

## ABSTRACT

In the 1950s in Kenya a nationalist uprising against colonial rule erupted in Kenya. The Mau Mau prisoners were detained in detention camps spread in the whole country. In Mwea detention camps hardcore prisoners provided labour in the rice fields started by British colonialists in Kirinyaga County. After release from detention camps some of the Mau Mau prisoners became tenants in Mwea Irrigation Scheme. The purpose of this study was to examine the role played by the Mau Mau detainees in Mwea to the growth of the rice irrigation scheme. The objectives of the study were: to examine the British colonial land policies that led to the establishment of Mwea Irrigation Scheme, to analyze how Mau Mau prisoners labour transformed Mwea Rice Irrigation Scheme and finally to assess how settlement of Mau Mau prisoners in Mwea Rice Irrigation transformed their social economic status. The study was informed by the political theory of decolonization and post-colonialism advanced by Margaret Kohn and Keally MacBride. The theory holds that understanding of colonialism and decolonization can help to understand contemporary politics. The study used historical research design which employs document analysis and validated with oral interviews from participants. The design is appropriate to establish facts in order to arrive at conclusions concerning past events. The sample population comprised of thirty-nine key informants. The study used interview guides as research instrument to generate qualitative data. Information was taped and later transcribed. The study used snowballing and purposive sampling techniques to collect information. Data was analyzed qualitatively. The study demonstrated that Mau Mau prisoners detained in Mwea prison camps contributed to the establishment of Mwea rice irrigation scheme. The prisoners constructed water canals, furrows, residential houses, and growing of rice. It is noted from the study that some of the prisoners were rejected after rehabilitation by their own people. They were taken back to Mwea and became tenants, thus contributing to the growth of Maurice Irrigation Scheme. The study recommends that policy makers initiated programs to address some of the challenges facing ex-Mau Mau prisoners and other farmers in Mwea Irrigation Scheme. The study findings will contribute to Mau Mau historiography.