Kinuku, Kinani Murumbi got shares of stolen property of the Embu. In the ensuing years, the relationship went sour, as evidenced by the Embu invading Mbeere at Kanyuambora market during the Mau Mau war of resistance, killing 15 Mbeere. Chief Mwandiko retaliated by organising his warriors to invade Kathunguri in Kyeni south, allegedly burning children in school. Glazier (1985) also mentions Kanyuambora's incidence and what happened during the emergency. In 1953 and 1954, skirmishes occurred between the Mau Mau adherents from Embu and Mbeere.

Osborne (2011) revisits the issue of participation and ethnicity in the Mau Mau movement. He argues that the Kamba played a role in the Mau Mau struggle. However,

their support for the movement was passive, not en masse, due to the astronomical colonial government's programmes. Osborne uses memoirs written by the Mau Mau fighters, declassified British colonial documents of 2006 and the author's interviews to make his argument. Despite the Kamba being cousins of the Kikuyu and living to the southeast of the Kikuyu land, the colonial administration hoodwinked the Kamba ethnic group to alienate them from Kikuyu (Osborne, 2010). Osborne argues that voluminous literature touches on the Kikuyu sidelining other Kenya communities; therefore, little research on heroes from other communities. He gives an example of uncelebrated generals like Kirita Ole Kisio of the Maasai.

Osborne further contends that these omissions did injustice to communities left out, especially today when the Mau Mau movement victims seek compensation for their atrocities in different detention camps during the 1950s. On the eve of a state of emergency, the British government was determined to curtail the Mau Mau ideas. For example, he argues that the British government restricted movement between the Kamba reserves and Kikuyu land. In addition, the colonial government passed a traffic amendment to prohibit vehicles travelling by night and increase police patrol at night. Osborne's article is essential to the current study because it shows that despite government efforts to keep the Kamba away from the movement, they could not control them. The Akamba feared that if Kenya gained independence without their participation, they would not enjoy the spoils of freedom. In 1953, Osborne alludes that the colonial government was concerned due to the increasing penetration of the Mau Mau insurgency in Ukambani and Kamba gangs colluding with the Kikuyu to finish off a chief in Ukambani. In addition, the article contributes to the latest scholarship that revisits the Mau Mau historiography, which has voluminous studies focusing on the Mau Mau insurgency as a Kikuyu affair. He argues that to fully understand the Mau

Mau episode, it is essential to situate how resistance in the colonial period intersected with ethnicity. This study endeavoured to assess evidence similar to the Akamba and then show Mbeere's contribution to the Mau Mau struggle for Kenya's independence.

Koster (2016) executed field-works in Meru-Laare, Embu-Kianjokoma, NDEFFO-Njoro, Othaya, Londiani, Machakos, Kitui and Siakago among the Mbeere on the power of oath. Her study opens a recent conversation on the importance of the oath in enhancing nationalism. She argues that the Kikuyu, Kamba, Meru, Mbeere and the Embu were not enemies. On the contrary, they collectively joined the Mau Mau movement and united based on oath commonalities and used the oath at the local level to unite members based on ethnicity.

Similarly, Kariuki (2009) argues that the oath of unity was intended to unite the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru, and other Kenya tribes. He also notes that the oath was forced on Kenyans who sometimes did not wish to take it. Depending on the Mbeere geographical location, their Uvariri medicine fame had reached Tanganyika and Mount Kenya region. Their prior mastery of oathing compared with the traditional oath Kaurugo in solemnising transactions accompanied by the despair of British domination, they could not have escaped the oathing process. Those who refused were forced to take the oath (Glazier, 1970). There was a similarity in comparing the Kaurugo oath with the Mau Mau oath. For example, after taking both oaths, each phrase uttered similar words if one did contrarily to the oath. Koster concludes that every community (Gikuyu, Embu, Meru, Kamba and Mbeere) have their own stories and oath interpretation. The book is helpful because it is contemporary research when ex-freedom fighters' need for recognition and reparation is relentless. Her study strengthens the Mau Mau insurgency as a

nationalist movement embraced by the Mbeere and other non-Kikuyu communities. It also separates the Mbeere from the Embu in Mau Mau consciousness hence a need for further research on the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle for independence, having taken the oath to liberate Kenya.

Blacker (2007) revisits data that states that hundreds of thousands of Kikuyu and others died because of the strict approach of the Mau Mau Emergency in Kenya. He argues that the data was based on comparative figures of the 1948 and 1962 censuses. Blacker argues that the change vitiated Caroline Elkins's comparison due to tribal classification. His article highlights the 1962 census report, stating that in 1948, the Mbeere and the Tharaka were classified as the Embu and Meru, respectively. In the 1962 census, both groups were treated as tribes. It is also clear that the 1962 census brought in tribal classification, and the Mbeere were classified as a tribe. He further states that a warning on the 1979 census indicated a trend of absorbing smaller tribes by the large ones, for example, the Mbeere absorption by the Embu and the Tharaka by the Ameru. Amalgamating the Embu and the Mbeere in the 1930s nullified the identity of the Mbeere, censoring their history in the Mau Mau struggle. Hence, further studies on the evidence of Mbeere's contribution to the Mau Mau struggle are needed.

Likimani (1985) portrays women's experiences during the emergency period, especially after the enforcement of pass laws, which led to massive deportation, interrogation and detentions. Likimani's book is written from personal experiences and gives insight into women's experiences in the emergency period. The book is essential to the current study because it portrays the life of the Mau Mau adherents in Nairobi. It reinforces the portrayal of the Mau Mau insurgency as a bloody revolution instigated

from below by the Kikuyu, Embu and the Meru. Likimani asserts that the colonial government required people from Central Province to have passbooks to ensure scrutiny. Likimani further examines the meeting between the District Commissioner Steel of Nairobi with the chiefs and sub-chiefs. The District Commissioner was categorical that all Kenyan tribes were behind people fighting for freedom. He further argued that people from Central Province, especially the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, were the originators. However, as Likimani mentions, the District Commissioner offers only the largest groups' contribution. They point out a gap that necessitates further research on the contribution of smaller groups excluded in the Mau discourse, like the Mbeere, who were also affected by the emergency and the impacts of the passbook.

Savo (2018) argues that South Africa was conceptualised as a white man's country during colonial rule. Colonialism and apartheid used education, knowledge and knowledge production to maintain white supremacy and structural domination. He further posits a need to decolonise knowledge to rewrite histories and reassert the oppressed dignity for posterity. Furthermore, Savo contends that the decolonisation of knowledge in South Africa should have taken place in 1994 as a critical priority to end the reliance on imposed knowledge. Still, South African universities favour Eurocentric knowledge that maintains structural domination. He proposes dismantling the pedagogy of big lies, followed by the decolonised curriculum and placing South Africa in the centre of research, knowledge and thinking. Thus, there is a need to revisit and rewrite the existing dominant histories colonists imposed for posterity. This study is essential to the proposed research as it shows how African countries, Kenya included, received political freedom. However, African universities still convey injustices through Eurocentric knowledge, leading to historical inequality and misrepresentation, as

observed in the Mau Mau historiography. To support her claim, Frantz Fanon (1961) points out that colonial education distorted and destroyed the future of the colonised. Some African scholars also propagated colonial education. The proposed study endeavoured to revisit and rewrite the Mau Mau historiography written from a Eurocentric view to assess the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau struggle and examine the reasons for their exclusion in the Mau Mau discourse.

Chafer (2002) postulates that in French West Africa, the broader nationalist movement played a role in building pressure on the French government. When the African leaders took over power, they tended to outwit their opponents in the nationalist struggle. With help from their ethnic groups, these leaders portrayed themselves as true African nationalists neglecting the role of other ethnic groups. He also notes that the winner wrote history; therefore, many questions remain unanswered, and many voices remain unheard. Therefore, there is a need to open debates that challenge this orthodoxy to suggest alternative histories. In addition, Chafer questions Jean- Louis Triaud's suggestion that the Muslim factor be discounted in preparation for independence. His view is that there is a need for more research on the voices that have remained unheard in the anti-colonial struggle). Chafer's work informs the current study by highlighting that some players' contribution to the decolonisation struggle has not been acknowledged. Therefore, little has been written about them, hence a need to research them and appreciate their role.

Clough (2003) points out that imperial propagandists negatively portrayed the Mau Mau movement. John Lonsdale (1990) expounds the same, where there are multiple interpretations by conservatives and Christian fundamentalists. To date, similar

curricula remain disconnected from the realities and lived experiences of the Mau Mau veterans. It is also used to suppress the voice of communities at the periphery in the Mau Mau struggle. Therefore, there is a need to challenge these discourses and misconceptions, which continue to shape ways of knowing by assessing the evidence of the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle to construct the everyday realities of Mau Mau historiography. This study attempted to determine the evidence of the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau struggle.

Durrani (2018) examines the historical resistance of Kenyans against colonialism at different stages. The resistance ranged from peasant to nationalist opposition when Kenya was under British domination. He terms the Mau Mau insurgency an armed struggle for land and freedom for the people of Kenya. However, the colonial government did not acknowledge the Mau Mau struggle as a war of independence for fear of other oppressed people joining the movement or starting their war of independence. Therefore, the colonial government misrepresented history for their gains and tagged them as 'terrorists' to create a false impression. Using the term 'terrorist,' they used all means available to quell 'savage acts'. Literature written by Peter Hewitt and Lovatt portrays the British colonial government handling the Mau adherents and hard cores humanely. No excessive force was used to curtail the spread of the Mau Mau movement. However, Durrani's (2018) book portrays a different picture. First, Durrani argues that there was the determination of the British colonial government to erase all its darker deeds. Second, the cruelty and barbarism of the British in suppressing the movement. He points out that between 1952 and 1954, there was a judicial massacre. By the end of the emergency, mobile gallows were built explicitly for prisoners to be hanged in their homes (the travelling gallows were erected in a sentenced

man's home at dawn before execution to instil fear and warning). Of interest to this study are deliberate destruction and hiding of information that affected writing history, showing that only a tiny fraction of Kenyans participated in the Mau Mau struggle. Secondly, the effect it had on surviving victims and their descendants' lost properties and a chance to educate their children due to colonial plunder. Durrani argued that this is adding insult to injury. Nevertheless, Durrani's book is helpful to the current study as it acknowledges the progression of Kenya's national liberation distorted historical interpretations from Britain to Kenya's ruling elites. Hence, a need to assess the evidence of the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau struggle and whether the distortion has affected their inclusivity in Mau Mau discourse.

Durrani's book being contemporary, emphasised how many Kenyans supported the Mau Mau insurgency for Kenya's independence. The Mau Mau movement attacks took place in many parts of the country, from Mombasa to Kisumu. He further posited that the complete history of those who participated needs to be researched and written. He, however, identifies groups that participated in the war of independence yet are rarely recognised. These include women who are seldom covered in the struggle. Secondly, he mentions the Akamba and how the colonial government was worried about infiltrating the Mau Mau doctrine into ethnic groups other than the Kikuyu. He reveals a Kamba General named Kavyu and that in every fighting group of thirty, five or six were Kamba. Thirdly, the contribution of the Maasai under *Mzee* Paita's leadership, who headed the Mau Mau fighters in Kajiado and how Oldoinyo Orok hosted more than 2000 Mau Mau freedom fighters. Another warrior among the Maasai was general Ole Kisio, who led the Narok war front. The book is helpful to this study as it shows that the Mau Mau movement was not a Kikuyu affair as the colonialists claimed. This

study, therefore, endeavoured to examine the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle as little attention has been paid to them.

Glazier (1985) examined land tenure and social changes among the Mbeere and how land tenure transformation was external. The current study also examines how the Mbeere related with their neighbours, the authority of the colonial rule and finally, the post-independence government. Glazier further alludes that various observers noted similarities between the Mbeere and their neighbours, and sometimes they were viewed as the Kikuyu's sub-tribes. Also, as residents of the multi-District termed Kikuyu Land Unit (KLU), the Mbeere, Meru, Embu and Kikuyu were occasionally conceptualised as a single entity. Glazier also noted that Mbeere ethnicity was also used to encompass Kikuyu identity with all the Bantu peoples of Mt. Kenya perimeter. This was done for political expediency, and there was the invocation of the myth of the origin of Gikuyu and Mumbi. This was later affirmed by oath-taking ceremonies of the early 1970s in Central Province to confirm their support for continuing political domination of the Kikuyu and allied people. The Mbeere's neighbours used them to justify political gain, yet their history is never mentioned in the liberation struggles. In addition, Glazier describes how hard it was for a Mbeere seeking job in Nairobi to be employed; therefore, there was a shifting of ethnic identity and identifying as Kikuyu. This study, therefore, attempted to assess the evidence of the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau movement.

Jomo Kenyatta (1938) detailedly studied the life and customs of the Gikuyu before the advent of colonialism. Kenyatta portrays the Gikuyu as people conditioned by social and cultural institutions conditioned them. Kenyatta challenged the colonial

administration's view of customary laws governing African land as communal. The colonialists' conception of African land as communal translated it to government property, seizing African farms and turning the Gikuyu into serfdom. In this monograph, Kenyatta portrayed how communities related to each other, such as how the Kaptei Maasai joined Southern Gikuyu warriors to invade Loita Maasai or a section of Gikuyu, the Mbeere or the Tharaka. The monograph review is valuable in shedding light on how the Mbeere were regarded as part of the Gikuyu in pre-colonial times. The monograph demonstrates divergent views on the ethnic identity before colonialism, detaching the Mbeere from the Kikuyu. The current study endeavoured to assess evidence of Mbeere's contribution to the Mau Mau movement struggle independent of the Agikuyu.

Maina wa Kinyati (2000) provided a different perspective of the Mau Mau insurgency by using documents that he terms underutilised. These documents include the Dedan Kimathi papers, former Mau Mau cadres' literature and guerrilla revolutionary songs to show that the Mau Mau movement was an uprising against Kenya's invaders. He traces Kenyans' resistance stretching from 1800 to 1900. He argued that Africans were increasingly dissatisfied from 1947 to 1952, opting to organise themselves into anti-colonial groups. In 1951-1952, the Kenyan masses were impatient with Jomo Kenyatta and Mbiyu Koinange's peaceful transition to self-government. Therefore, KAU militant wing opted for a violent uprising against the British government. Kinyatti's book is key to the current study because it shows the Mau Mau movement as an uprising emerging from the working class in Nairobi and Rift valley, then supported by peasant masses in Central Kenya. Wa Kinyati further alludes that the movement was for most Kenyan people and people from Central Kenya viewed the Mau Mau insurgency as "their

tongue, their voice, ears, brain and blood in their hearts and veins." He also alludes that the Mau Mau movement was open to any Kenyan regardless of origin as long as one accepted to follow the rules and regulations and then took the anti-imperialist oath. Since the Mbeere lived within Central Kenya as peasants, there is a need to assess their contribution to the Mau Mau struggle.

Brokensha and Glazier (1973) have argued that there was high infiltration of strangers, especially the Kamba and Kikuyu in Embu. Also, the construction of work camps in Mbeere where the estimated number of detainees in Embu and Kirinyaga was 12,500. Of these, Mwea had seven detention camps holding about 7,000 prisoners, most brought from Kikuyu areas. The influx was due to the Kikuyu, who relocated during the 1950s. The overcrowding in the camps destabilised the regional economy and ecology, which affected the Mbeere people—in addition, crowding contributed to health and sanitation problems, and village dispensaries that depended on the detained Kikuyu workforce also suffered closure temporarily during the emergency period. The curfew reduced the time for the communities in Embu District to engage in their normal agricultural activities. For example, Ndia and Embu, known as the Central Province breadbasket, were hard hit. The curfew affected the Mbeere, who depended on their neighbour for agricultural products. Market closures that were effected with little warning affected these communities, which engaged in barter trade. Closings could be extended up to three months. Trade and labour migration were also affected because crossing District boundaries were curtailed, and no one could go without a pass or loyalty certificate. History is mute on the role played by the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle in Embu District, hence the need for this study.

Lovatt (2005) discusses oathing. Having worked as a field intelligence officer in the 1950s, he offers firsthand account information. He argued that oathing was a traditional way of confirming agreements, and this was the first method used for the Mau Mau oath. He asserts that discontented Kikuyu took the Mau Mau oath among the squatters on European farms and then spread it to squatters. In addition, since the Mau Mau oath needed to be a secret, the oath administrators had to do several things against Kikuyu customs. Therefore, it became necessary to force people to take the oath when they showed unwillingness to participate in the movement and promised never to disclose the secret. Of interest to the current study is how the author describes the early oathing in Fort Hall. Lovatt argued that when oathing commenced in 1951 and 1952, it was carried out by residents in Nairobi and that most oathing ceremonies took place during weekends organised by Nairobi' corner boys.'

Thurley (1955) describes corner boys as boys who stared sullenly at the white man passing and muttered obscene jokes when they saw *memsahib* (white women). Since circumstances also forced the Mbeere to go and work in Nairobi, together with the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, it is unknown who constituted the Nairobi corner boys. Boys went back to their locations to administer the oath, hence massive oathing that spread to almost all parts of Central Kenya. Operation Anvil targeted Central Province residents, and anybody arrested was taken to detention camps or centres. Some of the Mbeere working in towns were also repatriated back to Embu District. Lovatt (2005) further observes that in detention camps or centres Mau Mau movement committee was operational, and there was no way one could have stayed there without taking one or more oaths. This study, therefore, aimed to examine evidence of the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau struggle for Kenya's independence.

2.4 The Reasons for Exclusion of the Mbeere in Mau Mau Discourse

Furley (1971) believes there was a lack of comprehensive study on the Mau Mau movement organisation. He further noted that the first documents on the events of the Mau Mau war were written by Europeans who wanted to exonerate themselves from the situation they had created for Kenyans. Secondly, the reports from missionaries viewed the Mau Mau movement as an anti-Christian movement that could be tacked through spiritual renewal and improved social and economic conditions. Finally, settlers' memoirs justified the statement from the British government and missionaries. In addition, Furley posits that many writings on the Mau Mau movement portrayed it as a simple historical event started by Kikuyu and ended with the Kikuyu.

Ngugi wa Thiongo contends that the conflict in Kenya was between Africans and Europeans due to three fundamental forces; economic, cultural and political reasons (Maina wa Kinyatti, 2000). Ngugi's position is inclusive in that it does not portray the Mau Mau insurgency as centred on land and freedom. By analysing the three forces, the movement was not limited to the Kikuyu but Africans in Kenya. To single out one of them is over-simplification and curtailing other communities to be celebrated in the war of decolonisation as it has happened to the Mbeere people, whose contributions remain as few scattered footnotes.

Ambler (1989) analyses the role of customs and tradition in advancing colonial rule in Kenya. Ambler portrays Embu District as comprising two communities, the Embu proper and the Mbeere, with a population of 60,000. Each community occupied unique climatic conditions. Therefore, Europeans believed that the two communities' identities were fluid and overlapping, and their boundaries were indistinct. Ambler further

claimed that the communities in Embu and Mbeere were indistinguishable from the British, who wished to rule using indigenous authorities. Ambler's article is essential to the proposed study in shedding light on how the British could not distinguish the two communities. Therefore, when the British imposed their rule in Embu and Mbeere were drawn into the emerging political economy as one (Embu) and had to search for opportunities to earn cash wages far away in Nairobi. The Embu and the Mbeere were labelled as the Embu ethnicity in such endeavours. Therefore, the Mbeere missing out in the Mau Mau struggle or hidden within the Embu is complex.

Hewitt (2008) offers his experiences as a police officer since he arrived in Kenya to serve the colonial government. He gives an overview of settlement with the proportion of areas occupied by Africans and Europeans. The territories occupied by the indigenous population of about 52,000 square miles are of interest to this study. Territories are also conceptualised in Mau Mau songs. Out of these 52,000 square miles, a sixteenth was the Kikuyu Land Unit. He alludes that the KLU spread from the Kikuyu escarpment North of Nairobi to Fort Hall and Embu, then it stretched to Mount Kenya, Meru and Isiolo to the North (Hewitt, 2008).

Berman and Lonsdale (1992) also noted that the Kikuyu wanted to be united with the Embu and Meru, and therefore, they extended the house of Mumbi and Gikuyu from Ngong to Karimatula (Garba Tula). Hewitt (2008) states that this vast reserve was meant for the Kikuyu ethnic community. He also acknowledges aspects of collaboration with the Mau Mau adherents due to the Kikuyu and Maasai intermarriages. The book is an account of a colonial officer, and the pertinent question could be raised, for example, what was on the colonial mind regarding ethnic identification? This is because

Europeans perceived the Kikuyu ethnic community settled on the expansive Kikuyu Land Unit, where the government employed mass arrests, torture, curfews and screening to quell any uncertainties. It shows that the colonial administrators could not pinpoint who was who and that within the Kikuyu Land Unit, none of the ethnic groups was immune from punitive measures of the colonial government.

Muriithi, identified as lieutenant-general Kamwana (1971), discusses the ordeals he underwent as a Mau Mau movement veteran when he took his first oath as a forest fighter, his experiences in detention and later his release. Muriithi narrates how deadly the oath process was and how it made him a changed man, with a feeling of unity and a belief in the cause of nationalism. He further contends that it took time before the colonial administrators recognised the secret oathing, which many people in Central Province had taken. Like his mother, those who were reluctant to take the oath received a severe beating. He further argued that his mother's stubbornness threatened the safety of fellow freedom fighters. It shows the risk of being labelled a betrayer or a collaborator, and the Mau Mau Law book was clear on the penalty of the betrayer. Of interest to this study is that Mau Mau operated within forest zones from his narration. However, when Muriithi was arrested and placed in Marua cell, people from Nanyuki, Nairobi and Kisumu were arrested for being members of the Mau Mau insurgency. Therefore, it thus contradicts the assertion that the participants were only from communities around Mount Kenya and the Aberdare ranges. He also mentions that when he joined the Mau Mau fighting group in the forest, their survivability was pegged on those who were outside the forest as informers, food suppliers, Home Guards who had taken the oath and scouts; hence the current study intends to consider the contribution of those who were far from the forest like the Mbeere people. He also

mentions how his friends were well received in the Embu reserves and hailed as heroes. Nevertheless, a great deal of information is not known about those who resided in the Embu reserves, whether Embu and Mbeere people or Embu proper alone.

Maloba (1998) presents the Mau Mau movement as one of the most significant peasant revolts against the British colonisation of Africa. Of importance to this study is how Maloba describes the scenario after 1952 under Sir Evelyn Baring, who had a complex character and no military experience and appeared indecisive. Clayton (2006) also argues that the situation in Kenya was entirely outside his experience, and his adviser Dr. L.S.B. Leakey did not understand the legitimate grievances of the Kikuyu people. Maloba further observes that in 1953, the colonial troops had failed to isolate and eliminate the Mau Mau guerrillas. Due to frustrations, they used to harass Africans in their residential areas at night. He also posits that due to a lack of intelligence, the colonial government increased the bullying of Kenyans out of frustration. However, when Waruhiu Itote (General China) was captured, he revealed the Mount Kenya Committee consisting of militant personalities drawn from different Districts, including Embu. In 1954, the British government launched Operation Anvil, which placed Nairobi under police and military siege, capturing the Mau Mau activists and innocent people. Maloba asserts that the Kikuyu/Embu and Meru people were targeted for supporting the Mau Mau insurgency in operations. Maloba's book gives a vivid picture of how the operation was indiscriminate and brutal, and there is no way Mbeere could have escaped since they came from Embu District. Therefore, there is a need to examine the reasons for their exclusion in the Mau Mau discourse.

Fadiman (1933) gives a historical account of the Meru's migration and eventual settlement on the slopes of Mount Kenya in the late 19th century and their encounter with European missionaries and early administrators. The book shed light on Mukuna Ruku; he contended that it relates to the histories of the Gikuyu, Embu and adjacent Mbeere. In addition, Fadiman claims that the Gikuyu, Embu and the Mbeere inhabited different regions and that by 1904 the British extended military protection to the Mbeere, who bordered Embu on the East. The Mbeere acquired guns, crossed borders, raided and defeated the Embu. The book review helps demonstrate that the Mbeere had a migration history like her neighbours. By the 19th century, drawing ethnic community boundaries, communities like the Mbeere were aware of their distinctions with their neighbours. The Mbeere as a distinct ethnic group contradicts Kenyatta's view where he lumps them with the Gikuyu. The Mbeere, a separate ethnic group, are barely mentioned in the Mau Mau movement's struggle. This study aimed to examine reasons that hindered the inclusiveness of the Mbeere community in the Mau Mau struggle for Kenya's Independence.

Hewitt (2008) further notes that the Kikuyu and their kindred ethnic communities engaged in Mau Mau oathing to incapacitate the white settlers. Clearly, the colonial government could not pinpoint who was a Kikuyu and who was not, or they lumped together all ethnic communities as Kikuyu. Different ethnic groups, for example, the Mbeere, who were on the fringes of Mount Kenya, as shown in Figure 1.1, inhabited the Kikuyu Land Unit, and there is a need to assess evidence of their contribution to the Mau Mau movement. In addition, Hewitt mentions the collaboration aspect of the Maasai with the Mau Mau insurgency, offering refuge to fugitive gangs and later terrorising the settlers. It is clear evidence that the history of the Mau Mau movement

is not inclusive; it included even those communities who were out of the Kikuyu Land Unit. Therefore, there is a need to examine the reasons for the exclusion of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau discourse, yet they lived in the fringes of the Kikuyu Land Unit and were probably perceived as the Kikuyu; Embu or Meru.

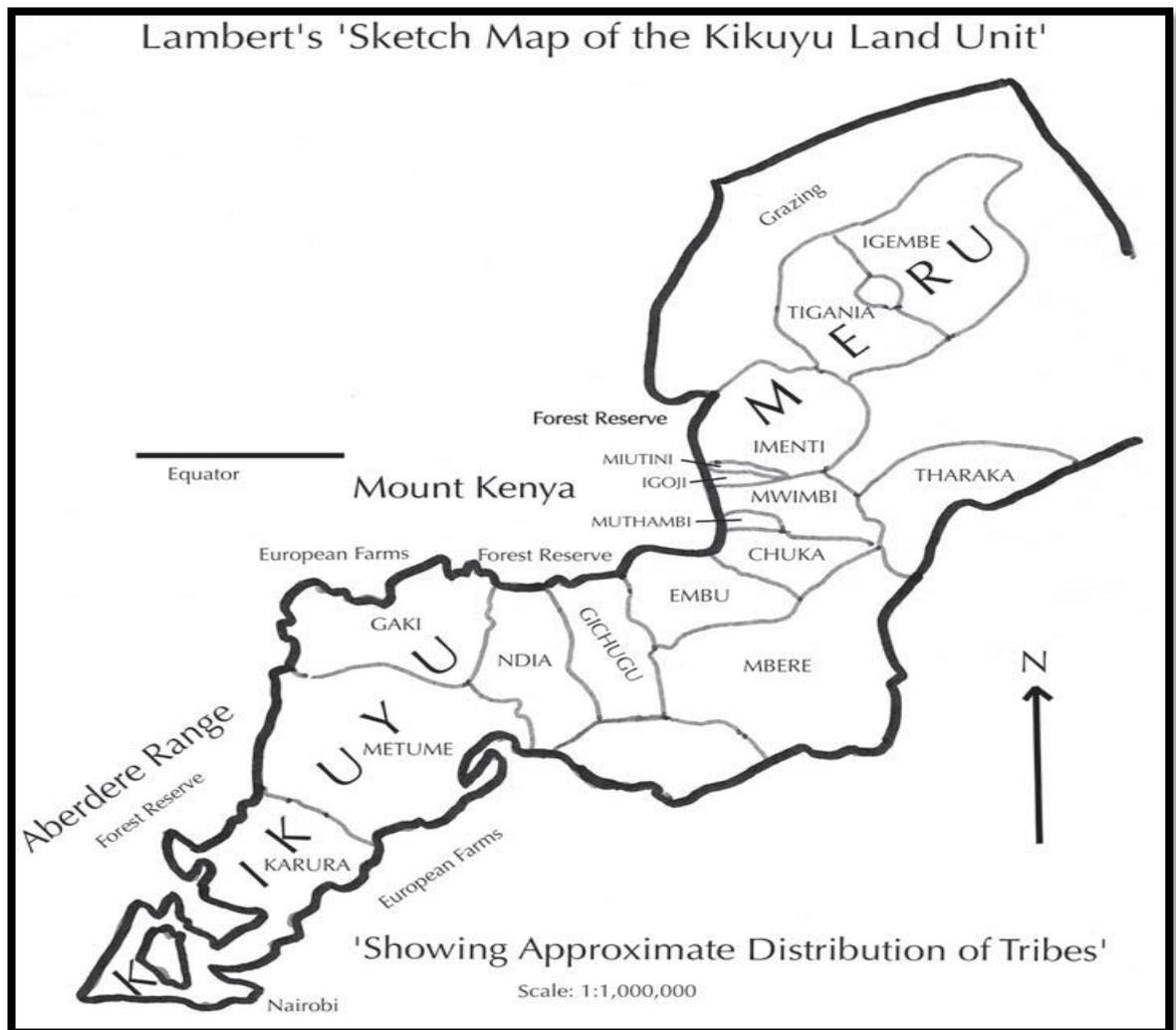


Figure 2.1: A sketch map of the Kikuyu Land Unit (1949)

Sourced from H. E Lambert, 'the systems of land tenure in the Kikuyu Land Unit: History of Occupation of the land,' *Communications from the School of African Studies*, 1949.

Hornsby's (2012) book focuses on accounts of post-independence Kenya, concentrating on the state and its rule by arguing that many written histories of Kenya

focus on colonial domination and the Mau Mau conflict. Of interest to this study is how the book illuminates the issue of neo-patrimonialism, ethnicity and the fruits of independence. The author claimed that by 1963 the Kikuyu were the majority with the related Embu, Meru, Mbeere, Meru and the Tharaka, but also demonstrates that ethnic labels ascribed to Kenyans early twentieth century were not identical to those used today. He explains how Basuba, who in the 1962 census were separately identified but were absorbed linguistically and administratively into the Luo. The aggregation of communities by creating District boundaries by the British colonialists profoundly reduced the self-ascribed ethnic groups. From Hornsby's book, it is clear that some communities were identified on tribal rather than the sub-tribal label, making them lose identity in the colonial struggles.

Branch's (2007) article explains how counterinsurgency campaigns against the Mau Mau rebels created loyalists. Loyalists supported the colonial military campaign against their fellow Embu, Meru and the Kikuyu Mau Mau insurgents. Branch further asserts that it was not fear or supernatural punishment that made people join the insurgent, but the movement promised to deliver land and freedom. The promise provoked many to support the insurgency. They believed land offered self-mastery; however, by 1954, the Mau Mau movement failed to deliver the promise of self-mastery. From 1952-54, approximately 13,000 Gikuyu, Embu and Meru were acknowledged as casualties of the anti-colonial violence, and tens of thousands of the insurgency sympathisers were in fortified villages. In contrast, the loyalists were expanding their landholdings and growing cash crops. As the Mau Mau movement war progressed, people chose to receive what the movement had promised from the colonialists.

Branch further contends that significant numbers of loyalists emerged from late 1954 onwards. He also alludes that some joined the loyalists for revenge after the Mau Mau insurgents killed their loved ones. Others joined due to religious factors; for example, Jeremiah Nyagah said he would rather die than take the Mau Mau oath. Branch (2007) holds that loyalists should not be depicted with few wealthy individuals acting in the service of the colonial master. It was hard to describe who was loyal despite public pronouncement to support the government. Many loyalists offered covert assistance to the Mau Mau insurgency. Branch article is essential to this study as it demonstrates that there was different motivation to collaborate or resist. The desire for self-mastery was the main idea. Branch analysis of loyalists indicates that loyalism was a choice of all ethnic groups in Central Province and that the population in Central Province oscillated between loyalism and Mau Mau adherents.

In addition, Branch posits that land shortages provoked dissent, attempts to reform land tenure, and attempts to ban clitoridectomy as experienced in Mbeere. His argument made it hard to label the Mbeere community as loyalists or collaborators because loyalism was guided by whether one attained self-mastery. Secondly, the British government promised loyalists to form the foundation of the government in the reconstruction period. The pledges to the Mbeere as purported collaborators are yet to be quantified. This is based on the analysis of employment and development done by Mwaruvie (2011). In the Mbeere region, the inhabitants remained forgotten compared to the Embu, whom the Mau Mau memory portrays as heroes. In addition, the literature mentions more of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru loyalists who benefited from the collaboration and continued to condemn the Mau Mau movement and publicly

denounce the rebellion; little is discussed on the loyalists from the Mbeere region if they existed.

2.5 Recognition and Compensation of the Mbeere by Kenya and British Governments

Brownhill (2009) focuses on claims submitted in letters to the British Foreign Secretary in October 2006. These letters aimed to sue Her Majesty's government for torture perpetrated during the emergency and, after that, address them. The atrocities that persisted in the colony were rape, systematic murder, forced confinement, mutilation, mass incarceration, collective punishment and destruction of property in the 1950s. Brownhill further argued that anyone who sympathised with or supported the Mau Mau movement's goals and objectives was arrested to silence the legitimacy of their grievances. The reviewed article demonstrates how the Mau Mau adherents were dispossessed in their struggle for freedom in the 1950s. Their atrocities had a long-term effect on the Mau Mau veterans. Some of the Mbeere supported the movement, and therefore, they were not immune to police brutality. Thus, separating the Mbeere from the Embu freedom fighters is essential to rebuild relations and question whether the Mbeere were included and compensated for justice realisation.

Elkins (2005) highlights the suffering Kenyans underwent in the system of detention introduced by the British government in 1952 to curb the Mau Mau menace. The author demonstrates how the Kikuyu were imprisoned in different camps in Kenya. She also describes the operating pipelines around 1956 in Embu District, where the Embu and the Mbeere resided. These camps include Dondueni, Gathigiri, Ishiara, Kandongu, Kanja, Mwea, Tebere and Thiba. In addition, Embu District had many works camps compared to other Districts in Central Province. Her work brings the history of the Mau

Mau movement to the limelight, especially on atrocities done by the British government in camps, systems of interrogation and villages as an approach to brainwashing the Mau Mau to produce upright citizens. Her work is essential to this study as it appreciates that all indigenous groups were affected by British colonial rule, but the ethnic group most affected was the Kikuyu.

Furthermore, the British forces reinforced ethnic identity by separating the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru from the rest of the population near the Hilton hotel in Nairobi. Apart from creating the ethnic identity, the British government created tribal divisions among the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. She states there were loyal Kikuyu, Embu and Meru who supported the government against the Mau Mau insurgency, leading to the introduction of loyal certificates distinguishing between loyalist supporters and former Mau Mau adherents. The reviewed book shed light that the British colonialists created altered and reinforced ethnic groups in the colonial era. Therefore, the Mbeere case is not a new phenomenon. Secondly, Kenyans suffered at the hand of the colonisers; hence, this study is essential to evaluate the impact of the war and whether the Mbeere freedom fighters have been recognised and compensated by the Kenyan and British governments.

Maina wa Kinyati (2008) terms Gikuyu, Embu and Meru comprador bourgeoisie, where the key figures were the Kikuyu who wanted to consolidate political and economic power. The GEMA association reflected the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru (GEM), leaving the smaller ethnic groups in the Central province. As a result, GEMA failed to ethnically convince many in Central Kenya to support its divisive politics. Lumping the Mbeere with the Embu denied them independent history from the Embu on the Mau Mau struggle, subsequently rarely appearing in the quest for land and other material gains

hence a need for further research to evaluate whether the Mbeere freedom fighters have been recognised and compensated by the Kenya government as land hunger remain a concern among the Mau Mau veterans.

Mwaniki (1973) claimed that the Embu and the Mbeere ritual are the same, meaning that they are culturally indistinguishable, and therefore, the name Embu has been the bearer of collective memory. When the British officials incorporated Northern Kenya, they failed to identify Ajuran as a community on its own but as Oromo. A similar case happened to the Mbeere, who became the 'other' of the Embu ethnicity. Games of inclusion and exclusion in Embu have been manifested since pre-colonial times. However, the magnitude has continued to widen, especially after promulgating the new constitution, where considerations are subject to ethnicity. As the identity game is manipulated, stakes have increased in Embu County, especially in the reparation process. This study examined whether the Kenyan and British governments have compensated the Mbeere people.

Castro and Ettenger (1994) examine the impact of counterinsurgency during the emergency from 1952-1960. The study focused on the Mau Mau suppression in Ndia and Gichugu to identify the effect of the British government's violence on rural communities. The scholars relied on field interviews conducted in Kirinyaga and Embu Districts. The current study covered Kirinyaga District, which in the 1950s was divided into Ndia and Gichugu divisions and were then administered as part of Embu District. They argue that the Mau Mau insurgency in Ndia and Gichugu attained widespread support, but the pattern of participation coincided with the local social and economic divisions. The authors further note that in Embu District, the number of deaths

attributed to the Mau Mau movement increased notably among people suspected as government informers, chiefs and government employees. Therefore, because the Mbeere were termed loyalists, they suffered a double tragedy in the hands of the colonialists and the neighbouring communities. It is estimated that the number of deaths among the Mbeere increased from three in 1952 to 109 in 1953. They allude that the government announced a night curfew for Ndia and Gichugu, the Kikuyu and Embu due to the state of emergency. To make the situation worse, the Embu District Council banned the gathering of ten people without permission and carrying more than two Embu or Meru in a motor vehicle. The new regulations forbade Africans from leaving employment or reserves without official approval. They also argue that no African over ten years old could enter Embu town without a pass. From their argument, the curfew and restriction imposed by the colonial government affected Africans not only the Gikuyu, Ndia, Embu and Gichugu but also the Mbeere, who were within the same regions at the periphery.

In addition, the emergency regulations of 1952 authorised the use of collective punishment against any community suspected of supporting the Mau Mau movement. There is no way the Mbeere could have escaped that based on their geographical location and need. The term support meant unwillingness to divulge details of the Mau Mau movement and abet Mau movement fighters. During the emergency period, massive migrations to the Mbeere regions were reported, especially after the colonial administration ordered the eviction of the entire population living within a mile of the Mount Kenya reserve. As the colonial government forced natives to abandon their fields, Kikuyu immigrants (ahoi) sought refuge in Mbeere.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed offers valuable insight into that the Mbeere do not appear in the decolonisation process in Kenya, yet they were in Kikuyu Land Unit. The Mbeere in Embu reserves were lumped together with the Embu, leading to the dearth of literature on their contributions. The omission of their contribution, especially in contemporary Kenya, when the Mau Mau veterans are being recognised and compensated for anguish by the British government, is grave. It limits the understanding of their role in Kenya's decolonisation process. The history of the 'popular' has overshadowed the Mbeere history hence the need for further research to fill the knowledge gap by examining the Mbeere ethnic community's involvement in the Mau Mau struggle for Kenya's independence.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study employed post-colonial perspectives (subaltern studies theory), a stream within post-colonial studies by subaltern studies groups, as a theoretical framework. Said's (1978) book on Orientalism inaugurated the field of colonial discourse that led to the development of post-colonial theory. Moreover, when the Global North came to the Global South, they imposed foreign rule and education that denigrated the African way of life. Therefore, post-colonial studies were committed to reviewing Eurocentrism, imperial ideology and nationalism as tenets of the theory.

Key proponent thinkers of the concept of subaltern are Antonio Gramsci (1929-1935), Ranjit Guha (1982) and Gayatri Spivak (1988) in her essay, "Can the subaltern speak?" Antonio Gramsci started the concept of subaltern class, an outcome of hegemony (the relationship between the dominant and dominated class). A dominant class is a leading faction with the power to articulate the interests of the faction. The connection is both consensus and coercion. The dominant group has the mandate to establish its worldview

as universal and shape the interest and needs of the subordinate groups. Therefore, Gramsci uses subaltern to mean the low-rank person or groups of people in a society suffering under the domination of the elite ruling class (Gramsci, cited in Quentin & Geoffrey, 1971, p. 191). The elites deny them the right to participate in making history as active nation members. He argued further that the subalterns are in a deplorable situation, limiting their access to the state and the only way to reach freedom is to break the master-slave pattern.

Guha was more concerned with examining the interplay of subjugation and domination in India (Spivak, 1988). He viewed the subaltern study as subordination that could be expressed regarding caste, gender, sex and class. Guha was guided by an assumption that colonial and nationalist bourgeois elites, products of British colonial rule, controlled the writing of Indian National history that did not acknowledge the contribution of ordinary people. Spivak (1988) viewed subalternity within new historical development brought about by capitalistic politics of undermining radical voices. She reconsidered the issue of subalterns by dealing with problems of gender in India in colonial times.

Furthermore, Spivak was concerned with how Sati women's practices under colonial rule were lost under two polarities: the British were calling for individual freedom of women and Hindu policy called for voluntary participation in rituals. In such a scenario, Indian women lost their voices due to the discursive group's attempts to voice their voices. It led to subjectivity as their free will was taken away. From Gayatri's point of view, expressing the oppressed group's resistance is impossible because of the existence of other dominant forces.

A small association maintained the assumption on colonialism response and guidance to independence, leading to missing the narrative on the enormous mass of subaltern Kenyans (Ahluwalia, 2012). As in the case of India, there were two types of elites in Kenya (colonialist and bourgeois nationalist elitism). The bourgeois nationalist elites emerged as an ideological product of British rule in Kenya. They were also assimilated into the neo-colonialist elitist historiography of the colonialists. Through assimilation and imitation, the native elites were involved in the political negotiation but expected a share of the colonial rule's wealth, power and prestige (Spivak, 1988). Kenyan nationalism was represented as an endeavour in which Kenyan elites led others from subjugation to freedom, shying away from collaborationist aspects of elites. In the real sense, the Mau Mau movement struggle operated outside the elite nationalist movement led by Jomo Kenyatta and the Kenya African Union, who condemned revolutionary, violent decolonisation. The elites' nationalism became a power broker, and history was written portraying Kenyatta as a messiah, a symbol of the struggle against oppression disregarding voices of discontentment that took up arms (Shamsul, 2007).

When Jomo Kenyatta took over power after Kenya's independence, he adopted a 'war of position.' Chatterjee (1993) maintained that in this kind of war, the leader attempts to neutralise opponents, converting some former ruling classes into allies and undertaking economic reforms of a limited scale. President Jomo Kenyatta, from the leading faction, imposed his ideology on other factions, thus establishing moral authority over the subaltern classes (Shamsul, 2007). Due to their numbers, Kenyatta's brand of nationalism was limited to people he thought mattered for political gains. Leys (1975) gives an example of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), a predominately Kikuyu and their closely related neighbours, the Embu and Meru while

missing in these discourses acknowledging the contribution of minority communities. In writing history, liberal historians indoctrinated into the ideology of writing from the British and native elites have no option but to suppress the accounts of disadvantaged groups (subaltern groups).

The post-colonial perspective (subaltern studies theory) is crucial to the study as it illustrates continuity in post-colonial exploitation, oppression and inequality created by those with power at the expense of others. The weakness of this theory is that its way of thinking is derived from anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, hence a fragmented way of thinking. However, it guides the study on why there was a missing discourse of the Mbeere in the history of decolonisation in Kenya. Colonisation in Africa and Kenya created classes of people where elite native historiography dominated the nationalist struggle. For a long time, therefore, elitism has dominated the historiography of Kenya, and such historical writing shies from acknowledging contributions made by people independent of elites in the nationalism struggle hence constructing a narrative and historical silencing. Subaltern historical silencing, there has been a relentless call for recognition of other players in the war of decolonisation. This study aims at filling such gaps in the historiography of the Mau Mau insurgency.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section presents the research methods used in carrying out this study. Specifically, it described the research design, study area, sampling procedure, ethical consideration, research instruments and data analysis procedures employed in this study.

3.2 Research Design

This study was qualitative and adopted a descriptive and exploratory research design to answer what and how (Bangura, Obando, Munene & Shisanya, 2019). Collecting data to respond to research questions began by reviewing relevant literature and archival materials, then personally questioning the informants and recording their responses (oral interviews). Next, the researcher evaluated historical documents such as media reports, development plans, political memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, communication records and memos. The in-depth study emphasised a complete contextual analysis of events and their interrelations in the period under study. In addition, this study relied on qualitative data mainly obtained from in-depth interviews and document analysis. This study examined and reported the way events occurred. It provided answers to questions such as Who? What? When? Where and How? Besides describing what and how it happened, this study tried to explain why and its implications for the Mau Mau movement and Kenya's history in general.

3.3 Location of the Study

This study was undertaken in Embu County. Embu County has an area of 2,818sq.km that borders Kirinyaga, Kitui, Machakos, Murang'a and Tharaka Nithi. Embu County

has five sub-counties: Embu East, Embu West, Embu North, Mbeere South and Mbeere North. Administratively, Mbeere North and South are within Embu County and predominately inhabited by the Mbeere. Embu County has two distinct climatic conditions: soils in Mbeere are sandy, but productive soils are mainly found in riverbeds. The inadequate retention capacity of sandy soil makes the climate inhospitable for agriculture compared to the upper area around Mount Kenya, which consists of Runjenyes and Manyatta, which are favourable for agriculture.

The rainfall pattern in Embu is bimodal, with two distinctive rainy seasons. Long rains mainly occur from March to June, while short rains occur from October to December (Embu County, 2014). Variation in altitude in Embu affects the amount of rainfall received, but the average rainfall is about 1,067.5 mm. The temperature ranges from 15 °C (Celsius) in July to 30 °C in March. Due to low rainfall, Mbeere residents practice mixed farming, cultivating pigeon peas, green grams, sorghum, beans, maize and rearing livestock. Mbeere North sub-county has three civic wards: Evurore, Nthawa and Muminji, while Mbeere South sub-county wards are Mavuria, Makima, Mbeti south, Mwea and Kiambere (see **Figure 3.1**). In Embu County, the upper areas around Mount Kenya consist of Manyatta and Runyenjes wards predominantly inhabited by the Embu.

The distribution of people per square kilometre is affected by climatic conditions. For example, as one travels in dry areas, the distribution of people is low. Therefore, the nature of the land, soils, accessibility to modern means of communication and fauna influenced the distribution of people as evidenced by population distribution where the most densely populated constituency is Manyatta with 605, Runyenjes 590, Mbeere North and South 122 and 104 per square kilometre respectively (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). As shown in Figure 1.2, of importance to this study were

Mbeere North and Mbeere South, where the Mbeere resides and Kyeni South in Embu East because of the allegedly burning of school by Chief Mwandiko Ngira and his warriors.

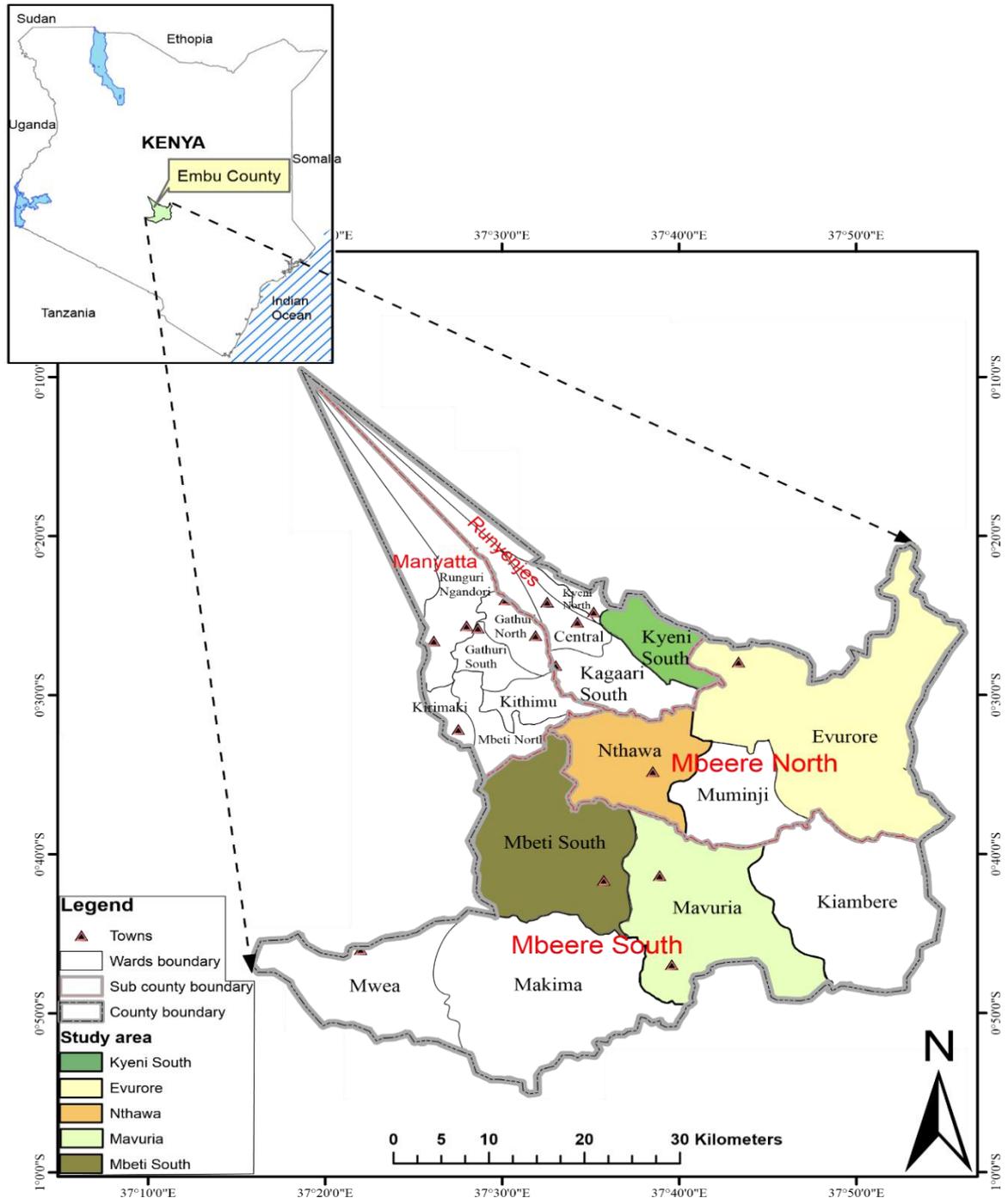


Fig 3:1 A Map of Embu County showing the areas of study
 Source: Embu County Integrated Development Plan, 2018-2022.

3.4 Target Population

Baskaranda (2014) contends that population specification is a requirement in qualitative studies. This qualitative study focused relatively on a few participants who described their experiences in enough depth concerning the research questions of this study. Thus, the research offered a chance to respondents who could provide the most accurate information. Asiamah, Mensah, and Opting (2017) hold that in qualitative inquiry, academic studies should put forward general, target and accessible population concepts to provide insights into the preceding systematic approach of selecting participants from a large population. Therefore, the general population of the current study was the older adults in Kyeni, Mbeere North and Mbeere South. Creswell (2003) defines the target population as participants with specific attributes of interest and relevance. In this case, this study selected 59 older adults who could articulate issues under discussion, born between the 1920s and 1950s, who participated in the Mau Mau movement actively or passively in Evurore, Nthawa, Mbeti South and Mavuria. Therefore, the accessible population was the final group of participants from which data was collected; it was reached after taking out all target population individuals who did not participate or could not be accessed during the study period. Asimah et al. (2017) further argued that if all members of the target population are willing to participate in this study, there will be no need to specify the accessible population.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

This study employed non-probability sampling, where informants were selected based on knowledge about the Mau Mau movement activities as participants. After obtaining a research permit and reporting to relevant authorities in Embu County, the researcher visited

chiefs in three wards within Mbeere North and Mbeere South constituencies and the chief in Kyeni South as an entry point. The researcher conducted oral interviews in Kyeni South-Kathanjire to capture the local peoples' memories of what transpired when Chief Mwandiko and his warriors allegedly burned several schools in the area. The chiefs referred the researcher to persons knowledgeable about the Mbeere and the Mau Mau movement, especially the leaders of the Mau Mau Veteran Association in their wards. Thus, informants' selection was based on their knowledge about the Mau Mau insurgency.

The interview subjects were in two categories; specific persons and older persons chosen due to their age, or participation in the Mau Mau movement or conversant with the Mau Mau struggle to capture the average voice of Mu-Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle. The specific persons were selected through an expert sampling technique. In this technique, experts were chosen in a non-random manner based on familiarity with the subject matter. The researcher employed purposive sampling as a non-probability approach to identify the Mau Mau veterans for in-depth interviews. First, the researcher selected the respondents based on their more profound understanding of the issues raised in the research questions. Their information led to a deeper understanding of the issue under study based on the set objectives (Creswell, 2002). After that, the researcher used a snowball sampling strategy to locate other respondents who met the study's selection criteria after a recommendation from other participants. Then the researcher interviewed the Mau Mau veterans to explore the topic of the Mbeere people and their involvement in the Mau Mau movement war. The interviews helped unravel whether they participated and what happened after Kenya attained independence since the Mbeere were hardly mentioned in the Mau Mau

historiography. The researcher also interviewed claimants on the list for compensation for their suffering during the Mau Mau struggle. The list was obtained from the Mau Mau War Veteran Association's (MMWVA) representative from the wards under study in Mbeere North and Mbeere South, well known by respective chiefs. Fifty-nine respondents were interviewed (in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion). The 59 respondents comprised 22 women and 37 men.

3.6 Research Instruments

This study was qualitative research that employed interviews, observation and focus group discussions (FGD). Interviews were done face to face, where the researcher asked preconceived questions to the participants and recorded their responses with their consent. Through in-depth interviews, the interviewer had an opportunity to ask for clarification on issues raised and ask follow-up questions. For example, where the respondent was seeking reparation for injuries, the researcher observed where they were injured. Through the (FGD), the researcher grouped 6-10 participants in a shared location (mainly the chief's camp) and, as a facilitator, led the discussion where everybody was accorded an opportunity to respond. The FGD was guided by already prepared questions that allowed for deeper examinations of issues raised. Using interview guide and focus group discussion guides to obtain data from participants, the researcher had an opportunity to collect qualitative data in direct quotations that enabled capturing descriptions, personal reminiscences and perspectives.

The FGDs used interaction to produce data and insights, which facilitated capturing real-life data in the study area and helped the researcher explore how and why there was a

missing discourse of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau movement. The focus group approach also allowed the researcher to observe non-verbal responses such as clicks, frowns and other gestures. The researcher used a purposive sampling strategy for focus group discussions to select respondents. Since the Mau Mau veterans were the actors, their experiences, feelings, and opinions were collected through in-depth interviews.

The researcher used the interview guide to conduct oral interviews with participants and a focus group discussion guide. The interview questions emanated from the objectives of the study. During the interviews, the researcher also conducted open-ended follow-up questions. However, when interviewing, the researcher guided the informants to provide information that helped answer questions in the interview guide. Where permission was granted by the respondent (s), interviews were recorded (audio or visual) for accuracy. During interviews, the researcher, with the help of interpreters, used Kimbeere, Kiambu, English and Kiswahili languages as found appropriate to each informant.

3.7 Data Collection

This study relied on primary and secondary sources from field research and documented materials. Secondary sources included books, theses and scholarly journals that offered background information and literature review material on the Mau Mau movement and provided insight into the current study. In addition, this study delved much into the literature that focused on the Embu and Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggles because the two communities shared boundaries and were perceived as cousins.

The study involved analysis of the Mau Mau discourse in three broad categories. The first category for analysis was the primary discourse that includes correspondence between the

colonial officials, minutes, monthly reports, District Commissioner handover reports on the Mau Mau insurgency, London released reports on the Mau Mau movement of the mid-1980s and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) migrated archives released from 2015. The researcher used the Foucault approach of reading archival materials, then posing specific questions to the archival materials and letting them speak to the researcher rather than interpreting archival materials. The researcher read archival materials between the lines to construct the subaltern history. The secondary discourse came from primary discourse, where historical narrators create secondary discourse. The tertiary discourse was also helpful in the current study as it emanated from academicians or former officials who were not serving at the time of writing. The tertiary discourse was independent of favouritism of both primary and secondary discourse as it tried to find the roots of the insurgency in their ways.

The archival materials that made up primary sources were sourced from the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Centre (KNADC) in Nairobi and The National Archives (TNA) in the United Kingdom. At the KNADC, the researcher perused government records and reports compiled by organisations, individuals, commissions and institutions. In the TNA, the researcher searched records on the archive's website. The colonial administration records (migrated archives) concerned with insurgency and the response of the British government were identified in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) series 141.

Although all archival files were to be repositied in Nairobi, the researcher visited the Nakuru archive. There were massive files on labour, emergency regulations, subversive movement,

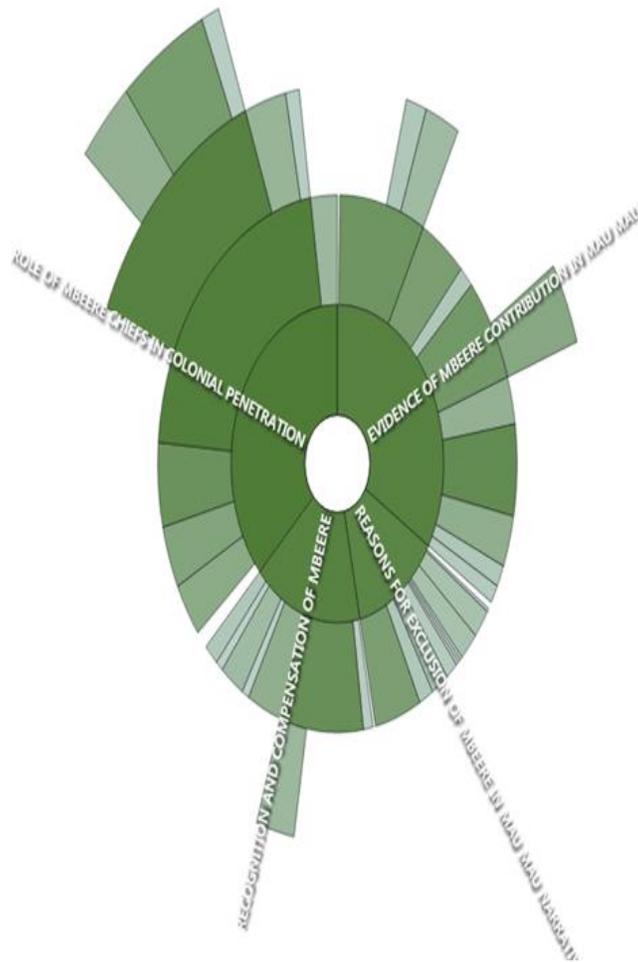
insurgency compensation claims and general administration in the Rift Valley, a paradise for central Kenya ethnicities searching for jobs in the white settlement. Additional primary and secondary sources were accessed via the internet on sites maintained by universities, museums, ministries, institutions and organisations to gather information necessary for this study. Data from archival sources were cross-checked with and supplemented by other sources, such as oral interviews. An internet search always intersected and overlapped with archival search, library search and oral interviews. Besides scholarly journals published online, specialised primary source collections for a historical period could easily be searched on the internet. Thus, the researcher consulted both electronic and print sources. Documentary research was, therefore, a critical method in this study. Apart from providing background information and literature review materials, documents were valuable data sources for this study. The researcher cross-checked the documentary data with data from oral interviews. The types of documentary data sources used included books and journal articles, newspapers and magazines, archival records (local and migrated archives), letters, diaries and memos, government publications and official statistics. Newspapers from the 1930s were also valuable sources of information for this study.

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data collected from primary and secondary sources were analysed qualitatively. The analysis was conducted by organising data into common sub-themes or sub-categories. When analysing qualitative data from oral interviews, the transcribed data was organised from each question separately. This approach enabled the researcher to focus on one issue at a time. Then the researcher grouped the responses by sub-themes and sub-categories. When analysing documents, the researcher coded the contents and characteristics of such

documents into various sub-categories that would blend in with sub-categories formed from interview data.

A qualitative data analysis computer software NVIVO 12 was used for data analysis. The first step was to open a blank project, renaming it and then importing to NVIVO 12 two categories of transcribed data (Interviews and FGDs). Next, nodes were created based on the study's objectives, as shown in **Figure 3.2**, an outcome of the parent node. Thus each node represented the objectives of the study.



Through reading the interviews and FGDs, theme nodes emerged, as shown in **Figure 3.3** from the parent node “**Reasons for exclusion of Mbeere in Mau Mau narrative.**”

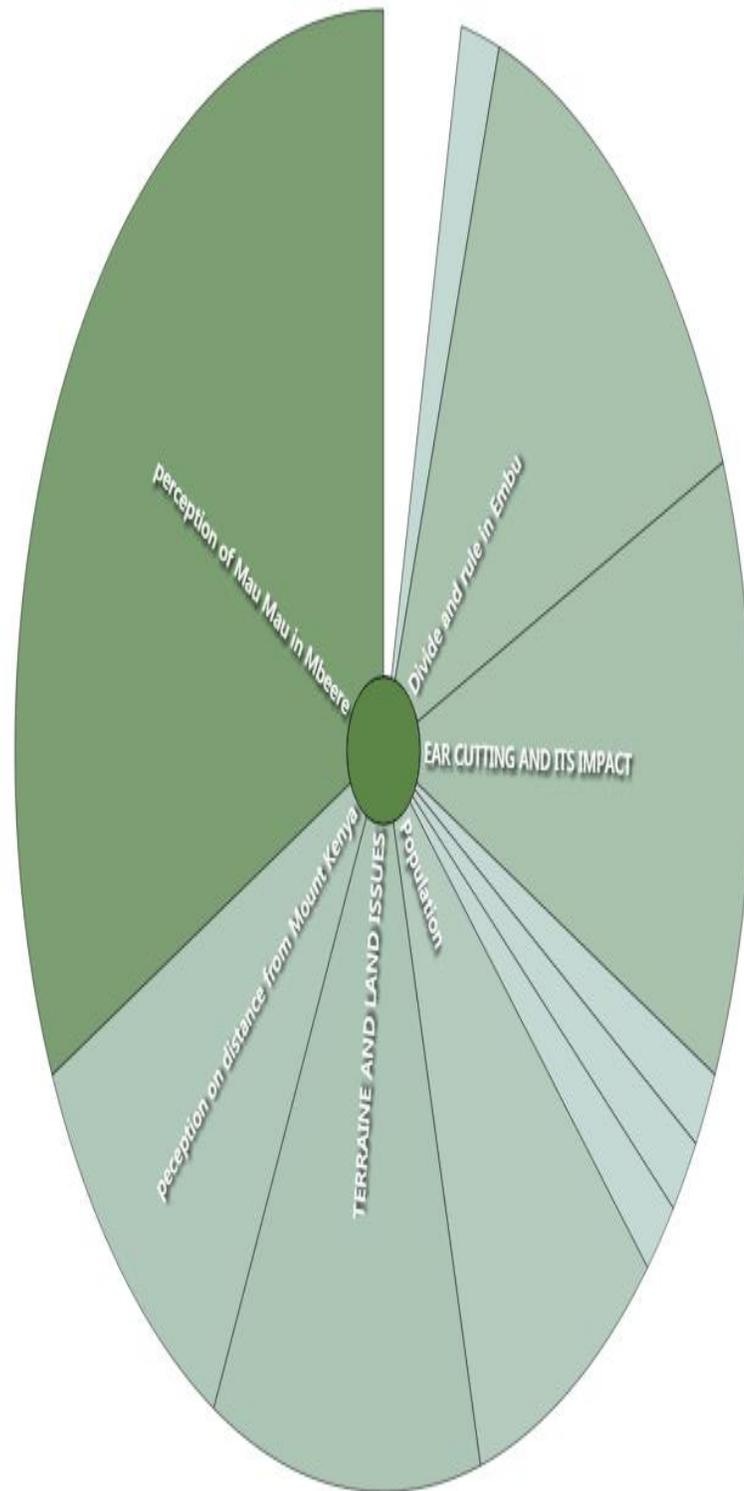


Figure 3.3: Theme nodes

This enabled the researcher to decide whether the data answered the questions that led to the research. The current study's findings were analysed, interpreted and organised into a coherently and systematically written thesis. A conclusion and recommendation were finally drawn in the order of objectives and findings of this study.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study ensured that relevant persons and authorities were consulted. The necessary permission and approval were obtained before collecting data from the Kenya government and Karatina University, the Directorate of Post-graduate Studies. The researcher adhered to the principles of voluntary informed consent and read out informed consent forms to the participants before the commencement of the research. The researcher also adhered to the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 protocols and guidelines when interacting with the participants. The participants were assured the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study. The study also observed confidentiality, anonymity in sensitive matters, non-plagiarism, duty to cause no harm to the respondents and objectivity. Informants were guaranteed that the information shared was to be used only for academic purposes. In addition, all informants were asked whether they were comfortable being recorded and the data used to write the thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This chapter has four subsections, each discussing the study's objective. The first subsection examines the role of the Mbeere chiefs in colonial penetration, while the second subsection presents evidence of Mbeere's contribution to the Mau Mau movement. Notably, the evidence presented questioned the history that exhaustively lauded the efforts of the major ethnic groups, principally the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, at the expense of smaller groups such as the Mbeere. The third subsection presents the reasons that have contributed to the exclusion of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau narrative. It examined the underlying causes that informed the construction of the Mau Mau narrative in public spaces. The last subsection evaluates how the Kenya and British governments recognised and compensated the Mbeere people for their suffering and role in the Mau Mau movement.

4.2 The Role of Mbeere Chiefs in the Colonial Penetration

In Embu Division, the British government employed the divide and rule policy to entrench their rule in totality. For smooth sailing, colonial power created an indigenous upper class (the chieftaincy institution) in chiefless communities that passionately served them. The chiefs whose workings are part of history, as the subsection is undergirded by subaltern studies theory, the narrative that emerges is from this class ignoring the subalterns (the ordinary Mbeere) who were at the bottom of social hierarchy. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activities of the ruling group, always seen as inactive, scared and submissive. Thus, the chiefs propelled colonial projects, separatism and approached the Mau Mau

insurgency differently depending on their judgement and prejudice. Furthermore, the penetration of the Mau Mau movement and oathing rituals did not dismantle the colonial government as anticipated but destabilised the relationship of the two communities (the Embu and the Mbeere), an approach that strengthened colonial penetration.

4.2.1 Colonial Penetration in Embu Division

The presence of Europeans in colonial Kenya was unevenly distributed and government policies did not influence all areas equally. The trade caravan routes, the ‘lunatic’ railway line and the newly built capital of Nairobi symbolised imperial achievements, thus making Nairobi the centre of operations. As the colonial government expanded for effective occupation, the Kikuyu suffered heavily at the hands of the British. First, with an accelerating pattern of dissent in Kikuyu heavily occupied areas, high taxation was used. Next, any community sympathetic to the Mau Mau movement was warned of tax increment (KNA/DC/MRU.3/12). Elkins (2005) vividly demonstrates that among the indigenous groups in Kenya, the Kikuyu experienced intense transformation compared to peripheral communities like the occupants of the Embu District. Furthermore, by describing the situation in Kenya, Elkins (2005) posits all indigenous groups were affected by the British colonial rule. For instance, the establishment of African reserves for political order with clearly defined boundaries with minimal economic reforms.

To divide Embu District residents further, the colonial government categorised the Agichugu and the Andia as Kikuyu. At the same time, the Embu and the Mbeere were perceived as one, submerging the Mbeere into the Embu, thus effectively swallowing the Mbeere identity (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4). As a result, the Mbeere were rendered a stateless

society governed by a council of elders. Moreover, the colonial government identified the major clans, namely Thagana and Irumbi, as a point of entry, granting them more powers and autonomy to exercise it.

The Mbeere region was not affected by land alienation as compared to other areas of Central Kenya. To the Embu and the Kikuyu, land meant everything, as explained by ex-Senior Chief Koinange in 1950;

When someone steals your ox, it is killed and roasted and eaten. One can forget. When someone steals your land, especially if nearby, one can never forget. It is always there, its trees which were dear friends, its little stream. It is a bitter presence (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1970, p. 74).

Most central Kenya residents and scholars viewed the Mbeere as lacking a solid conviction to resist the colonialists because their land (Ithaka), a key objective of the Mau Mau insurgency, was not touched. Although the Mbeere did not experience land alienation, colonialism disrupted their freedom; for example, the wage economy was foreign and illegitimate to the ordinary Mbeere who were reluctant to embrace it. To aggravate the situation, the colonial officials compelled the Mbeere to partake in forced labour and taxation. The Mbeere who could not pay a few rupees had no option but to sell their herds of goats, while those with no alternative were subjected to colonial labour. To further tighten their control, the second colonial regulation proposed a hut and poll tax which increased from (rupee) Rs.3, Rs.5 to Rs.12 and those who could not raise the taxes faced civil cases adjudicated by the members of the court (Kĩama) (KNA/DC/EBU/3/2). As Gardner (2012) noted, the general opinion of *thirikari* (government) was that taxes were the perfect tool to compel Africans to join wage labour as taxes amounted to more than two months of African wages. For instance, in Nairobi, the average wage was Rs. 4, while it

was as low as Rs. 3 on the farms around Thika. (KNA/DC/EBU/3/2). It implies that the rate in Mbeere Division was much lower, which drove many to seek employment outside the locality. Some of the Mbeere were employed in Embu District by Messrs Duncan and MacDonald, the rubber concessionaries (KNA/DC/EBU/3/2). Those who could not secure a job in Embu District opted to go to Fort Hall, Kiambu, Thika and Nairobi Districts. Notably, circumstances in the Mbeere accelerated the search for high-paying jobs as far as Mombasa. Riley and Brokensha (1988, p. 44) described the Mbeere Division;

Mbeere country as too backwards . . . Mbeere live in the conditions of utmost squalor and poverty. The women live in little huts which are scarcely bigger than dog kennels. . . 'Furniture' is a shelf of branches.

It demonstrates that raising the required tax was an uphill task for the Mbeere. Furthermore, it portrayed how the Mbeere country was unfavourable for human sustenance.

As suggested by colonial authorities for economic progress, migration to a more favourable area with more reliable rainfall was the only option, although the proposal was never acted upon. However, archival reports and oral interviews indicate that the Mbeere were not indolent as portrayed by colonial administrators who never settled in Mbeere until 1956, when a District Officer was stationed at Siakago. Interestingly, the desire for agricultural productivity among the Mbeere made them settle beyond their borders, cultivating outside their jurisdiction, as reported by Chief Fausto of Embu (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4). Regardless of colonial government suggestion, Chief Kiathi of Evurore affirmed Fausto's report noting that since 1934, a family of twenty-seven Mbeere lived in Fausto's jurisdiction for cultivation purposes to make up for the loss of rains.

All shreds of evidence point to Mbeere's need for cultivation which extended on the North bank of River Thuci, where massive farming was conducted. As described by Lukengu Ngeu of the Ikandi clan to J. G Hopkins on the Mbeere land tenure system, the Mbeere, just like the Kikuyu, were expanding, pushing for continued immigration within the colony as they bought land from the inhabitants of Mwea whom they found in possession of the land when they arrived (KNA/DC/EBU/3/2). It is discernible that the Mbeere had mastered the harsh climatic conditions, as opposed to the portrayal of Mbeereland as unfavourable, where scarcity of food was a common condition. Furthermore, within Mbeere, blacksmiths produced iron implements that enhanced bush clearing and agricultural production. The iron implements were also used as a medium of exchange for grains and livestock. Mwaruvie (2011) argued that the iron implements made by blacksmiths encouraged trade between the Mbeere and the Embu, who lacked sufficient iron ore. The Mbeere community, whom the colonialists described as indolent, was simultaneously described as the only community in Embu that could handle sisal, very unpopular to others;

It will be virtually impossible to wean the Mbeere people away from the idea of cultivation, although harvests are a very doubtful accomplishment in many areas and especially whilst the possibility of cash crops such as Turkish Tobacco, miraa and sisal exist (KNA/BD/8/2).

4.2.2 Inter-ethnic Relations in Embu Division

The Mbeere and the Embu relationship was slightly cordial. Mwaniki (2005) asserts that the two communities agreed to separate and share borders agreeing never to interfere with each other's property. Mwaniki further posits that the Mbeere who went to work in Nairobi or Thika identified themselves with the Embu. When the Kamba invaded the Mbeere and drove them to Embu, the Embu who were at the height of militancy rescued them. In a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) held on February 3, 2020, at Mwanyare, the respondents asserted that the Mbeere could not steal from the Embu. Again, if the Embu stole anything

from the Mbeere, they believed they would be attacked and eaten by a lion (Ngatunyi). The Embu could not steal from the Mbeere and vice versa as the oath-bound them. Doing contrarily to the promise attracted ritual contamination (Mugiro).

Oathing was common among the two communities. Among the Mbeere, licking the knife was common. In this oathing, a knife was heated with fire and the parties in dispute were requested to utter some words by the head of the *Kĩama* and then lick the hot knife three times (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4). If one of the parties appeared fearful or inconsistent with previous testimonies, judgement was rendered immediately as the members of the *Kĩama* assumed they feared the oath because they recognised the efficacy of the oath in eliminating liars (Glazier, 1970). The *Kĩama* could judge a case without waiting for the effects of the oath. If blisters appeared on one party or both, the claim was retained. Notably, oath-taking was done in public. Glazier further notes that if one of the parties was declared a winner by the *Kĩama* after the oath and then died after seven month period, or one of the lineage or clan became seriously sick, the loser could use that incidence as a fact to initiate an appeal asserting that they lied and the effect of the oath was taking place. Thus, the oath influenced the association and guided the *modus operandi* of the two communities.

Another form of oathing prevalent in Mbeere was the killing of a goat or sheep. A traditional healer carried out the ritual, where they dipped their stave in the goat's blood and the litigants were required to drink the blood. The litigants also uttered some words. The colonial administrators approved the use of the Mbeere oaths in severe cases. The *Ruengu* oath was admissible by tribunal elders in cases of witchcraft, homicide and

serious theft. Brokensha and Nellis (1971) argued that religious beliefs in Mbeere were in a state of flux where the older generation adhered to traditional beliefs and powers of ancestors to punish transgressors. Generally, the oath was not to be administered to authentic Christians unless for cleansing purposes, as espoused in the Embu African District Council meetings of August 1951 (KNA/BD/5/9). Oathing process was costly because it required goats and sometimes sheep for sacrifices, beer and other foods. In some cases, the *Kĩama* asked for the bull, court cost and transportation fees. Such an extensive process favoured the wealthy Mbeere. The influence of Christianity had a profound effect on the oath as Christians refused to take the oath and opted to pledge with the bible making the oath an instrument of settling disputes unstable. The colonial courts acted as an alternative agency to offer a final settlement.

Life was good in the Mbeere Division, although the Mbeere were not self-sufficient as narrated in FGD held on January 31, 2020, at Kombo Munyiri sub-location and Mwanyari on February 3, 2020. The Mbeere engaged in trade with neighbouring communities. For instance, the Embu would travel to Mbeere to buy foodstuff or goats and the Mbeere also went to Embu on buying missions. Gathoni Muturi Muketho and Miriam Mbuya (O.I, 1/02/2020) in Nyangwa described how they cultivated sorghum, lablab beans, pigeon peas and finger millet, which they sold in Embu. The market at Ishiara existed since the pre-colonial period and communities from Tharaka, Ukambani and Embu thronged the market on Tuesdays to trade foodstuffs, honey and goats. In 1926 the Ishiara market expanded more than hitherto and by 1944, there was a regular bus service to the current Embu town. Before regular bus services, the Mbeere could walk to Kirimariboma town (Kirimari) to

trade with the Embu. Since the journey took many days, sometimes the Embu and the Mbeere hosted each other when night approached. Emiliciano Muringo and Phides Thaara (O.I, 11/2/2020 and 8/02/2020) in Karurumo-Kyeni South described how they travelled from Embu to Ishiara to sell bananas.

There were designated resting places such as Gachoka, where the Mbeere from Mbeere South rested on their journey to Kirimari. Gaconi Muturi Mukevo (O.I, 1/02/2020) affirmed at Nyangwa, stating the importance of resting points in the trade between the Embu and the Mbeere communities, especially for long-distance traders; “the Mbeere traders like Njiru Macuke, Gitau from Gatoori and Kiura from Kiritiri and Mbiti Magecho from Irabari used to trade cows. They used to go for cows from Ukambani and sell them in Embu . . .” Similarly, Jackson Ileri (O.I, 12/02/2020) worked in Mbeere and noted as follows; “Before the Mau Mau, the Embu and the Mbeere had good relations; they used to intermarry; and the Mbeere would seek food in Embu in case of famine, while the Muembu would go for millet in Mbeere.”

4.2.2.1 Identity Issues in Embu Division

District Commissioner (DC) D. R Crampton, in 1927, described the Embu as the Agikuyu stock. As they migrated, the Embu adopted new customs and identified themselves as the Embu (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4). The colonial officials delineated the Embu country as well-watered, fertile and conducive for cattle rearing. Crampton portrayed the Embu as inferior to the Kikuyu; likewise, the Embu viewed the Mbeere as inferior. Consequently, the Embu assumed a sense of superiority and strived to create a power relationship between them and the Mbeere, whom they regarded as a subordinate group. As pointed out in this subsection,

the Embu used coercion to sustain the power relationship. Zalampas (1990) observes that any person or community that has a sense of superiority tends to be arrogant, boastful and tyrannical, as was manifested by the Embu, who sought the company of prominent groups like the Kikuyu to appropriate, incorporate and transform the Mbeere into Mau Mau adherents without giving out the specifics. The Embu belittled the Mbeere to construct hegemony through coercion and violence. The Embu identified the Mbeere as weak or of lesser stature. Because of their geographical position, population density and climatic conditions, the Mbeere assumed a subordinate class, the position the colonialists exploited by 'loving' the Mbeere too much to entrench themselves in Embu District.

The Embu as hegemony and the Mbeere as a subordinate stood in opposition. The colonial power's contradiction would widen by oscillating more on the weak side and sometimes falling in with the dominant (Embu). The Embu did not intend to destroy the dominated group. Still, it was determined to harm the relationship of the Mbeere with the colonialists by forcing them to respond to their authority. Likewise, the colonialists were determined to apply the divide and rule policy to the two communities, realising that they posed a force to reckon with if united. Clough (1990) averred that the imposition of foreign rule caused significant changes and dislocations in the traditional way of life. It disrupted people's lives and reduced communities into a status that never existed before, a situation experienced in Embu District.

The common point of departure was intervention in the livelihood of the Embu and the Mbeere. The white man's government disrupted the boundaries of the Embu District

against the wishes of the Embu and the Mbeere elders, who wanted them to remain intact. Today, the debate regarding where the border rightly belongs is bitterly contested, as witnessed in oral testimonies in Embu and Mbeere sub-counties. The boundary issues between the two communities date back to 1937, as District Commissioner L.R Gillespie noted on August 15, 1938 (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4). The colonial administration decided to engage in boundary-making processes, demarcating the chief's jurisdictions against the elders' wishes. True to the elders' projection, both parties made confusing conflicts regarding boundary claims and counterclaims after the colonial official created the boundaries. On August 31, 1946, a meeting was held at Ishiara over the Mbeere boundary area. Present in that meeting were DC, D. W. Hall, Chief Kiathi Mugwetwa of Evurore location and Mwandiko son of Ngira, Evurore representative. From historical experiences on boundaries demarcated by the colonialists, the colonial government employed ethnic manipulation to stay in power and therefore, the outcome of the meeting favoured the Embu by reinforcing earlier decisions on the boundary, as noted;

It was made clear to Evurore people that the boundary laid down by Mr. Gillespie would not be altered and would be adhered to. If the Mbeere persisted in attempting to 'jump a claim' on the land lying above the junction of Karurumo and Ena rivers and if they continue with their aggressive attitudes towards the whole matter, they would be deterred by whatever degree of compulsion might seem fit . . . It was further noted that Wambere living between the Karurumo, Ena and Itimbogo rivers were living in Embu Division (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4).

Another incidence was reported in 1946 when the Mbeere claimed ownership of the Muhito location on the Embu side without mutual agreement. They wanted to extend the boundary towards the Muhito location, citing illegal removal in an area where they used to plant maize (KNA/DC/EBU1/5).

4.2.3 The Creation of Chieftaincy in the Mbeere Locations

Ndubai (2016) noted that chiefs were an excellent asset for the British colonial government to function effectively in unfamiliar and hostile territory. Therefore, chieftaincy was necessary for the British government, whose officials were few and scattered. The introduction of chieftaincy brought bitter internal conflicts between Mbeere and her neighbours, which intensified in the 1960s. A chief's position was illegitimate in the eyes of the ordinary Mbeere but crucial within the administrative hierarchy of Kenya. Chiefs were granted a monopoly of power and autonomy to exercise that power to implement policies in African District policies. Therefore, the administration burden at the local level rested on the chief, an entirely new establishment and unpopular in many parts of Kenya.

Mwaniki (O.I, 8/02/2020) narrated;

In pre-colonial times, the Mbeere did not have chiefs; they were a decentralised society. When the colonialists came, the Mbeere, like many other communities like the Kikuyu and the Embu, had to have colonial chiefs, chiefs who were very different, say from the West African famous chiefs, because those through accreditation had their systems. Even in a place like Uganda, they had well-established chiefdom systems or centralised state systems.

Choosing a chief became a matter of importance in the expansive Embu District with only nine administrative officials. The choice for chiefs was a delicate business in a decentralised community like the Mbeere (KNA/DC/EBU1/6). Clough (1990) suggests that the Europeans followed various courses when appointing chiefs in stateless societies. He gives an example of the Luo people of Nyanza, where the British appointed chiefs from dominant lineages hoping they could ground their newly acquired authority on traditions of deference and respect.

So confident of chieftaincy, in Mbeere, the evidence shows that selection of subordinates willing to use delegated power from colonial administrators rotated around men who had served as headmen or councillors. The evidence, therefore, indicates that many appointees to the position of a chief were those who had served the administration in some capacity, such as sub-location headmen, tribal retainers and men whose relatives had served in government positions. Like in Kiambu District, as Tignor (1971) explained, where relatives succeeded sixteen chiefs, there was a tendency of continuity to keep appointments in one family, as evidenced by the Kombo Munyiri family. Like the Ibo chiefs in Nigeria, a concept applicable to the Kombo family, chiefs tended to stay in power for a long time and prepare the way for their successors, who were often relatives. To date, the Kombo Munyiri family is regarded as a ‘family of royalism’ and one of their family members still holds the chieftaincy, as explained in an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri sublocation where his son was present. Other participants called him *mwana wa muthamaki* (child of a king). However, a recurrent theme of deposing chiefs in Embu District and Kikuyu land was experienced, as Rosberg & Nottingham (1970) noted. Therefore, the position of the chief was precarious; one either worked in the interest of Europeans or risked unpopularity, which was fatal although compensating opportunities for personal aggrandisement.

In a detailed account of the state of chiefs in Mbeere, respondents agreed that early chiefs experienced a hard time because the authority they possessed was illegitimate in the eyes of most Mbeere. When the chiefs yielded powers that never existed before, they were perceived as oppressors. When they took over from elders, they were considered usurpers. Ben Kanyeki (O.I, 5/02/2020), held at Nthawa, posited that the chiefs paved the way for

the colonialists and pinpointed where chiefs' camps would be constructed. As a result, people from many locations in Mbeere were resentful or undermined the authority of chiefs. Moreover, the chiefs were under pressure from the District Commissioner (DC) to remit taxes. Embu District Officer (D.O) K.W Simmonds, acting as D.C on September 3, 1940, wrote to the Provincial Commissioner-Central Province on how Chief Njamburi's location was backward in tax collection, yet the sale price of goats was reasonable (KNA/DC/EBU/7/7). The D.O complained of the weakness of chief Njamburi in tax collection, yet he was not prosecuting tax evaders. Similarly, Chief Kiathi Mugetwa of Evurore location was dismissed after six years of ineptitude and Chief Paulo Makenda Mbiru replaced him, who served in the Local Native Council before his selection. Paulo Makenda was chosen by majority vote over a tribal Police constable candidate to rule on probation on August 1, 1947 (KNA/DC/EBU1/6).

Perhaps Chief Makenda's indignities caused his leadership to be placed on a scoreboard. A confidential letter described how the colonial administrators were dissatisfied with his leadership (KNA/DC/EBU/1/7/5). Sometimes chiefs used rough methods on their people. Chief Paulo was accused of extortion and always had bruises on his forehead for drunkenness. "Paulo was [a] silly, boastful little man who has a minimum *heshima* (respect) and drinks too much." (KNA/DC/EBU/1/7/5). Paulo Makenda was dismissed on August 30, 1949, at a *baraza* (public meeting) held at Ishiara. The colonial officials advised the natives to forward five to six names of people they wished to be their successors. However, they were warned that if unsuccessful in helping in choosing a suitable candidate, the colonial administrators would have no option but to choose a non-Mbeere as ruler

supported by the tribal police (KNA/VQ/16/2). True to colonial administrators' words, some Mbeere chiefs appointed after that were foreigners. Many first chiefs in Mbeere were purged for incompetence or abuse of power. Mwaniki's collection of oral testimonies in Mbeere (2005, p. 50) stated that "the first Mbeere chiefs were terrible. He further states they would eat people's goats freely and unfairly. None of them would finish a day without eating a goat, forcing the Mbeere to comply with the demands to escape prison or terrible beatings."

As the local representatives of the British government, the early chiefs were tasked with maintaining law and order in their locations. They were also in charge of bringing in revenue from fines and taxes. The paucity of European staff caused the available officials to travel widely. The colonial government tasked chiefs with providing porters for official local tours. Moreover, they acted as courts, settling disputes and assessing fines and damages, as evidenced by the Embu Annual Report of December 1947;

Overall, the chiefs have worked hard and well and they have had more political activity than usual to cope. The amount of soil conservation work they had to superintend was much more than usual . . . They collected 500/- tax less than the previous year . . . (KNA/DC/EBU/1/6).

The chiefs' remained the most powerful and wealthy individuals in Mbeere. Their position was secure if they avoided naked abuse of power. As local political administrators, chiefs seized new opportunities to enrich themselves. First, they accumulated wealth by acquiring land cheaply or through fraud. Later, they came to own small businesses, a large herd of goats and transport companies.

The chiefs played a critical role in welcoming the missionaries and giving out parcels of land for civilising missions. Embu Division was attractive to the mission societies compared to Mbeere Division, which was sparsely populated. Each mission group tried to carve out its sphere of influence in Embu, the most notable being the Salvation Army, Catholic and the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS). After the initial contact, most missionaries tried to obtain land to build their stations. The Embu Local Native Council minutes of 1942 illustrate how missionary societies applied for places of worship (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). The CMS applied for places of worship at Ngenge and Kathera in Chief Kombo's location, which was approved, showing pioneer missionaries came to Chief Kombo's area unsummoned, appealing to the government through the Local Native Council (LNC) for land. However, in some instances, the missionaries' applications for land were denied. These included the Salvation Army's application for land at Gataka, which the Local Native Council denied. The missionaries used a similar approach in the application for schools. With the identification of land, they constructed rudimentary structures for preaching and proselytising.

Education was considered a tool that could be used to Christianise and uplift the Mbeere. At their earliest convenience, the missions began to establish out-schools in the hinterland of its sphere. In Embu, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Catholic sent teachers from Embu to Mbeere locations to teach in the out-schools. Jackson Ileri (O.I, 12/02/2020) stated, "The church had sent us to teach, Catholics sent their teachers, and CMS had also sent their teachers since they were the two predominant churches." The Mbeere viewed missionaries with suspicion but welcomed them half-heartedly and school attendance was

low, a trend that continued up to the 1960s. Despite all the challenges the missions underwent, they began to win converts (*Athomi*) and school-going pupils due to chiefs' efforts in Mbeere. Jackson Ireri's statement confirmed the state of schools and children in Mbeere;

The schools were few. Like Karangare, from there, it was Kigwambiti, then Kathiga and Iriaitune. The colonial administrators constructed mud schools. Even when we went to teach, the children would just come looking shaggy and without uniforms. But we still taught them and some of them came through.

The colonial government knew that the history of chieftaincy in a decentralised type of society began with them, and it had no roots in pre-colonial Kenya. Appointed chiefs carried out government instructions and policies for all departments without fail. Chiefs worked hard and remained loyal during the emergency period. The colonial government reminded them that their position was not hereditary and they could be deposed at any time if they failed to deliver. Chiefs were subjected to personal threats during the Mau Mau uprising or destruction of their property as the colonial government demanded them to face violent opposition from agitators or removal and replacement. To boost the morale of chiefs, the colonial government offered chiefs courses at Jeans School in Nairobi. In addition, the colonial government requested they attend chiefs' meetings regularly in the District (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). These meetings provided an opportunity to learn, exchange views and coordinate policies. The colonial government also paid tribute to chiefs who performed exceptionally well. For example, tributes were paid to senior Chief Njiri Karanja for forty years of government service in Fort-hall. Similarly, some chiefs like Muruatetu of Embu, Waruhiu of Kiambu and Nderi of Nyeri were granted the title of senior chiefs (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6).

4.2.3.1 Chief Kombo Munyiri

The imposition of British colonial rule in Embu did not lead to a clean break from the past. Chiefs did not rule alone; there was a blend of the traditional and the new. Chiefs liaised with elders on land disputes, witchcraft and boundaries, illustrating traditional and official authority co-existing in a colonial situation. However, the land disputes involving the landless in Mbeere were minimal, considering the Mbeere had huge land and a low population. As far as European officials were concerned, the colonial government could not have made a better choice for a chief than Kombo, the son of Munyiri. As a functionary of the British, Kombo was portrayed as one of the oldest administrators; his glowing performance, loyalty, intelligence, and progressiveness were repeatedly cited in colonial records. This was a justification for placing him as a top-ranked chief among the Mbeere. Irungu Thatiah (2013, p.13), in the biography of Jeremiah Nyagah, describes Kombo Munyiri physique as "standing above six feet and almost wide. . . He spoke with a commanding voice, dark in complexion whose fame spread beyond his area of jurisprudence and ruled the Mbeere for over five decades." He commanded respect as informants recollected.

The Mbeere remembered Kombo Munyiri quite differently. Some saw him as an old, senior chief in the same rank as Embu's famous chief Muruatetu but could not forget his implacable hostility to those who went contrary to colonial instructions, probably because he feared creating an independent power base supported by the Mau Mau freedom fighters. His reputation for accepting bribes (traditional gift-giving) from supplicants for favours, especially those found to have taken the Mau Mau oath, went unnoticed, a reputation that

the government was unaware of. Others viewed him as a primary mediator and the most powerful chief in Mbeere. Gathagu wa Titima alias General Wakimere (O.1, 11/08/2020) described Kombo Munyiri;

Kombo was a real Mbeere man. There never existed any other better Chief than Kombo. He was a people-loving man. He never hated anyone. Also, when it came to the people who had taken the Mau Mau oath when arrested, Chief Kombo would go for them, keep them at his place; he would never detain them. He used to de-oath them while other ethnicities were jailed. Kombo visited our prison and since I and Njiru wa Kagoro, Nthegere wa Rukingi and Ireri wa Macharia moved away from Mbeere after it was reported our engagement with oathing at Nguuo. Kombo said that he would not see anybody else but me. He asked for my freedom, but I was not released as I was a targeted person.

Nevertheless, Kombo's power and influence were unassailable, making the Mbeere fear and adore him in both measures. He was highly respected by the colonial government and frequently consulted. In some cases, he was named senior chief (although he was not until he retired) by the local people, a clear illustration that his powers stretched beyond Mavuria location. Moreover, he was often regarded as the Mbeere mouthpiece and intermediary with the government in matters affecting the Mbeere community (KNA/DC/EBU/1/8).

The governor appointed Kombo Munyiri of Mavuria and Manunga Ngochi of Siakago as official headmen (The Official Gazette, October 11, 1938). Like other Councils, the Embu Local Native Council was formed where some chiefs and headmen were chosen to hold positions under the administration's auspices. Despite having no education, Kombo sat at the LNC as a councillor and played a critical role in progressive programmes in the Mbeere region. Nonetheless, he also worked as per the wishes of the colonial authorities and thus, it was no wonder that he was able to rule for many years despite his age and lack of education; this contradicts Schilling's (1976) argument that the elected representatives were often mission educated (skilled with pen and paper). The District Commissioner was the

chairperson of the LNC and never tolerated criticism of the government policies. For LNC to perform effectively, they mandated chiefs to ensure they raised fines, fees, rents, and sponsored projects such as education, health, agriculture and public works. The LNC operations depended entirely on tax collections from the inhabitants of the District.

To ensure the penetration of colonial authority in Embu District, Councillor Kombo Munyiri presented the needs of the Mbeere to the Embu Local Native Council (LNC). He applied for a new road from Kiambere to Riachina, espoused in Embu LNC of May 10-15, 1949. Also, he was a champion of communal labour resolution. When the government was disallowing the use of communal labour for the building and repair of roads, Kombo welcomed the resolution and commented; "It is the responsibility of chiefs to keep camps to provide emergency repairs to roads, and he could not do without them" (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12).

Kombo personified the old world. He had no interest in education. He was not astute on education but considered it a tool that could 'control' the youths in Mbeere. Kombo seconded Resolution No. 2/49 proposed by Chief Muruatetu on the offence of juvenile to be employed (Embu LNC, May 10-15, 1949) (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). As a chief, Kombo engaged in massive campaigns in Mavuria for the council's policies, mainly controlling the roaming youths. As an Embu LNC member, he was worried about the youth turning into spivs and burglars. He suggested introducing compulsory education and technical schools in the District with other councillors.

Kombo also spearheaded compulsory labour enforcement in the villages encompassing road construction and other services that touched on the welfare of the villagers. Moreover, in a bid to allow education penetration in Mavuria Location, he approved Resolution No 8/51, which permitted extra tax levied on African male inhabitants of the Mbeere Division who owned a hut (KNA/BD/5/1). The special education rate of sh. 4 per annum payable before January 31, 1952. This extra tax was supposed to improve educational facilities within Mbeere Division. However, the taxes he instituted for education were seemingly meant to derail children's enrollment in school. For example, Irungu Thatiah (2013) argues that Kombo refused to take his children to school, which is a probable reason the Kombo children were not part of the post-independence government compared to many colonial chiefs in central Kenya.

As a council member of Embu ADC, Kombo allowed Jeremiah Nyagah, returning from the United Kingdom, to be appointed as a member of the District Education Board in place of Mr. Eustus Nguru. Considering Kombo was good at taking 'traditional gifts' he could not have denied the child of his friend Joseph Nthiga to be elevated to a high position in what he termed as a 'new world' in the Mbeere region. The Council also agreed to invite the Mbeere teacher to represent the Mbeere interests as recorded in Embu African District Council (ADC) minutes of November 9 and 10, 1954 (KNA/BD/5/1). Considering the environmental condition of Mbeere locations, Chief Kombo was not bothered about their wellbeing. A levy of Sh. 4 was quite burdensome, and some men were physically compelled to pay it. Kombo's move to increase tax was in contravention with a plea made by headmen and elders of the Mbeere in 1920, who presented their country as low lying,

very poor in soil and infected with tsetse flies and barely afforded them a living. The acting District Commissioner Mr. Evans, concurred with them and reported to the Central government how the Mbeere struggled with a food shortage (KNA/VQ1/29/7). In some instances, persuasion was insufficient, which made Chief Kombo resort to force. This is evidenced by cases presented at the Mbeere Native Tribunal in table 4.1;

Criminal cases tried by various tribunal-1951		
Offence	Embu Native Tribunal	Mbeere Native Tribunal
1. Tax	1091	1959
2. Cess	1117	2070
3. Breaches of ADC resolutions	506	208
4. Breaches of Native Authority Ordinance	380	180

Table 4:1 Criminal cases tried by various tribunals in 1951 (KNA/DC/EBU/1/10)-Embu Annual Report 1951-Appendix No. 8.

As Shamsul (2007) noted that chiefs were a strong native hand for the British government, creating subjugation and domination. The chiefs were determined to oversee the penetration of colonial authority against the people's wishes, as evidenced in Mbeere locations. By 1951, of all the Divisions in Embu District and considering the low population of the Mbeere region and the harsh climatic conditions, the Mbeere Native Tribunal presented 4,686 cases, Embu presented 3,342, Gichugu, 1,685 and Ndia Native Tribunal 2,995 criminal cases (KNA/DC/EBU/1/10). It demonstrated that the Mbeere faced extreme hardships in paying taxes and cess. Chief Kombo enforced measures with impunity, exploiting the common Mbeere problems for personal aggrandisement. In the eyes of the colonialists, Chief Kombo earned a reputation, was portrayed as the best chief

ever in Mbeere and subsequently gained considerable respect from his people, as noted by DC Wilkinson (KNA/DC/EBU/1/10). As a chief, Kombo capitalised on the opportunities that came with chieftaincy for his self-interest by welcoming the Wakamba to the Rianjeru area in the Mbeere Division who engaged in bush clearing and cultivation and later acquired land, which became a contentious issue in the contemporary Mbeere sub-counties as shown in the monthly intelligence report of Embu District dated May 1952 (KNA/VQ/16/2).

Furthermore, to add more burden to the people of Embu District, Chief Kombo proposed Produce Cess Resolution No. 5/53. The by-laws stated that anybody who purchased grams, pulses and beans from the producer or any other agent was supposed to pay Embu African District Council a cess of shs. 2 for two hundred pounds in weight of such products purchased. Failure to pay the cess attracted a fine not exceeding a hundred shillings or imprisonment of not less than two months. In addition, Kombo proposed licensing of trading plots. Notably, he accelerated oppression, which served as an asset to the African District Council as he saw opportunities to create money for the colonial government. Conversely, the presidents of ADC welcomed his approach to finding a new source of revenue since the general fund balance was insufficient to meet annual expenditure (KNA/BD/5/1). Thus, Kombo played a critical role in building up the revenue balance, which was considered desirable by the ADC Presidents and Councils. However, most of the provisions Kombo proposed were on generating revenue with harsh terms. First, any person who failed to comply with these provisions was liable to a fine of shs.5, which according to oral testimonies in Mbeere sub-counties, was challenging to obtain or pay all

outstanding annual rents for most tenants. Secondly, trading plots with no premises were forfeited to the Embu African District Council as described in the minutes of February 16 and 17, 1956 (KNA/BD/5/1).

Gatheru (2005) asserted that other Kenyan communities were concerned with European annexation. For example, the local Embu and Mbeere people rejected control of the cultivation area. Chief Kombo voted yes on a resolution for managing the cultivation of Rianjeru against Chief Mwandiko, who voted nay. The Rianjeru area was part of the Mbeere Division contained by river Rupingazi from the point at which it meets the Embu-Mbeere boundary to its confluence with river Thiba and river Itabwa. The area was condoned for cultivation in the grazing area unless one had a special written permit issued by the DC on the recommendation of the Rianjeru committee. The cultivated land was supposed to follow the directives of the Agricultural Officer, which included narrow-based terracing to protect against soil erosion and was adequately manured and assiduously taken care of. In addition, no person could cultivate any area unless it was under grass for at least four years and enclosed by a fence or hedge (KNA/BD/5/1). To ensure adequate water supply in Mbeere, Kombo presented to the government a need for dams prompting engineering geologists to recommend boreholes at Kiambere and Kiritiri. After surveying was done, two shallow dams were dug successfully (KNA/DC/EBU/1/9). Earth Dams were constructed in Mavuria at Siakabakwa Kabondori and Ruamburi in 1940 as well as Bururi and Kiambere in 1942. However, these dams were built as experiments by African masons available without technical advice from government specialists.

The rapidly growing urban areas and better-paying jobs in Nairobi acted as a magnet to the young generation from Mbeere seeking new opportunities. The Mbeere who moved to Nairobi described urban life as hard and landing a job was a nightmare, as noted by Ileri Muranga in an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri Sub-location on January 31, 2020. Considering the freedom Nairobi offered, the harsh life was easier to bear than life in Mbeere Division, where the elders and the chiefs demanded obedience, taxes and labour. Chief Kombo tried to retain the young generation through sisal farming (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). The younger generations were running away due to stringent measures in Embu.

The Embu African District Council Bylaws (Minor Communal Services) outlined the chief's power. These powers included a chief's ability to use any non-disabled adult male in his jurisdiction without pay. Any person who failed to honour a chief's directives was guilty of an offence and liable for a fine not exceeding Shs. 100 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months. The non-disabled men were to construct and maintain local roads, bridges and camps for administrative purposes. Chief Kombo presented to the Embu LNC that sisal was one of the products of the Mbeere people, especially in the Mavuria location and required the DC J. H Candler, President of Embu LNC, to find a reputable firm to buy the sisal from the Mbeere, which he agreed (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). To summarise the situation better, Rosberg and Nottingham (1970, p. 77) argue, "the young people could find few opportunities inside the District, and this was the spur to leave it."

The legislation to prevent women's circumcision was discussed on September 21, 1925, by the Native Affairs Department in Nairobi (KNA/DC/EBU/8/2). According to the Native Affairs Department, legislation was set in place to prevent the practice, but they also acknowledged the difficulty of enforcing it. The legislation was presented to the Local Native Council to assess the general attitude (KNA/DC/EBU/8/2). Chief Kombo was an Embu African District Council member that passed a resolution that enhanced colonial penetration, particularly in Embu and Mbeere. Among the Mbeere and Embu, circumcision of both girls and boys was part of social-cultural life. For one to move from one stage of life to another, circumcision was inevitable. This was considered a rite of passage that introduced age sets into different roles.

The residents of Embu disagreed before they argued with the British colonial administrators. They saw the ban on female circumcision as a confirmed moral disorder. They joined in joint condemnation distancing themselves from missionaries and mission schools. Again, the colonial administrators and missionaries abjured female circumcision, a core value of Mbeere culture. Although the Catholic missionaries and CMS in Mbeere Division were always divided on the issue, Chief Kombo and the elders endorsed a ban on clitoridectomy (KNA/BD/5/1). Regulations against female circumcision were unpopular as the Mbeere perceived a crisis in morality. They were ready to safeguard their culture from delinquent missionaries. Some Christians in Mbeere abandoned it. Most paid lip service to the government prohibition and continued with the practice. Miriam Wangui (O.I, 1/2/2020) at Umau-Nyangwa stated;

We accepted, but still, we continued to circumcise as we sang the initiation songs. At some point, we demonstrated. Women protested the banning of female genital mutilation (FGM), people from far came together and they marched to Siakago at the DC's place.

Similarly, Flora Gatiti (O.I, 31/01/2020 at Kamurugu revealed;

When the whites came, the anti-FGM was solely from the Christian whites, who brought it in their formal education. So the church was the one against FGM. That was a big issue that angered many women, those from Mavuria, Kiambeere came together and each contributed a shilling (Shs). Others were from Munyori and Mbita. They collected plenty of money and put it in a basket and they travelled to Siakago to meet that *Mzungu* (white) so that he would allow them to circumcise women. I did contribute that one shilling. The DO arrested those women who had arrived at Siakago and chased others away. The women leader stood firm and said that no matter how long they were kept in those cells, they would continue circumcising their girls. The one shilling served as a bribe. They were released later and after two weeks, they went back to practising FGM.

In an anonymous letter from Gatunduri Village dated November 11, 1956, to the DO of Runyenjes, the author narrated the hardship of coping with uncircumcised girls' insatiable sexual desire in Embu since the men married more than one wife. He also stated that they hated uncircumcised women for it was against their traditions (KNA/DC/EBU/8/2). The scurrilous song *Muthirigu* (the big uncut girl) was widely sung in central Kenya, vividly portraying the concerns about women's sexuality. Young men also uttered, 'We cannot marry a *kirigu* (uncircumcised girl).' The public humiliation of 'uncut girls' among the Mbeere was based on a fear that girls would turn wayward to prostitutes, making Mbeere posterity go to waste. Similar criticism of uncut girls falling into evil living was also witnessed in Nyeri, Kiambu and Murang'a, as Peterson (2000) noted. Resolution No.11/37 on female clitoridectomy stated, "no person other than one duly authorised by the Embu LNC shall, within the Embu District, perform or assist in the performance of the operation of clitoridectomy," which was repeated in the Embu ADC Minutes of 1950. Still, it was not adhered to (KNA/BD/5/1). A by-law cited at the African District Council of Embu (Female Circumcision, 1956) was passed by DC F. R. Wilson, Chief Kombo Munyiri, and others. The by-laws categorically stated that female clitoridectomy in Embu was unlawful

from November 10, 1956. The by-law also outlawed associated ceremonies (Embu ADC, May 17 & 18, 1956). However, passing the resolution without informing the local population brought many fracas when the circumcision season commenced. Unlike other places in Central Kenya, where most parents transferred their children from missionary-run schools to newly formed African independent schools, many of the Mbeere and Embu were apprehended, defected from the church (*Githomo*), fined, creating fuss and unlimited illegal circumcision (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6).

The elevation of Kombo Munyiri over other chiefs in Mbeere was based on his years of service to the colonial government and the people of the Mbeere Division. Thatiah (2013) noted he was a great pillar in Mbeere and dominated affairs in the Division for a generation. However, compared to great chiefs in Kiambu like Koinange Mbiu, Waruhiu Kungu and Josiah Njonjo, who competed with emerging elites, Chief Kombo and his descendants did not play an influential role in shaping Kenya's independence. The power shift to replace the old with the educated elite did not accommodate Chief Kombo or Chief Manunga and their children, compared to Chief Njonjo and Chief Koinange, who were educated elites and favoured by the missionaries who schooled them. It should be noted that Chief Kombo and Chief Manunga were portrayed as unamenable to change, which created antagonism to change, especially on issues relating to female circumcision. In as much as the colonial government kept them in power, it was for a short time since they were incapable of forcing unwanted programmes on their people. Moreover, as was recorded by the colonial administrators, the people of the Embu District were not politically minded and held no strong views (KNA/DC/EBU/1/18).

By 1959, Chief Kombo and Chief Manunga had requested the government to relieve them of their duties, possibly because they could not keep pace with the changing economics and competition with emerging elites (mission-educated) and educational conditions. After 47 years of service and an award of the Queen's Medal for Chiefs in Silver, Chief Kombo left the office. At the farewell attended by the Minister of African Affairs, Mr. C.M. Johnston, Chief Kombo was nominated a Senior Chief on retirement. The colonial records described his service as almost impeccable and looked upon as the "grand old man of the District" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/18). Kithinji (2014), in his thesis, presented a photograph collection of chiefs in Embu. Chief Kombo was among the leaders in photograph collection with plenty of medals, as shown in **Figure 4.1**. According to Kithinji (2014), Chief Kombo received many awards, as portrayed hanging on his neck and coat, which showed how the British valued him. A Nairobi road connecting the Ngara roundabout with Gikomba proper is named after Chief Kombo.



Figure 4.1: Chief Kombo wa Munyiri of the Mbeere. Retrieved from Kithinji thesis Presented to Egerton University in 2014.



Figure 4.2: Queen's Mother greets Chief Kombo Munyiri for more than 40 years of service, 1959. It is reproduced with permission from Kenya National Archives (Class No. 350 Ken: DOI, 1959).

To conclude, the usefulness of Chief Kombo to the Mbeere people is better explained by a song shared by the Mau Mau veterans in Mbeere North and Mbeere South requesting him to protect Mbeere boundaries.

Iiii mbutu iino yomboka njikire ru ni murau niurarimire.
 Anene matuire ciirairi makiruirira na ndurwi giaturanwe.
 Kombo wa Munyiri kindira Mwea muvaka wa Embu na Mbeere ni Manyatta.
 Iii Kombo iii ndwamukure, Mbere uria wa Mose wa Itumu akuonie njira wa Mwea.
 Gikingi kia vanditwe Mwea utina wa Mbonjuki Mwea ndungiaturanwa.

Translated as

The army has arisen and a plough cultivated.
 The leaders have dwelt for long on cases for dividing the land.
 Kombo wa Munyiri stand firm regarding Mwea, the boundary between Embu and Mbeere is at Manyatta. Kombo, please talk to the Mbeere son, Mose of Itumu, to show you the route to Mwea. The beacon was planted in Mwea next to Mbonjuki; thus, Mwea cannot be subdivided.

4.2.3.2 Chief Mwandiko Ngira

Leadership changes were not frequent in colonial Kenya as those in power wanted to remain; however, when it did happen, it was purposeful. After Chief Paulo Makenda was deposed, Mwandika Ngira was selected from the thirteen names presented to the committee that assisted DC, J.H. Candler, in choosing an appropriate candidate (KNA/DC/EBU/36). Mwandiko was installed as acting chief at a baraza held at Ishiara on September 23, 1949. According to DC Candler, Chief Mwandiko was showing indications of being above average. At his inception, he had already prohibited the sale of all sugar cane to reduce drunkenness (KNA/VQ/16/2). However, the relationship between Mwandiko and the people in his location was delicate, as Embu residents were portrayed as heavy drinkers by the colonial officials (KNA/DC/EBU/3/4). Therefore, denying them local brew, an act highly praised by the DC, created unpopularity for Chief Mwandiko.

Before a chief assumed office, there was a swearing-in ceremony. Mwandiko was sworn in as chief of the Evurore location at Ishiara on May 3, 1950, in a well-attended meeting (KNA/VQ/16/2). Six months after assuming office, Chief Mwandiko was taken to Kabete to attend chiefs' training course. Chief Mwandiko was younger than Chief Kombo and, therefore, very active in LNC and ADC meetings. The official records portray him attending most of the LNC and ADC meetings in which he actively participated in the progress and adherence of colonial directives in Mbeere. The chiefs' course offered at Kabete sharpened Chief Mwandiko's leadership skills for acting as an efficient extension of the colonial administration. He was active in forcing the pace of change through the LNC meetings. Notably, Chief Mwandiko was at the forefront of tax assessment and

collection increasing tax rates from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 without warning (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). Chief Mwandiko reported to the colonial government that people would agree to this move with other chiefs and councillors. The government perceived this move as progressive since it came from the councillors, not the LNC President. Moreover, as chief, Mwandiko ensured that despite the lack of agricultural officers in Evurore, soil conservation was practised through land resting, clearing new land and terracing. Furthermore, Mwandiko ensured that the Mbeere in Evurore were allotted this task.

Chiefs defended their locations from infiltration. Of all the chiefs in Mbeere Division, Chief Mwandiko was against the infiltration of other communities in Evurore. He spearheaded the return of about 30 Tharaka residents from Meru District who had moved to Evurore with their families. The argument was that the Tharaka moved to Evurore without permission from the authorities of both sides (KNA/VQ/16/2). Due to infiltration, Chief Mwandiko was involved in affrays with Meru's headmen. The affray with Meru headmen prompted several of the Mbeere who were cultivating in Meru to discontinue farming. Notably, Mwandiko wanted the Mbeere to remain in Mbeere locations where they were registered as residents for tax and similar purposes. He never tolerated the constant movement of people across the border to escape the administration's attention.

According to the Provincial Commissioner Central Province based in Nyeri, in the Embu District Intelligence Report of November 1950, the Mbeere region faced challenges of food shortage (KNA/VQ/16/2). Therefore, the government allowed large food consignments to go to the Mbeere markets; however, the Kamba used to buy most of it. Actions were taken

to prevent lorry loads and donkeys of maize from moving out of Embu District to Ukambani and Yatta. Chief Mwandiko, seconded by Chief Kombo, proposed a resolution on produce cess stating that anybody who purchased cereals from Mbeere had to pay to the Embu African District Council. Failure to pay the cess rendered one guilty of an offence and was liable for imprisonment to a term not exceeding two months.

Some chiefs lost touch with the Mau Mau movement and the people they controlled as they strived to become influential bureaucrats within the colonial system. Because Chief Mwandiko was in charge during the emergency, he suggested that energetic methods were needed to prevent the extension of the Mau Mau movement in the Mbeere Division. He was responsible for preserving public order at the expense of Kenya's emancipation from the chain of colonialism. He never envisioned the Embu-Mbeere political integration engendering antagonism and undermining the vision of residents of Central Kenya on land and self-mastery. In the eyes of the European officials, Chief Mwandiko would be an ideal chief, a prototype for modern progress. Notably, the ordinary Mbeere viewed him differently, some as a true Mumbeere, warlike, tribalist (ethnocentric) and an aggressive anti-Mau Mau person, as noted in oral testimonies in Mbeere sub-counties. Not everyone was pleased with his ethnocentric choices and an implacable enemy of the Mau Mau militancy. He fulfilled missionaries' hopes of building schools and churches in Evurore; hence, he was altogether different. Since subversive behaviours were associated with Nairobi and Embu Divisions, any person from those areas perceived as a Mau Mau insurgent was dealt with accordingly. By 1952, the government suspended most development-related activities to concentrate on the Mau Mau insurgency.

Adriano Nthiga Mukinyango on (OI, 10/02/2020), at Kathimari-Nguthi sub-location, recalled how Mwandiko wa Ngira fame was for wrongdoings. He created his para-administrative and military bodies surrounded by young tribal retainers who implemented his will; they would beat the Mau Mau insurgents mercilessly in de-oathing. He also noted, "Mwandiko was not a good man? We even planned to beat him, but we did not. During de-oathing, we were beaten, and even Mwaura wa Nyaga died upon reaching home." Chrispin Mate (O.I, 8/2/2020) described Chief Mwandiko as an adamant dark man who, during the Mau Mau uprising, Ishiara, Nguthi, Evurore and Kathera natives were summoned to the chief's office at Ishiara, where they witnessed those suspected of being the Mau Mau supporters tortured by order of Chief Mwandiko. He explained as follows;

The Mau Mau adherents were arrested and taken to Mwandiko, who ordered his aid-de-camp Mwombombo to hit them mercilessly. Mwombombo used a belt and beat them so bad. I felt awful. I stood up and told him to stop beating those people. The government would punish them.

Contrary to Lovatt's (2005) argument that the Mau Mau movement eliminated those who remained stoically faithful to the colonial government, there were no oral or archival pieces of evidence of any chief in Mbeere whom Mau Mau insurgents killed for repulsing Mau Mau fighters as compared to those from the Kikuyu ethnicity.

Chiefs were loathed, but their powers were recognised almost everywhere. Under Chief Mwandiko, the expectation was high for him to reclaim the status of the Mbeere in Embu Division. He played a considerable role in fighting against the forceful oathing of the Mbeere. As discussed, Chief Mwandiko fuelled inter-ethnic wars after the Kanyuambora incident. He authorised the Mbeere to retaliate and attack the Embu. He even incited his

people to attack the Embu teachers stationed in Evurore; however, DO Lakin and Judge (Mathunu) intervened before the Mbeere harmed them. Jackson Ireri lived and worked as a teacher in Ishiara and described Chief Mwandiko wa Ngira as merciless. He further said;

Mwandiko wa Ngira would beat people frequently. If you found him in the field beating up people, Mwandiko and Fausto were the same. The people would be lined up in the field, accused of being Mau Mau supporters. After some time, Mwandiko was sacked around 1956 for bad behaviour, dictatorial tendencies and not fulfilling his duties well.

Chief Mwandiko was suspicious of the newcomers, especially the Agikuyu (Ahoi) and Embu residents from Nairobi. According to DC Wilkinson, in the Special Intelligence Report of December 1952, Embu residents in Nairobi were responsible for administering the oath locally (TNA/FCO 141/5727). It led to the rounding up of all Embu residents in Nairobi. By 1953, there were about 300 people whose cases had been sorted out and awaiting trial before the resident magistrate who was supposed to be appointed in Embu on January 11, 1953. Many others were still under investigation.

Not all the Mbeere disliked Chief Mwandiko Ngira. Some saw him as a warrior who was ready to defend their interests. Nahashon Nyaga (O.1, 7/02/2020), held at Ishiara, argued that Chief Mwandiko represented true Mbeere. His reaction to Embu demonstrated that the Mbeere were not their 'wives' and could defend themselves. Mwandiko, just like the colonial administrators, viewed the Embu as terrorists. In the DO pricis, "the Mbeere continues to identify all Embu as Mau Mau movement followers; this is not a satisfactory position" (TNA/FCO 141/5767). Additionally, he assisted many Mbeere whom the colonial government arrested by engaging in de-oathing (vomiting the oath) acting as 'Her Majesty's witch doctor,' thus saving many Mbeere from imprisonment while

simultaneously crippling the Mau Mau movement by restricting the flow of intelligence.

Joseph Kabiero (O.I, 7/02/2020) at Ishiara, said;

Mwandiko was a chief I cannot forget because I went to school because of his efforts. He was an ambitious leader who promoted local people and never liked Mbeere concentrating on livestock farming only. My father was against education, and Kombo arrested and compelled him to send me to school. He told one Indian called Almasi Patel to take the measurements of my school uniform; that is how I ended up in Karangare school.

Not all chiefs were admired as they sought to represent the people's will. Chief Mwandiko pushed the colonial government to meet the demands of the local populace as he appreciated education. To some extent, Chief Mwandiko was like Chief M' Tuerando of the Abothuguchi location, who was development-oriented and promoted the government's policies to benefit the people (Ndubai, 2016). As an ex-chief in 1956, Mwandiko complained to the President of ADC, R.L.A Dobson, about the lack of intermediate schools in the Evurore location. He argued that the lack of intermediate schools in the Evurore location prompted children from his location to seek education in other areas. Subsequently, he proposed some of the work camp buildings at Ishiara be made available for children who qualified for intermediate education from Iriari, Karangari and other Evurore locations. DO Dobson accepted his request as outlined in ADC's minutes 8 and 9 of 1956 (KNA/BD/5/1). By May 1957, the Salvation Army application for Ishiara intermediate school was received and approved after Chief Mwandiko gave them a site to build the school.

Chief Mwandiko was not well-educated by European standards but exhibited leadership traits. Although he had leadership traits, he was portrayed as naughty. Once he hated you, there was no way out. In one instance, he had an altercation with a teacher from Embu,

Nyaga wa Kithae, who had reported him to DO Lakin and Judge (*Mathunu*), which prompted his transfer to Kanyuambora. Sometimes chiefs used conspiracy to subdue their opponents or competitors, which was common with chief Mwandiko, as noted in oral testimonies in Mbeere sub-counties. The use of force to terrorise local communities and illegal attainment of wealth was a norm among many chiefs in Embu District. Favouritism was rendered to those who could offer gifts to Mwandiko and those within the confines of power. In contrast, those outside the confines of power (ordinary Mbeere) felt the weight of coercive administration. Jackson Ileri was perplexed when a leader of his stature incited the Mbeere against the Embu by saying that the eyes of the Mbeere and Embu would not look at each other since the Mbeere considered the Embu as Mau Mau supporters.

When a man fell from power, he saw his wealth diminish; he was even prone to falling prey to para-administrative and military bodies he created. Chief Mwandiko, who once served with total dedication to the colonial government, continued to claim advances on the purchases he never paid. A file on Chief Mwandiko Ngira documents this trend, where the colonial government, through the District Officer-in-charge in Mbeere, tried to sell a Peugeot light lorry Mwandiko had acquired through an advance on October 21, 1954 (KNA/OP/1/2626). Although the loss of office in Mbeere was not expected, Chief Mwandiko retired in June 1956. The colonial government also took his gratuities of Sh. 2370 and sold the lorry to cover the outstanding balance of Sh. 3510 in respect of his motor car advance (KNA/OP/1/2626).

4.2.3.3 Chief Manunga Ngochi

Chief Manunga was not a Mbeere by blood. Notably, Chief Kombo's originality is also questioned. Birici Gatheri, in an interview held on May 16, 1981, and December 30, 1983, by Mwaniki Kabeca, stated, "My mother is of Muraga clan, of Ikombo wa Munyiri and was a Muembu (Mwaniki, 2005)." Chief Manunga was an adopted child from Ukambani. The Mbeere as a community were accommodative, and according to Mbeere custom and laws, adoption could be done through redemption by a goat. During the redemption ceremony, an adult went through oathing to be reborn again and accept the culture of the Mbeere. In case of an attack by the tribesmen of the adopted child, such a person was placed on the frontline. If their behaviour portrayed any allegiance to the enemy, they were considered enemies of the Mbeere and killed on the battlefield. At the same time, according to the Mbeere culture, the alien born through goat (giciaro) could buy land and enjoy similar rights as the Mbeere if he lived with the community as one of them. Moreover, his children could also exercise the same rights, but his relatives could not come to Mbeere and claim land after his death. Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020 at Nthawa, recounted how the white man always favoured leadership positions to people outside the Mbeere community. Interestingly, in the Embu District Monthly Intelligence Report of August 1949, DC warned the Mbeere of selecting useless chiefs like Paulo. If they chose another ineffective leader, he would appoint a non-Mbeere for the post (KNA/VQ/16/2).

Tignor (1971) points out that when people speak highly of a chief, he did not mistreat them or exact heavy obligations like other chiefs. From oral interviews in Mbeere sub-counties, respondents genuinely admired Chief Manunga Ngochi. Chief Manunga is remembered

with deep affection throughout Mbeere for his accommodative traits and advocacy for the people. He was a Mkamba-Mumbere who became more of Mumbere-Mkamba, a leader whose stand on the insurgency was hard to comprehend, yet liked by his colonial superiors and always missing in LNC and ADC meetings.

As the British government tried to create collaborationist chiefs in a chiefless society, some chiefs influenced others. As a local boss, Chief Manunga is rarely mentioned compared to Chief Kombo, who was very old and respected or the enterprising Chief Mwandiko, a true Mumbere who was always warlike and a dictator. Chief Manunga was portrayed in oral testimonies as a non-aggressive person who did not harm the people of Siakago. Mwaniki (2005), in his collection of oral testimonies in Mbeere, believed that Manunga was on good terms with the Mau Mau movement's followers, and they never hurt him. Ndubai (2016) noted that some chiefs sympathised with the Mau Mau movement and offered support discreetly. According to Birici Gatheri, a sub-chief in Siakago, Chief Manunga knew he had taken the oath and never de-oathed him but smiled, indicating that he had also taken the Mau Mau oath (Mwaniki, 2005). This action concurs with Abiodun and Hook's (2006) contention that some individuals were 'head hunted' into membership in the Mau Mau movement due to their strategic position in government. Oral testimony is remarkably consistent in detailing how some chiefs took the oath and kept quiet.

As a local boss, Manunga attained a hold over the people. Many came forward in agricultural development. Moreover, Chief Manunga was entitled to chiefly supervision duties and encouraging agricultural development in close collaboration with the colonial

officers from the Department of Agriculture. He was supposed to ensure that every cattle boma was well-drained and repaired, and the grass used as bedding for cattle was used on the farm as composite manure before rains commenced. He was also mandated with guaranteeing that Napier grass plots were available, weeded and manured before the long rains. The chief was the face of social change during planting, ensuring line planting was adhered to throughout the locations. Soil conservation was vital, and Manunga, like other chiefs, was mandated to ensure that topsoil was not eroded (KNA/BD/5/9). He ensured the principal methods of stopping erosion (narrow-based terraces bank) were implemented, and the grass was planted at the onset of the rains to limit soil movement to about three metres.

Unlike other Divisions in Embu District, Mbeere was not considered a permanent Division. Thus, the chiefs enjoyed considerable political autonomy in deciding what was suitable for their people, unlike the Embu Division, where the District Officers were stationed. Manunga ensured that cultivation was not done on steep slopes (over 20%) unless the slopes were benched. Also, Chief Manunga was to certify that no cultivation was done near any river or a stream in his location, and roads were well maintained. Furthermore, all roadside hedges were to be maintained and trimmed. Besides safeguarding compliance to the instruction, chiefs were supposed to show leadership and make people understand the need and benefit of these measures as outlined in 1956 by DC Symes-Thompson (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). In Mbeere, the most recognised white man was Judge locally known as Mathunu. He had acquired the confidence of the people and was widely admired. Judge's responsibilities in Mbeere included overseeing construction work on water supplies, roads

and bridges, health centres at Siakago and rock catchment tanks near Kiritiri. DC Symes-Thompson asserted that all this was done to Mbeere because of their loyalty during the state of emergency period and all that the Mbeere needed was water (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). In contrast to Chief Kombo and Chief Mwandiko, whose views were widely felt, Manunga was not vocal in the African District Council of Embu. However, on behalf of ADC-Embu, he seconded a loan of £2,000 from the African Land and Development Board (ALDEV) to establish a grazing scheme in Mwea (KNA/BD/5/9). The loan was supposed to be repaid by imposing a stock grazing fee upon all stock-owners grazing in the scheme area, as illustrated in Embu ADC minutes of May 16-17, 1957 (KNA/BD/5/1). He also engaged in market by-laws whereby children under 16 years were not employed in established markets.

An analysis of Embu District ADC's minutes reveals that Chief Manunga only proposed resolution No.29/56 on female circumcision by-law of 1956 (KNA/BD/5/1). The by-law prohibited clitoridectomy within Embu District with effect from the tenth day of November 1956. Any person found doing it was guilty of an offence, a resolution that offended women in Mbeere, causing them to demonstrate to the DO's office at Siakago. The by-law also prohibited any person from attending such ceremonies. The contravention of this by-law attracted a fine not exceeding 500 shillings, imprisonment up to six months, or both. The imposed fine was too heavy for the Mbeere to incur, but the Mbeere and Embu continued female circumcision despite the harsh terms. This progressive step of outlawing female circumcision was taken after Dr. Kinya addressed the Council in Embu about female circumcision (KNA/BD/5/9). DC Symes-Thompson anticipated opposition from the

Mbeere, whom he termed as conservative. He feared that conservative parents would take their children for circumcision in neighbouring districts where it was not yet an offence under native law and custom (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). However, according to DO Palmer's Handing over Report (1958), the measure was passed without any reference to the people in the locations; therefore, unlimited illegal circumcision still thrived (KNA/DC/EBU/2/8). Due to widespread female circumcision, the council was set to meet and rescind the decision, allowing licensed female circumcisers to carry out the operation.

Chief Manunga's silence did not mean he was a weak chief because the colonial government never tolerated any weakness among chiefs. The colonial government regularly reminded them how chieftaincy was not hereditary. Therefore, they were supposed to enforce the policy and instructions of all departments even if they faced personal threats or the destruction of their property. Chiefs were to personally champion what the colonial government considered right against the violent opposition of agitators. Notably, Chief Manunga, unlike Chief Mwandiko, was not deposed from office but went into honourable retirement like Chief Kombo. Despite being a Mau Mau sympathiser, he played a double role, a challenging oscillating position. Markedly, his support of the colonial government was unwavering.

Chiefs had a difficult time carrying out their duties effectively. For example, Ndubai (2016) records that the colonial period heralded difficult times for chiefs because they had to balance between the needs of their people and insurgency while being loyal to their masters. Chief Manunga Ngochi also engaged in the de-oathing process. Njuki wa

Mitambo (O.I, 5/02/2020) at Riandu narrated how Chief Manunga assisted him. As he was being arrested, chiefs in Mbeere said they could de-oath those who had taken the oath. When they reached Siakago, they were placed in a barbed-wire prison (Thegenge). Chief Manunga saw Njuki wa Mitambo and informed his father not to buy a bull owing to their friendship. Instead, he was to buy a bottle of whiskey that cost Sh.7. Some elders asked the chief why seven bulls during the de-oathing ceremony, yet eight people were to be de-oathed. Chief Manunga asked them if they had finished the seven bulls' meat, and they kept quiet. Subsequently, the Home Guards were furious and told the men to stop wasting their time. Njuki wa Mitambo and others were de-oathed in public, and he noted;

While being cleansed, we uttered, "If I saw Mau Mau going or looking for the chiefs, I would report." We used to lick a small piece of the bull's liver with blood as a way of cleansing. When it got to me (Njuki wa Mitambo), I changed the vow and said, "Whenever I saw the Mau Mau coming for Chief Manunga, I would tell him and not everyone." Those around said I was a difficult person (hardcore) and when Manunga was asked, he sided with me, asking them, "how was it possible to tell everyone?" He said I was right to report to him since he was the leader.

After de-oathing, he, Kombo and Mwandiko sought employment at British American Tobacco (BAT), where they frequently reported to an Indian (BAT manager). Their action showed an act of empowering the ex-Mau Mau adherents. Evidently, Mbeere chiefs played a critical role in the colonial penetration in Mbeere. The three leaders understood the needs of their people and worked to realise those goals. Notably, one commodity lacking in Mbeere was water, where the chiefs played a critical role through the Central government to provide water.

4.2.4 The Mau Mau Organisation from the Core to the Periphery

The colonial administrators in Embu described Embu District as friendly and free from Nairobi politics. They also reported Embu, Gichugu, Ndia, Embu and Mbeere Divisions

inexperienced in political agitation, illegal oathing and secret societies. In 1951, there were reports by government officials of seditious activities led by extremists, although they never mentioned the Mau Mau movement (KNA/DC/EBU/1/9). In November 1952, the Mau Mau insurgency influence in Embu District was widespread, as reported in the Special Intelligence Report regarding the persistent oath ceremonies in Ndia Division (KNA/VQ/16/2). Ndia Division's populace was 100% behind the Mau Mau movement and the colonial government associated the massive recruitment of Ndia and Gichugu people to their proximity to Nairobi. They also drew connections with contacts from the region who worked as cleaners in Nairobi (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12).

As the colonial government traced the source of extremism in Embu District, the *Muhimu* committee that later became the Mau Mau Central Committee was exploiting government weakness, searching for ways of sending a special organiser through the Nairobi-Nyeri train without a permit. A month later, the police arrested a man and his wife, who boarded a train without a permit at Dundori-Nakuru station. On May 1, 1953, it was reported to colonial officials by the engine driver how a package of articles was thrown off the train and collected by people besides the line (TNA/FCO 141/5766). The colonial government took time to investigate these claims and on June 4, 1953, a train coming from Nairobi was raided by the police and the army, whereby they recovered 237 rounds of ammunition and hand grenades. To their amazement, the ammunition was carried by a recruit disguised as a schoolchild. His box contained ammunition and a tin of cooking fat with the ammunition inside. There was also a bag of flour as espoused in the Embu District Intelligence Committee meeting minutes of June 11, 1953 (TNA/FCO 141/5766).

To the colonial official, they wondered why the insurgency never vandalised the railway line during the war. As noted, later, there was a strong connection between Mau Mau activity and the railway line (Osborne, 2014). In September 1953, two Embu men were charged by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) under emergency regulations for sending recruits and ammunition by train to Embu from Nairobi. For sanity in railway transport, the colonial government earmarked railway workers for cleansing. Later, in Ukambani, the security forces arrested 253 Kamba members working as railway workers (TNA/WO 276/407). What mattered to the British colonialists was to control the spread of the Mau Mau ideology across the colony through the railway, but astonished upon realising harm had already happened after a revelation of how in Ukambani, the Mau Mau movement used the railway line to sell their doctrine in the fringes of the Kamba reserves (*East African Standard*, May 14, 1954).

Embu District Intelligence Reports (TNA/FCO/141/5766), recorded how locational committees collected funds and sent them to Nairobi-Kiburi house, Grogan road (now Kirinyaga road). Kiburi house was the centre of the Mau Mau insurgency; leaders from different provinces met to forge the way forward and report the progress (Muthua, n.d.). They also unveiled a chain of command and a complicated set-up flow of information; for example, in the District, Will George Njui was the representative of the secret Central Committee. In each *Itura* (village), there were committees of approximately 6-8 men with a chairperson and secretary. Information was forwarded to the three Divisions of Embu (Mbeere, Ndia and Gichugu), where each Division had two representatives.

Women were also featured in the Mau Mau organisation, especially in the Mau Mau set-up in Nairobi regarding Embu. Although women's lives were thought to be in the Kitchen, fetch water and child-bearing, it was a surprise for the British Intelligence to find them in the public sphere of politics. Nevertheless, this was to be expected as in late 1939; Governor Brooke-Popham envisioned an educated African woman who could be of an equal footing with the menfolk as White (1973) highlighted. The set-up also contained women, mainly commercial sex workers either for personal reasons, patriotic or enemies of imperialism as Furedi and White (1973; 1990) stated. The confessions of the arrested Mau Mau supporters in Nairobi showed women participation. Furthermore, detained youths in transit to Embu on the train showed the centrality of Embu to the Mau Mau movement because of the vast numbers of the Mau Mau prisoners in Embu. Many of the captured Mau Mau members feared that if they chickened out, they would cripple the organisation of the Mau Mau movement in Nairobi, which was their backbone (TNA/FCO/141/5766). In Embu alone, there were 14 camps with a capacity of 13000 detainees, as shown in **Table 4.2**. Fort Hall and Nyeri had six camps, each with a total capacity of 9000, while Meru had two camps with 1500 holding capacity. Therefore, Embu and Meru had enough land to handle outflow (TNA/FCO 141/6237).

District	Detention Camps	Capacity
	Ishiara	1000
	Kiambere	500
Embu	Mwea I	900
	Tebere I	900
	Mwea II	900
	Tebere II	900
	Mwea III	1800
	Tebere III	1800
	Mwea IV	1800
	Kangaita	500
	Dodueni/Kamwete	500
	Kagumori/ Rupengazi	500
	Kanja	500
	Njukini	500

Table 4:2: Source: Ministry of Defence (December 20, 1954): *List of detention camps.* Kenya National Archives (KNA/DC/MRL/1/6/2).

4.2.4.1 “Oathing our Wives” and its Impact on the Colonial Penetration

During the 1953-1956 period, although officially there were four Divisions in Embu District, there were only three Divisions. Gichugu and Ndia were Divisions independently, while the Embu and Mbeere formed Embu Division. Embu Division was always in the limelight regarding lawlessness. A series of forceful oathing ceremonies were reported in 1954, where non-cooperation with the Mau Mau movement's demands resulted in slashing, killings and abduction targeting those who refused to join the insurgency (TNA/FCO 141/5767). The Mbeere who lived near the Embu border suffered more in the Embu Mau Mau attacks. The colonialists used propaganda portraying the Mbeere as loyalists and

opponents of the Embu Mau Mau movement. The perceived alliance between individual Mbeere and the colonial regime became a product of violence.

On January 14, 1954, the disappearance of two Kenya Police reserve *Askaris* from Embu was widely circulated and sensationalised, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty, especially after a revelation of how an Embu man tricked his companion from Mbeere into accompanying him to an alleged beer party. The colonial regime identified a new trend of targeting and picking those loyal to the colonial government, a practice that severely constrained the daily lives of the Mbeere (TNA/FCO 141/5767). The tactical use of terror was also experienced on February 4, 1954, whereby the Embu Mau Mau attempted to forcefully oath the Mbeere at Kyeni location, which was beyond the trajectory of the war. The colonial regime associated oathing with efforts to settle old scores. Large scale violence was almost owing to forceful oathing but ceased by the administrators. Equally significant, a dramatic increase in support of the Embu Mau Mau adherents was also reported in the same month, whereby a gang from Kiambu armed with stern guns and rifles was spotted heading to Embu to support them in fighting the Mbeere (TNA/FCO 141/5767).

To further intimidate the Mbeere, the Mau Mau insurgents in Embu began burning schools. On Tuesday night, February 23, 1954, the Embu Mau Mau completely burnt a school and market at Kanyuambora in Evurore. As part of attempts to further divide the Mbeere and the Embu, the colonial regime quickly associated the latter with Mbeere Home Guards' coordinated attack in the Kyeni location after Chief Fausto's assassination. During an FGD

at Mwanyari about the situation at Kanyuambora, the respondents told the interviewer, “Kanyuambora people had refused to be administered the oath and the Embu vowed to give it to them by force. Mwandiko's *askaris* blew the trumpets and people assembled with quavers, bows and arrows and attacked the Embu. Both the Embu and the Mbeere killed each other.”

Adriano Nthiga Mukinyango (10/02/2020) at Kathimari-Nguthi sublocation recalled how the Embu ambushed the Mbeere at Kanyuambora, after which the Mbeere retaliated. Sephania Giconi (O.I, 8/02/2020), held at Nguthi recalled how that night, they were at the Embu-Mbeere border guarding their people from possible Embu Mau Mau movement's attack. At night they heard screams and distress calls from Kavengero, "*Uuuwi! Uuuwi! Na Kavengero! Uuuwiii! Uwiii na Kavengero!*" They tracked the direction of the screams fully armed with bows, quivers full of arrows, machetes and clubs;

It was around 10 pm-11 pm when we heard the screams. So we decided to go and help. We found some Mbeere tied with ropes. Ngari Gatuva and others were captives of the Embu Mau Mau insurgents. Later, we discovered that some women had been butchered and their houses burnt down. The night was full of screams, and people came from as far as Ngiiri, even from River Sagana. They spent the whole night standing.

Francis Njeru (O.I, 7/02/2020) held at Kiare kia Makundi, remembered the situation after the Kanyuambora incident. Kathenwa was shot dead. He noted that the Mbeere people were in disbelief why their immediate neighbours, the Embu, would force them to take the oath while the Chuka and Kikuyu were informing them about the oath in a diplomatic manner. There was a massive cry in Mbeere and a song of grief was composed;

Uuuiyu nitwauiya ndugu tuuri Kegonge, ii Embu, nimueguire, Yembu yareta icamburira na Kavengero, nitwethire nyomba iri cavi, ivuana mwangi, iciovoka ngesi, iria na ngoro ninthairwe, chifu avoneanengere kabathi, Chifu akinengera marua ngitira mwiri, ngikena muno ii ngithungira Embu.

Loosely translated as,

At Kegonge, the friendship was disrupted; as you heard, Embu attacked Kavengero, where we found houses locked and on fire, our hearts were heavy, please convince the chief to give us a chance and a letter of authority (to go and revenge in Embu), after which I will be very happy entering Embu territory.

Presented with an enemy to deal with, Chief Mwandiko was asked why he allowed the Embu to mistreat the Mbeere. Subsequently, a convoy of people from far regions camped at Ishiara near Chief Mwandiko's office, full of anger and raring for revenge. Francis Njeru further stated;

Chief Mwandiko informed us that we would kill each other if we followed the attackers. We went to Patel Ndaya's textile shop; we took a piece of red cloth material. Each person wore a red ribbon on their wristband. Some tied it around their heads to serve as their identity mark when in Embu occupied territory. That was a directive from Chief Mwandiko, and nobody went against his command. The Mbeere went and attacked Embu. They killed them mercilessly. They only spared women and small children. They only killed mature men, from Karurumo, Kegonge up to Kathanjuri, and one could spot fires everywhere.

It is worth noting that the Mbeere region did not attract many expatriates in the Division, but there were three Italian priests and a local businessperson. Emiliciana Muringo, an Embian who resided at Karurumo, near the border between Embu and Mbeere, hinted how the Embu went to forcefully administer the oath to the Mbeere and then the Mbeere retaliated. She noted that when the Mbeere came to Embu, they came to steal, as recorded in an interview held at Karurumo-Kyeni South on February 11, 2020. Jackson Ireri also narrated how the Embu agreed to oath the Mbeere by force;

The Mbeere had refused to take the oath when the Embu were taking. I remember one day; it was on a Tuesday in 1954. There was a battle as the Mau Mau insurgents raided Kanyuambora; the Mau Mau from here in Embu entered one part of Kanyuambora and beat up people. They also burnt a school and harassed people overnight. On a Tuesday, which is usually the market day at Ishiara, the Embu would also come to the market at Ishiara; remember that the Mau Mau would also beat the Embu who were not Mau Mau adherents, but the Mbeere did not know that. In the morning, things were nasty. People demonstrated how you see people carrying out demonstrations. The Mbeere rallied for support to attack the Embu, who had attacked them previously. Luckily, I used to teach at Karangare, which is near Ishiara town. The Embu teachers who resided far came in a rush as if chased away. We congregated at Ishiara. Those at Kanyuambora also came to Ishiara

since moving to any other place would not have been safe for them, so they came to Ishiara. We were seeking shelter and assistance at Ishiara. So, Chief Mwandiko blew a whistle and called a meeting when we went. Other Mbeere blew the horn, and many came at the chief's camp field. Remember (the Embu teachers) were also at the camp. So, the chief briefed the Mbeere and informed them of how the Mau Mau supporters had beaten up people at Kanyuambora. Then he asked the people, even as we are speaking, who are these (referring to us), is it not the same Embu?

Chief Mwandiko incited the Mbeere to attack the Embu teachers. By good luck, the DO, Mr. Lakin arrived and a teacher called Nyaga wa Kithae ran towards his car and informed him their state of danger. Nyaga explained why they needed to be rescued; he explained what the chief had said. Chief Mwandiko was called and asked to explain his utterances. Lakin compelled him to explain what he meant by saying that the eyes of the Mbeere and the Embu would torch (burn) each other by looking at one another. He refuted the claims and the Embu teachers were asked if he had said that and they answered in the affirmative. Mr. Lakin ordered Chief Mwandiko to recall the meeting and inform the people that anyone who would touch an Embu teacher would be arrested. Chief Mwandiko complied and announced to the Mbeere; he would arrest, jail and impose a fine of a he-goat on anyone caught abusing a teacher. The Home Guards at the chief's camp relocated and the teachers occupied those houses. The guards would also accompany the teachers to the school and spend the day there due to anonymous death threats. After that meeting, the situation de-escalated in Evurore while the colonial government promised to deal with the situation.

4.2.5 The Mbeere Chiefs and De-oathing

Rosberg and Nottingham (1970) contend that oathing raised the ordinary person's commitment and bound the rural and urban-based radical leadership. A continued refusal of the local populace in Mbeere to give information shows the power held by the Mau Mau movement (TNA/FCO 141/5766). The alliance of the Mbeere Division with Nairobi was

supported by an organised movement of mobile oathing groups from the city and, therefore, Mbeere chiefs saw a chance to salvage the name of the Division alleged misdeeds of the Mau Mau movement. The colonial regime indicated that the Mbeere Division was kept away from the influence of the Mau Mau fighters primarily due to the influential position maintained by Chief Kombo (KNA/DC/EBU/1/13).

The Embu District Intelligence Committee of 1953 stated that some key personalities in the District had taken the oath. Chief Fausto gave a voluntary statement on attending a meeting in January 1950 at the senior Chief Muruatetu's house. In that meeting, there were other five prominent chiefs and eleven other prominent persons in the District. One of the meeting agendas was how those present could further the agenda of the Mau Mau movement and keep the whole movement under the strictest cover of secrecy (TNA/ FCO 141/5766). In the meeting, all those present were given the Mau Mau oath by one of the chiefs' sons. Fausto admitted to having taken three oaths since then. The colonial government was awakened by the implication of the highly praised leaders, especially senior Chief Muruatetu and Chief Mugeru. The removal of senior Chief Muruatetu was a relief to the loyalists in Embu District. Subsequently, chief Muruatetu was detained for eighteen months on hard labour, although he appealed and the colonial government reduced the sentence. For unknown reasons, the Mbeere chiefs had alternative arrangements for the Mbeere who had taken the oath.

The interviews and archival sources are opaque whether Mbeere chiefs had taken the oath since many people secretly joined the Mau Mau movement and did not reveal it. Evidence from oral interviews in Kanyuambora suggests that deposed Chief Paulo Makenda engaged

in massive oathing of the Mbeere and explained the need to join the movement. Mwaniki, in one of the collections of oral testimonies, argues that Chief Mwandiko did not associate with Mau Mau (Mwaniki, 2005). Chief Manunga of Siakago and Chief Kombo were on good terms with the Mau Mau movement and could not be harmed by the movement. Birici Katheri, in an interview carried out by Mwaniki Kabeca on May 16, 1981, and December 12, 1983, narrated how he was tricked into going to the DC office in Embu town (Mwaniki, 2015). Upon reaching Embu, a relative accommodated him, hoping to see the DC the following day in the morning. During the night, people appeared and his relative disappeared. He was taken out of the house and oathed. As he went back to Mbeere, Chief Manunga saw him, smiled, and told him to go home and rest. He argues that oath-taking took time to reach Mbeere, but with time everyone took the oath. There was no other alternative but to comply.

The colonial administration devoted plenty of time to understanding the Mau Mau oath and associated oath-taking practices. They could get reliable information from the evidence of the caught Africans ready to speak about the oath and the oathing process to dismantle it. The government was determined to make the people realise the devilish nature of the Mau Mau path and its effects. Notably, the government was ready to use *gutahikio* (vomiting), a cleansing ceremony they knew was applicable in Kikuyuland against the movement. The committee mandated to assess the efficacy of the cleansing oath argued that to reclaim a person, confession needed to be free and voluntary and done in the presence of the people who knew the person well (TNA/FCO 141/6582). The confession was to be followed by a cleansing ceremony, properly conducted, to seal the sincerity upon an admission. Just like

the Christians declared before the church elders and congregation, the confessor was supposed to make a formal declaration and confession before their fellow men.

The Mbeere chiefs had established an anti-Mau Mau movement attitude. Anybody suspected of affiliating to the movement or aiding its spread was dealt with accordingly. Such an attitude worked as the lack of almost daily contact with the Mau Mau supporters led the passive wing to lose its nerve (TNA/FCO 141/ 6127). Chief Kombo offered an alternative solution as calls for counter-oathing increased since he was determined to keep Mbeere Division free from the Mau Mau insurgency contamination. As a way of delivering reforms, Chief Kombo displayed to the government that he was on top of the movement and could assist members from the Mbeere who had taken the Mau Mau oath. Drawing from the FGD held on January 31, 2020, when the State of Emergency commenced, chiefs made the Mbeere believe that the Mau Mau followers were *mang'ei* (terrorists). Julieta Mutave, in an FGD, held on February 3, 2020, described Chief Kombo;

I would not say that Kombo was a good man. When I was a young girl. We sang, and Kombo would send his guards to come and arrest us. We sang songs called 'Njai'. Girls sang this song to please themselves. We also made lacerations on our stomachs, and Kombo did not like it. He arrested us, claiming the letters were marks of the Mau Mau movement. We were arrested and detained at Kavondori, where we dug trenches. After we did the digging, they released us. Kombo had even refused to allow us to be circumcised. He said we should not be circumcised because our mothers took the Mau Mau oath, but we did it secretly.

Interestingly, Chief Kombo began the de-oathing process before the recommendation of the committee tasked to report on the sociological causes underlying the Mau Mau movement with some proposals on the means of ending it. In the week ending of April 24, 1953, “among the repatriated from Nairobi to Embu District were 60 Mbeere - Embu” (TNA/ FCO 141/5766). After the screening was done, many of them were found to have

taken the Mau Mau oath. AL Archer for the Embu District Intelligence Committee stated as follows, "This is most disquieting, as up to now these people have been unaffected by Mau Mau." This prompted the government to call for a *baraza* of Mbeere chiefs to speak for the detainees who admitted having taken the oath. However, according to Archer's analysis, none of them appeared to be enthusiastic Mau Mau supporters. As a result, it was decided that the repatriates undergo intense cleansing and be returned to Mbeere. According to Archer, a potent cleansing ceremony at Siakago on April 23, 1953, at 5:36 pm, where the Mbeere repatriates oathed at Barry Johnson farm were de-oathed (TNA/FCO 141/ 5766).

The colonial government took an interest in the psychological approach applied in Mbeere by the chiefs (TNA/FCO 141/6582). The proposed method established a relationship between Africans and Europeans, showing that the two were essential for the development of Kenya. The first approach that the colonial administrators used was to make a Mau Mau movement supporter feel like a respectable citizen achieved through a full confession to regain a new state of mind. The colonial administration's approach in eradicating the Mau Mau movement in the supporter's mind was to employ Catholic-like confessions whereby fear yielded peace of mind, resentment to trust and sullenness to happiness. Chief Kombo was trusted, consulted, and made functional in the fight against the Mau Mau insurgency to harness the anti-Mau Mau process. Mugo wa Malindi (O.I, 4/02/2020 at Ngangari detailed how Chief Kombo rescued them when he accepted to perform de-oathing. Kombo requested the Mbeere arrested taken to Kavondori for de-oathing. In 1953, the Mbeere Mau

Mau adherents were released and lorries from Embu DC's office transported them from the detention.

As noted in oral testimonies, the lorries were full and difficult to find a space to sit on. The lorries took some to Siakago, others to Evurore, from Mavuria they were taken to Kavondori, at Kombo's place. Their families brought bulls for de-oathing, both those who had taken the oath and those who had not. In de-oathing, they made the utterance of the following words; "if I had taken the oath, I'll remove it with this blood of this bull and then swallowed the blood." Mwaniki Mwangario (O.I, 30/01/2020) at Nguru-Kianjiru location noted that the Mau Mau insurgents in Mbeere were released because of Chief Kombo. As a condition for vomiting the oath, each member was supposed to offer a bull for the practice. Nevertheless, they hurled nothing. Renison Muthige (1978) argues that 'vomiting the oath was symbolic of *'thahu'* removal.

Nyaga wa Nthumbi's testimony of February 01, 2020, suggests that Kombo's wisdom made him formulate this plan to protect his people. Even at Kilimambogo, where he used to work, Chief Kombo would go and bring back those Mbeere arrested with a promise to de-oath them. The de-oathing process in Mbeere was different from what was described by the government because they employed force. In an FGD conducted at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, the researcher noted that that Chief Mwandiko used force to de-oath, "Some of us saw it with our own eyes. They never hid them. They beat the Mau Mau supporters in our presence. A man named Mwaura wa Nginyuki got killed at Irumire. He

had taken the oath in Nairobi. They took him from his home, beat him all the way, and he died.”

Juliana Konji, in an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, argued that Chief Kombo would ask Mau Mau suspects to bring bulls or goats for the ceremony. According to her, there was no rationale in the whole process because once one had taken the oath, it was hard to remove it from the stomach. From her expression Chief Kombo was a wise (*muugi*) who never wanted the Mbeere to suffer in detention camps. Juliana Konji (O.I, 3/02/2020) at Mwanyare recalled how Chief Kombo compelled her to sell six acres of land to buy bulls for her husband Kithinji wa Nthambara de-oathing. In the de-oathing process, he was beaten and came home naked.

4.2.6 The Death of Chief Fausto and its Implication on Entrenchment of Colonial Rule

The Mau Mau movement's violent acts in Embu District increased rapidly after numerous strikes on Embu loyalists. The escalating violence ended with the brutal murder of ex-chief Erasto of Kabare location in June 1953, although the government associated his death with some private feuds he was involved in (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). Also, Chief Joshua of Ngariama in Gichugu Divison was brutally murdered then succeeded by Muchiri Thagicu (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). As the colonialists' security system deteriorated, the Mau Mau movement fighters dealt with those perceived to benefit from colonial patronage. These included Chief Fausto of Kathanjuri and Agricultural Officer Samuel Mbogo. Chief Fausto's death caused a state of panic as far as Ishiara area. For the colonial government, killing the two was an outrageous act that demanded immediate attention (TNA/ FCO 141/5766). Before killing the Agricultural Officer, his house was ravaged by fire on

October 12, 1953, but he escaped unhurt (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). At the same time, the Mau Mau insurgents executed an attack at Chief Fausto's office to release Mau Mau movement prisoners. The Mau Mau adherents managed to release six male prisoners, who were later captured and taken back to custody. The attacks on the chief's office and Mbogo's home frustrated the colonial government, who felt that a continued refusal of the local populace to offer information was a sign the insurgency inspired them (TNA/ FCO 141/5766).

In the eyes of European officials, the local initiates were behind the attacks since no requisite information was forthcoming. Notably, the Embu loathed Samuel Mbogo for enforcing digging of trenches for soil conservation. He forced people to dig trenches and prevented them from planting along the riverbeds. However, despite numerous pleas for him by the Mau Mau movement followers to change his ways, Mbogo remained adamant. Strenuous digging of terraces in colonial Kenya as a soil conservation project disrupted most areas in central Kenya and even to residents of Bunyore location in North Nyanza Province (Opolot, 2019). The attack on Chief Fausto's Camp led to the unfolding of drama as the chief called a meeting and threatened the local population that he owned a book of all the Mau Mau movement supporters in the Kathanjuri location. Little did he know that some of his guards belonged to the Mau Mau movement? According to Jackson Ireri;

It was the guards at the chief's camp who ganged up against Fausto and Samuel. The camp had been surrounded by a trench with sharp sticks at the bottom to protect the chief, with a special place for people to enter (drawbridge which would be lowered allowing people to enter and leave). Njeru wa Muoyo was the corporal as he was from the army. He would keep surveillance on the camp with his *askaris*. However, Njeru and the *askaris* had also taken the oath, yet they were guarding the camp. One day they ganged up and planned and ensured that the entry to the camp was open. Njeru wa Mbathane was killed as he went on top of the tree trying to shoot and raise the alarm. Fausto and Samuel were also killed at the camp. After Fausto was killed, there was heavy rain that night.

The chief's office also had a chimney where he could cook, as shown in **Figure 4.3**



Figure 4.3: Chief Fausto's office

The Embu District Intelligence Report corroborated Jackson Ileri's testimony for the week ending November 12, 1953 (TNA/ FCO 141/5766). On a subsequent attack, eight guns with ammunition were stolen after the gang managed to enter the chief's office, which doubled as his home. They captured him and took four books containing the names of Kyeni people who had taken the oath and contributed money to support the movement. Chief Fausto and Samuel were murdered on the night of November 8, 1953, on Sunday at Home Camp at Kathunjuri (TNA/ FCO 141/5766). Chief Fausto was a targeted person. According to Jeremiah Ileri and Emiliciana Muringo, Fausto was loathed by the Mau Mau movement; "He would beat people mercilessly in the field. Chief Mwandiko and Chief Fausto were the same. The people would be lined up in the field, accused of being supporters of the Mau Mau movement." The people of Kyeni location celebrated the deaths of Fausto and Mbogo. They did not mourn them but rather celebrated their murders. After the duo's death, the following day was a Monday. It rained heavily, which to the Mau Mau movement adherents, was a good omen for their death (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Jackson

Ireri, in an oral interview, corroborated archival data that the rains cleared the gang's tracks, making it hard for the police to follow up in the early hours of the morning. Phalafala (2011) noted that rain in the African context signified the prevalence of peace and the dropping of the rain after an atrocity signified the gods were happy about the act done towards the cruel authority. Interestingly, most of the Mau Mau movement's attacks in the Embu Division were executed on Monday nights when most people were preparing for the Tuesday market at Ishiara.

Seeing the pressing need to restore confidence among loyalists in Embu, the DC held a *baraza* and informed the Kyeni location residents that they had one hour to give information regarding the murder of Chief Fausto (TNA/FCO141/5766). No information was forthcoming, which led to the closure of a coffee farm in Kathunjuri and enforced collective punishment. The security forces confiscated all the cattle in Kyeni and Kagaari locations and anyone suspected to have associated with the Mau Mau movement was arrested and detained. The precarious situation compelled less the police to rely upon evidence and confessions. As police assembled Kyeni residents in earnest, some loyalists took advantage to settle old scores and grudges. They would associate their foes with the Mau Mau movement (TNA/FCO141/5766). The police would beat the accused individuals for confession. Notably, the Mbeere who had taken the oath would be revealed and taken away (TNA/FCO141/5766). In one of Kimathi's letters, he noted;

In the early morning, during a downpour, according to the report I received this evening, our forces made a surprise attack upon Kathunjuri enemy post. After thirty minutes of fierce engagement, our fighters broke the enemy defence and seized the Post. Most of the enemy defenders were eliminated, including the notorious traitor chief Fausto . . . The captured enemies were executed and the Post was left smoking. No casualties on the people's side. Two days later, the British forces armed with heavy weapons attacked Kathunjuri village killing hundreds of people . . . Homes were burned down and crops in

the field were savagely destroyed . . . (Maina wa Kinyatti, 1987, p. 201) extract from notes from 'Kimathi's Diary.

Following the killing of Chief Fausto, the colonial administrators began profiling Home Guards, reducing them to the barest minimum. The colonial government also seized the opportunity to use the Mbeere to attack the Embu at Ishiara and Kyeni. The Mbeere Home Guards under Chief Mwandiko were told to patrol uninhabited areas between their own Division and Kagaari and Kyeni location (TNA/FCO141/5766). However, according to oral testimonies, the Mbeere took the opportunity to take revenge. It was speculated that those who attacked Chief Fausto went to Ishiara the following Tuesday to sell their goods, as narrated by Jackson Ileri;

After this, it got tough at Ishiara as the Embu who had gone to the market at Ishiara were beaten up. Thus, the battle heightened since the Embu who had come to the market were treated as part of the Mau Mau insurgencies who killed the chief. An alarm was raised in Mbeere. The Mbeere came for revenge for the death of the Embu chief. After the chief was killed, the *askaris* here in Embu, the ones from Mbeere alongside some other Mbeere, came to Embu. To them, they had found a reason to beat up the Embu. Even at Ishiara and Embu, they were beaten. Some Embu left their wares at Ishiara and escaped towards River Thuci. For us, we did not leave our houses. So, the fight was massive and lives were lost as the Mbeere took that opportunity to revenge here in Embu.

The colonial government was determined to use the divide and rule tactics, where they emphasised ethnic differences further to worsen the relationship between the Embu and the Mbeere. The Mbeere were tainted as having acute hostility to the Mau Mau movement and its doctrine, yet they were at the centre of oathing as Ben Kanyeji explained;

The Mbeere had a critical role in the Mau Mau Movement. Among the Meru and the Kikuyu men who were here, only the Mbeere provided doctors. Oathing was also very advanced among the Mbeere people. When the systems were changing, the Kikuyu would send their elders to the elders in Mbeere, Embu would do the same. Medicine men were found in Mbeere . . .

Following the government's security action in Embu Division, there was a three-week lull of peace. However, along the Mbeere Division's border, the colonial officials reported two

insecurity incidents (TNA/FCO 141/5766). The first one was the murder of two Embu guards near Murinduko hill. An ex-Kiambu District immigrant living in Mbeere was identified as one of the assailants. Another incidence was that of a Mbeere man and his two wives, seized near Kiamuringa, their left ears cut off and then oathed with their blood (TNA/FCO 141/5766). The ear-cutting scenario aroused Mbeere bitterness, leading to an operation near Embu west at Njukini forest where three men were killed (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Meanwhile, in the South Gaturi location, nine Mbeere were abducted and forced to take the Mau Mau movement's oath (TNA/FCO 141/5766). It was also reported that "oath-taking became almost universal and was very difficult to obtain useful information and by the end of 1953, Embu Division was the worst part of the District" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12).

4.3 The Mbeere Contribution to the Mau Mau Insurgency

Colonialism was an exercise of power relations, a relation between domination and subordination; therefore, history was written from the perspective of the dominant groups. Thus, this subsection argues that by claiming subordinate status in Embu District, the history of the Mbeere's contribution to the Mau Mau insurgency is fragmented and continually interrupted by the ruling groups (the Kikuyu and Embu in this case). The Mbeere, like any other subaltern group, are always subject to the activity of the ruling group. The historical materials and their representation ignored the Mbeere and focused their interest on the dominant groups. For example, the oathing and oathing practise, argots and the songs they sang originated from the Kikuyu. To restore the subaltern history, in this case, the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau insurgency, the research relied on

different intellectual materials and testimonies from below, posing specific questions on archival materials to find gaps and contradictions in the arrests and detention of the Mbeere. The gaps were also sought in reaction to Jock Scott and rehabilitation, operational anvil, villagisation process and atrocities meted on the Mbeere, who were always lumped together with the Embu.

4.3.1 Oathing

Shamsul (2007, p. 224) notes that the Mau Mau struggle was a glorious phase in Kenya's history and that if Kenyans fail to learn from it, “we would greatly dishonour the thousands of fighters and ordinary Kenyans who sacrificed their lives for independence and social justice.” Koster (2016) asserts that every community have their own stories and oath interpretation. This discussion, therefore, argues that oathing was deeply rooted in the Mbeere culture to achieve unity and justice. As noted by Gathagu wa Titima alias General Wakimere (O.1, 11/08/2020);

There were no specific oaths for different groups of people. That Mau Mau oath that the Embu took was the same oath that the Kikuyu, Mbeere and Meru took. Mostly the Mau Mau oath was taken in Kariokor and the administrators were the Kikuyu people. While taking the oath in Nairobi, many Mbeere people, came from Evurore, Siakago, including women.

Gathagu suggests how the Mau Mau oath was deeply entrenched in Kikuyu culture. Rosberg & Nottingham (1970) claim the sole purpose of the oath was to form social solidarity and raise political commitment. For the Mbeere, just like other Kenyans, they were aware of their subaltern position in Kenya. Therefore, the Mbeere could not afford to be left out. One act of negation in Mbeere was oathing, a sign of resistance to colonial rule. However, the colonial authority always pinpointed the Kikuyu *Ahoi* and the Embu, as with any act of extremism, thus silencing any signs of the Mbeere's involvement in the Mau

Mau movement. Under any circumstance, any act of extremism in Embu was associated with infiltration of *Ahoi* from Kikuyu in Embu District, who came by invitation of Chief Muruatetu (KNA/DC/EBU/1/10). Evidence of occupation was presented by Murenga Githuka (a Kikuyu) in a squatter case. His submission emphasised how they entered Embu and made a peaceful verbal agreement with the local Embu residents to live together (KNA/BB/3/154).

The ceremony was sealed with the adoption ceremonies (*Guciarua*) performed by Mihiriga (Clans) as a sign of acceptance. Subsequently, they lived together and were even villagised together during the emergency; after that, there were allegations that the Kikuyu were taking a separate oath resulting in separate villagisation (KNA/BB/3/154). The colonial officials portrayed the Kikuyu *Ahoi* as a source of trouble and their rehabilitation was inevitable as they endangered civilisation which they preached for almost half a century. In Embu, all Kikuyu and Embu were placed under villages as a punitive measure in July 1955 (TNA/FCO 141/5701).

While the colonialists were contemplating how to defeat the Mau Mau movement, the oath continued to be administered under duress and false pretences. Many Kenyans were lured by friends who had already joined the movement. Those who accepted voluntary oathing were roughed up in preparation for the ceremony. Notably, any persistent refusal attracted a rope punishment. A string would be obtained and a noose placed on the neck, after which one would be hoisted off the floor until one became unconscious. In some instances, the torture would be meted out in the presence of family members (TNA/FCO 141/6583). The

most notable incidences of intimidation in potential Mbeere initiates included the cutting off ears, stripping women of their clothes and slaps on the face to confuse the oath-taker until one consented to take the oath as explained in an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri and Mwanyare on January 31, 2020 and February 3, 2020. Threatening witnesses enhanced the spread of the insurgency, anchored on the protection provided by the terms of the oath.

The anger and resentment towards the Mbeere grew as Rosberg and Nottingham (1970) suggested that General Sir George Erskine formulated a military plan to restore control to areas affected by the insurgency but ignored outlying Mbeere and Tharaka regions in Meru where political activity was rudimentary. Despite the government adding more Home Guards' posts and the appointment of General Erskine, the press reported an extension of the Mau Mau movement's influence among the Embu and Meru ethnic groups leaving out the Mbeere.

Branch (2007) contends that the Mau Mau movement's control over the local populace was at its peak during the first quarter of 1953. This discussion expands his argument to include the second quarter. In April 1953, oath-taking ceremonies were conducted in broad daylight in the entire Embu District and 192 of the Mau Mau movement members were reported to have been brought into the District from Nairobi (TNA/ FCO 141/5766). In the week ending May 1, 1953, the situation in Embu District had changed and oath-taking ceremonies were reported in all parts of the District, including Mbeere, except for the Sagana police post. According to a government official on the ground, the increase in the ceremonies within the District was that many people began to accept the movement's pleas

and started taking the oath willingly. Secondly, in analysing the Mau Mau movement's finances, Intelligence reports believed that money was paid during ceremonies (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Once an individual had taken the oath, they promised to support the movement in kind or cash. Notably, money was also raised to assist in the Kenyatta trial.

According to the Embu District Annual Report (1953), papers found on one of the arrested Mau Mau movement followers indicated money collected from two locations amounting to sh.15,500 (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). Considering the wages of that period, sh.15, 500 was much money, which means the number of Mau Mau movement subscribers were very many. It also reported an expected increase in the collection of funds for the movement's purposes, especially during the end months, as noted in the Nairobi City District Intelligence Summary Report of September 3, 1953 (TNA/FCO 141/5791). On the week ending June 4, 1953, the Kenya African Union distributed pamphlets requesting Africans to pay a subscription fee to Kiburi house for Kenyatta's lawyer, Mr. Dennis Pritt's, expenses. Thirdly, the release of well-known Mau Mau adherents was a key factor.

Fourthly, General China, whom the colonial government perceived as dangerous, had a significant impact. The movement was also recorded to spreading to other ethnic communities: "There are signs that one or two of the active members of Mau Mau in Embu District have moved across the Tana River into the Yatta" (TNA/FCO141/5766). Branch (2007) noted that inadequate intelligence could render even the most technologically savvy groups, such as the British forces in Kenya, of acting in barbaric ways. Due to panic and public pressure, raids were conducted at the Embu Market, where 464 men were screened

and four suspected Mau Mau movement members arrested. The Mbeere who returned from Nairobi were always suspects and chiefs were supposed to interrogate and de-oath them. In the week ending April 3, 1953, out of 268 repatriates in Embu, 200 were charged with Mau Mau movement-related offences, while the others were placed under surveillance (TNA/FCO 141/5766). The colonial government believed that the repatriates were involved in the Lari massacre and were disturbed by the subversive songs.

4.3.1.1 The Role of Urban-based Mbeere in the Mau Mau Insurgency

The colonial government employed propaganda to show that the communities in Ukambani were not willing to listen or welcome the Akamba associated with the Mau Mau fighters as described;

The Mau Mau has very little attraction for them, except for some of the young men who have come under Kikuyu influence and have suffered deterioration in character from the conditions of life in Nairobi. Most of the Kamba do not hold the Kikuyu in high regard, but they do not lack admiration for the small groups of loyal Kikuyu . . . (*East African Standard*, Friday, May 14, 1954).

To win over the Akamba, the colonial government began showing coronation films in which many Kamba soldiers featured among the troops on parade during critical events. In Nairobi, as had been done for some of the Mbeere, screening teams eliminated a considerable number of the tainted Akamba to smash the whole Kamba Mau Mau organisation (*East African Standard*, Friday, May 14, 1954). Moreover, as Durrani (2018) described, the colonial government never acknowledged the Mau Mau struggle as a decolonisation war for fear of other oppressed people like the Mbeere and the Akamba joining, forming a formidable force. Therefore, the colonialists misrepresented history for their gain.

Fighting for the alienated land was not strong among the Mbeere because they did not lose any land to the colonialists. However, they demanded their independence (Ben Kanyeji, O.I, 5/02/2020). Glazier (1985) acknowledged that land alienation, an agendum of Mau Mau, never occurred in Mbeere Division. Therefore, oathing in Mbeere was not as rife as experienced among the Embu, Gichugu and Ndia. Also, the communities close to Nairobi did not see a reason for oathing the Mbeere, as noted in oral testimonies among the Mbeere Mau Mau movement veterans interviewed. There was a feeling that the Mbeere populace numbers were insufficient to influence the decolonisation war. Notably, most of the Mbeere who had proximity to Embu at Mwea and around Kianjiru mountain had taken the Mau Mau oath. Those in the interior in areas like Kerie, Iriatune, Thambu and Karamandi were later oathed by the urban-based Mbeere. Furthermore, in regions around Kianjiru, Embu and Mwea, many residents took the oath and were obliged to respond if ever needed in the Mau Mau insurgency.

Gathagu wa Titima, alias General Wakimere (O.I, 11/08/2020), was fortunate to meet Kivuti wa Mbuta. Kivuti played critical in introducing the oath to the Mbeere. He further noted, "Kivuti had joined the movement before I did because he took it while at Nairobi, and he used to bring the Mau Mau recruiters here in Mbeere." He further explained to the Mbeere people the need to take the oath. Gathagu wa Titima asserted that he joined the Mau Mau movement in Nairobi by force. After returning to the Mbeere region, he and others explained why joining the Mau Mau movement was necessary. Convinced people would meet with them at Kianjiru hill for oathing, and the cycle continued. As an urban

repatriate, Gathagu wa Titima, alias general Kimere went to the forest as he feared for his life in the reserves after a woman identified him as one of the oath administrators at Nguuo.

As Mwaruvie (2011) noted, the Mbeere economy was integrated into the metropolitan economy, and the Mbeere felt the pinch of colonialism, just like the other Kenyans. In addition, he also affirmed that the collection of taxes was fierce; in some instances, raping, caning and confiscating property was experienced in Mbeere. To make the matter worse, to the ordinary Mbeere, their chiefs demanded more than three rupees and therefore, a reaction against the colonial rule was inevitable. As a result, the Mau Mau movement managed to create a formidable support base in Mbeere Division. The Mbeere participation was not through ground mobilisation, as was the case amongst the Kikuyu (Ben Kanyeji, O.I 5/02/2020). Instead, it entailed self-recruitment from Nairobi. Through coordination from Nairobi, the urban-based Mbeere would travel to Mbeere to oath people and develop a front. They then joined the Embu and Kirinyaga cells and fought from there; therefore, the Mbeere did not have a frontline of their own or a controller or a General from Mbeere since they joined the progressive organisations. Instead, the Mbeere acknowledged unity as a tool for progressing forward. As Ben Kanyeji called it, '*Kamuingi Koyaga Nderi* (a group of people lifts a heavy mortar), not to be divided but to create a united front to defeat the British forces.

Therefore, the Embu had a formidable front with General Kubukubu, and since the Mbeere people were very few, there was no need to start their cell. Kanyeji's testimony concurs with Anderson's (2007) argument that not all groups had links with Mount Kenya and the

Aberdare. For example, gangs operating on the fringes of Kiambu, Thika and Rift Valley established a command structure independent of the key principals Stanley Mathenge and Dedan Kimathi. The only vibrant links were those from the reserves and Nairobi because of their food, money, weapons and ammunition support. Notably, according to oral testimonies in Mwanyare, Nguru and Umu, in Kianjiru Hill, most of the recruits were from Mbeere Division. Anderson (2007) further observes that such a scenario created latent mistrust in other fighters. Thus, the Mau Mau movement was never a unified guerrilla army as the British government had previously thought.

Gabriel Nyaga (O.I, 10/2/2020) recalled how he administered the Mau Mau oath in 1953. During the oath ceremony, many from his village, Irumire, attended. Oath administrators were urban-based Mbeere who had returned from Nairobi. Before the oath was administered, the reason for joining the movement was spelt out, making many join voluntarily. He also recollected that those who refused to take the oath were beaten until they accepted. According to Titus Ngoci and Njue Njuki, people took the oath in an FGD discussion held at Kombo Munyiri sub-location on January 31, 2020. However, they remained silent following a warning from Nyaga Kivavia of the repercussions of revealing its content. Notably, administering the Mau Mau oath ended with the invocation of *thahu*, as a penalty for transgressing the words uttered. Additionally, silence and secrecy were vital ingredients of the Mau Mau oath. Furthermore, Nyaga Kivavia also advised oathes to obey whatever the Mau Mau movement insurgents instructed.

Julieta Mutave (FGD, 2/2/2020) recalls how their brother at Karie brought the oath to them. They had no option but to join the movement after the colonial government banned their treasured traditions. Markedly, Julieta was bitter about how her mother was jailed for circumcising them. The jailing of her mother provoked his brother, locally known as General Chui, to join the Mau Mau movement. General Chui would later die while fighting for independence. Julieta recalled, apart from her mother's jailing, "We were not forced to take the oath; we took it willingly because the white man had stopped us from doing our things. Also, because he had jailed Kenyatta and Kenyatta was ours, we took the original oath fully."

Muturi Ndaru (FGD, 3/2/2020) affirmed that he joined the movement out of bitterness because his father had been jailed in Manyani. Similarly, Jeremiah Nyaga Mwaniki narrated how he took his first oath in Nairobi in Githurai, where he worked as a cook for a white man while at the same time serving the movement as a guard during oathing. As a guard, his role entailed closing and opening doors for oathees, hence nicknamed "*General Kufunga na Kufungua*." Mimicking names in the Mau Mau movement played a critical role. Anderson (2009) observed that the Mau Mau movement was emulating the British Army by adopting ranks; therefore, these names had a purpose. Old habits die hard. When he was repatriated back to Mbeere, he narrated how he began organizing how oath would be administered in the Mbeere region. According to his recollection, many people took the oath from Nyangwa, Nganduri, Gataka and Kiambeere past Nyangwa to Siakago and the Mau Mau movement fighters followed the route from Mount Kianjiru to Mbita to Kiangungi hill.

Angelica Mbutha Mbiti, in an FGD held at Mwanyare, narrated how she took her first oath when they traded in Kikuyu. They met Agikuyu harvesting maize, and after interrogation, the Kikuyu discerned they had not taken the oath, thus oathing them. She also took another oath at Kiamuringa. Then, in Mbeere, Njagi wa Munyori and Njue wa Mugwere administered to her the third oath. Based on the FGD held in Mwanyare, the oath administrators were of different ethnic groups and were not only the Mbeere.

Nthiga Mukinyango (O.I, 10/2/2020) narrated how he took the oath in Nairobi and took the Mau Mau oath guard role. He would alert the oath administrator to hide if he noticed anything unusual. Afterwards, he was forcefully taken to Mbeere to marry, whereby he began administering the oath to the Mbeere. The ingredients of the oath were blood mixed with extracts from a goat's stomach (locally known as *tatha*). Notably, the oath was not administered to pregnant women or women during menstruation periods as they were termed unclean. Nyaga Mukinyango learnt the skills of administering the oath in Nairobi and used the same knowledge in Mbeere. As he administered the oath, he informed the oathees of its importance. As a result, attendance significantly increased over time (Mukinyango, O.I, 10/2/2020). Most of the Mbeere joined in the 1950s upon the advice given by urban-based Mbeere or oath administrators traversing the Mbeere locations while emphasizing the similar point of origin from Gikuyu and Mumbi.

Paul Mate wa Mavuta (O.I, 10/2/2020) narrated how he moved from Mbeere to Thika, searching for greener pastures. Upon reaching Thika, a white man employed him to weed

on a coffee plantation. While in Thika, he found the Mbeere, a basis of trust and social relations. Mr. Mate was unacquainted about the Mau Mau oath but advised him to take the oath as a survival mechanism. Thus, in 1953, he took the oath. Notably, Paul Mate stated that he did not take the oath to go and fight in the forest but to escape death. Staying in Thika without taking the oath was like a death trap. He recalls how they took the oath with other people from Mbeere, such as Kirangi wa Mukethie, Mati wa Mbuta, Njeru wa Nginyuki and Muria Mukinyango. When he shifted to Mbeere, Kirangi wa Mukethie and Ngoru wa Mwarire began to administer oaths. However, they were arrested and taken to Ishiara on a Tuesday, where they were 'softened up' by beating and whipping, seeking confession. Edgerton (1989) argues that the thrashing of suspects was typical; the suspects were beaten with clubs, rifle butts, and whips, and their agony was a terrible scene to witness. Those suspected to have partaken of the oath would be beaten badly. If one confessed, they would be spared the beating but forced to reveal others who had taken the oath and identified the administrator. The following day (Wednesday), there was a massive arrest whereby Paul Mate was also implicated in the oathing activities in Mbeere.

There were also indications from Intelligence reports on how the colonial government received news that the Tharaka traders in Ishiara Market were members of the Mau Mau movement (TNA/FCO 141/5767). The Tharaka existed along the Ishiara and Tharaka-Nithi border. Francis Njeru (O.I, 2/2/2020) at Kiare kia Makundi narrated how two Chuka residents, a male and a female, had tried to lure the Mbeere to join the Mau Mau movement after they saw how Chief Mwandiko was beating them. They were overheard discussing how most of the Tharaka had taken the Mau Mau oath. This demonstrated that

indoctrination into the movement was moving quickly among the Tharaka. The Chuka pitied the Mbeere for the treatment they received on suspicion of being Mau Mau movement members. After the Tharaka realized their conversation on involvement in the Mau Mau movement had been overheard, a Kenya Police Reservist at the prison camp at Ishiara reported that most Tharaka who lived in Mbeere had returned to their District. They no longer came to the Ishiara market, as recorded in the Embu Intelligence Committee Report of May 19, 1954 (TNA/FCO 141/5767).

As the Mau Mau movement was spreading in Mbeere, Miriam Wangui Mbuya was already psychologically prepared by her mother to take the oath upon arrival in Umuau. She narrated how her mother had asked the Mau Mau movement followers to take a goat-kid while grazing at Ndandu. When she realised the goat kid was not there, she reported to her mother, who requested her to follow her. The mother advised her not to scream at what she would see. As they neared the bush, they saw Guri wa Kagoro, Nthegere wa Rukingi and her uncle Mariko Ngoci. She narrated as follows;

When we got there, I was slapped on the face not to recognise those people and I wondered what I had done to deserve the slap. I just kept quiet. They had already slaughtered the goat and they asked if I would accept what they would do to me and I told them yes. They told me that I would take an oath and say that I will never reveal the secrets. I took it and said that I would never admit it.

To ascertain she would not reveal the oath or the secret of the Mau Mau movement, they tested her as outlined;

I went ahead with my journey; when I reached Kabururí, I heard footsteps approaching. It was dark then and I wondered, could it be that the Mau Mau members had followed me? I then realised it was a man I knew, called Muthengi wa Nthande, a Mumbeere. We knew each other well since his mother and my mother came from the same clan, known as 'Mbari ya Njiru'. We used to call each other "Mbari ya Njiru. He (Muthengi) called me, "Mbari Ya Njiru," and asked, "Let me ask you Mbari ya Njiru, have you seen the Mau Mau on this

road? At what place did you pass them?" I told him that I had not seen anyone. He touched the gourd and uttered, 'it seemed the gourd had some gruel that had spilled over and it seemed not to be that long ago.' I did not tell him that I had given it to some people. I told him that I had poured the gruel in haste and thus the spillage. I later realised that Muthengi had been sent by the Mau Mau I had encountered at Mwanyari, to determine if I would reveal what they had done. He then accompanied me until, we reached a place known as Ndagori. He told me to stop and warned me never to reveal whatever we had conversed or what I saw to anyone. After that, I would not know where I would die. We then proceeded and when we reached Munathini, he assured me that nobody would bother me from there. He went back and I went home.

While conceding that the Mau Mau oath distinguished the Embu and the Mbeere, Jackson Ileri (O.I, 12/2/2020) argued that the Embu took the oath in large numbers as compared to the Mbeere, whose population was low. Although the Mbeere took the oath, they did not reveal it, which created the perception in Embu District that the Mbeere did not participate in the Mau Mau movement. As a result, in Embu District, Mau Mau was predominately identified with the Embu and the narrative excluded the contribution of the Mbeere.

Jackson Ileri, a Muembu, narrated as follows;

For me, I had refused to take the oath and stayed in Mbeere. I used to stay with one driver at Ishiara, a Mumbeere known as Njuki. He would constantly ask me why I did not to go back to Embu. Little did he know I was once surrounded by young men in 1952 who tried to force me to take the oath after completing school, but I managed to escape. On Wednesday morning, Njuki told me he would drop me at home and pick me later during the holiday. However, when he dropped me at Kathanjuri, he did not come back. Instead, he went and took another route back via Ugweri and left me at Kathanjuri. When I arrived, I saw some of the people that had apprehended me earlier and they asked 'what kept me in Mbeere . . .' When my father saw me, he asked me what I had come to do because the young men of my age used to swear against me. He told me that it would have been better if I had not come back. The driver never came back for me. By 7.30 pm, the boys captured me and they beat me up thoroughly and administered the oath. They wanted to kill me, saying that I had escaped and reported them. However, they decided not to kill me, but I was ordered to pay thirty shillings. Money was sourced at home till it was found. The following day, I woke up very early to go back to Mbeere. When I arrived at Ishiara, Njuki and the teachers would ask me, 'so what did you use to say?' They had already been informed that I had been administered the oath. So, when I arrived, they just laughed. They told me to keep it a secret and I did not talk about it.

His testimony demonstrated that the Mbeere people had taken the oath like Njuki but chose to keep quiet. Thus, even though the Mau Mau movement's narrative tends to be more exclusive in Embu District, the narration by Jackson Ileri paints a picture of a complicated network that had developed effective communication between the movement's members irrespective of one's locality. Furthermore, the Mau Mau movement could trace originality, identity, and whether or not one was inside or outside the movement. Thus, secrecy was the heart of the Mau Mau movement, which excluded outsiders from insiders' activities.

Just like circumcision, which was a deciding factor in giving children status in manhood or womanhood in Mbeere, not all the Mbeere accepted the new status as fully pledged members of the movement. Chrispin Mate (O.I, 8/2/2020) narrated how he was forced to take the oath by Ngoru wa Mwarire, Njagi wa Njamwea and others who had been oathed earlier. He indicated how the Mau Mau oathing ritual was not tied to the Mbeere culture;

I did not take the oath. One day, my wife and I were woken up at night then taken to Gatunguru. Upon arrival, I noticed that people had removed all their clothes and entered an erected structure. In the structure, there were witch objects (charms). The oath administrators commanded us to remove all our clothes. We were all naked. Then my instinct sensed this place was not suitable, I held my wife's hand, collected her clothes and mine, and we ran out. I then informed my wife that we were going to work on them in case they came back. I took a bow, quiver and arrows and waited for them to come, but they did not.

Chrispin Mate painted that oathing ritual at Gatunguru as coercive, vague and exclusive as the oath administrators did not explain the reason for taking that oath. This also shows the prevalent attitude against the Mau Mau movement in Mbeere created a feeling of unease among the residents.

The colonial government was slow to associate the Mau Mau movement with the Mbeere despite confirming massive oathing in the Division. At the same time, the Mbeere chiefs played a critical role in stopping the insurgency's spread. As suggested in the example, the chiefs determined the pace of oathing practices in Mbeere as they led patrols to disrupt the ceremonies. Gaconi wa Muturi Muketho (O.I, 1/2/2020) explained that she never took the oath as Chief Kombo closely watched secret mass oathing ceremonies. Anybody suspected of partaking in the oath, upon accepting, was de-oathed in public and those who refused were severely beaten. Chief Kombo limited the movement's spread and those who rejected de-oathing like Kivuti wa Mbuta, Gataka, Kaumbuthu and Mutegi wa Nthande had no option but to seek refuge in Kianjiru hill. Kianjiru hill played a critical role as a hiding place (shelter) for the Mbeere, especially those running from the chiefs and colonial administrators on suspicion of being Mau Mau adherents. More importantly, when an incident occurred in the Mbeere Division, the colonial officials termed in the colonial records as unimportant. For example, the burning of schools at Siakago on September 7, 1953, the colonial administration was slow to implicate the Mau Mau movement. The colonial government, through the Embu Intelligence committee of September 10, 1953, stated as follows;

Two minor arson cases have occurred in Mbeere Division and, more importantly, a flare-up in Kyeni and Kagaari locations. Bishop Beecher recently recorded that church attendance is high and the Christian element is unaffected by the recent Mau Mau disturbance (TNA/FCO 141/5766).

The Kyeni and Kagaari school burnings on September 6, 1953, was associated with the Mau Mau movement gang, leading to collective punishment;

Since the local inhabitants must have known the arson gangs' presence, a special rate of Sh.10 was imposed on all males in the District except the Mbeere and known loyalists to cover schools corrugated iron roofs' cost (KNA/DC/EBU/1/13).

A decode of telegram to the Secretary of State for the colonies on curfew imposed for the destruction of Schools in the Elgon Nyanza District of Nyanza Province was recorded. As a result, three mission schools were burnt (TNA/FCO 141/6127). Arson was suspected, but the government was slow to act, alleging the motive was unclear. It illustrated the double standard employed by the colonial government when handling cases in the emergency period.

Despite government effort to spread the Mau Mau oath, in October 1953, the Mau Mau movement gang administering oath operations was reported in Mwea-Mbeere area (TNA/FCO 141/5766). A group of 70 people wearing police coats purportedly from Nairobi carrying four firearms were spotted. The Intelligence Committee posited that Mau Mau was attempting to break new grounds and that the oath administrators were Kikuyu. However, the colonial administrators alleged that the Kikuyu oath had no binding implication on the Mbeere. The colonial administrators regarded Mbeere Division as uncontaminated, but government efforts were needed to shield the Mbeere from the Mau Mau movement intrusion.

4.3.2 Songs

In Africa, societies used songs in all aspects of life, whether cultivation, initiation or commemorating historical events. They used songs to educate, praise, mobilise and conduct rituals. Songs have a broad significance, reflecting different groups' needs and aspirations. In the Mau Mau movement songs, the composers drafted songs of resistance that raised recruits' spirits. These songs were designed to be historically informative, raising consciousness about the Mau Mau movement and carrying messages understood

by those who had taken the oath. Songs were a tool to gauge subaltern consciousness; therefore, their meaning was hidden, especially to the colonial elites, who tended to depend on conventional sources for information. Shamsul (2007) noted that Mau Mau songs were designed to fill the gap of subaltern silence and as a tool to mobilise and solidify support for the revolt against the British authorities. Songs were composed based on experiences or situations to retain the memory of the struggle.

Markedly, the movement's songs portrayed the determination of Kenyans to stand together despite the challenges and an expression of oppositional consciousness. They also exposed the worst faces of British actions, which the Mau Mau movement was determined to change. The Kikuyu were the leading Mau Mau song composers; the compositions aimed to address issues they faced to attract a wider audience who shared similar grievances. As Mwaura (2007) put it, the Mau Mau songs were modelled along with the Gikuyu traditional art; *kuina* meant singing and dancing, as the two cannot be separated. A popular songbook (*Nyimbo*) was circulating where most songs were written in Gikuyu, carrying African grievances and aspirations messages. For inclusivity purposes, the Embu, the Ameru, the Akamba and the Mbeere, although mutually intelligible, sang in Gikuyu. Rehearsals were thus propelled by pride, passion, bitterness and hope for a brighter future. Although the performance space was curtailed, they would nod their heads, and emotions were evident. Whatever the circumstances people found themselves in, they sang as a form of protest and assert hope.

Vansina (1992) stressed the importance of oral materials as a legitimate source in reconstructing history where writing did not exist. Mwaniki Kabeca (O.I, 8/2/2020)

acknowledged the Mbeere preservation of history through songs. He added that the Mbeere were excellent in transmitting their history through songs;

The Mbeere are very good at recording. You know songs are poetical, in such a way that there are rhyme and other qualities. Then it is effortless to get out and spread like wildfire. So, you would hear a song sung here for the first time tomorrow; it has already crossed two rivers. People keep on reciting and even today, sometimes, when I want to remember something and I know there was a song, I start by humming the rhythm and the few words that I remember and some or others come and I can now tell the story. Those were the media of those times and just like a written word, once registered, it remains forever. So, the songs that were sung would forever stay in the memories.

Through songs, the research attempted to tell a different story of the Mbeere as a critical component in the war of resistance in Kenya. Notably, the struggle over history has led to the elevation of others and domination over history, while others like the Mbeere have been portrayed as *Eririri* (opportunists). Moreover, they were depicted as a group of people who joined the movement without allegiance to national patriotism. Their primary interest was to exploit the opportunity to feed their stomachs (Maina wa Kenyatti, 2019). The colonial government divided mutually intelligible communities by dismantling power among them. Foucault's (1978) quote, "where there is power, there is resistance," denotes a determination to resist prompted the use of different categories of songs such as mobilisation, detention and guerrilla songs. Songs spread influence showing the experiences of the Mau Mau fighters in the forest and detention away from their families. In addition, they criticised how wealth was distributed and how the introduction of new

culture affected the indigenous African culture, values, customs and created regional identity.

The continuous identity construction could be deciphered in the songs, originating from the core to the periphery with the invocation of Mumbi and Gikuyu. It started with the Kikuyu adjacent to Nairobi, Embu and then to the peripheral Mbeere. The Kikuyu used narratives of originality tracing from Gikuyu and Mumbi to define communities, informing themselves about who and what they were. An FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, brought to the fore the fact that there were Mau Mau songs; however, most were centred on the house of Mumbi. The Gikuyu myth of origin provided a significant source of inspiration for the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. The myth emphasised similar roots and shared lineage through a common ancestor (Mumbi and Gikuyu). One of the critical components to defeat the insurgency was to show it as localised and geographic-specific. It portrayed the Mau Mau movement as a central Kenya affair; however, the insurgency convinced other ethnic groups to join them in a subaltern revolt. The geographical space around Mount Kenya was significant as a dwelling place of Mumbi and Gikuyu, which created a determination to maintain close contact with the ancestors and the ancestral land. The Kikuyu perceived the land alienation problem created by the British colonisers disconnected them from their god and ancestors. In many cases, the Kikuyu emphasised the morning prayers while facing Mount Kenya with hands raised and ending with the Kikuyu invocation "*Thaai Thathaiya Ngai Thaai.*" The centrality of *Ngai* (God) and ancestors were critical, hence collective efforts to regain what the colonisers took (happiness), as illustrated in the song shared by Mau Mau veterans in Mbeere.

Ciana cia Mumbi, Ngai, niwe uheanaga kii
 Children of Mumbi, god, is the one who provides
Twathiaga tukenete, tukenuka tukenete, ciana cia Mumbi tigai kieha Ngai
niweurihanaga
 We went happy; we came back delighted, children of Mumbi, do not be sorrowful;
 it is god who repays.

The house of Mumbi was ‘everywhere,’ as portrayed in the song below. The song attempts at de-territorialisation as the colonialists confined the Mau Mau movement within Mt. Kenya geographical space. The songs show that the house of Mumbi was vast, diffused and open for alliances with those who lived beyond the Mt. Kenya territory.

‘Nyumba ya Mumbi turi engi muno, gutire vandu tutari’
 The house of Mumbi are many; there is no place we are not found
‘Wathie Mutindwa turwakuo’
 If you go to Mutindwa we are there
‘Na Ngong turwakuo’
 ‘Even Ngong, we are there.’
Nyumba ya Mumbi turi aingi muno, gutiri vandu tutarii!’
 The house of Mumbi are many; there is no place we are not found!
Twarugirwe na drum, twarugirwe na drum na nyungu igiri cia ugikuyu itungati
igituma rigu”
 They cooked for us with a drum; they cooked for us with a drum and two Gikuyu pots. Mau Mau fighters carried the food.

Jeremiah Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020) explained how they sang even in detention to oppose domination. He portrayed Mau Mau movement songs as an expression of oppositional consciousness which began in the forest and continued in detention centres. Clough (1998) writes that the struggle against the British did not end with arrest and detention; non-cooperation was also experienced through singing and writing. Gakaara Wanjau (1989), in his diary entries, noted the conflict between the Mau Mau movement and the authorities over food in the Manda camp. Detainees thus used songs to reassert a commitment to the cause, just like the forest fighters used them in the forest. The aesthetic nature of the Mau

Mau songs lies in the fact that they were a carrier of hope in times of hardship. Jeremiah Mugo recollected further how they were supposed to be jailed for one year but were detained for three years. In the detention camps, they sang songs of a triumphal future which they anticipated. They sang as follows;

*Murathi akunyitwo, kwohuo na guthamithio, na gutwaro iciriro, na amututigatiga
guteterera wiyathi,
kinya bururi ukona utheri.
Wiyathi x3 bururi wa Kirinyaga,
bururi wa gikeno, gituamba na mititu
Kenya ni bururi wa andu airu.
Mbari wa Mwenda Njeru menyagai na ngoro, Kiega gitithiraga, bururi uyu ni witu
na ni thu igairitwe, twarathimiiirwo ni Murungu.
Translation*

Prophet has been arrested, detained and moved, taken to court, but we will never stop fighting for self-governance until the nation sees the light.
Self-governance x3, the nation of Kirinyaga
The nation of happiness, plains and forests,
Kenya is a land of black people,
The side of Mwenda wa Njeru know by heart, a good thing never ends,
This is our land, allocated to our enemies, We were blessed with it by our god.

The above song can be categorised as a detention song that highlighted the suffering in prisons and detention camps. It shows the Mau Mau movement supporters' phases and there was no indication of backing down. It reminded those in detentions of the hardship they were to undergo for the cause. The song also reminded the Mau Mau adherents that they were fighting for their country (*Bururi*) and freedom (*Wiyathi*).

In the forest, Jeremiah Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020) revealed how they were taught to sing and recite the songs collectively to enhance morale. The Mau Mau songs played a critical role as a record of history to capture the power of the moment as they fought for freedom and land. Songs became invaluable accompaniments and references in situations recorded as

having not taken place, thus filling the missing gap in written records. An example was a song below sung by Jeremiah Mugo, an Mbeere Mau Mau seer (*Muroti*). The song below was composed at a war front showing how the Mau Mau movement fighters reacted after they realised they were surrounded. It also portrays the role of women as informers at the great battle of the Ruiru River, a clear indication that even women participated in the movement. Therefore, the song can be categorised as a guerrilla song that informed the experiences of fighters. The song also invoked god (*Mwene Nyaga*), who was to assist them in their endeavours.

Kwari muthenya wa Juma twari itura Karuri, tugithugunda meciria twaigua turi akavire x2

Mutumia umwe ni okire ohau rui Ruiru, agitwira ciana ciakwa guku ni gucukire x2
Naithui tukimucokeria njamba cia ita ciakaba, rithathii marigu thiini ciatuthaga macoya x2

Tukiringa kamugoiri twakorire makara, njamba cietu ikiumiriria tukimakavurithia, njamba cietu ikiumiriria tukimakavurithia, mahoraga kihonoko meciragia na tugakava, na twahuraga twohorwo thirikari ikamaka x2

Thirikari yari nyiingi yaumite ya Nanyuki, na iria ingi ya TumuTumu na iria ingi Karatina x2

Thongu nyiingi niciokite hau runji Ruiru, tondu meciragia riu ni indi ya muthiro, cietanaga ova ova Nanyuki, muruei murikuo kuu tutingioneka x2

Twaringa rui Ruiru, batabatu akirugama, vau akivura veveta bururi bebeta bururi iking'enyuruo, vau akivura veveta bururi bebeta bururi iking'enyuruo, thi ino tukatheo na ithaka tucokeruo, na inyui thaka cia bururi nguria mukagera ku? na inyui thata cia bururi nguria mukagera ku?

Kwari muthenya wa iri twareire na mahoya, twahoyaga mwene Nyaga twonane na Eliud x2

Mwene Nyaga atuitikiria twathire tugikava, twarikia kurigiciria makiugua mururumo x2

Twakinya kambi thiini Wambugu akirugama, akiuga niwarakara thata ciothe cuiunganio, thata ciarikia kuunganio, Gateru akirugama, agicithura na iboko agicitwara iherero x2

Kariba akiuga na kiugo chagurai muthungu, mutige mbaara ya nyakairu ni urimu mwarinaguo x2

Translation

It was on a Saturday, we were at Karuri village, pondering after hearing we had

been waylaid x2,
 One woman came there at the river in Ruiru and told us, my children, things have deteriorated here x2,
 But we responded and told her that when warriors were confronted with bullets in the banana plantations, they would pluck the banana leaves x2,
 As we were crossing Kamugoiri, we found 'Makara (the ones who had waylaid them), but our soldiers held on and we pursued them, but our soldiers held on and we followed them, they were seeking shelter, as they had thought we would surrender, but we were fighting to be set free, which shocked the government x2
 The government soldiers were many; they had come all the way from Nanyuki, others from TumuTumu and others from Karatina x2,
 Many soldiers had come to the River in Ruiru, because they thought this was the final battle, they were calling 'over over' from Nanyuki", encouraging the ones there to fight since they couldn't make it there x2,
 When we crossed Ruiru River, BatuBatu stood and raised an alarm that the nation cannot be divided; he raised a warning that the nation cannot be divided; we will be given our nation and the land will be returned to us. I ask you barren of the land where will you be, you barren of the land where will you be?
 It was on the second day we had spent the night praying; we were praying to our God 'Mwene Nyaga' we have an audience with Eliud x2,
 When our god allowed us, we went and waylaid them; when we finished surrounding them, They heard a loud bang x2,
 When we entered inside the camp, Wambugu stood and said he was angry; all the 'barren ones' should be mobilised; after they had been mobilised, Gateru stood and whipped them with canes and punished them x2,
 Kariba said, choose the colonialists and stop the battle of 'nyakairu', you were just foolish x2

Jeremiah Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020) also noted, "As we met with other *itungati*, we sung songs, we also used *Cannabis Sativa* (marijuana). We smoked marijuana until we saw the colonialists as small children." Jackson (2013) acknowledges entertainment within the forests among rank and file and leaders. In some cases, heroic stories were narrated, such as survival skills, the Mau Mau destruction of British plans in the forest. In some instances, they composed songs showing success in the combat and dirges of the fallen compatriots. As Jeremiah Mugo recollected, this was done to keep the spirit or rather the morale of *itungati* high.

Songs became an essential medium of communication as Makoye (2007) noted. They aroused the entire community's consciousness as well as attracting other communities, as evident in this mobilisation song,

Anake a Gikuyu ni ciumbe njega.
Tondu matiuragia wakwao ona uuu...o uria mangiona tonya murata, tumite kwa Mumbi, thina tutiri.

Translation

The Gikuyu youth are good creatures.
They do not discriminate anybody. Anyone they saw, they welcomed them as friends; we are all Mumbi descendants or house has no problems.

The composer intended to show that the Kikuyu were welcoming irrespective of one's background and were ready to interact with anyone who accepted the Mau Mau movement's goals. It is important to note that the mobilisation songs were composed in a stable context before the war broke out.

When the Mau Mau movement fighters attacked the Mbeere at Gachoka in 1954, they never killed them but mutilated their ears for refusing to take the oath because the Embu had not informed the Mbeere properly on the importance of joining the Mau Mau movement. "Kariba akiuga na kiugo chagurai muthungu, mutige mbari ya nyakairu ni urimu marinagu, mutige mbari ya nyakairu ni urimu mari nago x2,"

Translation

Kariba said, choose the colonialists and stop the battle of 'nyakairu,' you were just foolish x2

The Mbeere were considered ignorant and uninformed for rejecting the oath and therefore agreed to mark them by mutilating their ears instead of killing them since they did not know purpose of fighting for independence.

During the oral testimonies in Mbeere Sub-county, the Mbeere ex-Mau Mau sung;

‘Andu aitu a Kirinyaga, ni tunyitane hamwe, na mutige muthutukanio, kirimu na muugi, gitonga na muthini, muoroto witu no wiyathi.’

Translation

Our people from Kirinyaga, let us unite and stop segregation, the foolish and the wise, the rich and the poor, our goal is self-governance.

The composer spoke about enhancing the relationship of the people from Mt. Kenya. The song expressed issues that people in that region underwent. Some perceived themselves as superior compared to the Mbeere, leading to division. The song served as a tool for enhancing the unity of purpose to all ethnic groups around Mount Kenya irrespective of class or distinction based on wealth. Most of the Mau Mau songs went beyond entertainment to act as a response to daily happenings. In the song above, the composer emphasised ways of bringing people together during times of suffering. Notably, most of the songs analysed revolved around the politics of everyday life and a hope for an anticipated better future.

Another song presented during FGD was;

“Arata thina iri na arume, niwega tuminyue na Maina, na Njeri murata wa Chege tucoke tumahe gitumi, kwari ta thaa cia Miaraho, twaiguire tugitwo tukiria, twirwe

tukire na ihenya Chege agiukira na kaihuri, Twatarirwo kwa munene umwe, nake ari wa nyota ithatu, oragia kweri ni inyui Kĩama kiria gicaragia wiyathi? Twaririe na ucamba munene, ni undu wa kumenya gitumi, ni wiyathi witu tukwenda na ithaka ciitu tucokerio. Kibugi mari na Karanja wa Nyokabi, nio mari njamba iria nene, nio marugamiriire thu nake Wambugu aragurageeee, Kubai akirekio igotiini, nyumba ya Mumbi yarungii ho, erirwo tondu niwarekio, githii ugatwitirie wiyathi. Kubai ndaigana kuregaa, oigire ni nindetikira, mwire muingi wikire kioo, bururi uthire karambaa.”

Translation

Friends' problems follow men, it is good we take it (the oath), with Maina and Njeki the friend of Chege and then give them the reason, it was at dawn, we heard a call, we were told to get up in a hurry and Chege abruptly got up.

We were taken to one leader, who had 'three stars'. He was asking, is it really you, the party that seeks self-governance?

We talked with much courage since we knew why it was self-governance we wanted and our lands returned.

Kibugi with Karanja wa Nyokabi were the leading soldiers; they were guarding the enemies while Wambugu opened the gates.

When Kubai was released from the courts, the house of Mumbi stood there and he was told that since he had been released, he should go and demand self-governance on our behalf, Kubai never refused; he said he agreed, tell the masses to work hard so that the land is free of trouble.

The song above portrays unity of purpose through oathing and how it spreads among friends. Those who took the oath were told the meaning or the objective of the oath. The Mau Mau movement aimed to demand the return of the stolen land and freedom. According to Ogot (1977), Mau Mau hymns could not be regarded as national freedom songs because not all Kenyans could sing with pride and conviction. Ogot thus downplayed that the problems the house of Mumbi faced were experienced by all men in Kenya as the song shows, "problems follow men." The song was about the difficulties that faced men and the need to unite did not limit the oathing to the Kikuyu alone. Moreover, this chapter shows evidence of the Dorobo (Ogiek), the Maasai, the Kamba and the Mbeere taking the oath.

Therefore, narrowing the Mau Mau movement to a tribal affair lacks rigorous analysis of the Mau Mau movement's historiography.

The song below gives a scenario of happiness among the Mau Mau fighters and shows hope among the freedom fighters. Stanza three describes a scenario where the Mau Mau insurgents found an older man who wanted to scream after seeing the Mau Mau fighters but was threatened with death because he presented endangerment to the insurgents if he screamed. Also, the Mau Mau movement's adherents were guided by moral codes and thus, they could not eat a dead goat;

Twathiaga Tukenete
Twathiaga tukenete, tugacoka tukenetei,
(Rugendo ruitu rwari rweга tugiithii na tugicokax2)
Na twakinya Longonot, tugikora kamuthuri, gakiuga nige kuga mbu
(General akiuga karekwo koige, koigithanie na Njirungix2)
Twathia thia hanini, tugikora mburi ikuite,
(General akiuga tutikarume tuti kanyitwo ni thahu x2)
Twathiaga tukenete, tugacoka tukenete,
(Rugendo ruitu rwari rweга tugiithii na tugicokax2)

Translation

We went in happiness
We went in happiness and returned in happiness.
(Our journey was good when we were going and when we were returning x2)
When we reached Longonot, we met an older man, who threatened to scream
(General told him he would shoot him if he screams x2)
When we proceeded a short distance, we found a dead goat
(General told us not to touch it lest we bring evil on ourselves x2)
We went in happiness and returned in happiness
(Our journey was good when we were going and when we were returning x2)

Sarah Igoki (O.I, 1/2/2020) recollected the song below;

Nyumba ya Mau Mau irugagwo ni andu atatu, umwe ni mugikuyu, uyu ungi ni Muembu,

Mumbeere agikira nyanyi

Translation

In the house of Mau Mau, a meal is cooked by three people; one is a Gikuyu and the other is an Embian and the Mbeerian adds vegetables. (The Meru and Gikuyu would cook and the Embian and Mbeerian would add the vegetables).

The Mau Mau songs were sung within Mbeere locations; nobody could publicly sing about the Mau Mau movement. If apprehended, the chief would discipline them, as noted in oral testimonies in Mbeere. In some instances, the chiefs brutally handled some culprits. The colonial authorities realised the power of songs and their historical significance in evoking history that the Mbeere, as part of the house of Mumbi, were suffering irrespective of territoriality. The sung songs connected them with others and portrayed hope that the British would leave Kenya one day and then traitors like Home Guards would have nowhere to run to or hide.

4.3.3 The Mau Mau Heroes in Mbeere Sub-County

The oath administrators comprised young urban-based Mbeere who had gone to Nairobi. This group sacrificed their life to sensitise the local Mbeere on subaltern consciousness. As noted in oral testimonies from those ex-urban-based insurgents, they would inform the local people of the need to unite to undermine the British authority. Thurley (1955) noted that circumstances forced corner boys to go and work in Nairobi. These boys returned to their locations to offer oaths and then returned to Nairobi. In Mbeere Division, they told the residents about Dedan Kimathi and his stand against the loyalists. Prominent figures like Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi and Jomo Kenyatta were known in Mbeere and their

agenda for Kenyans. Later, the pro-Mau Mau writers reconfigured the image of Kimathi and reinforced their moral-political conviction elevating Dedan Kimathi to the ranks of Lenin (Yenjela, 2021). However, the positive portrayal of the Mau Mau leaders did not favour every player because the teller portrayed the Mau Mau memory as "an intra-Gikuyu civic war," undermining others (Yenjela, 2021). Not only vital players but ordinary Mbeere were also excluded through forest mentality, 'you did not go to the forest therefore not entitled for remembrance.'

The Mbeere people had no option but to join the Mau Mau movement's aspiration for freedom because of the efforts of the urban-based Mbeere. They felt they would be disadvantaged in national cake sharing if left out; thus, they joined the struggle with the others. Nderitu (2017) explains how political consciousness spread when Jomo Kenyatta asked Kimathi and others to mobilise the people to meet in Nyeri in 1952. The mobilisation was done through oathing, and the number of people who showed up in the meeting was about 75,000. After this meeting, other public rallies were held in Central Kenya, Embu and Mbeere. These meetings were well attended by ethnic communities from Embu, Meru, and Mbeere (Nderitu, 2017).

As the war became bitter in 1953, Dedan Kimathi wrote four threatening letters to the Embu District Home Guards, chiefs, and the District Commissioner about the Mau Mau movement's planned attack on the Gatari location. However, Kimathi never threatened the Mbeere and their chiefs, as noted by the Embu District Intelligence Committee of July 1953 (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Instead, Kimathi pitied those collaborating with the British,

warning them they would pay for their lives. Titus Ngochi, in an FGD, held at Kombo Muniyiri sublocation on January 31, 2020, stated that in as much as there were Mau Mau movement leaders in Mbeere, they subscribed to Dedan Kimathi, who was very popular among the Mau Mau insurgents, especially his declaration: "We will fight them, let those who have guns use them. Let those who have spears use them. Let those who have swords use them, and those who have bows and arrows use them (FGD, Mwanyare)." In an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, Jeremiah Nyagah Mwaniki, who worked at Kahawa in Nairobi, mentioned how Kimathi used to administer the oath in Nairobi. He (Jeremiah) used to close and open doors on those who were partaking of the oath.

Unlike young males who were expected to roam around in search of green pastures, young females were left behind in rural areas to take care of households. First, young and old females played critical roles as couriers because there were limited avenues for searching them (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Secondly, the colonial government did not consider them worth bothering. The women also carried messages, money and sidearms (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Thirdly, women could move freely, collecting weapons, ammunition and clothes for the forest fighters. When men went to the forest, women were left to tend to the children. Most Mbeere women were subjected to communal labour of digging trenches in rural areas. Other women secretly joined the Mau Mau movement and shielded their husbands, who never wanted to join the organisation; they even offered bribes for their husbands' lives, as explained by Miriam Mbuya (O.I, 1/2/2020). With time the colonial government was concerned about the actual participation of women in Embu District, especially the Mau Mau movement's set-up in Nairobi, regarding Embu women who were

used as prostitutes, an aspect that featured high as noted in the Embu District Intelligence Committee May 8, 1953 (TNA/FCO 141/5767).

Several small gangs in Embu District were believed to comprise mainly local people (TNA/FCO 141/5767). These groups engaged in raiding and later returned to their homes. The British intelligence believed these groups consisted of local compatriots who organised and conducted operations in areas where the local population did not recognise them. Kathagu wa Titima recollected how he and his group served in Kikuyu areas but hid at Kianjiru hill. These gangs were well equipped with rifles and pistols. The compatriots who lived in Kianjiru hill were reported because the need for food forced them to steal livestock, as discussed in an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020. Food was a key in the insurgency. When the flow of food was consistent, the Mau Mau movement's credibility to its members and operational capacity was excellent in overcoming state forces (Salehyan & Hendrix, 2014). However, the food crisis indicates that the insurgent could not fight long, and group cohesion decreased. Notably, the lack of food compelled the Mau Mau insurgents to the enemy line for its acquisition. Because the Mbeere region was unprotected, it became a food distribution hub to the fighters where demand superseded supply. For example, in 1954, there were unending problems and complaints from all directions of hunger (Jackson, 2003). It led to stock theft, which increased considerably, as reported in Mbeere locations.

In Mbeere South, renowned Mau Mau movement leaders included Kathagu wa Titima, who operated at Kianjiru mountain. Kathagu was a tower of strength to the movement as

he was conversant with the Mbeere terrain. Despite Mbeere's low population density, he could move and quickly locate families for oathing. Gathagu wa Titima, alias General Kimere (O.I, 11/8/2020), stated, "After we talked, we would meet with them at Kianjiru hill, after which I would go back and convince our people on the importance of taking the oath, and they would take it." Another Mau Mau movement leader from Mbeere was General Chui, a brother to Julieta Mutave, one of the respondents. General Mwaniki Chui was Ambeere from Kanyariri, Kanji Keru location. In the Mau Mau insurgency, he used to administer the oath among the Mbeere. Other notable leaders in Mbeere included General Nyaga wa Mwongia, who administered oaths in Mbeere. However, he was killed at Kiangungi Mountain near Kĩamaranga/Maranga Mountain in Embu, as attested in FGD held in Kombo Munyiri sublocation and Mwanyare. Other leaders included Ngondi wa Mulingi and Njanthingi Makindi, Kivuti wa Mbuta, Njagi wa Munyori and Nguyu Wamugwete alias 'General Makanyanga.'

The Kianjiru Mountain had excellent hideouts where the freedom fighters slept in caves or thick bushes. For survival purposes, the freedom fighters ensured they left no trace behind. They used to bury any rubbish and bones. They would operate from the hill into the villages despite a trench dug around Kianjiru Mountain. The colonial government knew that the Mau Mau movement fighters in Mbeere were operating from Kianjiru Mountain. Njeru Muchiri (O.I, 1/2/2020) pointed out that after completing school at Nyangwa, he joined the fighters at Kianjiru mountain. However, many Mau Mau insurgents were killed due to bombing and attacks from the Mbeere Home Guards. The colonial askaris killed his brother Kaumbuthu wa Ngaiyari, the Mau Mau movement's Secretary in that locality. Jeremiah

Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020) asserted that in Mavuria, there was Kianjiru that hosted the Mbeere Mau Mau.

Another group that has never been celebrated in Mbeere, as pointed out by Muthengi Mugwate (O.I, 4/2/2020), are those who took the oath and never went to the forest;

Those who took the oath and stayed silently at home were the ones who fed those who went into the forest [they provided the fighters with food]. They remained silent on their matters. Some were in the Kirinyaga forest during the time of the war. The Mau Mau fighters in this region hid in Kianjiru hill. They hid well in the bushes/forest and could not easily be found. When their location was exposed, the white man sent planes with bombs over the forest to try and flush them out.

He also noted that those in the villages in Mbeere were subjected to forced labour, taxation, interrogation and confinement in villages surrounded by trenches. Besides, they were subjected to strict orders and feared attacks from the Embu, the colonial government, the Mbeere chiefs, and their Home Guards, especially when they (the local people) refused to give information to Mau Mau movement fighters and their activities. For survival purposes in Kianjiru Mountain, the freedom fighters ensured they left no trace behind. They buried any rubbish and bones as self-discipline to conceal tracking and whereabouts, but no source tells us how they dealt with the smoke when they warmed themselves. They would operate creatively in the villages despite a long trench dug around Kianjiru Mountain. At the same time, the colonial intelligence was extensive and could monitor movement in and out of the Kianjiru Mountain. Digging trenches around the Mountain as a counter-insurgency measure worked well for the British intelligence in Mbeere as their routes were well tracked, leading to bombing as explained by Njeru Muchiri (O.I, 1/2/2020), who joined the fighters at Kianjiru Mountain but survived the bombings. Unfortunately, his brother

Kaumbuthu wa Ngaiyari, the Mau Mau movement's Secretary in that locality, did not survive the attacks.

Jeremiah Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020) asserted;

In Mavuria, there was Kianjiru that hosted the Mbeere Mau Mau. Yes, there was Kathagu wa Muchoria and Kivuti wa Mbuta and one person from Kirinyaga was shot at Kianjiru. Although later they were arrested and moved, they were not taken where the others were. They were de-oathed. Kathagu and Kivuti wa Mbuta fled to the forest with a battalion from Kirinyaga. It was in 1954 or thereabout.

Another group that has never been celebrated in Mbeere, as pointed out by Muthengi

Mugwate (O.I, 4/2/2020) included those who took the oath and never went to the forest;

Those who took the oath and stayed silently at home were the ones who fed those who went into the forest [they provided the fighters with food]. They remained silent on their matters. Some were in the Kirinyaga forest during the time of the war. The Mau Mau fighters in this region hid in Kianjiru hill. They hid well in the bushes/forest and could not easily be found. When their location was exposed, the white man sent planes with bombs over the forest to try and flush them out.

He also noted that those in the villages in Mbeere were subjected to forced labour, taxation, interrogation and confinement in villages surrounded by trenches. Besides, they were subjected to strict orders and lived in fear of attacks from the Embu, the colonial government, the Mbeere chiefs and their Home Guards, especially when they (the local people) refused to give information on the Mau Mau movement fighters and their activities.

Little has been documented on the fighters who destabilised the colonial government in the interior. Much attention was given to the "Generals" who hailed from Fort Hall, Nyeri, Kiambu and Embu Divisions and operated in Mount Kenya or the Aberdare ranges. From such a perspective, the Mau Mau heroes and heroines in Mbeere are thus uncelebrated as they fall under the group of the communities in the periphery. These groups are never celebrated, yet they dedicated their lives to Kenya's freedom. Muthua (n.d, p. 54), in his

autobiography, acknowledges the contribution of other communities, 'I was detained with people like Henry Muli, Odhola, John Washika a Luhya and Njoroge ole Mashale,' whom he refers to as a Maasai, but from this study, Njoroge was a nusu Maasai. Additionally, the contribution of the Maasai, whom the colonialists labelled nusu (half), is rarely documented. According to the colonial records' Safari Programme', 'it is true that every nusu has been oathed and probably every pure Maasai with Kikuyu wife. In the Mau region, probably every pure Maasai has been oathed except in some cases where they are employed in the settled areas or on the plain tending stocks (District Officer 2, Mau, April 1954). Major Frank Kitson (1960) explained that the Maasai had intermarried with the Kikuyu as many of their women were barren due to congenital syphilis. A large colony of half breeds (nusu) proved to be enthusiastic supporters of the Mau Mau movement, which formed a significant gang in the Maasai country through intermarriages.

As the Mau Mau war progressed, the colonial government failed to reveal the number of pure Maasai within the Mau Mau movement, yet there was a list of names at Olokurto for the pure Maasai who were detained (KNA/NKR/EA8/6&KNA/NKR/EA8/3). The Mau Mau movement detainees who underwent screening in Narok Works Camp included the Dorobo but were labelled as fully 'Kikuyused' Dorobo to conceal their identity. According to the dossier, most assisted in feeding and keeping the Mau Mau movement secrets, and some offered their houses to oath administrators. However, from the dossier, the treatment of the Kikuyu and other communities outside the Mount Kenya region was different. The Kikuyu who were screened in Narok Camps were detained irrespective of their Mau Mau movement affiliation. They were described as; "A member of his/her family thoroughly

indoctrinated and firm Mau Mau supporter who would help and feed gangs if not detained" (KNA/NKR/EA8/1).

Conversely, the colonial government was lenient to the Maasai and Dorobo, most of whom were not detained after screening. The remarks were as follows; "Evidence insufficient to substantiate charge before Supreme Court." However, a disclosure to have participated in the Mau Mau movement was relative. Ethnicity was a key determinant. An example is Nagulomot Ole Naisho, a Maasai identified by a woman as part of the gang that administered the Mau Mau oath in the Narengiare District in December 1953. In 1954, the same woman said Nagulomot visited her house in March 1954 and requested food for himself and a gang of four, yet he was set free despite her testimony (KNA/NKR/EA8/1).

The colonial state questioned the Kikuyu association with the Mbeere in the Mwea area. The Kikuyu influence was perceived to harm the more backwards and gullible Embu' tribesmen' (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). The Kikuyu influence on other ethnic groups was also questioned when DO 2 of the Mau region wrote a Mau Mau movement report for April 1954 on the relationship of the Mau Mau movement with other ethnic groups in Narok. According to DO 2, the Wandorobo, who originated from Laikipia and lived on the Mau region's Western side, were loyal to the government. However, those who originated from Kikuyu land were regarded as disloyal; "This deduction is a result of the Mau Mau purge of some seven Wandorobo in the Western area as they found that their movements were reported to the security forces every time they moved openly in that area" (KNA/AD/REP/S).

The colonial government was vigilant about any community interrelated to the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru. For example, the Maasai had direct ties with Kikuyuland and were perceived as more Kikuyu than Maasai. According to the colonial administrators, General Ole Kesio, a pure Maasai, was lured by the half-bred Kikuyu Maasai into the Mau Mau movement (KNA/BB/8/16). Ole Kisio played a critical role in the Maasai Mau Mau oath ritual, yet he is uncelebrated with his second in command, Ole Ngapian (KNA/BB/12/45). They thus remain like the Mbeere unsung Mau Mau movement heroes and heroines.

4.3.4 The Mau Mau Argots, Handshakes and Signs in Mbeere Region

The imposition of a curfew and incarceration did not deter the growth of political consciousness among the Mbeere, prompting the government to engage in psychological warfare and employing pseudo gangs (pseudos) as part of the strategy to hasten the destruction of the Mau Mau insurgency (Kitson, 1960). Captain Kitson designed the mind games of turning insurgents to betray compatriots, and Ian Henderson attached to the Kenya Police Special Branch who could speak fluent Kikuyu (Bailey, 2010). Apart from Captain Kitson and Ian Anderson, the British government invited ethno-psychiatrist Dr John Colin Carothers, who termed the Mau Mau movement an irritational force of evil. Bailey (2010, pp. 8-10) noted, "There was only one way we are going to beat the Mau Mau insurgency, and that is to have gangs disguised as Mau Mau to go into the forests and live as Mau Mau and destroy them in their lairs." The British propaganda emphasised that there were both 'good and the bad Mbeere.' The divide and rule techniques could isolate the Mau

Mau movement members from their ethnic communities. The colonial government divided the Mbeere among themselves and against other communities (Nderitu, 2017).

To tighten the *modus operandi*, the first approach in Mbeere was oathing. The Mbeere took the oath and remained silent as the oath administrator warned them of divulging the secrets of the oath. As they were taking the oath, they swore, "I will never divulge the secrets of the group." It is worth noting that anything bound by oath is believed to have some power in many societies. Certain utterances like 'I now pronounce you husband and wife,' or 'If I do contrary to this oath may it kill me,' and other such parts of speech have power because society has conferred power on formulaic utterances. Another priority approach was encoding information. Information encoding is not a new phenomenon; it is frequently used by people performing social functions such as intelligence services. However, it is worth noting that, since the Mau Mau argots are no longer in use, the Mau Mau movement veterans did not pose a problem sharing them. The researcher noted that if the languages were still fulfilling their functions, sharing such information would run against the fundamental interests of the group.

Groups that speak in secret language do so to conceal linguistic knowledge from outsiders. The conviction that the English language was an instrument of western oppression robbed the Africans native speech. Thus, the Mau Mau movement used Kikuyu as a language of communication. The same approach was also applicable among the *Rastafari*, who developed dread-talk, an in-group language that described the experiences of *Rastafarians* and conveyed the consciousness of its members (Barrington, 2012). The Mau Mau movement members also left their hair to grow naturally to show a commitment to the naturalness that dreadlocks symbolise. Jeremiah Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020) noted that

they used to smoke cannabis, a natural substance to promote social healing by producing a sense of peace and harmony. As they shared puffs of *ganja*, they celebrated oneness and understood themselves while perceiving Europeans as 'small children.'

With aggressive penetration into the movement by the colonial forces and pseudos, the Central Committee became obnoxious to people within them as Mau Mau movement spies, prompting the deployment of complicated codes of speech and behaviour unique for survivability. An example, when Kimathi Mukami escaped police inspection at Muthaiga Police Station, Mukami Kimathi ran to Muthaiga Club, where she knew a Mau Mau movement member who managed a network of waiters to get information, then passed to Kimathi. Mukami went to the kitchen and shouted to the cook *Mariboti na ndubia* (latest report and a cup of sugarless tea) (Nderitu, 2017). This language was only known to those within the group, as the others could not comprehend it. Kithinji (2005) writes in the *Murder in the rain* how General Baimungi used argots or what he refers to as slang;

The Mau Mau had decided to attack Kimitu Prison and to set free their colleagues held there. At each meeting to discuss the assault, General Baimungi - their leader, had emphasised that it would take place on the night of ninth December. He suspected that someone among his people was a police informer. During their last meeting, he had held to the light a piece of paper written simple 9. They attacked on sixth and took off with twenty of their men.

The police informer had informed the prison warders expecting the attack to take place on December 9. However, according to Kithinji, nine and six were interchangeable in Mau Mau slang. Therefore, if they talked of six, they meant nine and vice versa.

To recognise those who had not taken the oath in Mbeere, they used words with hidden meaning. As elucidated, a particular house had lice/fleas after which they would begin to

scratch themselves as narrated in an FGD held at Mwanyare. In an oral interview, Jeremiah Mugo, a Mau Mau seer, stated;

A person who has taken an oath is known through secret language. The one who had taken the oath used the words like fleas, for example, when in a house you could claim that there were many fleas and if a person had taken the oath, they would say that the house did not have any fleas and he would know that he was the one being called a flea and refute the claim. Also, we would ask, if one wanted to go would they take the upper route or the lower one? They would say that they want to take the lower road since it had no sun, but the upper path had sun. We would communicate in secret until we acquainted with each other.

The secret code shared was corroborated with another research conducted in Londiani among the Nyakinyua. According to the FGD, held on September June 9, 2015, when explaining the oathing ritual, they stated as follows; "We got to a house, with scouts outside, asked if there were fleas/lice. If you kept quiet, punishment was inevitable, smeared saliva on the face and then given a seat, after that the oath was administered."

There were special greetings as illustrated by the respondents in the Mbeere regions;

When we met, we would greet each other like this (demonstrating licking the soil). The one who did not do that was not a Mau Mau. You would meet people and, without talking, just perform the ritual. If one just greeted us formally, we would know they were not a Mau Mau.

The soil was at the centre of the Mau Mau oathing process. According to Wanyumbari (1993), oathing ceremonies utilised blood and meat. Interestingly, the initiates would take the oath while holding moistened soil against their stomach with their right hand. It symbolised that the person was ready to do anything in their power to protect the land belonging to the people. As much as the Mau Mau movement oathing changed from place to place, the centrality of holding the soil was standard. Another type of handshake applicable in the Mbeere region was expounded in an FGD at Kathimari and corroborated by Julieta and Muthingi Mugwate. As illustrated in Mbeere, the secret handshake involved

joining both palms, but the thumb would be pulled outwards. Those who had not taken the oath could not decode the message and were easily identified.

The Mau Mau moment of greatness in survival craft was short-lived in Mbeere as Mbeere locations were dangerous and challenging ground for the Mau Mau movement as the Home Guards and farm guards were always in control. Tide turned against the Mau Mau movement with the advent of reliable chiefs like Mwandiko wa Ngira, who had a record of active resistance to the Mau Mau movement, a fact well known to the local people. Also, some headmen feared because the colonial government used the trial and error method to detain headmen they suspected of supporting the movement. Interestingly, Mbeere were scattered all over the District, and their vast grounds became performance grounds where the Mau Mau fighters could hide and collect food. For longevity, as Muturi Ndari, a Mau Mau scout, narrated in an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, how they were on the lookout and whenever Home Guards or security forces appeared, we used a secret warning: "*Runji nirwaucura*" (the river is full). Once they heard this, they already knew the enemy was near. It shows that people who have a similar agenda, live in the same area with common interests are likely to develop unique forms of language that are only recognisable in a smaller circle.

In Mau Mau's survival craft, men did not leave women out. Whenever young and old females met, they sat down, stretched their legs straight, and did not crouch or put one leg over the other. The researcher in an FGD also observed the same sign held at Laare-Maua on July 9, 2015, as shown in **Figure 4.5** for Mwanyare and **Figure 4.6** for Laare-Maua. If

a woman sat with legs crouched, it was evident that she was not a Mau Mau movement member. In the FGDs held at Mwanyare and Kombo Muniyiri sub-location, the participants also narrated how communication was secretive in Mbeere; for instance, a man used to climb a tower and blow the horn as one in the process of chasing birds from destroying the millets. Once they blew the horn, the Mau Mau movement fighters would know that the food was ready and on its way and would prepare to receive it.



Figure 4.4: Mau veterans in an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020. Women seated, stretching their legs, a form of Mau Mau coded language.



Figure 4.5: A Mau Mau meeting held by the researcher in Maua-Laare on July 8, 2015. The Mau Mau women seated in a coded form.

From 1954-1955, the British used pseudo-gangs to infiltrate the Mau Mau movement. So, they could convert captured Mau Mau into instruments for countering their compatriots. The captured Mau Mau movement members revealed the movement's oaths, prayers and handshakes. Once the Mau Mau handshakes were exposed, the pseudo-gang would be oriented to the Mau Mau movement's characteristics and thus enter the forest and engage in contact with genuine members of the movement. According to Bailey (2010), the Mau Mau movement fighters in the forests were not expecting this and were always high. Therefore, they could not distinguish people in the gloom of the forest. The exposure of the Mau Mau argots was a big blow to the movement, as the infiltrating team would relay the information they learned to the security forces enabling them to capture the members and annihilate the movement (Molnar, 1965).

4.3.5 Effects of Colonial Military Strategies on the Mbeere

While describing the country of the Gikuyu, Kenyatta (1938) defined it as the central part of Kenya divided into five Districts, namely, Kiambu, Fort Hall (Murang'a), Nyeri, Embu and Meru. Anybody who hailed from these Districts was labelled a Mau Mau insurgent until proven otherwise. In the colonial mind, the Mau movement was within the central Kenya landscape, and the colonial administration attempted to isolate it within these boundaries. As Likimani (1985) notes, D.C. Steel of Nairobi acknowledged that all Kenyan ethnic groups were behind the freedom fighters. Hence, the research incorporated the Mbeere-like other large ethnic groups in Central Province that were affected by the colonial military strategies.

The imposition of curfews in Central Province shortly before the Declaration of the State of Emergency confined the natives to their houses as a way of colonisers asserting self-legitimation. At the beginning of the State of Emergency, restrictions of movements permitted those who held loyalty certificates to attend a public meeting (KNA/BB/12/24). In most cases, those who held these documents could be called on to halt for excruciating examination. Faced with a crisis, the colonial government enacted detention orders and the power assigned to the governor to detain any person he imagined as a threat to public order. Under the emergency powers, the governor delegated powers to police officers above the assistant inspector's rank to arrest without a warrant, provided he had enough grounds to justify the detention (KNA/BB/12/24). Edgerton (1989) argues that the colonial government placed anyone it wished into a concentration camp, and evidence of wrongdoing was not required. Furthermore, on average, one African was hanged every

morning (Nderitu, 2017). African privacy was also interfered with when senior police officers were entitled to search premises without a warrant and the mandate to stop and search any vehicle or individual in the public space. Africans were also compelled to give information by force, and the government instituted a clause on power to obtain information. Any person who failed to produce information in pursuance of the request duly made under the regulation was guilty of an offence (KNA/BB/12/24).

The emergency regulations facilitated the military strategy throughout 1952. The first arrests were made through operation John Scott (1952). The leaders of the Kenya African Union were arrested and detained. Nderitu (2017) argues that the famous massive arrest of the core leadership of KAU marked the beginning of massive oathing, and Kimathi expanded the Mau Mau movement membership through a colossal recruitment drive. The Mau Mau Central Committee conducted this drive even among those who could not fight, such as older adults who could support the Mau Mau movement with resources and information. As more people were oathed, the colonial government arrested many Mau Mau suspects, convicting them while others awaited trial in the Embu District. As a result, the colonial government found it necessary to build new detention camps within the district. The situation forced the colonial government to subject the Mau Mau movement prisoners to hard labour and increased guards, as noted in the Embu District Intelligence Report of October 1952 (KNA/VQ/16/2). As a result, most activities in Embu District were suspended, apart from those dealing with the Mau Mau movement. Worse still, they continued to intimidate loyal elements in the district, as noted in the Embu District Intelligence Committee Report of March 27 and April 3, 1953 (TNA/FCO 141/5766). So

confident, the colonial government even reported that 50% of the Kikuyu and the Embu ethnic communities believed that the Mau Mau had the backing of Russia and that Russia was supplying firearms and other requirements to the movement.

As a practical approach to restoring a state of sobriety, the British troops increased attacks, indiscriminate beatings and the murder of Africans. Apart from the rehabilitation programmes introduced in 1953 in which the Mau Mau movement suspects were detained in concentration camps, the British soldiers also erected mobile gallows to hang suspected Mau Mau movement members (Nderitu, 2017). The colonialists hired local traitors termed by the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA) very dangerous since they spoke Kikuyu, Kimbeere, Kimeru and Kiambu fluently. Their confession would entail a process that aimed to break down the confidence and faith of the member in the Mau Mau movement (TNA/FCO 141/6582). After confession, cleansing and character rebuilding were done until self-respect was restored. Then, the 'patient' (Mau Mau movement supporter) could be pronounced fit to be received back into the community. He also explained that the creation of fear in the minds of the screened person was necessary for inducing confession. Mr. Lambert believed fear was created without torture or physical fear (TNA/FCO 141/6582). According to oral testimonies of the Mbeere detainees, before one was considered innocuous enough for release, he underwent detention in successive camps referred to as the pipeline.

Under the Prisons Ordinance to re-establish authority, the beating was permitted. The severity of a prisoner's punishment depended on the classification as either 'hard-core' or

'black' (Z1) to 'intermediate' or 'grey' (Y1) to a 'white' (Y2) (KNA/DC/MRL/1/6/2). In an FGD at Kombo Munyiri sublocation on January 31, 2020, Titus Ngochi and Ileri Njue testified how they were arrested while heading to Ukambani and accused of administering the Mau Mau movement oath. Although never classified, they were beaten at Makunguru and later taken to Siakago for detention for eight days. After they were presented to the court, the arbitrator issued an injunction arguing they were too young to be jailed; however, they were thoroughly caned and forced to dig trenches at Siakago. Paul Ngutiri was a Mbeere who acquired his identification card in Meru, which wrongly indicated that he was a Meru. Ngutiri (O.I., 7/2/2020) narrated how he was arrested at clayworks at Kasarani in Nairobi and taken to Langata. He was classified as a black (hard-core Mau Mau movement member) and received a thorough beating per the regulations equivalent to his classification (KNA/AB/2/44). He was detained at Lang'ata for six days and transferred to the Manyani detention camp containing Z1. He stayed at Manyani for 17 months and was taken to Mageta Island in Lake Victoria near Kisumu for nine months. In Kisumu, he found a man named Njiru, from Mavuria. He was then transferred to Kandongu, where he stayed for nine months, then moved to Mbeu and Kinoru, where he spent a year at each camp. He was recalcitrant; hence many transfers, although severe beatings, changed him, prompting a return near home.

The severity of the prisoner's punishment also varied with the ethnic group or cradle place. Mate wa Mavuta (O.I., 1/02/2020) revealed how they took the oath and then arrested in Thika with a Kariuki wa Mubarabara, a Kikuyu. After arrest, they were taken to Embakasi, and he was set free, but Kariuki was detained in Manyani. It is worth noting that the

screening team were suspicious of the Kikuyu who had taken the oath and spared the Mbeere, who seemed not too indoctrinated. According to Mate wa Mavuta, the screeners comprised a group of traitors known as *gakunia* who would cover their faces with a sack as they pointed out the Mau Mau movement members to the colonialists. Thus, the *gakunia* acted as both investigators and judges; in essence, they determined one fate, either to be jailed or not. In many cases, they were biased, especially if there was a personal grudge or dispute between them and the suspected Mau Mau movement member. Mugo wa Marindi (O.I, 4/2/2020) stated that although he never took the oath, he was arrested in Thika and screened. As he was in Thika carrying out his daily chores, he found a corpse of a settler on the roadside. He and others were later arrested and implicated in killing the settler. He was detained for 16 days. During that period, he underwent screening and found a significant number of the Mbeere in detention. In Thika, the Mau Mau movement supporters were brutally beaten. Some got killed through the screening process. He recalls how the screeners beat him until he fainted. However, he was released when the Mbeere chiefs requested to take the Mbeere prisoners for de-oathing.

For individuals working outside Mbeere, Nahason Nyaga (O.I., 7/02/2020) stated he worked in Thika and took his first oath there. When rehabilitation began, he returned to Mbeere and was de-oathed and employed as a guard at Gathigi camp in Ishiara. In Gathigi camp, prisoners were sent to work at the Ishiara irrigation scheme, and he noted that the detainees comprised all the ethnic groups of central Kenya. To him, the Mbeere received the same treatment as the other ethnic communities. Samuel Mbaka and Sarah Igoki (O.I., 30/1/2020; 1/2/2020) asserted how they were detained at Gachoka for two months. In

Gachoka, there were many Mbeere, and some came from as far as Kiambere. Detainees were beaten, especially if they gave the wrong answers during interrogations, with the phrase "*ya kurega ni ikagirwa mukwa*" (if one refuses, they should be hanged) being applied. At Gachoka, the detainees engaged in digging trenches and putting spikes. Jeremiah Mugo Mutavi, an Mbeere who lived in Gatari, was arrested in Embu and detained for one year because his identification card did not read Mbeere Division. He recalls how they were beaten and mocked that they should tell Kenyatta to come and release them. The Mau Mau movement's significant influence did not spare women. The brutality of the rehabilitation programme was not selective, as recollected in FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020; Julieta Mutave and some other women were jailed at Kavondori for three days for lacerating their bodies. The ultimate brutality at Kavondori was hard labour and beating. They were also forced to dig trenches, "The guards beat us mercilessly. They poured soil in a basket, and you were supposed to carry and pour it at a certain place and repeat the same thing repeatedly, but chief Kombo released us after some days."

Operation Anvil (1954) was the third security strategy in which 16 500 Africans (Kikuyu, Embu, Mbeere and the Meru) were forcefully removed from Nairobi by the government security forces (Durrani, 2018). The urban-based Mbeere interviewed said they were rounded up with the Embu and forced to return to Mbeere and Embu. Its implementation intensified pressure and animosity between the Embu and the Mbeere, as 15 Mbeere were killed near the Mbeere-Embu border (TNA/FCO 141/5767). As a result, the Embu of Gatari location were collectively fined two hundred heads of stock on the premise that they ought to have known an attack was imminent due to their closeness to the crime scene (KNA/DC/EBU/1/13). The decision in favour of one heightened the hatred between the

two communities. Oral testimonies and Kimathi's diary noted how the colonial government attacked people and then implicated the Embu Mau Mau movement supporters. Yet, from the Embu Intelligence Committee Report of April 16 1954, it was not clear who had carried out the operation;

If, as is possible, this was Embu Division forest gang under Kassam or Kubukubu making its circuitous way from Mathira area south Nyeri back to its traditional haunts. This massacre has the dual effect of punishing the Mbeere for their activity against the Embu early in the year and also registering on the local population a sensational success, as an immediate reaction to government inferences on operation Widgewood that Mau Mau was deemed to defeat (TNA/FCO 141/5767).

Through oral testimonies, collective fines were a heavy burden to the people of Embu, who had suffered earlier separate collective fines after burning schools and the destruction of bridges. In addition, in one area of Embu, the colonial government prohibited the planting and growing of sugarcane, thus completely disrupting the local people's livelihood (KNA/DC/EBU/1/13).

The colonial government was determined to change the civilian population, initially scattered, to a domesticated one, utterly visible. Through surveillance villagised settlement, the colonial forces to some extent, thwarted the Mau Mau movement's operations. The villagisation programme was a military strategy that entailed forceful removal of civilians and relocation of Embu District civilians to safe villages surrounded by moats. The moated villages were surrounded by trenches, 50 miles long, 10 feet deep and 16 feet wide and heavily guarded (Nicholls, 2010). The Home Guards shot anybody who tried to leave without permission. Therefore, under the emergency powers, many Africans became victims of "trying to escape." The colonial administration affirmed that to prevent Mau Mau movement fighters from staging a demonstration and increase intimidation in Mbeere,

the implementation of villagisation policy was the best remedy to improve the political situation.

The Embu Intelligence Committee meeting held on May 5, 1954, stated that this was intended to enhance the collection of information necessary to destroy the insurgents (TNA/FCO 141/5767). The Mbeere region did not face absolute villagisation, as Nderitu (2017, p.82) noted that "the British government moved everybody from the Gikuyu, the Mbeere to the Meru to villages." In Mbeere, the villages were at Gachoka, Rianjeru, Kiambere and Kavindori, which were solely for the Mau Mau movement's followers. A refugee camp was constructed near the Ena tobacco factory (TNA/FCO 141/5767). Jackson Ireri, an Embian who used to teach in Mbeere during the emergency period, corroborated the testimonies offered by the Mbeere when describing how the situation had been in Embu;

There was much fear during that period. People would rarely walk at night. After people were shifted to villages, places like here (Kanthunjuri) used to be occupied by the Mau Mau movement fighters. Before 1952 people lived on farms, it was after this, all people were mobilised into the villages. After this, even while going to farms, Home Guards would accompany them because if they came alone, the Mau Mau movement fighters would attack them. There was a village at Kathanjuri, Kathunguri, Gakwegori, Kiaragana, Muvu and Kiangungi. At Kanyuambora, there was no village, but the people moved to live near churches. At Ishiara, people did not move from the farms since the Mau Mau movement's presence was not much. However, there was a detention camp at Kathigi.

The Mbeere did not face punitive villagisation compared to other Districts in Central province since they could move freely and engage in their usual daily chores. However, curfews, crop destruction, and forced labour disoriented the supporters of Mau Mau and the civilian population. In Mbeere, around the Kianjiru Mountain and Rupingazi, Chief Kombo forced people to dig trenches directed by Mr. Lakin, the DO. He also placed

witchcraft paraphernalia in the trenches to confuse the Mau Mau movement fighters, as noted by Miriam Mbuya (O.I, 1/02/2020). Kianjiru Mountain was swept for insurgents, after which bombs were dropped, with the security forces shelling on the lower end of the mountain randomly with light artillery assisted by the Mbeere Home Guards with bows and arrows. In addition, Chief Kombo borrowed the conspicuous military operation "First Flute" tactics to flush out the remaining Mau Mau movement fighters from Kianjiru Mountain. The Mbeere Home Guards were waiting on the fringes of the mountain with arrows and killed anyone who emerged from the forest. This prevented the movement of the Mbeere Mau Mau movement fighters from Kianjiru to the reserves, resulting in the elimination of many insurgents. D. H. Lakin considered the operation very successful and he replaced the troops with large ditches around the mountain zones manned by little posts to prevent egress (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). As a result, movement from the mountain was halted. The Mau Mau movement supporters in Mbeere chose to remain in the settled areas instead of the mountains. However, they also faced gradual elimination in the settled areas as chiefs in Mbeere enforced massive local sweeps.

In contrast to other Embu residents, the implementation of the villagisation policy was welcomed by Kaagari and Kyeni location residents due to the hardship they underwent as the collective punishment dismantled their livelihood. Whittaker (2015) argues that any community suspected of being in league with the Mau Mau faced a counterinsurgency campaign that included property confiscation, detention without trial, livestock seizures and other inhumane practices. The creation of concentrated villages was implemented in Kyeni and Kaagari, and no resistance was reported. It was considered an internal solution

to the Mau Mau movement problem and evidently, it was bearing fruits. From April 29 to May 1, 1954, nine Mau Mau movement fighters were killed; two in Njukini forest, two in Kieni location, one in Kagaari location and others near Kangaru School in Ngariama location. At the border of Kyeni and Evurore, in a gang of eight, one Mau Mau was shot dead with a bow and arrow by a hoeing man (TNA/ FCO 141/5767). Anderson (2005) argues that all the counterinsurgency measures were terrible, but villagisation was the most punitive measure as it denied insurgent foods, the colonial's government as service provider failed to deliver services to those within the community the villages.

Villagisation to some in Kagaari and Kyeni was a blessing as it meant protecting those who wanted a change, loyalists. Advancement was witnessed in implementing the villagisation policy, which signalled a change of heart; however, this did not mean that the movement's progress and attacks had stopped. Notably, the colonial officials reported stock theft in the Embu District as Mau Mau movement fighters tried to obtain food; there was also forceful oathing and people continued admitting to having taken the oath. The Mbeere in Kyeni location continued to be targeted by the Mau Mau freedom fighters. The abduction of a Mbeere older adult and a child occurred in June 1954, near the Embu-Mbeere border (TNA/ FCO 141/5767). A gang of 70 Mau Mau believed to have come from Nyeri District was also seen heading to Mbeere to engage in massive oathing;

Kassam's gang of about 75 with about 30 men of Kaleba Company have left north Ngariama/Baragwi border en-route to Mbeere in two groups, each moving either side of Njukini forest. They will attempt to oath extensively in Mbeere and resort to violence if the oath campaign is resisted (TNA/ FCO141/5767).

By August 1954, the Mau Mau tactical aim majored in the struggle for existence, night intimidation of those in villages and establishing new routes to ensure a constant food

supply (TNA/FCO141/5767). Some of the Mau Mau insurgents were reported in the Mbeere region, hiding in bushes and soliciting food. Food kept the fighters' morale and the fighters more often moved into high-access areas and established control over the local population to expand their activity. The British government denial of food was tactical. They understood that the Mau Mau movement could not attract large pools of potential recruits without food to support themselves. The scarcity of food prompted the Mau Mau insurgents to focus on survival rather than fight or secure recruits. The acute need for food forced the Mau Mau insurgents to hide in Mbeere. As noted by Koren (2018), the prevalence of staple crops shapes conflict patterns. Also, high fertile areas like the Embu, Muranga, Meru and Nyeri experienced more violence during the Mau Mau insurgency due to the prevalence of food.

As the colonial government tightened its security control, communities in the Embu district oscillated between loyalism and Mau Mau movement sympathisers. They were waiting to see which side to jump on. Conversely, the morale of the loyalists was high due to the increased number of British officers, which came with satisfaction and continuous flow of information, enabling the security forces to pursue the Mau Mau movement fighters into the forests. Despite the continuous flow of information on the Mau Mau movement, insurgents were reported in Mbeere on August 16, 1954, doing massive oathing;

A party of five Mbeere, much of those pasts has been spent in Nairobi, have been responsible for oathing ceremonies in the Mbeere country. Information of these ceremonies is very quickly brought to the authorities and the Mbeere are succumbing to oathing only under compulsion (TNA/ FCO141/5767).

The Mbeere returning home could not be trusted wherever they were because as the government was concentrating on the Embu/Mbeere border, the five Mbeere who had

returned home owing to Operation Anvil performed massive oathing in Mbeere. After this incident, in September 1954, the colonial forces found several hide-outs of the Mau Mau insurgents, and the merciless Mbeere Home Guards reacted to the situation (TNA/FCO141/5767). The colonial government was always on the lookout for the Mbeere Mau Mau movement operatives joining forces with the other communities, hence constant surveillance and sweet talks. Markedly, because the colonial authority knew insurgents could use Mbeere terrain for camouflage and the Mbeere homes for basic needs, they created trenches and praised the Mbeere as loyalists.

4.4 Exclusion of Mbeere in the Mau Mau Narrative

The politics of small numbers (Mbeere population), identity game, positionality (relation of the core and periphery), the role of independent schools, labelling and the colonial projects were used as a tool for propaganda by the Department of Information (DOI). Additionally, scholars' failure to interrogate colonial propaganda, divide and rule and politics of lumping communities together to deny the Mau Mau movement's mass following. All these factors affected the integration of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau discourses. Therefore, to gain a clear picture of the insurgency, the analysis of the Mau Mau movement extended beyond the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (KEM) and showed the nationalistic outlook of the movement. Notably, most scholars viewed the Mau Mau movement as merely a military conflict, overlooking the contribution of the communities claimed to be loyal to the colonial government. These communities included the Kamba, the Maasai, the Tharaka and the Mbeere. Therefore, this subsection delves deeper into the exclusion of the Mbeere.

4.4.1 Identity Game

A community exists when identified as unique and its contributions appreciated. Identity allows a community to own a historical narrative and claim exclusive rights as actors in history. It also serves as a passport to a self-legitimising narrative of a community. For example, when the British colonisers controlled the Embu region, their first approach was to create administrative Divisions for the Gichugu and the Ndia, leaving the Mbeere as part of the Embu Division. Although, however, the colonial government drew boundaries between the Embu and the Mbeere, the former occupied viable agricultural lands. At the same time, the latter occupied land largely arid, sandy and rocky, suitable for pastoralism or mixed farming in some areas. In addition, the British adopted administrative units that lacked territorial inclusivity, a case that was evident in the Embu Division, where the Mbeere were denied a Division until years later. This was an act of concealment, a sophisticated hide-and-seek game well crafted.

The climatic conditions in Mbeere locations were harsh. When the colonial government promised water supplies through an agricultural betterment fund, the implementation was slow compared to Embu Division, where the return on investments was high. The colonial authority described the Embu as hardworking and food sufficient but portrayed the Mbeere as innately conservative, lazy who required much persuasion and supervision to cultivate. Embu (uplands) always took famine migrants from Mbeere (lowlands) due to the variable food output between the two regions. Charles Ambler (1988) explained how the Mbeere were non-traders and obtained food, honey, iron and livestock from their neighbours. Further, Ambler (1988) argued that the Mbeere lacked resources for exchange, and they

could only sell their labour to the Embu. He portrayed the Mbeere as people troubled by their source of food with little concern for development. Howard and Shain (2005) posit that the Mbeere continued to work as labourers for the Embu and Mbeere region because Mbeere was peripheral to the main trade route and different from other communities in central Kenya.

As the Mbeere worked as labourers in Embu, the Embu were able to commit to non-agricultural activities. Mwaruvie (2011) discredited such an argument and offered a different perspective regarding the Mbeere as time conscious who engaged in specific activities throughout the year, from farming, labour mobilisation and internal to regional trade. In Africa and Kenya, the caravan masters, brokers and other traders converted commodities into social and political power that affected status relations and identity. The representation of the Mbeere as consumers who made little effort to evolve into the changing system profoundly influenced their history and identity.

Haugerud (1995) associated food with conversations on politics where food is connected to the nuances of power, and because the Mbeere were unstable on food production, the Mbeere livelihood and political status suffered. The scarcity of food in Mbeere locations portrayed the inhabitants as consumers rather than providers, making them depend on the Embu, creating a food-structured relationship sanctified by blood partnership. The colonial government also encouraged the Embu and the Mbeere to view their fates as separate. As a result, the Embu did not consider the Mbeere worthy competitors and opted to compete with the Kikuyu in the neighbouring districts (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6).

The British administrators spent more time in Embu compared to Mbeere. No administrative officer was stationed in Mbeere until the Mau Mau emergency. Therefore, the Mbeere region was considered a marginal area in economic, social and political terms. With time, Mbeere was characterised by processes of uneven development reproduced by the governance of Mbeere at Kirimari where political authority was negotiated and renegotiated. In this case, the landscape conceptualisation and narratives structured by the elites, the British, or the dominant group (Embu) provided legitimisation of control of the Mbeere. The colonial administrators portrayed the Mbeere as primordial to evoke feelings interpreted in different ways by different groups. The Mbeere Division was vast, and the lack of British administrators gave the Mbeere autonomy under their chiefs. They only encountered the DO or DC during *safari* work. Notably, the Mbeere were ruled by elderly chiefs (traditionists) who were laggards in development for their people's wellbeing (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14).

At first sight, Mbeere and Embu appeared culturally indistinguishable. However, their differences were identifiable when specific inquiries were made or after a prolonged period with them. The Mbeere constantly shifted identity depending on whether it suited them. Sometimes, a *Mumbeere* became *Muembu*. On rare occasions, a *Muembu* posed as *Mumbeere* because the Embu perceived themselves as enlightened and second only to the Kikuyu in development (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). Donskis (2009, p.10) noted that "the shifting identity is always troubled, and the troubled identity is always shifting." Some of the Mbeere who lived in Embu locations ganged up with the Embu to oath their tribesmen at the hinterland, as explained by Jeremiah Mugo in an interview held at Siakago on February

5, 2020. It is worth noting that the Embu distinguished themselves as Mau Mau adherents and despised the Mbeere as loyalists. However, in Nairobi and other places, the two communities were identified as one and suffered a similar fate as indicated in a precis of an appreciation given by the Intelligence Adviser, A. M. MacDonald, to the Colony Emergency Committee on January 9, 1954, stated;

There can be no doubt that a large proportion of them are still giving active assistance to the Mau Mau movement, while another large section is not prepared to come out on the government side. In those areas where the Kikuyu were known to be actively and voluntarily assisting the terrorists, the full weight of government must be brought to bear on the Kikuyu people as a whole.... The swollen Kikuyu population must be reduced either by removing all Kikuyu from the city or by subjecting them to strict control (TNA/FCO 141/6554).

Maloba (1998) acknowledged that during Operation Anvil, the colonial government was frustrated with the inadequate intelligence and pressure mounting from the white settlers. Due to such frustrations, the harassment of Africans in search of credible intelligence was indiscriminate. A senior British Army officer, General George Erskine with a distinguished record of service in World War II, a background which equipped him to decide on the situation in Kenya. His first approach was to deploy about twenty-five thousand security forces with military vehicle's loudspeakers blaring directives for Africans to pack only one bag and exit the streets peacefully with minimum destruction (Clayton, 2006). Elkins (2005, p.122) noted, "All Africans were temporarily taken to barbed wire enclosure . . . the Kikuyu, as well as the closely affiliated Embu and Meru, were separated from the rest." Operation Anvil was quick, characterised by moments of confusion and anyone who spoke was immediately shipped directly to detention. At the same time, those who protested were hauled off and placed in a specific police vehicle. Elkins further posited that several of the suspects were never spotted again. Notably, there was no room for the military personnel

to distinguish between the Embu and the Mbeere; the only thing that mattered was central Kenya's as a point of origin.

Political consciousness in the mind of the colonial administrators in the Embu District only reached Kirimari, where offshoots of Kenya African Union (KAU) resisted soil conservation. Notably, they ran their activities from Embu town and their services were not available in Mbeere (KNA/DC/EBU/1/6). The colonial government realised the impact of a collective identity for the Embu and Mbeere and, therefore, capitalised on the deteriorating relationships around the boundary in Nthawa, Europe and adjacent Mbeere locations bordering Embu. Notably, the elders in Embu and Mbeere wished there was no boundary between them. However, the colonial government insisted on boundaries, resulting in bitterness between the two communities, as the elders had predicted. Mr. Gillespie drew the border despite the complaints from the Mbeere elders who were subsequently forced to accept the outcome of the demarcation;

If the Mbeere persisted in their attempts to jump a claim on the land lying above the junction of the Karurumo and Ena rivers and if they continued their aggressive attitudes towards the whole matter, they would be deterred by whatever degree of compulsion government might see fit to employ (KNA/DC/EBU/3/3).

In 1954, the colonial administrator recorded, "In February, Embu attempted to oath the Wambeere leading to a civil commotion and routing of the administrators. The Mbeere, apart from a long-standing animosity regarding their boundary with Embu Division, considered the latter's inhabitants to be Mau Mau" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/13). On April 1, 1954, the colonial government also stressed the need for vigorous progress in converting the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru guards into Tribal police (TNA/FCO 141/5703). To preserve the political status and further alienate the Mbeere, the Embu alleged that the Mbeere were

Home Guards yet the Embu were among the Tribal police. Furthermore, the colonial government capitalised on attacks between the two communities. They sent finishers to magnify the attack whenever an attack occurred, as expounded in Kimathi's letters regarding the Kathanjure attack (Maina wa Kinyatti, 1987).

The Mbeere became 'others' of the Embu. They suffered casualties at the hands of the Embu, which caused them to retaliate, killing several of the Embu. When the emergency ended, the Embu, who were against colonialism, were uplifted compared to the Mbeere, who always earned praise as loyalists. Shamsul (2007) argues that the official discourse described the Mau Mau movement as a Kikuyu phenomenon. In this case, the Embu were regarded as a community solely involved in the Mau Mau movement in Embu Division (Embu and Mbeere Division). The same official discourse scholars borrowed and reinforced, "Mbeere loyalty was beyond question, and they proved themselves energetic in keeping the Mau Mau out of their territory" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). Notably, most scholars read the archival materials along the grain instead of reading against the grain. They interpreted archival materials without posing specific questions about the records and letting them speak to the researchers. Michel Foucault (1984) recommended reading the archival materials between the lines to liberate the submerged voices of history and the Mbeere voice in this case. To liberate them, Foucault rejected the idea of intellectuals given the privileged position as experts in expounding the truth. Foucault explains how masses can articulate knowledge (insurrection of subjected knowledge) which can be done through interviewing the Mbeere themselves and delineating the game of inclusion and exclusion. The diverted attention creates identity games favouring the populous Embu in the Mau Mau narrative, excluding the Mbeere.

4.4.2 Core and Periphery Relations

Representation in the Mau Mau historiography depended on positionality. Markedly, the core defined who was who in the Mau Mau narratives. Howard (2006) argues that peripheral regions are always less civilised and depend on their wealthy neighbours, who exploit them for their benefit, thereby reinforcing the peripheral state. As noted in previous sections, the Mbeere region was at the periphery and depended on the Embu political consciousness and food. The colonial administrators defined the Mbeere region as underdeveloped, a position exploited by the colonialists and the Embu for their progression.

Not all peripheral regions in a geographical sense were impoverished, as discussed later in this chapter. Exceptions in geographical categorisation existed. The Mbeere region was disadvantaged in the Mau Mau historiography owing to its close relation with Embu and the colonial habit of keeping areas with retarded growth out of the bigger picture. The significant contribution was thus associated with communities near Nairobi or Mount Kenya. Proximity to the core (Nairobi and Mount Kenya) mattered a lot to scholars of the Mau Mau historiography. Notably, the colonial government estimated many insurgents to be in the forest. To many scholars, this became the point of analysis. The Embu District Annual Report of 1955 stated that Mbeere remained impervious to the Mau Mau movement indoctrination for several reasons, including its geographical location

(KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). Mwaniki Kabeca (O.I, 8/02/2020) was of the view that;

The Mbeere chiefs, when the war broke, almost went underground because some of them had sympathetic ideas about the Mau Mau and they would even let the Mau Mau go to the Mbeere region and hide. They would tell their people to welcome the Mau Mau, but on the face of it, they appeared to be against the Mau Mau, but to the white man, he saw them as so loyal that they were against the Mau Mau.

This illustrates how the Mbeere disguised themselves for survival. Mwaniki also noted that the Mbeere participated in the Mau Mau movement activities, although their participation was not en masse. Since the Mbeere experienced colonialism's pain, it was not as intense as the experience by the Kikuyu, Embu or the Meru. Mwaniki further explained that the white folks (*nyakeru*) invaded where there were 'edibles and drinkables'; thus, there was nothing to appropriate in Mbeere. To a large extent, therefore, the Mbeere were forgotten by the colonialists, as narrated by Mwaniki, O.I, 8/02/2020;

In late 1960, I went to the valley that divides the Mbeere and the Kamba of Kitui. I found people living in their traditional lifestyles, which existed even before the white man came. They were eating with banana barks as spoons and eating typical Mbeere food; this food would be raw millet. Some did not even know where the Embu town was located. Equally, some of the Mbeere told me that they were not paying taxes because the white man's askaris could not reach them. Although they had chiefs, each chief had an expansive area to rule, yet they did all the walking because they did not have a car and roads were impassable.

The chiefs' retainers could not cover the vast area of the Mbeere locations. In addition, many places were full of buffaloes and other wild animals. Therefore, the Mbeere region was different from the Embu region, where you could go, jump over this, shout and be heard, as explained by Mwaniki. During the emergency period, Mbeere region experienced water shortages and the land was never alienated by the Europeans, who opted for a temperate climate and fertile highlands in Embu. Therefore, grievances in Mbeere were not intense against the colonial government to push the Mbeere initiative as a form of anti-colonial expression (Mwaniki, O.I, 8/02/2020). Instead, it came from outsiders who had suffered adverse colonial effects.

The Mau Mau movement chaos that began in 1950 affected the Mbeere who settled in central Kenya. As the colonial government concentrated on the forests, the Mau Mau

movement was changing tactics and, therefore, the forests were no longer the primary avenue of the conflict. Insurgents were oscillating between the reserves and Nairobi, enhancing and strengthening the network of the Mau Mau movement cells. In Nairobi, there were urban-based Mbeere who could not be excluded by their cousins, the Embu, Meru and Gikuyu, in the oathing ceremony that formed social solidarity and raised the level of political commitment (Shamsul, 2007). Mwaniki (O.I, 8/02/2020) refutes the claim that communities far from Mt. Kenya never participated in the Mau Mau movement war. Concerning the Mbeere, he argued that they were shielded from interacting with the Embu, Kikuyu and Meru. Also, there was strong condemnation of the Mau Mau movement in Mbeere forged by the chiefs who referred to the Mau Mau insurgents as *mang'ei* (terrorists);

The DC Kitui has been requested to alert the Wakamba chiefs bordering the Tana River to arrest any strange Kikuyu or Embu natives in their areas. The Mbeere chiefs have been offered a reward for any strange Kikuyu or Embu his men bring in from the Mbeere Division” (TNA/FCO141/5766).

According to Anderson (2005), it was easier to accept the oath than refuse it for those in Nairobi. In Nairobi, a militant group known as *Muhimu* was very aggressive in oath mobilisation. It enlarged its committee in the city by bringing in members from each Kikuyu district, including Embu and Meru. *Muhimu* District Committees established subordinate structures that connected to locations in Central Kenya. This underground network of committees was able to develop cells that engaged in oathing and fee collection. It illustrates why oathing had reached Mbeere by the end of the 1940s, where many chiefs in Embu District, including Fausto, Muruatetu, Paul Makenda and Manunga Ngochi, were oathed but kept silent. This was certainly the case because the male migrant wage earners

who came to Nairobi from Murang'a, Mbeere and Embu never lost ties with rural areas, unlike those communities from distant regions of Nyanza and Mombasa. Those who came from Central Kenya were never urbanised. They were all essentially rural men who went home and informed their people about the city of shanties, worthless wages and promises of the Mau Mau movement for self-emancipation. Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020) noted how the Mbeere were aware of what other communities were undergoing at the hands of the colonialists and the Mbeere in Nairobi reported on the hardship they were facing and a need to unite through oath. The urban-based Mbeere became mobile in recruitment and procuring logistical support. Therefore, the infiltration went beyond Mbeere to Ukambani (KNA/BB/8/17).

As this example suggests, Ukambani was far from Mt. Kenya. However, the Kamba felt the Mau Mau movement's presence in their locality despite massive government protections and intensive campaigns to detach the Kamba in Nairobi from those in the rural areas. Thus, there is no way the Mbeere could be left out in the Mau Mau movement struggle as outlined by Mukami Kimathi. In narrating her life story, Mukami Kimathi argued that her husband thought he was helping by sending her to Nairobi; "He had no idea that he had thrown me into the lion's den that was Nairobi" (Nderitu, 2017, p. 97). When Muthoni arrived in Nairobi, she settled in ethnically arranged Bahati, assigned to the Gikuyu, Mbeere, Meru and Embu. She further notes that the colonial government segregated central Kenya communities in Kariokor, Bondeni and Bahati to stop their anti-imperialist ideas to other communities. In Bahati, the Kikuyu, Embu and Mbeere suffered because of the passbook; they were suspected of being directly involved in the Mau Mau

movement. According to Nderitu (2017), the Gikuyu, Mbeere, Meru and Embu were all suspects. The British colonisers believed that the four ethnicities were related and hailed from central Kenya. Passbook order dated February 11, 1954, crippled the KEM progress;

No adult Kikuyu, Embu or Meru may move or reside outside Native Land Unit unless in possession of a passbook bearing a special endorsement valid only for a specified move or permit to reside, that such passbook shall always be carried outside Native Land Unit and shall be produced on demand by any authorised person" (TNA/FCO 141/6740).

Life was tough for the Kikuyu, Mbeere and Embu regardless of whether one was a passbook holder or not. Those who were lucky to acquire the passbook would hold onto it even when going to the toilet. For those without, fear abounded and even visiting restrooms was problematic as the police would hang around and prohibit anyone without the passbook from travelling (Nderitu, 2017). The Mbeere, due to their loyalty status, were not supposed to hold passbooks, but most of the interviewees who worked outside the Mbeere locations possessed passbooks. Notably, it was hard for colonial administrators to distinguish between the Embu and the Mbeere, as shown in the correspondence letter between the Taita DC and District Pass Officer;

Mr. Munyi Musungu, a Mbeere was charged before Second class Magistrate Voi on January 13, 1958, for failing to preserve his Kikuyu, Meru and Embu passbook contrary to section 20(e) of the Emergency Regulations 1954. He was fined Shs.5, which he paid vide court fines receipt No. 251822 of 13. 1. 1958. On January 15, 1958, the District Pass officer Mombasa wrote a letter to the District Commissioner Taita District that Munyi Michungu Passbook No. 28766 was a member of the Mbeere ethnic group and was not required to have a passbook (KNA/PC/Coast/2/1/80).

There was no evidence of refunding the fine from the colonial records, but his passbook was withdrawn by the District Pass Officer in Mombasa and endorsed his identity card that he was not required to have a passbook.

Narok was another example, it was far from the 'core', yet the area seeped in Mau Mau movement influence during the emergency period (KNA/ EP8/2). The colonialists cited

the infiltration of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, leading to mixed blood in Nairagiengare. Nairagiengare had a long and strong bond with Kikuyu land. Similarly, the Mbeere did not live in isolation as they interacted with Kikuyu *Ahoi*, who lived in different locations in Embu and Kikuyu pit-sawyers, who engaged in the timber business in Mbeere locations (TNA/FCO141/5727). The ADC council noted that immigrants from other districts in Mbeere and Embu were the primary source of trouble. As recorded in the Embu African District Council minutes of May 19, R.A. Wilkinson requested the Kikuyu agitators known to be of bad character be repatriated to their original Districts (KNA/BD/5/1).

4.4.3 Politics of Numbers

Maina wa Kinyatti (2000) explain how the Mau Mau movement was driven by three fundamental forces (economic, political and cultural reasons). As such, the insurgency analysis should go beyond land and self-mastery to avoid oversimplification and celebrate those communities like the Mbeere, who remained a few scattered footnotes. In comparison to other communities in central Kenya, the Mbeere were considered a small group. Brokensha (1988) attests this through the established register of the number of huts and the tax collected. The 1912 report of the DC Embu detailed each area, whereby Chief Kombo Munyiri registered 1,101 huts at Mavuria, 887 huts at Kirima and 567 at Kiambere (Brokensha, 1988). The official claim of the Mbeere population in Mbeere in 1924 was 21,041 and 24,819 in 1937 (Brokensha, 1988). For 13 years, the population increased by 3,778, representing a steep rate of increase in population. In October 1960, the colonial government released human and stock populations in Mbeere Division, as tabulated in table 4.3 below.

Location	Total Human Population	Cattle	Goats
Evurore	11,390	6,329	16,239
Nthawa	8,930	2,636	3,991
Mavuria	13,860	7,613	8, 810

Table 4.3: Human and stock population in the Mbeere Division

Source: Kenya National Archives: Memorandum on the Mbeere grazing control and water development, October 11, 1960, KNA/BD/8/2).

By 1960, the entire population in Mbeere was 34,180 (KNA/BD/8/2). Through approximation, by 1952, the whole population was about 29,000. Thus, the Mbeere population was significant and enough to create a formidable force with an impact on the movement (KNA/BD/8/2). Also, considering there was a massive migration of the Mbeere who settled in Embu, Ndia and Gichugu as acknowledged by Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020).

The Gichugu who also lived in Embu District were projected to be 100% behind the Mau Mau movement. However, the Embu were the leading faction, introducing the relationship of the dominant and the dominated. As with the Kikuyu and the Meru, the Embu also enjoyed recognition in nationalist consciousness and the knowledge created revolved around them. However, the expected single and unified voice was missing because the Embu Mau Mau adherents downplayed the Mbeere contribution in the Mau Mau movement due to their numbers. In addition, the Embu Mau Mau supporters were more exposed to KAU politics and rather than induct the Mbeere; they capitalised on their position of awareness to negate them.

At the outset of the insurgency, the Embu controlled the organisational structure of the Mau Mau movement within Embu District, endorsing themselves as the insurgents and appropriating the Mbeere through forced oathing. Thus, the oath failed to reinforce social bonds and unity in the Embu Division. Oathing rituals caused disunity in Embu Division, but the Kikuyu efforts to bring the Mbeere into the Mau Mau movement was fruitful. The Kikuyu explained the reasons for joining the Mau Mau movement, upon which the Mbeere obliged to respond to the movement's calls whenever insurgents passed through their land, as noted in an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020. Therefore, the Mau Mau movement managed to form a formidable support base in Mbeere locations because even small numbers mattered during a period of need. In addition, as noted by Berman and Lonsdale (1992), the Kikuyu were determined to unify communities, especially communities that induced a similar history. Fadiman (1993) related the Kikuyu and Mbeere on traditions within oral histories of *Mukuna Ruku* and since the Mbeere were within the KLU, there were no possibilities of being left out.

The Mbeere population was thought to offer substantial support to the Mau Mau insurgents. Mwaniki (O.I, 8/02/2020) revealed that the Embu and the Mbeere related in the war of decolonisation, although the relationship was not well-defined. Hence, he argues that the Embu were deeply affected by colonialism, thus vigorous in the Mau Mau movement activities. He, however, notes that a portion of the Mbeere who neighboured Embu were also affected and assisted the Embu. Nevertheless, those in the interior of the Mbeere region like *Weruri wa Ithiga* and the valley that divides Mbeere and Kamba were not concerned because the evil of colonialism was not intense there. Notably, they only heard about

colonialism and, when asked to pay taxes and at such times, they would hide from the tax collectors. Mugo wa Marindi (O.I, 4/02/2020) revealed that even though the Mbeere population did not join the Mau Mau movement 100%, they related well with the Gikuyu and the Meru. Therefore, there was unity until the Embu began forceful oathing. Notably, the Embu Mau Mau movement adherents did not explain the need to take the oath of joining the insurgency. Mugo revealed that the Mbeere needed to be approached with courtesy and thus, it was not surprising that they took the oath and kept quiet.

During an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, it was noted that the Mbeere population was less in comparison to other ethnic groups in Central Kenya and primarily scattered. Glazier (1987) also contends that the Mbeere did not live in villages; instead, the basic unit was a homestead that composed numerous huts occupied by the senior male, wife or wives, married children and unmarried sons with spouses and children. The homesteads would thus be loosely and widely distributed. Also, Mwaniki asserted that the Mbeere families spread far from each other and subsequently, the spread of information was minimal. Despite their number, Jackson Ireri (O.I, 12/02/2020) noted that the Embu and the Mbeere were considered one people and, in most cases, mentioned as one group regarding the Mau Mau activities. His contention concurs with Amblers' (1989) analysis that the Embu and the Mbeere were indistinguishable from colonial administrators and viewed their identity as fluid and overlapping. It explains why the British government implemented the heinous rule in Embu, visualising the two communities as one (the Embu). The study contends that the colonial government cunningly lumped the Mbeere with the Embu to deny the Mau Mau movement's national outlook in the Embu District. The

colonial government was aware of atrocities meted on the Mbeere, especially forceful oathing by the Embu but concealed the bigger picture to the broader audience.

4.4.4 Lack of Independent Schools in Mbeere Division

The Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA) and Kikuyu Karinga Schools emanated from local initiatives formed by parents who appreciated the value of education but feared the influence of mission education. The circumcision crisis of the 1920s, which was also experienced in Embu District, surprisingly led to the proliferation of independent schools among the Mbeere, a conservative community who were ready to do anything to protect their culture. The KISA major sponsors were wealthy natives and therefore, they lacked political legitimacy in the eyes of the suspicious white folks (*Nyakeru*) due to the misdeeds of previous Kikuyu associations. The colonial state feared advocacy for Kikuyu unity yet it allowed the formation of these schools as long the natives were willing to follow bureaucratic procedures and standards put in place for effectiveness. Peterson (2003) argues that the natives' investment in education was inspired by *Mugo wa Kibiro*, who warned the Kikuyu to learn from the strangers because learning their secrets of power will make them depart. True to Chief Koinange's speculation, as noted by Clough (1990, p.164), "when the Kikuyu have gotten wise (educated) sons, they will consider what deceits and cheatings their fathers suffered from the whites." Therefore, the KISA schools were in the sense of mission for a political claim.

The Independent schools started in Kiambu in the 1930s and with time, they spread to Murang'a, Nyeri and then to Embu District. By the 1940s, the colonial administrators praised KISA schools in Embu for efficiency and promised grants for those thirsty for

knowledge. The Provincial Commissioner Central Province A.C.M. Mullins addressed the Embu LNC between 10th and 13th May 1949. He praised Mr. Johana Kunyiha, the President of the Independent Schools Association. He instructed the natives to oversee the running of the independent schools as there was a movement afoot from other districts trying to seize control of the schools (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). In the long run, the emergence of independent schools increased the number of schools and teachers as the LNC strived towards implementing compulsory education for school-going children. According to Minute 17 of 1950, parents were compelled to pay school fees regardless of whether they sent their children to school or not (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12).

The colonial government accused the Embu KISA schools of playing a critical role in the Mau Mau movement. It is worth noting that associating KISA with the Mau Mau movement did not rise before 1952, when the colonial government considered these schools assets. According to SandGren (2012), the Kikuyu administered KISA Schools. With the spread of Mau Mau indoctrination, the colonial officials considered these schools as centres for enhancing Kikuyuness and Mau Mau movement's oath. Derek Peterson (2003) argues that KISA schools offered the Kikuyu skills to understand bureaucracy by learning British rules and pen battles. For instance, Karari Njama used the pen battle to memorialise the Mau Mau struggles. These schools meant independent, learning from the British and teaching natives not to rely on the whites. That 'independent thinking' from knowledgeable people was missing in the Mbeere locations compared to the Kikuyu who were termed industrious agricultural people (Robertson, 1997). The Mbeere lacked English

language know-how for effective communication, unlike the Kikuyu, whose command of English made them recognisable in the colony and outside Kenya (Peterson, 2003).

The lack of independent schools in Mbeere meant they were out of touch with the KISA objective of furthering the Kikuyu interests and safeguarding the homogeneity of such claims relating to their economic, social, social, spiritual and educational uplifting (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1970). KISA also sought to provide African answers to problems of social development, fostering social integration through education, independence and religious separatism. Therefore, the absence of KISA schools in Mbeere meant that the community was left out when the others negotiated how to handle issues that affected them and accepted a certain balance among themselves. Peterson (2003) posits that they were left out in creative engagement with British powers because they could not work within the grammar of the colonial state. Barnett and Njama (1966, p. 183) explained how a similar hindrance was also conveyed by Stanley Mathenge when he broke his silence on this fascinating clue, 'As I do not know how to read, how can I speak to the government . . .'. Such a hindrance made Mathenge use Karari Njama to talk to the government.

In 1952, almost every aspect of KISA schools was a bother to the colonial government, who abruptly stopped KISA schools' activities after doubting the loyalty of KISA teachers. During the same period, most teachers were arrested, others murdered and schools were taken over by District Education Board (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). In Ndia, for instance, the Mau Mau insurgents used schools in chief Naaman's locations for the Mau Mau movement ceremonies (TNA/FCO141/5727). Notably, the local priest and teacher of the KISA

schools at Kihumbo and Chief M'tetu's location were convicted of Mau Mau movement-related offences (KNA/VQ/16/2). According to the Embu Intelligence Report of December 1952, it was the requirement of the Embu residence, Ndia and Gichugu Divisions, to pay a special rate of Shs. 6/- to put up new management of the closed KISA schools. The closure of KISA schools and subsequent management of those schools by missionaries and the District Education Board (DEB) profoundly affected student turnout, although the colonial government was hopeful that the situation would improve (KNA/VQ/16/2). Additionally, the impact of the emergency was felt throughout the Embu district in 1953 as Mau Mau insurgents burnt down 20 schools and teachers' houses. During the heinous act, several teachers were murdered, while others were issued death threats (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). Notably, the colonial government perceived most teachers to have taken the Mau Mau movement's oath, either under varying degrees of duress or willingly. Therefore, the government acted swiftly by imprisoning several teachers for participating in the Mau Mau movement activities while suspending others on suspicion of being Mau Mau adherents. At the same time, the colonial administrators elevated those deemed 'clean' to chiefs in the expansive Embu District (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12).

In Mbeere, all the schools were under missions and surprisingly, they employed teachers from Embu. Jackson Ileri was among the first teachers sent to Mbeere by the missionaries. In an interview held at Karungu-Kyeni Central on February 12, 2020, he recalled how most of the teachers in Mbeere were Mau Mau movement adherents. Notably, oral testimonies in Mbeere revealed how Embu teachers in Mbeere were bitter with their pupils. Frances Njeru, in an interview at Kiare kia Makundi on February 7, 2020, stated that the enmity

between the Embu and the Mbeere extended into classrooms where Mbeere children were on the receiving end. However, Jackson Ileri associated the behaviour with the teachers who had a Mau Mau movement mentality and punished the children on those grounds. As a pupil, Francis Njeru recollected how the Embu teachers forced them to sing a revenge song then beat them;

Uuuiyu nitwauiya ndugu tuuri Kegonge, ii Embu, nimueguire, Yembu yareta icamburira na Kavengero, nitwethire nyomba iri cavi, ivuana mwangi, iciovoka ngesi, iria na ngoro ninthaithirwe, chifu avone anengere kabathi, Chifu akinengera marua ngitira mwiri, ngikena muno ii ngithungira Embu.

Translated

At Kegonge, the friendship was disrupted. As you heard, Embu attacked Kavengero, where we found that houses locked and on fire, our hearts were heavy; please convince the chief to give us a chance and a letter of authority (to go and revenge in Embu), after which I will be thrilled to enter the Embu territory.

During fieldwork, it was clear how suspicion was conspicuous within the insurgency, as in the case of Jackson Ileri. Ileri, in an interview held at Karungu-Kyeni Central on February 12, 2020, noted that before he took the Mau Mau oath, most teachers from Embu would speak behind his back, lamenting his refusal to take the oath. He further revealed the role of independent schools and churches in the Embu Division in campaigns against clitoridectomy and the government's suppression of unrest. The schools thus created awareness that was lacking in Mbeere. Jackson Ileri further revealed that the Independent churches and schools associated with Jomo Kenyatta were spared from the burning sprees;

The Independent church brought the idea of fighting for self-governance. They also introduced the oath to the Embu. The Kikuyu came from Githunguri and administered the oath at Muganjuki Independent Church. Most people partook in the oathing ceremony. Those who refused were thoroughly beaten. Then, after the government realised what was happening, they burnt Muganjuki Church. The oathing venue was here even given the congregation's name at Muganjuki to refer to the oath.

4.4.5 Ear Amputation Out-rage and Power of Labelling

During the emergency period, Mbeere Division was embattled by frequent attacks, which the colonial government associated with the Embu Mau Mau and the Mau Mau in general (TNA/FCO 141/ 5766). Chief Kombo reported an attack at Gachoka on the night of February 1, 1953. Ten people had their left ears clipped. The Mbeere reacted to the Gachoka attack by capturing and killing some of them. According to an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri Sub-location on January 31, 2020, the Gachoka incidence befell the Mbeere traders sleeping in Gachoka on transit to Embu market. The Mau Mau insurgents had intended to oath them but decided to put a mark by clipping their left ears. Clipping the Mbeere ears was a means of identification that seemed desirable to the Embu Mau Mau movement adherents. The scars from the Gachoka attack, as described by respondents in Mbeere, bore witness to the harsh realities of the Mau Mau war of resistance.

As described in the oral testimonies in Mbeere, ear mutilation was crude, egregious and unnecessary as they were not offered the oath before the incident. Identification (*rori*) was made on the upper part of the Mbeere ears to show their refusal to partake in the Mau Mau oath. It served as a form of domination, identifying and sorting the Mbeere resulting in permanent exclusion. The cutting of ears relayed information to the residents of central Kenya that the community was against subaltern consciousness and posted a warning that such people should be dealt with when caught. Teboho (2016) argues that ear cutting was a punishment among the Babylonians reserved to shame low-status individuals who could not pay a fine, a sign that one had failed to heed authority. Furley (1971) noted that the Mau Mau writings revolved around the larger communities and started as a simple

historical event among the Kikuyu and ended with them. Also, clipping off the Mbeere ears side-lined them in the Mau Mau consciousness within the Kikuyu Land Unit. Therefore, mass arrests, torture and curfew by the British government were thought to have excluded the Mbeere community. Despite attacks in Mbeere, the colonial government did not attempt to divorce the Mbeere from the Kikuyu and the Embu as it planned with the Meru;

The District Emergency Committee considers that, as a first step towards divorcing the Meru from the Kikuyu and Embu tribes, Meru District should be removed from the Kikuyu Native Land Unit forthwith. The Ministry of African Affairs has this matter under consideration (TNA/FCO 141/5701).

It is worth noting that some people offered their two ears for clipping without struggling due to fear. Jeremiah Mugo (O.I, 5/2/2020), a Mumbeere raised in Embu, recollected the planning and execution of the attack. A Mau Mau movement battalion at Itabua in Kiamuringa decided to attack the Mbeere heading to the market. In their discussion, it became apparent that most Mbeere residents had refused to take the oath and, therefore, Mwangi wa Chege and Boniface Maina were ordered to oath the Mbeere at Gachoka. Since it was impossible to oath all of them, they decided to engrave them with a mark. They agreed to mark them by clipping the ear, specifically on the right side for men, while women on the left side, but the Mau Mau adherents saw the Mbeere as against them (Mbeere were the ones who refused to 'drink' the oath). The engraved sign meant easier identification, a permanent transition to low status and a ploy to stigmatise the Mbeere through a permanent mark.

To conceal his identity, respondent X did not participate in the Gachoka covert operation because there was a possibility of being recognised. Notably, the oath's power is portrayed

in Jeremiah Mugo, who conspired to attack his people. Jeremiah considered using force to punish the body as the best way to compel conformity in his people. It shows that some Mbeere accepted the negative perception imposed on them, thus confirming themselves as weak and unwilling to commit to the Mau Mau movement's activities. With Jeremiah Mugo's blessings, Mwangi wa Chege and Boniface wa Maina led the assault at Gachoka. They waited until the Mbeere were asleep and launched their attack. After clipping the Mbeere's ears, the Mbeere raised the alarm prompting the Mau Mau movement insurgents to escape heading to Mwea. Jeremiah Mugo recalled what he was told by one of the attackers who was fortunate to escape, "Mumbeere is a bad person, they caught up with us and took the ears we had carried in a basket to show the 'General' . . . And I asked him (humorously) if they might have cut the ear of a person from Uvarire; if you did, you could not survive."

East Africans feared the Uvarire family because of their supposed power to curse. The colonial government was aware of their ability (power) hence greatly feared in the expansive Central Province. Brokensha and Nellis (1971) contend how the Mbeere traditional doctors from the slopes of Kiang'ombe were famous for their prowess in charms. After raising the alarm following the Gachoka ear clipping incidence, the Mbeere pursued the Mau Mau insurgents and were able to kill most of them, whom colonial administrators estimated to be twenty-five (TNA/FCO 141/5766). According to Jeremiah Mugo, only two escaped and they were in great shock regarding what had transpired that night as they tried to save their lives.

Mugo wa Marindi, commonly known as Mugo survivor, was among the survivor of the Gachoka attack. According to his testimony at Ngangare on February 4, 2020, unknown people came at night and surrounded the shopping Centre. They kicked his door until the hinges fell. As they came in, he was grabbed by the shirt and thrown outside where others waited. The attackers spoke in Kiswahili while sorting and hurling the Mbeere in two rooms. He recalled hearing them ask where the car had reached. However, the said car never turned up and because they were in a hurry, they agreed to mark the Mbeere. They recommended piercing the Mbeere right eye, a suggestion rejected by the leader outside. Another one suggested they chop off the left arm at the wrist, which their leader also dismissed. A recommendation for cutting the left ear was then forwarded, which the leader agreed to do. Mugo wa Marindi was under a table as they started clipping the ears;

They did not cut the whole ear. I told myself that I would not let my ear get cut or for my eye pierced. I would rather have died trying to escape. When he got near me, a Mbeere man known as Kivothu stood up and screamed. They cut his head twice with a *panga*. I moved toward those whose ears had been cut. When they were done clipping everyone, they asked who had been left out and threatened to cut off the head if they did not cut your ear. A man seated next to me, known as Ngari wa Njiru from Gachoka, lifted his hand and they chopped his entire ear.

Not only did the attack on Mbeere continued to cause great fear, but individuals constantly disappeared without a trace (TNA/FCO 141/5766). It is worth noting that the ear clipping incidences escalated the elimination of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau memory hence labelled as collaborators. A story was told in Embu, as described by Mwaniki Kabeca in an interview held at Mutunduri on February 8, 2020, of how the Mbeere lost their ears;

Immediately after the movement started, adverts and invitations were calling on those who would become soldiers and help the white man fight the Mau Mau. The story goes that several Mbeere men came to a place called Embu and asked them, "Where is this office where people are being employed as soldiers to beat the Embu?" They were asked if that was all they wanted; they should follow them to be shown. They were taken to that place between Ugweri and Mbeere, at the boundaries, around 1953 to 1954. The guide showing them the way, took them into a bush where some Mau Mau actors were. They were told,

"You know you are our brothers, if it were not for that, we would have cut off your necks but, we will give you a mark so that you do not talk such nonsense again and if anything, you should be supporting us. Each one of them had an ear chopped off. Chopping off in Embu dialect means "Gucuma." That place where ears were cut became known as Macumo even today. From that day, word spread, and they could see the marks made on their fellow Mbeere.

The name of a place (*Macumo*) gives a quick glimpse into the history of a place, showing what happened in that place. *Mucumo*, as narrated by Mwaniki Kabeca, offered uniqueness of that place and what the Mbeere underwent in that geographical location. Also, the described incidence shows a narrative that was vulnerable to manipulation going on in Embu District. A description that was periodically revived profoundly affecting memorialising the Mbeere in the Mau Mau movement's war of resistance was accompanied by a degree of entitlement to that history. The labellers (the Embu) constructed social othering where the labelled (the Mbeere) due to their small numbers, lack of political voice did not have the power to control the image imposed. Labelling the Mbeere as 'loyalists' and the ear clipping practices became authoritative and appeared legitimate to the residents of Embu District. As Branch (2007) observed, despite a public pronouncement to support the government, many loyalists offered a covert operation to the Mau Mau movement. Therefore, communities in central Kenya were oscillating between loyalism and resistance. However, the loyalist classification delinked the Mbeere from subaltern consciousness, leaving them vulnerable, alienated and insecure.

Ear clipping posed a challenge to the Mau Mau memory and left an irreversible imprint on the mind of the Mbeere people, especially those who experienced it. According to Mugo wa Malindi (survivor), it was challenging to make sense of it; it was done by people from the same locality who treated them as unworthy and forgot how they used to be good to

each other. During the interviews, evoking the Gachoka memory triggered a general feeling of subordination and inferiority upon the Mbeere, which is still evoked today, “*Mumbeere ti Mundu*,” (the Mbeere are less human). There were fears of contamination if any community associated with the Mbeere. According to Eyben and Moncrieffe (2007, p.90), “persons who are considered ‘not quite human’ can suffer physical and psychological torture, seemly without recourse.” For the most part, the colonial government affirmed that the Mbeere could not be swayed to Mau Mau indoctrination. However, they did not offer enough security to the Mbeere: “The Mbeere are still in extremely good heart and are indignant about this latest ear amputating out-rage. They are perpetually expressing their keenness to come to grips with the enemy” (TNA/FCO 141/5766).

4.4.6 Social Welfare, Information Office and Propaganda on Colonial Projects in Embu District

The colonial government was determined to win over the natives to stop the spread of the Mau Mau movement ideology. If this was achieved, the supposed nationalist outlook of the movement would not be realised. Firstly, the word 'Mau Mau' was constituted and existed only within the colonial discourse. The term 'Mau Mau' did not exist within the Gikuyu linguistic code. The insurgents in Kenya never called themselves Mau Mau and the word itself was indeterminately coined to show a movement destined to fail. From the word 'Mau Mau', the colonial government aimed to present a term that did not apply to anything, a 'thing' that did not exist that was to be met with the brutality it deserved. To the colonial settlers, 'Mau Mau' was associated with bestial and primordial activities. The colonial government steadily isolated the Mau Mau movement in central Kenya as a landscape of insurgency. Further, they associated the Mau Mau movement with the 'wild

space' of the forest. They used detection, containment, detentions, and sometimes eradication to sanitise the African space contaminated by the Mau Mau influence, as Nicholls (2010) noted.

The colonial government was concerned with the provision of services for their use. They constructed paraphernalia of the British way of life, including schools, hospitals and centres considered ideal for white settlement (Seeley, 1987). Notably, those definitive areas were often near towns. As far as Africans were concerned, non-state actors such as the missionaries provided such services as they continued their evangelistic work. The missionaries provided health and educational services in rural areas. Seeley (1987) noted that in 1944, DC. A. M Champion wrote a Native Welfare booklet on formulating a plan that would make Africans' lives better and worth living. Initially, Africans were to be inspired by the British model of living and strive to improve themselves. In 1950, the Community Development thrived and by 1951, Kiambu, Kakamega, Machakos and Nyeri had Community Development services limited to sports events, lectures and film shows.

Social welfare provisions in Mbeere were carried out by the missionaries and the Embu volunteers sent by the missions. They introduced schools and churches and developed plans to promote government policy (KNA/BB/50/3). They helped the government gain the people's confidence by persuading natives to accept the desirability of the plans and policy in a willing and cooperative spirit. The Community Development Officer stationed in Embu taught valuable principles of self-help and initiatives geared towards raising natives' living standards, as noted by Commissioner for Community Development December

Report of 20, 1957 (KNA/BB/50/3). As the colonial government aggressively penetrated Mbeere, they anticipated apathy among the Mbeere in adopting new ideas. It was the responsibility of the various administrative and departmental staff to explain and convince the natives. At the same time, the Community Development Officers engaged in campaigns by arranging mobile cinema shows, posters and pamphlets, and vernacular newspapers. The Community Development Officer was the representative of the DOI in the District and, therefore, he had the power to provide campaigns that favoured the government. To summon apathy among the Embu District residents, the Community Development Officer employed propaganda and showed films from other areas where community development was practical to rekindle people's enthusiasm. Clayton (2006) associates films and magazines produced under official auspices as a source of moral education. It was the task of Community Development Officers to explore every formation which could assist in achieving the object of overcoming apathy and conservatism and substituting an enthusiasm for genuine progress (KNA/BB/50/3).

In Embu, Community Development Officers showed interest in youths, clubs and scouts. As anticipated in April 1955 in the colonial mind, there was character training for the youth to control them (TNA/FCO 141/5703). The youths were a pressing problem in Embu District and the DC. Wilson (President of Embu African District Council) reminded the Councillors, including Chiefs Kombo Munyiri, Manunga Ngochi and Samson Mukenie of Evurore, to control them. The President reminded the Council that many youths were roaming in the District without employment and their control was necessary. One of the recommendations was establishing technical schools to engage in hand-works such as

carpentry, brick making, agriculture and other skills. The councillors also proposed vacated work camps for youth training by Embu ADC (KNA/BD/5/1, 17&18 May 1956). By 1957, despite the availability of a Community Development Officer, the technical schools that used to operate in Runyenjes, Kianyaga and Kerogoya were closed. The Councillors asked if it was possible to introduce technical schools in the ADC workshops but DC. Wilks believed this could not be done because of the lack of a European officer to supervise the affair of the workshops (KNA/BD/5/1).

The value of the Community Development office was less felt in Embu District and Mbeere Division. Nevertheless, the colonial government claimed to be investing funds in Mbeere compared to Machakos District, where the initiative had been launched earlier. In Machakos District, mobile cinemas, posters, pamphlets, community halls and village handicrafts were in place. By February 1954, the colonial government introduced film programmes, a new weekly newssheet "Akamba" that issued 5000 copies, press office hand-outs supplied regularly and several articles. The District Commissioner opened the first Akamba Broadcast in Kikamba and by March 1954, 12 information rooms with an average monthly attendance of 14,400 listeners were in place. Moreover, loudspeaker vans were available that gave 26 Film shows, as noted in the Provincial Information Officer Report in March 1954 (KNA/BB/8/17).

To enhance the flow of information, the colonial government realised the importance of organised propaganda dissemination facilities that did not previously exist. Osborne (2015) noted that the colonial government re-energised its existing information systems initially dormant. As a result, the information staff numbers rose from 46 in 1952 and to 331 by the

end of 1954. Through different publications, the colonial government portrayed the Mbeere as loyalists and waverers. As loyalists, the government gave them confidence for their support and it was always recorded how the Mbeere residents were benefiting more from colonial projects than those in Embu, Ndia and Gichugu. The same approach of evoking loyalty was demonstrated among the Kamba. The British officials promised to fulfil every demand they made as noted by Osborne (2014). The Mbeere problem, as noted in the Embu District Annual Report of 1957, was reluctant to make an effort necessary to tread the path of progress as others in the District (KNA/DC/EBU/1/16). Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020) held in Nthawa observed that the Mbeere were not treated differently as it was the European mandate to improve the welfare of Africans. Mwaniki Kabeca also noted in an interview at Mutunduri in Ngandori location on February 8, 2020, that the white man claimed to have many projects in Mbeere, but it was not because they supported the British, somewhat due to the legal human needs. The Mbeere region was also blessed with many rivers and since their problem was water, it was sensible for the British government to dig boreholes and trap water from these rivers.

Moreover, to assert their authority, the colonial government was mandated to provide basic needs for human survival. Ben Kanyeji further stated that the roads and boreholes had nothing to do with the Mau Mau movement. According to him, the colonial government had its projections. Furthermore, the catholic missions had created earth dams in Mbeere before the Mau Mau movement had commenced. Therefore, like any other government, the colonial government was committed to development using taxes generated from the Mbeere.

As outlined by the European Elected Members Organization (EEMO) of November 13, 1953, in a policy statement, the European community was mandated to accept the responsibility of guiding the development of the African people (KNA/DC/EBU/4/4). In addition, government expenditure was supposed to develop productive elements and necessities for economic expansion, such as water supplies, all-weather roads and general communications. However, according to oral testimonies in Mbeere, the Mbeere attained nothing unique from other Africans in Kenya. Most projects commenced in Embu, after which the government would try them in Mbeere. They also implemented a similar Embu taxation structure in Mbeere, where the tax rate was Shs. 20 for Mbeere locations. However, it turned out that whenever there were possibilities of increasing the minimum rate to Shs. 25 in Embu District, the colonial government, was slow to implement in Mbeere for their selfish gains, which created the perception of the Mbeere as loyalists amongst other communities (KNA/BB/49/3). Making it impossible for Mbeere to unite with other communities, the colonial government engaged in widespread stories and rumours of injustices linked to the Embu Mau Mau supporters (TNA/FCO141/6582). Chief Mwandiko reflected government thinking when he uttered at Ishiara; "there is no way the eye of *Muembu* and *Mumbere* can see each other; the Embu eyes can burn the Mbeere eyes since Embu are murderers." Jackson Ileri made this claim in an oral interview held at Karungu-Kyeni Central on February 12, 2020. Chiefs as colonial agents provided information that served the colonial interests. Osborne's (2015) argument attested that the colonial government engaged in information production on materials meant to discredit the Mau Mau movement and inspire the confidence that the government would win over the

Mau Mau movement supporters. The colonial government publicised that it had the best interests of the Mbeere and promised projects which failed to materialise. Markedly, the chiefs were at the forefront of discrediting the Mau Mau insurgency through propaganda, as presented by Chief Mwandiko, to serve the interests of the colonial masters.

To further fuel hatred between the Embu and the Mbeere, the colonial government skilfully used the Lari massacre of March 1953 to demonise the Mau Mau movement. It assigned mobile vans to air a film named the *Mark of the Mau Mau*, showing burnt corpses, maimed cattle and close-ups of children with burnt faces. The colonial government also utilised the Gachoka incident, where it capitalised on the Mbeere with amputated ears and Kiamuringa attack photos showing 15 severely damaged bodies to present the brutality of the Mau Mau insurgents. However, it was reported through oral testimonies and Kimathi's diary that Home Guards and security forces carried out slaughters after the Mau Mau movement attacks and laid the blame on Mau Mau insurgents (Wachanga, 1975). The colonial government was successful in hardening opposition in Mbeere Division as some of the Mbeere vowed to protect their boundaries from the Mau Mau insurgents coming from Embu;

No change in their attitude was well shown by 600 Wambere turning up for an operation near Embu when only 100 were asked for. The ear cutting campaign is one that will bitterly be regretted by the Mau Mau in the months to come. Embu District Intelligence Committee December 17, 1953 (TNA/ FCO 142/5766).

Understandably, since it was a revenge mission, most Mbeere could have offered help. However, the colonial government was keen on producing propaganda through exaggeration, perpetually expressing a need to divide the Embu residents further for their gain. Osborne (2015) confirmed the Department of Information (DOI) was charged for

generating and distributing propaganda. Its top officials enjoyed day-to-day access to the governor of the colony. DOI was mandated to publish and ensure adequate information of government policies, achievements, and the colonial government's benefits to the natives. For example, it suggested that the British government brought education to the Africans while the Mau Mau movement was trying to stop it by burning schools in Mbeere; "Mau Mau insurgents are burning schools while the government is building them." Notably, the main feature that dominated Embu District was arson attacks on schools and Home Guards posts. The Mbeere were left with an option of following the government or the Mau Mau movement, as illustrated in the excerpt, "The best propaganda for the law-abiding is to show them the rewards and benefits which accrue to the law-abiding and conversely the heavy hand which falls instantly on the wrongdoer" (TNA/FCO 141/6237) and **Figure 4.6**

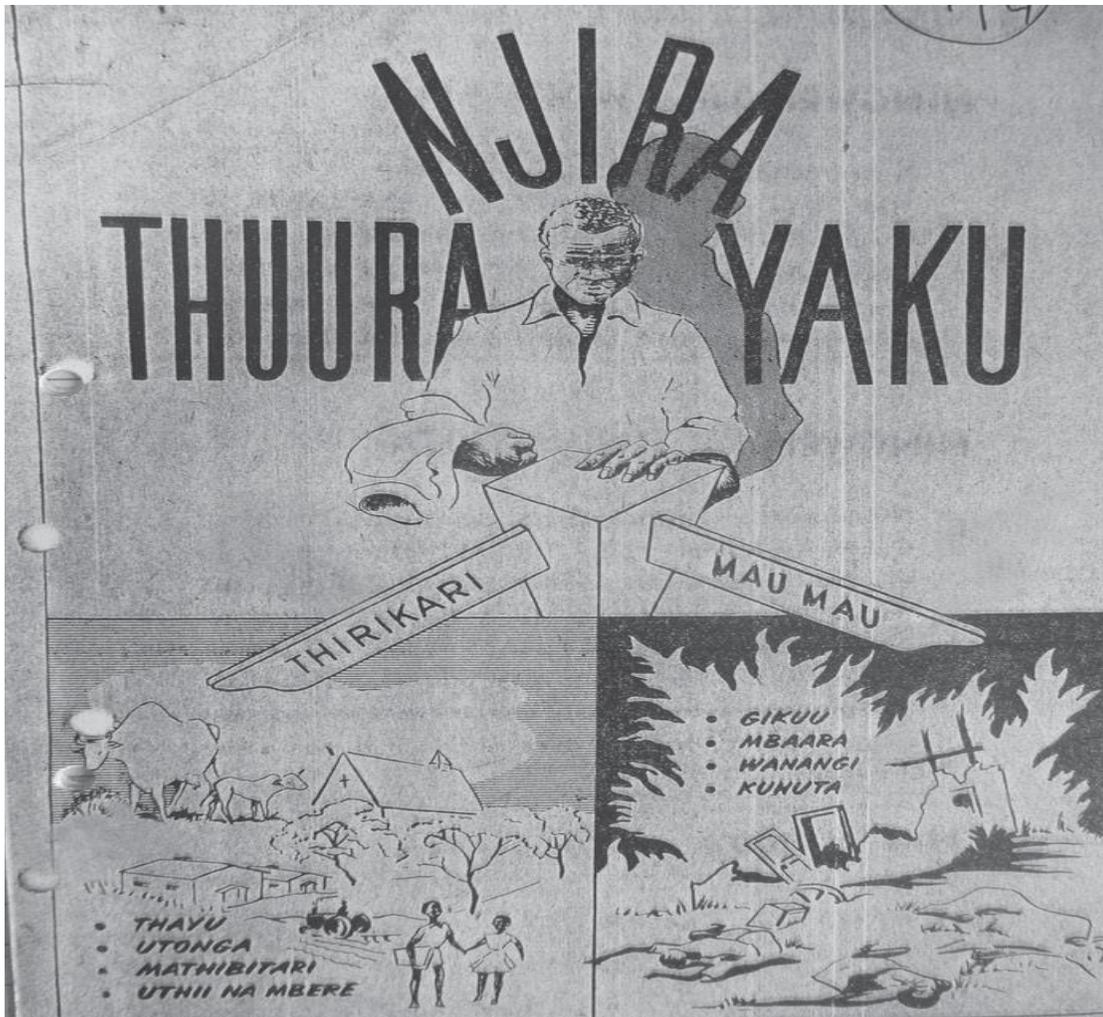


Figure 4.6: Image from an anti-Mau Mau pamphlet (1954) that asks readers to choose between the 'government 'path of peace, wealth, hospitals and progress and the 'Mau Mau' way of death, war, destruction and hunger. KNA AHC/. Reproduced with permission from the Kenya National Archives.

According to the Southern Province Annual Report of 1955 by the Department of Information, the colonial administration used the department entirely after identifying its enormous potential (KNA/BB/8/17). The broadcast, for example, was at their disposal to win over the Akamba. The colonial government granted the Kamba loyalism with six Kamba newspapers covering the various Districts. The 'Akamba' newspaper, with a yearly publication figure of 660,000 copies, concentrated on the news about Ukambani from

Ukambani. There was also "*Maendeleo ma Aka*" a Kamba edition of all women clubs. Thirdly, small Kamba libraries of three booklets dealt with tree planting, preservation of hides and a balanced diet. The three booklets were published at regular intervals, with 5000 copies for each booklet. Fourth, the government organised unique campaigns through information vans, leaflets, Kamba press, and cinema with coverage on sisal promotion, anti-witchcraft drive, township adult literacy and tree planting campaigns (KNA/BB/8/17). Thus the government used its immense powers of patronage to reward existing loyalists. Above all, land allocation was vital.

According to Migot and Ruigu (1989), the Ishiara scheme was mentioned by the colonial administrators in 1929 to break recurrent famine cycles experienced in Mbeere Division. The Embu LNC of 1942-1950 proposed using water from the Thuchi River for irrigation after finding out the water was a leading cause of hunger at Ishiara. The LNC requested the government investigate the possibility of digging furrows out of the Thuchi River to Ishiara. Paddocks were cleared as an added package in 1953. The Ishiara irrigation scheme was funded by taxes collected within Mbeere Division. Secondly, Ishiara in Mbeere, just like other areas, was identified as a potential area for irrigation and an avenue to put good use of Mau Mau detainees. Therefore in the 1950s, the colonial administration used the Mau Mau movement detainees to provide labour on irrigation schemes. Just like the Perkerra, Mwea-Tebere and Hola extensive irrigation schemes that needed Mau Mau detainees. The Ishiara irrigation utilised the Mau Mau detainees under the aegis of ALDEV, who put to work all sorts of Mau Mau detainees that included the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and Mbeere detainees who were housed at Gathigi. Nahason Nyaga (O.I, 7/02/2020), held

at Ishiara narrated how he worked as a guard at Gathigi prison. The Embu Community Development Officer wrote a letter on September 20, 1955, to the Church of Scotland Mission on the whereabouts of detainees indicating the presence of detainees from other ethnicities (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). Nahason Nyaga's information corroborated the Community Development Officer's letter. Notably, in Gathigi prison, there was no preferential treatment of the Mbeere as guards were trained to treat all detainees equally, as noted by Nahason Nyaga.

The colonial government praised the scheme at Ishiara as a worthy recognition of the Mbeere's loyalty to the cause of law and order. The agricultural officers supervised seventy acres of land underuse and the Mau Mau movement detainees provided labour before trekking back to Gathigi camp, as noted in oral interviews in Mbeere. According to DC. Wilson, chairman of Embu District Intelligence Committee (1954), the advent of two large work camps, Ishiara and Kiambere, was a potential source of conflict since the Mau Mau detainees were paid and received rations, yet the Mbeere Home Guards received no pay (TNA/FCO 141/ 5766). He reported that if the detainees were paid, it would affect the morale of the Mbeere ethnic group. Notably, all the irrigation schemes that used Mau Mau detainees labour flourished; however, the Ishiara irrigation scheme practically collapsed after the closure of the Gathigi camp and the repatriation of detainees from 1956 onwards. By the 1960s, weeds choked the furrows on the Ishiara irrigation scheme prompting a decrease in occupancy. Only 18 Mbeere farmers were left in the 100 acres that cost the colonial government £6,374 (Blundell, 1962).

Although the Mbeere region was deemed an unpleasant country, they were always portrayed as the most loyal community in the Embu district. In correspondence letters, it stated, due to the Mbeere loyalty, the colonial government invested much money in Mbeere land. The Embu District Annual Report of 1955 recorded as follows;

It is most gratifying to be able to record that the Mbeere have remained impervious to the Mau Mau indoctrination . . . but the fact of the matter is that the government's policy of supporting and rewarding the tribe has successfully stimulated and maintained a healthy contempt for Mau Mau throughout the Mbeere country (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14).

The Handing over Notes for Narosura from DO D. T. Collins to DO J. Barrah explained how the colonial government wanted to befriend some communities with sweet terms. For example, DO Collins wrote as follows;

It seems a tragedy to me that the Maasai, who have been so pampered and sheltered by the government in the past, have come to the sorry state of affairs . . . keep a watchful eye on Ole Nakola, the owner of the shamba near the Home Guards (H.G) post. He fed Gathatwa's Gang . . . (KNA/EP8/2).

When some of the Maasai adopted pathetic attitude towards the Mau Mau movement, they were reminded, like the Mbeere, of the plans the colonial government had for them and chiefs like Kombo were termed as “doyen of the corps, who still administers his Mbeere location in the best old fashioned traditions” (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). Mwaruvie (2011) contradicts that view, arguing that the Mbeere remained a backwater of Embu District because the colonial government-directed most projects towards the Embu people despite their resentment to the colonial administration. Mwaruvie's argument tallied with the Mbeere Development Committee, which consisted of the DO, Mbeere, District Agricultural Officer (DAO), Assistant Agricultural Officer (AAO), Mbeere’s three chiefs, the senior agricultural and veterinary instructors, and the veterinary officer. The Committee's meeting held on July 6, 1956, reported that they were exploring the

possibilities of development projects in Mbeere as it was felt that so much was done in top areas (Embu region) with so little done to the loyal Mbeere (KNA/BD/8/2). Council William Mavuti, Minute 32/50, proposed a veterinary scout permanently stationed in Mbeere (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12).

The reality on the ground contradicts the colonial government's statement of rewarding the Mbeere for their loyalty during the emergency. The colonial government held many discussions on how they could improve Mbeere, but no implementation was forthcoming. Their discussion included developing smallholdings groups around Siakago where the rains were moderate, the irrigation scheme at Ishiara, recovery of the eroded areas in Evurore location and introduction of grazing controls. Brokensha and Nellis (1971) argued that by the 1960s, there was a sketchy network of social services in Mbeere and up to 1970, newly posted DO's request for transfers was high compared to other locations in central Province. Brokensha and Nellis (1971, p.320) noted how one DO requested a transfer from Siakago, citing, "not a suitable place for a civilised man to bring his family." These projects were not unique in Embu District to warrant the colonial government's claim to rewarding the Mbeere people. The first project was the application of manure which was foreign to the Mbeere, as explained by the colonial administration. However, the application of manures was not foreign to Mbeere. For example, permanent cultivation was practised in Kiamuringa, Kanyuambora, Siakago, between Siakago and the Ena River, as well as, around Kiritiri, where the Mbeere placed manures on the farms. In addition, the loans for buying manure were open to all the Divisions in the District. A piece of land was cleared in other areas, leaving tree stumps 3-4 feet high. It was followed by burning the trash, then

cultivation was done for 2-3 years, after which the land would be left fallow for 4-5 years. The tree stumps were not uprooted, which allowed regeneration to take place. The colonial government also proposed more profitable animal types (milk strain Borans) on smallholdings at Siakago. However, the colonial government instituted a similar project in Kanja for jersey bulls (KNA/BD/8/2). The Local Native Council (LNC) discussed the project and minuted in the Embu District Report of 1947, even before the advent of the Mau Mau movement. According to the LNC, the government promised to provide cattle breeding stations and schools in Embu or Meru districts (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). As noted by Central Province Emergency Committee Appreciation and Plan of 1955, "Rewards continue to be paid for information leading to arrests or kills and for recovered firearms . . . Furthermore, incentives are available, high-grade cattle or cross-bred stock for restocking farms for loyalists" (TNA/FCO 141/6237). The Embu Mau Mau adherents had no option but to accept the government propaganda; the government path is the path for progress, wealth and progress unlike the Mau Mau path of war, death and hunger." (KNA/AHC). It explains why conceding was high in Embu, as shown in table 4.4 and table 4.5;

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Captured</u>	<u>Surrendered</u>	<u>Precision Weapons</u>
<u>Nanyuki</u>	5			1
<u>Nyeri</u>	20	21	7	
<u>Fort Hal</u>	24	7	23	3
<u>Embu</u>	2		92	1
<u>Meru</u>	6	3	9	1
<u>Total</u>	57	31	131	6
<u>Overall total</u>				219

Total casualties: 219

Table 4.4: Enemy Casualties from 1st to July 13, 1955

Retrieved from Central Province Emergency Committee at Nyeri on July 14 1955 (TNA/ FCO 141/ 6237).

	Killed	Captured	Surrendered	Total
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Nanyuki	22	2	Nil	24
Nyeri	74	35	21	130
Fort Hall	78	20	30	128
Embu	36	3	118	157
Meru	84	18	29	131
Total	294	78	198	570

**Table 4.5: Casualties, end June to Mid-August 1955
Retrieved from Central Province Emergency Progressive Report No.2: July 30 -Mid August 1955 (TNA/FCO 141/5701).**

With the growth of Embu, the government tasked the Trade Committee of Embu African District Council with allocating plots for new markets and shopping centres. In Evurore, Eriira market was to be established and the allocation of plots was to proceed. The plots for markets were issued for Kathigaceru, Mbuguri, Mugoro, Riacina, Ntharawe, Riandu and Karie shopping centres. Members of the public were supposed to send application letters to the residing chiefs in the areas where the shopping centres were to be constructed. However, the same application was replicated everywhere and was not unique to the Mbeere region.

Another project instituted in Mbeere at Kiambeere with the help of the Mau Mau detainees was a veterinary paddock aimed at curtailing unregulated stock grazing in the Division. These paddocks consisted of land, cleared and wood fences erected with protective clearing on the perimeter. These paddocks were not well kept. For example, there was the regeneration of grass and large trees of *Delonix Elata*, *Melia Volkensil* and *Acacia* around the perimeter clearing. Moreover, tsetse flies were a significant problem in these paddocks since the elephants and rhinos moved across the paddocks (KNA/BD/8/2). The government targeted these paddocks for large cattle owners as opposed to people who owned few cattle.

The colonial government also came up with a closure and recovery area approach, which hindered the traditional grazing method. In these approaches, the colonial government recommended the stock unit per area and rotational plans. Thus, there was gradual closure, recovery and re-opening of grazing on a controlled rotational basis. The Mbeere did not favour the approach, but elders and chiefs were required to enforce the practice. In addition, as a condition for cultivation, all trees and bushes were to be uprooted instead of cutting off, and only approved grass species were to be planted. Furthermore, chiefs enforced soil conservation in Mbeere, Gichugu, Ndia and Embu, where the local population dug narrow-based terraces.

It was impossible to wean the Mbeere people from the ideas of being cultivators, irrespective of the scanty harvest, as noted by District Veterinary Officer Gibson Ian (KNA/BD/8/2). However, Gibson believed that if government officers and ALDEV officers worked on grazing control, schemes and stock auctions, there was a chance for progress in Mbeere. He termed the Mbeere region as rugged and scantily populated, but which nevertheless remained 95% loyal and for whom little had been done (KNA/BD/8/2). As District Veterinary officer, Gibson Ian contradicted his employer, claiming that nothing was done in the Mbeere region, which had potential but was only achievable if the government allocated resources accordingly. By 1961, a Development Officer was yet to be deployed to work closely with the administration, agricultural and veterinary departments.

Another project that the government attempted in Mbeere was the construction of water pipelines. The water supplies project in Mbeere was proposed in the 1940s. However, it took many years for hydraulic engineers to construct permanent water supplies in Mbeere (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12). In consultation with the Mbeere Development Committee, the District Agricultural Officer (DAC) secured loans and grants to connect water throughout the District. Nthawa location received £3,362 for the construction of the Kiang'ombe-Kerie water pipeline. The Evurore location received £2,000 for the partial structure of the Ishiara pipeline from Thuci River to the vicinity of Karamandi Hill, though the whole project was estimated to cost £4,527 (KNA/BD/8/2). Mavuria location was allocated £1,638 to concentrate on sub-surface dams, surface dams and rock catchments. As the colonial government released the funds to the ADC, plans were underway to post an ALDEV officer in Mbeere to oversee the project, Embu DC., P.H. Brown noted in the Mbeere Rural Development Scheme Report of 1960 (KNA/BD/8/2).

The loans and grants were to be repaid through a stock cess of Shs. 2 per head of cattle, 50cts per head of the sheep or goat yearly. Therefore, the colonial projects were financed by local taxes, not from the central government in Nairobi. In resolution No.8/57, Councillor Johana Karuga proposed and seconded by Councillor Chief Manunga, the African District Council of Embu agreed to accept a loan of £2,000 from ALDEV for the establishment of a grazing scheme in Mwea, which would be repaid by imposing a stock grazing fee upon all stock owners in the scheme area (Wilks, President of ADC Embu). The colonial government imposed more taxes on the projects they introduced to fund further projects, making ordinary Mumbeere life hard. Experimental and demonstration

farms commenced in the 1950s. In Siakago, Kabondori and Muringari, the colonial agricultural officers used the farms to experiment with crop varieties. They did the same in Embu Division at Molinduko and Kianjokoma. The councillors requested the President of the Local Native Council J.H. Candler, to permit a trial of rice cultivation in Mbeere, which could be replicated in other Divisions if successful. In addition, the Mbeere were also anxious to try growing tobacco (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12).

In an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri Sub-location on January 31, 2020, participants concurred that the colonial government did not build roads. The chief made the application of new roads and the natives provided labour. Neglecting the chief's directive attracted heavy fines or jail terms. Chief Kombo and others were responsible for overseeing emergency repairs, digging new roads, maintenance and repairing dams. They perceived Mbeere young men as idle and compelled them to work for free (KNA/PC/CEN/2/1/12).

It is worth noting that the constructions of schemes, be it Mwea/Tebere, Perkerra or Ishiara, were done by the Mau Mau detainees. Thus, it was not an act of favour to the Mbeere. Moreover, digging was a form of punishment to the Mau Mau movement adherents all over the colony, as noted by Joseph Ndwiga Kabiero (O.I, 7/02.2020) held at Ishiara. However, the creation of the Ishiara irrigation scheme was a blessing to the Mbeere people because those terraces and canals are still used by the Mururi, Mukera and Nyonga clans to date. Nyaga wa Kimani (O.I, 4/02/2020) held at Gachoka believed that the white man brought development (*Maendeleo*). Schools never existed in Mbeere, but the colonialists were able to open schools under the auspices of the church and expanded the road network, which connected Mbeere with other regions. They also introduced tobacco and a tobacco factory

at Siakago, which provided jobs to the Mbeere, as pointed out by Njuki wa Mitambo (5/02/2020) held at Riandu. He also recollected, "I saw offices built in Siakago and huge houses at British American Tobacco (BAT) where tobacco was processed. No African could afford to build such houses at that time, as they lacked the financial means." The Local Land Board also allocated land to the East African Tobacco Company to build houses and a tobacco curing factory at Siakago. The Mbeere and the Embu benefitted from the colonial project equally. However, the colonial propaganda was intense towards the Mbeere to win them over from the Mau Mau movement's indoctrination.

4.5 Recognition and Compensation of the Mbeere Mau Mau Veterans

The Declaration of the State of Emergency in 1952 disrupted the way of life of central Kenya residents, with the colonial government imposing strict measures to end the insurgency. However, the colonial administration concentrated more on the emergency, neglecting other government responsibilities. As a result, life became miserable for central Kenya residents who were pushed to the limit, as outlined in the implications of the state of emergency in Embu Districts, where all Africans were treated equally in the eyes of the colonisers. Notably, although the Mbeere were termed as non- "KEM"- Kikuyu, Embu or Meru for political reasons, their treatment was not unique compared to other central Kenya residents. As a result, they suffered triple peripheralisation in the hands of the Embu Mau Mau insurgents, the colonial government and their chiefs, a narrative never fully explored. After the emergency, the Mbeere Mau Mau movement followers were side-lined even further, identified as 'less human' and disregarded within a marginalised community. The colonial government favoured the progressive western-educated Jeremiah Nyagah, who hoped to claim political power. His claim to literacy guaranteed him entry to ethnic

leadership in Embu. His proficiency in English (ki-thungu) and vernacular language isolated others and made the Mbeere look ‘foolish’, kirimu allowing him to share his ambitious desires at the expense of demands placed on him by the Mbeere populace. In this light, he bought the narrative of re-making Kenyan politics without the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans. The people who offered taxes to realise a bursary made it possible for him and others to set off by air for England early in September 1952 (KNA/VQ/16/2). In the postcolonial landscape, the Mbeere Mau Mau supporters had high expectations, which were suddenly extinguished when the loyalists took centre stage in Kenyan politics. Their hope of comprehensive programmes of land redistribution and the reversal of the land programme by the Kenyan government never materialised despite the change of regimes. In addition, the Mbeere Mau Mau movement veteran’s ownership claim of the memory of the rebellion is farfetched. However, they are hopeful as they invent ways of coming to terms with the tormenting legacies of the past colonial administration. They convene ex-Mau Mau movement followers’ meetings that shape their consciousness to pursue reparation within current debates.

4.5.1 The Emergency and its Implications to Embu District Residents

Through the oath, the Embu Mau Mau insurgents coerced the Mbeere population into forceful oathing without giving the reasons for taking the oath. Furthermore, the Embu brutalised those who refused to take the oath. According to the DC Embu, 1953, the Mau Mau insurgents moved freely without hindrance, even engaging in oathing in broad daylight. Moreover, intimidation was high, especially from the Mau Mau movement followers returning from Nairobi (KNA/DC/EBU/1/2). Interestingly, the Embu Mau Mau

movement adherents engaged in indiscrete attacks, disregarding those whom the urban-based Mbeere had oathed.

Although the Mbeere lived within Embu District' they never faced punitive villagisation experienced in Embu, Murang'a and Nyeri. However, oral testimonies show that the Mbeere suffered severely at the hands of the colonialists, chiefs, and Embu Mau Mau insurgents. The Mau Mau insurgents' attacks and resultant fear in Mbeere occasioned mushrooming villages where people clustered together awaiting directions. This was also experienced in Meru, where voluntary, punitive, and mushroom villages existed. The loyal elements requested the construction of voluntary villages for greater security (TNA/FCO 141/ 6237). Interstingly, Jackson Ireri, a teacher from Embu who worked in Mbeere, noted that he could see mushrooming villages as he walked to Mbeere, where the Mbeere clustered for fear of attacks (O.I, 12/02/2020).

The colonial administrators reminded chiefs in Mbeere that their position was not hereditary and if they did not assist in combating the Mau Mau movement, they would face demotion or replacement (KNA/VQ/16/2). As a result, chiefs used brutal force to contain the situation in their locations, leading to many deaths and exile. The Mbeere chiefs, especially Chief Mwandiko and Chief Kombo, were brutal to anyone suspected of taking the oath. Due to their efforts, the colonial administrators reported how Mbeere Division effectively campaigned against the Mau Mau terrorists, thus intense hostility towards the Mau Mau movement adherents (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). The informants in oral testimonies conducted in Mbeere recalled how chiefs regularly took goats as bribes in Mbeere Division.

According to Branch (2009), chiefs had no option because the colonial government interpreted low arrests to indicate sympathy towards the insurgency. However, not all chiefs played to the tune of the colonialists; for example, Chief Manunga Ngochi was slow to act on the Mau Mau movement sympathisers, hence able to pursue the middle path with great success.

As the Mbeere chiefs tried to keep away the Mau Mau movement, the movement supporters were also using force as they sought new grounds and more sympathisers in the area leading to more attacks and deaths. Throughout the emergency period, the chiefs acted as advisors to the DC; they gathered intelligence and enforced punitive measures on suspected Mau Mau movement sympathisers. The colonial government rarely challenged their decision to maintain stability. Therefore, chiefs benefited a lot through *fitina* (intrigue), especially the Ministry of African Affairs' publication on forfeiture of properties. Notably, the Ministry of African Affairs published on June 30, 1955, the forfeiture of terrorist property (the Mau Mau followers' property). They cited the emergency regulation 4B and the properties to be seized, including monies, cattle, vehicles and crops. The regulation was also directed against persons who failed to take reasonable steps to prevent crime or escape of criminals. In addition, to being an active supporter of unlawful society (KNA/NKR/EP10/2). Some Africans in Fort hall, Embu and Kiambu Districts even lost their best land, as recorded in the *broadcast* of Tuesday, July 12, 1955. Moreover, those believed to be the Mau Mau movement leaders and failed to surrender lost their rights to clan land in the reserves and those with individual land rights lost their land to the Local Land Board (KNA/BD/1/1).

In July 1955, the Central Province Emergency Committee dedicated the security of the reserves to the administration and police. The War Council aimed to destroy the Mau Mau movement (terrorists) who opposed the government through violent means (TNA/FCO 141/6237). The administration's roles included concentration the whole of the Kikuyu and Embu ethnic groups into villages by August 31, 1955, to maintain strict control of the movement of KEM in the Province and maintain the application of repressive and progressive measures according to local requirements, amongst others. In addition, the administration was to use the army and police where necessary (TNA/FCO 141/6237). The approach converted central Kenya into a military arena and any person who stepped on prohibited areas was killed or captured by the army. Likewise, the police had the mandate to kill or capture anyone suspected to be a Mau Mau movement supporter in the Settled and Reserve Areas (TNA/FCO 141/6237).

Overall, it appears in the colonial mind that all the central Kenya residents were terrorists, so indiscriminate attacks were experienced. According to Brownhill (2009), those suspected of sympathising with the Mau Mau movement were arrested and tortured to silence their grievances. Archival and oral testimonies reflect that mass arrests were undiscerning in central Kenya and nobody was immune to police brutality. In Embu District, the primary pursuit of the Mau Mau movement leaders included Kassam, Magotu and Mbatura operating within Gichugu Division, while in Ndia Division, Wagakani Oneko, Chui Motta and Kuona Ondera were active. In Embu Division, Dr. Malani's gang laid claim to the area. In total, all the gangs in Embu were 355 (TNA/FCO 141/6237). According to

the Embu District Intelligence Report, the Mau Mau movement fighters possessed 11 precision weapons in Mt. Kenya Forests. The colonial government deployed forces to pursue these fighters, which disrupted the entire region of the Embu District. There was untold manipulation of security processes; Embu residents were compelled to offer information, while failure to do so attracted collective punishment (TNA/FCO 141/6237). With the triumph in population control and denial of food in Embu District, Kĩama Kia Muingi (KKM) (TNA/FCO 141/6237) emerged. Embu District Annual Report of 1959 expounded more on KKM;

The infection of KKM, which was reported on (sic) the 1958 Report, was somewhat more widespread than had previously been thought to be the case. Embu Division was found to have been relatively heavily contaminated and it was essential to exercise considerable care and patience to eradicate this unpleasant society . . . (KNA/DC/EBU/1/18).

Interestingly, the formation of KKM was always associated with *Ahoi*;

It fell to the Ahoi in the District to gain ill-fame for themselves as originators of the first post-Mau Mau secret society. The Kĩama Kia Muingi is still on the secret list and this is, therefore, not the right place to mention it in more than general terms; but it is safe to say that the sting was taken out of its tails almost as soon as it was born, a credit to the intelligence organisation and a sombre warning to government against complacency (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14).

The colonial administrators' portrayed pressure in the District as felt only by the *Ahoi* as paying guests who, according to the Annual Report of 1955, wanted to produce a new political drum and start beating it (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14).

Alongside other measures, patrols increased to contain the spread of the Mau Mau movement leading to arrests and a large-scale exodus of Embu residents. However, movement from one Division to another was highly controlled. The DO had the sole discretion of offering passes for inter-divisional movement; "No movement in any form of transport was permitted without written permission by a District Officer and frequent

police checks are made on all movement on main roads and of passenger and goods trains" (TNA/FCO 141/6237). Elkins' (2005) work on "*Imperial reckoning*" shifted the dialogue to the brutality meted on Kenyans. She argued that historical human rights abuses were experienced in Kenya and interestingly notes that many indigenous groups were affected by colonial rule and that the British forces reinforced ethnic identity and introduced loyalty certificates. Based on this analogy, therefore, clearly, the Mbeere were not unique. They suffered at the hands of the colonisers either directly or indirectly.

Hunger and uncertainty were rife in the Mbeere region, with the Kamba from Kitui engaging in massive buying of reserve grains and lack of normal exchange due to the emergency in the District, leaving the Mbeere at the mercy of the colonialists (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). The colonial government was not concerned with the sparsely Mbeere population in the famine relief, concentrating more on feeding the security forces and prisons; "for famine relief, the colonial government imported 1500 bags of maize in the mid-year, but this was almost entirely to meet the needs of security forces" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). Attempts to use betterment schemes was limited because most of the Agricultural Officers within the Division were labelled Mau Mau movement adherents. Being labelled a Mau Mau and loyalists did not determine the development of a place but also the viability of a place in terms of agricultural production. The Mbeere were sidelined, as the colonial administrators posted assistant instructors and marketing officers to agriculturally viable areas. The government directed its loans towards the emergency, with the remaining funds available to loyalists employed on emergency duties. The Mbeere region was used to punish the Mau Mau insurgents, not for their interests.

Western education was associated with cultural destruction by the Mau Mau insurgency. In a bid for tribal reversion, some schools were targeted and destroyed. The colonial government turned to teachers dismissing some while others imprisoned for alleged Mau Mau sympathisers. The Mbeere region did not have teachers from within and depended on the Embu teachers (most identified as Mau Mau movement adherents) whom the Mbeere threatened. Jackson Ileri (O.I., 12/02/2020) explained that the act disrupted education in the region. In February 1954, the President of the ADC, Wilkinson Roger, pointed the burning of over 70 schools in Embu District and decided that the African District Council should levy a special rate of 10 shillings per head to rebuild the schools near Home Guards' camps (KNA/BD/5/9). All the males were supposed to pay this rate except the Mbeere and known loyalists to cover the cost of corrugated iron roofs for schools (KNA/DC/EBU/13). The passing of the resolution was unanimous, although the DC had exemption powers to those deemed loyalists and made efforts to defend the schools from destruction (KNA/BD/5/9).

The colonial rule had brought health facilities to Africans in return for reciprocal duty of being loyal. With the Mau Mau insurgency, the colonial government directed the funds to fight the insurgents; therefore, the ADC failed to secure ambulances for the hospitals. As a result, maternity services were stopped to meet the emergency needs, with the ante-natal and post-natal clinics seriously affected, thus putting the lives of women and children at risk (KNA/BD/5/9). The DC Embu 1953 observed that "on touring the District one becomes aware of filth, squalor and contagious diseases many patients admitted are

crawling with lice, covered in scabies and infested with worms" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). According to him, prophylaxis was hindered by the emergency, especially on the protection of water supplies and the annual rat drive. To the colonial officials in Embu, Africans were ungrateful and granting them good health services was a sign of weakness and a stab in the back.

Inherent suspicions in Embu District disturbed trade that stretched into the interior of Mbeere. The State of Emergency hindered prosperous farmers and traders, especially with the Kenya authorities unwilling to determine genuine traders due to the Mau Mau pressure (Throup, 1985). In Embu Division, trade completely collapsed, especially for those who relied on the forests. The forests became prohibited areas and many ceased to function. Despite the challenge, the colonial government did not stop tax collection. Yet the recruitment of workers became a challenge amongst the Kikuyu, Embu, Mbeere and Meru. The consultation of the Provincial Commissioner, Central Province was in effect before labour dispatch. However, in some cases, labour dispatching could be done without reference to him and this applied to towns or settled areas adjoining the reserves like Kiambu, Thika and Fort Hall, but in Embu, it was only sweepers from Ndia Division who were authorised to be dispatched without consulting the DC (KNA/NKR/LAB. 27/1/17.VOL.IV). The emergency posed challenges that momentarily undermined the economic base of central Kenya natives, especially with control of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (KEM) and Mbeere recruitments in the 1950s. Any white farmer who wished to recruit these communities could obtain a private recruiter's licence from the Labour Office.

As the white farmers existed, the conditions were to get in touch with the DC for labour supply in the District.

Unlike previous years where Africans could land a job anywhere, choosing the names of recruits was highly monitored and censored. Increasingly white farmers' choice of workers did not lie in their hands as it was mandatory to send their names to the DC for security checks. From such scrutiny, it became very hard for anyone associated with the Mau Mau insurgency to get a job outside the Mbeere Division. In some instances, the employers failed to obtain the names of the skilled persons and the authorities in Embu were asked to compile a waiting list of the Embu in specific trades who wished to be employed under the Nominated Person Skills. In such scenarios, anybody on bad terms with the chiefs or involved in the Mau Mau movement activities could not be chosen. After the labourers were chosen, the Special Branch would conduct additional checks for security risks (KNA/NKR/LAB. 27/1/17.VOL.IV). Being cleared to work in the Rift Valley did not guarantee freedom as the colonial government apparatus remained vigilant to KEM labourers.

The colonial government passed Emergency Regulation 4AA, a ruthless regulation that was consistently implemented when an opportunity appeared. On June 22, 1955, security officials alleged that the Mau Mau insurgents tried to steal potatoes from Mr. Van Rensburg's farm and on June 23, 1955, Mr. Van Rensburg sheep was killed and meat taken. In 1955, the potato was a rare commodity, as the government declared, "No potato, no maize and no squatter stock will be permitted on a farm where there is normally no resident European" (TNA/FCO 141/6201). Until February 1956, even after the Mau Mau attacks

subsided, maize and potatoes were not grown in many districts because the two crops provided high caloric intake. After interrogation, the KEM denied any knowledge. However, the DC, D.G Christie-Miller, exercised power confirmed on regulation 4AA of the emergency regulations, 1952, upon which the following order was made, "Every adult male and female Kikuyu, Embu and Meru in the affected area were ordered to pay a fine of Shs. 40 each on June 29, 1955" (TNA/FCO 141/6047). An amount that was problematic to raise, causing grave dissatisfaction.

Mwaruvie (2011) contends that there was a trade relationship between the Embu and the Mbeere. The Mbeere referred to the Embu as a hut for getting grains (*ngucu ya thuguri*). These two communities exchanged commodities, but the emergency period disrupted the trade as each community was suspicious of the other. Considering that many attacks took place on Monday nights, as many people were on the way to the Tuesday market day at Ishiara, both sides were highly affected. The emergency, therefore, continued to pose severe restrictions on internal trade, licensing and transport. The Tuesday market at Ishiara and Saturday market in Embu were thus limited. The bus services were also disrupted, making life difficult for the Mau Mau adherents and loyalists in Embu and Mbeere (KNA/DC/EBU/1/4). The Mbeere region suffered immensely from reduced livestock trade as incidences of death and diseases were high. The veterinary matters were restricted due to the Mau Mau movement upsetting the peace of the District. The livestock improvement services had ceased and the village's villagisation policy concentrated livestock in Embu District; hence, the zoonotic diseases spread to Mbeere Division. The introduction of

Sahiwal grade bulls/improved stocks also facilitated new infections in the District. The colonial administrators released the sales figures for exports from African areas. In 1951 the exports totalled £ 231,215, in 1954, £ 217,038 and in 1955 it was £ 169,771 (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14).

The colonial government added police officers within Embu Division (Embu and Mbeere). The Kenya Police and Tribal Police increased in 1953 and most crimes were associated with the Mau Mau movement. The Embu African District Council members in 1953 were nominated as opposed to elected for loyalty purposes. It appeared impracticable to the colonialists to trust elected leaders to be stable during that time (KNA/DC/EBU/1/12). In the Embu African District Council of July 28th and 29th, 1953, Chiefs Kombo Munyiri and Mwandiko Ngira's retention illustrated that the colonial government did not doubt their loyalty. The President of the ADC, Wilkinson Roger, addressed the Council and assured members that the District possessed adequate police force the emergency needed. Also, resident officers were in all districts except Mbeere (KNA/BD/5/9). He also insisted on the determination of the colonial government to wipe out the Mau Mau movement supporters and restore peace to the District. Finally, he thanked members for rendering valuable services in the struggle against the Mau Mau movement.

The Chief Native Commissioner announced on October 31 1952, that DCs should make known that Africans could lay claim in respect to losses suffered since January 1, 1952 (KNA/NKR/EP 10/15). The DC was responsible for investigating allegations and forwarding them to the committee through the PCs and a full report of their investigations.

The colonial government established compensation of Africans for losses attributable to subversive activities, which dealt with claims arising from the emergency. The compensation committee of the treasury dealt with claims arising from deaths, disablement, or loss of property by Europeans, Asians and Africans who were not members of the security forces (KNA/NKR/EP10/15). There is no evidence of compensation of the Mbeere property or loss of lives from the colonial records and oral testimonies. However, the colonial government compensated communities like the Maasai for subversive activities. The compensation included loss of animals, property and full blood compensation, which ranged from Shs. 600 and Shs. 2400 for the cases of death as shown on the deposit voucher in **Figure 4.7** and **Figure 4.8**.

COLONY AND PROTECTORATE OF KENYA

DEPOSITS

Nairobi Passed for payment* Nairobi Chief Sub-Accountant.

F.O. FORM 86

District Commissioner, Narok. (Name and address)

Receipt No.	Reasons for Withdrawal	Name of Payee (if two or more)	AMOUNT	
			Sh.	cts.
M.R. 825810	Compensation due for death of Toda ole Goe	(deceased).	600	-00
TOTAL .. Sh.			600	-00

that the amount of Sh. **SIX HUNDRED** .. cts. -
 withdrawal and payable to the person(s) stated above and that it has been entered in my Ledger and
 as under.

Signature

19..... **DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, MALIVASHA.**..... Designation

ts

gal

ivasha.

Dept. Vch. No.	*STATION VOUCHER No.			D.W. No.	AMOUNT	
	Station	Voucher No.	Date		Sh.	cts.
NSA. 328	58	805	APR 18 1955		600	-00

*For Paying Office use only.

Figure 4.7: Blood compensation voucher for Mau Mau victim (KNA/NKR/EP10/15). It is reproduced with permission from the Kenya National archives.

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COMPENSATION RE EX-GRATIA IN RESPECT OF
FOLLOWING:-

<p>Mr. Malelong in respect of sheep and cash Sh.75/- stolen by</p>	<p>..... 150.00.</p>	
<p>Mr. Narekae in respect of sheep stolen by Mau-Mau</p>	<p>..... 240.00.</p>	
<p>Mr. Sopia in respect of sheep stolen by Mau-Mau.</p>	<p>..... 400.00.</p>	
<p>Mr. Njoe in respect of sheep stolen by Mau-Mau.</p>	<p>..... 40.00.</p>	<p style="color: red; font-style: italic;">Seyu</p>
<p>Mr. Saoli in respect of sheep stolen by Mau-Mau</p>	<p>..... 400.00.:</p>	
	<p>1,230.00.</p>	

Figure 4.8: An approval of compensation due to the Mau Mau activities (KNA/NKR/EP10/15). It is reproduced with permission from the Kenya National archives.

Loss of livestock compensation was Shs. 100 and Shs. 20 for cows and sheep, respectively. The report of the Narok Compensation Committee, chaired by Mr. Francis L. Alex, was formed in July 1954. This Committee received 18 cases of death and managed to sort nine cases, of which they paid Shs. 5400; on the loss of property, they paid Sh.1, 770 out of a total of Shs.25, 144 claimed (KNA/NKR/EP10/15).

Those who served in the KAR regiment, KPR, Home Guards and died in the line of duty were also catered for under the Security Forces Compensation Committee of the Council of Ministers. According to the Secretary for African Affairs, the DCs were to ensure that claims arising from injury or death of members of the Home Guards were submitted as promptly as possible. Notably, in Mbeere, widows of the Mbeere who served as KAR were never paid. However, in Nyeri District, some Africans were compensated for losses incurred but were not eligible for any further compensation regarding loss (KNA/NKR/EP10/15). Gaconi wa Muturi (O.I, 1/02/2020) held at Nyangwa revealed that she never received ex-gratia for her husband;

My husband served in KAR. Nevertheless, I followed that money and got tired. I went to Embu, Gachoka and Siakago. When I went to Nthawa, they asked for my husband's book when they came from the war, but I did not have it as the children had misplaced it. So, I had to give up on the money even though I had used up much money following up on this payment. I gave up and many others also did the same.

Sarah Igoki (O.I, 1/2/2020) at Nyangwa revealed that the dues of her husband were not paid for the services he offered to the colonial government. She also revealed that during the Mau Mau insurgency, as the Mau Mau chased them from their farm in Nguu, she injured her leg running from the attacks. As a result, she had no option but to leave maize and beans unharvested for the Mau Mau insurgents.

The colonial government initiated a directive of repatriation of KEM to the Central Province and most lost their property in the process. The office of the District Commissioner, Nakuru, on September 19, 1956, released a circular of repatriation of all KEM from Molo, Njoro, Bahati and Subukia via the Nakuru Transit Camp. Most of the KEM were discharged and handed over to the District Officer (KNA/NKR/GEN/48).

During this process, most families were disoriented in the transit camp awaiting re-employment or repatriation to the reserve. Suspicion was evident for the re-absorption of the central Kenya residents, who included the Mbeere, into the Rift Valley (KNA/NKR/GEN/48). The argument was that the communities from central Kenya abused the squatter system in the forest and farming areas; hence, when permitted back into the Rift Valley, the colonial government learned from history to prevent a Mau Mau revival. DC F.A. Peet of Nakuru, on September 17, 1957, released the figures of adults in the District totalling 35,509. In the 1948 census, the estimate of the African population was 152, 000 and due to repatriation of the KEM during the state of emergency, the numbers had decreased significantly (KNA/NKR/GEN/48). He estimated that the number of KEM by then was 40% of the total population in the District. Since sheep and goats played a critical role in the Mau Mau movement ceremonies, the KEM were not required to keep stock in forest areas for at least one year from the official termination of the emergency. In other words, the District emergency committee was determined to make life unbearable to the KEM for their involvement in the Mau Mau movement; "It is important to make the affected tribes realise that life is going to be hard and uncomfortable for them until they have done everything possible to bring the last terrorist in the area" (KNA/NKR/GEN/48).

Due to the considerable number of unemployed people in the Kikuyu Land Unit, most of the KEM and perceived "non-KEM" had found their way to the Rift Valley searching for jobs and thus, most were repatriated. As a result, the Labour Officers in the Rift Valley indicated that the labour supply position moved from adequate to surplus. However, the Senior Labour Officer in the Rift Valley Province noted that the KEM were in demand in

the Rift Valley because some employers viewed them as better labourers than other ethnic groups. Moreover, some believed they would work for lower wages and were easily controlled because of the threat of repatriation (KNA/NKR/GEN/48).

4.5.2 Treatment of the Mbeere Mau Mau during the Emergency Period

The Mbeere, just like the Kikuyu and other related communities, suffered in Nairobi. By 1950, the pass laws that restricted job seekers' flow into Nairobi were no longer as stringent as they used to be because the police numbers were limited and therefore, they concentrated on serious crimes that were on the rise in Nairobi. Anderson (2005) asserts that one police officer was tasked with overseeing 1000 inhabitants and in areas like Eastleigh, there was only one inspector with five constables. Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020), held at Nthawa, believed that the Mbeere who had gone to Nairobi after the Second World War acted as a magnet and resting place to newcomers from the Mbeere region. When immigrants from Mbeere arrived in Nairobi, other Mbeere who had arrived earlier welcomed them (Nderitu, 2017).

To the colonial government, restoration of temperate conditions and respect for law and order could only be attained after the web of subversive Kikuyu, Embu, Mbeere and Meru were destroyed. Notably, this was possible through close physical control of all the Kikuyu, Embu, Mbeere and Meru living in or visiting the city (TNA/FCO 141/6126). The management of these ethnic groups, especially, the Kikuyu had a significant effect as most were suburban's who resided in the reserves and travelled daily to work or sell their produce in Nairobi. Further measures included a progressive reduction in Kikuyu, Embu and Meru in government employment. In addition, the unaffected tribes were required to carry their

blue identity cards in which a photograph of the holder was affixed. However, the Luo and the Akamba regarded the passbook as a punitive measure and the Minister of African Affairs and Defence felt that if attempts were made to extend the passbook system to other ethnic groups, this would create considerable bitterness (TNA/FCO 141/6126). Most of the Mbeere, just like the Agikuyu, were unemployed and therefore, lived in shanties where the Mau Mau movement constituted a powerful force. The creation of exclusively Kikuyu, Embu, Mbeere and Meru estates was an ill-considered measure that punished even the loyalists among the Mount Kenya ethnicities, who were lumped together with the Mau Mau insurgents. It was evident that all the tribes of central Kenya were in some instances identified as Kikuyu;

DC F.R Wilson of Embu District while discussing the heart of the Kikuyu...., the Kikuyu (with whom I include the Embu...). Therefore, there must continue to be the most careful balance between the relaxation of governmental control and the grant of political expression in the Kikuyu land unit (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14).

The Kikuyu Land Unit extended to Mbeere Division, as shown in **Figure 1.1**. The colonial government flexed its muscles with the local population employing any tactic to produce a submission. FD. Corfield, while writing to Colonel Meinertzhagen on June 12, 1959, on problems which faced British administration in Kenya and Africa, in general, he stated as follows;

The emergency proved that many Africans of some standing were true nationalists in the true sense of the term but were prepared to co-operate. The tragedy of the pre-emergency and Emergency periods were that the government failed to protect so many of them from their fanatical compatriots and they have disappeared from the scene (TNA/FCO 141/6583).

It was also noted that with the Declaration of Emergency, there were far more Kikuyu siding with the government, although the numbers gradually decreased and a large number welcomed the Declaration of the Emergency as they believed that they would be protected

for their stance against the Mau Mau movement. However, they later became disillusioned when treated like the Mau Mau movement supporters (TNA/FCO 141/6582).

Many central Kenya ethnic communities were hopeless and the call for ethnic solidarity through oath-taking provided a ray of hope, with those who dared oppose the Mau Mau movement brutally slaughtered. On July 2, 1952, Constable Chesire Chepkiyen was reported missing. On July 21 1952, his body was found in a dense bush on the Athi River plains some ten miles from Nairobi. From the evidence obtained, the constable had attended a drinking party in the outskirts of Nairobi, which had developed into a Mau Mau movement oath-taking ceremony. On July 4, 1952, Muiruri Ng'ang'a reported to the police that on July 3, 1952, several Africans attempted to force him to take the oath. He managed to run away and escaped to the police station, where he reported those who had tried to oath him. On August 2, 1952, at around 7.30 pm, Muiruri's family was attacked again, but he was fortunate as he was only grazed at the back of his shoulder by a shot. On August 7, 1952, the police found a naked body of a police informer on the Nairobi River. The autopsy report showed he was strangled to death by a rope, with severe cuts on his chest (TNA/FCO141/6583). Anderson (2005) explained that it was easier to accept the oath than to decline it and therefore, many took the oath despite their anxieties regarding its meaning and purpose. Consequently, in 1952, there were several Mau Mau insurgents' attacks on those against oath-taking or those who offered as witnesses in the Mau Mau movement cases.

Reports and interviews demonstrate that there were cordons and searches in Nairobi, with roadblocks mounted on the main roads. During the searches and house inspections, many of the Mbeere incurred damages. However, those who suffered wrongful hurt or damage or loss of property in these operations by the security forces did not have a chance to have their cases examined to obtain redress (TNA/FCO 141/6582). Savania Giconi (O.I, 8/02/2020) held at Nguthi recalled that during the emergency, he asked for permission to move from Thika to Embu Division. His employer accompanied him to Ruiru and Thika Police Station for a permit. After receiving a pass, he and others thought they would have a safe passage, but because they were tainted as Mau Mau movement adherents when they reached Sagana, they found Home Guards who ordered them to stop and produce passbooks;

They started beating us and one of the Home Guards from Chief Kombo's side, who was from Mbeere, felt very badly when he saw that it was one of his people being a Mumbeere beaten for nothing. He hit back at the Home Guards beating us. A white man came and found them fighting and he separated them. We were authorised to continue with our journey, but it became worse after few kilometres as we saw we would die on the road. We decided to go to another village in Mwea and we ran to a police post. When we showed them passbooks, they accepted us.

The colonial government disrupted Africans' daily life and increased searches through which many Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and Mbeere people were captured and interrogated. During an oral interview held on February 5, 2020, in Siakago, Jeremiah Mugo termed that time as chaotic and dangerous and there was a saying '*mumenyereri wiyuge*' (the cautious one should shelter). It was because of the situation in Nairobi where the Mau Mau movement suspects were arrested indiscriminately, with many being expelled from the city; "For me (Jeremiah Mugo), I was swift and I came when the problems started because from Nairobi I came with a *bogi* (goods train) and passed through Gatitu in Murang'a via

Makuyu." He also noted that the *Mumbeere* was not left in Nairobi because he was among the central Kenya communities that took the Mau Mau movement oath. Some of the Mbeere were detained in Langata irrespective of whether one had taken the oath or not. The Mbeere were lucky since Chiefs Kombo and Manunga travelled to Langata and assured the colonial government they would cleanse all their people who had taken the oath in Nairobi. To effect the cleansing directives, villages prepared a list of their detainees. In addition, the District Officers and Chiefs were encouraged to keep surveillance on the detainees and make occasional informal visits (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6).

The Mbeere Mau Mau movement adherents in the Mbeere Division were treated differently from the Mbeere who resided in other areas as attested by Paul Ngutire (O.I, 7/02/2020). He revealed that even before the oath reached Mbeere, he had taken the oath in the 1940s: "By the time the oath was being reported in Mbeere in 1953/1954, we had taken the oath five years earlier." He was arrested in Nairobi near Kahawa Sukari and when the Mbeere chiefs suggested to the colonial government they would do de-oathing, he was not released like other Mbeere because his identity card indicated that he had registered in Meru. However, Gathagu wa Titima alias General Wakimere (O.I, 11/08/2020) held in Kombo Munyiri sublocation, recollected, "after the transfer to Kamiti from Embakasi, I found four Mbeere who included Njiru, Ileri, Nthegele and Kivuti in Kamiti and they were all taken to Gathigiriri Works Camp in Mwea where they worked for one year and released in 1958." Mr. Gathagu further asserted that he had informed the colonial authority that he hailed from Nyeri and a possibility that those who could associate their originality with Mbeere division, identified by the respective chiefs or were identified as grey, were not jailed as

compared to other Mount Kenya residents. He further stated, "When my identity could be traced back in Mbeere, people from Mbeere were called to identify me, but they consisted of residents from Evurore, Siakago but no one from Mavuria, they didn't know me and nobody recognised me."

Therefore, the Mau Mau adherents concealed their identity for the posterity of the Mau Mau movement. Also, from pieces of evidence, many of the Mbeere who could be identified back in Mbeere Division were not jailed but repatriated as demonstrated by this fact where 60 Mbeere were screened and found to have taken the oath (TNA/FCO/141/5766). The Mbeere chiefs were called and they spoke to the detainees who admitted having taken the oath. The detainees were then released as the colonial government ruled that none of them appeared to be a very enthusiastic Mau Mau movement supporter (TNA/FCO/141/5766). However, before their chiefs collected them from the other detentions or camps, they underwent similar treatment with the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. It is also evident that the colonial forces did not distinguish the Embu from the Mbeere. On the arrest of 60 Mbeere, the Embu Intelligence Committee report identified them as, '60 Mbere,' Embu raising confusion if there existed Mbere Meru or any other similar grouping (TNA/FCO/141/5766). It also brings an interesting perspective on whether this was the innovative colonial way of identifying deviant behaviour with Embu. In the colonial mind, the Mbeere were harmless and primordial and the only way to punish them was through communal labour.

In Embu, the detained people were in three different categories (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). The

first lot were the irreconcilables who were approximated to be about 200 by 1955. They were deeply indoctrinated with the Mau Mau movement ideologies and the communities were hesitant to welcome them back. The second group were unconvinced. This group was about 1500 by the end of 1955. Most of these were the Operation Anvil pick-ups in Nairobi who did not believe that the colonialists could defeat the Mau Mau movement. The third group were confessed murderers, those who had engaged in killing their people and the colonial government wondered whether they could be re-integrated into the society. These categories were sorted from the thirteen works camps in the District (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). The colonial government believed that effective propaganda for the tough elements was to create fear in them.

Within Mbeere occupied areas, in contrast to other regions of Embu where screeners used hoods to protect their identities, chiefs took centre stage during interrogations. If one was suspected of taking the oath, there was an option to either accept or deny it. In case one denied, they would be beaten badly, often leading to death. Chrispin Mate (O.I, 8/02/2020) held at Kanyuambora, witnessed Chief Mwandiko and his guards beating the Mau Mau movement adherents mercilessly;

When Mau Mau movement suspects were arrested, they were taken to Ishiara at the chief's Camp. They were beaten seriously by a man named Mwombombo, who took out his belt and started beating the Mau Mau people. He beat them so bad. After seeing how these men were beaten, I stood up and told him to stop beating those people. After that, the government would punish them. Why wallop them then?

Paul Mate wa Mavuta (O.I, 10/02/2020), held in Nguthi Sub-location, stated that after coming back to Mbeere, some of his friends continued to administer the oath in Mbeere. It was a wrong move as they were arrested and taken to Ishiara severely beaten for confession;

Those oathed were severely beaten. Some even soiled themselves. Kirangi confessed that he took the oath and spared the beating. Those mentioned were arrested the following day, including me. They used walking sticks to cane us. They also used to kick and step on us with boots. I was beaten, even Mwaura wa Nginyuki, whom they tied together with me for taking the Mau Mau oath. We were tied by aides-de-camp of the chief and the white man. We were told that we were being cleansed of the oath of Mau Mau and given another one from Mbeere and pledged we would never take a Mau Mau oath for so long as we live. After confession, I was released and requested to report to DO's office for six months.

If one confessed, they were de-oathed and asked to name others who took the oath with them or administered the oath. However, the detained Mbeere underwent questioning. During the oral interviews, detainees recalled how they were beaten during interrogations. The beating continued until one accepted the coerced confession of belonging to the Mau Mau movement. In doing so, they corroborated the information given and could point out inconsistencies in accounts provided. Beating to obtain admission was not always applicable to everyone, as stated by Jeremiah Mugo Mutavi, a Mau Mau seer. He and others were not hit. The only beating they received was during oath administration. Also, drawing from Ileri Muranga in an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri Sub-location on January 31, 2020, who affirmed that he was screened in Mombasa and was never beaten as it was experienced in many parts of central Kenya. He denied having taken the oath and was released. In Mombasa, Mau Mau supporters used to conceal identity by changing names. However, those who found to have accepted the Mau Mau movement oath were detained.

The Mbeere Mau Mau movement adherents who agreed to denounce the oath, just like other places in Kenya, were told that they would be forgiven if they confessed quickly and freely, but according to colonial records, there was no warranty for such action. The

colonial records indicated that it would be monstrous to let the perpetrators of atrocities go scot-free merely because they confessed. Therefore, through the chiefs, the colonial administrators often would beat the Mbeere Mau Mau movement adherents mercilessly. According to oral testimonies, confession confirmed the presumption of a guilt. It suggested more restrictions as they hoped to arrest those mentioned. Confession, therefore, defined a case against the defendant, those mentioned and, in some cases, it traversed to the entire community. These defined the type of punishment to be rendered. As an area was cleansed of the Mau Mau movement, the residents hoped that restrictions would be relaxed.

The general picture in Embu District in 1953 and 1954 was the complete eradication of the Mau Mau movement. In 1953, a total of 204 Mau Mau adherents were killed in the District and none surrendered (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). In 1954, the Mau Mau movement was losing ground because 666 Mau Mau movement supporters were killed and 116 captured, while 25 surrendered (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). In 1955, most people in Embu were losing faith in the movement as those who had surrendered were 654, with 375 killed and 81 captured (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). Based on the figures, Embu District was losing faith in the Mau Mau movement, depicting the steady and inexorable defeat as was experienced with the amnesty of January 18 to July for the Embu

Division, which was carried out in the Reserve and the forests (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). In a personal and confidential letter between Carey Francis and Government Commissioner J.D. Corfield, 1959, there was an agreement between the two officials that the government did not professionally handle pre-emergency and emergency due to the difficulties and inadequate tools;

Much was done outside the law, for example beating terrorism by counter-terrorism . . . I

(Corfield) know that you (Cary Francis), while appreciating the immense problems facing the government, feel that it was not sufficiently "honest" in the way it dealt with this particular problem and I will bear this in mind when I come to deal with it. However, the insensate savagery of Mau Mau was bound to raise emotional tension to breaking point . . . (TNA/FCO 141/6583).

Colonial records show the success was attained due to a change of tactics from iron discipline to methods worthy of a more benign dictatorship. However, they also noted that it was not without blemish (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). One way applied by the military was placing thick cordons of troops along the forest edges. In Mbeere, the Mbeere were forced to dig anti-erosion trenches (Mitaro) in Mbeere Division, especially along the Kianjiru Hill and Tribal Police and farm guards in Mbeere locations were tasked with guarding the ditch to stop the movement from the reserve to Kianjiru hills. Anybody who tried to escape from the Kianjiru Mountain was shot with arrows. Flora Gatiti (O.I, 31/01/2020) narrated how they dug ditches and erected spikes; they had no option but to follow the colonial directives of digging trenches. In addition, around the detention camps, the Mbeere were subjected to digging wide trenches and a bridge used by the leaders to cross over, as narrated by Samuel Mbaka at the Nguru-Kianjiru location on January 30, 2020. The Mau Mau insurgents had instructed the natives, especially the Mau Mau adherents, never to dig anti-erosion trenches when asked to dig them. The colonial officials' denial of digging trenches proved association with the Mau Mau insurgency, while Mau Mau associated those who dug trenches as traitors.

In Mbeere Division, as punitive villages never existed, the Mbeere were scattered all over the Mbeere occupied regions and the Mau Mau insurgents saw this as an opportunity worth exploiting, opting to hide and seek food in Mbeere. The Mbeere were left with the burden

of feeding the Mau Mau insurgents while other Divisions in Embu were under villagisation. On August 21, 1953, the Central Province Emergency Committee regulated that no crops should be grown within three miles of the forest edge along the Aberdare and Mount Kenya (TNA/FCO141/6201). They also recommended that food crops in the three-mile strip and forest land that could not be harvested by September 5 should be uprooted. In Embu, no crop was supposed to be planted in the three-mile strip and any crop on the west of Rupingazi Rivers not harvested by September 5, 1953, was to be destroyed. In Mbeere and many other Districts, guarding of stock and crops were done as a government directive to ensure the Mau Mau movement adherents were denied food. The Provincial Commissioner-Central Province noted that this policy was tried in all Districts of the Province except Kiambu. In some cases, the British government moved the population living near the forests back to three or four-miles prohibiting cultivation towards the forest (TNA/FCO141/6201). In a move to deny Mau Mau movement fighters food, the secretary of the War Council further directed the prohibition of maize in the African reserves, which were considered 'bad location.' The implementation of the policy in Embu and Nyeri blocked the planting of maize during the short rains.

The denial of food policy was supposed to ensure that no food reached the Mau Mau movement fighters. However, the policy affected the Mbeere country since the food production cycles were disrupted, resulting in extreme hunger. It also prompted the Mau Mau movement fighters in the forest or areas near the forest to move afield, seeking new loopholes to get food as acknowledged by Bennet (2013). The colonial government anticipated that the Mau Mau movement adherents would be driven into more vulnerable

areas, but the residents welcomed them when they reached the Mbeere regions. According to Miriam Mbuya Wangui reflection (O.I, 1/02/2020) held at Umau-Nyangwa, the Mau Mau insurgents knew from which houses to seek food and other assistance. Some Mbeere Mau Mau movement supporters, through locally coded language, would inform the Mau Mau movement fighters when security forces were near so that that food would be sneaked to them. The Mau Mau forces hiding in Mbeere Division experienced a difficult ground since most Mbeere were disoriented by the Embu Mau Mau movement adherents who used to attack and kill the Mbeere in the pretence of oathing. However, the Mau Mau movement adherents changed tactics in foraging food or increasing stock theft during the day in settled areas (TNA/FCO141/5748). It was also challenging to get livestock because, in Embu, they had designed a new type of stock night *boma*, which was rated successful and the presence of 'Watch and Ward units' (made of Tribal Police and ex-Kikuyu guard) that assisted in the task of denying them food (TNA/FCO 141/5703).

The Mbeere who assisted the Mau Mau movement suffered immensely. The imposition of curfews in areas where the Mau Mau insurgents were spotted also disrupted the way of life. In addition, the closure of shops in the settled areas affected the way of life of the Mbeere. In a telegram conversation between the Governor and Secretary of State, the Governor noted that denial of food was a success in the Kikuyu Land Unit. As a result, the Mau Mau movement fighters were forced to break into small parties searching for food (TNA/FCO 141/6201). While planning for Operation Hammer, the colonial government anticipated Mau Mau movement fighters to execute bold raids to obtain food in settled areas and reserves. They had also projected that some might take to the forests entirely and

become "*Watu wa swara*" or Buck men, living like Aborigines. Also, some would look for soft spots to live and obtain food. The colonial government anticipated soft spots to include the Nyambeni Hills and Mwea, where the fortification of villages was minimal (TNA/FCO 141/5703).

4.5.3 The Mbeere Mau Mau in the Post-Emergency Period

Since the colonial government recorded that the Mbeere remained impervious to the Mau Mau movement indoctrination, the expectation was that many colonial rewards would be manifested among the Mbeere. For example, in Embu District, only the loyalists were permitted to vote. Therefore, the expectation was that the Mbeere presence in African elections would be visible as most of them were eligible to vote following the Special Commissioners Directives on the Loyalty test as outlined on Handing over Report for Embu Division of 1956 (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). In addition, possessing a loyalist certificate was considered access to special tax exemptions in 1957 and membership of political associations. Elkins (2005) asserts that loyalists were also given special considerations for various commercial licenses and license to grow coffee and tea, but the only people who were able to benefit from these offers were chiefs like Mwandiko, who owned a Peugeot light lorry for commercial purposes (KNA/OP/1/2626). In 1956, Mbeere locations were accorded a permanent Division status. Colonial records reveal that the establishment of the Mbeere Division was an outcome of outstanding loyalty throughout the emergency. The colonial government felt that the Mbeere Division needed close supervision to stop them from sliding back into the previous lethargic state. As noted by Embu DC R.H. Symes-Thompson, "It will be most unfortunate if the Mbeere is allowed to return to being

backwater . . .” (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). Therefore, having a DO at their doorstep was a huge reward from the colonial government.

The Mbeere, whether loyal or not, were always second to the Embu. Unlike the influential old-fashioned Chief Kombo, who believed in superstition and illiteracy, the Embu chiefs were also termed progressive and educated (*Athomi*) (KNA/DC/EBU/1/16). The colonial administration constantly flirted with the Embu, evidenced by the projects directed towards the Embu loyalists in the post-emergency period. Moreover, the Embu could form associations as a form of official encouragement. The colonial government repatriated the Kikuyu, whom they considered a threat to the Embu progress from the District, which the Embu also supported. Notably, the Embu reaped the benefit of colonialism in the post-emergency period as the colonial government embarked on enhanced agricultural and veterinary husbandry.

Records concerning colonial government trying to convince the Embu they could surpass the Kikuyu are remarkable, but simultaneously handed down relatively few economic resources to the ‘conservative’ Mbeere who needed explanatory *barazas* concerning female circumcision, unlike the Embu, whom the colonial government termed as willing to walk in the path of civilisation (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). The colonial administrators were distasteful on unfilled primary schools in Mbeere Division and the unutilised Kiambere grazing paddocks designed by the colonial government. Moreover, as recorded in the Embu District Annual Report of 1957, "cheerful Mbeere are often embarrassed by the attention and interests of his progressive neighbours" (KNA/DC/EBU/1/16). To the colonial

government report, if the Mbeere were not monitored, they deemed the backwater in Embu District, yet their loyalty to the colonial government warranted special assistance. DC Symes-Thompson noted how Mbeere needed water, which was not addressed in totality (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6).

As most Mau Mau movement veterans were forging forward and forgetting the troubles of the past to build up a secure livelihood, the Mbeere Mau Mau adherents were left in isolation. The Mbeere Mau Mau movement fighters had nothing to show for their essential contribution to the movement. Then again, the Embu Mau Mau veterans were lucky to be memorialised in books as among those who participated fully in the war of decolonisation, although material support was never realised. The Embu identity was overused at the expense of others, silencing the history of 'others' in Embu. The Gichugu, Ndia and Embu correctly perceived themselves to have suffered most due to villagisation and hence declined to recognise the Mbeere's role in the Mau Mau movement war.

The Mbeere were identified as loyalists, a term assigned and overused by the colonial administrators then passed down to the Embu and enforced by scholars as official, primarily to silence history and increase the centrality of the Embu in the Mau Mau war of resistance, as noted by Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020). The central Kenya residents used the vernacular naming convention that was openly attested during oral testimonies terming the Mbeere as 'wives,' and statements like *Mumbere ti Mundu* (Mbeere is less human). These assigned identifiers reinforced misidentification, thus denying the deserving Mbeere Mau Mau veterans a place to reminisce.

In an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 10, 2020, more Mau Mau movement women broke their silence, as attested by Beatrice Ndegi Githinji's recollection of how the Mau Mau war left her and others in a sorrowful state after the death of their husbands and sons, leaving them to feed the remaining children on their own. Muturi Ndaru, in an FGD held at Mwanyare on February 3, 2020, regretted how they fought for independence and after winning the war, they did not get a fair share of the cake. Those who assumed leadership did not bother about them. Some of the Mbeere Mau Mau adherents had died, leaving their families in a destitute state. Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020) held at Nthawa affirmed that the Mbeere, after 1956, were left in a state of dilemma. The Mbeere nation had thus been alienated and side-lined in the liberation struggle. He argued that the colonial government decided to dish out Mbeere land to the Embu and the Kikuyu at Carolina in the post-emergency period.

Kanyeji emphasized how the Mbeere had lost to the Embu through government efforts and when they tried to appeal, it was withdrawn immediately. It can also be noted through the boundary tussle between the Mbeere and the Gaturi people, despite the Mbeere grumble, the border remained unaltered and Mbeere were warned they would face the wrath of the government if they disturbed peace (KNA/EBU/DC/1/16). The infiltration of the Wakamba, who were invited to the District by Chief Kombo and the Kikuyu, invited to Embu by senior Chief Muruatetu, also posed a problem in the District (KNA/DC/EBU/2/6). By 1961, the Embu and the Mbeere complained when the Kamba

and the Kikuyu defied authority and continued to graze and cultivate their lands around Gaturi at the Mbeere border (KNA/DC/EBU/2/11).

Joseph Ndwiga Kabiero (O.I, 7/02/2020), held at Ishiara, recollected that the Mau Mau movement disoriented the livelihood of the Mbeere. He also noted that since the Embu forced the Mbeere to take the oath, the Mau Mau movement in the region is remembered negatively due to the destruction it caused among the two communities. Therefore, the Mau Mau memories in the area are not favourable. There is suspicion and lack of trust between the Embu county residents, especially resource mobilisation and sharing. It has been an overwhelming experience for the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans who survived assigned identifiers (loyalists), also from a marginalised community whom other actors unacknowledged. The Mbeere people are still seeking justice for the land they lost in different regions that bordered their Division.

Jeremiah Nyagah, a loyalist as identified by Branch (2009, p.158), was a politician originating from the loyalist stronghold of Mbeere in Embu. In the narratives, Jeremiah Nyagah did not find a suitable rationale for how the Mbeere, particularly the Mbeere Mau Mau movement veterans, would be integrated into the social structures that privileged some and disadvantaged others in power relations. Consequently, he failed to represent his people to challenge unequal power-relationship based on ethnicity and exclusion in history. When the Mau Mau movement was at its peak, he was in Oxford University, courtesy of the Mbeere taxes. On arrival in Embu, the ADC Council of 9th and 10th November 1954 unanimously agreed on Mr. Jeremiah Nyagah's appointment as a member of the District

Education Board (DEB) in place of Mr. Eustus Nguru (KNA/BD/5/9). In the week ending September 29 1954, the chair of Embu District Intelligence, F. R. Wilson, noted that Jeremiah Nyagah had returned to the District after two years in the United Kingdom (TNA/FCO 141/5767). On his arrival in Kenya, he briefed the Special Branch his encounter with the Mau Mau movement in the past. It was noted that efforts were needed to ensure that such a highly qualified member of the Mbeere ethnic group was identified with the government and kept in the picture about general policy in the District (TNA/FCO141/5767).

Branch (2009, p.1) contends, "within African population, there was a Division, there were those like Jeremiah Nyagah who were watching the infliction of violence on insurgents from afar and those in the forest targeted by the bombers." Maina wa Kinyati (2008) considered Jeremiah Nyagah, a black puppet leader who was elected in the Legislative Council between 1957 and 1958 and a leading traitor in Embu District. Nyagah fell under the category of opportunists who used the Mau Mau movement status quo to gain recognition at their (Mau Mau) expense. True to colonial projection, Nyagah was always against radical members. On January 29, 1959, he gave a press statement advising Africans to ignore the African Elected Members' appeal for the boycott of the Royal tour (TNA/FCO141/5769). Muliro and Towett were of the view that the Royal Family was above politics. The colonial government portrayed Nyagah as moving against the tide of radical colleagues. His disparaged comments concerning 'Kenyatta-ism' among the young Kikuyu, whom he termed knew nothing about the emergency hardships. Due to his

remarks, he was viewed as a genuine moderate who could not agree with extreme fellow elected members (TNA/FCO141/5769).

Ben Kanyenji (O.I, 5/02/2020) held at Nthawa narrated how Jeremiah Nyagah only cared about himself and the consolidation of power. Therefore, he invited more of the Akamba to settle in Mbeere lands. Kanyenji concurs with Njeru's (2016) contention that Nyagah brought many immigrants from Kirinyaga and Ukambani and resettled them in the Mwea irrigation scheme to increase voters. The Akamba occupation is a debated crisis in the contemporary Mbeere region and a source of conflict in Mwea, where the Akamba allegedly occupied Mbeere land in the Mwea location. As explained by Kanyenji, the Mbeere clans had gone to court to reclaim, expel the newcomers and repopulate the area with their own. Kanyenji believed that eviction of the Akamba was inevitable as the Mbeere used the traditional perspective to show the land was theirs and proved unequal allocation, where some individuals monopolised land allocations at the expense of indigenous owners (the Mbeere). Kathagu wa Titima alias General Kimere in an oral interview in Kombo Munyiri sublocation, reminisced; "When the Mau Mau veterans asked Mzee Jomo Kenyatta for land, Nyagah said, there was a huge chunk of land in Mbeere and therefore the Mbeere Mau Mau were given nothing because of honourable Nyagah's intervention."

Anderson (2007) asserts that the colonial administration facilitated the legislative elections of 1956 and 1957, who needed to re-make Kenya politics beyond the Mau Mau insurgency. Most of those who vied for the election (loyalists) were encouraged to stand by the colonial government. Notably, this was done to lock out the Mau Mau adherents. In narrating her

story, Mukami Kimathi recounted how she worked on a farm owned by Jeremiah Nyagah, Legislative Council (LEGCO) representative. Rebels like Mukami Kimathi had no option but to work for the same people who objected to Kenya's emancipation from the chain of colonialism. When she was employed, their employers said that the Mau Mau freedom fighters would be paid five cents per day, while other people got two shillings and fifty cents. She was paid five cents and lunch was not offered to her compared to other workers since she was a Mau Mau adherent. Mukami Kimathi argues that nobody wanted to associate with the Mau Mau adherents and when the owner of the farm identified her as the wife of Dedan Kimathi, she was chased away.

Jeremiah Nyagah, just like the colonial government, perceived the Mau Mau as 'unacceptable' in Mbeere Division and, therefore, he could not have pushed for the recognition and compensation of the Mbeere Mau Mau adherents (KNA/DC/EBU/2/11). As Muthengi Mugwate (O.I, 4/02/2020) recollected, his main concern was "rewarding those who supported him politically, strategically cutting the boundary in a political manner so that he could receive more votes from that region." Nyaga wa Kimani (O.I, 4/02/2020), held at Gachoka, said that the exact boundaries that created enmity between the Embu and the Mbeere are what Jeremiah Nyagah capitalised on, creating resentment between the two communities. In oral testimonies in Mbeere Sub-counties, it was agreed that the Mbeere boundary extended to Manyatta. Mwaniki Kabeca (O.I, 8/02/2020) also concurred that the border extended to Manyatta but noted that the Mbeere are Embu and the closeness of the two communities are indistinguishable.

Maina wa Kinyati (2008) revisited the comprador bourgeoisie in Kenya, including the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru. They formed GEMA, an association to consolidate political and economic power. He further argued that this association failed to unite small ethnic groups in Central Province and that these small communities like the Mbeere, the Tharaka and the Gichugu were left out in the quest for land and other material gains. Within GEMA, a "tribal association" aimed at furthering the welfare interests of the three ethnic groups, the Mbeere were left out in a mix of promoting property ownerships as noted by Makoloo (2005). The Mbeere are never mentioned and although Jeremiah Nyagah was a member, they were lumped together with the Embu. As Mwaniki (1973) noted, the two communities were culturally indistinguishable. Since the Embu had the upper hand, they dictated the game of exclusion and inclusion. A situation still manifested after the dispensation of the new constitution where the identity game is still embodied in Embu County. Kabiero Joseph (O.I, 7/02/2020), observed that the failure to recognise the Mbeere as an ethnic group side-lined the recognition of the Mbeere contribution in the Mau Mau movement and the same is still prevalent to date during resource allocation. The Mbeere were never recognised, or rather, Embu people overshadowed them as most of the Mbeere were not educated.

DC P.L. Johnson, in 1961, summarised the political situation of Embu District where the Kenya African Union (KAU) was establishing grounds in the District after the approval by the Locational Council and the ADC. In June 1961, Jeremiah Nyagah held a series of meetings in the District. He condemned the oath-taking carried out by *Kĩama Kia Mungu* (KKM). To the colonial eyes, the prestige of Nyagah was enhanced and assessed

him as follows; “Although he has taken steps to hire a room in the ADC Hostels as a Constituency Office, he has not yet found time to open it, it is a great pity that his “extra constituency” duties are so numerous. . .”(KNA/DC/EBU/2/11).

The colonial government acknowledged KANU, the party he supported because the assessment of the Provincial Commissioner was positive. PC noted that the party had the support of the proportion of the haves instead of the have-nots. The ‘haves’ were spotted at the KANU election meetings that included coffee growers, whereas the have-nots like the Mau Mau movement followers were nowhere to be found. According to Njeru (2016), the primary driver of poverty in Mbeere was political patronage that materialised on clan cleavage. Thus, as a long-serving Minister, Nyagah reaped the benefits alone as no significant developments were done in Mbeere, "Mbeere appears to have reaped little spoils by way of development in a senior position in government, no Mbeere was appointed to senior posts" (Njeru, 2016, p. 95). Njeru further noted that the Mbeere were subsumed under the Embu for many years and vague reference existed. The Mbeere were known in Embu due to recurrent famines, witchcraft, poverty and nothing were done by Nyagah to reclaim the Mbeere identity absorbed with Embu.

4.5.4 The Mbeere Mau Mau during the Post-independence Period

The release of Jomo Kenyatta from restriction in 1961 was warmly welcomed by many Africans and Asians in Embu District. The British officials merely accepted the move and the loyalists were worried about their fate if the British left. The Embu District dispatched gifts and lorry loads of pilgrims to Gatundu (KNA/DC/EBU/2/11). It is worth noting that 13 days after the arrival of Kenyatta in Gatundu in Kiambu, Jeremiah Nyagah applied for a

public meeting at Sagana on August 27, 1961, hoping to host Kenyatta on his first public appearance, with him (Nyagah) taking all the political credit. However, Kenyatta never showed up in the meeting, which over 25,000 people attended. The release of Kenyatta was followed by revoking restriction orders for ex-Senior Chief Muruatetu and returning Willie George Njui (the head of Embu Branch Committee of the secret society placed on the local restrictions order to Kevote village). The release of Njui was highly welcomed in Embu, prompting the Local KANU organisation to try and provide similar reception with Kenyatta (Gatundu reception). However, Nyagah was not impressed with the reception;

. . . he feels that the gentleman in question will gain an exaggerated impression of his own importance if he is treated as a special person much longer. In my view, he should be treated like any other locally restricted person with the onus firmly placed upon him to show by his behaviour that less rigid restriction would be justified (KNA/DC/EBU/2/11).

By the time Kenya attained her independence, the loyalists had dominated everything at the expense of those who struggled (Osborne, 2014). When Kenyatta became the President, he urged Kenyans to forget the past and move on. To his understanding, everybody fought for independence and therefore, public memories of villagisation, torture and dispossession were suppressed. Kenyatta shied away from talking about the Mau Mau movement and this angered the Mau Mau veterans in Mbeere and the nation at large, who felt deceived by the person they saw as their emancipator. The option left was to work themselves and win respect in their communities. Clough (1998) noted that the Mau Mau veterans were marginalised in the 1960s and 1970s. Anyone representing veterans was persecuted as it did not conform to the demands of the Kenyatta regime. Mau Mau movement could only resurrect when called upon, especially publicly praising Jomo Kenyatta and returning to a deadly slumber.

The Mau Mau veterans had hoped that the departure of the colonialists would mean steady efforts of comprehensive programmes of land redistribution and the reversal of the land programme which the colonial government had implemented. In contrast, the Kenyatta government inherited the same policies of preserving private land tenures. Therefore, independence did not alleviate the land hunger as it was anticipated. On the contrary, the situation was chaotic and unmanageable, outraging the Mau Mau veterans. As a result, the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) capitalised on the Mau Mau movement memories without much impact as a tool to legitimise opposition, making the Mau Mau movement memory a topic of discomfort to the Kenyatta government. In 1969, KPU was banned, but the call for land redistribution and social justice did not fade away.

Anderson (2007, p. 336) noted that old comrades did what old comrades from wars do. They formed an old comrade's association. These associations offered hope and promises for a fruitful future. According to Anderson (2007), Mau Mau Associations were many in Kikuyu land by the 1960s and many of them are still going strong. After President Kenyatta's pronouncement in the Rift Valley that there was nothing for free (*Hakuna chabure*), the Mau Mau veterans were determined to form an association. Kanyingi (2015) argues that although Jomo Kenyatta was against the formation of these associations, the then Nakuru Member of Parliament (MP), the late Mark Mwithaga was relentless in ensuring that the freedom fighters could form an association and buy land in the expansive Rift Valley. In an oral interview held in Nakuru on July 23, 2014, with the late Mark Mwithaga, he narrated how they used to meet at night and discuss how they would persuade *mzee* (Jomo Kenyatta) to remember Mau Mau veterans.

To some degree, Jomo Kenyatta berated those who demanded 'free things' from the government after independence, as Branch (2010) noted. The Nakuru District Ex-Freedom Fighters Association (NDEFFO) was formed as a land-buying company not exist as any meaningful group involved in the liberation struggle. Its members were warned never to reminisce about the Mau Mau movement. The Mau Mau veterans under NDEFFO were able to raise Ksh. 800,000 and when they approached him in Nakuru Statehouse, the President was surprised and told the then vice president Moi in Kikuyu, "*Tumundu tutu twina Mbia nyingi muno*" (these people have much money) (Kanyingi, 2015). Remembering the Mau Mau movement thus became a subverting act, but interests in the Mau Mau movement showed no sign of ceasing in the existence of tyrannical systems that tried to arrest the wheels of history.

The remembrance of the Mau Mau movement was highly censored, but it never ebbed. As most of the Mau Mau veterans died, the others remained strong despite the entangled past. A past that refused to fade away and continued to resonate, calling for a response. They tried to break the silence they had enclosed, but the Jomo Kenyatta government was ready to shut them completely. Jomo Kenyatta only remembered the Mbeere when he attempted to rebuild the Kikuyu political community, as Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020) summed up the feelings of many. With the need to take control of the state, the Mbeere were corralled to attend an oathing ceremony in Gatundu to protect the Presidency's retention in the *House of Mumbi*, as explained in an FGD held at Kombo Munyiri sublocation on January 31, 2020. As oral testimonies in Mbeere suggests, the oath was nicknamed '*chai*,' an appeal to

entitlement to power based on the strength of the *House of Mumbi*. Therefore, evidently, in times of need, the Mbeere were recognised among the members of the *House of Mumbi*.

The Mbeere Mau Mau veterans still waited for their grievances to be addressed just like other Mau Mau veterans from other Districts, but nothing was forthcoming as noted in oral interviews in Mbeere North and South sub-counties. Like other Mau Mau veterans, the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans recollected how they wanted the flowers when they are alive to see the beauty, smell and touch them and not be remembered when they are dead. In oral testimonies and FGDs, the Mau Mau veterans agreed that the post-colonial government did nothing to the Mau Mau veterans in Mbeere. They were denied a platform to air their grievances. Just like other places, whenever Mau Mau veterans tried to rekindle their memory, they were thwarted. In Othaya, in a bid to honour the Mau Mau movement fighters killed in an Othaya police post-attack of 1953, the local people decided to dig out the foundation for a monument. However, as they were digging out, they found bones and as they planned to rebury them in a consecrated ground properly, the bones were taken by a politician (Anderson & Lane, 2016).

Anderson and Lane (2016, p.14) hold that “all over central Kenya, the bones are coming up.” The bones of ancestors, Kenyan brave nationalists’ fighters who joined the Mau Mau movement and died young from the British oppression. The bones had been left in shallow graves in the forests, towns or stuffed unceremoniously into toilets in the villages. Retrieved bones also included the Mbeere executed in Kiamuringa and other places without trial after being labelled loyalists by the Embu Mau Mau movement adherents. The bodies

were retrieved from undignified resting places across Mbeere Division as the intra-Embu physical struggle during the Mau Mau period received little attention and no consensus about reconciliation has ever been reached between the two communities (TNA/FCO 141/5766). Anderson thus and Lane argue that this was a sign of fear of politicians on the power of the Mau Mau memory. The passage of time may have healed some wounds of those knowledgeable on the Embu and Mbeere attacks. Nevertheless, the clipping of Mbeere ears a form of identification (*Ruri*), the events continue to be memorialised by their offsprings, yet reconciliation and memorialisation have never occurred in response to the past. The Mbeere bones of troubled past remain unacknowledged in the struggle for independence compared to the recent official recognition and memorialisation of the Mau Mau fighters, majorly from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru ethnic communities.

The succession of the late President Daniel Arap Moi after Jomo Kenyatta's death in 1978 was no different from his predecessor (Kanyingi, 2015). The late Moi relied heavily on repression to sustain his government. According to Branch (2010), a clandestine movement, Muungano wa Wazalendo wa Kenya (Mwakenya), was formed to fight for multi-party democracy. Its members were made to raise one hand and face the portrait of Dedan Kimathi and swear to never betray their colleagues in Mwakenya. When Nelson Mandela visited Kenya and addressed a large crowd in Nairobi on July 13, 1990, he acknowledged Dedan Kimathi, thus rekindling the pressure for the government to find the body of Kimathi and offer a dignified reburial (Branch, 2010). The call for the search of the remains of Kimathi was running alongside pro-democracy movements going on in Kenya. As the campaign for the exhumation of Kimathi remains went on, the Mbeere Mau

Mau were never featured anywhere. However, President Moi granted the Mbeere a District in 1996. The Mbeere were overjoyed for having their District which later was sub-divided into Mbeere North and Mbeere South.

The most significant problem in Mbeere was water projects that were on the verge of completion by the time Kenya attained her independence. These included the Ciambengo rock catchment tank in Mavuria location, which was ready, but the off-take points and the livestock routes to this supply were incomplete. Other 'loyal tribes' projects included the extension of the Kerie pipeline in the Nthawa location and maintenance of the Ishiara scheme furrows (KNA/DC/EBU/2/11 & KNA/PC/NKU/2/1/51). In colonial officials' correspondence feature, the enrolment and retention of pupils as very low in Mbeere compared to Embu. Njeru (2012) posited that President Moi was on a vote hunting mission in a complex and contested pro-opposition zone, hence creating the new District. Ben Kanyeji (O.I, 5/02/2020) asserted that Moi did nothing to the Mbeere people and Mbeere Mau Mau adherents. Kanyeji avers that Moi was hunting votes, seeking KANU delegations and he knew by giving the Mbeere a District, they would vote for him. Joseph Ndwiga Kabiero reports, "I am aware of compensation claimed but have not seen any seriousness in the compensation of the victims." The post-colonial regimes are yet to compensate the Mau Mau veterans.

The Mau Mau movement adherents perceived the Kibaki regime as the beacon of hope. However, Branch (2010) offers a different interpretation of the Kibaki regime, which agrees with the response from the oral testimonies in Mbeere, where Mau Mau veterans

argued that "they have nothing for us, just empty promises or rather no seriousness of compensation of victims." The quest to find Kimathi's grave and search for his bones became an obsession with the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), a multi-party alliance formed in 2002 to push for Mwai Kibaki's election capitalised on, combining first Kenya's liberation and second liberation. Kimathi and the Mau Mau became a potent symbol of mobilising the Mau Mau movement adherents and their offshoots against the KANU presidential candidate Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta. Whose father hailed from Kiambu Home Guards' strong point (Branch, 2010). In August 2002, the *Daily Nation* reported, "General Mathenge no longer at ease" (an article by Macharia Gaitho and Joseph Karimi). The stories of the purported General Mathenge were aired for months, asking whether the hero would ever be returned to the homeland. The Mathenge story favoured NARC as they officially recognised the search for Kimathi's body. The potent of Kimathi and the Mau Mau movement enhanced Kibaki's appeal to populist Kikuyu, who identified with the Mau Mau movement. To rekindle the Kikuyu support after years as President, on February 18, 2007, President Kibaki unveiled the life-sized statue of Dedan Kimathi, which was erected at the Junction of Mama Ngina Street Road and Kimathi Street in honour of those who fought selflessly for Kenya's independence (Omoró, 2007).

On April 11, 2007, President Kibaki also led the government delegation to Mbooni Division in Makueni for a state burial of the late Kisoí Munyao, who hoisted the Kenya flag on Mount Kenya (Omoró, 2007). This form of remembrance appealed to the masses associated with freedom fighters jailed or killed in the struggle for Kenya's independence. His government also promised to table a bill in parliament to assist serving heroes and the

families of the fallen heroes, erection of mausoleum for Pio Gama Pinto in City Park. Nevertheless, these were fanciful promises to win the 2007 Kenya's presidential election. Unlike the Jomo Kenyatta period, where power was based on strength, Mr. Kibaki recognised historical grievances to consolidate the Mount Kenya voting bloc. The Mount Kenya identity was centred on bloodshed during the British counterinsurgency and their repression during the Moi regime. Branch (2010), therefore, argues that political actors have increasingly exploited the relationship between violence and identity, solidifying ethnic bonds to contest elections. The Mau Mau movement memory has thus been used as a vehicle in the polls to provide the needed cohesion in Kikuyu politics.

The Mbeere Mau Mau movement adherents, in an FGD discussion held at Kombo Munyiri sublocation on January 31, 2020, acknowledged the need to keep away politics from the Mau Mau movement memory. Secondly, their brave and heroic actions should be recognised. By recognition, some proposed compensation to those who lost properties and because most of them were farmers, they suggested reparation payment in kind in form of livestock's which Mau Mau fighters took. However, Ben Kanyeji posited that the post-colonial government would do nothing to the Mau Mau veterans because it is allergic to them whenever the Mau Mau movement is mentioned.

The call for Mathenge's return was accompanied by litigation against the British government for atrocities against the Mau Mau insurgents. Moran (2019) observes that compensation for historic wrongs was once legally unthinkable because rules protected the past British government from legal responsibilities. The Mau Mau movement cases showed

assault, suppression, silencing of the Mau Mau insurgents through detention, hanging on mobile gallows and murder. Laman (2020) argues that the theory of the Mau Mau as a disease justified by Dr J.C. Crothers justified excessive use of military force to eradicate the 'mental disease.' The colonial government suspended the typical rule of law to preserve social order, perpetuating colonial massacres. The case re-ignited debates on the Mau Mau movement and the memorialisation of the Mau Mau movement gained momentum. Many Mau Mau veterans resurfaced to be registered for reparations (Kanyingi, 2015). For those who had died, their families, including grandchildren, resurfaced to benefit from the compensation from the British government. A stream of cases emerged on the historic colonial wrongs thought to be beyond judicial reach. However, such cases were perceived as too old to decide.

4.5.5 The Mau Mau Associations and Power of Victimhood

The formation of the Mau Mau Associations began with the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru because the Mau Mau movement adherents' suffering was highly publicised among them, hence receiving greater attention. Although the Mbeere suffered, their oppression experiences never received significant public attention as their contribution to the Mau Mau movement and experiences were lumped together with the Embu. Peterson (2006) acknowledges that the Mau Mau movement memories play an active role in society depending on the ability to claim ownership of the memory of the rebellion. It yields legitimacy, moral authority and political and economic power as experienced by the Embu in remembering the Mau Mau movement in Embu District. Validating the Mau Mau claims published by David Anderson, *Histories of the hanged: the dirty war in Kenya and the end of empire* and Caroline Elkins *Imperial reckoning: the untold story of British gulag in*

Kenya failed to establish the link of the Mbeere in a complex web of detentions and abuses. The Kikuyu, Embu and Meru were the ultimate victims as archival sources reflect evidence for colonial genocide in Kenya, a position they shielded in the Mau Mau Associations to receive an apology and monetary compensation. In most Mau Mau Veteran Associations, the protocol and national executive board were headed by the Kikuyu, bestowing power on the supposed victims. It clearly illustrates that identifying a community as a victim provides a legitimate claim as players in the Mau Mau and shaping public opinion on reparation issues.

The post-colonial theory, which argues that a dominant group has the mandate to establish its worldview as universal and shape the subordinate groups' interests and needs, is applied in this study. Before Elkins and Anderson's publications, Africans wrote on atrocities meted on the Mau Mau supporters in detentions and villages, but the narrative was only recognised when western scholars controlled the history. The current research posits that unless the Mbeere's claim for compensation is acknowledged by the War Veteran's Association headed by dominant groups, then legitimised by western scholars who could not differentiate Muembu and Mumbeere distinctly in retelling Kenya's past, they will remain silenced yet they suffered greatly under colonial rule. In the absence of laying such a claim, the voices of the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans will remain voiceless or subjugated by the Embu voice.

4.5.6 We are Hopeful

Not everybody who suffered during the colonial period was able to receive reparation in the first claim. In 2013, the British government settled a claim in favour of the claimants.

In the settlement, they agreed to pay 5,228 Mau Mau victims £13.9 million, where each claimant was to receive £ 2,658 (Kanyingi, 2015). In the United Kingdom Parliament, Foreign Secretary William Hague said;

I would like to make clear now and for the first time, on behalf of Her Majesty's government, that we understand the pain and grievance felt by those who were involved in the events of the Emergency in Kenya. The British government recognises that Kenyans were subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment at the hands of the colonial administration. The British government sincerely regrets that these abuses took place and marred Kenya's progress towards independence. Torture and ill-treatment are abhorrent violations of human dignity, which we unreservedly condemn (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2013, par.4).

The Mbeere Mau Mau movement surviving claimants have minimal financial resources and leaving them out from historical injustices claims in Kenya means the desired healing among the Mau Mau veterans will be a nightmare. It will create a cleavage between those compensated and those left out, as noted by Gathagu wa Titima (O.I, 11/08/2020) at the Kombo Munyiri sublocation. He vividly recollected how he called Gitu wa Kahengeri, seeking clarification on why he was omitted from the reparation process. Gitu wa Kahengeri, the then chairperson of the Mau Mau War Veterans Association, could not answer why he was left out, yet he knew his contribution to the Mau Mau insurgency. However, once bitten twice shy, the Mau Mau veterans like Gathagu wa Titima are hesitant to narrate their encounters as they deem information obtained benefits researchers.

As one travels from Embu to Kiritiri on Mondays, near Mwanyari, older men and women gather at Mwanyari Chief's Office. The Chiefs Office is located on top of a hill, which impedes the frail Mau Mau veterans from reaching the office in time. Despite the constraint on accessibility, the veterans always walk in frailty filled with the hope of indemnification. Like Gaconi wa Muturi and Sarah Igoki, those incapacitated send their children to the

meetings, which serve as a source of hope for reparation. In some instances, the Mau Mau movement veterans can spend the whole day waiting for the Mau Mau movement spokesperson from Nairobi to come and address them. "Mr. Ngacha Karani came and gave us hope that our money is on the way coming for the damages caused through the spilling of blood and destruction of property," Wangui Mbuya explained (O.I, 1/02/2020) at Umu-Nyangwa. Mr. Ngacha Karani was the chairperson of Mau Mau Original lobby group, although his leadership was criticised in 2007 when he presented papers to vie for the Presidency (Wangui, May 10, 2017). As they sit under a tree, the Mau Mau veterans are hopeful. Women stretch their legs straight on the ground, a coded language synonymous with the Mau Mau movement secret codes. Monday is a Market day in Kiritiri and the Mau Mau movement veterans from Mavuria, Itabua and Mbeti have commodified the Mau Mau movement meetings. Thus, they sell farm produce to sustain themselves as they await their turn to be compensated by the Britain government.

To sum up the FGDs at Mwanyare and Kombo Munyiri sub-locations, the Mau Mau movement veterans said they used to meet at Ishiara, where their names and identification numbers were taken and promised to wait for reparation. However, although some of them died waiting for the payment, they remain hopeful. Other Mau Mau veterans' informants were registered at Kiritiri and given some forms to fill; "We have the forms at home since they never came back for them." Some of the Mau Mau veterans revealed that they had been members for 15 years. In those 15 years, they never received anything, yet they contributed facilitation fees. Considering the waiting period, the Mbeere Mau Mau movement veterans are frustrated. Their frustrations, in particular, emanate from lack of

recognition and delayed reparation, yet they suffered as the other dwellers in the Kikuyu Land Unit. Adriano Nthiga Mukinyango (O.I, 10/02/2020) held at Kathimari-Nguthi sublocation revealed that their names were written down for compensation by Fundi wa Mugire, a former sub-chief. Mukinyango summed up the feeling of the many who were tortured and never recompensed. Mukinyango further reported, “It hurts to date. I have never forgiven him. The beatings have made me weak.” Gathagu wa Titima, an ex-Mau Mau general, explained how he stayed in the forest for seven years and when the colonial government announced an amnesty, he and the other four Kikuyu refused to surrender. After the arrest, he recollected how the situation was challenging due to cold, hunger, and beating at the Pangani rehabilitation centre. After being taken to Embu, the British officials recognised he was general Wakimere attracting massive beating during interrogation. The interrogators asked about a gun suspected to be in his possession. He also noted that Kavinde and Kumenya, who refused to surrender their guns, were killed, but he was advised by Kimani wa Ndirangu nicknamed *Mutiira*, to confess or face death.

Titus Ngochi in an FGD discussion held at Kombo Munyiri sub-location on January 31, 2020, narrated how one day at Kianjabi, police came at night; they found him in the house, stripped him naked and beat him while searching for Mau Mau insurgents. His name was among those written down at Kiritiri in 2014 for recompense, but nothing has come to date. Jeremiah Nyaga Mwaniki vividly remembered being hit by the white man, breaking his ribs at *Katharari* (Kasarani, Nairobi). In his words-the, beating incapacitated him;

I cannot walk straight due to the beatings; I cannot protect myself better, and I cannot even chase after women; I cannot run.' So, we returned home from Nairobi to search for jobs, but I was horrified to find that the Home Guards had killed my grandfather and uncle.

Julieta Mutave Njeru also narrated how her husband was shot on the thigh at Kasarani. They were then forced to sell their land to feed the children. Gladys Njoka Njeru also lost her husband in the hands of the colonialists, “I am still in pain from the white folk (*Mzungu*) killing my husband at Kĩamaranga hill near Runyenjes, leaving me with three children. I have never even seen his burial ground.”

While some memories of the movement may unify the two ethnic communities, others may divide them further depending on who controls public memory. The fact is that the Embu benefited more than the Mbeere in the reparation process, which pains them. Notably, they joined hands to fight the colonialists, but they were excluded when the ‘cake’ was shared. Although Joseph Kabiero never participated in the Mau Mau resistance war, his brother Tumbo Kabiero participated. Tumbo made many trips to Nairobi, but nothing had been paid, yet his friends in Nyeri received monetary compensation as a form of respect and attention. From the testimonies and Association books under the custody of Njuki wa Mitambo, Association secretary, none of the Mbeere interviewed had received any form of payment. Njuki wa Mitambo (O.I, 5/02/2020) at Riandu acknowledged that the Mbeere received nothing as recompense; hence, reparative justice is far from home.

4.6 Summary

In the first subsection, the intrusion of colonial rule could not have succeeded in the vast region of Embu District without the institution of chieftaincy. This institution impacted the livelihood of every occupant of the Embu District through taxation, communal labour, and other colonial policies. The first sign of disruption used by colonial agents was portraying the Embu as superior and development-oriented while the Mbeere as lazy; therefore, the

Mau Mau insurgents' hope to unify the masses in Embu Division was never realised. The two communities, previously under oath, viewed each other with suspicion. The suspicion was exacerbated by boundary issues, the Mau Mau movement's oath and unequal and incomplete development. The colonial government always emphasised how the Mbeere benefited a lot from colonial projects, yet up to 1960, most of these projects were incomplete or non-existent. To worsen the situation further, elders who were the custodians of the law and governance were replaced by colonial government-appointed chiefs who valued their continued stay in power more than their people's lives. The colonial project's execution determined whether a chief would remain in power or not. Chiefs played a critical role in entrenching the colonial administration in the Mbeere Division as they ensured their people followed colonial policies to the letter. Individuals who contravened the chief's authority were jailed, fined and sometimes forced to flee to another location. However, the Embu and the Mbeere responded to the Mau Mau movement's intrusion into Embu Division. The Embu took the movement's oath in large numbers, while the spread of the movement's oath in Mbeere was crippled by a sparse population and the presence of formidable chiefs who were against the Mau Mau movement's ideologies. The Mbeere chiefs were determined to stop the movement's spread, giving the colonial government leeway to organise themselves and subdue the movement. Consequently, the Embu perceived the Mbeere as 'women,' and they were entitled to forcefully oath them without explaining the reasons for taking the oath. The Mbeere had no option but to arm themselves and, with the help of Chief Mwandiko, organised revenge attacks on the Embu. The death of Chief Fausto witnessed the widening of the rift in the relationship between the two communities further as the colonial government used the Mbeere Home Guards stationed

at Ishiara to attack the Embu in Kyeni location. It allowed retaliation, and even the Embu at Ishiara were attacked. However, as the colonial government was determined to end the Mau Mau movement through overt and covert operations, the Mbeere chiefs saw what was happening in Kikuyu land. They quickly salvaged their people through de-oathing, a process the Embu chiefs never applied to save their people from the pipeline.

It is well demonstrated in the second subsection that the Mbeere, like the Embu, were not immune to colonial oppression. They shared subaltern consciousness as those within the Kikuyu Land Unit. The Mbeere were aware that if they did not join others in Central Province, they would experience discrimination and prosecution. Oathing was not a new phenomenon among the Mbeere; it existed in the precolonial period, and when the Kikuyu spearheaded it for solidarity, the Mbeere had no option but to join the bandwagon. The urban-based Mbeere were quick to learn from the Mau Mau insurgents in Nairobi and returned to oath their kins while explaining the need to make a political commitment with others. Furthermore, the Kikuyu and the Embu, who were in the same locality, attempted to connect with other localities through coded messages, songs and an oath for strategic alliances. The oath was binding, and the Mbeere understood the repercussions of transgressing on the words uttered, which clearly shows the Mbeere took the oath but chose to remain quiet based on their positionality on rituals and oathing. The Mau Mau oathing reinforced social bonds, and the invocation of Gikuyu and Mumbi fostered the local bond. The Mbeere were obliged to be their brother's keepers and be able to respond to the neighbour's plea for help. The Mbeere joined in counterhegemonic songs, which were always sung in Kikuyu. It shows the Kikuyu experiences in the movement prominently feature the Mbeere as they (Kikuyu) tried to forge alliances in Central Province. The

coalition of the Mbeere for decolonisation can be attested in songs that mattered to those in the insurgency. These songs portray insurgent consciousness and stress on a common lineage by evoking the history of Mumbi and Gikuyu. They also imply territoriality (the nation of Kirinyaga), showing common heritage and habitat and sometimes transcending the borders to other areas like Ngong (where the house of Mumbi was available for interaction). The Mbeere Mau Mau movement supporters were in a precarious situation due to surveillance of powerful Mbeere chiefs who resented the Mau Mau insurgency. Thus, suspicion among the Mbeere was accompanied by constant intervention by the Embu Mau Mau movement supporters, who perceived the Mbeere as loyalists. To conceal themselves, encoding information played a significant role in excluding 'outsiders' and pseudo-gangs. For the Mbeere to reinforce group solidarity, identification and a distinctive social context, they understood the Mau Mau movement's secret codes, based on which they developed their own for the progression of the insurgency. It illustrates the autonomy of subaltern consciousness dependent on the self as a practice of anti-colonial feelings. Moreover, the military strategies employed by the colonial government targeted certain localities; therefore, as long as the Mbeere Division was within the Kikuyu Land Unit, they were not immune to 'short sharp shock' pain, followed by the fear of more pain.

It is clearly shown in the third subsection that the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru were blamed for the outbreak of the Mau Mau violence. However, the post-independence scholars borrowed a lot from the Mau Mau colonial discourse, failing to capture the subalterns who were determined to make their history; hence, the Mau Mau discourse took a different shape and form. Apart from scholars, the postcolonial ruling elites, whom Fanon

referred to as 'go-between,' a class serving as an intermediary between the colonial masters and the colonised masses, inherited unfair colonial legacies that favoured the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. The Mbeere behaviour is characterised as a troubled identity, constantly shifting, and the Embu took that opportunity. The Mbeere were merged with Embu, lacking an identity to legitimise their narrative. Additionally, the environment in Mbeere presents the residents as more consumers than the Embu inhabitants, who were producers and able to venture into other businesses. The Embu consolidated power and were able to thwart opposition to hegemonic projects. Thus, the Embu controlled the Mau Mau memory's identity, leaving the Mbeere residents at the periphery in the Mau Mau discourse. Positionality also played a role in the Mbeere exclusion in the Mau Mau historiography. The colonial government rendered the Mbeere unprogressively and their region a place where political consciousness was least expected. The Mau Mau scholars fell on the same bandwagon, perceiving the Mount Kenya region as the arena of the Mau Mau movement without interrogating how the Mau Mau movement was changing tactics, oscillating from the forests to the reserves. As a result, they failed to counter the colonial narrative and create an alternative discourse that redeems the peripheral communities from colonial injustices. Independent schools played a critical role in awakening subaltern consciousness. However, the lack of these institutions in Mbeere hindered autonomous consciousness, and they depended on others to make their move. Moreover, the existence of these institutions amplified the problem of the community in question to the entire nation. Thus, the Mbeere were left out when other central Kenya dwellers were negotiating on how to handle issues that affected them, which caused the others to consider the Mbeere as being in a comfort zone. The amputation of the Mbeere ears as a label was highly magnified and irreversible.

The Embu, Kikuyu and Meru validated the label, a sign of a traitor. All these factors conspired to exclude the Mbeere from subaltern consciousness passed from generation to generation. It also led to a permanent transition to low status, which was hard to incorporate while writing the history of the Mau Mau movement that lauded the populace and the victors. The colonial projects were crucial instruments used by the DOI as a cover for Mau Mau movement propaganda. Furthermore, the assertion that the Mbeere community were the favourite community of the colonial government in the Embu District created disunity and a strong belief that the Mbeere were not committed to the Mau Mau movement.

In the fourth subsection, the decolonisation war was not a walk in the park. Kenyans suffered, primarily if their originality was traced to central Kenya. However, there are different perceptions of the Mau Mau movement, especially in central Kenya, where labelling was constructed, showing that some people suffered and others benefited at the expense of others. Those who suffered more have justified and publicised their suffering, cementing their claim to victimhood. This position simultaneously determined who was included and excluded; the local and international scholars adopted it to validate their claims. These groups that played victimhood also used their power in shaping public opinion in determining whether other groups would play the victim status. The Mbeere, just like other central Kenya residents, experienced colonial atrocities and harsh conditions in KLU, Nairobi, the expansive Rift Valley, or the Embu District diversely. However, their evidence of contribution has been buried within the Embu shapers of the dominant Mau Mau narrative in Embu County. The Embu repressed the legitimacy of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau movement through a well-crafted scheme backed by other residents in central

Kenya, erasing the legitimacy of the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans. Portraying the Mbeere effeminate and less human evoked their removal from the context surrounding the uprising. The narrative of victimhood centred on KEM allowed them to form Mau Mau Associations and file a lawsuit against the British government for crimes against humanity, where some received monetary compensation. Nevertheless, the Mbeere were left out, yet they suffered torture and oppression, but they remain hopeful despite limitations in the narrative of victimhood. The Mbeere also lost land and embarked on discovering themselves in the Kenyan courts, as evidenced in oral testimonies. The Mbeere Mau Mau movement adherents and the community at large are thus still hopeful. The first step, therefore, entails retelling the past to shape public memory. There is a competition of narratives, and the Mau Mau movement memory symbolises power struggle in the society; however, hope remains that justice will be realised through the Kenyan and British governments, respectively, for healing to occur.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter provides a summary of the study's key findings, conclusion and recommendation. When the British colonisers came to Kenya, they created the institution of chieftaincy, an indigenous class around which history revolved, disregarding others on the social ladder. The colonial history thus orbited around them, ignoring the subalterns. To create the account of the subaltern in the Mbeere Division, the researcher interrogated the role of the Mbeere chiefs in colonial penetration and how they related to 'others.'

5.2 Summary of the Findings

On the first objective to establish the role of Mbeere chiefs in colonial penetration and administration, it is clear that the history of the subalterns is always fragmented and can be deliberated through their connection and affiliation to colonial power formations (chieftaincy) that played a critical role in development and transformations. This dominant political formation influenced programmes proposed by the central government to the people, transitioning from the pre-capitalistic mode to colonial capitalism formation. The chiefs in these transitions amassed much wealth as they played a critical role in economic spheres, which translated to dominance. The institution of chiefship determined the community's direction through power relations, either obeying or disobeying the policies in place, inter-ethnic and production relations. Therefore, there was constant disruption of the activities of the subalterns by the ruling groups. The chief perspective (ruling group) was crucial to complete a historical cycle. The Mbeere chiefs were at the helm of the

colonial penetration and were determined to keep the Mau Mau movement consciousness out of Mbeere Division.

There were long organisational processes and other preparation forms in every revolt. Chiefs in the Embu District were organising how to expel the colonial master. They retracted their commitment to the Mau Mau movement course when they realised that the emerging Mau Mau insurgents threatened their power. The British government guaranteed the chiefs security as long they danced to their tune. Therefore, the chiefs' support of colonial power gave the colonial government leeway to organise themselves and subdue the movement. The chiefs (elites) determined the Mbeere and Embu relationship. The elites decided the right time for the Mbeere to respond to the Embu attacks. It demonstrates that subaltern history is a suppressed narrative, incomplete as pure subaltern consciousness is futile. Thus, the chiefs defined the representation of the Mbeere and their reactions to colonial rule profoundly affected how other communities in central Kenya perceived them.

The archival sources by colonial administrators revolved around the chiefs and statuses of divisions. These materials focused on the hegemonic class (chiefs, agricultural and veterinary officers) and their relations with colonial administrators. The death of Chief Fausto served as a notable example of a construction of a history of the ruling class and their reaction to control and security, as Chief Mwandiko authorised his Home Guards to attack the Embu as colonialists avenged the death of Chief Fausto. From the attacks, subaltern consciousness developed, as reflected in the attacks. While the Mbeere, just like other residents of the Kikuyu Land Unit, were not immune to colonial domination. They had no option but rose to the occasion disregarding the ruling groups (chiefs) who

collaborated with the enemy (the British government). The subalterns realised they were exploited and dominated, opposing the institution legitimised and imposed on them. They were anxious to defend (land and freedom) but the foreign institutions of the chieftaincy were determined to suppress the people's voice. Chieftaincy was thus an institution created for subjugation and domination as they tried to establish unconditional loyalty to the British government. Although some chiefs were determined to deter the promises of the Mau Mau movement of self-mastery, another force from Nairobi planned how to magnify subaltern consciousness. The urban-based Mbeere played a critical role in political awareness and preparing for a confrontation to fill the gap between the chiefs with no traditional standing.

On the second objective, to assess the evidence of the contribution of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau struggle, it was clear that with Mau Mau's popularity glowing, the urban-based Mbeere became powerful and influential. Urban-based Mbeere played a critical role in the spread of Mau Mau consciousness, and they were highly trusted. Notably, to ensure loyalty to the Mau Mau movement goals, the transformation of native minds was an integral part and therefore oathing was a vital ingredient of the movement demonising the "civilising mission" of colonialism. Oathing was not a new phenomenon among the Mbeere; it existed in the precolonial period. The Kikuyu spearheaded the Mau Mau oath for solidarity and the Mbeere had no option but to join the bandwagon. The Mau Mau oathing reinforced social bonds, and the invocation of Gikuyu and Mumbi fostered the local bond. However, oathing was secretive, and as the movement grew, insurgents invented secret codes to defeat the enemy.

Besides introducing the oath, the Kikuyu crafted songs and relayed them all over central Kenya. The Mau Mau situation compelled the Mbeere Mau Mau movement adherents to master the songs as they created a sense of belonging and oneness that was foreign to non-members. Notably, songs created political consciousness expressed orally and only made sense to those within the insurgency. The songs portrayed subaltern consciousness stretching from Olenguruone, Nairobi and settler farms all over Kenya where the Kikuyu, Embu, Mbeere and Meru used to work. Therefore, songs were part of the strategy to oppose domination; they were also an expression of oppositional consciousness against hegemonic power. The Mbeere Mau Mau insurgents also used secret codes that affirmed oneness to those who had taken the oath and showed a strong sense of purpose. The codes were applicable in many parts of Kenya, demonstrating that the Mau Mau movement was much organised and that the desire to be free from repressive conditions, everyday fears and uncertainties connected those who had taken the oath. The oath offered direction and inspiration beyond the widening inequalities among the communities involved. It also created an emancipatory vision for all sorts of exploitation experienced in Kenya.

Because the Mau Mau movement was against the established colonial structure, they inverted a symbol of authority. Dedan Kimathi symbolised power within the Mau Mau movement and was recognised even among Mbeere Mau Mau adherents. The Mbeere Mau Mau veterans referred to Dedan Kimathi as Field Marshal of the Mau Mau movement. Notably, endorsing and honouring such titles demonstrated the destruction of the authority of the hegemonic class. The Mbeere Mau Mau movement followers celebrated their heroes, who quickly resonated with the Mbeere Mau Mau movement followers from Ishiara to

Kombo Munyiri Sub-location. They remembered and adored them for their role in the insurgency. Others were even named 'Generals,' a rank in the British army and appropriated as a sign of negation, destroying symbols of British authority. Thus, the Mbeere insurgent consciousness in a militaristic environment was paid by blood, loss of property and loved ones. Nevertheless, most of them remained unbowed.

The third objective was to examine the reasons for the exclusion of the Mbeere in Mau Mau discourse. It was established that most narratives on the Mau Mau movement focused on the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru, which clearly shows the failure of historians to interrogate issues in totality and over-reliance on primary discourses that served the interests of the colonial government. Primary discourses are invaluable sources of information, but keenness is needed to interpret these materials. The Mbeere Mau Mau movement veterans could articulate their experiences, often ignored and disqualified for a long time. Geographical positioning, ear cutting to create identifiers, lack of independent schools and low and sparse population density subjugated knowledge of the Mbeere in Mau Mau insurgency.

Under the newly created 'Emergency Expenditure Funds', various departments in the colony used the money to fight against the Mau Mau. Projects were critical instruments used by the DOI as concealment for Mau Mau propaganda. The surge of propaganda asserted that the Mbeere community were a colonial government's hand-picked community in the Embu District to create disunity and a strong belief that the Mbeere were not involved in the Mau Mau movement. Notably, the Embu District propaganda was well crafted and

justified by the DOI. The official reports note how the Mbeere received the government monies, and other communities envied it; furthermore, the colonial government illustrated how monies the three communities contributed as taxes benefited 'the hand-picked' Mbeere community more than the rest. The colonial devised scheme through DOI-managed information was rewarding for the colony as Mbeere compliant rate with the Mau Mau ideologies decreased, making it widely known among the Embu residents that the Mbeere were working for the government. The Embu seriously took this narrative and reflected on how they treated and presented the Mbeere to other residents in central Kenya. As a result, the Embu felt threatened and thus reduced the Mbeere to traitors. To normalise the threat, the Embu began attacking the Mbeere, acts that became acute with time. The effort to separate Embu and the Mbeere was further pushed by the Mbeere chiefs, who also dehumanised the Embu, designating them as enemies and criminals, a clear violation of peace oaths the two communities had engaged in before colonial contacts. As a result, there was an escalating pattern of violence, fear, and intimidation between the two communities, indicating that the purveyor of these propagandas' expected outcome worked. Even though Embu Division received colonial projects, they had limited media coverage during the emergency period because of their strong alignment with the Mau Mau movement, as reported in Colonial Official Records. Through social welfare and colonial projects, propaganda provided shreds of evidence of coordinated onslaughts and a must-stop of the Mau Mau movement's brainwashing. The propaganda fooled the Embu and Mbeere as manifested in historical silencing and looming suspicion still experienced in contemporary Embu County.

Lastly, in evaluating how the Kenya and British governments recognised and compensated the Mbeere people, it is clear there is a bitter struggle in the experiences of the Mau Mau veterans in Kenya and the Mbeere Division in particular. Notably, the Kenyan government is yet to allocate land to the veterans, and compensation is still pending. From oral testimonies in Mbeere Sub-counties, it was evident that although the Mbeere were neglected in the initial reparation claim, they are relentless in their request for reparation, as evidenced in **Appendix VII**. The Mbeere, although unrecognised, were victims of gross and systematic human rights violations that emerged in colonial Kenya. The emergency in Kenya left a scar that took many years to heal; failure for recognition like others has been detrimental, yet, the emergency punitive measures within the autochthonous region of Mbeere were inconceivable. Markedly, these punitive measures were carried out by the colonialists, chiefs and extended by the Embu Mau Mau adherents. As the colonial government concentrated on breaking off the spread of Mau Mau consciousness, the Mbeere, like the Embu, faced a deteriorating health care system and poor trade relationships because Embu was the food basket of the Mbeere. It led to the conversion and confinement of the Mbeere region to a police-like state, disturbing their socialisation with no repair modalities. Subsequently, most experienced trauma as they lost their loved ones, personal properties and suffered the psychological impact of exclusion and labelling.

In the post-emergency period, the colonial administration shifted their commitment to the Embu and considered the Mbeere lesser and anti-development. Consequently, the Embu dominated the public sphere, a narrative upheld by scholars concealing the contribution of the Mbeere. This narrative created profound anxiety about the status of the Mbeere in the

Embu District, who lost land to the Embu and *auki* (newcomers) with colonial projects concentrated in the Embu and the Mbeere region alienated in decision-making on development. Notably, Jeremiah Nyagah was the hope of the Mbeere, whose goal was to impress Her Majesty the Queen's government at the expense of his people.

The post-independence government in Kenya did not consider the contribution of the Mau Mau veterans' worth of compensation as per the victims' expectations. In coming to terms with the past, the pursuit of reparations and apologies for a wide array of past injustices received more attention during President Kibaki's regime. The Kibaki government used Mau Mau memories to charm the populace in central Kenya who associated themselves with Mau Mau movement memories. However, the government did not show any grand plans for the veterans. Instead, they shifted the weight to the British government. They never assumed responsibility for those Mau Mau movement veterans who lost land through colonial policies against the Mau Mau movement supporters. Subsequently, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and satisfaction are yet to be achieved for Mbeere Mau Mau veterans.

5.3 Conclusions

The colonial rule disrupted the Mbeere's way of life. The role of the chiefs in colonial penetration and the spread of the Mau Mau movement cannot be overestimated. Chief Kombo, perceived as the paramount chief of the Mbeere, was a voice of reason to the colonial powers. His stand against the Mau Mau movement was highly publicised by the DOI and painted the picture of the Mbeere as loyalists. Chief Mwandiko Ngira legitimised the colonial powers' claim as he ruthlessly dealt with the Mau Mau movement cases,

collaborating with the colonial administrators to torment his people. Secondly, the colonial administrators believed that the Kikuyu and the Embu forcefully oathed the Mbeere as the land issue was not grave in Mbeere Division. Therefore, the fundamental connection (land), an objective of the Mau Mau movement, was weak. The weak land agitation among the Mbeere was highly politicised in colonial Kenya and manipulated in post-colonial Embu.

The idea of de-oathing carried out by the Mbeere chiefs was also highly regarded; to the colonial government, it was powerful and could remove the Mau Mau movement oath in de-oathing ceremonies entirely compared to other Divisions in the districts. It led to suspicion among the Embu District inhabitants as most Mbeere were freed from detention camps. Despite the Mbeere chiefs collaborating with the colonial administrators, the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans narrated how their chiefs took a broad move in assuring the colonial officials Mbeere's de-oathing prowess, thus rescuing them from detention.

To win over the Mbeere, the colonial government engaged in hegemonic projects coupled with propaganda to bind the Mbeere. This project became a source of suspicion on the position of the Mbeere against colonialism. The present predicaments of the Mbeere are based on colonial projects, then used by the Embu as a strategy to eliminate the Mbeere in the glorious phase of the war of resistance. The elimination and labelling of the Mbeere as loyalists greatly dishonoured their contribution to the fight for self-mastery. Meanwhile, the participation of the Mbeere in the Mau Mau was not *en masse* compared with the Kikuyu and Embu. The Embu considered them a small population insignificant to impact change in the Mau Mau movement.

Subaltern consciousness was vital to the already overwhelmed central Kenya residents. As subaltern consciousness spread all over central Kenya with a promise of a liberated Kenya, the Mbeere could not imagine being left out of the Mau Mau bandwagon. The Mau Mau bandwagon created unique communication which only mattered to those who shared subaltern consciousness. The Mbeere had no option but join other key players; hence their contribution to the movement was immense. In the study, it was evident that marginalised communities had no power to speak about their experiences. The marginalisation was well crafted, as it began with colonial administrators and then amplified by the Embu and the elites. The Mbeere were denied recognition as historical actors or subaltern consciousness as their legacy of the Mau Mau movement was obscured. As mentioned, the Mbeere became victims of their cousins (the Embu) and academic works demonstrating the power of concealed identity.

Friedrich Nietzsche borrows the idea of David Hume on "historical men." Their vision of the past turns them towards the future, encourages them to persevere in life and kindles the hope that justice will come and happiness is behind the mountain they are climbing. They believe that the meaning of existence will become apparent in evolution; they look backwards at the process only to understand the present and stimulate their longing for the future. Friedrich Nietzsche demonstrated that certain men were hopeful and had become a symbol of hope to undo the silence to fill the historical quest for what happened and how it happened. The need to write and rewrite the history of the Mau Mau movement has become even more urgent as people invent ways of coming to terms with the tormenting

legacies of past relations. These events are operative on the surviving Mbeere veterans as the past refuses to remain in the past. On the contrary, it continues to resonate, calling for a response in the present before the transition to the afterlife

In Kenya, the coveted land and freedom that the Mau Mau movement fighters fought for are partially felt, the narrative is changing, and the constitution has recognised those who fought for independence, coupled with an apology from the British government. Also, the Mau Mau veterans are taking the opportunity to voice their stories regarding what and how it happened as they fought to liberate Kenya. The unveiling of the Mau Mau memorial in Nairobi was a sign of the Kenyan government appreciating the role of the Mau Mau fighters in public spaces. It shows hope in recasting a new Mau Mau narrative that is inclusive and remembered positively. However, Chinua Achebe noted, "Until lions have their own historian, the tale of the hunt will only glorify the hunter. . ." The lion denotes the Mbeere, who are determined to have a history and the hunter (the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru). The quote means that until the voice of the Mbeere is part of history, the voice of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru will always prevail. Achebe thus calls for Africans to challenge the silence. In this regard, the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans are hopeful that the new narrative from scholars who collect first-hand information is a breakthrough for the community and favours posterity. It will also recognise them as a community that suffered in the Kenyan liberation struggle independent of the Embu. Thus, the Mbeere are hopeful for their recognition and contribution followed by reparation, a form of repair of sour relations that may involve truth commissions and monetary compensation to those who suffered. Lastly,

change in the education curricula that lauds dominant ethnic groups at the expense of the under-represented comes in handy to mend past wrongs.

5.4 Recommendations

The Mau Mau debates will not end soon as researchers uncover the contribution of voiceless and marginalised communities. Notably, with the growing attention of the marginalised narratives, the Mau Mau narratives should be observed as worthy of analysis because the Mau Mau in modern-day Kenya represents more than the insurgents intended. The Mau Mau narrative has taken a different path; it defines power, legitimacy and modelled to achieve specific purposes in resource allocation and influence in contemporary politics. The Mbeere involvement in the Mau Mau insurgency as seers was deeper than assumed; they utilised an unmarked villagisation process by scavenging food for the Mau Mau insurgency. In addition, they used non-KEM status to evade detection as a tactical of war for insurgency's sake. These two areas need further research for posterity.

This study engaged with knowledge produced by the community understudy undergirded by believing every Mumbeere veteran had something special. A new wave of research justice calls for knowledge creation to achieve liberation and justice for global citizens who are invisible or powerless to build power. This approach can be replicated in other peripheral communities in Kenya to retell their past. The need to rewrite the history of the Mbeere is ripe and to show nuances of the Mbeere marginalisation in resource allocation and how it intersects with the history of decolonisation. In addition, scholars ask a pertinent question of how to use the Mau Mau movement's historical experience to critique contemporary Kenya. Finally, there is a need for extensive research to determine the

Mbeere marginalisation after the post-dispensation of the new constitution. Moreover, there is a need to review the relationship between Embu and the Mbeere in Embu County politics that has continued to be unpredictable, especially with the devolved government having power and unimpeded control over resources. Lastly, review the state of non-Embu (the Kikuyu *ahoi* and the Kamba) who claimed to have been born into the Embu tribe while the colonial government, the Embu elders and ADC members expressed in 1961 that there was no place for them in the District. As of July 1965, the government contemplated expeditious removal or alternative measures for settlement.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Oral Sources

All the interviews, photos, in-depth interviews, FGDs were recorded and stored in safe custody.

Name of the Respondents	Gender	Place of interview	Date of Interview	Nature of the Interview
Samuel Mbaka	Male	Nguru-Kianjiru Location	30/01/2020	Indepth Interview
Mwaniki Mwangario	Male	Nguru-Kianjiru Location	30/01/2020	Indepth Interview
Flora GatitiNjege	Female	Kamurugu	31/01/2020	Indepth Interview
Titus Ngoci Mburano	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Njue Njuki	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Joseph Muchungu	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Mwaniki Njoka	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Kariuki Kombo	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Ireri Muranga	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Rukuthu wa Njiru	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	31/01/2020	Focus Group Discussion
MiriAm Mbuya (Wangui)	Female	Umau-Nyangwa	1/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Njeru Muchiri	Male	Umau-Nyangwa	1/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Gaconi wa Muturi Muketho	Female	Nyangwa	1/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Nyaga wa Nthumbi	Male	Nyangwa	1/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Sarah Igoki Gitabari	Female	Nyangwa	1/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Naleah Muregi	Female	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Angelica Mbutha Mbiti	Female	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Gladys Njoka Njiru,	Female	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Julietta Mutave Njeru	Female	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Juliana Ndegi Konji	Female	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Beatrice Ndegi Githinji	Female	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Jeremiah Nyaga Mwaniki	Male	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Muturi Ndaru	Male	Mwanyare	3/2/2020	Focus Group Discussion
Mugo Wa Malindi	Male	Ngangare	4/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Nyaga wa Kimani	Male	Gachoka	4/2/2020	Oral interview
Wamaitha Wabuthe	Female	Gachoka	4/2/2020	Oral interview
Muthengi Mugwate	Male	Gachoka	4/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Jeremiah Mugo Mutavi	Male	Siakago	5/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Ngari wa Nganga	Male	Gikuyari	5/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Njuki Wa Mitambo	Male	Riandu	5/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Ben Kanyenji	Male	Nthawa	5/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Agnes Ngungi	Female	Nthawa	6/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Jerusha Mbeti Njeru	Female	Nthawa	6/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Nahason Nyaga	Male	Ishiara	7/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Francis Njeru Mwea	Male	Kiare kia Makundi	7/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Paulo Ngutiri	Male	Ciagera	7/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Joseph Ndwiga Kabiero	Male	Ishiara	7/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Phides Garunji Njeru	Female	Ishiara	8/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Savana Giconi	Male	Nguthi	8/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Chrispin Mate	Male	Kanyuambora	8/2/2020	Oral interview
Mwaniki Kabeca	Male	Mutunduri	8/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Embu Muceke	Female	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Oral interview
Domiano Mate	Male	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Oral interview
Gabriel Nyaga	Male	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Oral interview
Ciambiti Ndwiga	Female	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Oral interview
Nthiga Mukinyango	Male	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Adriana Nthiga Nduma	Female	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Oral interview
Paulo Mate Mavuta	Male	Kathimari-Nguthi Sublocation	10/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Emiliciana Muringo Mugo	Female	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Marieta Ciangondi	Female	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Esther Cianjoka	Female	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Phides Thara Gaconi	Female	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Nazaria Mbaka	Female	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Taratision Njahe	Male	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Njagi Waweru	Male	Karurumo-Kyeni South	11/2/2020	Oral interview
Paul Ngondi	Male	Kanthanjuri-Kyeni Central	12/2/2020	Oral interview
Jackson Ireri Waweru	Male	Karungu-Kyeni Central	12/2/2020	Indepth Interview
Kathagu Titima	Male	Kombo Munyiri Sublocation	11/8/2020	Indepth Interview

Names of the informants listed at their discretion

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EX-FREEDOM FIGHTERS

My name is Benson Waiganjo Kanyingi. I am a postgraduate student at Karatina University conducting a research titled “**At the Periphery in Mau Mau Discourse: A Case of the Mbeere of Embu County, Kenya: 1952-2014.**” The researcher has selected you as the respondent in this study. Kindly answer the following questions to enable me to complete my study. I undertake to treat any information you provide in strict confidence and it shall be used strictly for academic purposes.

Name_____ Age/Age group_____

Sex_____ Occupation_____

Place of residence_____ Date of interview_____

This list of sample questions will be administered to the Mbeere people who participated in Mau Mau War

1. Were there Mbeere chiefs during the colonial period? If so, what role did they play during the colonial period in relation to Mau Mau movement?
2. Are you a Mau Mau veteran? If so, did you join the movement voluntarily or through coercion?
3. When did you join the Mau Mau movement (location and date)?
4. Were you affected by Operation Anvil? If so, where were you and how many Mbeere people were relocated to Kikuyu Land Unit?
5. How many people did you join with from your community? Explain why you joined the Mau Mau movement.

6. What was your contribution to the Mau Mau movement? Explain any event that stood out from your Mau Mau experience.
7. Did the Mbeere people join the Mau Mau movement en *masse*? If yes, how come they are never recognised in Mau Mau discourse?
8. Were the Mbeere treated differently from Kikuyu, Embu and Meru in Kikuyu Land Unit during the Mau Mau revolt? If yes, explain more why?
9. Was Mau Mau an act of nationalism bringing together groups and people to fight against the British? Explain.
10. Who was your leader in Mau Mau in the Mbeere region and Kenya in general?
11. Were you detained? If so, explain your experience in the detention camps. What were the dates and what was the location? Describe a moment that you remember that stood out based on your experience.
12. Are you associated with the Mau Mau Veteran's Association? If so, which ones and where? How long have you been affiliated?
13. Do you seek Mau Mau reparations? Explain why. Were you a victim? If so, explain as much as possible what happened include dates, location if possible.
14. Explain the aftermath of living with the abuses suffered during Mau Mau. How is it affecting you?
15. What does Mau Mau justice mean to you? Is it possible to find peace and justice as it relates to the Mau Mau abuses?
16. Is there anything you feel we have not discussed or should be added to this interview? If so, what?

APPENDIX II: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR EX-FREEDOM FIGHTERS

My name is Benson Waiganjo Kanyingi. I am a postgraduate student at Karatina University currently researching on the topic titled “**At the Periphery in Mau Mau Discourse: A Case of the Mbeere of Embu County, Kenya: 1952 -2014.**” The researcher has selected you as the respondent in this study. Kindly answer the following questions to enable me to complete my study. I undertake to treat any information you provide in strict confidence and it shall be used strictly for academic purposes.

General Information:

Name of participants and the location:

Number of participants in the discussion: []

Gender distribution: Male [] Female [] **Date:**

This list of sample questions will be administered to the Mbeere people who participated in Mau Mau War as a group.

1. How was your life before and during colonial rule?
2. During the colonial period, did chiefs rule you? If yes, who were they? What was their role with colonial penetration?
3. What role did the colonial chiefs play during the Mau Mau period?
4. How did the Mbeere relate with their neighbouring communities during the Mau Mau period?
5. Did you benefit from colonial encounters? If yes, how and why did you benefit.

6. Are you Mau Mau veterans? If yes, explain how you become a member (location, date, oath taken).
7. Did the Mbeere community contribute to the Mau Mau Movement? If yes, explain what their contribution was and why did they contribute. Finally, describe a moment that you remember that stood out based on your experience with Mau Mau.
8. Where did you fight? What were some of the locations? Are you proud of your service? Any disappointments?
9. Who are Mau Mau heroes or heroines? Why?
10. How comes the Mbeere community is not recognised to have participated in the Mau Mau war?
11. Were you detained during the Mau Mau upheavals? If so, explain your experience in the detention camps. What were the dates and what was the location? Explain an event that stood out from your Mau Mau experience.
12. Are you associated with any Mau Mau veteran's association? If so, which ones and where? How long have you been affiliated?
13. Do you seek Mau Mau reparations? Explain why. Why were you a victim? If so, explain as much as possible what happened include dates, location if possible.
14. Explain the aftermath of living based on the abuses suffered during Mau Mau. How is it affecting you?
15. What does Mau Mau justice mean to you? Is it possible to find peace and justice as it relates to the Mau Mau abuses?
16. What has the different regimes in Kenya done to address the plight of the Mbeere Mau Mau veterans?

APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOLARS

My name is Benson Waiganjo Kanyingi. I am a postgraduate student at Karatina University currently researching on the topic “**At the Periphery in Mau Mau Discourse: A Case of the Mbeere of Embu County, Kenya: 1952-2014.**” The researcher has selected you as the respondent in this study. Kindly answer the following questions to enable me to complete my study. I undertake to treat any information you provide in strict confidence and it shall be used strictly for academic purposes.

Name _____ **Age/Age group** _____

Sex _____ **Occupation** _____

Place of residence _____ **Date of interview** _____

This list of sample questions will be administered to scholars (Historian) in Embu County.

1. Were the Mbeere people ruled by chiefs? If yes, who were they? What was their role in colonial penetration?
2. What role did the colonial chiefs play during the Mau Mau period?
3. Did the Mbeere participate in the Mau Mau movement? If Yes/ No, please explain.
4. Did the Mbeere get what they were fighting for during the Mau Mau period? If yes, what was it? Please explain
5. Were the Mbeere people coerced to join the Mau Mau movement? If yes, who compelled them?
6. Do you agree that the community far from Mt. Kenya and Aberdare ranges never participated in the Mau Mau movement?
7. What was Embu and Mbeere's relation with the Mau Mau war of resistance?

8. Operation Anvil targeted the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. Where were the Mbeere grouped?
9. Mau Mau revolt was an act of nationalism bringing together groups and people to fight against the British. So how comes the Mbeere are never recognised to have contributed to the Mau Mau war of resistance?
10. Did the Mbeere contribution to the Mau Mau movement making a difference? How many participated in Mau Mau, in your opinion? Did they come from any particular area?
11. How comes even after classifying ethnic groups in the 1962 African population, the Mbeere are rarely mentioned in Mau Mau discourse?
12. What does Mau Mau justice mean to you? Is it possible to find peace and justice as it relates to the Mau Mau abuses?
13. Do you think the Mau Mau movement is remembered positively in Kenya?
14. Do you agree with the building of a Mau Mau memorial? What do you want people to remember about Mau Mau in this memorial or some other form?
15. What have different regimes in Kenya done to address the plight of the Mbeere Mau Mau war veterans?
16. Do you think the Mau Mau historiography should be re-written to capture the voice of the voiceless such as the Mbeere?
17. Is there anything you feel we have not discussed or should be added to this interview?
If so, what?

APPENDIX IV: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

AT THE PERIPHERY IN MAU MAU DISCOURSE: A CASE OF THE MBEERE OF EMBU COUNTY, KENYA: 1952-2014

Researcher: Kanyingi Benson Waiganjo

Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research. This statement contains detailed information about the research, and aims to clearly explain the research and its procedures

Purpose and Background

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of the Mbeere community in Mau Mau for Kenya's Independence and different perspectives on the Mau Mau reparation process. This research is about of a much larger effort to understand the role of communities at the periphery in Mau Mau struggle.

Procedures

Participation in this research will involve:

- The researcher will ask questions from the interview schedule.
- Select people who complete the questions asked will be invited to participate in a follow-up interviews or Focus Group Discussions.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

Any information obtained in connection with this research that can identify you will remain confidential, and can only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. If you complete the questions asked, I will use the results in my research and possibly in a research publication. These results will be reported completely anonymously, as only group data will be used, and you will not be identified. However, for detailed interviews it will be necessary to identify participants in the research publication.

Further Information

If you require further information or if you have any problems concerning this research, you can contact Kanyingi Benson Waiganjo, kanyingibenson@gmail.com or +254727039950

Consent

If you consent to participate in this research, please sign your name below. Then please respond to questions asked. Your completion of this interview questions will also be taken as evidence of your consent. We would like to thank you in advance for your assistance in this research effort.

Thank you,

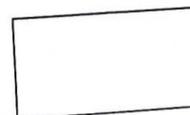
Kanyingi Benson

I agree to participate in the study of 'At the Periphery in Mau Mau Discourse: A Case of the Mbeere of Embu County, Kenya: 1952-2014,' conducted by Kanyingi Benson Waiganjo

Name _____

Signature _____

Thumb print of participant



APPENDIX V: UNIVERSITY ETHICAL APPROVAL



KARATINA UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

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P.O. Box 1957-10101, KARATINA
Website: www.karatinauniversity.ac.ke

Our Ref: Karu/DPS/09/VOL.I

Date: 20th February, 2020

The Director,
British Institute in East Africa,
P.O BOX 307101,
Laikipia Road, Kileleshwa,
Nairobi, Kenya.

REF: Kanvingi Benson Waiganjo: Ethical Approval, Risk Assessment and Data Protection.

This is to confirm that Benson Waiganjo is a bonifade postgraduate student of Karatina University. He has completed his coursework and has successfully defended his proposal. He is now in the process of starting the research field work in Embu County. His research topic is - **At the Periphery in Mau Mau Discourse: A case study of the Mbere of Embu county, Kenya: 1952-2014 for the period ending: 12th December 2020.**

Karatina University is grateful that BIEA will kindly finance his fieldwork research and data collection.

Karatina University confirms that Benson will adhere to high standard of research ethics during this exercise. Likewise, it is hereby affirmed that the general data protection regulations as stipulated by BIEA shall be observed. The research and data collected shall be risk assessed accordingly.

Prof.Patrick W. Mathenge

DIRECTOR, POSTGRADUATE STUDIES



APPENDIX VI: RESEARCH PERMIT


REPUBLIC OF KENYA


**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: **603779** Date of Issue: **12/December/2019**

RESEARCH LICENSE



**This is to Certify that Mr.. Benson Kanyingi of Karatina University, has been licensed to conduct research in Embu on the topic:
AT THE PERIPHERY IN MAU MAU DISCOURSE: A CASE OF THE MBEERE OF EMBU COUNTY, KENYA: 1952-2014
for the period ending : 12/December/2020.**

License No: **NACOSTIP/19/3079**

603779
Applicant Identification Number


Director General
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION**

Verification QR Code


NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

APPENDIX VII: EVIDENCE OF ONGOING MAU MAU LITIGATION

REP18395



NJUKI MITAMBO
PO BOX 2 CAINGRA
Our Ref: REP18395
Your Ref: 9734

FORM OF AUTHORITY REGARDING SETTLEMENT – KENYAN EMERGENCY GROUP LITIGATION

This authority is given by me, NJUKI MITAMBO, after receiving advice from my solicitors about a possible settlement of the claims within this Group Litigation. That advice is summarised and recorded in a separate document which I have confirmed by signature or mark.

I have read this form of authority, or it has been read to me in my own language, and as a result I have signed or marked this authority document to indicate that it has been explained to me and I understand it. I have also been informed that the advice I have received along with the contents of both documents are strictly confidential and that under no circumstances should I discuss the contents with anyone else.

I confirm that:

1. I am aware of the present position of this litigation; specifically I understand that a trial will not begin until October 2016, although the judge will be taking evidence from test claimants earlier than this;
2. I have been advised of the value of my claim on a full liability basis (ie the value I might expect to receive if the litigation goes all the way to trial and my claim succeeds in full);
3. I have been advised of the prospects of success of this litigation;
4. I have been advised of the possibility of settlement negotiations;
5. I have been advised of the fact that as at the date of this authority liability is denied totally by the UK Government;
6. I have been advised that if the UK Government does engage in settlement negotiations then it is very likely that any offer of damages will represent only a small percentage of what I would expect to be awarded if my claim succeeded at a trial in full. I have been told that it is likely that the range of the figures offered in settlement will not be less than £2,500 (approximately KES 400,000) per claimant nor more than £10,000 (approximately KES 1,650,000). I understand that any offer made within the range of £2,500 to £10,000 would be much less than I would get if this case was won at a trial and any appeal was successfully resisted. However, the uncertainty of getting a sum of money as identified in point 2 above against the possibility of securing damages in the near future is far more important to me than waiting to receive a larger sum in potentially several years' time if my claim is ultimately successful. I also do not wish to run the risk of losing at trial or a subsequent appeal. For these reasons I am prepared to authorise negotiations to settle with a view to receiving a significantly smaller sum at this very much earlier stage;

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Page 1 of 2

REP18395

7. I have been further advised that if the UK Government makes an offer of settlement it may offer a single lump sum to be divided amongst all claimants who are subject to the Group Litigation Order or it may seek to allocate different levels of award to separate individuals or categories of client. However if the UK Government makes such an offer of settlement, I confirm that my solicitors are authorised to accept the offer and to allocate any awards to me or to other claimants on whatever basis they honestly and reasonably decide is fair, so long as I receive £2500 or more;
8. I have been advised of my valuation banding and that this may be used as the basis of apportioning any damages awarded following a pre-trial settlement. I appreciate this means I may get more or less than some other claimants but as long as the amount I receive is within the range set out in point 6 above I am in agreement with the allocation of an award by my solicitors as described;
9. I have been advised fully that I should not feel obliged to sign up to this process unless I am truly willing to give an authorisation in these terms. If I did not wish to sign up to these terms I realise I would have to find other solicitors to act for me;
10. I have been advised that the Kenyan shillings equivalent amounts are indicative only and will vary according to exchange rate movements. I understand that any settlement will be negotiated in GBP.

Client Signature

I do hereby confirm I agree to and understand the contents of this Form of Authority and that it has been explained to me in my own language.

Signed by (or Thumbprint)

Dated

10/02/2016



Case Worker Attestation

I certify that I have read over the contents of this Form of Authority to the person above in his/her own language and that that person:

- a) appeared to understand the Form of Authority;
- b) confirmed their instructions approved; and
- c) made his/her signature/mark in my presence.

Signed by

Print Name

Dated

Wambui Ngige

10/02/2016

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This firm does not accept service by fax or by e-mail

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APPENDIX VIII: LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATION



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Retelling the Mau Mau Past from the Mbeere Perspective

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← The Rhetoric of 'Speaking in Tongues' amongst the Mbeere Mau Mau in Colonial Embu



The Rhetoric of 'Speaking in Tongues' amongst the Mbeere Mau Mau in Colonial Embu

Kanyingi Benson^{1,2}*, Mwaruvie John¹ and Osamba Joshua¹
School of Education and Social Sciences, Karatina University

1215hrs-1230hrs			Interpreting Contemporary Embu-Mbeere Politics in the Lens of Sibling Rivalry, 1906-2021 Kanyingi B., J. Mwaruvie & J. Osamba
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