Essays on Mau Mau

Rob Buijtenhuijs

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ESSAYS ON MAU MAU

R. Buijtenhuijs

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PREFACE

The year 1966 stands as a landmark in Mau Mau historiography. For the first time, comprehensive and fully-fledged studies of the complex phenomenon of Mau Mau were published by independent scholars, i.e. The Myth of Mau Mau by Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham, and Mau Mau from Within by Donald Barnett and Karari Njama, the latter an ex-forest fighter of some standing in the Aberdares. Rosberg and Nottingham's book was mainly devoted to the origins of the Mau Mau movement until the declaration of the Emergency in October 1952, while Barnett and Njama were especially concerned with the 1952-1956 period of forest fighting. Making extensive use of both these studies and of many other sources, I was able to present an overall view of Mau Mau in a French book (1971), which tried to do justice to the origins of Mau Mau as well as to the actual fighting in the forest and summarized the existing knowledge of the Mau Mau revolt at that moment.

Since that time much progress has been made in Mau Mau studies, and publications on the subject abound. Although many of these are of high academic quality and of great use for a better understanding of one of the most controversial periods in the history of Kenya, it has to be admitted that this wealth of literature has created about as many problems as it was able to solve.

First of all, the recent literature on Mau Mau is widely scattered and, moreover, deals mainly with detail. 'Mau Mau in Nakuru', 'Mau Mau and the Trade Unions', 'The Meru Participation in Mau Mau': these titles are characteristic for most of the publications that appeared in the 1970s. No comprehensive work on Mau Mau has been published since then, and in order to get acquainted with the current state of Mau Mau studies, the interested reader must go through dozens and dozens of books, articles and papers. Secondly, it is my impression that although we know much more about Mau Mau today than we did ten years ago, we do not understand the phenomenon any better; indeed, perhaps we understand it even less well.

In fact, the wealth of information obtained during the 1970-1980 decade is often controversial, at times even confusing. Academic researchers are at loggerheads about important points such as Mau Mau recruitment in the Rift Valley or the importance of the Anake wa Forty in the movement, while most of the ex-freedom fighters who published

their memoirs have been tempted to boast about their own role and that of their associates, and to play down the contributions of others to the cause. Therefore, we are in danger of not seeing the forest for the trees and of missing some of the important clues that may lead to a better understanding of the deeper meaning of Mau Mau. An important epistemological question that I will leave unanswered is whether more knowledge of historical events always and automatically leads to a better understanding.

My aim, in this report, is not to present a new, comprehensive study of Mau Mau, but rather to take stock of and to evaluate the progress made in Mau Mau studies during the last ten years. This means that my readers are supposed to be familiar with general works on Kenyan history and Kikuyu society, and more particularly with Mau Mau 'classics' such as Rosberg/Nottingham and Barnett/Njama. It also means that, in sorting out the evidence, I will only deal briefly with details that are generally agreed upon in the existing literature, in order to concentrate upon points that have raised controversy or publications that carry new 'discoveries' (facts as well as hypotheses). My report, therefore, will be fairly unbalanced, and it should be considered as a series of articles loosely held together rather than as a well-constructed book. This all the more so, as I will deal extensively with some of the hypotheses on Mau Mau I developed in my 1971 publication. The reasons for this are that my French text is not easily accessible to all people interested in Mau Mau, and that some aspects of the Mau Mau phenomenon I dealth with have been neglected in the English literature, for reasons to be discussed later.

So much for my aims. A few words now on my means, or data. First of all, I will use the rather substantial literature that saw the light since about 1970, on Kenya in general as well as on Mau Mau in particular. Secondly, I will use some manuscripts that have not yet been published and some confidential documents unknown to previous writers.

My third source needs some more comment. During the academic year 1978-1979, I had the privilege of working with Greet Kershaw who, during the Emergency, collected extensive data on two Kikuyu communities in the Kiambu location of Komothai (Mbari ya Igi and Mbari ya Thuita). Kershaw's data are of the utmost importance because she managed to get in touch with the entire population of her two groups (1856 persons in all) and interview them extensively. Moreover, 254 of her informants had

lived in the Rift Valley before or even during the Emergency, while 203 males and 17 females were living in Nairobi. As Dr. Kershaw's data are not yet completely worked out, I will not use her detailed statistical tables in this report, but I will hint to some of her results in the course of my argument.

Some acknowledgements conclude this preface. I am heavily indebted to Greet Kershaw for her great insight into Mau Mau affairs and for her permission to allude to her statistics. John Spencer was of great help in giving me access to some unpublished manuscripts, and I am grateful to those people who provided me with confidential documents. I would also like to thank two of my former students, Lidwien Kapteijns and Freek Schiphorst. By choosing Mau Mau as a subject for their M.A. examinations they kept my interest in Mau Mau alive during the years that I was mainly engaged in research on other subjects. W.M.J. van Binsbergen, G.W. Grootenhuis and P. Konings made useful comments on an earlier draft of these essays, while Mrs. B. Blair kindly upgraded my English. The administrative staff of the Afrika Studiecentrum were very helpful in typing my manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

Before we can start our evaluation of recent Mau Mau historiography, one question has to be answered first: how do we exactly define 'Mau Mau' and whom do we consider to be Mau Mau members? As there has never existed an official body known as Mau Mau, with written regulations and registered membership, this question is not easy to solve. During the days of triumphant colonialism, a period that lasted in Kenya till about 1960, most Mau Mau 'specialists' had a ready answer at hand: any Kikuyu (or Kenya African) who took even the slightest interest in politics was a dangerous agitator and hence 'Mau Mau'. No distinction was made between Kenya African Union membership, Kikuyu Central Association membership and Mau Mau commitment. Although it is true that these three organisations partly overlapped, it is clear by now that many KAU and KCA members did not belong to Mau Mau and, in some cases, were even strongly opposed to it, while some Mau Mau activists did not belong to either KAU or KCA. In other words, the colonial solution to the definitional problem is obsolete.

A second solution is to consider as 'Mau Mau' all those Kikuyu (or Kenya Africans) who took a political oath at some date after the end of World War II. As recent research has shown, taking an oath can be considered a minimal 'requirement' for Mau Mau membership, but these studies have also pointed out quite convincingly that this is not enough and that oath-taking could have several meanings (Cf. Tamarkin 1976). Many early oath-takers, in particular, were fairly moderate people, who had not much in common with the later activist oath-takers who 'advocated the employment of organized violence in the pursuit of their political, anti-colonial cause' (Ogot 1977a:170).

Following Tamarkin and Ogot, I would argue that only the latter should be considered Mau Mau in the strict sense of the word. True, the political aims of most of the oath-takers were more or less the same, in that they all wanted land and independence, but the choice of the means to be used in the pursuit of these goals is of paramount importance. For the Emergency-period, then, the situation is fairly clear. Those people who participated in the forest fight and those people who helped the forest fighters of their own free will, without taking to the forest themselves, can be considered as belonging to the Mau Mau movement.

As for the pre-Emergency period, however, we are left with a difficult problem, i.e. to distinguish analytically between different groups of oath-takers, because the distinction is not simply one between early and later initiates. True, Kiambu District, one of the regions most heavily committed to early oathing, was less involved in the forest fighting phase than the other Kikuyu Districts, while some of the people who took an active part in the forest fight, such as Karari Njama and G.G. Gikoyo, took their first oath only a few months before the declaration of the Emergency. Many early oath-takers, however, did follow the general evolution of Kikuyu politics during the 1946-1952 period and ended up as forest fighters or members of the so-called passive wing of the Emergency Mau Mau. Only some of them remained political moderates. At the other hand, it can even be argued that not all the later oath-takers were automatically political radicals. Especially during the first months of the Emergency, some of them may have obeyed the following - albeit naîve - line of reasoning: 'Kenyatta has been arrested as the main leader of Mau Mau - Kenyatta is a good man - Therefore Mau Mau must be a good thing and I must take the oath' (Cf. Kershaw's forthcoming publication). No radical overtones are necessarily implied in such an argument. This has to be kept in mind when analyzing oath-taking and oathing campaigns before and even shortly after the declaration of the Emergency.

CHAPTER ONE: MAU MAU RECRUITMENT

a. Oathing before the Emergency

Pre-Mau Mau Oathing

It can be said that the pre-history of Mau Mau is related to the history of oathing. Therefore, one of the first tasks of Mau Mau historiography is to discover where oathing started and when. A first point to be mentioned is that political oaths were already used in Kenya before World War II. In 1925, the founding members of the Kikuyu Central Association introduced a form of oath 'consisting of a Bible held in one hand and earth pressed to the navel with the other' (Murray-Brown 1972: 240). However, this oath was only used incidentally and had no radical overtones.

Immediately after the end of World War II, important developments took place in oath-taking. The first one occurred in Kiambu and has already been analyzed very aptly by Rosberg and Nottingham (1966: Chapter VII). It is therefore not necessary to treat this aspect in detail, and I will limit myself to a summary of the facts as given by John Spencer in his doctoral thesis published in 1977. Spencer starts his analysis by saying that 'Mau Mau' began in 1944, after the return of the Kiambu KCA leaders who were detained at Kapenguria during the war.

> 'When the detainees got home, the KCA elders made them take a new oath, closer to the traditional tribal oaths than the KCA one and even stronger than the revised 1938-40 KCA oath. (...) At first, as a token of their continuing loyalty, only the detainees took the new oath. It then spread slowly throughout Kiambu until, by the end of 1945, all the former KCA branch officials and committeemen had taken it' (Spencer 1977: 227).

When Kenyatta returned from England, in 1946, he was also invited to swear this oath. Then, at the end of 1946,

> '(...) as part of the general move to reconstitute the KCA, the Kiambu KCA elders, led by Chief Koinange, his son Mbiyuu, G.K. Ndegwa, and Kenyatta drew up a plan to spread the new "loyalty" oath into the two other Kikuyu Districts, beginning with Nyeri and then working down through Fort Hall' (Spencer 1977: 228).

As one of the means in this campaign, Chief Koinange used the old Kikuyu Land Board or Mbari Association that had been mainly concerned

with the defence of Kikuyu claims on land alienated to the benefit of European settlers. As Spencer says:

> 'The Board, which was composed of representatives from the Kikuyu sections of Central Province and the Rift Valley, met every Thursday at Chief Koinange's house in Kiambaa. During the first stage of post-war oathing, these men took the oath back with them to their home areas. The Land Board continued to be an important factor in the later stages of oathing' (Spencer 1977: 229).

It should be emphasized, however, that this new oathing campaign was a slow and selective process, and that it was part and parcel of a moderate political project. Although Spencer started his analysis by saying that 'Mau Mau began in 1944', he was well aware of this fact and he qualified his own statement in his conclusion on developments in Kiambu:

> 'This oath (...) was not the beginning of "Mau Mau" (...) with all the radical, militant disruptiveness that "Mau Mau" implied to Corfield. (...) The oath was for the reliable, experienced, generally older men, not for the young militants' (Spencer 1977: 232).

A second post-war development in oath-taking took place in the Rift Valley. This aspect of pre-Mau Mau history has not received the same attention in the older literature as the KCA-Mbari Association campaigns in Kiambu. Rosberg and Nottingham, more particularly, neglected this point, and in my own 1971 book I could only suggest that developments in the Rift Valley must have been important, without being able to supply detailed information. Due to the pioneering work of F. Furedi, and also to the contributions of M. Tamarkin and T.M.J. Kanogo, we are now much better informed about Rift Valley Mau Mau history, and I will go into this aspect in more detail.

Rift Valley pre-Mau Mau oathing was initiated at Olenguruone, a Kikuyu settlement in Maasaï-land developed in the early 1940s by Kiambu Kikuyu. Most of the Olenguruone settlers, about 4000 people in 1944, had been evicted from the European Highlands, where they still held land-rights, when the 1932-Carter Commission recommended the extinction of these rights in order to make the Highlands entirely and 'legally' white.

> 'Almost from the beginning', says Furedi, 'the Kikuyu settlers came into conflict with the Administration. The Kikuyu felt that Olenguruone was in exchange for the land they lost to the white settlers, and they demanded exclusive ownership of the land. The

> Kenya Government felt that Olenguruone was a controlled settlement and the Kikuyu living there had to abide the rules set down by the Administration (...). By 1942 most of the Kikuyu settlers had taken the KCA oath. In 1943-44, there was unanimous opposition to the new agricultural rules, which wanted to establish crop rotation and prohibited the burning of grass. The threats of the Government to evict the Olenguruone Kikuyu unless they complied with these rules led the ex-squatters to take new steps, which were to have far-reaching implications. The Olenguruone squatters initiated a new oath of unity, which used goat meat and which subsequently came to be known as the Mau Mau oath' (Furedi 1974a: 2).

A first and important point to note is that the Olenguruone oath, although administered by local leaders with KCA leanings, was not an oath of loyalty reserved to trusted and elder politicians, but an oath of unity taken by all the Olenguruone inhabitants including women and children, a radical departure from Kikuyu custom (Murray-Brown 1972: 240). Moreover, the oath had several features later to be developed in Mau Mau oathing, like the use of human blood mixed with goat's blood and the use of arches of banana leaves.

The Olenguruone oath is even more important for the implications it had elsewhere in the Kikuyu areas:

> 'Most students of the Mau Mau revolt have pointed out the importance of Olenguruone for an understanding of Kikuyu nationalism. It has been suggested that the tremendous unity of the Olenguruone settlers against the Government, and the large-scale use of oathing, provided a lesson for Kikuyu militants (...). I would like to argue that the importance of Olenguruone is not merely symbolic or exemplary but lies in the field of political organization. The Olenguruone settlers initiated a process of political mobilization which gave a direct organizational impetus to the growth of the Mau Mau movement in the White Highlands' (Furedi 1974a: 1).

In order to get a better understanding of this new development we have to turn to another article by Furedi where he argues 'that the Mau Mau revolt was an outcome of a prolonged agrarian struggle between Kikuyu squatters and European settlers' (Furedi 1974b: 486). Squatters in the White Highlands are as old a phenomenon as the White Highlands themselves, as is evident from the following lines by Kanogo:

> 'The settler-pioneer period was characterized by direct colonial government's appeals to attract Africans into the settled areas to provide labour. The Africans were promised, and were indeed given lots of grazing land and abundant land for cultivation. They were afforded relative independence in their social and economic activities. Amongst other tribes, the Kikuyu were quick to seize this opportunity. Still a frontier society whose expansion had only been halted at the turn of the century by the British, the promise

> of virgin land was very appealing. With time the White Highlands began to be looked upon as a place where one became rich quickly' (Kanogo 1977: 244)

In a way, the squatter phenomenon was initially conservative in motivation. While settler calls on squatter labour for farm or ranch work were only occasional and often easily evaded, the abundance of land for cultivation and grazing allowed the squatters to maintain a distinctly 'pre-colonial' life-style (Kitching 1980: 18), this as contrasted with the conditions prevailing in the Kikuyu Land Unit where land-scarcity and overpopulation, already early in the colonial period, presented a barrier to the maintainance of large herds. The White Highlands were therefore particularly attractive to 'traditionalist' stock owners, and also to landless Kikuyu whose position became increasingly insecure as the owner-families, whose land they cultivated, increased in numbers. In another way, the squatter phenomenon was, in my opinion, also 'progressive' in motivation, in so far as it allowed enterprising and dynamic people to start a new life elsewhere, under better conditions than in the Reserves; this in line with the ancient, pre-colonial Kikuyu tradition of migrations into virgin land.

Unfortunately, the period during which both squatters and European settlers benefitted from the system, only lasted for about two decades, and very soon the inherent conflict between squatter and settler interests became painfully apparent. A first conflict has been noted by R.L. Tignor, who states that:

> '(...) given the vast extent of many European estates (...) Kikuyu squatters did not regard themselves as employees or labourers but rather as colonists who had claimed new land for their mbaris. To Kikuyu emigrants, the Rift Valley was a new frontier, much as Kiambu had been a nineteenth-century frontier. When Europeans began to fill up this area in the 1920s en 1930s and sought to limit Kikuyu emigration and even turn people off estates, their action was met with disbelief, resistance, and bitterness. The Kikuyu who were forced to leave felt much the same as those Kiambu Kikuyu who had been dispossessed before World War I' (Tignor 1976: 107).

Those squatters who were allowed to stay in the White Highlands, and they were the majority, had to face another conflict, albeit related to the one about land ownership. After World War II, legislative measures made it possible for European settlers to reduce the acreage and the number of livestock previously allowed to squatters, while at the same time increasing the number of days the squatters had to work

for them during the year. As cash wages only rose very slightly, the result of this was, first of all, a general impoverishment of the squatter community, and, secondly, a change in status: from more or less independent producers the squatters tended to be reduced to a rural proletariat 'divorced from its dependence on land and, instead, earning its livelihood in cash wages' (Clayton and Savage 1974: 306).

According to Furedi, a squatter protest movement in response to new restrictions placed on their activities by European farmers emerged as early as 1929, but the nature of this protest changed radically by 1946, becoming organized and politically conscious instead of spontaneous and sporadic (Furedi 1974b: 492). It is here that Olenguruone enters into the picture.

> 'The struggle at Olenguruone had a great impact on squatters in Nakaru district. A direct road connected Olenguruone to Molo and Elburgon (...). The Elburgon KCA activists were in constant contact with Olenguruone. In early 1946 a number of militants from Olenguruone left for the farms to obtain support for their struggle from the squatters. They administered the new oath of unity to a number of KCA activists in the Elburgon area and on the huge Soysambu estate (owned by Lord Delamere ...), an important centre of KCA activity.
> This initiative found ready support among the KCA leaders on the farms and many of them, in turn, spread the oath on other farms. The considerable pace of oath taking led to a more coherent and sophisticated form of squatter political activity in 1946 (...). Throughout Nakuru, Naivasha and Laikipia districts, squatters refused to sign the labour agreements. Hundreds of squatters were evicted and sent back to the Reserves' (Furedi 1974a: 3).

As a result of these evictions and of police action, the squatter movement of 1946 was defeated, but:

> 'Toward the latter part of 1947, African political activity showed signs of being reactivated (...). The KCA initiated a large scale oathing campaign (...). According to most squatters interviewed, this oathing campaign was the starting point of the so-called Mau Mau revolt. This view is also corroborated by intelligence sources. A memorandum of the Director of Intelligence and Security states that the Mau Mau "started its activities towards the end of 1947" and in 1948 several "oath" ceremonies are known to have taken place in the Naivasha district' (Furedi 1974a: 5).

With regard to Mau Mau historiography, Furedi therefore comes to the conclusion that '(...) the oath of unity began in 1946, earlier than it was hitherto believed. It also shows (...) that oathing on a large scale began in the Highlands and not in the Reserves' (Furedi 1974a: 7).

Furedi's thesis is indeed confirmed by Government sources. The first official mention of the use of the oath of unity as an instrument of political mobilization is made in the Nakuru-Naivasha-Ravine Annual Report, 1946 (Furedi 1974b: 496), while the first mention of an 'association designated Maumau' is to be found in the 1948 Nakuru District Annual Report (p. 4). We have to wait untill 1950 to see the term Mau Mau used in official documents pertaining to the Kikuyu Land Unit. Kershaw's data also point to the same conclusion.

Furedi is therefore right when he characterizes Mau Mau historically as the outcome of a prolonged agrarian struggle between Kikuyu squatters and European settlers. At the same time his thesis needs some qualification. Although Furedi nowhere makes an explicit statement on this point, he seems to suggest, or at least it could be induced from his articles, that the Rift Valley squatters continued to play a leading role in the Mau Mau movement during its whole period of activity. In my opinion, such a conclusion is not justified. As we will see later, the squatters' contribution to Mau Mau probably had much more weight during the 1946-1950 period than during its subsequent stages.

A last point has to be mentioned in the context of early oath-taking in the Rift Valley. Furedi mentions several times that the oathing campaigns in the European settled areas were initiated and led by KCA leaders, and this is confirmed by other sources. Samuel Koina, the chosen spokesman of the Olenguruone settlers, had been one of the founders of KCA in the Rift Valley (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 254), and many of the Rift Valley squatters who helped the Olenguruone settlers in their struggle against the administration also belonged to leading KCA circles (Cf. Tamarkin 1976: 122, for the situation in Nakuru town). Therefore, the oathing campaign at Olenguruone and in the Rift Valley stood not entirely on its own. Contacts were maintained with KCA leaders in Kiambu, Jessie Kariuki, one of the founders of the association, serving as the regular liaison between the two areas (Spencer 1977: 234). These contacts finally led to the merging of the two 'streams' of pre-Mau Mau oathing described in this section of my report. In the words of Spencer:

> '(...) Beauttah remembers that Samuel Koina, the leader of the Olenguruone settlement "brought the oath (of unity R.B.) to Kiambaa and Githunguri (...); it merged with the traditional oath and became an oath of unity"' (Spencer 1977: 238).

Spencer does not mention a specific date for this event but it pro-

bably happened somewhere in 1948. From then on, the oath of unity would not only be used to cement the solidarity and unity of specific sections of the Kikuyu, such as the Olenguruone settlers or the squatters on a few European farms, but of the whole Kikuyu population without exception. This provided the basis for the future Mau Mau movement, but as the use of violent means of action was not contemplated at the time by the leaders of the oathing campaign, one can not yet speak of Mau Mau in the strict sense of the word. This only becomes possible during the next phase of oathing to which we will now turn.

The Oath in Nairobi

John Spencer's publications are undoubtedly the best source for understanding how the moderate Kiambu loyalty oath gradually developed into a militant oath of unity. In an early paper, published in 1975, Spencer gives the following summary of the events that occurred in the 1948-1950 period:

> 'In mid-1948 the "Mbari" and Kenyatta made a decision that was to tighten the control of the oathing and to change its whole scope and scale. While some people who lived in Nairobi had taken the oath, it had been given mostly in the rural areas. To spread it into Nairobi, the "Mbari" directed Mbiu Koinange to contact two of the best known union leaders, Fred Kubai and J.M. Mungai (respectively the Secretary and the President of the Transport and Allied Workers Union, R.B.), and see if they would join the movement. He approached them late in 1948, and they agreed to take the oath on two conditions, first that it cease being restricted to those who could pay Shs 62/50 and who were KCA members or whom KCA members had approved and henceforth be given to any Kikuyu who was trustworthy and, second, that the oath become more militant. The "Mbari" hesitated but finally agreed, and Kubai and Mungai brought ten of their most trusted associates to Kiambaa (Chief Koinange's home, R.B.) to be oathed. These men were to become known as the "Action Group" (...)
>
> Then, Kubai chose twenty-four trade union leaders, and they took the oath at Kiambaa. After this, a group of carefully selected "criminals" (Kubai's words) were oathed and given the job of collecting arms - slowly and surely. Then the oath was taken by the Nairobi taxidrivers, who would organize the transportation for much of the future mass oathing. Finally (...), some four hundred prostitutes from the Nairobi African areas (...) were oathed and told to collect whatever information would help the movement' (Spencer 1975: 9-10).

A first thing to be noted is that the events described by Spencer were already mentioned in earlier publications, but that they occur, in Spencer's version, more than a year earlier than was thought hit-

herto. Rosberg and Nottingham, for example, argue that the decision to speed up the pace of oathing and to give a more militant turn to the campaign was taken during a meeting at Chief Koinange's home on February 20, 1950 (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 269). It seems, however, that the opposition between these versions is not as absolute as it appears at first sight. Although Spencer is somewhat sparing with dates and although some of his informants give slightly controversial stories, a careful scrutiny of all his published material leads one to the conclusion that the process described above was a rather slow one and covered a period of over one year. The first contacts between the Mbari leaders and the Nairobi trade unionists probably took place in late 1948, and a loose collection of some militant young men, calling themselves the Action Group, may have met occasionally since 1949 (Cf. Mungai's evidence in Spencer 1977: 281), but it seems that this group only became a more structured unit, under the temporary chairmanship of James Beauttah, following the February, 1950 meeting at Chief Koinange's place (Spencer 1977: 280).

Anyway, it was probably only after this date that the Action Group started in earnest with its work of collecting arms and ammunition, which led to the accidental death of one of Chief Koinange's sons, Gathomi, at an Action Group meeting in March, while cleaning a pistol. Not only did the Group indulge in the buying and stealing of arms, but its members also drew plans to use them, right from the inception of their association.

> 'The murders of Chiefs Waruhiu and Hinga, of Tom Mbotela, of Muchohi Gikonyo (both moderate Kenya African Union officials, R.B.) and of several others, including Governor Mitchell, were first discussed at this time (...). Shortly afterwards, members of the Group tried to kill City Councillor (...) Muchohi Gikonyo' (Spencer 1977: 281).

It is not quite clear to what extent this attempted murder and the projects for other assassinations were centrally planned. A confession-report from the Emergency-period that I have been allowed to read, suggests that trade union leaders like Kubai, and even members of the Koinange family, like Peter Mbiyu, Kenyatta's close associate, were deeply involved in these events and took a leading role in their planning. Emergency confession-reports, however, are said to confer on the reader an impression of standardization (much as witchcraft-confessions from earlier European history) and they should therefore be

used with caution. J. Spencer is of the opinion that the death of Gathomi and the attempted murder of Gikonyo were rather the first signs of a lack of general control (Spencer 1977: 281), and in another publication he quotes evidence to the effect that James Beauttah himself feared the tough and heavy-drinking 'boys' of the Action Group, which made him resign as its chairman as early as March 1950 (Spencer s.d.: 76).
It should be noted that Spencer's publications, as well as the Rosberg-Nottingham study, may be biased to some extent insofar as these authors draw heavily upon the evidence of the 'militants' like Kubai, Kaggia, Beauttah and Mutonyi who, several years after the Emergency, were willing to discuss their role in the events that ultimately led to Mau Mau.
The moderate leaders of the Kiambu oathing campaigns such as Kenyatta, Peter Mbiyu Koinange, and Chief Koinange, however, remained silent.
Had they written their memoirs, a somewhat different picture of pre-Mau Mau history might have emerged. They would probably have argued that they lost control over the militants about as soon as they recruited them into the movement, a pattern that was indeed repeated elsewhere at the local level (Cf. Tamarkin's analysis of developments within KCA in Nakuru).

Whatever the exact truth of the matter, the first months of 1950 witnessed the beginning of the use of violent means of action in African politics. Two groups, as we have seen, were mainly responsible for this development: the trade union leaders around Kubai, John Mungai and, very soon, Bildad Kaggia, and a loose collection of 'criminals' organized in the Action Group. I will discuss the role and intentions of the first group later in this report, and first turn to the second group because they are the subject of an interesting controversy in the literature. Who were exactly those associates used by the trade unionists to do the 'dirty work' in the movement that would now gradually develop into 'Mau Mau'? The question is of some importance for the understanding of Mau Mau as an armed uprising, and I will go into it in some detail.

The controversy referred to above started with F. Furedi's article The African Crowd in Nairobi, published in 1973, in which he stressed the importance of an organization called the Anake wa Forty (1) in the development of Mau Mau. According to Furedi:

> 'The Anake wa 40 was founded (in 1946, R.B.) by Dominic Gatu and a number of young dissatisfied Nairobi Kikuyu. Its first members

> were the unemployed, petty traders, thieves, prostitutes and others of the lumpenproletariat of Nairobi. Many of the leaders were ex-soldiers and traders (...). According to one of its leaders, "(...) we felt that K.A.U. was going too slow and that the only way to change things was through violence. This is why we started armed robberies (...)"' Furedi 1973a: 282).

Furedi then went on to argue that from 1950 onwards the Forty Group, through mass oathing, established its hegemony over the African locations of Nairobi and that, between 1947 and 1951, it built up an organization that extended into all parts of Central Province and into some areas of the Rift Valley.

> 'The organization also had close ties with a number of trade unions and with the most radical wing of KAU. Through its ability to obtain money and arms, the 40 Group played a central role in the movement which the government called Mau Mau (...). It was responsible for the killing of such important African loyalists as the Nairobi City Councillor, Tom Mbotella and Senior Chief Waruhiu (Furedi 1973a: 284).

As for the first part of Furedi's argument, there is no major controversy, although some details are confused. The Anake wa Forty Association did indeed exist and was even officially registered in 1947, under the name of the Nyeri Kikuyu Education Society (Spencer 1977: 212). Some confusion exists about the real founder of the Group, because besides Dominic Gatu, other people are mentioned as such, like Mwangi Macharia (Itote 1967: 37) and Henry Kahinga Wachanga (Spencer 1977: 212). As the name of the society suggests, most of its original members had been circumcised in 1940, but soon members of other age sets joined, almost all of them young men however. As indicated by Furedi, its members were often 'hooligans' and unemployed, especially at the early stage of the movement, but they were joined quite soon by more respectable people such as traders and businessmen. An interesting point is that many members were ex-servicemen from World War II, although all sources agree that it was not exclusively an old soldiers' association.

The Association was founded in Nairobi and also had its headquarters in the capital, but most members were not fully-fledged urbanites and maintained frequent contacts with their home areas, mainly Nyeri and Fort Hall Districts, where their most spectacular actions took place. According to Sorrenson, after World War II:

> '(...) administrative and agricultural officers alike became obsessed with the problems of erosion: they considered the land was being mined beyond recovery; and they assumed that the only solution was a massive programme of bench terracing, carried out by communal labour. This was most unpopular with the Kikuyu. They were required to devote two mornings a week to the task, without pay, and were liable to fines if they did not attend (...). Terracing upset the normal day to day agricultural operations, no insignificant matter to those with small areas of land. Moreover the women were expected to work on terraces along with the men. It was this factor which finally brought the terracing to a halt. In 1947 the women at Fort Hall, encouraged by the Kikuyu politicians, refused to work and, after a demonstration which nearly became a riot, government had to submit' (Sorrenson 1967: 75).

It is likely that the 'politicians' referred to by Sorrenson were Forty Group members, who also stirred up the agitation against Chief Ignatio (Location 8, Fort Hall) later in 1947. An important detail is that Kenyatta was originally in favour of the soil conservation scheme, but that he had to back down on this point under the pressure of the more militant African 'masses' led by the Forty Group (Spencer 1977: 213).

As for its aims, the Forty Group did not have a fully-fledged political platform like KAU, but agitated mainly against specific government measures such as the forced digging of contours, forced cattle dipping, tax collection etc. (Cf. Wachanga 1975: XXV, for a list of Forty Group objectives). Another of their aims was to continue the circumcision of girls, while Spencer notes that: 'The "40 Group" was not all rowdiness, for it helped the Kikuyu General Union in its campaign to round up single Kikuyu girls in Nairobi and send them back to the reserves' (Spencer 1977: 212).

So far for the early activities of the Forty Group. As for the subsequent period (1949-1952), Furedi's thesis has been challenged by Spencer who argues that the Forty Group only lasted until 1949 (Spencer 1975: 23) and that, according to all his sources, the acknowledged leaders and organizers of the 1951-52 oathing campaign were Kubai, Kaggia and other trade union leaders (Spencer 1977: 271). Both these statements are correct. Wachanga, himself one of the founding members of the movement, confirms that: 'Although we had some successes, the Forty Group grew weaker and weaker (...). Because there was no-one to hold the meetings and collect taxes, the office was finally closed in December 1948' (Wachanga 1975: XXXV). It is also exact that Kubai and his trade union associates were the real leaders of the subsequent oathing

campaigns at the highest level.

It is therefore incorrect to use the term Anake wa Forty in connection to what happened after the end of 1948 (a mistake I made myself in my 1971 book: pp. 174-175), and Spencer was formally right in challenging Furedi's version of events. However, in discarding the Forty Group altogether from post-1948 Mau Mau history, Spencer throws out the baby with the bathwater and misses an important point. Although the Group was formally dissolved, many of its members continued their political activities and were incorporated into the 'strong arm' groups gravitating around the Kubai-Kaggia trade union elements. Moreover, and this is an essential feature in my opinion, they were the only ones who, after the declaration of the Emergency, took to the forest and assumed leadership positions within the Mau Mau army (or within the so-called passive wing). Stanley Mathenge, Henry Kahinga Wachanga, Isaac Gathanju, Waruhiu Itote ('General China'), Kariuki Chegge ('General Kago') and E. Mutonyi were all Forty Group members, or even leaders as far as the first three are concerned, who ended up as Mau Mau generals or organizers. None of the trade unionists and none of the KCA-Mbari leaders who were active during the first phases of the oathing campaigns did so or even contemplated undertaking such an action.

The Anake wa Forty members are therefore the only continuing link between the early oathing campaigns and subsequent forest fighting, and as such they are a group of pivotal importance, even if their association ceased to exist as an independent body in 1949 and was incorporated into the trade union directed pre-Emergency Mau Mau 'machine'. The Anake wa Forty therefore deserves further study, because Wachanga is entirely right when he claims that:

> 'Mau Mau was directly connected to (...) the Aanake a Forty. Even though many Aanake a Forty did not enter the forest nor take the Mau Mau Oath, their actions toward the colonialist were essentially the same as those of the forest fighters' (Wachanga 1975: XXIII).

Turning now to the role of the trade unionists in the building up of the Mau Mau organization, we can be rather brief, because many more details have already been published by earlier historiographers, such as Rosberg and Nottingham. A first point to be noted is that, although Kubai and Mungai c.s. joined the Kiambu oathing campaign in 1949 and almost immediately started to collect arms, they remained at first

relatively passive as far as mass oathing was concerned. This is shown quite clearly by Kershaw's data which reveal that the Nairobi Kikuyu population was later with oath-taking than its Rift Valley counterpart, in spite of the activities of the Kubai-Kaggia group. It should be noted that the militant group had to lie low for some time after the attempted Gikonyo murder, while until early 1951, it had probably not yet made up its mind whether to continue to concentrate on trade union activities or to switch plainly to politics.

A decision in favour of the second solution was taken during the first part of 1951. It resulted in a speeding up of the oathing campaign, as is shown by Kershaw's data, and in an attempt to take over the direction of the, at least in intent, nation-wide and multi-ethnic KAU, whose leaders, like Kenyatta, had disappointed the militant trade unionists because of their failure to make any political progress for Kenya Africans through moderate, constitutionalist action. They succeeded in their aims, at least at the Nairobi level, during the 1951 Nairobi KAU branch elections in which they managed to win all the leading positions. From that time onwards the Nairobi KAU branch acted more or less as a separate organization, with the national Head Office losing almost all control (Spencer, s.d.: 72). This could happen all the more easily as KAU, during most of its lifetime, was a rather weak and inactive political party, mainly because of lack of funds to pay full-time officers (2). At this stage, many of the early leaders of the (Kiambu) oathing campaign, like Kenyatta and Peter Mbiyu Koinange, slipped back into political inactivity and lost whatever control they had had over 'Mau Mau', although their names were still used in the oath and although they were occasionally informed by the militants about their activities. This is contrary to the colonial thesis that equated KAU (and KCA) with Mau Mau and attributed to Kenyatta the leading role of Mau Mau 'architect'.

Using the KAU Nairobi branch as a cover, the trade unionists and their associates then started to build up a secret organization headed by a body alternatively known as Central Committee or Muhimu ('Important'). According to Bildad Kaggia:

> 'This committee (...) had twelve members. Most of them were members of KAU. The KAU officials on the committee were very few, as they had to be "trusted" (Apparently, most of them were not, at least not by Kaggia's militants. R.B.) Kubai and myself were members of the committee, but it was decided that no KAU official should be

> an official of the committee. Although Kubai and I took leading parts in the deliberations, we held no office. The chairman was Eliud Mutonyi, and the secretary, Isaac Gathanja (...). To protect the secrets of the Central Committee, a new body, known as 'the group of 30' was formed. This 'group of 30' disseminated Central Committee orders and programmes and was the link between the Central Committee and the districts. The district leaders had no direct dealings with the Central Committee and did not even know who the members were' (Kaggia 1975: 108-9).

Other sources (Itote 1967: 43; Wachanga 1975: 24) mention the existence of a 'War Council', formed in January 1952 and working closely together with the Central Committee, although Itote suggests that it was an even more radical body in so far as it comprised only 'those people willing to go and fight in the forest' (Itote 1967: 43). The War Council may be Kaggia's 'group of 30' in another guise, but the sources I have consulted do not allow for a definite conclusion. A last point to be mentioned is that both on the Central Committee and the War Council, members did not represent a hypothetical national Kikuyu constituency, but their districts of origin, and that even in Nairobi the grassroots adherents of Mau Mau were organized on the basis of their districts of origin.

As the city of Nairobi constituted an important base for Mau Mau leadership right from the end of the 1940s and as quite a few members of its Kikuyu population had taken an oath at the end of 1951, it may be of some interest to interrupt our historical outline at this point in order to find out whether we can say anything more particular and precise about Mau Mau's urban following in terms of social classes (3). S.B. Stichter's article on Workers, Trade Unions and the Mau Mau Rebellion is one of the first sources that should be taken into account, especially because this author boldly jumps to clear-cut conclusions which I will quote at some length to introduce the subject. Stichter first of all claims that:

> 'Broadly speaking, Kenya's Kikuyu workers (...) supported the rebellion. The Kikuyu unskilled manual workers actively participated, while the skilled ones were more likely to provide "passive" support. Those few Kikuyu workers who did not support Mau Mau were generally white-collar (...). Within the Kikuyu wage-earning population, levels of support or non-support given to Mau Mau varied according to class situation' (Stichter 1975: 260).

A few pages further she slightly varies her thesis by saying that:

> 'When the rebellion broke (...) the Kikuyu skilled manual workers by and large formed part of the "passive wing" of supporters, rather than the active one, and white-collar workers tended not to support it. The unskilled and unemployed Kikuyu, on the other hand, formed an important source for the recruitment of Mau Mau fighters and terrorists' (Stichter 1975: 265).

In this second quotation, the unemployed are introduced as a new category and lumped together with unskilled workers with regard to Mau Mau commitment. It should be noted that Stichter's distinction between Mau Mau recruitment amongst skilled and unskilled workers nicely fits in with the 'labour aristocracy' thesis of Arrighi and Saul (1973) which she quotes favourably in her article. Stichter then comes to the conclusion that:

> 'Fanon notwithstanding, the example of Kenya suggests that when (...) a peasant rebellion takes place, a large section of the urban workers will support it, either actively or passively' (Stichter 1975: 263-264). (4)

Unfortunately, Stichter does not supply any statistical data in order to buttress her thesis, nor does she quote her sources. This makes me rather hesitant to accept her conclusions at face value, especially as other sources are much more confused on the subject of Mau Mau urban recruitment.

One point stands out clearly in the mass of documents published hitherto: Mau Mau, and particularly its 'Forty Group' wing, recruited heavily amongst the 'criminals': thieves, hooligans and prostitutes, people who, in classic Marxist literature, are classified as the lumpenproletariat. Although we can not be quite sure, in the absence of statistical data, the 'criminal fringe' of the urban Kikuyu population probably passed almost as one body into the ranks of Mau Mau, if we are to believe Kaggia:

> '"Mau Mau" had enlisted the help of all sorts of people, including thieves and robbers. "Mau Mau" had a hand in almost every theft, robbery or any other crime directed against Europeans. Most of these crimes were political. Crimes against Europeans were rapidly increasing in Nairobi and in other large towns. But anything dropped or lost in African locations, including money, was always turned in to my office in Kiburi House. This was because of the Oath of Brotherhood' (Kaggia 1975: 96-97).

I am tempted to believe Kaggia, because the criminals had every interest to support the Mau Mau cause. Their participation in the movement not only allowed them to continue their traditional way of 'earning' their living (several sources mention the fact that criminals

insisted on being paid for services rendered to the movement), but it also considerably enhanced their social status as it elevated them into a kind of African Robin Hoods.

As we have seen before, however, even the 'Forty Group' was 'not all rowdiness'. Furedi (and others) claim that some of its first members were traders, and also taxi-drivers, and that most of the leaders of the association 'had obtained a certain level of education' (Furedi 1973a: 287). There is some reason to believe that Furedi's statement on traders is correct. After World War II, many Africans, and especially ex-servicemen, tried their hand as would-be traders and transporters, and many of them failed or had to struggle hard to keep their business going, this mainly because of government restrictions and the intense competition from established Asian dealers (Cf. Kitching 1980: 180). No wonder therefore that we find quite a few traders among Mau Mau leaders before and after the declaration of the Emergency, such as Karari Njama, General China and E. Mutonyi (the latter chaired the Naroibi Central Committee from early 1951 till his arrest at the end of 1953). Mutonyi's as yet unpublished manuscript is very interesting in this context because he dwells at length upon all the difficulties put in the way of African entrepreneurs by the administration and by Asian traders, although he himself managed to become a rather wealthy businessman.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that Kikuyu businessmen, as a class, supported Mau Mau. Most of them probably did not, according to Kershaw's data, but the few who did were often amongst the first initiates and they took several oaths. Having laken more than one oath cannot automatically be interpreted as a sign of deeper Mau Mau commitment, but it certainly was in most cases. We therefore arrive at the very tentative conclusion that businessmen were less conspiciously involved in Mau Mau, but that those who became involved were often more deeply committed to the movement and supplied some of its leaders. To a lesser degree, the same seems to hold true for the clerks and teachers (Stichter's white-collar workers).

As for Stichter's distinction between skilled and unskilled labour, I have the feeling that it is rather an artificial one. When trying to break up her urban male population, Kershaw was unable to apply this distinction to her data and divided her informants into eight categories

according to occupation. The most important of these were house servants, business-assistants, artisans and mechanics, while the clerks/ teachers and the businessmen represented two other categories. I do not think that Kershaw could have arranged her data in a different way, in order to allow them to be used for theoretical purposes. I would rather argue that these data demonstrate that the classical working-class distinctions used in European literature, however useful they may be for analyzing the political economy of industrialized nations, are largely irrelevant for pre-industrial Third World cities such as Nairobi in the early 1950s. A distinction may be made between white-collar workers (i.a. clerks and teachers) versus manual workers, but the distinction between skilled and unskilled labour is rather artificial in an urban setting characterized by the absence of heavy industry, and by the predominance of small-scale, mainly artisan, enterprises and, again mainly petty, trading. I am therefore unable to see how Stichter arrived at her conclusion about differential Mau Mau recruitment among skilled and unskilled labour, and I also think that the differential behaviour of some of the categories distinguished by Kershaw has nothing to do with class-situation but rather with well understood, but very specific and limited, economic interests.

As far as I am able to see, this conclusion is in line with recent theoretical research. F. Bovenkerk, in an article where he argues that the term 'lumpenproletariat', as used by Marx and Engels, is not based on any thorough sociological analysis and therefore useless as a scientific tool, makes a remark that could eventually be applied to the Nairobi situation in the early 1950s:

> 'It appears that contemporary historians are very reluctant to establish more precise distinctions amongst the urban poor in the pre-industrial cities according to social class or social status, and Schilling refers in this context to Hobsbawn's much more diffuse category of the "city mob"' (Bovenkerk 1980: 204-205).

According to Kershaw, the mechanics category, which also includes the taxi-drivers, had a rather high Mau Mau commitment. This probably stems from the fact that they knew quite well that it was on the Mau Mau side that their bread was buttered. During the early days of Nairobi oathing, new members were not initiated in the city, but brought at night to the - then still Kiambaa - headquarters of the movement, the taxi-drivers providing the - fully-paid - transport. As only trusted

people could be employed in this thriving transport business, any Nairobi taxi-driver was of course well-inspired to become an early oather, while the Mau Mau leaders had an interest to encourage them to take the oath in order 'to keep the red ball rolling'. It was also in the interest of the initiators of the oathing campaign to bring as many house servants as possible into the movement, as these could be a valuable source of information about the activities of their - mainly European - employers. This is probably one of the reasons why house servants in Kershaw's population also had rather high oathing percentages.

As for trade-union participation in Mau Mau, as distinguished from workers' commitment, the few facts at our disposal are consistent with some of Kershaw's data. According to Corfield (1960: 257) the two unions 'most seriously contaminated' were the Transport and Allied Workers Union and the Domestic and Hotel Workers Union. With regard to the organized trade union movement generally, Stichter notes that: 'Like the nationalist party, the movement was split between a pro-Mau Mau wing and a wing which, though neutral in policy, in fact worked against the rebellion' (Stichter 1975: 261), the latter wing being mainly represented by public-employees unions that were subjected to more pressure from the colonial government (Stichter 1975: 273). As we have seen, at least some trade union leaders like Kubai, Mungai and Kaggia were amongst the first to take the oath of unity and they supplied the leadership of the movement, in so far as it was centrally led at all, until the declaration of the Emergency.

Many Mau Mau specialists, including myself (Buijtenhuijs 1971), have argued in the past, or automatically assumed, that Mau Mau in its post-Emergency phase was mainly or even exclusively a peasant revolt. On the basis of recent publications such as those of Furedi and Stichter, and also considering Kershaw's statistical data, this statement has to be qualified in several ways. First of all, the political leaders and trade unionists in Nairobi were the ones who, from early 1951 onward, introduced the idea of 'freedom now'; they radicalized the rural masses and committed them to the fight for independence. This is not only true for Nairobi, but also for other urban centers. Tamarkin, for example, in his article on Mau Mau in Nakuru, claims that:

> 'In the Rift Valley, Mau Mau developed concurrently on the farms and in the urban centres. Moreover, it seems that the urban centres came to play a focal role in the network of Mau Mau organization throughout the Rift Valley' (Tamarkin 1976: 120-121).

The urban factor is not only important in the field of organization and leadership, but also on the level of recruitment. The Nairobi-component of Kershaw's population, for example, scores much higher in oath-taking than those who stayed behind in Komothai. Of course, the Nairobi population was mainly made up of younger men between 19 and 40 years old, which could in itself explain these differences for, as we will see later, oathing was predominantly a 'youth' phenomenon. However, a breakdown according to age-groups shows that the Nairobi environment is an independent variable: all the Nairobi age-groups, with only one statistically insignificant exception, are more oath-involved than their counterparts in the Reserves.

There is even more. Dr. Kershaw has drawn a very elaborated table on sources of income and Mau Mau, from which I will quote those details that are most relevant in this context. It appears that four categories score very high on oath-taking. Three of these are precisely the ones that comprise people who depended exclusively on wages for their living, while in the fourth category are people who had land for subsistence only, coupled with both male and female wages. At the same time, those people who were able to make a living exclusively from their land had also the lowest oathing percentages. In other words, not the peasants, but those most involved in the modern wage-economy were the ones that were the most engaged in oath-taking. Mau Mau, therefore, seems to be not so much a peasant phenomenon as a 'working-class' phenomenon. Although I will argue later in this report that Mau Mau still has to be considered a peasant movement and especially a peasant revolt, the above-mentioned facts nevertheless demonstrate that the urban influence on Mau Mau should not be underestimated.

Oathing in the rural areas

We have seen that pre-Mau Mau oathing developed more or less independently in two rural areas, i.e. Kiambu and the Rift Valley, and that these two streams merged in 1948-49 to become an oath already quite similar to the subsequent Mau Mau oath. At about the same time, control of the

Kiambu oathing campaign gradually passed into the hands of the Nairobi trade union militants who gave it a more radical and violent content. The urban militants then speeded up the oathing campaigns in Nairobi as well as in the rural areas to which we will turn our attention now.

I will first deal with developments in the Rift Valley, because it is on this area that recent research on the grass-roots level has concentrated, which has led to new insights in the Mau Mau phenomenon as such. A second reason why the Rift Valley should receive preferential treatment is that its oathing campaign is an ancient phenomenon and that it continued in full swing after its first stirrings during the 1946-47 period. Official documents leave no doubt about this. In the 1950-Nakuru District Annual Report, we find for example the following remarks:

> 'It must (...) be recorded that there are very strong grounds for a sense of insecurity among the farmers of the district as during the year a hitherto unknown anti-European movement came to notice, the Mau Mau society whose professed aim it is to effect the expulsion of all Europeans from Kenya (...). The society has spread rapidly in the Naivasha, Solai, Njoro, Subukia and Ol' Kalou areas' (p. 3).

The same concern is expressed in the Rift Valley Province Annual Report for 1950 (p. 1). As for the Kikuyu heartland, i.e. Central Province, no mention is made of Mau Mau activities in the Provincial Annual Reports before 1952. Only the Kiambu District Annual Report for 1950 carries a few remarks on 'illegal oath taking (Mau Mau)' (p. 1), but without the alarmist overtones that characterize its Rift Valley counterparts.

Let us see now how the Rift Valley oathing campaign developed over the years and what were the specific patterns of Mau Mau recruitment in this area. First a remark on the central control of the Rift Valley movement. Rosberg and Nottingham, when analyzing the role of the pre-Emergency Central Committee in Nairobi, observed in 1966 that:

> 'As the secret movement strengthened its grip on Nairobi, it began to have an increasing impact upon the rural Kikuyu areas. It probably had least effect upon the squatters in the Rift Valley as contrasted with the Reserves (...). The secret movement (in the Rift Valley, R.B.) had stronger links with the Kiambu "Parliament" (i.e. the Mbari group and Kenyatta, R.B.) than with the Nairobi Central Committee' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 272-273).

This is probably true, although less so for the later 1951-52 period. Many squatters, especially in the Naivasha area where oathing started, and also most of the Olenguruone settlers, originated from Kiambu, which pleads in favour of more extensive contacts with the Mbari-branch of the oathing campaign.

Coming now to the growth of Mau Mau in the Rift Valley, I will first pay attention to the situation in Nakuru that has been analyzed very skilfully by M. Tamarkin. This author makes several interesting remarks, two of which are of importance in this context. The first one has to do with the relationships between KCA and Mau Mau in Nakuru.

> 'Traditionally', says Tamarkin, 'the KCA recruited only mature and responsible members of the tribe who had been recommended by existing members. There had always been a small number of young men in the movement but they had acted mainly as messengers. The increase in the number of young recruits in 1947 or 1948 amounted, in the long run, to more than a quantitative change (...). This youth group was the direct predecessor of what was to become Mau Mau in Nakuru, although it was certainly not intended to develop that way by the local KCA committee which had brought it into being (...).
> In about 1949 the youths began to challenge the leadership and political orientation of the movement. They claimed that peaceful methods had achieved nothing and that the Europeans would not yield to their demands unless forced to do so. While arguing with the KCA elders, the youths began to promote violence as an alternative way' (Tamarkin 1976: 123-124).

Tamarkin then describes how, about in 1950, the youths formed their own committee, as did other young KCA groups in Nakuru District, and how they began to hold their own oathing ceremonies, although they maintained their contacts with the main KCA body until mid-1951. Finally, by the middle of 1951, they started using violence and intimidation in their oathing campaign and adopted a new name, Kiama Kia Bara, the fighting group.

> 'The elders, appreciating their inability to control the course of events and fearful of arousing the militants' rage, chose to abstain from action. The KCA committee was withering away (...). It was from then on that the movement which had been the traditional KCA came under full control of the militant Mau Mau leaders' (Tamarkin 1976: 127).

Tamarkin then concludes that this 'radicalization of Mau Mau in Nakuru was influenced by developments among Nairobi (...) militants' (Tamarkin 1976: 128), a statement that contradicts the remarks on central control made by Rosberg and Nottingham, although it only

applies to the final pre-Emergency years. Tamarkin's contribution on this point is very stimulating because he is the first author who, in a grassroots study of Mau Mau, established a clear, analytical distinction between oathing campaigns in general, and the radical and violent Mau Mau oath in the true sense of the word. It is also important because he exonerates KCA of the accusation of having been at the roots of Mau Mau. Tamarkin's findings are confirmed by other recent research, such as Spencer's:

> '(...) contrary to the beliefs of the Corfield school, the 1946-50 period, not the later 1950-52 one, was the high point of KCA's influence in Central Province. From 1950 onwards, KCA became less, not more, significant in the Kikuyu heartland. As we shall see, most of the leaders of the militant group that became known as "Mau Mau" were a generation or two younger than the KCA activists of the 1930s. They, not the KCA, provided the thrust and the organization of Mau Mau' (Spencer 1975: 6). (5)

Tamarkin's second contribution to Mau Mau historiography pertains to the movement's recruitment patterns. About the young militants' leadership he discloses the following facts:

> 'Amongst them were ten known leaders (...) who were residents of Nakuru. Seven had come to Nakuru from the surrounding districts where most of them had lived as squatters. Nine of the ten were self-employed, mostly petty traders. The majority had settled in the town in the post-war years. They were largely uneducated (...).
> This profile is in sharp contrast to that of the leadership of the KAU and the KCA in Nakuru. The top Kikuyu leaders of the KAU were educated people who had recently settled in Nakuru (...). The leadership of KCA comprized semi-educated Kikuyu and uneducated tribesmen who had had a long association in the town. Some of the latter were established traders, though by no means prosperous businessmen' (Tamarkin 1976: 128).

Tamarkin then goes on to say that the KCA leadership belonged to a social stratum that may be termed the urban sub-elite, and that they had roots, if not a stake, in the system, as did KAU leaders.

> 'Mau Mau leaders in Nakuru had no roots in the town nor in the system as a whole. They had nothing to lose except for their petty trade which barely gave them a living (...). Most of the Kikuyu leaders of the KAU and the KCA originated from the Kiambu District which was renowned for its political moderation (...). In contrast, most of Mau Mau's leaders had come to Nakuru from among the squatter population of the town's hinterland' (Tamarkin 1976: 129).

Tamarkin's thesis about the importance of petty traders in the Rift Valley is confirmed by Furedi's research findings. After World War II, says Furedi, the lack of security for squatters led many of the more enterprising individuals to turn to trading in the small townships of the Highlands.

> 'By the end of the Second World War one sees the emergence of a group of squatter traders and artisans (...). (They) often lived on the farms, their livelihood was dependent on the activities of the Africans on the farms and they were themselves an integral part of the squatting community (...). This group of traders, artisans and farm teachers played a pivotal rôle in the movement on the grassroots. It was from their ranks that arose the leadership of Mau Mau in the Highlands' (Furedi 1974b: 499-500).

As these people could easily go around, they were instrumental in spreading the oath from farm to farm. In agreement with Tamarkin, Furedi stresses the point that these militants had nothing to do with the educated and wealthy urban Kikuyu who supported KAU which in an indirect way 'served as an African businessmen's club' (Furedi 1974b: 497). He also mentions, although with much less detail, the evolution from moderate politics to violent action that took place within KCA under grassroots pressure.

According to Furedi, the militant White Highlands petty traders and artisans also provided the link with Kikuyuland and the Kikuyu community in Nairobi. Referring to his The African Crowd in Nairobi article in which he analyzed the pivotal rôle played by petty traders and other 'marginal' men in the development of Mau Mau in Nairobi and the lead they gave to the Kikuyu in the rural areas, Furedi comes to the following conclusion:

> '(...) the leading role of petty traders and artisans in the Mau Mau, first noted in Nairobi and now observed in the White Highlands may provide an important unifying thread in understanding the social basis of the movement as a whole' (Furedi 1974b: 504).

Two points have to be mentioned before concluding this part of my report. First of all, Furedi and Tamarkin seem to disagree when assessing the rôle of the larger Rift Valley townships in the development of Mau Mau. According to Furedi, many of his petty traders and artisans lived amongst the squatter population on the farms; they were an integral part of the squatting community and they felt the restrictions on economic activity 'more intensely (...) than (...) the

wealthier and more educated Africans in the townships' (Furedi 1974b: 500). This suggests that these townships were more or less homogeneous aggregates, which is certainly not the conclusion arrived at by Tamarkin. As the latter focused his fieldwork entirely on Nakuru town, I am inclined to agree with his analysis.

Another point to be noted is that administrative reports also attribute to the sawmill owners and contractors, with their large and unsupervised gangs of Kikuyu employees, a leading rôle in the spreading of Mau Mau through the Rift Valley (Nakuru District Annual Report 1950: 5).

Furedi's research also dealt with Mau Mau recruitment on the European farms. The first point he makes in this context is that the Kikuyu squatter communities were by no means homogeneous, but that most European farmers had a number of 'trusted men' whose duties had a specialist and supervisory aspect to it (foremen, milk clerks, drivers and house servants). According to Furedi, many of them were appointed on the basis of their popularity with the squatters so that there existed no hostility between them and the rank-and-file farmhands. Because they were the most respected men on the farms, they, and the farm teachers, were the first to be oathed by the Mau Mau leadership and then became responsible for spreading the oath on the farms and organizing the farm committees of the movement (Furedi 1974b: 501). This is confirmed by Corfield who, when dealing with the 1949-1950 period, claims that 'an essential feature of the Mau Mau organization in the settled areas was the enrolment of the more influential personalities on the farms as oath administrators' (Corfield 1960: 94), and who refers more particularly to cooks and houseboys (Corfield 1960: 99).

Furedi's and Tamarkin's findings, combined, provide us with a nice and rather clear-cut picture of pre-Emergency Mau Mau recruitment in the settled areas. However, a recent publication by T.M.J. Kanogo, containing an all-out attack on Furedi and more implicitely on Tamarkin, disturbes our intellectual satisfaction. Kanogo, who undertook research in several areas of Nakuru District, arrives at conclusions that are the very antithesis of Furedi's findings and argues that neither the farm teachers, nor the artisans, nor the milk clerks or foremen, nor the cooks and house-servants, nor the traders were amongst

the first groups oathed or amongst subsequent Mau Mau leadership. On the contrary:

> 'Mau Mau could be seen as having been basically a struggle of the have-nots against the haves. Even amongst the Africans, the possession of wealth was seen as a hindrance to the complete embrace of the movement (...). Oral interviews indicate that in most cases, the Mau Mau leaders were chosen from among the unemployed people. Unemployment in this case referred to those who were neither employed by the mzungu nor self-employed' (Kanogo 1977: 248).

Unfortunately, Kanogo does not supply any statistical data or concrete evidence to support her thesis and only provides us with some arguments based on logics. As for the traders operating between the farms and the towns, she says that while they 'might have been used as couriers in the course of their business travels, true leadership would have demanded their giving up their business', because they could not otherwise have attended the meetings that took place between the White Highlands and the Central Province leaders (Kanogo 1977: 248). In my opinion, this is a rather weak argument. Besides the fact that the meetings referred to by Kanogo were certainly not as frequent as she suggests, trading and travelling is by no means incompatible; on the contrary, traders enjoy a considerable amount of freedom, especially when they are able to employ relatives as business assistants. In the light, also, of Tamarkin's detailed research data, I am therefore inclined to think that Kanogo is wrong on this point.

Some of her other points, however, are more convincing. As for the teachers, she claims that if they did act as leaders of the movement in the White Highlands, 'then the scarcity of Mau Mau records (which they ought to have kept during the revolt) is unexplainable' (Kanogo 1977: 248). The absence of literati in Mau Mau, especially in the forest, is an established fact which I will return to later, and Furedi is possibly wrong on this point. As for the rôle of the more influential personalities on the farms, Kanogo argues that they were viewed with suspicion by the ordinary squatters because they enjoyed better salaries and other privileges and therefore had a stake in settlerdom. They had no reason at all to join, and even less to lead Mau Mau and were always the last to be oathed on any farm (Kanogo 1977: 247). However, Kanogo is rather vague when she tries, in her turn,

to identify the people who were the first to be oathed on the farms and who led the movement:

> 'Oral interviews indicate that on any shamba, the first to be oathed were a selected few. These few were chosen, not because they held positions of importance within or without the settler set up, but because of their political insight, respectability and "the wisdom of God", i.e. wisdom given them by God rather than wisdom derived from formal education, special training (as an artisan), etc. In most cases, those selected were elderly people - mostly members of the Elders' Council' (Kanogo 1977: 247).

These statements do not convince me either, and especially the one on elders which, as we will see later, runs counter to all we know about Mau Mau in the present state of research. At the moment it is rather difficult to arbitrate between Kanogo and Furedi, although Kershaw's data seem to confirm Furedi's claim that traders, artisans and house servants played a pivotal role in the 'Mau Mau' movement in the Rift Valley. However, Kershaw's data do not allow us to distinguish between the moderate KCA oath of loyalty and the more militant Mau Mau oath. This may also explain, at least partly, the discrepancy between Furedi's statements and those of Kanogo. Nowhere in his Rift Valley article does Furedi make an analytical distinction between KCA and Mau Mau, and neither does Kanogo. We might suppose, as a working hypothesis, that the oathing patterns described by Furedi are particularly relevant for the earlier KCA-phase of oathing, while those revealed by Kanogo pertain to the militant Mau Mau phase, in which case they could be complementary rather than contradictory. However, in the absence of more precise data, it is impossible to draw conclusions on this point and the Furedi-Kanogo controversy must remain undecided at the moment. The only way to settle the controversy would be a kind of public debate between both scholars during which they could supply more evidence from their research data. I hope that this will take place some day, because the contrast between Furedi's rather 'elitist' view of Mau Mau and the more 'lower class' picture of both Kanogo and Tamarkin touches upon very important questions with regard to the deeper meaning of Mau Mau.

About the spread of the oath in the Kikuyu heartland (Kiambu, Fort Hall and Nyeri) we must of necessity be brief, for no new research has been done in this field since the end of the 1960s. I will therefore only mention the main features of the evolution of oathing in these

areas.

First of all we can safely conclude that mass-oathing in the Kikuyu Reserves occured much later than in the Rift Valley or in Nairobi. The Annual District Reports are quite positive on this point. The Kiambu District Annual Report for 1950 does indeed mention a number of unlawful oath cases that were successfully prosecuted during that year, but this only in a rather casual way and with the comment that this oath 'purported to bind the person making it to the Kikuyu Central Association' and that 'the form of oath and the ritual followed in its administration were practically the same as those adopted by the Mau Mau association' (p.6). (6) As for 1951, the Kiambu District Annual Report opens with the statement that: 'The year passed by without any major political incident', although there is a short reference to the continued administration of unlawful oaths of the Mau Mau type, with the specification that this was mainly the work of 'youngish men of no particular standing and there are indications that the more prominent politicians prefer to voice grievances and make demands through more constitutional channels. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether they in fact condemn the Mau Mau movement' (pp. 1-2).

The Fort Hall District Annual Report for 1950, in its turn, states that politically the year was quiet and that no case of illegal oath-taking was discovered although there may have been some isolated cases (p.1). The 1951 Report does mention some Mau Mau oath ceremonies in Forth Hall (p.2), but again without undue alarm. It is only in mid-1952 that official circles begin to show some alarm about the Central Province rural areas, and more particularly about Nyeri and Fort Hall (Venys 1970: 31).

Now it is of course possible, and even probable, that the colonial administrators were not aware of all the unlawful activities that were going on in their districts, but Kershaw's data suggest that the relative detachment of the administration did indeed reflect the situation in the field, at least in Komothai Location. Compared to the Rift Valley and the Nairobi dwellers, the inhabitants of Komothai were very slow starters in oathing, and although other rural areas may have had higher scores, in view of Komothai's reputation as a 'loyal' area, (Cf. Wanyoike 1974: 208), the impression prevails that the Kikuyu heartland definitely did not ta-

ke an early lead in the oathing campaign.

A second point to be noted is that, from the beginning of 1950 onward, oathing patterns became increasingly different in Kiambu as compared to Nyeri and Fort Hall. While the Kiambu campaign remained to some extent under the control of the moderate Mbari-KCA politicians, oathing in the two Northern Districts was increasingly directed by the Nairobi militants and the Kubai-Kaggia trade-union leadership. As time passed, the relations between both groups became more and more strained because of the lack of political success obtained by the moderate, constitutionalist politics advocated by Kenyatta and his associates. Kaggia, for example, claims that:

> 'Very few former KCA men were supporters of "Mau Mau" in the beginning. KCA used a Christian oath in its organization, and KCA people were strongly opposed to the traditional Kikuyu oath, as many of them were Christians. Secondly, KCA members were always constitutionalists (...). Also, the "Mau Mau" Central Committee was not in agreement with the "Kiambaa Parliament" which was dominated by KCA. The parliament was always acting as a brake on the "Mau Mau" Central Committee' (Kaggia 1975: 194).

Remarks to the same effect can be found in an as yet unpublished manuscript by E. Mutonyi, the Central Committee Chairman during the crucial 1951-1953 period. We are therefore led to underwrite Spencer's conclusion that:

> 'Although Europeans blamed KCA for the oathing and the consequent violence, most of what caution and moderation there was in the movement came from the old KCA leaders (...). When the Nairobi branch took over the oathing, the last major constraining influence was gone' (Spencer 1977: 282).

As a consequence of this, oaths remained an instrument of moderation and control in most parts of Kiambu, even during the Emergency, while the oaths in Nyeri and Fort Hall quickly developed into an instrument of mobilization for violent action (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 248).

In the absence of detailed grassroots studies nothing more can be said about the development of oathing in the Kikuyu Central Province Districts.

The same more or less holds true for Embu and Meru Districts. To my knowledge, no research has ever been undertaken on Mau Mau

in Embu and we can only guess that oathing in this district developed later and slower than in the Kikuyu heartland, as is suggested by all the official sources. The same is true for Meru, but in this case J. Kamunchuluh's 1975 article has provided some new material and new insights. As for the background of 'Mau Mau' agitation in Meru, Kamunchuluh has this to say:

> 'The most controversial issues in Meru were the agrarian measures and the dictatorial methods of the agricultural department. These measures were aimed at soil conservation and land reclamation. This meant communal labour for all able-bodied "natives" for two days plus a grass planting day' (Kamunchuluh 1975: 198).

Other grievances were the hut and poll tax, compulsory labour by young men on European farms, and the fear of land alienation, although in fact very little land was alienated in Meru under colonial rule. Kamunchuluh then turns to the rather ambiguous relationship between the Meru and the Kikuyu, stating that, as they belonged administratively to the Kikuyu Land Unit:

> '(...) the Meru could easily identify with the Kikuyu problems especially when measures applied in Kikuyu that could not work in Meru - were applied to the Meru. This could mean common grievances and hence a common enemy (...). The Kikuyu saw (Meru) as an area for expansion, for settlement and exploitation. The Meru were aware of the Kikuyu intentions, and never appreciated Kikuyu presence in their midst (...). Perhaps, up to as late as 1957, Meru was a Kikuyu's "satellite district" (...). Frequently, political agitation in Meru was no more than parochial reflections of the political situation in Kikuyuland and Nairobi' (Kamunchuluh 1975: 200).

On the origins of Mau Mau in Meru, and on Mau Mau recruitment Kamunchuluh, however, remains rather vague:

> 'Mau Mau was introduced into Meru by the Meru repatriates, the leaders of independent school movement and K.A.U., and the Kikuyu squatters, traders and labourers in Meru. The Meru repatriates, who had began to poor into Meru from 1950, were mainly the young men who had fled from communal labour, taxation, criminals, or those that could not fit in the traditional society' (Kamunchuluh 1975: 201).

The main problem with this statement is that it mixes up KAU and Mau Mau, as in the best colonial tradition; it should therefore be used with caution. Some of Kamunchuluh's data are nevertheless consistent with those of the Central Province Annual Report, 1952,

which states that Mau Mau in Meru and Embu spread through forest and sawmill employees, Kikuyu ahoi, and Embu people 'of the sweeper class who work in Nairobi' (p.2).

The Declaration of the Emergency

In October 1952, the new Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring, judged that rumours about mass oathing all over the Kikuyu areas and some sporadic acts of violence were sufficient reasons for declaring a State of Emergency and to ask for British troops to be flown into the country. Right from the beginning, heated debate ensued on the question whether this decision was justified by the real state of affairs, and the question is still not solved. I certainly do not pretend to be able to give a definitive answer to such a controversial question, but before turning to a description of the Mau Mau war and an analysis of the patterns of forest fighters' recruitment I will try to evaluate the existing evidence.

A first question that comes to mind is: how many people had in fact taken the 'Mau Mau' oath in October 1952, and especially how many Kikuyu? It is of course impossible to give an accurate answer to this question, first of all because official estimates varied widely over the year 1952. At the beginning of the year they were still very low. A police report from Nyeri District, for example, estimated the number of illegal oath-takers in the district at about 9,000, or 5 per cent of the total population, at the beginning of April. At the same time, the Commissioner of Police, commenting on an electoral speech by one of the European Legislative Council candidates to the effect that Mau Mau was universal amongst the Kikuyu, declared that 'it was true that large numbers of Kikuyu had taken the oath, but he would put their number at under 10 per cent' (Corfield 1960: 130). A few months later, by mid-1952, the intelligence services estimated that over a quarter of a million Kikuyu had taken the oath (Corfield 1960: 31) i.e., about 25 per cent of the total population. To my knowledge, no other official estimates were released before the declaration of the Emergency.

After the declaration of the Emergency, the official estimates (now based on hindsight or inspired by the prevailing state

of panic?) suddenly swelled the alleged Mau Mau ranks to a great extent. 'It was estimated that at least 80 per cent of the Kikuyu had taken the Mau Mau oath by the time the State of Emergency was declared', says Corfield, while Furedi quotes official documents putting the number of oath-takers in Nairobi and in the Rift Valley at over 90 per cent (Furedi 1973 a: 287; Furedi 1974 b: 495).

I am personally inclined to believe that, if the official April reports underestimated the number of oath-takers, the later evaluations are almost certainly too high. Kershaw's data certainly indicate this, while some 'Mau Mau' sources confirm the picture suggested by her data. When dealing with the August-September 1952 period, Waruhiu Itote ('General China') remarks, for example, that in the villages bordering the Mount Kenya forest where he operated 'we could only trust those who had taken the oath and many had not yet done so' (Itote 1967: 63. My italics). As for Nairobi, E. Mutonyi, the Central Committee Chairman, states that after October 1952, he and his associates decided to intensify their oathing activities and more particularly to proceed to forced oathing (Mutonyi s.d.: 140), which again casts some doubt upon high official estimates. It is true that oathing activities were speeded up during the last months of 1952 and the first months of 1953, especially in the rural areas, but this happened after the declaration of the Emergency. (7). As the oath was intended as a means to cement the cohesion and the unity of the entire Kikuyu population, and as war was only to be waged when this unity was fully realized, it can therefore be suggested that Mau Mau was not ready for armed revolt in October 1952.

It is quite likely, however, that the Central Committee leaders were preparing for violent action against the colonial government in the long run. Arms were stolen and murders were planned as early as the beginning of 1950, while in 1952 the idea of taking to the forest for guerilla warfare had begun to materialize. H.K. Wachanga, for example, refers to a meeting of the Kikuyu War Council held in early 1952 in Nairobi:

> 'At this meeting, Stanley Mathenge was elected Chairman of the Mau Mau Movement. He was honoured with this position because of the work he was doing at the time and because he had been in the army during World War II. It was felt that he would

> be the best man to organize our Movement because of his experience and knowledge of modern army organization and guerilla tactics. Mr. Waruhiu Itote (...) was elected the leader of Mount Kenya forces' (Wachanga 1975: 25).

This is confirmed by Central Committee Chairman E. Mutonyi who reveals the existence, by the end of 1951, of a Military Operations Committee, headed by Mathenge and with instructions to organize for guerilla training. Wachanga furthermore claims that he, Mathenge and Dedan Kimathi took to the forest as early as January 23th, 1952 (Wachanga 1975: XXIII), but this statement should probably be taken with a pinch of salt. Elsewhere in his book he declares that the Nyandarua forest leaders still frequently attended meetings in Nairobi and elsewhere. I would therefore suggest that their 'taking to the forest' was limited to a few scouting operations and the building up of some forest stores; Mathenge and Kimathi probably decided to really hide in the forest only in December 1952, as is alleged by Karari Njama (1966: 129). As for Waruhiu Itote, the future General China, he indeed established a guerilla basis on the slopes of Mount Kenya in August 1952, with a few dozens of followers (Itote 1967: 43 ff).

However, the same conclusion applies to the preparation for guerilla warfare as to the oathing campaign: in October 1952, Mau Mau was certainly not ready to fight and 'none of the KAU or "Mau Mau" leaders wanted the Government to declare an Emergency' (Spencer 1977: 278). There were probably at least three reasons for this. First of all, the Central Committee and War Council leaders had not yet elaborated strategical or tactical plans for a fully-fledged armed insurrection. As M. Mathu, himself a member of the Mau Mau urban guerilla, puts it:

> 'When the Emergency was declared it seems we had neither a plan for revolt nor the leadership to carry through such a plan. For many months we were clearly on the defensive, simply reacting to Government's repressive measures rather than putting into effect our own program of revolt' (Mathu 1974: 17).

Mathu's statement is corroborated by the facts. Much to the surprise of the authorities, the situation in the Kikuyu areas remained outwardly quiet during the first months of the Emergency, except for a few sporadic acts of violence, some of them against European settler families. Real guerilla warfare only started towards the end of March 1953.

A second reason is that the Central Committee leaders who were in charge of collecting arms and ammunition for the expected fighting had been able to enlarge the Mau Mau armory to some extent, but that 'there simply were not enough weapons for any sustained fight to be made against the British' (Spencer 1977: 279), This, again, seems basically correct. According to Corfield, at least 504 firearms were reported lost in Kenya during the 1948-1952 period, of which a mere 105 were recovered. Corfield therefore concludes that:

> '(...) at the time of the declaration of the Emergency (...) Mau Mau probably possessed not less than 400 assorted precision weapons, assuming that that was the destination of the majority of the arms stolen. The total may well have been 800, as the theft of unlicensed firearms was rarely reported' (Corfield 1960: 233).

Even 800 precision weapons rather seem a meagre stock for declaring an all-out guerilla war, but Corfield's assumption, moreover, was probably wrong. It is a striking fact that the first official estimates of firearms in the possession of the forest gangs were very low and remained well below 200 until June 1953, with the specification, moreover, that the major part of these arms had been acquired during raids on Police Posts, European farms and Kikuyi guard posts. It is also striking that General China, when inaugurating his guerilla base in the Mount Kenya area in August 1952, was definitely short on arms as he started out with only one pistol (Itote 1967: 47-48). We have therefore to assume that the major part of Corfield's lost weapons never reached the Mau Mau forest fighters or only reached them after several months of warfare.

The third reason is even more important, especially as it also throws some light on the deeper meaning of Mau Mau as a nationalist and national movement. I will introduce this point with an interesting remark made by E. Mutonyi:

> 'Many people have wondered why apparently only Kikuyus were involved in the Muhimu. It is not because other tribes did not like our ways, as some writers have implied. It was because the Kikuyu oath was unsuitable for other tribes except perhaps the Akamba who have similar customs to the Kikuyu. We hoped that in the course of time (...) we would divise suitable oaths for each tribe' (Mutonyi s.d.: 112).

According to Spencer, a plan to spread the oath into the other tribes did indeed exist and was just beginning to take effect in October 1952. Versions of the oath had started to spread among the Kamba, the Luo and the Luhyia. Two young Kamba leaders were members of the Central Committee and had started to spread the oath in the heart of the Kamba country, while Kubai claims that he had made contacts among the Luo and had arranged for the beginning of an oathing campaign there, in accordance with Luo custom (Spencer 1977: 279). But again, this campaign was still in its initial phase when the Emergency was declared.

We can therefore conclude that L.S.B. Leakey's statement to the effect that Mau Mau 'went off at half-cock' and that it was 'forced into the open' by the declaration of the Emergency (Leakey 1954: 108), is confirmed by recent evidence from Mau Mau leaders themselves. As Kubai said: 'We needed another year. The Emergency came much too soon for us' (Spencer 1977: 279).

Given these facts, how are we to explain the precipitated declaration of the Emergency in October 1952? Two factors seem to have played a role in the process, one of them to be sought on the side of Mau Mau, the other on the side of the colonial authorities. As for the Mau Mau side of affairs, there is no doubt that, although none of the leaders of the movement considered that the time was ripe for war yet, actual violence increased from late 1951 onward, especially in Central Province. It started with a large-scale riot against anti-rinderpest inocculations in Fort Hall District, late in 1951, followed by the burning of Government headmen's huts in Aguthi Location (Nyeri) and the murder of headmen in Tetu and, again, Aguthi, in Januari 1952. Soon afterwards, grassfires broke out at several European farms in Nanyuiki District, a definite turning point in the Mau Mau campaign, according to Corfield (1960: 126). Later in the year, in September, stables were set on fire and cattle were maimed on European farms in Timau area, while the Kenya Government was badly shaken, in the beginning of October, by the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu, a leading Kiambu loyalist, assassinated in broad daylight by alleged 'Mau Mau' gunmen. For the Government, his death seems to have been the real point of no return. According to A. Clayton, Governor Sir Evelyn

Baring was at that time making arrangements for a meeting with Kenyatta at Government House, but after the murder of Waruhiu the project was abandoned (Clayton 1976: 5).

Official documents of this period, and also subsequent documents like the 1960 Corfield Report, leave no doubt about the prevailing opinion in policy-making circles in the Colony to the effect that these acts of violence were all part of a planned campaign to provoke an armed revolt. In reality, this seems not to have been the case. Spencer, for example, argues that they were not the signs of a controlled campaign for violence, but rather indications of a gradual breakdown of control within the Mau Mau movement, a problem which had been in existence since the inception of the Action Group in early 1950 and which became increasingly manifest as time went on:

> 'There simply was no central body that controlled all the oathing, all the collection of arms and ammuniton, the arson, the raids on European farms, and the sundry acts of violence that were to increase during KAU's last years' (Spencer 1975: 32).

This seems to be true to a certain extent. The murder of Waruhiu, for example, was probably not ordered by the Nairobi Central Committee leaders, but has to be understood in the context of internal disputes about political leadership between different leading families in Kiambu District. Or, to be more precise, the murder of Waruhiu was probably arranged by members of the Koinange family, without the knowledge and consent of either Kenyatta or the radical trade union leaders, although the actual shooting was done by hired assassins who may have been Mau Mau initiates. I have reason to believe that even some leading Government officials were aware of this at the time, but preferred not to say so openly in order to be able to maintain the then prevailing confusion between the Kenya African Union, the Kikuyu Central Association and Mau Mau.

A point in favour of Spencer's thesis of uncontrolled acts of violence by grassroots groups is that they all took place, with the exception of the Waruhiu murder, in areas such as Nyeri where Mau Mau was a rather recent phenomenon and where central control had suffered more heavily from the precipitate introduction of mass

oathing. Kiambu, where oathing was allready a well-established and moderate phenomenon at the end of the 1940's, remained relatively quiet. The Kiambu District Annual Report for 1952 stated for example that:

> 'For some obscure reason Kiambu district has suffered far fewer incidents than the other Kikuyu districts (...) incidents of murder and arson had been comparatively few' (p. 2).

The same seems to hold for the settled areas of Rift Valley Province, the second old-time bastion of oathing. According to the Nakuru District Annual Report, 1952:

> '(...) prior to the declaration of a State of Emergency in October, the District was virtually immune from serious incidents though troubled by many minor indications of unrest among the Kikuyu tribe' (p. 3).

Interestingly enough, when violence finally broke out in the Rift Valley, at the end of June 1952, this occurred in Laikipia District, where the bulk of the Kikuyu population came from Nyeri, while the Nakuru and Naivasha Districts, inhabitated by a majority of Kiambu and Fort Hall Kikuyu, i.e. older initiates of Mau Mau, gave less cause for concern (Rift Valley Province Annual Report 1952: 1-3). As in Central Province, therefore, it seems that it was the Nyeri group of Mau Mau adherents, i.e. relatively recent initiates, who got out of hand, a fact that can indeed be interpreted as a sign of failing central control over the 'outer territories' of the movement.

The relative quiet of the Rift Valley and the absence of a general breakdown of 'law and order' in this Province is even more interesting because all the sources I have been able to consult agree that the militant batuni or fighting oath was first developed in the Rift Valley areas, in the beginning of 1952, before being introduced in Nairobi. At first sight this seems somewhat contradictory, but it means that those areas where the idea of planned and centrally-controled insurgency first materialized were also those that suffered less from uncontrolled acts of violence that were premature from the point of view of the Mau Mau central leadership as they provided the Kenya Government with a ready pretext for early intervention. This apparent contradiction

thus supports Spencer's thesis, a thesis that by now has become undisputed amongst Mau Mau specialists.

Even too much so, in my opinion. Assuming for the moment the role of the devil's advocate, I should like to point out that although pre-Emergency violence may not have been centrally planned, there was nevertheless some direction and some system behind it, and that it is not quite consistent with the facts to impute it exclusively to the 'leaderless and anonymous masses' as I did myself in my 1971 book. It is Spencer himself who provides us with some doubts:

> 'The Fort Hall episode (the anti-rinderpest inocculation campaign R.B.), which Beauttah willingly admits he helped stir up, was an expression of local discontent. The arson and attacks in Nyeri District were solely the work of Nyeri District's senior KAU officials, led by the Assistant Chairman, Henry Wambugu, and the Secretary, Samuel Kiragu Kagotho. The raids on the European farms in Nanyuki and neighbouring Timau were the work of the Chairman and the Secretary of the Nanyuki KAU branch, urged on, again, by Beauttah, who discussed plans for the attack with them. There was, it is true, a Central Province KAU committee that included these men, but it does not appear to have served any Province-wide tactical or strategic function in the increasing spread of violence' (Spencer 1977: 283. My italics).

Although Spencer rightly distinguishes between organizations and individual personalities, it has to be admitted that there was at least some KAU and some KCA (i.e. Beauttah) participation in the rising tide of violence; the confusion between KAU,KCA and Mau Mau at the government level, therefore, had at least some basis in reality. It has to be admitted also that this argument fell on fertile ground in the Kenya establishment, and it is here that we have to turn to the other side of the coin and analyze the role of the colonial administration in the precipitate declaration of the Emergency. This has already been done by some authors of the 1960-1970 period, but never in such a systematic way as was done more recently by J.B. Berman. I shall quote this author at some length because his observations also have a more general bearing for the study of revolutionary movements. Berman formulates his main idea in the following terms:

> 'The difficulty (...) with both recent accounts of the Emergency period in Kenya and theoretical approaches such as Gurr's and Wolf's is that they are one-sided, analyzing the

> genesis of collective violence almost exclusively from the actions of the insurgents (as is obvious from Gurr's title, Why Men Rebel). They can explain the factors that brought the Kikuyu into conflict with the colonial authorities and made them mobilize for mass action, but not those that shaped the response of the authorities to Kikuyu demands. The importance of this gap is highlighted by the insistence of contemporary scholars, as well as Kenya Africans themselves, that it was the refusal of the Kenya Government to increase effective African political participation or implement African demands for socio-economic reforms, and its harassment and repression of African political activity, that directly precipitated Kikuyu militance, secrecy and violence (...). We must understand the bases for repression by incumbents as well as rebellion by insurgents since, as Charles Tilly has pointed out, "collective violence is a contingent outcome of interaction among contenders and governments, in which the agents of government commonly have the greater discretion and do most of the injury and damage"' (Berman 1976: 145-146).

As for the specific case of Kenya, Berman comes to the conclusion that the declaration of the Emergency was 'a pre-emptive attack carried out by the incumbent colonial authorities against a significant segment of the African political leadership of Kenya and its supporters' (Berman 1976: 170). In other words, the Kenya Government knowingly used the sporadic acts of violence that occurred throughout 1952 and that were the work of a small minority of Kikuyu militants, in order to round up all African leaders - moderate and militant - and thus prevent their taking constitutional action for moderate goals: this in response to insistent demands from the unruly, conservative Kenya settler element which was defending its life-style and its whole raison d'être against the rising tide of African nationalism.

Undoubtedly, there is much truth in this argument and the example of Kenya does not stand all by itself in African contemporary history. R.A. Joseph, for example, has argued that the May 1955 riots in Douala which initiated the U.P.C.-insurrection in Cameroun were partly provoked by the colonial administration, headed by Roland Pré, a 'tough' and virulently anti-communist High Commissioner recently nominated by Paris with the explicit misson to 'make an end to subversion', and that the administrative authorities 'share a large part of responsibility for this week of violence in Cameroun' (Joseph 1977: 277). As was the case with Mau Mau in 1952, the U.P.C.-leadership was de-

finitely not ready for armed revolt in May 1955 (although some of its leaders indulged in very menacing statements), but the Douala riots supplied the colonial government with a ready-made argument for declaring the U.P.C. an illegal party. This, in turn, drove the U.P.C. leaders underground and led them to prepare for guerilla warfare that was only launched in December 1956, nineteen months after the Douala riots and after repeated appeals by U.P.C.'s General Secretary Um Nyobe to lift the ban on the party (Joseph 1977: 316). As Joseph puts it: '(...) the U.P.C. could be said to have been forced to fight, and its rebellion was very much reluctant in nature' (Joseph 1977: 345), a statement that, to a certain extent, also fits the Mau Mau revolt.

It is also true that political movements, especially African peasant movements, often have rather limited objectives and that their attitudes are at first conciliatory, i.e. they first petition the government and only later, when the government seems deaf to their protest, adopt more violent means of action. This is brought out clearly by a comparison between the Agbekoya ('farmers shall not suffer') movement that was active in Yoruba-land in 1968-1969, and the 1965 Mangalmé peasant movement that initiated the Frolinat insurrection in Northern Chad. In Nigeria, where the demands of the peasants were met by the release of detainees, and eventually by the lowering of income tax rates and the abolition of several other noxious levies (which was all the peasants asked for), the violence subsided very soon (Lloyd 1975: 209). In Chad, on the contrary, all channels of political communication were obstructed, and the government replied to peasant complaints about taxes with heavy-handed repression and large-scale arrests. A few months later, extensive parts of Central and Eastern Chad were in open revolt (Buijtenhuijs 1978: 105 ff).

It seems therefore that the role of the incumbents in the sparking-off of armed insurrection is very important; this in turn, has important consequences for the theoretical analysis of such movements. In line with Tilly (and Berman), R. Aya makes the following general statement:

> 'Theories of revolution (...) fall into three main lines of thought: (1) the outside-agitator model, which imagines revolutions and lesser public disturbances to be the work of subversives who, with a sinister genius for cajolery and coercion, provoke otherwise disinterested masses to violence; (2) the volcanic model, through which civil strife appears to be the periodic eruption

> of social-psychological tensions that boil up in human groups like lava under the earth's crust or steam in a geyser; and (3) the political model, in which the sound and fury of public violence signify shifting power balances and struggles for hegemony between contenders for control of the state. What the other two models dismiss as the handiwork of secret agents or mere nihilistic thrashing about is thus revealed to be the by-product of political power struggles between incumbent authorities and groups of challengers, who take to the streets (or hills) when legal measures fail to bring a redress of grievances, just and equitable performance on the part of officialdom, or a restructuring of the polity that accomodates their claims - fail, in short, to bring them an effective say in the decisions that shape the course of their collective destinies' (Aya 1979: 49).

Although the Kenya Government firmly believed, or professed to believe in, alternately, the first and the second of Aya's models, there is no doubt that the Declaration of the Emergency stems even more from a series of events that fit rather nicely into the third - political - model. As for the specific case of Kenya, however, I think that Berman and others, including myself in 1971, go too far when they put the main responsibility for the Emergency at the Government's door. As we have seen, violent action, including guerilla warfare, was prepared for by some political leaders (Aya's 'outside-agitator model'), and at the end of 1952 quite a few young Kikuyu were prepared to follow them on this path.

I therefore think that Sir Evelyn Baring was right, but for the wrong reasons. Had I been Governor of Kenya in October 1952, while at the same time benefitting from the hindsight we have now, I would probably have declared a State of Emergency in order to nip an incipient revolt in the bud. Contrary to what Sir Evelyn Baring did, however, I would only have ordered the arrest of the Central Committee and Kikuyu War Council leaders while leaving Kenyatta and his moderate KAU associates as free men. Putting Kenyatta on trial for the planning of Mau Mau was a grievous fault that drove many hesitant Kikuyu straight into the arms of Mau Mau; it betrayed a lack of detached analysis, in so far as KAU, KCA and Mau Mau, although partly overlapping, were definitely not synonymous. The same lack of discernment made the government strike wildly at the Kikuyu community as a whole, in a panic-inspired series of measures of collective punishment and repression. Again, this all-out attack on the Kikuyu drove many ordinary peasants to fighting in the forest, a line of action they were not prepared for and had certainly never planned.

b. Warfare during the Emergency

The Beginning of Guerilla Activities

Before we turn now to analysis of the patterns of forest fighters' recruitment, a few words have to be said about the beginning of Mau Mau guerilla activities. Although no real, full-scale academic debate has developed on this particular question, the existing literature is implicitly somewhat contradictory and the elements for thorough debate are present. I will start this section with some extensive quotes by D.L. Barnett who, in 1966, presented a version of the beginning of Mau Mau guerilla warfare that has been largely accepted since:

> 'A significant section of the European settler community tended to interpret the Emergency declaration and legislation as promulgating a sort of 'open season' on Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribesmen. Forced confessions, beatings, robbery of stock, food and clothing, brutalities of various sorts and outright killings were frequent enough occurrences to arouse a fear in the hearts of most Kikuyu that the intent of the white men was to eliminate the whole Kikuyu tribe. Combined with the general confusion, the partial disintegration of the Movement and the will of some to fight back, this fear inaugurated a slow but steady drift of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peasants, particularly the youth, into the forests of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares. I believe it to be useful and historically accurate to consider the beginning of the 'Mau Mau Revolution' as falling in that period, early in 1953, when several thousand Kikuyu, Embu and Meru peasants withdrew to the forested areas of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares and began organizing themselves into fighting groups' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 71).

Elsewhere in his book, Barnett precises that 'this movement was slow, sporadic and, at least in the early stages, unorganized' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 149). In 1971, I took over this thesis, describing Mau Mau as a revolt of the 'leaderless and anonymous masses' (Buijtenhuijs 1971a: 201-202).

There are indeed some reasons to believe that Barnett was not far from the truth when he characterized the Mau Mau armed revolt as mainly a 'peasant withdrawal' in its initial stages. Several Mau Mau life-stories leave no doubt that Government repression was felt heavily in the Reserves and elsewhere and that this contributed to individual decisions to join the forest fighters by people who had, in a way, no other option left, life outside the forest having become unbearable (Cf. Wamweya 1971:

144-5; Kabiro 1973: 61; Barnett and Njama 1966: 128, 136, 197 and 271). Barnett's thesis also has the advantage of emphasizing the cleavage that existed between the oathing campaigns before the Emergency and forest fighting afterwards, a point I have underlined several times in the course of this report.

However, we should not lose sight of the elements of continuity that also existed between pre-Emergency and post-Emergency 'Mau Mau', a continuity that has been emphasized in some recent articles. Furedi, for example, argues that although many African political leaders were arrested in October 1952, including Kenyatta, his Kiambaa-associates and the Kubai-Kaggia group, those that were most deeply involved in the preparation of armed violence escaped the net and went on undisturbed with their organizational action. This is particularly true for the middle level leaders of the Action Group and the Kikuyu War Council (Furedi 1973a: 284-285). Although Barnett does mention the presence in the forest of some pre-Emergency leaders, such as Stanley Mathenge and Dedan Kimathi, Furedi is right in emphasizing this element of continuity more than has been done hitherto. The same phenomenon not only occurred at the national level, in Nairobi, but also locally, as is demonstrated by M. Tamarkin for Nakuru.

> 'In Nakuru the declaration of the Emergency and Operation Jock Scott (the massive arrests of African political leaders R.B.) had no effect whatever on Mau Mau leadership (...). The same committee continued to control the movement in the town and the district and to maintain contact with the movement's central committee in Nairobi' (Tamarkin 1976: 133).

Tamarkin concludes therefore that there was less discontinuity between pre-Emergency Mau Mau and the forest revolt than was claimed by Barnett and by myself. I do admit that Tamarkin has a point here, but I also think that he and Furedi tend to underestimate the negative effects of the arrest of the Kubai-Kaggia trade union elements, the central planners of Mau Mau violence. At the end of 1952, the Kenya Government showed some surprise that, contrary to its expectations, nothing had really happened in the Kikuyu areas during the first months of the Emergency, and this relative quiet had certainly much to do with a change in leadership, as is alleged by M. Mathu, himself a member of some standing of the Nairobi 'passive wing':

> 'For a month or so, while our leaders in Nairobi tried to figure out the lines of action open to us in the new circumstances, we remained relatively inactive. Perhaps, though I don't know this

> to be a fact, our leaders were waiting for some hint, advice or subtle directive from Kenyatta and the other detained KAU officials. If so, they waited in vain. All KAU officials - including those tried at Kapenguria - and the vast majority of educated Kikuyu quickly detached themselves from the revolution' (Mathu 1974: 16-17).

Mau Mau members themselves, thus, painfully experienced an element of discontinuity in leadership, at least at the national level. This means that Tamarkin's thesis probably mainly holds for developments at the local level. In view of the fact that there existed no clear hierarchy of authority within the movement, so that local cells enjoyed a considerable amount of autonomy, this is an important element that has to be taken into consideration as a corrective on Barnett's 'peasant withdrawal'-thesis.

The recruitment of forest fighters

Analyzing the patterns of forest fighters' recruitment is an almost impossible task in the absence of hard data. First of all, before trying to make a breakdown of the Mau Mau forest armies with regard to district of origin, age, education, social class, etc., we would want to know with some precision how many forest fighters were there at all. Even this is difficult to establish. During the first year of the Emergency official estimates were low (about 100 'hardcore' terrorists in February 1953; about 1000 in June) and certainly below reality. It is only in August 1953 that General Erskine, Kenya's commander-in-chief, suddenly puts the number of active combatants at 8,000, which is probably still an underestimation. According to F. Kitson (1960: 16), the British Army leaders subsequently came to the conclusion that the number of forest fighters, at that time, must have amounted to at least 10,000 and maybe even 15,000.

Some Mau Mau estimates are much higher. Wachanga (1975: 182-188), for example, claims for August 1953, probably the absolute peak of Mau Mau enrolment, a total of 51,250 fighters, which is certainly excessive. Barnett and Njama are much more modest: for the same period they arrive at about 15,000 warriors in the Aberdares and 5,000 in the Mount Kenya area (Barnett and Njama 1966: 157), while General China, when interrogated after his capture in the beginning of 1954, claimed a total of 7,500 fighters for his Mount Kenya armies, 4,600

of these being in active service. If these estimates are correct, and taking into account the rather high turn-over in the forest armies, due to battles, defections and surrender, we may very tentatively suggest that during the 1952-1956 Emergency years some 25,000 to 30,000 people in all must have engaged in forest fighting for at least a period of time.

Let us turn now to the question of forest fighters' recruitment patterns. It has to be said first of all that in this field Mau Mau historiography has not progressed much since the end of the 1960s, especially when compared to the work done with regard to the pre-Emergency oathing campaigns. New research on the grassroots level is painfully lacking, the only new sources being some forest fighters' Memoirs. These are very useful for matters of detail, but they are sometimes biased and do not pretend to offer an overall view of the forest war. Therefore, our knowledge about the forest fighters is still rather impressionistic and our conclusions have to remain very tentative. Generally speaking, however, we know at least four things about the composition of the Mau Mau armies:

1) Almost all the forest fighters were young men. This, of course, is normal in any war, but in the case of Mau Mau, the participation of the older generations, and of women, is an important subject to which I will return in chapter five.
2) Most of the forest fighters were illiterate or at most semi-educated, a subject that will be dealt with at the end of chapter two.
3) The majority of the forest fighters belonged to the poorer sections of the Kikuyu community, as we will see in chapter five.
4) Most of the fighters originated from Nyeri District and, subsidiary, from Fort Hall, while Kiambu District lagged far behind in its contribution to the forest war. Moreover, quite a few forest fighters were repatriated squatters or Nairobi dwellers.

In this chapter, I shall concentrate on this last point, i.e. the geographical distribution of the forest fighters, trying more particularly to establish the facts as they are known today, while reserving my comments and interpretations for later chapters.

A first point that has to be remembered is that the early guerilla fighters, who took to the forest between October 1952 and April 1953, probably belonged to different categories. A few of them, but only a

minority, were committed men with a long previous carreer in Mau Mau, who were already preparing for guerilla warfare before the declaration of the Emergency and who now implemented their plans, although at a moment not chosen by themselves. They were the Mathenges, the Kimathis and the Chinas who escaped the mass arrests in October 1952 and almost immediately turned to guerilla warfare, each of them initially with a force of between one hundred to three hundred followers.

They were joined very soon by young Kikuyu from the Reserves who, as stated by Barnett, were not so much motivated by idealistic or political considerations, but rather were escaping from Government repression in the Reserves. Many of them took the decision to join the forest fighters individually, or together with a few friends, without having had previous contacts with the guerilla armies. Wandering more or less aimlessly through the forest, they sooner or later met with already established gangs and were then incorporated into the Mau Mau army. The few established forest leaders probably did everything within their power to increase this stream of young peasants from the Reserves. Referring to Stanley Mathenge, P. Maina says:

> 'From the forest he travelled widely in recruitment and organization missions. During the early part of 1953 (...) these missions took him to Fort Hall, Kiambu and the Nyeri reserve. On returning to the Aberdares from these visits he always brought back many more freedom fighters to the forest' (Maina 1977: 60-61).

It is interesting to note that some of the men who were later to take leading positions within the Mau Mau armies were recruited in this way. This was, for example, the case with General Kago, one of the leading Fort Hall generals who, according to Maina 'decided to join the war of liberation after considerable pressure from Fort Hall Mau Mau fighters who wanted him to lead them in the struggle' (Maina 1977: 35). The same holds true for Karari Njama who moved to the forest in May 1953, after a personal call (or rather summons) from Stanley Mathenge (Barnett and Njama 1966: 143). Young peasants from the Reserves were thus the first to join the Mau Mau armies, and as the war went on and Government repression became more and more heavy-handed, such people continued, individually or in small groups, to enlist as fresh recruits.

During the first months of 1953, another section of the Kikuyu community began to contribute to the Mau Mau armies, i.e. the Rift Valley squatters. As was the case with the Reserves dwellers, many of them were

not so much moved by political motives but rather were forced to join the forest fighters, ironically enough, by Government measures meant to restore 'tribal discipline' amongst the Kikuyu. Kanoge describes the Rift Valley events in the following words:

> 'With the declaration of the State of Emergency (...) a large number of the Kikuyu squatters were arrested and placed in government posts where food supplies were scarce and living conditions harsh. Hungry and insecure (...) the only outlet was to seek the security of the forest where food was not very scarce. As Barnett states, "Several thousand (squatters) chose the latter course and entered the Aberdares either directly from the Rift Valley or after spending a short time in the reserve". Those of the squatters who were initially repatriated to the reserves encountered hostile reception especially because they were a burden to feed. The Kikuyu in the reserves were not slow to reprimand the repatriates as being responsible for the State of Emergency. Under such hardships, some of these ex-squatters found their way into the forest after brief periods in the reserve' (Kanogo 1977: 245-246).

There is no doubt that the repatriation of Kikuyu squatters from the settled areas involved large numbers of people. Perhaps as many as 100,000 Kikuyu (men, women and children) were driven back to the Reserves or left voluntarily; in 1953 alone, Kiambu received about 37,000 repatriates, Nyeri and Fort Hall 20,000 each (Clayton and Savage 1974: 348 and 353). It is therefore statistically possible that large numbers of squatters joined the forest gangs during the first months of 1953, as is claimed by several sources. This would also be in line with Furedi's (and more implicitly, Kanogo's) thesis that 'the Mau Mau revolt was an outcome of a prolonged agrarian struggle between Kikuyu squatters and European settlers' (Furedi 1974b: 486).

Nevertheless, I am inclined to think that the contribution of the squatters to the forest fight has been exaggerated to some extent. Although I do not have any conclusive evidence for this, there are at least two points that explain my hesitations. First of all, the Mau Mau Aberdares Army, which comprised about three quarters of the total number of forest fighters, was divided into several groups according to the district of origin of its combatants. According to those Mau Mau leaders who have supplied some details about this geographical build-up, the Rift Valley fighters only represented a minority of the total Aberdare forces. Karari Njama lists a total of eight Mau Mau armies, only one of which (General Kimbo's Mburu Ngebo Army) originated from the Rift Valley. Although he does not provide full data about this Army, its

main sections only comprised about 600 warriors (Barnett and Njama 1966: 278 and 281), compared with a total of over 10,000. Another list of Mau Mau armies that only partly coincides with that of Njama, is given by Wachanga. In his statistics, two of the Aberdares armies are listed as Rift Valley groups, one of them being Kimbo's. According to Wachanga, they were made up of 4,000 fighters compared with a total of 33,250 (Wachanga 1975: 182-188). Although Wachanga's absolute numbers are certainly inflated, the relative proportions of Rift Valley and non-Rift Valley combatants may be fairly correct. This suggests a rather modest contribution by the squatters to the forest forces, although it is possible that some squatters individually joined gangs from those reserve areas where they or their families originally came from.

Secondly, it is known that the forest fighters operated mainly in the Kikuyu areas of Central Province and, preferably, in their districts and locations of origin. Both Njama and Wachanga claim that this was not to the liking of the leading Mau Mau generals, such as Mathenge and Kimathi, and that they repeatedly urged the forest fighters to raid the settled areas and not the Reserves, where they caused the deaths of innocent Africans (Cf. Wachanga 1975: 82 and 96-98). However, most of the lesser generals did not act upon these calls, one of their reasons being that because they and their followers did not know the area, they would be unable to get food (Barnett and Njama 1966: 214). This again casts some doubt on the participation of genuine Rift Valley squatters in Mau Mau warfare. In my opinion, the failure of the forest leaders to convince their followers to carry the fight to the settled areas is all the more significant as most of the British army documents I have been able to consult express concern about such an eventuality, and claim that attacks on European farms would have been the best strategy for Mau Mau, because it would have forced the Security Forces into a defensive guard role in the settled areas. My conclusion, therefore, is that the squatters' contribution to the forest fight has probably been exaggerated, but that we need more concrete data in order to be sure of this.

Nairobi urbanites formed a third source of Mau Mau recruitment, a source that became important after the first months of the Emergency had passed. Again, it is impossible to say exactly how many city dwellers joined the Mau Mau forces. Here, too, I have the impression that their contribution may have been exaggerated by some observers,

such as General Erskine, who claimed that toward the end of 1953 'Nairobi had become the main Mau Mau supply base from which terrorists obtained recruits, money, supplies and ammunition' (Erskine 1955: 11). With regard to money, supplies, and ammunition, Erskine's remark is confirmed by Mau Mau sources such as Njama, Gikoyo, Itote and Mutonyi, but on the specific point of recruits these sources are less affirmative. The most precise data are supplied by Mutonyi, the Central Committee Chairman until the end of 1953, who was in a good position to record Nairobi recruits leaving for Nyandarua and Mount Kenya.

> 'The first contingent led by Stanley Mathenge Mirugi, left Nairobi for Nyandarwa on 7th November 1952. It consisted of some five hundred young men. The second group, led by (...) General Matenjagwo (...) left on 3rd March 1953. Gitau led a band of some five hundred men including General Kago Mboko (...). Warungutamu left for Nyandarwa with about four hundred and fifty men on 11th March 1953 and Miri Kamau followed on 4th April of the same year with some five hundred followers. A period of nearly ten months elaspsed before large contingents of men were sent to the forest at the initiative of the War Council (...). In January 1954 (...) a group (...) left for the forest. Another group left in February and yet another in April 1954 (...). The April 1954 group was the largest which left under the direction of the War Council. Several other groups from Nairobi and elsewhere made their way to the forest as emergency measures became more and more stringent' (Mutonyi s.d.: 142-143).

Thus, about 2000 Nairobi recruits joined Nyandarua in 1953 and a large but unspecified number did so in 1954. If these figures are anywhere near correct (8), we can safely increase the 1953 Nairobi contribution with a few hundred more fighters, since Mutonyi omits the recruit-parties joining the Mount Kenya area that were mentioned by General China during his interrogation after capture (Interrogation of .... : 25). Although these numbers are not neglectable, they show that the Nairobi recruits never represented more than a substantial minority of the total Mau Mau forces, evaluated at about 15,000 combatants in 1953. Moreover, the Nairobi contribution came to a sudden stop when Operation Anvil destroyed the Nairobi Mau Mau network in April 1954. During the summer of 1954, those urban Mau Mau activists who had escaped arrest decided in their turn to take to the forest, but they limited their operations to the Kiambu areas surrounding Nairobi; they remained on their own and never even met with the main Mau Mau armies in the Aberdares.

A question that remains to be answered and that has never been asked until now is whether all those fighters listed as Nairobi recruits by Mutonyi and others really were urbanites. I have some reasons to believe that this was not always the case. M. Mathu, for example, gives the following details about the functioning of the Nairobi Mau Mau central organization:

> 'Often we received a report that Waruingi, who fought in and around Kiambu, or one of the leaders of the Aberdares or Mount Kenya fighters needed a certain number of men. This information was sent to the Kenya Parliament which would have its representatives from the district committees ask each location to contribute a certain number of young men for the forest' (Mathu 1974: 24).

It is not quite clear whether these district and locational committees were based in Nairobi itself or in the home areas in the Reserves, but the last possibility is not to be excluded. G.G. Gikoyo, who belonged to a local Mau Mau network in Fort Hall District and who decided to go to the forest in February 1953, joined the Nyandarua Army in the following manner: he first approached his locational leader, who then passed on his demand to the Nairobi leaders; these decided that Gikoyo should be send to the forest together with other volunteers (Gikoyo 1979: 44). In May 1953, Gikoyo joined a group of 99 fighters, recruited under the overall responsibility of the Nairobi committees; some of these, however, were 'sent by locations', others 'by divisions' and still others 'by districts' (Gikoyo 1979: 53). This suggests that his case was not an isolated one and that other young men may have joined the forest fighters as 'Nairobi recruits' without ever having set foot in the city.

I therefore conclude that, although Rift Valley and Nairobi contributions to the Mau Mau armies may have been substantial, the bulk of the forest fighters must have come directly from the rural areas of the Kikuyu Land Unit unless we assume that the overall estimates of the Mau Mau armies now generally agreed upon are much too high. I think this is rather improbable. According to Corfield, about 11,500 Mau Mau fighters were killed up to the end of 1956, about 2,500 were captured, while 2,700 surrendered (Corfield 1960: 316). As some Mau Mau combatants were neither killed nor captured, we may safely assume that at least 20,000 people must have engaged in forest fighting and probably even more, as I suggested before.

However, not all the Kikuyu Districts contributed equally to the forest fight. Kiambu District, for example, lagged far behind compared to the others:

> 'Kiambu District still remains the great enigma of the Emergency. All the Mau Mau High Command came from Kiambu, but investigation has shown that only 6 per cent of the gangs come from the district (...). It is typical that most of the assassinations in Kiambu District have been carried out by imported Fort Hall gunmen' (Kiambu District Annual Report, 1953:1).

All other sources confirm this statement. Although some Kiambu gangs did take to the forest under the leadership of General Waruingi, they never comprised more than a few hundred fighters and were never integrated into the Mau Mau army hierarchy under Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge. Nyeri District, on the contrary, was heavily over-represented in the forest. Barnett claims, for example, that 'Nyeri contributed 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the estimated 15,000 man-strong guerilla force which was operating in the Aberdares by July 1953' (Barnett and Njama: 157), a fact all the more amazing as Nyeri men also made up at least 50 to 60 per cent of the 5000- men-strong Mount Kenya forces. Other data confirm this picture. In July 1955, Native Land Rights Confiscation Orders were issued against 'terrorists known at large'. Although these orders do not give an entirely accurate picture of the geographical composition of the Mau Mau armies, as some people may have been in the forest without the knowledge of the government, they certainly do give some indications, especially when compared with population data per district. Using the data provided by Sorrenson (1967: 105), we can construct the following table (9):

Table I Geographical Distribution of Forest Fighters

	Known Mau Mau Fighters (July 1955)	Total Population (1948)	%
Kiambu	417	388,162	0,1
Fort Hall	868	384,851	0,2
Nyeri	1773	253,328	0,7

The over-representation of Nyeri is evident, although it has to be noted that these data may be biased by a time factor. In 1955, the

Fort Hall forest armies had already been severely beaten by the Security Forces, while the Nyeri gangs had as yet suffered less decisive blows. It is therefore possible that a comparable table for 1953 would have shown a higher Fort Hall total. At the other hand, we have also to consider that the leading Mau Mau generals (Mathenge, Kimathi, China) originated from Nyeri, which tips the scale again in favour of this District.

Although Nyeri undoubtedly contributed most to the numerical strength of the forest armies, it seems that the Fort Hall gangs were the most 'aggressive' and that they enjoyed the largest popular support. This is at least the impression conveyed by most official and semi-official reports. Looking back upon his two years of service in Kenya, General Erskine, for example, makes the following statement:

> 'I found the Central Province firmly in the grip of Mau Mau with certain locations of Fort Hall District nothing more nor less than Mau Mau Republics (...). With the intention of implementing an offensive policy without delay I decided to tackle the worst areas first - The Fort Hall District and that portion of the Aberdare forest adjoining this District' (Erskine 1955: 7).

This appreciation is probably due to the fact that the Fort Hall combatants, under the leadership of General Kago, operated more frequently in the Reserves than their Nyeri counterparts and even waged extensive daylight battles with the Security Forces. As for passive wing support, we can quote the following lines from a 1955 Handing-Over Report for Kandara Division:

> 'When the Emergency was declared the Chiefs and headmen had lost their power (...). A complete wave of civil disobedience had swept over the land, and it is now hard to believe that the people spat at DO's rather than speak to them'.

This appreciation does not stand on its own, and, so far as I know, it is not matched by comparable statements on other districts, including Nyeri.

As for Embu and Meru Districts, they, too, participated in forest fighting, although guerilla warfare was only initiated several months after the outbreak of hostilities in the Kikuyu heartland. Probably one third of General China's Mount Kenya forces were made up of Embu and Meru tribesmen; therefore, they must have contributed several

thousands of fighters to the Mau Mau armies, less than Nyeri and Fort Hall, but certainly more than Kiambu. According to official estimates, about 1850 Meru went to the forest during the Emergency, but Kamunchuluh (1975: 203) considers this an underestimation. It must also be noted that guerilla activities lasted longer in Meru than elsewhere, although the main Mau Mau forces in the district were defeated by the end of 1955. Kamunchuluh's article carries some interesting remarks on this protacted Meru war.

> 'In the middle of 1957 or early 1958, we saw a revival of the Mau Mau movement in Meru (...). This new growth (...) while other Mau Mau areas had more or less surrendered could be attributed to a number of factors. The great publicity of economic rewards and extensive reconstruction measures in Kikuyu districts given over press and radio, tended to convince the Meru that rebellion pays and perhaps lack of such advancement in their area was that they never took the rebellion more fanatically. This gave the oath administrators and "hard core" element a new psychological propaganda advantage that progress and government assistance could only follow a general oathing of the district. This could help explain why the backward formerly loyal division of Igembe, was now leading in Mau Mau activities' (Kamunchuluh 1975: 208).

In 1961-1963, there again occurred a great influx of Meru into the remaining forest ranks.

> 'To a very large extent', says Kamunchuluh, 'this influx can be explained by the rumour in Meru that the African government was to be manned by Mau Mau adherents (...) and that freedom meant free things for freedom fighters. Most, therefore, joined the ranks due to promises of material rewards and jobs' (Kamunchuluh 1975: 211).

Dissatisfied with the independent Government's offers for rewards, some disgruntled Meru Mau Mau even withdrew again to the forest after independence, to be defeated by Government forces in 1965. These events, however, are only loosely connected with the mainstream of Mau Mau history, although they are important for the understanding of the movement at the local level.

Differential commitment to forest fighting did not only exist between the different Kikuyu districts but also between different areas within each district, as is shown by the scattered remarks in the 'colonial' literature about 'good' and 'bad' divisions and locations. I will only mention them in passing, being unable to correlate them with other data and even less to explain them.

As for Kiambu, the 1953-Annual District Report states that 'generally speaking Githunguri is far and away the most actively loyal (...), Gatundu shaky and Chura frankly animal' (p. 1). Omusule, however, claims that Gatundu Division 'was one of the most peaceful areas in Kikuyuland during the Emergency' (Omosule 1974: 116). As for Fort Hall District, Kandara Division is sometimes mentioned as the 'worst' area during the Emergency (Lamb 1974: 29), although others, like Rutherford (1957: 8), give 'pride of place' to Kangema Division. Rutherford affirms moreover that, in 1951-52, oathing in Fort Hall started in Location 4 in Kandara Division, the northern part of Location 7 in Kigumo Division and the whole of Locations 12 and 13, particularly the areas round Kangema and Gituge; the oath was introduced in these areas by 'thugs resident in Nairobi whose homes were actually in these locations. The worst of all came from Gituge' (Rutherford 1957: 2). However, Fort Hall also harboured some 'islands of resistance' to Mau Mau, such as Ndakaini in Location 17 and Ichagaki in Location 7:

> 'Pride of place (...) must surely go to the African Christian Church and Schools communities dotted about near the forest in the South-Western corner of the District at such places as Kinyoma, Ichichi, Chomo and Gituru. They had originally been part of the African Inland Mission but broke away in 1948 (...). Despite the lack of direct European guidance (or because of this? R.B.) they have contributed more than any other organisation to the defeat of Mau Mau in the Fort Hall District' (Rutherford 1957: 5).

As for Nyeri, Tetu Location and Mathira Division, especially its Northern portion, are mentioned in official documents as the 'backbones' of terrorist activities (Nyeri District Annual Report, 1955: 1-2), while in Embu District, Ndia and Gichungu Divisions were considered as 'black spots', with Mbere Division, on the contrary, as a particularly 'good' area (Central Province Annual Report, 1953: 1 and 7). Kamunchuluh, finally, has some interesting remarks about the differential behaviour of specific areas in Meru:

> 'In discussing the distribution of Mau Mau in Meru, one has several factors to consider. The highest recruitment was along the areas bordering the forest of Mount Kenya, the Embu and Nanyiki districts (...). Considering the manner of the Meru introduction into Mau Mau by people sent from Nairobi to their home locations, Mau Mau recruitment went hand in hand with the number of the returning Meru repatriates. Very few people had left Igembe and Tharaka for work outside Meru (...). There was

> (also) the factor of the disintegration of the indigenous government, that had occurred in different degrees in various parts of Meru. In Tigania and especially in Igembe and Tharaka where (...) (it) was very strong, Mau Mau did not gain much ground (...). The strength and efficiency of chiefs also determined Mau Mau distribution in Meru. The highest recruitment was in the locations where the chiefs had been classified as outstanding' (Kamunchuluh 1975: 204).

Kamunchuluh is the only author who has tried to go deeper into the question of intra-district differences in Mau Mau participation, and other studies of this kind would certainly be welcome.

A last question has to be touched upon at the end of this chapter because it is important for our appreciation of the 'tribal' versus 'national' character of Mau Mau: the participation in the armed uprising of ethnic groups other than the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. Generally speaking, the contribution of other tribes has been negligible if not nonexistent, with the possible exception of the Maasaï who did establish some guerilla-bases in their territory. Corfield mentions them in the following quote:

> 'During the remainder of 1952 and the first quarters of 1953 the Masaï areas remained placid on the surface, but throughout this period wanted persons from the Central and Rift Valley Provinces slipped in unobtrusively to the haven afforded by the forest of the Mau (...). But, in addition to outside influences, there was also an internal threat. A number of pit-sawyers had been allowed to operate in the Mau forests upon payment of timber royalties, a reasonable imposition to which they illogically but consistently objected. During the first half of 1953 it was decided that this concession should cease and the pit-sawyers were in consequence thrown out of business (...). The principal in this enterprise was one Matei ole Motian (...), an associate of Kenyatta, who proceeded to exploit this opportune grievance by instigating his partners, Ole Kisio and Ole Ngapien, to organize gangs of malcontent half-breeds. Their initial purpose was to enlist Masaï sympathy for certain specific claims, including the former Masaï lands in Laikipia, an area recently distributed for European farming at Mau Narok and forestry rights in the Masaï forest' (Corfield 1960: 209).

Unfortunately, we have no other information about guerilla activities in Maasaïland, besides that all sources emphasize the fact that they were mainly the work of Maasaî-Kikuyu half-breeds, and that their gangs, numbering a few hundred fighters, were rapidly disposed of by the Security Forces. P.A. Pavlis, who published a very interesting article about Mau Mau and the Maasaï is certainly right when saying that 'from the existing evidence, no clear picture can be formed

concerning the Maasaï during the Emergency' (Pavlis 1977: 266); he is also right when he asks that more research be undertaken on this point.

The same also holds true for the Kamba. During his interrogation after capture (p. 21), General China insisted that the 1000-man strong Embu Ndaya Battallion comprised approximately 15 per cent of Kamba tribesmen; this may be an exaggeration, but the question has never been examined by independent scholars. It is known, however, that during the 1951-54 period, substantial numbers of young Kamba took the Mau Mau oath in Nairobi, and that a Kamba 'fighting group' operated in the capital in early 1954, although it numbered only about 17 people when it was identified by the Security Forces in March of that year (Corfield 1960: 205-206). The Kamba contribution to Mau Mau has certainly been small, but one would like to know more about it and not have to rely on official sources alone.

CHAPTER TWO: MAU MAU ORGANIZATION

a. Passive Wing - Active Wing

I would like to open this chapter with a very appropriate quote from H.K. Wachanga:

> 'Although Kimathi, Mathenge and Kaniu were our "big leaders" in the forest, there were others in the movement not in the forest (...). There were leaders in prison, detention, and in the Reserves and towns. Thus no leader could reach all the people in the movement. We had no leader or commandant except the oath. The oath was our leader' (Wachanga 1975: 32).

This to remind us that the Mau Mau movement and the subsequent revolt were largely uncoordinated and unplanned, and that local groups at the district and locational level functioned at least semi-autonomously. It is therefore almost impossible to give a clear picture of the Mau Mau organization during the Emergency, but I will try to discuss at least the main tendencies that can be discerned. First of all, I will give a brief outline of the Mau Mau network as it existed in October 1952.

At the national level we find the Nairobi-based Central Committee or Muhimu, manned by people such as Kaggia, Kubai and Mutonyi and using the KAU Nairobi branch as a cover. It was made up of representatives of the different Kikuyu districts, as well as Embu, Meru and Kamba, and maintained contacts with the rural district, divisional and locational committees through the '30 group'. Within the Central Committee existed a Kikuyu War Council comprising the most militant elements; this may be another name for the '30 group' but I am not sure of this. The Kiambaa-Githunguri leadership in Kiambu continued to function more or less independently until October 1952, relations between both groups being often strained. It has to be noted that, even in Nairobi, 'Mau Mau' members were organized on regional lines according to their districts of origin. The mass arrests following the declaration of the Emergency partly decapitated the organization at the national level. The main Kiambaa and Githunguri leaders, as well as many of the Muhimu members, disappeared from the scene, but most members of the '30 group' escaped and continued to maintain a Nairobi-based body, called alternately

Central Committee, Kikuyu War Council or Kenya Parliament. At the local level only a few leaders were arrested and most committees continued undisturbed during the first stages of the Emergency.

Let us now try to analyse the relations between the so-called 'passive wing' of Mau Mau and the forest armies, or 'active wing', during the Emergency. As I said before, the task is difficult, not only because the lack of tight organization and clearly established command lines within the movement, but also because the sources are sometimes contradictory. This is especially the case with Mau Mau sources: most members of the movement who published their memoirs display a tendency to boast about their own role and that of their direct associates. Let us begin with a quote from Tamarkin's Nakuru article:

> 'After the declaration of the State of Emergency, Nakuru developed as a logistic centre supporting the forest revolt. It seems that Mau Mau national leaders realized that their main problem was not so much sending people to the forest as securing regular supplies of food, arms and other material essential for carrying out a sustained resistance. Thus Nakuru's leadership was not disrupted, only one of the known leaders having left for the forest (...). In order not to hamper Mau Mau leadership in its main function, Nakuru was consciously not made the scene of an urban guerilla campaign' (Tamarkin 1976: 133).

This statement, whose truth I do not doubt, runs counter to the conclusions of some previous Mau Mau studies, such as Barnett and Njama's book and my own 1971 publication, in which greater importance was accorded to the forest fighters to the neglect of the 'passive wing'. If the most important Nakuru leaders consciously took the decision to remain in the passive wing, we must try to find out whether this was a more general pattern, in which case we would have to admit that the term 'passive wing' is misleading. In order to arrive at a clear picture, I will make a distinction between active - passive wing relations at the national level and at the local level.

As for the relations between the forest generals and the Nairobi central body, it is possible that the latter was able to maintain some sort of undisputed leadership during the first months of the Emergency. As we have seen before, some of the initial forest leaders such as Mathenge and China had been nominated by Muhimu or by the Kikuyu War Council before the Emergency, and there is some evidence

to the effect that Mathenge at least continued, until late in 1952, to seek the advice of the Central Committee during trips to Nairobi (Maina 1977: 55). This situation, however, did not last very long:

> 'All orders and regulations emanated from the Kikuyu War Council. But as the war intensified and confusion increased, it was not easy to maintain a streamlined communication system from the centre. We had to delegate substantial powers to individual units' (Mutonyi s.d.: 143).

This is probably a faithful reflection of the real state of affairs. The Nairobi leaders went on supplying the forest fighters with recruits, money and arms, but contacts were only intermittent and moreover indirect: none of the Nairobi 'bosses' ever went to the forest on an inspection mission, and the leading forest generals ceased their travels to Nairobi by the end of 1952. The forest armies, therefore, acted largely as independent bodies and took no orders from Nairobi. This becomes evident, for example, in the course of 1953, when Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge disagreed about the overall leadership of the Aberdare forces. Although Mathenge had been sent to the forest as the Central Committee delegate to lead the freedom fighters, while Kimathi went to the Aberdares on his own initiative (Mutonyi s.d.: 159), the War Council did not interfere in the struggle, nor did the forest leaders seek its advice. As Kimathi finally took the advantage in the leadership struggle, these events demonstrate that the Nairobi leaders had lost their grip on internal forest affairs and that Kimathi assumed supreme military leadership as an autonomous commander.

Some Mau Mau generals have even claimed that the relationships were the other way round, and that the Nairobi committees had to obey the forest leaders. According to Wachanga, the Central Committee had the authority to make independent decisions, but if the fate of a very important person was being considered, they needed final authority from Mathenge or Kimathi (Wachanga 1975: 46). The Nairobi leaders, more particularly, are alleged to have asked for permission to kill Ambrose Ofafa and Tom Mbotella, but apparently this request only reached the forest generals in early 1953 (Wachanga 1975: 46-47). As Mbotella was killed in November, 1952, the Nairobi leaders were apparently not waiting very anxiously for the green light from the forest, if they ever asked for it at all. General China also claims that at least one important ur-

ban guerilla leader, i.e. Brigadier Nyama Nduru, although nominated by the Nairobi War Council, was in fact serving under his command (Itote 1967: 110-112), but again this seems rather unlikely as was suggested by the anonymous official who interrogated China after his capture (Interrogation of ...:24). I therefore conclude that both the Nairobi War Council and the main forest armies acted more or less as autonomous bodies, maintaining only irregular and infrequent contacts, although these contacts were very important for the guerilla forces as a source of supplies.

On the subject of the relationships between active and passive wings at the local level, General China supplied some very useful information during his interrogation:

> 'Prior to August, 1953, a Council of 12 Elders sat alongside the Mount Kenya Committee (consisting of China and other leading military commanders, R.B.) in an advisory capacity. These 12 persons were drawn from the Passive Wing. On the 16th August, 1953, this Council was dissolved for the following reasons:
> (a) The Militant Wing became strong enough to direct affairs without the assistance of Passive Wing representatives.
> (b) Members of the Council were frightened of the forest.
> (c) Members of the Council were repeatedly arrested in the reserves (...).
> (d) The Elders were often regarded as too weak and too slow' (Interrogation of ...: 27).

As for the situation after August, 1953, the China interrogation claims that:

> 'The (Mount Kenya) Committee(...) also controls the passive wing of Mau Mau in the Reserves. Such control is achieved by influence and although the passive wing is not represented at meetings, orders given by militant leaders to individuals of the passive wing are quickly obeyed as they are regarded as emanating from a "committee of Generals" with whom nobody would venture to disagree' (Interrogation of ...: 6).

In the Mount Kenya sphere we thus find a shift in passive wing - active wing relations occurring during 1953. A similar development seems to have taken place in the Nyeri and Fort Hall areas bordering the Aberdares:

> 'As to their relation with other groups within the Movement, the only formal link maintained by these early forest groups was with their respective sublocation or location groups and councils (...). While the warrior-wings were originally subordinate to their local councils, the revolutionary situation tended to reverse this relationship, with elders' councils becoming increasingly subordinate to militant group leaders' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 155).

G.G. Gikoyo's life-story also contains some indications that the passive wing leaders in his Fort Hall location were to a certain extent subordinate to General Matenjagwo who, in November 1953, took the initiative to nominate male and female guard commanders in the Reserves and informed the local committees of elders only after having taken his decision (Gikoyo 1979:92). Again, this is in contrast to the situation earlier in 1953 when the locational leaders maintained contacts with and obeyed to the Nairobi leaders but had no direct contacts with the forest leadership (Gikoyo 1979: 44-45).

All that we have seen so far is rather different from Tamarkin's description of the situation in Nakuru where passive wing leaders, all through the Emergency, remained in control over the fighters sent to the forest. A similar situation seems to have prevailed in Kiambu District where, as was pointed out by Barnett, 'the district council of elders prohibited the killing of loyalists or traitors without council consent and for some time retained this control over the guerilla units' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 155). This is confirmed by Kiambu combatants such as Wamweya (1971: 63) and Muchai (1973: 21). According to G. Kershaw, however, young Mau Mau members did not always listen to the orders of the elders, as in the case of the April, 1953 'Marige-massacre', an attack ordered by the Nairobi Central Committee (Kershaw 1972: 329), although not by the forest armies.

It should also be mentioned, in favour of Tamarkin's thesis, that some sources point out that in many areas no Mau Mau-inspired incident occurred in any village without the prior knowledge and consent of the local council of elders. R.G. Wilson claims that this was definitely the case in Fort Hall District (Wilson 1956: 147), while China, during his interrogation, maintained that he respected this rule in the Mount Kenya area, although his interrogator comments that 'for reasons of security, however, it is doubtful if China practises exactly what he preaches' (Interrogation of ...: 38).

All in all, I am inclined to conclude that the relationship between active and passive wings as described by Tamarkin for Nakuru was atypical. His model may apply to the Rift Valley as a whole, and it does apply to Kiambu, but in the main areas of Mau Mau warfare the local passive wing committees were subordinate to the forest fighters.

b. The Mau Mau Armies

The organization of the Aberdares Army has been analyzed in full detail by D.L. Barnett, who emphasized the fact that its main leaders never really managed to integrate the initial small bands of local peasants into an army machine with a strict hierarchy and clear-cut lines of command. When commenting on the foundation, in May 1953, of the Ituma Ndemi Trinity Council that was meant to be the coordinating body of all the Nyeri combatants under the leadership of Mathenge and Kimathi, Barnett has this to say:

> 'Though endowed with certain powers (...) the Council lacked what we might term an independent enforcement arm. Thus, while its leader-members voluntarily surrendered to it rights to formulate policy, reach judicial decisions and pass rules binding upon themselves as individual section or camp-cluster leaders, they failed to provide the Council with a force, independent of their own, to guarantee that decisions and policies were carried out. Whether or not the Council's rulings were implemented, therefore, depended in large measure upon the willing compliance of its leader-members. Closely related to this is the fact that the authority of each leader (...) still rested primarily upon the loyalty he commanded from his own warriors. The latter, in turn recognized the authority of the Council primarily because of their own leader's membership and participation in it, rather than the converse' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 169-170).

According to Barnett, the Aberdares Army maintained this and more recent publications do not contain any indications to the contrary. It is less certain whether these characteristics also hold for the Mount Kenya Army under China's command. In my 1971 book (pp. 242-243) I already suggested, without any concrete evidence, that these forces might have achieved a higher degree of integration and were better disciplined. Recent publications have reinforced me in this idea, although definite proof is still lacking. I am more particularly thinking of Maina's description of Muriuki Kimotho's (General Tanganyika) carreer:

> 'Early in May 1953 Muriuki (...) joined the Mau Mau in the Mt. Kenya forest. At the time he entered the forest he held no position of importance in the Mau Mau hierarchy (...). By December 1953, Muriuki had come into prominence among the Mau Mau in the Mt. Kenya forest. Before the end of the year General China promoted him to the rank of "General"' (Maina 1977: 112-113).

Tanganyika thus climbed up from the ranks, something which, to my knowledge, never happened in the Aberdares. This suggests that

China, more than Kimathi and Mathenge, had effective command over his army and could nominate (as well as dismiss) leaders. It seems, in fact, that the inverse also occurred in the Mount Kenya area if we are to believe the China interrogation:

> 'General Communist, mention of whom was made some months ago and who, since that time, seemed to have disappeared altogether, is reported to have enlisted in Kassam's command as an ordinary soldier, having been deposed by the Mount Kenya Committee for "causing to many of his men to be killed"' (Interrogation of ...: 22).

Again, it is difficult to generalize from just one example, but this does at least suggest that China had more hold on his subordinate commanders, and that they, in turn, had less hold on their personal followers. I also have the impression that China was able to maintain higher standards of discipline among his followers than was the case with the Aberdares units. During his interrogation, China gave the impression that he had done everything in his power to retain the support of the Reserve population by disciplining his own forces (heavy penalties for rape and plunder) and by eliminating independent and irregular guerrila bands that terrorized the Reserve dwellers. However, we have only China's word for this and it is impossible to draw conclusions on this point.

China's interrogation report supplies us with some interesting details about the Mount Kenya Army organization, details that are somewhat different from (or sometimes complementary to) what China said in his memoirs. As this report has not yet been published, I will go somewhat deeper into this. According to this source, the supreme body governing both the military and passive wings in the Mount Kenya sphere was the Mount Kenya Committee, consisting of 20 generals and brigadiers: 6 from Nyeri District, 6 from Embu, 6 from Meru, a Chairman (General China), and a Secretary. However, three of the Embu seats and four of the Meru seats had always been vacant as these two areas did not possess the required number of high-ranking and sufficiently trusted leaders (Interrogation of ...: 5). This Mount Kenya Committee was regarded as a kind of 'War Cabinet' and had primarily a policy formulating function, but did not deal with detail.

From representatives of this Committee an Executive Committee was elected, which dealt with the prosecution of the war, but in far greater detail. It had 8 members with China as Chairman: 5 from

Nyeri, 2 from Embu and 1 from Meru:

> 'The difficulties in arranging a meeting are considerable and while it is intended that the Executive Committee should meet fortnightly, the fact that it cannot do so has caused its members, and Mau Mau militant commanders as a whole, to enjoy far greater latitude in their respective commands' (Interrogation of ...: 26).

About the organization at the lower levels of the hierarchy, the report says:

> 'Every unit, at Batuni, Section and Company level, has its own Committee of 4 to 6 persons, usually the most senior. These committees deal solely with the every-day affairs of the unit (...). Unlike our system where the Unit Commander is the head of the force at all times, Mau Mau unit commanders are only in complete authority during battle. At all other times the Committee is the authority, though obviously the Unit leader is "Chairman" and always influential' (Interrogation of ...: 26).

Of course, in the absence of other evidence it is impossible to assess the extent to which this organization really functioned in practice, but this is at least how China thought it should have functioned.

I will turn now to the series of internal conflicts that divided the Mau Mau armed forces throughout the Emergency and did a lot of harm to their cause. First a few words about the relationship between General China and Dedan Kimathi, a subject upon which recent literature has thrown some new light. There is first the question whether and to what extent China was subordinate to Kimathi or to other Aberdare leaders. In 1970, the main sources were contradictory, China claiming that he had been nominated as the overall Mount Kenya leader by the Kikuyu War Council before the Emergency (Itote 1967: 47), while Karari Njama alleged that China was send to the Mount Kenya forest as Kimathi's delegate after the declaration of the Emergency (Barnett and Njama 1966: 340). We know today that China's claim is justified. It is in fact confirmed by Mutonyi as well as by Wachanga (1975: 25), although the latter still states that the rank of General was given to China by Kimathi in March 1953 (Wachanga 1975: 30). It is indeed possible that China recognized, or at least paid lip-service to, the nominal leadership of Kimathi, although he was entirely autonomous in his day-to-day management of the Mount Kenya forces.

Meetings between Aberdares and Mount Kenya leaders were infrequent and irregular, and relations between both groups were relatively good during China's command. However, China does not seem to have had a very high opinion of Kimathi. According to his interrogation-report, he disclosed that:

> 'Dedan Kimathi has lost a lot of prestige as his orders are bad. His troops do not like him. His troops also say he is frightened to leave the forest (...) but "as he was the first leader he must be respected and he cannot be disposed"' (Interrogation of ...: 40).

China, in turn, lost much of the sympathy he enjoyed among the Aberdare leaders when, in exchange for his life, he tried to help the colonial Government to initiate 'surrender talks' with the remaining forest leaders after his capture. In his memoirs, China claims that he had been entrusted with a peace-negotiation mission by his fellow leaders, including Kimathi, before his capture (Itote 1967: Chapter 22), but in the light of other evidence now available, this seems very unlikely. First of all, during his initial interrogation he never mentioned such a mission and did not ask for negotiations. His interrogator described his frame of mind at the time in the following terms:

> 'China is a complete fanatic. He has no fear of execution, is completely self-exposing and cannot be convinced that Mau Mau is doomed, however long the battle may last (...). At the time of his interrogation, his sole wish was to expound his political testament before Legislative Council and then walk to the gallows without trial (...). He is emphatic that on the Mount Kenya side there could be no question of surrender as determination is stronger than ever' (Interrogation of ...: 2 and 30).

His change of heart, therefore, probably took place at a later stage and had nothing to do with any mission conferred upon him earlier. This is confirmed by other sources which, contrary to China's own statement (Itote 1967: Chapter 28), claim that Kimathi and other Aberdare leaders did not appreciate his line of action at all. With regard to Kimathi's attitude during the 1954-surrender talks, Maina has this to say:

> 'At first he had received the news of China's capture with sorrow but it later turned to hate and disgust (...). He deplored China's surrender talks and said he would kill any Government representatives who ventured into the forest with the intention of selling the surrender proposals to the freedom fighters. He was in favour of peace talks rather than China's appeal to the Mau Mau to surrender' (Maina 1977: 141).

Karari Njama is also very negative about China's behaviour and even suggests that he 'must have revealed most of our secrets and plans to the Government which resulted in a complete destruction of our communications and supplies, and detention of about 60,000 great supporters (Anvil and Reserve operations)' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 357). This is certainly an exaggeration, but there are some indications that China was indeed careless with information, and that this led to the arrest of some passive wing members and to the final defeat of the Mount Kenya forces (Erskine 1955: 17).

Whatever the truth of the matter, the deterioration of relations between Kimathi and China did not directly affect the Aberdares Armies. Other internal quarrels, however, did have a negative effect on the conduct of the war in the Aberdares. This is especially the case with the conflict between Kimathi and Mathenge over the supreme leadership of the Aberdare forces. By 1970 a lot was known about this quarrel, mainly through the memoirs of Karari Njama, who is quite reliable about most of the facts but rather one-sided in his comments, as he remained a staunch Kimathi supporter almost to the end. Some more recent sources (Wachanga 1975, Maina 1977 and Mutonyi s.d.) enable us to draw a more balanced picture of this event.

It becomes clear, first of all, that Mathenge represented legitimacy and the continuity of pre-Emergency command lines. He was the man who had been put in charge of the forest fighters by the Central Committee, some nine months before the Emergency, while Kimathi, although a leading oath-administrator, went to the forest on his own initiative without having been invested with an official command. It also becomes clear, although this was already suggested by Njama, that Kimathi was primarily an administrator and ideological leader, and much less a military commander, and that these qualities finally gave him the advantage in his struggle to supplant Mathenge at the head of the Aberdare forces. Two remarks by Maina demonstrate this beyond doubt:

> 'During the Emergency (...) his swaying speeches on public platform made him emerge as the overall leader of the Mau Mau in the forests' (Maina 1977: 126).

> 'From the time he entered the forest Kimathi made his work almost purely administrative. He never participated in any known raid outside the forest (...). As time went on Kimathi

began to supercede Mathenge in usefulness because the latter was illiterate. Through the writing of letters to the Government and other Mau Mau leaders, Kimathi began to be more recognized as the indisputed leader of all the freedom fighters' (Maina 1977: 137).

The new sources mentioned above also enable us to correct to some extent Mathenge's profile as an inefficient, weak and rather cowardly leader as it was drawn by Karari Njama. Gikoyo is much more positive about Mathenge's qualities, claiming for example that he lost leadership, not because of weakness, but 'through his love for peace within the Movement', while Kimathi'got to the top through self-advertisement, guile and ruthlessness' (Gikoyo 1979: 296). As for Wachanga, he mentions that Mathenge was 'a brave man and extremely fierce in battle'; later, when a ruling was passed by Kimathi that '"big leaders" were not to lead raids any longer, Stanley Mathenge continued to do so' (Wachanga 1975: 28-29). The same author emphasizes the negative traits of Kimathi's personality: his jealousy of other leaders and his dictatorial behaviour that became especially apparent towards the end of 1954 1).

These are the main points that are revealed by more recent writers who, generally speaking, are more favourably disposed to Mathenge than are earlier sources. They confirm, at the same time, that a conflict between literate and illiterate forest fighters was at the background of the quarrel between Kimathi and Mathenge, the latter being considered a representative of the illiterates against Kimathi and his semi-educated associates.

More evidence is also becoming available about the conflict that oppposed the main Aberdare armies under Mathenge and Kimathi and some groups which, although based in the forest, mainly operated in the Reserves and thus partly escaped the overall control of the Mau Mau hierarchy. Karari Njama lumped them all together under the heading 'Kenya Levellation Army'; in fact this Army did not exist as a corporate body but was made up of at least two entirely independent groups. The first operated mainly in Aguthi Location (Nyeri District) under Generals Kariba and Rui. Kariba had originally joined China's forces and was chosen by him to lead a company of the Mount Kenya Hika Hika Battalion. 'As time went on' says Maina, 'it became more and more independent (...) although it owed its allegiance to China' (Maina 1977: 95). According to Nja-

ma this happened mainly because of Aguthi's geographical position in the middle of the district which made it difficult for its fighters to commute to and from the forest for food, so that they finally decided to stay in the Reserves altogether (Barnett and Njama 1966: 315). General Rui, apparently, first belonged to Kimathi's Army, but he and General Gachuma broke away from Kimathi on account of the latter's refusal to allow them sufficient physical latitude in the area immediately west of the Sagana river; the two generals, with their troops then registered under China (Interrogation of ...: 3). It seems, however, that this registration under China remained purely nominal. Both Kariba and Rui served as liaison officers between the Aberdares and the Mount Kenya forces in the beginning of 1954 when both groups wanted to deliberate about the proposed 'China' surrender talks (Barnett and Njama 1966: 353); this suggests that they had a foot in both camps and maintained some sort of in-between position.

The second 'Levellation' group consisted of General Kago's Fort Hall forces. Although Karari Njama (1966: 354) is very positive about Kago's bold actions in Fort Hall District, Gikoyo claims that Kago had openly quarreled with Kimathi and that he finally broke away from him. According to this author, groups of Fort Hall fighters got into a conflict with Macaria Kimenia, one of Kimathi's closest associates, during the autumn of 1953; this led to a regular shoot-out between the two camps. At the end of the year, Kago clashed again with Kimathi and his deputy. Apparently he was arrested and sentenced to death, but some fighters rescued him, again after a regular battle during which two soldiers were killed. Subsequently, Kago arrested Kimenia who then agreed to obey his orders:

> 'Generally Kago turned to Macaria's followers and asked them if they also would be ruled by Kago's orders. They signified assent. The General turned to Macaria and told him that the messes they had created for themselves with Field Marshall Kimathi would have no place under Kago. "Under me", he said, "there will be no officers and servicemen where rations are concerned. We are all fighters and we shall eat from the same pot"' Gikoyo 1979: 112).

If this story is to be believed, it means a kind of coup d'état against Kimathi by the majority of the Fort Hall fighters, with Kago setting himself up as an independent force. The conflict seems to have revolved not only around the dictatorial and 'élitist' attitu-

de of Kimathi versus Kago's more democratic command, but also around matters of tactics and strategy. Njama, for example, reports the following conversation with Mathenge in June 1953:

> 'He said that Murang'a people were very brave fighters but they lacked fighting tactics. He said that they were conducting day battles in the villages which resulted in the death of many women, children and old persons who are generally found in the battlefield, as the security personnel would always avenge on them' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 184).

There is no doubt that Kago was one of the most daring and reckless Mau Mau generals, a fact even admitted by British Army sources, and that he was admired by many fighters such as Gikoyo who calls him the 'greatest challenge' to the colonialists (Gikoyo 1979: 143). Not all the combatants, therefore, shared Mathenge's more moderate and prudent ideas about tactics. It has to be said that Kago paid heavily for his ruthlessness. Soon after he assumed general command in the Fort Hall area, at the end of 1953, his troops were severely beaten in a series of daylight battles during which he was killed himself. Subsequently, resistance died down in Fort Hall, while Nyeri remained a 'black spot' for about another year.

Many authors have given a very negative description of Mau Mau guerilla tactics. R. Whittier, for example, first emphasizes the political naïveté of the forest generals and then goes on to say that:

> 'Once in the forest, their political naiveté was matched by their strategic ineptitude (...). They were unable to plan and effectively carry out their military campaigns, or even to select military strategic targets. The majority of their efforts were directed against their own people in the Reserves. During the course of the Emergency, not one railway train was destroyed nor derailed, nor one single power station destroyed. Although they adopted many of the trappings of the military as regards rank, organization, training, etc., they were unable to function as an effective military machine (...). As Waruhiu Itote (...) put it, often the forest gangs were raiding in order to get weapons in order to raid. More often, however, they raided for food and clothing to survive another day in the cold and inhospitable mountain forests' (Whittier 1975: XVI-XVII).

Other authors confirm these statements, including some Mau Mau leaders themselves. Mutonyi, for example, admits that:

> 'Our planning of the war had long proved inadequate. When we had planned to take up arms and when we had trained our men, we had only thought of the Kenya Police, the Kenya Army and

No Mau Mau leader, apparently, did foresee that the colonial Government would call upon the Imperial Army to defeat their rebellion. This strategic ineptitude of the Mau Mau forces does learn us something about the personnel of the revolt and more particularly about its leaders. It suggests that ex-servicemen were probably not very numerous in the forest, contrary to what is alleged by Shiroya (1979: 173), who ascribes to them 'an important role' in the 'revolutionary army'. This is a remarkable fact which needs some comment. According to data supplied by Shiroya, at least 13,921 Kikuyu, 2,185 Meru and 658 Embu took part in World War II (Shiroya 1968: 249). Therefore, there existed a considerable reservoir of trained soldiers, some of whom acquired experience of forest war in Burma, out of which the Mau Mau forces could have recruited. Many of them, moreover, seem to have been disappointed by the rewards the Kenya Government offered them upon their return to civilian life, and some of them took an active part in radical politics during the first post-war years.

The Forty Group, for example, although not exclusively an ex-servicemen's association, counted many of them among its members, and some of them, such as Stanley Mathenge, definitely had an ex-serviceman mentality. Wachanga, for example, reports a speech delivered by Mathenge early in 1947 that was mainly a detailed review of the injustices done to the African soldiers during and after the war. The same probably holds for General China who, when dealing with the 1947 anti-terracing campaigns, claims that these

> '(...) brought out into the open a clash that was to become even more marked in succeeding years. On the one hand were the keen young ex-Army officers who formed the core of the British Kenya Administration and were District Commisioners and District Officers in the Central Province during the period between the end of the 1939-45 War and the Declaration of the State of Emergency (...); on the other hand were the young ex-Army Kikuyu NCOs whose whole outlook had been changed radically by their service overseas and who had survived death and much hardship in the cause of a country which now seemed determined to block and humiliate them at every opportunity' (Itote 1967: 38).

It is true that Mathenge and China did take up leading positions within the Mau Mau armed forces (Kago is another example of an ex-soldier who saw service abroad), but they were apparently not followed by most of their ex-colleagues, unless we must suppose that they forgot all about their military training

between 1945 and 1952. A rather unlikely hypothesis, contradicted moreover by China's own comment that when he started training forest recruits in August 1952, 'I learnt that none of my men had been in the army' (Itote 1967: 53).

What happened then to the ex-servicemen who, a few years earlier, had been so conspiciously present in the Forty Group? Spencer is the only author who throws some light on this problem, and his evidence is rather contradictory. In one of his first papers, he claimed that the ex-soldiers changed 'the whole course of Kenya's history':

> 'It was, it seems, not so much a new political philosophy that the ex-servicemen brought back. Their real contributions were two: first, their experience had taught them that the Government could be challenged; second, and more important, they taught Africans not to fear the use of violence against the white men. An immediate result of this was the great increase of crime in the urban areas; the eventual result was Mau Mau' (Spencer s.d.: 45).

However, after some more research (his first paper was mainly based on the Nyeri KAU-archives and on James Beauttah's life story), Spencer slightly revised his opinion:

> 'In fact, it was remarked, often with surprise, how well, that is peacable, the ex-Askari had readjusted to civilian life. Primarily this was because they returned to Kenya full of economic rather than political expectations' (Spencer 1977: 196).

Apparently then, the economic frustrations they had to face in post-war Kenya did not lead them into violent political action. This may be contrasted with the 1947 Malagasy insurrection in which World War II 'anciens combattants' played an important role:

> 'A l'occasion du conflit mondial de 1939-1945, plus de 15000 Malgaches ont servi dans les rangs de l'armée française (...). Lorqu'arrivera la fin des hostilités, certains purent croire un moment, dans la ferveur de la Libération, qu'ils allaient bientôt devenir dans leur patrie les messagers de la liberté, comblés d'honneur par une France nouvelle enfin reconnaissante `a l'égard des Malgaches des services qu'ils venaient de lui rendre (...). Il n'en fut rien (...). Pour les sociétés secrètes, ces anciens militaires devenaient des recrues de choix (...). La suite des événements devait confirmer la part active que prirent la plupart d'entre eux au mouvement insurrectionel' (Tronchon 1974: 120-122).

The military experience of the ex-servicemen is probably one of the reasons why the Malagasy insurrectionary movement was better structured and represented a real danger to the French, es-

pecially during the first months of the revolt when the insurgents managed to 'liberate' several small towns in the Eastern part of Madagascar.

> 'Pendant ce temps, l'insurrection continue de s'étendre, et l'encerclement des grands centres urbains, limitrophes de la zone insurgée, se précise de plus en plus. Un mot d'ordre est alors donné à tous les militaires en opération: "Tenir coûte que coûte"' (Tronchon 1974: 60).

This strongly contrasts with the first military reports on the Mau Mau revolt which convey the impression that the British Army was nowhere in danger of losing the initiative in the operations and that the anti-Mau Mau war was mainly a 'police campaign', with the Army in a secondary role. One has to consider, however, that the Malagasy conspiracy was in a much more advanced stage of preparation when actual fighting broke out. While Mau Mau was forced into the open by the declaration of the Emergency, without being ready for war, the Malagasy insurrection was initiated exactly on the day fixed previously by the leaders of the secret societies. This may also account for its initial successes.

The participation, or rather non-participation, of World War II soldiers in the Mau Mau revolt leads us to an important general point, i.e. the contribution of educated people to the insurrection. All the pre-1970 sources already agreed that the educated were conspiciously absent in Mau Mau, and this impression has been strongly reinforced by more recent literature.

We have few indications of the presence of educated people in the forest, and the general impression is that there were almost none of them. Men like Karari Njama and K.H. Wachanga, who had a few years of secondary education, were isolated cases; according to Whittier (1975: VIII) there were only three of their sort in the whole forest army. This is confirmed by Mau Mau members themselves. Speaking about the first months of the Emergency, Mathu makes the following, rather bitter, remarks:

> 'All KAU officials - including those tried at Kapenguria - and the vast majority of educated Kikuyu quickly detached themselves from the revolution (...). With the arrest and detention of many educated leaders and the failure of other qualified men to step into their shoes, leadership of the Movement fell into the hands of men who lacked the political experience, education and knowledge of warfare necessary for the success of a popular revolution' (Mathu 1974: 17).

Mathu's remarks implicitely suggest that the revolt was 'betrayed' by the educated, and in a way this seems to have been the case. As Barnett puts it:

> 'KAU (...) leaders, including Kenyatta, ignored pre-Emergency warnings and allowed themselves to be arrested without a struggle, none even ever attempting to escape and join the peasant guerilla (...). It is widely believed among Kikuyu that KAU leaders gained knowledge of the Emergency Declaration some 24 hours before the 20 October 1952 announcement' (Barnett 1974: 7).

This is actually correct. Kaggia confirms in his memoirs that he was informed about his imminent arrest on October 19th, together with his fellow-members of the Central Committee, and that he quietly waited for the Security Forces to take him to detention, after having destroyed important papers (Kaggia 1975: 116-117). According to his own testimony, Mutonyi, the Central Committee Chairman, was also warned beforehand, but he decided to escape and remained an active Mau Mau organizer until November 1953 when he was finally arrested.

How are we to explain this behaviour? As for Kenyatta and his Kiambaa-Githunguri associates, the situation is relatively clear. They never prepared for violent action and did not agree with the militant campaigns. That they stuck to their line of moderate politics is not amazing and it would therefore be unjust to accuse them of having betrayed a movement in which they never felt at ease. The case of the militant trade-union leaders is less clear. As we have seen, they did prepare for violent action right from early 1950, although they were aware of not being ready for war in October, 1952. There are two ways of explaining their behaviour at the declaration of the Emergency:

1) It could be argued that, in spite of all their radicalism, even they had never considered in earnest the eventuality of fighting in the forest, and that they were only preparing violence on a limited scale with the intention of using it as a means to force the Colonial Office to grant the political and economic reforms that were stubbornly refused by the local administration. There are some indications that even within the Central Committee and the Kikuyu War Council 'there was a further secret committee, composed of those who had no reluctance to use violence in furthering our aims. Some of our leaders and members in both the Committee

and the Council (...) were opposed to bloodshed' (Itote 1967: 43). If this is correct, the passive behaviour of the Kubai-Kaggia group does not automatically amount to betrayal.

2) A more Macchiavellian hypothesis would be that they did prepare for violence on a larger scale while knowing quite well that those who would take up arms stood no chance whatever to win the war. Their aim, in initiating these plans, may have been the same: to awaken the British Government to its duties and responsibilities. In this case, however, the forest fighters were mere pawns in their game, sacrified in cold blood and lured into paying a price the educated leaders were not prepared to pay themselves.

Whatever the case may be, the Kenya situation stands in sharp contrast with events in Madagascar and Cameroun. The pattern of the Malagasy insurrection still reminds us to some extent of the Kenya situation in so far as here too the educated leaders of the Kenyatta type were not really involved in the planning of the revolt and went to great pains to disengage their responsibility when actual fighting broke out. However, some people of the Kaggia-Kubai type, with regard to their level of education, did take part in the armed struggle:

> '(...) ceux qui militent au sein du movement insurrectionel sont dans leur grande majorité des paysans; parfois des instituteurs, des artisans, des commerçants, voire des cathéchistes ou des petits fonctionnaires' (Tronchon 1974: 163).

Members of the Malagasy sub-elite therefore were not altogether absent from the revolt. This has been even more the case in Cameroun where relatively well-educated trade-unionists took part in the armed revolt, as commanders of guerilla bands or as representatives of the insurrection in exile, the most important of them paying their commitment with their lives. I will come back to this difference between Kenya and Cameroun later on this report.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MEANING OF MAU MAU: CULTURAL RENEWAL

a. The oath as an initiation ceremony

In 1954, Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of Kenya from 1944 till June 1952, voiced his feelings on Mau Mau in the following way:

> 'That persons of some education (...) should describe this monstrous, nauseating wickedness as a "resistance movement" is intolerable - unless of course they mean a resistance movement against God and decency and morality and indeed everything that distinguishes man from the carrion-eating reptiles' (Mitchell 1954: XVII-XVIII).

Right from the start, Mau Mau evoked passions that have rarely been equalled in the history of the decolonization of the African continent. Therefore, much of what has been written on the subject has been coloured by myths. Roughly speaking, one can distinguish two myths pertaining to Mau Mau which are diametrically opposed and each of which stems from one of the two groups that fought each other during the Emergency: the white settler and civil service community, and the more radical sections of the Kikuyu people (the latter supported by some independent scholars such as Rosberg and Nottingham).

I have analyzed these myths elsewhere (Buijtenhuijs 1973: 43-48), and I will not come back to this point here. We should keep in mind, however, that the debates on Mau Mau are still going on, especially in Kenya, and that myths still seem to colour much of the discussion. Two main questions: whether Mau Mau was a tribal or a nationalist movement, and whether it was essentially modern or traditional, are still not agreed upon, most authors applying to these questions one-sided arguments of the either-or type. I will argue in the three following chapters that such arguments are not subtle enough to do justice to the very complex, many-sided, contradictory phenomenon Mau Mau really was. In my view, Mau Mau was both a tribal and a nationalist, both a modern and a traditional movement, all at once. If we do not take into account this ambivalence and this ambiguïty, we will be unable to understand the deeper meaning of Mau Mau.

Mau Mau can be analyzed in at least three ways: as a movement for cultural renewal, as an anti-colonial revolt, and as a civil war within the Kikuyu tribe. The first -cultural- aspect has been rather neglected in the existing literature, especially since about 1960. I have been one of the few authors to emphasize the cultural renewal dimension of Mau Mau in my 1971 publication, and almost no new material has been brought to light in this field during the last ten years. In a review article, F. Furedi even challenged me for being too preoccupied with cultural and psychological explanations of Mau Mau and reproached me my fascination with oaths, traditional structures and cultural influences at the expense of 'real social analysis' (Furedi 1973b: 171). I am ready to admit that this 'fascination' does exist and I believe that it may stem at least partly from my training at a French university where 'cultural anthropology' seems to be more honoured than is the case with the British tradition of 'social anthropology'. However, the differences between French and English schools of anthropology are not sufficient to explain my 'bias', and they should not be used as an argument to dismiss Mau Mau altogether as a movement of cultural renewal. Mau Mau was such a movement, not only in the mind of a French-educated anthropologist, but also in the field. In view of these lacunae in Mau Mau studies, I will dwell upon them with some detail by summarizing the arguments and hypotheses I put forward in 1971.

There is no doubt that, in so far as it was preoccupied with cultural renewal, Mau Mau was a 'tribal' movement. The Mau Mau initiates aimed at a revival of Kikuyu culture, or rather a specific brand of Kikuyu culture, from which members of other ethnic groups were excluded out of necessity. Their main instrument in this cultural endeavour was the oath, that was first of all a means to unite the Kikuyu people in its struggle against colonialism, but at the same time an end in itself and much more than just a political device. In order to bring to light the full significance of the oath I here reproduce a lengthy description of what was known at the time as the 'first oath'. This oath was relatively standardized and Karari Njama's description of the oathing ceremony he

underwent in Nyeri District in September 1952 is typical for other accounts in the literature:

> 'After Sunday Service, I met Mr Samuel Ndiritu Njagi (...). On the way, Ndiritu told me that he had been invited to a feast by my neighbour, Charles Ngatia Gathitu (...). We passed many people on the way and arrived at the house at twilight. There were some people standing outside, including Charles, the owner of the feast. He led me into the big hut. Inside, were many people sitting (..). Groups of men and women continued to come (...). A few persons would be called by their names and moved in the next hut. When I was called to go to the next hut, I was very pleased, but arriving outside in the clear moonshine, I could see hundreds of people standing, some armed with pangas, simis (swords) and clubs. They formed a path on both sides leading to the door of the next hut (...).
>
> As I led my group marching in the cordoned path, they waved their pangas and swords over our heads and I heard one of them asking whether there was an informer to be 'eaten'. With a reply that we were all good people from another person, we entered the next hut.
>
> By the light of a hurricane lamp, I could see the furious guards who stood armed with pangas and simis. Right in front of us stood an arch of banana and maize stalks and sugar cane stems tied together by a forest creeping and climbing plant. We were harassed to take out our coats, money, watches, shoes and any other European metal we had in our possession. Then the oath administrator, Githinji Mwarari - who had painted his fat face with chalk - put a band of raw goat's skin on the right hand wrist of each of the seven persons who were to be initiated. We were then surrounded (bound together) by goat's small intestines on our shoulders and feet. Another person then sprayed us with some beer from his mouth as a blessing at the same time throwing a mixture of the finger millet with other cereal on us. Then Githinji pricked our right hand middle finger with a needle until it bled. He then brought the chest of a billy goat and its heart still attached to the lungs and smeared them with our blood. He then took a Kikuyu gourd containing blood and with it made a cross on our foreheads and on all important joints (...). We were then asked to lick each other's blood from our middle fingers (...).
>
> We were then ordered to hold each other's right hand and in that position, making a line, passed through the arch seven times. Each time the oath administrator cut off a piece of the goat's small intestine, breaking it into pieces, while all the rest in the hut repeated a curse on us (...).
>
> We were then made to stand facing Mt. Kenya, encircled by intestines, and given two dampened soil balls and ordered to hold the left hand soil ball against our navels. We then swore (...) biting the chest meat of a billy goat held together with the heart and lungs (...).
>
> We repeated the oath while pricking the eye of a goat with a kei-apple thorn seven times and then ended the vows by pricking seven times some seven sodom apples. To end the cere-

> mony, blood mixed with some good-smelling oil was used to make a cross on our foreheads indicating our reception as members of Gikuyu and Mumbi' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 116-119).

The oathing ceremony described by Njama is loaded with cultural symbolism. In a way, it can be considered as a summary and as a full-scale mobilization of Kikuyu culture, with references to all the sacred symbols and rituals. First of all, the ceremony incorporates elements of the traditional Kikuyu oaths used in the administration of justice. Traditionally these were meant to establish the truth in difficult court-cases, either in civil law-suits where both parties presented contradictory versions of the facts, or in criminal cases where the accused claimed his innocence in spite of the evidence against him. In such cases the elders would summon both parties, or the accused, to swear an oath that was supposed to kill false witnesses or eventually one or more members of their family within a certain span of time. The first death or serious illness in the family of a person who had taken such an oath was interpreted as a sign of his having borne false witness. There were several types of oaths in traditional Kikuyu law, one of them called koinga thenge, or goat-oath. The ceremony described by Njama refers to this model. Another oath was pronounced over the githathi, an object with seven holes in it, and to which other Mau Mau oaths refer.

Secondly, the Mau Mau oath was deliberately meant to be an initiation ceremony. The arch of banana stalks and sugar cane stems, the white-painted face of the oath-administrator, the unction of the postulants' foreheads and important joints, their benediction by spraying beer on them, are all references to traditional initiation ceremonies. Another traditional rite de passage is also referred to, i.e. the socalled 'second birth' that Kikuyu children underwent when they were about two years old and that made them into real human beings and members of the tribe. During this ceremony, the child was placed between the legs of its mother and tied to her body with goat's intestines. Sitting inside her hut the mother then acted out child birth, pretending being in great pain and screaming until neighbours came to her rescue. The child was then cut loose by the father, the goat's intestines symbolizing the umbilical cord. As we have seen, Mau Mau initiates were also tied with goat's in-

testines - not to their mother, but to each other - and these were cut by the oath-administrator when they passed through the arch of banana stalks. Both traditional initiation ceremonies were thus telescoped into one, which reinforced the solemn character of the oath.

The Mau Mau oath also contains allusions to magic and witchcraft, such as the use of animal blood and the piercing of a sodom apple and the eye of a goat. The fact that several parts of the ceremony were repeated seven times is also characteristic, the number seven being associated with black magic. Religious elements were also present in Mau Mau ceremonies, and these elements were 'impartially' derived from Kikuyu religion as well as from Christianity. To stand facing Mount Kenya was the traditional manner of Kikuyu prayer, while the sign of the cross to annoint initiates refers to Christian custom. Maybe this religious syncretism was not invented by Mau Mau leaders but copied from the Watu wa Mungu, a religious sect that was active in Kikuyuland in the 1930's (Cf. Kenyatta 1953: 273-279). They too used to pray facing Mount Kenya, their foreheads marked with a cross by blood. The fact that Mau Mau initiates had to take off all European-made objects may also have been borrowed from the Watu wa Mungu, who were convinced that the possession of such objects hampered communion with God and the Holy Spirit.

All the elements of the Mau Mau oathing-ceremonies thus contributed to form a cultural 'cocktail' that strongly impressed the minds of the initiates and reinforced the solemn character of the occasion. It should not be forgotten either that the notion of thahu (ritual uncleanness) was omnipresent at the basis of the oathing-ceremony. The traditional Kikuyu oaths as well as black magic were associated with thahu, of which C.W. Hobley gave the following definition:

> 'Thahu (...) is the word used for a condition into which a person is believed to fall if he or she accidentally becomes the victim or intentionally performs certain acts which carry with them a kind of ill luck or curse. A person who is thahu becomes emaciated or ill (...), and if the thahu is not removed will probably die' (Hobley 1910: 428).

According to Hobley, thahu could be contracted unvoluntarily and even unknowingly, but in some cases it was contracted consciously and deliberately, as during circumcison or when taking a judicial oath. Although in most cases people could be cleansed from thahu by

appropriate purification ceremonies, there is no doubt that pre-colonial Kikuyu culture was ridden with fear of thahu. No wonder then that it reappeared in Mau Mau ceremonies, as a modern way of deliberately contracting ritual uncleanness, with all the underlying elements of fear and awe it carried with it.

Which element should be emphasized in this 'summary' of Kikuyu culture, if we want to understand the deeper meaning of Mau Mau? Undoubtedly the initiation aspect of the oathing ceremony. As contrasted with the religious and magical aspects of the ritual, that should be interpreted as a means to confer a solemn and unique character upon the event, the initiation element of the oath can be considered as an end in itself. Neither the Kikuyu themselves nor informed European observers have been mistaken on this point. The Mau Mau movement, in their view, was definitely an initiation society. In ancient times, nobody could be a true Kikuyu if he had not been initiated in the tribe by circumcision. In the same way, the oath-administrators, during the years preceding the Emergency, created the impression that nobody could be a true Kikuyu in the modern world without having submitted to the trial of the new initiation, i.e. the Mau Mau oath. The terminology used leaves no doubt on this point. As L.S.B. Leakey said, the words for taking an oath are Kunyua Muma, and although the Mau Mau oath was still sometimes referred to in this way, it was increasingly referred to as Kurua, 'to be initiated' (Leakey 1954: 49). This is confirmed by J.M. Kariuki (1964: 55), who states that if Mau Mau members wanted to know if someone they met had taken the oath, they should ask him: 'where were you circumcized?' A specific answer to this question was a sign of Mau Mau membership.

As we have seen in Njama's description, Mau Mau members were initiated into 'The House of Gikuyu and Mumbi', the mythical ancestors of the Kikuyu. In the mind of the Mau Mau leaders, it meant initiation into a new and purified Kikuyu tribe, proud of its past and its personality, and freed from European domination and foreign influences. The new Kikuyu nation, created by the oath of unity, was meant to be the beginning of a new life, for each initiate individually and for the Kikuyu people as a whole. It was understood as such by Njama, who expressed the following feelings after having taken the first oath:

> 'At sunrise I remembered that the next week would be my 26th birthday and that I had been born again in a new society with a new faith' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 121).

Mau Mau cultural renewal expressed itself in a new solidarity between its members and a new set of morals. The new solidarity had a negative and a positive aspect. Negative in the sense that Mau Mau initiates set themselves apart from the community as a whole and refused, as much as possible, to mix with non-initiates who, in certain villages, were literally ostracised. The positive aspect of Mau Mau solidarity is expressed in the clauses pronounced by the candidates during initiation. Njama mentions the following formulae:

> 'I shall always help any member of our society who is in difficulty or need of help'.
> 'I shall never steal any property belonging to a member of our society' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 118-119).

One also finds it in every day life as is demonstrated by Njama's admiration for the work done by Mau Mau members in his village, when called upon by one of their fellow-initiates to help him to build a house (Barnett and Njama 1966: 116). Examples of this kind are numerous. G.G. Gikoyo, who was jailed for a minor offense in August 1952 and who had not yet taken the oath at that time, was astonished by the behaviour of several hundred prisonners charged with having taken an unlawful oath:

> 'One thing that struck me as unusual was the unity of these people. If one of them was brought food by a relation or friend, he served it along the line until it was finished. When another was visited, those who had not received a share before were given priority' (Gikoyo 1979: 25).

For some Mau Mau members, the solidarity created by the oath was but a rebirth of traditional solidarity as it had existed, or was supposed to have existed, within Kikuyu village communities. When emphasizing the importance of oaths in traditional Kikuyu culture, J.M. Kariuki has this to say:

> 'The purpose of all these oaths was to give those participating a feeling of mutual respect, unity, and shared love, to strengthen their relationship, to keep away bad feelings, and to prevent any disputes. Most important of all, groups bound together by this ceremony would never invoke sorcery against each other (...). The muma (oath) created a new and special relationship between the families and clans involved. Envy, hate

> and enmity would be unknown between them. The Oath of Unity (...) had the same background' (Kariuki 1964: 58-59).

These remarks clearly reflect the aim of social and cultural renewal, of a rebirth of the old communitarian values of Kikuyu society, that moved many Mau Mau adherents. The same concern is expressed in some clauses of the first oath pertaining to a new moral code:

> 'If I should ever go with a prostitute, may this oath destroy me'.
> 'If I should ever have sexual contact with a Kikuyu girl in the open, instead of taking her to the Thingira hut in accordance with old Kikuyu custom, may this oath destroy me'.
> 'If I should ever cause a girl to become pregnant and not marry her, may this oath destroy me'.
> 'If I should marry and thereafter seek divorce, may this oath destroy me' (Leakey 1954: 91).

Barnett's informants mentioned oathing clauses of the same kind (Barnett and Njama 1966: 68 and 118-119). As we have seen before, some of the Forty Group members, in 1947-49, were concerned with the same preoccupations. E. Mutonyi says, for example:

> 'In 1949, I became a Committee member of the Kikuyu General Union (East Africa). The aims of the Union were to preserve Kikuyu customs and traditions, and to try to contain growing social evils such as prostitution and a general breakdown of morality that had infected urban centres (...). We felt it was our responsibility to guide young men and women and married couples who, when problems arose, could not have access to traditional social organs back in the rural areas. These problems, such as broken homes, destitute children and prostitution had been generated by factors such as urbanisation, money economy and an indiscriminate imbibing of Western values' (Mutonyi s.d.: 263).

The Mau Mau oath as a means of upgrading moral standards thus seems to have had a historical precedent in the campaign of the Forty Group and related associations. A striking point in these campaigns is their almost exclusive concern with sexual relations. Maybe this is understandable in view of the fact that sexual life, in traditional Kikuyu culture, obeyed very strict rules and called for a high degree of self-control, especially for the young men of the warrior generations. It is quite likely that the breakdown of traditional morals under colonial rule was particularly felt in this area, and that the upgrading of sexual morals was therefore con-

sidered a matter of first priority by Kikuyu concerned with moral standards. We will see later, however, that Mau Mau morals were not exclusively limited to sexual matters.

I have characterized the first Mau Mau oath as a full-scale 'mobilization' of Kikuyu culture and religion, and enumerated the different cultural traits that appear, in a more or less modified form, in Mau Mau ceremonies: initiation, second birth, black magic, the cult of a Kikuyu High God (I will come back to this point later in this chapter), and the notion of thahu. This is not sufficient, however. It should be underlined first of all that some of these cultural traits, and more particularly tribal initiation, had almost disappeared as a rite de passage and had been reduced to its outer sign, i.e. circumcison, often performed, at least for boys, in hospital or in a dispensary, without ceremony and without the transmisson of knowledge that used to be an important part of initiation in ancient times. Mau Mau therefore went back to the tribal past and revived old institutions, although in a modern context and with a quite different purpose. It should be stressed also that this 'return to the past' was selective, and that some important traits of traditional Kikuyu culture were absent from Mau Mau rituals.

This is for example the case with the ancestors' cult or 'communion with the ancestors', as it was more correctly termed by Kenyatta. Although this was an important element of Kikuyu religion, I have not found a single reference to it in the whole Mau Mau 'literature', i.e. hymn books, oathing clauses, prayers, and speeches by forest leaders as related in the memoirs of Mau Mau combatants. How is this ommission to be explained? The most plausible hypothesis is that, in the long run, communion with the ancestors would have been a hindrance rather than an asset for the Mau Mau leaders in their aim to unite the whole Kikuyu community behind the movement. In fact, the ancestors the Kikuyu traditionally revered were those of the enlarged family group. Communion with the ancestors would therefore have introduced a particularistic element in Mau Mau, instead of reinforcing national integration. The mythical tribal ancestors, Gikuyu and Mumbi, however, were fully integrated in Mau Mau symbolism. Consciously or unconsciously the leaders of the movement seem to have selected those elements of traditional Kikuyu culture that transcend the narrow limits of the extended family or clan, and this may explain why communion with the ancestors

was transferred from the family level to the national level where it could indeed play a positive and dynamic role.

Another interesting point is the absence of allusions to age-sets or regiments in Mau Mau 'ideology', although these were an important element of the social fabric of traditional Kikuyu life. As we have seen before, the Anake wa Forty, which I consider as a pre-Mau Mau organization, was initially meant to recrute the 'warriors' circumcised in 1940 or thereabout, but this idea was soon abandoned and only the name remained as a reference to ancient times. The later Mau Mau society, although basically an initiation society, did not lead to the formation of new age-sets and even the Mau Mau forest army was not structured according to age criteria, as had been the case with the pre-colonial warrior regiments. Maybe this is simply due to technical reasons. It was impossible to organize the oathing ceremonies in such a way that each biological age-group was initiated separately as in ancient times. The priorities set by the anti-colonial struggle demanded the rapid initiation of as many Kikuyu as possible and there was no time to distinguish between different age-groups. It is also possible, however, that age-set considerations were not entirely absent from the minds of Mau Mau leaders and that the entire movement was seen by them, more or less explicitly, as one single age-set. I will come back to this point later.

The first Mau Mau oath, or rather the comments on the oath by some European observers, finally lead us to some interesting conclusions with regard to the internal contradictions of the European myth of Mau Mau. L.S.B. Leakey, more particularly, has emphasized the fact that even the first oath was not conform to tribal law, although it did appeal to many ancient symbols and customs. Leakey's main objections were that:

1) Mau Mau oathing ceremonies were held at night and secretly while traditional ceremonies had to be held in the open, in broad daylight and in the presence of as many witnesses as possible.
2) Mau Mau oaths were administered to women, youngsters and even children, while the traditional oath was strictly reserved to adult males.

3) The Mau Mau oath did not impose a period of sexual abstinence on the initiates as had been customary.
4) The Mau Mau oath-administrators initiated people under constraint which was unheard of in traditional law (Leakey 1952: 98-99).

It is undoubtedly true that the Mau Mau oath did not follow the traditional model on all points, although Leakey exaggerated in his all-out attack on Mau Mau ceremonies. This, however, is only a point of secondary importance, at least in this context. More interesting are Leakey's motives in charging the Mau Mau leaders with innovation and the violation of traditional practices. His main aim was to persuade the Kikuyu public that the Mau Mau oath, as a deviation of tradition, had no judicial or religious value whatsoever, and that the awe it inspired in many illiterate members of the movement was totally unjustified. If Leakey had succeeded in his aim to persuade the Kikuyu that they had been fooled by the Mau Mau leaders, this certainly would have dealt a severe blow to the movement, and it is with this idea in mind that he set out to enumerate the different points on which the Mau Mau leaders, in fact, innovated as compared with traditional law. It is interesting and amusing that the same people who most vehemently denounced Mau Mau innovations on this particular point, were also the ones that accused Mau Mau of being an atavistic and tribal regression, a return to ancient savagery.

In reality, it is not Mau Mau that should be accused of regression and atavistic behaviour on this point, but the colonial administration. Inspired by some Kikuyu loyalists, such as Harry Thuku and Tom Mbotella (with Leakey conspiciously in the background) the Kenya Government, in April 1952, initiated a large-scale campaign of 'counter-oathing' or cleansing ceremonies with the purpose of lifting the spell of the Mau Mau oath from those who wanted to repent. Of course, these ceremonies respected tribal custom to the letter.

In spite of this, or rather because of it, the Government's cleansing campaign failed utterly. Certainly, many Kikuyu, a few of them sincerely, but most of them morally forced by mounting anti-Mau Mau repression, went through the purification ceremonies, but only to get initiated again in Mau Mau a few days later. The

net result of the campaign was therefore about nil and it was soon abandoned. The Government thus lost at least one battle against Mau Mau, the one that was waged in the field of magic and thahu. The reasons for this are not difficult to guess. The Mau Mau initiation ceremony, as we have seen, was loaded with cultural references, with dynamism and with warmth. In contrast to this, the Government-inspired rituals must have appeared hopelessly cold and flat to most of the Kikuyu. To the Mau Mau cultural renaissance the Kenya Government had nothing to oppose but rationally calculated techniques, that were moreover obsolete because they respected tribal custom on all points. The battle was lost because the Kenya Whites and their African associates could not, or would not recognize the effort of renewal expressing itself in Mau Mau. Interpreting the movement as a form of cultural regression, the Kenya Government hoped to undermine the basis of its popular support by regressing even more. This was a fundamental error.

b. The Batuni-oath controversy

The first Mau Mau oath was followed up by the batuni-oath, or 'advanced' oath as it was often callled in the 'colonial' literature. This oath probably emerged in early 1952 and spread from the Rift Valley into the other Kikuyu areas. Much was written on the batuni oath during the 1950s and the early 1960s, by Europeans and by a few Mau Mau members themselves, but the different versions presented by these authors are contradictory. The only points upon which they all agree are that a second oath did indeed exist, and that it was exclusively for active Mau Mau militants who were prepared to fight the Government by force of arms, this as opposed to the first oath that was to be taken by the entire Kikuyu population in order to bind it passively to the movement. Older sources totally disagree, however, on the content, the rituals and the meaning of the batuni oath. It is therefore very difficult to appreciate where facts end and myths begin, all the more so as recent sources, from about 1967 onward, remain almost completely silent on the subject. In my 1971 book I dealt in great detail with the batuni oath and I feel enti-

tled to do so again, as I am convinced that it is impossible to understand Mau Mau as a total social phenomenon while neglecting this aspect of the movement. I will first analyze the African version of the batuni oath as related by some Mau Mau combatants. Karari Njama's description is, again, the most exhaustive, but it is confirmed on essential points by J.M. Kariuki (1964: 56-58).

> 'At about 10 a.m. (at an unspecified date in early 1953 R.B.) David Wahome (...) and I were knowingly led by Johnson Ndungu (...) to an oath administrator (...). We were the only two persons to be initiated. He dipped some herb leaves in a Kikuyu gourd containing a mixture of goat's blood, its abdominal dung (i.e. the undigested stomach contents of the goat) and water, then sprayed us with it uttering words of cleansing and blessing. Each at his own time, we were initiated.
>
> Naked, I stood facing Mt. Kenya, holding high a dampened ball of soil (damped by milk, animal fat and blood - the most important dairy products) in my right hand and the other ball against my navel by my left hand. There were five two foot pieces of the goat's small intestines laying on the ground (...) and I was instructed to step over these one at a time when completing the set of vows I was about to take (...).
>
> (After having taken the vows) I dropped the two balls of soil in a Kikuyu gourd which contained a Kikuyu knife and a Kikuyu needle. I then sat down on a stool. He gave me the well stripped chest of a billy goat, from the neck to the testicles. It had a hole in the bottom and he told me to put my penis in that hole and hold the goat's chest upright with both my arms. I then repeated the vows for a second time, each time biting the goat's chest (...) and finishing by crossing the 2nd small intestine line.
>
> He then took away the chest and brought a Kikuyu pot and kept it upside down in front of me. He then put the ngata (the bone, containing seven holes, which joins the head and neck) of the billy goat on the pot and gave me seven small mugere sticks. I repeated the oath for a third time, putting a mugere stick in each ngata hole (...). I crossed the third line of small intestines.
>
> He then removed the ngata and brought an eye of the goat on the pot. He then gave me seven kei-apple thorns. I repeated the oath for the fourth time, each time pricking the eye with a thorn (...). As I stepped across the fourth line of intestines, he removed the eye and brought seven sodom apples (...) strung together on a thin hard reed and put them on the pot. He then gave me the same kei-apple thorns and I repeated the vows for the fifth time pricking a thorn at every sodom apple (...) and also crossing the fifth line of the small intestines.
>
> He removed the pot and the sodom apples and picked up the Kikuyu sword, knife and needle. Swinging these over me seven times, each time banging them down on my head, he uttered the blacksmith's curse, condemning me to death if I violated the vows I had sworn. He then brought a very small Kikuyu gourd that contained a mixture of lion and leopard fat. He dipped a

> reed in it and with the fat made a cross on my forehead wishing me to be as brave as a lion or a leopard (...). He then asked me to lick the remainder of the fat off the reed. The ceremony was over' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 130-133).

This oath - a combination of the thenge (the goat's chest) and the githati ceremonial (the bone with seven holes)- contains several elements that we already encountered when analyzing the first oath. It also contains some new allusions to ancient Kikuyu tradition. Interesting is the use of a knife and a needle during the ceremony, which undoubtedly refers to the traditional itwika ceremony, to be dealt with later in this report. The anointment of the candidate with lion's and leopard fat is borrowed from traditional war magic that was commonly used to bless and fortify young men going to war. It is not surprising that the Mau Mau 'warrior'-oath refers to these practices. The third new element in the batuni oath is its sexual symbolism that seems to have been one of the most important elements of the ceremony, or at least one of the most impressive in the eyes of the initiates; J.M. Kariuki mainly emphasized this aspect of his warrior oath (Kariuki 1965: 56-58).

How did Mau Mau members react to this oath and how are we to interpret this ceremony? Njama noted his own reactions 'on the spot':

> 'On the way to the school we discussed the oath we had taken. We resolved that it was a horrible oath, though typically Kikuyu'(Barnett and Njama 1966: 133).

As for the interpretation of the oath, Njama's co-author, D.L. Barnett, is undoubtedly the best source:

> 'To begin with it should be noted that several features of the oath, particularly those involving sexual symbolism, were regarded as "horrible" by each of my informants, and, I presume, by all other initiates. This fact, however, underscores their "typically Kikuyu" character, rather than demonstrating the opposite. To understand this, one must realize that the Kikuyu are traditionally a very puritanical people regarding sexual deviancy or exhibitionism (...). Traditionally, sexual taboos were calculatedly "broken" only within the framework of certain puberty rites and important oaths. Thus, a person accused of killing through witchcraft had to submit, if he maintained his innocence, to a public oath in which he swore, while inserting his penis in the vagina of a sheep, that he did not commit the crime in question (...). Again, if a man were accused of having impregnated a girl and he denied it, he would have to publicly swear, while biting a piece of sweet potatoe or the tip of a bunch of bananas which had been

> inserted in the girl's vagina by an old woman, that if he'd ever had intercourse with the girl, the oath should kill him. Modern versions of both these oaths were common features of the Warriors' Oath.
> Three conclusions can be drawn from the above. First, that the sexual acts or symbols performed or invoked while swearing an oath were calculated violations of acknowledged taboos, designated, in both traditional and modern usage, to revolt and to inspire awe and fear in the initiates or accused. Second, that according to Kikuyu belief, the more vile and repulsive were the acts performed while swearing an oath - i.e. the more highly tabooed such acts would be in every day life - the stronger and more binding did such an oath become. Third, that Karari and others should have found the second Oath both "horrible" and "typically Kikuyu" was (...) both a normal and highly predictable response' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 126).

In its African version, then, the batuni oath appears as a normal Kikuyu oath, undoubtedly a dangerous one, charged with evil forces and thahu, but also a 'legal' and recognized practice under specific circumstances. Few Kenya Africans have dwelt upon the reasons why the Mau Mau leaders introduced such a dangerous oath within the movement, but two ex-Mau Mau combatants have at least given some indications. According to H.K. Wachanga:

> 'The warrior oath, also used in the Mau Mau-type oaths, traditionally bound the warriors to one another and ensured that they would not run away from battle and desert their fellowmen' (Wachanga 1975: 1).

E. Mutonyi goes one step further by claiming that:

> 'The oath was supposed to wash away all self-consciousness and to instill instead a kind of self-sacrifice and fearlessness under all circumstances (...). Things like shame and self-interest had to be suppressed' (Mutonyi s.d.: 93).

Undoubtedly, the future Mau Mau fighters knew that, once in battle, theirs would be a difficult task and that some of the acts that might be required of them would be considered 'criminal' under normal circumstances. The following clause, for example, is mentioned in several descriptions of the batuni oath and seems to have been a common feaure of it:

> 'I swear solemny that should I ever be asked to go and to get somebody's head, be it even that of my father, or of my mother, or of my brother or of my sister, I will arise and do as commanded without question, and should I go against such an order may this oath kill me' (Gikoyo 1979: 49).

The batuni oath has therefore to be seen as a first step on the road to bloodshed and violence, an instrument to enable Mau Mau fighters to face up against the circumstances of war, including those of civil war insofar as a substantial minority of the Kikuyu had not yet taken the first oath in 1952, some of these even being declared enemies of the movement.

In the European literature on Mau Mau, especially those books and articles published during the Emergency, the batuni oath becomes something quite different. It has to be noted first that where Mau Mau sources only recognize two kinds of oaths, some European sources mention seven or even eight types. Some of these more 'advanced' oaths were considered so filthy, horrible and degrading that L.S.B. Leakey even refused to give details:

> 'It must suffice to say that every single thing done is of such a nature as to make the person doing it, an outcast, unclean - and in many cases uncleansable - and utterly degraded in the eyes of Native Law and Custom' (Leakey 1954: 84).

I. Leigh, however, is less sparing of horrible details:

> 'For the fourth oath, which is usually taken before an African becomes a Captain in the Mau Mau army, a dead body had to be provided. At the ceremony the fingers of the dead man are bent seven times, and his eyes pricked seven times (...). A Major, or a Treasurer, takes the fifth oath. He is required to bite the brain of a dead African seven times before he attains his Majority. For a Brigadier, the brain of a white man has to be provided. The candidate proceeds to eat seven pieces of it, besides performing other rites too obscene to mention. A General, who takes the seventh oath, is required to eat, besides the brain, the wrist bones of a white man, broken up and mixed with excrements and blood. For the last oath, which binds a member never to disclose the whereabouts of arms and ammunition, a man and a child must first be killed. The heart of the child is cut from its body, and pricked seven times with a nail; the brains and blood of the dead man are then mixed with the blood of the oath-takers - a draught which all the members are required to drink' (Leigh 1954: 47).

Without going fully into the question of the authenticity of these oaths, we can suggest forthwith that some elements figuring in Leigh's descriptions probably belong more to the realm of myth than that of reality. After all, during the whole Emergency, Mau Mau killed only 95 Europeans (civilians and soldiers) and it seems therefore rather unlikely that all Mau Mau Generals and Brigadiers

(there were dozens of them) could have eaten the brain of a dead European before being promoted. The literature only mentions two cases of Mau Mau fighters allegedly taking away certain parts of the bodies of their European victims for ceremonial purposes (Leigh 1954: 182-183; The Times, April 27th, 1953). Other details of the advanced oath ceremonies are provided by Corfield (1960: 167-168) and by Majdalany. The latter claims that:

> 'Common to all these variations (of the oath R.B.) was the ritual sipping seven times of some foul concoction or the taking of seven swallows of some equally unspeakable fragments of food (...). The ingredients were provided at times by menstruation, at others by masturbation, and included putrefying flesh taken from graves and the still warm brains of men, women and children just killed. Copulation with sheep, donkeys, bitches and goats was a commonplace ceremonial preliminary to the sipping or nibbling seven times of the ritual mixtures and morsels which strove only to surpass one another in foulness and of which menstrual blood seemed to be the basic indispensable ingredient' (Majdalany 1962: 166).

Before coming to the question of the authenticity of these oaths as described by Leigh and Majdalany, we have first of all to answer the question why the Mau Mau leaders eventually could have been led to invent such 'bestial' ceremonies. Two distinguished Africanists, M. Gluckman and G. Balandier, have tried to provide an answer to this question, assuming thereby that they really existed. Balandier has this to say on the advanced oaths:

> 'Interdit de séjour au pays du progrès blanc, le Gikuyu revieent à son passé et tente de faire une arme libératrice de sa "sauvagerie" retrouvée. Il réveille les forces endormies parmi les ruines de sa civilisation détirude. Il se lie pr le plus contraignant des serments qui lui impose: respect sacré de la terre tribale, secret, obéissance, et jusqu'au bouleversement de sa personnalité (...). Le serment Mau-Mau sert une impitoyable loi; il rompt l'ordre normal des relations humaines, car les cérémonies qui le précèdent conduisent à la violation des interdits fondamentaux; il établit une solidarité à base de culpabilité; il insinue en tous lieux la menace de la mort (...) (Il) entraîne la destruction de toutes les racines tribales; il arrache et ne laisse de liens pour ce monde et son au-delà, qu'avec la seule organisation Mau-Mau' (Balandier 1960: 17).

These few lines contain the three principal elements of the 'advanced' oaths in their European version. First, the total rupture with normal society by the violation of essential taboos and by the

desacralization of all that is held sacred. Second, the impossibility of a return to normal life because by taking the advanced oath the initiate becomes a permanent outlaw by all human standards. Third, the impossibility of being delivered from guilt, even by death, leaves Mau Mau as a sole refuge to the initiates, the solidarity with their fellow outlaws remaining as the only human value. As Gluckman puts it:

> '(...) all the evidence indicates that to some extent Mau Mau is a nihilistic movement of desperation - kill and be killed (...). Mau Mau is predominantly a movement of despair, and uses a magic of despair' (Gluckman 1963: 144-145).

Through the batuni oath, then, the Mau Mau leaders allegedly hoped to create an army of desperados, totally committed to the movement and ready to execute any crime required of them. The violation of everything taboo aimed at the conditioning of the forest fighters in order to enable them to support the psychological tensions inherent in total warfare against a - mainly - civilian population; a conditioning that broke down and numbed their conscience. According to Gluckman, the advanced oaths bear evidence to the fact that the Mau Mau fighters themselves believed that much of what they were required to do during the war was criminal (Gluckman 1963: 138). I am ready to admit this to a certain extent. It should be noted that Wamweya, when describing the batuni oath he swore in 1953, asserts that, in the vows he had to pronounce, Mau Mau was referred to as the 'council of the perpetrators of crime' (Wamweya 1971: 52-53). We may also interpret in this sense the fact that many Mau Mau murders were collective murders in which all the members of a gang took part. J. Wilkinson, who published a very interesting article on the medical aspects of Mau Mau, states that most of the African victims of Mau Mau examined by him had received multiple panga wounds, sometimes up to fifty or sixty (Wilkinson 1954: 309). Thus, responsability for the act was shared by all gang members. In this way, the Mau Mau leaders managed to create a specific 'Mau Mau mentality', described in the following words by an anonymous physician who gave evidence before the 1953 Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya:

> 'It has been possible to transform the human being into a new frame of mind (...) never met by me before. After having taken three or more oaths the personality of the oath-taker has changed. It is not insanity, even if it appears as such, but

> the person is not sane in the normal sense of the word. These people do not hesitate or think any more. They murder but not for the sake of furthering a cause, they just kill on being instructed to kill - their own mother, their own baby. They admit themselves that they are no good to anybody any more (...). Death for them means only deliverance, they told me. They only wish it should be a quick death, as life is no good' (Report to the Secretary of State...: 12).

This wish for a quick death has indeed been mentioned several times by authors belonging to the 'colonial' school of Mau Mau studies. Corfield, for example, reveals the following anecdote:

> 'A European farmer (...) spent the best part of two days recording a full confession of a forest gangster. When this confession was finished he asked the farmer in all sincerity and earnestness, to take him outside the hut and shoot him, as the world held no future for him' (Corfield 1960: 169).

Such declarations, if they really are authentic, could be interpreted as evidence for the nihilistic and self-destructive character of the Mau Mau movement, but a more positive interpretation is also possible as I will try to demonstrate later in this chapter.

Having outlined the psychological principles on which the advanced oaths allegedly were based, I will come now to the difficult question of their authenticity. Before doing this, I will first briefly summarize the positions of the antagonists. According to European sources, the acts committed during batuni ceremonies were of an indescribable bestiality and have to be considered as an attempt at moral suicide; they were used because Mau Mau members knew that much they would be required to do during the war was not only criminal in the normal sense of the word, but criminal in the pathological sense. African authors, on the contrary, describe the batuni ritual as a 'horrible' oath but also as a 'typically Kikuyu' way of behaving, conform, to a certain extent, to Kikuyu custom, and not characterized by excessive obscenity or bestiality. They were meant to condition the Mau Mau fighters to a life of 'crime', but crime in the normal sense of the word, i.e. the violence inherent in any war or revolution, and not more than that. All African authors agree upon this point and they all deny the existence of the advanced oaths as described by Leigh, Majdalany and others. J.M. Kariuki, for example, affirms that the two oaths described by him were the only authentic Mau Mau oaths, while Mutonyi, when evoking European allegations of bestial ceremonies, says that:

> 'If such oaths did exist, they must have been invented by individuals without the authority of Muhimu, and possibly with active inducement from the colonialists who sought to discredit us' (Mutonyi s.d.: 94).

What are the arguments that can be quoted in favour of the European version of the batuni oath? First of all, one can reason by analogy. Similar phenomena have existed, in Africa and elsewhere. Gluckman's article on The Magic of Despair, in spite of some serious errors of interpretation, is certainly a good source in this field. Gluckman refers, for example, to the methods used in Nazi Germany to break down and numb the conscience of the S.S. elite-soldiers. Gluckman more particularly recommended the study of Himmelfahrts Kommando (The Firing Squad), a novel by F.C. Weiskopf. One of Weiskopf's key passages, the interior monologue of a German soldier dragged against his will into the maelstream of violence and destruction is undoubtedly instructive:

> 'Aber es ist verteufelt schwer (...) Schluss zu machen, überzulaufen. Nicht nur wegen der Offiziere und Unteroffiziere und Gestapospitzel. Nein, vor allem deshalb, weil man nicht schon früher, gleich zu Beginn, Schlüss gemacht, weil man zuviel schweigend geschluckt hat (...) Das kan (...) nur jemand verstehen, der an sich selber erlebt hat, was es heist dabei gewesen zu sein, wenn "Himmelfahrtkommandos" zusammengestelt oder Geiseln abgeholt oder Gefangene niedergemacht wurden. Ja, das war es, was uns am festesten bei der Stange gehalten hat (...): dieses Gefühl, mit schuldig geworden zu sein an einem tausendfaltigen Verbrechen (...). Und nun weiss ich auch (...) dass der Wahnwitz Methode hat. Es ist alles geplant und beabsichtigt. Ich erinnere mich jetzt (...) dass uns einmal Unteroffiziere Klahde in der Nationalsozialistischen Erziehungsstunde sagte: "Leute, ihr musst immer so handeln, alsob ihr in der gleiche Lage wäret wie die altgermanische Katten. Die ketteten sich vor der Schlacht aneinander; da konnte keiner ausspringen". Glauben Sie mir (...) die deutsche Soldaten sind alle aneinandergebunden wie die alten Katten: einer an der andern, und alle zusammen an die Untaten, die sie mitbegangen oder nicht verhindert haben. Das macht das Ausspringen für die meisten so schwer' (Weiskopf 1952: 9).

Interestingly, Gluckman, after discussions with E.J. Hobsbawn and on the basis of the latter's Primitive Rebels, concluded that there has been no 'Mau Mau' movement, in the sense of a nihilistic, self-destructive revolt, in European history. This seems correct, but I would like to point to some 'primitive' European movements that, although they did not develop a fully elaborated ritual such as the batuni oath, nevertheless seem to have used techniques that could at least be qualified as 'proto-batuni'. The first example is quoted by

Hobsbawn himself when he describes the initiation rituals of the Italian Mafia:

> 'The crucial ritual - normally (...) carried out in front of a saint's image - was that of piercing the candidate's thumb and extracting blood, which was daubed on the saint's image, which was then burnt. This last act may have been designed to bind the novice to the brotherhood by the ceremonial breaking of a taboo: a ritual involving the firing of a pistol at a statue of Jesus Christ is also reported' (Hobsbawn 1959: 34).

Another example is provided by the Buck-riders societies, gangs of bandits that operated during the 18th century in the Southern Netherlands between the Ruhr and Maas rivers. In the case of the second gang of this name, W. Gierlichs (1939: 118-119) mentions a 'frightful oath' during which the candidates abjured God, the Virgin Mary and the Saints and devoted themselves to Satan; according to folk legends, the initiates had to trample a crucifix during this ceremony. This analogy is all the more interesting as the leaders of this society, all relatively wealthy people, may have been moved by political motives, i.e. revolt against the Austrian Habsburg regime. If this is correct, the acts of brigandage perpetrated by the Society should be seen as a kind of preparation for political violence (Gierlichs 1939: 82). These European analogies demonstrate at least that the 'European-style' batuni oaths, if they existed at all, were not an altogether exceptional device, and that the psychological processes on which they were based have been used elsewhere and at other times in history.

J.C. Carothers, a Kenya Government psychiatrist, pretended to have discovered some analogies between the 'advanced' Mau Mau oath and witchcraft as practised in Western Europe between 1250 and 1700. According to him, European witchcraft was characterized by night gatherings, ceremonies that blasphemized Catholic rituals (the 'Black Mass'), sexual orgies and the ingestion of human blood, excrements and other impure or filthy ingredients. The similarity with the advanced oath, as described by Leigh and others is striking, and Carothers even went one step further by suggesting that this similarity was not merely based on accident, but that the batuni oath was deliberately copied from European witchcraft models:

> 'To one who has read descriptions of certain Mau Mau oaths and rituals, and has also read descriptions of some rituals and practices of European witchcraft, the point immediately occurs: Have these been copied from those others? (...) Jomo Kenyatta is very

> certain to have made some study of European witchcraft; he had the opportunity and it is easy to imagine more than one incentive. No dogmatic answer can be given. The present writer thinks (...) that the broad outlines of these oaths were conceived by highly sophisticated persons' (Carothers 1954: 16).

We know by now that the Mau Mau revolt, contrary to what Carothers and many others thought, was not premeditated by highly sophisticated 'diabolical' intellectuals and that Kenyatta, more particularly was never a Mau Mau 'architect'. In fact, Carothers is practically the only author to go this far in his accusation of Kenyatta.

As for the analogy with European witchcraft, it has to be said moreover that the phenomenon of what G. Balandier called 'rituels d'antithèse' is not unknown in traditional Africa. In a series of lectures delivered at Paris University in 1960-61, Balandier referred for example to an unpublished manuscript by Mongo Beti who mentions certain black magic rituals practised by béti sorcerers:

> 'Il y a des hommes qui sont porteurs de magie noire, evu, qui se sentent différents des autres et se constituent en société secrète, avec une initiation et des rites spéciaux, qui présentent l'ordre social normal, mais à l'envers. Ils sont en agression contre l'ordre établi. Il y a profanation des reliques ancestrales, destruction des liens de parenté et un comportement anormal sur le terrain sexuel. C'est une véritable contre-société' (1).

Nearer to home, the Kikuyu disposed of another 'counter-society' mentioned by H.E. Lambert under the name of Kaita, a society that flourished for some time amongst the Meru.

> 'Its main object appeared to be the release of its members from the irksome restraints imposed by the social order in regard to sexual amusements, and its practices included orgies of nude dancing. Aggrieved husbands and fathers were kept in check by the terror inspired by the secret contingent curse known to have been pronounced at the initiation of the dancers' (Lambert 1952: 21).

Another society of the same type, also in Meru, was that of the Athi, 'a society of extortioners with a ritual of initiation into their circle' (Lambert 1952: 21). There was therefore no need to go to the British Museum Library in order to find models for an eventual counter-society, and we can therefore conclude that if the 'advanced' oaths really existed, they were most likely an autochthonous and spontaneous invention in which Kikuyu intellectuals had no part whatsoever.

Coming back now to Gluckman's study, we must emphasize that this

author only devoted a relatively small part of his article to European analogies of the batuni oath and that he was much more intent on placing the phenomenon within an African context. It seems to me that the examples he quoted in this field are not very well chosen and that they reveal an erroneous conception of what Mau Mau really was. Gluckman first of all refers to certain types of rites studied by Evans-Pritchard in his article Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa. These expressions of obscenity are encountered in religious ceremonies and collective work-sessions during which the violation of certain taboos is permitted and even encouraged, this in order to canalize human emotion into prescribed patterns of expression. I think that Gluckman was mistaken when he quoted these examples. What we have here is a collective 'letting off steam' which remains strictly under control. The violation of taboos does not undermine established social structures or religious values but is rather meant to preserve them by permitting, at fixed times and according to models prescribed by tradition, a deflation of accumulated psychological tensions that might otherwise endanger the social order, much like carnival-rites in Germany and the Southern Netherlands. Obscene songs, as in Evans-Pritchard's examples, do certainly not engender sentiments of unbearable guilt, as the 'advanced' Mau Mau oaths were supposed to do. Moreover, most of the cases mentioned by Evans-Pritchard pertain to obscene songs, not acts. In Gluckman's own terminology, these are rituals of rebellion, not of revolt or revolution.

Gluckman also compares the batuni oath to the burgeoning of witchcraft and magic in many African societies whose narrow social and religious cadres were broken up by European colonization, provoking a loss of confidence in the minds of traditional tribesmen who could only cope with the hazards of life within these narrow structures. He mainly quotes Evans-Pritchard's Witchcraft, oracles and Magic among the Azande of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in which this author claims:

> 'In sofar as the magic of the (new,R.B.) associations is not redundant it is directed against the vagaries of European rule. Azande, faced with a power they can neither stand up against or avoid, have found in magic their last defence' (Gluckman 1963: 137).

Following up this remark, Gluckman then comes to the following conclusion:

> 'To meet the threat to their way of life, and to cope with new strains, Africans turned in several directions for supernatural aid. One trend was increasing reliance on another set of beliefs - those in magic, in oracles and witchcraft (...). These beliefs (...) and their associate actions, are not firmly tied to particular sets of relationships, as religious ritual is. They can be applied to all new relationships in which men are involved with strangers, and even with whites (...). Throughout Africa, while ancient religious rituals have faded, fears of witchcraft have burgeoned and magic has blossomed' (Gluckman 1963: 142-143).

Gluckman's text is not absolutely clear on every point, but he seems to put the 'advanced' Mau Mau oaths in the same category as the magical practices that enabled the Azande to 'meet the threat to their way of life'. In my opinion, this comparison is based on an erroneous conception of the batuni oath, even as described by Europeans. In the case of the Azande, magic was considered as an efficient means to redress the situation, a direct weapon in the struggle against 'the vagaries of European rule'. The advanced oaths could only be compared with Azande magic and witchcraft if the Mau Mau combatants had believed that they could defeat the colonial Government by mere oath-taking, i.e. by magical practices only. There are no indications allowing such a conclusion. For the forest fighters the oath was a preparative, a mere conditioning for the actual struggle, not a weapon in itself. In order to win the war, they relied on the unity within the movement, the protection of the forest and on real fire-arms, not on the oath as such.

References to magical practices among the forest fighters are relatively rare in the literature, and the few examples mentioned seem to be exceptional cases. Njama mentions the case of a young Fort Hall mute who had recently started speaking and whose knife was believed to turn bullets into water (Barnett and Njama 1966: 137), but his presence in the forest seems to have been short-lived and after his disappearance from the scene he had no successors. Moreover, as far as I know, Mau Mau fighters never charged without protection against machine-gun fire, as the young Simba guerilleros did during the 1964-65 Zaïre insurrection. This demonstrates that their belief that bullets could be turned into water was not deeply rooted, if it ever existed.

Another event linked with magic is mentioned by Wachanga:

> 'One of the tremendous and marvellous things which brought much fame to Mau Mau was the raid on Mr. Gray Leakey's house (...). Mr. Leakey was captured (...). The reason the raiders captured a European elder was to fulfil a prophecy. Our ago, or arathi (prophets) had explained that if we wanted to defeat our enemies and drive them out of our country, we must duplicate the actions that they had taken against us in 1892. They had taken our great man, Chief Waiyaki, and buried him alive, upside-down, at Kibwezi (2). Therefore, we had been told to capture an old European alive. We were told to take him to Mount Kenya Forest (...), hold the captive upside-down (...) and bury him alive (...). The arathi told us that if we did those things, the battle could be won and (...) uhuru could be achieved at long last' (Wachanga 1975: 43).

In this example, magic is indeed seen as a means to win the war, but this case seems to have been an exception. Although most of the Mau Mau fighters were certainly 'superstitious', they did not believe that magic alone could help them win the war. The concept of 'magic of despair', which is central in Gluckman's analysis, therefore does not apply to Mau Mau warfare. Many Kikuyu, at the time of the Emergency, may very well have been desperate by the failure of their political leaders to bring about independence by constitutional means, but they never tried to change the course of history by magic alone.

In spite of these errors of interpretation, Gluckman's contribution to the analysis of the batuni oath is important in so far as he tried to find analogies to them elsewhere in history. If similar phenomena have occurred elsewhere, one has, indeed, some basis to hypothesize that the Mau Mau fighters may have obeyed the same psychological laws by inventing antithetical rites to prepare themselves for violence and warfare. Of course, this does not prove the authenticity of the advanced oaths-European style, but reasoning by analogy cannot be dismissed altogether.

A second point can be quoted in favour of the authenticity of the 'perverted' batuni oaths. They seem, in fact, to have corresponded to traditional Kikuyu psychology. Pre-colonial Kikuyu culture, contrary to most of its African counterparts, was a guilt - ridden culture, very much preoccupied with problems of ritual uncleanness. As we have seen, under certain circumstances, thahu was deliberatedly contracted in ancient times, and the Kikuyu seem to have been used to 'live dangerously', to expose themselves voluntarily to psycho-

logical tensions. D.L. Barnett, in a personal communication (February 23th, 1967), once warned me against the European version of the batuni oath by saying: 'I am inclined to think that we feed our own "needs" for the obscene and the orgiastic when we read deep meanings into the oathing abnormalities of the Kenya peasant revolt'.

This argument, in turn, cannot be dismissed lightly. It reminds us that it is indeed quite common for human beings to project their own suppressed desires and phantasies on others. As has been demonstrated by O. Mannoni, white colonialists, more particularly, are very much tempted to use this device in their contacts with colonized people. However, in the case of the advanced Mau Mau oath a problem remains. The oath, as described by European sources, corresponds much more to the 'needs for the obscene and orgiastic' of the Kikuyu than to eventual European needs, i.e. the taboos infringed upon during Mau Mau ceremonies correspond fairly well to Kikuyu notions of thahu. This is the case, for example, with menstrual blood, allegedly an indispensable ingredient of oathing ceremonies, and a highly impure matter in traditional Kikuyu culture. The same holds for manipulating a corpse, which was loathed by the Kikuyu to the extent that they often prefered to abandon a dying relative in the bush rather then have him die in their hut, exposing them to thahu. For the average European, touching a corpse may be frightful, but it certainly is not a taboo engendering guilt when infringed upon. This is even more the case with some ways of sexual intercourse that are less common in European practice than the 'normal' missionary position, but that do not engender guilt as in traditional Kikuyu culture where they were thahu. Again, deviant methods of sexual intercourse are mentioned by some sources as elements of the 'advanced' oathing ceremonies.

The psychological barriers transgressed during oathing ceremonies are therefore typically Kikuyu barriers. This suggests that the advanced oaths were probably not purely an invention of Europeans feeding their own psychological needs. If Europeans invented the story of the perverted oaths, they must have been very well informed about Kikuyu psychology and culture, which very few Europeans were at the time. Unless one supposes that the batuni 'horror-stories' were invented by Kikuyu hostile to Mau Mau, which is of course possible.

Let us now turn to arguments that cast some doubt on the authenticity of the European versions of the advanced oaths. As we have seen, they were supposed to serve as a kind of drug, numbing the conscience of the forest fighters and conditioning them to commit the beastly and savage crimes that were allegedly required of them. Many European sources, and even some African ones, have emphasized that Mau Mau fighters did commit such crimes, and more particularly that they indiscriminatedly slaughtered elderly people, women and children, and sometimes tortured their victims, exposing them to a slow and painful death. However, this image of the Mau Mau combatants as savage, bloodthirsty killers does not correspond to the facts as reported by J. Wilkinson, a medical doctor in Kenya during the Emergency. As Wilkinson himself was a staunch supporter of the European myth of Mau Mau, and as he did not himself see the implications of the medical evidence he brought to light, there is no reason to doubt the truthfulness of his observations. Wilkinson first of all reveals that two thirds of the 210 African victims of Mau Mau he examined at Tumutumu hospital had succumbed to panga-wounds:

> 'The majority were wounds of the head and neck (...). The commonest method of killing with a panga was the infliction of about six blows over the head (...). This method was used so frequently that it suggested that the terrorists had been trained to kill in this way. The method certainly ensured a quick and certain death for their victims' (Wilkinson 1954: 310. My italics R.B.).

Apparently, then, the Mau Mau fighters tried to kill properly. At another point, however, Wilkinson's evidence is less in favour of Mau Mau:

> 'In many cases the wounds were confined to the posterior aspect of the body and this suggested that the victims had been held face downwards on the ground whilst the wounds were inflicted. In many cases too, some of the wounds were very superficial and did not even penetrate the dermis, as though sharp instruments had been drawn over the victim's skin to torture him before he was finally killed (...). There were four cases of mutilation, all post mortem' (Wilkinson 1954: 310).

Here, the evidence is less clear-cut and it seems possible that Mau Mau did torture its victims in some cases. In a footnote, however, the editorial board of the East African Medical Journal, in which Wilkinson published his article, proposed another interpreta-

tion of the superficial wounds mentioned by Wilkinson: 'Would not an alternative explanation be that these wounds were inflicted as the victims ran away from their assailants?' (Wilkinson 1954: 310). Whatever the truth may be, we are far removed here from the horrors commonly attributed to the Mau Mau fighters such as the disemboweling of pregnant women, and the cutting up of babies in front of their mothers. Wilkinson's evidence also demonstrates that Mau Mau did not normally kill elderly men, women and children. Of the 1.024 known Mau Mau victims in July 1954, for example, only 98 were females (Wilkinson 1954: 310-311). As for the victims admitted to Tumutumu hospital until May 1954, Wilkinson (1954: 309) gives the following breakdown:

Table II Mau Mau Victims According to Age and Sex

Age group	Men	Women	Total
Children	2	1	3
Adults	154	28	182
Old People	26	-	26
Total	182	29	211

The conclusion is evident: the forest fighters did not slaughter women and children in great numbers as some of the spokesmen of the colonial myth of Mau Mau would have us believe. Of course, there have been exceptions, such as the Lari massacre in March 1953, but these cases were not typical of Mau Mau behaviour in general. As has been shown by Rosberg and Nottingham (1966: 286-292), the Lari massacre was a local affair, the result of a long-standing feud about land rights, and no Mau Mau 'High Command' can be held responsible for the crimes committed on that occasion. It is even rumoured that some of the Lari killers who fled to the forest were executed for their crimes by the forest fighters, but there is no concrete evidence to substantiate these rumours.

The facts related above compel us to reconsider the question of the 'advanced' oaths. If the Mau Mau fighters were not the bloodthirsty killers they were supposed to be, why then should they have needed an obscene oath to numb their consciences? Many authors, in fact, explain the horrors of the oath by the horrors of the crimes

committed by Mau Mau. If the horror of Mau Mau crimes is to a great extent a mystification, it is legitimate to suggest that the horror of the oath can also be dismissed as a colonial legend.

Other phenomena also seem to contradict the European version of the batuni oath, as for example the existence of the so-called 'pseudo-gangs', consisting of ex-terrorists who, after their capture or surrender, were used by the Security Forces during the last phases of the Emergency to locate and eliminate their former comrades-in-arms. A striking point, noted with surprise by several British officials, is the ease with which they 'crossed the floor' and the rapidity of their conversion:

> 'On surrender', says Corfield, 'a gangster who had been in the forest for years, and had taken a succession of the vilest of the Mau Mau oaths, almost immediatedly volunteered to lead the security forces to the hideout of his previous gang and, if an opportunity arose, would willingly dispose of his recent comrades in arms' (Corfield 1960: 9).

This easy change of heart seems to contradict the European thesis that the Mau Mau fighters were desperate people, bound by a horrible oath and for whom life held no future. It is therefore interesting to go somewhat deeper into the motivations of these pseudo-gangsters. According to Superintendent Henderson, the European commander of the pseudo-gangs, these rapid conversions of captured insurgents were those of men accustomed to the forest and frightened by the modern world, an idea I endorsed in my 1971 book. As Henderson puts it:

> 'Even those who surrendered because they could not stand the hardships of forest life cherished warm memories of their semi-animal life in the jungle (...).
>
> The thought of civilization now seemed foreign and dangerous and made them shudder. They felt they could not speak about the gadgets and complications of the world outside without feeling chilled and worried. But nearer to hand, inside the forest, there were things they understood well, things which comforted them (...). In the forest they knew the answers to everything, outside to nothing (...). We were trying to persuade them to change their regiment, not their souls' (Henderson 1958: 71, 167, 171 and 196).

If these were the deeper reasons for their behaviour, then it may still be considered compatible with the existence of a vile and binding oath, with the restriction, as I argued in 1971 (pp. 291-292), that the total commitment of the initiates to Mau Mau and its poli-

tical aims changed over the four years of forest war and became a total commitment to their way of life in the forest. In my view, the isolation of the Mau Mau fighters, especially during the last phases of the Emergency when they were cut off from all contacts with the outside world, and the hallucinating images of life in the forest as reported by Henderson, made such a conversion of commitments plausible, or at least a possible hypothesis. Today, I am less sure of this. A. Clayton explicitly questioned Henderson's thesis when he said that:

> 'The reasons for so many sudden conversions appear to have been residual racial attitudes of respect, the destructiveness of Mau Mau's internal debates, quarrels, executions and self-criticism, the government's obvious military superiority (in contrast to what they had been told in the forest), and plain fear of death penalty. The reasons are more complex than those advanced by Superintendent Henderson' (Clayton 1976: 34).

I am tempted to follow Clayton, and to believe that the reasons advanced by Henderson only played a minor role in the 'change of heart' of some of the ex-forest fighters. In this case, however, their eagerness to abandon the Mau Mau cause deals a severe blow to the European version of the batuni oath.

This leads us to the more general problem of the 'rehabilitation' of ex-Mau Mau members, a question that provoked heated debate during the Emergency, as some Europeans were convinced that, because of the oaths they had taken, Mau Mau 'hard-cores' were in a way lost for ever. This is indeed Leakey's opinion when he comes to evaluating the chances of rehabilitating them:

> 'I would NOT say it was quite impossible, but I frankly do not see much chance of success. We may well have to face the necessity of segregating such people for the rest of their lives, so that the evil they have done and the knowledge of it eventually dies with them. Many of the acts of defilement which are committed during the process of taking the more advanced oaths, are so utterly unthinkable to an ordinary Kikuyu that they are not the subject of any specific reference in Kikuyu Law and Custom. For this reason it is not possible to say "By Kikuyu law there is no possibility of being cleansed from this act". But most of what is done goes far beyond the limits of the sort of act which was regarded as so heinous that no cleansing was recognised by native law' (Leakey 1954: 86).

Carothers basically comes to the same conclusion when he says that the advanced oaths 'shocked something deep in these people -

so deep that many felt that they were forever outside the pale of their society on these grounds alone' (Carothers 1954: 18). Later on, the Kenya Government effectively elaborated plans to segregate ex-Mau Mau members, plans that were even implemented to some extent (The Times, August 2nd, 1955). It is interesting to note, however, that even during the heyday of Emergency panic, not all observers were so outspoken on the binding force of the oath and the impossibility of being cleansed. The Government-sponsored Report on the Sociological Causes Underlying Mau Mau (p. 2). reveals, for example, that the opinion of African members of the committee was sought as to whether there were some forms of oath-taking so bestial as to render the oath-takers incapble of being cleansed; in answer to this question the African members replied that there were a few occasions of these kinds of uncleansable things in Kikuyu tradition but that there was 'no pollution incurred by the Mau Mau oath which is incapable of being cleansed'. Interestingly enough, this report was never published, while Leakey's and Carothers' statements recieved wide publicity. Still, the Committee's considered opinion seems to have been nearer to the truth, and a few years later the Kenya Government abandoned all plans for the permanent segregation of Mau Mau detainees (and with it its whole rehabilitation policy). As Rosberg and Nottingham put it:

> 'The Administration quietly accepted that detainees could be released without confessing the oath or being rehabilitated, thus invalidating the basic propositions on which the ideology of rehabilitation had been constructed. Henceforth they almost begged detainees to go home, and many were carried, mute and unconfessed, from Land Rovers back to their families in the Reserves' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 347).

Again, these facts do not support the European version of the batuni oath, although Carothers, as early as 1954, sought a way out of the dilemma of accepting the myth of the advanced oaths while admitting at the same time that 'rehabilitation' was possible after all. The following argument was called to the rescue:

> 'Mental hospital admissions in Great Britain and various other European countries include many persons who are deeply depressed and filled with remorse for unforgivable sins they think they have committed (...). The occurrence of this mental reaction seems to depend on the development of a certain type

> of mental structure, so that the individual incorporates within himself a general social idea of behaviour by which his life is ordered. This ideal commonly conflicts within himself with various selfish impulses and may thus give rise to anxiety and depression. In Africans (...) the social rules are not meaningfully synthesized within the individual and the conflict (if it occurs) is external; a man is not weighted down by preoccupation with past sins nor by preoccupation with a need to order his future life on certain lines' (Carothers 1954: 18-19).

Not being a psychiatrist, I am not qualified to comment on this statement, although I tend to believe that it does not apply to the specific case of the Kikuyu. The Kikuyu 'basic personality', preoccupied with notions of guilt and thahu, seems to be nearer to the European model described by Carothers than to his alleged African models, so that, if the batuni oath really existed in its vilest forms, rehabilitation and cleansing must have been difficult, if not impossible, as was argued, logically and consistently, by Leakey. On the other hand, if Carother's remarks on African psychology apply to the Kikuyu, then it could be argued that the 'advanced' oaths probably never existed, because they needed a basis of guilt in Kikuyu personality to be grafted upon. Carother's hypothesis can therefore be turned against itself and used as an argument against the authenticity of the advanced oaths in their European version.

Concluding now on the authenticity of the advanced oaths, I am tempted to follow D.L. Barnett when he says that:

> 'I think that "filthy and bestial" oaths were the exception, and the result of individual deviency and proclivities among the more opportunist and/or magico-religious elements on the fringe of the organized movement. Government propaganda made much of these exceptional cases - trying to convey the notion that these were normal oathing practices and, hence, condemn the movement. Many of the 'confessions' of exceptional oaths were achieved under threat of severe punishment, death and torture - I don't think one should accept them at face value' (Barnett, personal communication, February 23th, 1967).

It seems possible, if not probable, that 'obscene' oaths did exist during the Emergency as exceptional cases, because the detailed descriptions in the literature do correspond rather well to our current knowledge of Kikuyu culture. It is therefore unlikely that they were a European invention altogether. It is also a fact that the Government exploited these exceptional cases to the full in its propaganda campaign, in the same way as it exploited the Lari massacre. It is probable also that confessions

by Mau Mau convicts have to be considered with suspicion. I have been told by people who have read a certain number of them, that they seemed rather standardized and stereotyped, much as the innumerable witchcraft confessions that have come to us from earlier European history. Still, I think that more research should be done on this matter. It is very surprising that after all the publicity that was given to the advanced oaths during the 1950s and the early 1960s, not a single author took up this question after 1967, as if it never existed at all. Personally, I would like to know whether there are still people in Kenya who have not been 'rehabilitated', and more particularly whether there are people still not cleansed of thahu contracted during the Emergency.

This question is important, not only in the context of the 'advanced' oath-European style, but also with regard to the batuni oath-African style as described by Njama and Kariuki. These oaths too, though typically Kikuyu and not perverted, were 'horrible', according to those who took them and they definitely exposed the initiates to thahu in the sense that they were calculated violations of traditional taboos.

This remark brings us back once more to the realm of analogy. We have seen that Gluckman, when looking for phenomena similar to the batuni oath, was guided by a nihilistic interpretation of Mau Mau and that the analogies considered by him were therefore rather 'negative'. In my opinion, Mau Mau is a much more complex and ambivalent phenomenon than Gluckman was ready to admit, and it is possible to point to some analogical phenomena that are much more positive, although essentially ambiguous as the batuni oath itself. I am thinking more particularly of the taboos infringed by certain African rulers upon their accession to the throne. To a certain extent, these phenomena can be compared to the batuni oath, as is shown by the following lines, devoted to Ntinu Wéné, the founder of the Kongo Kingdom:

> 'C'est alors que se place l'événement qui assure une coupure totale, jette le jeune homme hors de l'ordre normal et lui livre toutes les ressources de la magie. Relisons Cavazzi qui mentionne l'exploit tragique grâce auquel naquit un roi: "Un jour, il commet un meurtre sur la personne de sa tante, qui allait avoir un enfant. A la suite de ce 'haut fait', il fut proclamé chef". (...) Pour avoir tué sa "parenté", Ntinu Wéné acquiert l'état de solitude nécessaire à la domination des hommes et à la sacralisation du pouvoir. Il est semblable aux héros des légendes grecques qui ne recherchent la succession royale qu'après avoir brisé le respect des règles courantes. Ce défi aux principes fondamentaux de toute société manifeste un être d'exception. La violence sacrée reste

> le privilège d'un souverain à double face: brutal et dominateur, en même temps que justicier et conciliateur. Ntinu Wéné, meurtrier, guerrier puissant, conquérant, est aussi envisagé comme l'inventeur de l'art de forger (...). Il a acquis une autonomie qui ne peut s'expliquer que par la détention de pouvoirs non communs. C'est sur ceux-ci, et au dehors qu'il va édifier une société nouvelle et soumise à sa loi. Il s'impose en inspirant une terreur sacrée (Balandier 1965: 23-24).

According to Balandier, one finds this rupture with established values and this duality of power - brutal and at the same time conciliatory - 'chez la plupart des rois africains, créateurs des Etats traditionnels' (Balandier 1965: 25). Balandier's example of the founding of the Kongo Kingdom has at least three elements in common with the batuni oath. First of all, in order to conquer political power, the future ruler must enact a total rupture with the existing order and more particularly break all kinship relations. As in the Congolese tradition, the batuni oath emphasized that initiates should be ready to kill their own father, mother or child, if necessary. Secondly, a new society has to be built, outside and against the existing order, in the case of the Kongo Kingdom as well as in the case of the Mau Mau movement that I have qualified as an attempt at cultural renewal, an attempt at creating a new, purified Kikuyu community. In the third place, both cases demonstrate the dual aspect of power, i.e. terror and justice. In the foregoing pages I have been preoccupied with Mau Mau terror, but we shall see subsequently that the Mau Mau forest fighters were also people in search of justice, a word one often encounters in their hymns, speeches and prayers.

Of course, the Mau Mau forest leaders did not 'copy' the desacralisation rites of the traditional African Kingdoms of which they had no knowledge; subconsciously, however, they may have obeyed the same rules as the African kings. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that in many African Kingdoms, each ruler, and not only the founder of the dynasty, was required to commit some form of symbolical or real incest when acceding to the throne. It could be objected that, in these cases, the King's anti-social behaviour was institutionalized and approved of by his subjects. To the extent that the infringement upon taboo was permitted and controlled, one could hypothesize that no sentiments of guilt were engendered so that any comparison with the batuni oath should be rejected. According to L. De Heusch, however, this was not the case. With regard

to the rules of succession in the traditional Kingdom of Ruanda, De Heusch says for example:

> 'Le nouveau Mwami élève sa mère, qui n'était qu'une simple épouse du père, à la dignité de Reine. Celle qui la précédait sur le trône prend sa retraite. Il semble que cette opération politico-mythique engendre une forte culpabilité collective' (De Heusch 1958: 59).

This in spite of the fact that incest was only committed symbolically. In the Nyoro Kingdom we encounter a royal Triad: King, Queen-Mother (symbolical incest only) and Queen-Sister i.e. one of the King's half-sisters (a daughter of his father by another wife) with whom the King contracts his only marriage and with whom he does have sexual intercourse. De Heusch comments upon the relations between these three personalities in the following words:

> 'On observera que le mariage incestueux (...) avec la soeur élue (...) ne va pas (...) sans une certaine ambiguïté. Roscoe rapporte (...) qu'elle est appelée auprès du roi, lorsqu'il la désire, par un messager secret. Elle entre furtivement dans la hutte royale et en sort tôt le matin de la même façon (...). L'inceste avec la soeur constitue en effet dans la perspective de l'exogamie, l'une des fautes fondamentales contre la société. Dès lors, l'éloignement de la mère royale, de même que le caractère furtif des relations avec la Reine-Soeur, porteraient la marque de cette culpabilité initiale' (De Heusch 1958: 76-77).

Other examples of this kind are given by De Heusch, and it seems therefore legitimate to quote the incest rules of some of the African Kingdoms together with the batuni oath. In a way, the Mau Mau fighters behaved as African Kings bidding for power. Their oaths were 'horrible', although 'typically African', as seems to be the case with royal incest in traditional African Kingdoms; they engender guilt (and thahu, in the case of the oath), but they do, to a certain extent, represent institutionalized behaviour, recognized by native law in exceptional circumstances.

In this way we arrive at an interpretation of the 'advanced' oaths that is more subtle and less one-dimensional than the one suggested by Gluckman. Undoubtedly, the batuni oath was meant to mark the end of an era, the end of a decaying universe. But it also signified a beginning, the beginning of a new, purified and to a certain extent 'royal' Kikuyu community. This is also the interpretation proposed by P. Worsley for similar phenomena in Melanesia, as for example the 'Naked Cult' of Espiritu Santo whose ceremonies were characterized by the same ritual infringements upon strongly held taboos. As Worsley puts it:

> 'Some can see nothing in these acts except brutal perversion (...). (However), we are dealing with the deliberate enactment of the overthrow of the cramping bonds of the past, not in order to throw overboard all morality, but in order to create a new brotherhood with a complete new morality' (Worsley 1957: 250).

The perversion of ancient morals is seen here as only one side of the coin, the other side being the attempt at cultural renewal. Referring again to prophetic cults in Melanesia, Worsley makes another remark that can be applied to Mau Mau without changing a word:

> 'All prophets (...) stress moral renewal: the love of one's cult brethern; new forms of sexual relationship; abandonment of stealing, lying, cheating, theft; devotion to the interests of the community and not merely of the self' (Worsley 1957: 251).

Following up these remarks, we can also suggest a different and more comprehensive interpretation of another aspect of Mau Mau that most European writers have only been able to conceive in a negative and nihilistic fashion. I am thinking of the wish for a rapid and clement death one sometimes encounters with Mau Mau partisans captured by the Security Forces. We have seen that this temptation of self-destruction has been interpreted as resulting from an overwhelming guilt-complex engendered by the horrors of the 'advanced' oaths. In my view, it is not so much guilt that could be at the basis of this wish for death but rather a sentiment of profound deception in face of the failure of cultural renewal and social reconstruction to which Mau Mau members were totally committed and on which they had put all their hopes. To these committed people, being captured and sent to a detention camp meant the end of a dream, a dream pursued in vain. Some Mau Mau members themselves have eloquently expressed these sentiments of deception and desperation:

> 'Sometimes, after a suspect has made his statement, he says: "I am empty now". The screener asked a woman who had used this phrase: "What will you do now, Mother?" "I shall go home and sit in my hut and wait to be filled again. And the first one who comes to fill me, I shall believe"' (Huxley 1953).

The exaltation that many Kikuyu expressed after having taken the oath of unity, is followed at the end of their Mau Mau 'career' by feelings of emptiness and the fear of never being filled again. Although the Christian authorities of colonial Kenya never recognised this positive aspect of total commitment to Mau Mau values in theory,

i.e. in their writings devoted to the revolt, they nevertheless profited by it in practice. Mau Mau detainees and prisoners were literally besieged by the representatives of various Christian denominations and many spectacular conversions were recorded:

> 'L'expérience chrétienne fut portée et accueillie dans les hôpitaux et les prisons où se prodiguèrent Pères et Soeurs missionnaires, Prêtres et Frères africains et cela avec des résultats impressionnants: jusqu'a 70% des condamnés demandèrent parfois le baptème (...). Des dizaines de milliers de Kikuyu, sortis désillusionnés de la bourrasque, demandèrent au christianisme des valeurs sûres, des idées méritant qu'on vive pour elles. Les conversions au catholicisme dans les deux diocèses de Nyeri et de Meru n'ont cessé de croître; depuis 1954, le nombre de catholiques a plus que triplé' (Merlo-Pich 1961: 138).

More recently, L. Pirouet revealed that this 'Christian crusade' is still going on to-day:

> 'There have been enormous increases in the number of church members since independence, and these increases are not confined to the periphery of the country and among population groups which the missions had not previously been able to reach. Since the mid-1960s there have been reports of large numbers of adults, including old people, being baptised in Central Kenya' (Pirouet 1979: I1).

Refering more particularly to Nyeri, in the heart of 'Mau Mau' country, Pirouet then quotes a statement of D.B. Barrett to the effect that, in 1971, 50 per cent of the entire population attended church every Sunday (Pirouet 1979: 10). The desire to be 'filled' appears to me as one of the driving forces behind Mau Mau, and the various oaths should be considered in this light not as a negative and nihilistic phenomenon, but rather as 'something of value', an attempt at cultural renewal.

c. Religious aspects of the Mau Mau movement

Several authors have emphasized the religious aspects of Mau Mau, some of them with a missionary zeal that seems somewhat suspect. This is the case with Leakey, who said in the second book he devoted to Mau Mau:

> 'Two years ago I stressed that Mau Mau was nothing more than a new expression of the old Kikuyu Central Association (...). I also stated that, so far as the Kikuyu tribe was concerned, Mau Mau was synonymous with the new body called Kenya African Union (...). What I did not realize then (...) was the fact

> that Mau Mau, while to some extent synonymous with these political organizations, was in fact a religion and that it owed its successes to this fact more than to anything else at all (...). Again and again I have been puzzled to understand why it was that the former leaders of the K.C.A., who, when they worked purely as a political body, had not succeeded in attracting the support of more than ten or fifteen thousand followers, had now won over more than seventy per cent of the tribe to their cause. The genuine grievances (...) were identically the same as those that were the chief planks in the old K.C.A. platform. Their aims had not changed substantially and the leaders themselves were the very same people who had been behind the KCA' (Leakey 1954: 41-42).

Although Leakey's argument is interesting as an example of how Mau Mau was interpreted in colonial Kenya, it has to be refuted. Leakey seems to forget first of all that, before World War II, neither the political parties, such as KCA, nor the religious sects, such as the Watu wa Mungu, had been able to reach the Kikuyu masses, while after the war Mau Mau (a religion, according to Leakey) as well as KAU enjoyed mass support. This difference can easily been explained by a awakening of Kikuyu political consciousness during the war years, without any appeal to religious considerations. Leakey, moreover, contradicts his own thesis when claiming that the aims of Mau Mau were essentially the same as those of the KCA. Elsewhere in the same book he states, in fact, that: 'The achievement of self-government was never an active aim of the old Kikuyu Central Association, it was something which had not really ever been considered as being within the realms of possibility' (Leakey 1954: 24). The Mau Mau leaders differed from the elderly KCA and even KAU leaders on exactly this point: they considered self-government as being within the realms of possibility, and were prepared to fight for it. This explains much of the mass appeal of the movement. If other factors intervened, I would look for them in the realm of culture (Mau Mau's effort at 'renewal'), rather than in the field of religion, but again without dismissing the all-important political argument. Leakey's main error seems to be that he confounded Mau Mau, KCA and KAU; if one does this one has indeed to explain Mau Mau successes partly by non-political factors.

If it can not be said that Mau Mau was a religion, it is true, nevertheless, that Mau Mau ideology and thinking had a religious flavour that is essential if one wants to understand the movement. As is demonstrated by the Mau Mau creed quoted below, Mau Mau ideology

was highly syncretic and referred to Christianity as well as to traditional Kikuyu religion, the whole interspersed with statements of a more political nature. Although the following text was the work of one particular person, one Gakaara wa Wanjau, it was widely circulated amongst the Kikuyu population and it seems fairly representative for Mau Mau ideology:

> 'I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth: And in Gikuyu and Muumbi, the ones to whom He portioned out this land, our parents; And that they brought forth ten clans from the time of the earliest generations of the Kikuyu people; And that they began to be persecuted in the time of Waiyaki, Cege and Wang'ombe (the principal Kikuyu leaders at the end of the 19th century. R.B.). And that they were deceived and the land and government of this country was stolen from them and they were scattered; And that they were enslaved and left with nothing. Their children are not afraid, they are waking up from sleep, and they will restore those of old to their seats. Now they wait trusting in the true right hand of God, and they pray to the Almighty Father, the defender of the present generation of the Kikuyu, that He may drive out those who stole our inheritance, the inheritance of those who are alive, of those who are dead, and of those yet to be born. I believe in the holy sacrifices of Gikuyu and Muumbi; in the leadership of Kenyatta and Peter Koinange; In the true politics; In the fellowship of all black people; And in the eternal Gikuyu. Amen' (Quoted by Wilkinson 1954: 304-305).

It is evident that this text seeks its inspiration in the Apostels' Creed of the Christian Churches, with regard to form, but its content is nearer to Kikuyu traditional religion: the almighty God referred to is undoubtedly the old, ethnocentric Ngai, while the references to Gikuyu and Muumbi, and to sacrifices, also remain within the context of Kikuyu religion. Interesting is the allusion to the dedication in Jomo Kenyatta's book Facing Mount Kenya: 'The heritage of those who are alive, of those who are dead, and of those yet to be born'. References to Christianity are more discreet but not entirely absent. The persecution, the enslavement and the scattering of the Kikuyu people, mentioned in this text, are references to biblical history and should be interpreted as indications that, in the mind of Mau Mau members, the Kikuyu people were sometimes equated with the Jews of the Old Testament.

Biblical references are abundant in the so-called Mau Mau 'hymn books'. This is particularly brought to light by an analysis of the image, in Mau Mau ideology, of Jomo Kenyatta, prophet, saint and martyr all at once, accumulating the prestige (or 'vital force') of the principal personalities of the Old and the New Testament. Kenyatta

is first of all identified with Jesus Christ, as in the following lines:

> 'The Book of the Kikuyu is Holy, it helps me to be good, it is my guiding principle when I go to join the Kikuyu. The book is Kenyatta, it is he who leads me, it is he who saved me by his blood' (Quoted in Leaky 1954: 69. My italics R.B.) (3)

> 'Jomo Kenyatta, son of man, dedicated himself to agitate about the land of all the black people' (Leakey 1954: 63. My italics R.B.).

Several terms in these quotations unmistakenly refer to Jesus Christ, such as the designation of Kenyatta as the son of man, the fact that he saved his followers by his blood, and the allusion to the word having become flesh ('The Book is Kenyatta'). Another Mau Mau resistance-song carries references to Christ's Passion:

> 'The day Kenyatta was arrested
> Which was on Monday
> He was taken to the airport (...).
> They mocked him, saying
> Jomo, You've defended the blacks
> Now defend yourself and we'll see'
> (Quoted in Barnett and Njama 1966: 181).

These texts make it easier to understand how the Kenya Government came to believe that Kenyatta was the real 'architect' of Mau Mau, the driving force of the movement. Unlike many other leaders of African prophetic movements, who were themselves convinced of their prophetic powers and their divine mission, Kenyatta never proclaimed himself to be the Messiah. This may seem incredible, but there are other examples, in recent African history, of political leaders to whom their followers ascribed religious powers they never claimed to possess (Cf. Deschamps 1954: 118).

One also finds, dispersed in different Mau Mau texts devoted to Kenyatta, references to other Jewish prophets, such as Moses, as for example in the following speech, attributed to Dedan Kimathi:

> 'Kenyatta is a very wise man (...). He is a prophet chosen by God just like Moses, who God chose to deliver the Israelite nation out of Egyptian slavery; so is Kenyatta chosen to deliver the Kenya people out of Colonial slavery' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 440).

Even more revealing with regard to the background of Mau Mau ideology is the following text quoted by Leakey:

> 'God makes his covenant shine until it is brighter than the sun, so that neither hill nor darkness can prevent him coming to fulfil it for God is known as the Conqueror. He told Kenyatta in a vision: "You shall multiply as the stars of heaven, nations will be blessed because of you". And Kenyatta believed him and God swore to it by his mighty power' (Leakey 1954: 57).

Here, the biblical 'model' is undoubtedly Abraham (Cf. Genesis XII, 1, 2, 3, and Genesis XVII, 15, 16, 17), which is interesting as it shows that Mau Mau 'believers' tended to refer to the very beginnings of the history of the Jewish people. In Jewish thought Abraham is, in fact, the first Jew, just as Kenyatta appears here as the first Kikuyu, i.e. as the first 'new' Kikuyu, in accordance with the Mau Mau movement being a 'new', renovated Kikuyu society. The emphasis on God concluding a covenant with Kenyatta (and therefore with the Kikuyu people as a whole, Kenyatta figuring here as the 'patriarch', the Kikuyu par excellence) demonstrates that for many Mau Mau adherents the cultural renaissance they dreamt of was not only meant to be a mere restructuring of human society, but also a spiritual renewal, sanctioned by divine grace.

It may be difficult for a Christian believer to accept that Jomo Kenyatta, in the Mau Mau 'creed', replaces Jesus Christ and is identified with some of the most prestigious Jewish prophets, but the device is certainly not all negative. On the contrary, the Jomo Kenyatta who is hold up as an example to follow for the Kikuyu people, is pictured in Mau Mau 'literature' as an eminently wise, honest and righteous man, calling the Kikuyu to a life of work, frugality and study. He appears as the living incarnation of Mau Mau morality and as such plays a highly dynamic role in Mau Mau, as is shown in the following quotation:

> 'Kenyatta stood at Runguti and said:
> Vagrancy and laziness
> Do not produce benefits
> For our country'
> (Barnett and Njama 1966: 180)

Another striking point is that Kenyatta (and Peter Mbiu Koinange too, on some occasions) is characterized first and foremost as a person in search of justice and that he is often described as the supreme judge of the Kikuyu people, as in the following quote:

> 'Kenyatta will find happiness before God, for he is the foundation stone of the Kingdom. He has patiently suffered pain in his heart,

> he is moreover the Judge of the Kikuyu, and will dispense justice over the House of Mumbi (...). Kenyatta made a Covenant with the Kikuyu saying he would devote his life to them, and would go to Europe to search for the power to rule, so as to be a judge over the House of Mumbi' (Leakey 1954: 57).

The texts quoted above demonstrate that, although most of the Mau Mau adherents were certainly not Christians, many of them even denying Christianity quite openly, the prestige of the Bible remained intact in their eyes. Most of the descriptions of life in the forest confirm this. Verses from the scriptures were common currency amongst the Mau Mau fighters, even in common-place conversations. P. Goodhart, for example, claims that:

> '(Kimathi) did (...) know the Bible as accurately as many a lay preacher. At times he seemed to believe that the Bible had been written especially for him. He carried an Old Testament translated into Kikuyu wherever he went. He spoke in parables, and his harangues were larded with allusions to and quotations from the Bible' (Goodhard 1958: 29).

The same holds true for Karari Njama who, according to his own testimony, opened each of his speeches during forest meetings with a few appropriate verses from the Bible (Cf. Barnett and Njama 1966: 184-5; 264 and 367-8). Njama seems to have chosen his biblical quotations with two different aims in mind: first of all to demonstrate that the misfortunes and tribulations of the Kikuyu people were not unique in history but were similar to those that had befallen the Jewish people in ancient times; and secondly to transmit the idea that some principle of immanent justice is at work in the universe so that the last will be the first in the end. Dedan Kimathi himself seems to have tried to strengthen his followers' faith in the sacred cause of the movement by identifying the leading forest generals with the twelve apostles, as in the following speech:

> 'You are my warriors and disciples, followers and pupils. When Jesus parted with his disciples, he sent them to teach and preach to all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The same message I convey unto you all. Go all over Kenya (...) and preach to all African people and baptize them in the name of Gikuyu and Mumbi and of our soil' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 264).

At another place in his book, Njama claims that the number of its members was one of the first questions debated during the founding meeting of the 'Kenya Parliament' in early February 1954 (4):

> 'After a heated exchange of opinion it was agreed that since Jesus Christ had only twelve disciples, whose preaching had reached all over the world, we should then elect twelve excluding Kimathi, the President of the Parliament' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 334-335).

It is interesting to note that in all these examples, Jesus appears as a prophet and a preacher, but not as God's son. The mystery of the divine and human nature of the Messiah, the key dogma of Christianity, does not seem to have worried the minds of the forest fighters.

Following up this remark, we can conclude that the references to Christianity, although quite frequent, remained limited to the form of 'Mau Mau religion', but that it was traditional Kikuyu in content. As we have seen in the Mau Mau creed quoted above, central to it were the cult of the traditional, ethnocentric High God, Ngai, and the veneration of Gikuyu and Muumbi, the tribal ancestors of the Kikuyu. There can be no doubt that this traditional worship was an important element in the daily life of the forest fighters.

> 'Every Fighter', says Wachanga, 'must pray to Ngai three times daily for our struggle, for those in prison, for those killed, and for those whose minds have been twisted by the colonialists' (Wachanga 1975: 38).

Similar rules are mentioned by Njamà, in a rather poetic fashion:

> 'Everybody must wake up before dawn, just the time when birds begin their morning song (which were regarded as their prayers) and all together say our morning prayers' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 164).

Linked to this traditional flavour of Mau Mau religious thinking is the reappearance, amongst the forest armies, of the mundo-mugo, the seers who used to be attached to the traditional warrior regiments and played a considerable role in the elaboration of their strategy. The presence of these prophets demonstrates Mau Mau belief in superstition, and more particularly in good and bad omens, but also their faith in Ngai, who was supposed to communicate directly with the seers. According to Barnett:

> 'The actual power of the seers in determining or influencing military politics and tactics varied considerably from group to group, depending in large part upon the importance attached to magico-religious beliefs by the individual leaders. There was, in addition, considerable variation over time in the role and importance of the mundo mugo. Though the 'moral strength' derived by the forest fighters from their beliefs in the prophesies and magical powers is difficult to assess, it must be

> objectively noted that the seer's role was of dubious military value and a source of both stress and internal conflict within the revolutionary movement' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 202-203).

These remarks are confirmed by Mau Mau sources. It is first of all evident that even leading generals such as Mathenge (Barnett and Njama 1966: 205), Tanganyika (Muriithi 1971: 65), and Mutonyi (Mutonyi s.d.: 113) firmly believed in prophecies and never failed to consult with their seers before launching an attack. It is true also that the seers' activities created tensions within the Mau Mau armies, as for example on the occasion of the all-out attack decided upon by the military leaders for the night of June 25, 1953. This attack was largely a failure, mainly because the companies under the command of Mathenge decided to abstain from participating in the raids when deer and gazelles crossed their path as they moved down the mountains, an event interpreted by their seers as a bad omen. Karari Njama's reaction to Mathenge's decision to abandon his plans was quite outspoken (Barnett and Njama 1966: 205), and it was one of the reasons why he left Mathenge's camp to take sides with Kimathi.

It is interesting to note that although the activities of the seers were traditional in nature, the Mau Mau prophets themselves were not always of the customary type:

> 'Witchdoctors used by Mau Mau are not always the usual type of elderly "mundo mugo" common in peace-time Kikuyu tribal activities. They are often young men who, probably by fortune, have made a number of correct prophesies and who are, in every other respect, active terrorists operating with the Mau Mau units. The permanent witchdoctor for the Mount Kenya sphere is (...) an elderly Kikuyu woman' (Interrogation of .. : 40).

It is particularly towards the end of the revolt, in 1956, that the dreams and prophecies of the seers become the only hope of the surviving Mau Mau fighters. Even Dedan Kimathi, during the last year of his forest carreer, seems to have behaved as a traditional Kikuyu prophet rather than as the political and military leader of a revolutionary movement. According to Goodhard (1958: 23), Kimathi had had prophetic dreams even when an adolescent, but until the spring of 1955 these dreams apparently did not have much impact on his conduct of Mau Mau affairs. In Njama's memoirs he is pictured as one of the most realistic Mau Mau generals, an able organizer moved by a relatively coherent political doctrine and not conspiciously under the spell of superstition or prophecies. Towards the end of his career, however,

he seems to have lost contact with reality. In Henderson's description he appears as a man lost in his dreams, a man who did not pursue a political ideal to be realized on earth but who promised his followers a better life in another world (Cf. Henderson 1958: 162).

At the end of this analysis of the religious aspects of Mau Mau, two points deserve our attention. The first pertains to the origins of the movement. Already in 1954, D.H. Rawcliffe suggested that Mau Mau was the direct successor of the Watu wa Mungu ('God's People'), a religious sect that was active for a short time in Kikuyuland during the 1930s and is mentioned in Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya (pp. 273-279). Under the influence of the leaders of the KCA and of members of the 'Forty' group, this sect, according to Rawcliffe, became Mau Mau after World War II; or, more precisely, a scism within the movement led in 1946 to the birth of Mau Mau or a kind of pre-Mau Mau movement on the one hand, and a purely religious sect, the Dini ya Jesu Kristo, on the other.

Rawcliffe advanced different arguments to support his thesis. First of all, he suggested that the word Mau Mau was an onomatopoeic imitation of the roaring of lions, a customary element of Watu wa Mungu prayers (Rawcliffe 1954: 32). He also emphasized the fact that Watu wa Mungu believers, just as Mau Mau members, used to say their prayers standing upright, their hands outstreched and facing Mount Kenya. They believed furthermore that the possession of articles of European origin, and especially money, hampered their communion with the Holy Spirit; as we have seen, during Mau Mau oathing ceremonies, initiates were also required to remove all such articles (Rawcliffe 1954: 35). Another point mentioned by Rawcliffe is that early Mau Mau members used to grow beards, which can be interpreted as a desire to imitate a habit of Kenyatta, but also as a reference to the Watu wa Mungu who all grew beards (Rawcliffe 1954: 34). Finally, he claimed that the Watu wa Mungu murdered some of their enemies and marked the dead bodies with a cross in blood on their foreheads (Rawcliffe 1954: 31), a sign that was also used in Mau Mau oathing ceremonies.

There are, thus, a few similarities between Watu wa Mungu and Mau Mau 'custom'. Rawcliffe's hypothesis has, moreover, the merit of tracing Mau Mau back to a grass-roots movement while also taking into account its religious aspects. In 1954, in the absence of any serious research on the origins of Mau Mau, his suggestion seemed worth con-

sidering. Unfortunately, Rawcliffe's study suffers from a major scientific fault in that the author does not provide footnotes or bibliographical references so that it is impossible to verify his statements. Now that fully-fledged and well-documented studies have appeared, none of which adopted Rawcliffe's suggestions, this incertainty about his sources weighs even more heavily against his theory. Since his book was published, only few authors took his hypothesis into consideration, but without providing much new information. One of them was J.C. Brown, who mentioned as the only new element to support Rawcliffe's thesis the fact that the areas where the Dini ya Jesu Kristo was particularly active later became 'Mau Mau bastions' (Brown 1956: 312). Unfortunately, Brown omitted to name these regions so that we are unable to check his statement in the light of new research. An interesting remark, however, was made by Clayton and Savage, who mentioned the Watu wa Mungu only in passing, saying that:

> 'In 1937 the Native Affairs Department recorded that this movement was particularly strong among the Kikuyu resident labourers in the Naivasha area including among its "peculiar rites" the instruction from God not to work' (Clayton and Savage 1974: 199).

As the Rift Valley is one of the cradles of Mau Mau, further research on this point might be worthwhile. In the absence of other data, however, Rawcliffe's thesis must be used with caution. Although some Mau Mau customs look like far-away echoes from Watu wa Mungu practice, this is not sufficient evidence to claim a direct line of succession between the two movements. The only new indication I have been able to discover is the fact that Dedan Kimathi once referred to the Mau Mau fighters as 'God's people' (i.e. Watu wa Mungu; cf. Barnett and Njama 1966: 439). Neither Njama nor Barnett commented upon this expression and it is therefore quite probable that it does not contain any clue about the origins or the deeper meaning of Mau Mau. (5) Another point to be mentioned is that although Bildad Kaggia started his public carreer not as a trade-unionist/politician but as the leader of a religious sect, the Dini ya Kaggia, chapter 8 of his book in which he describes his activities as a preacher does not carry any references to the Watu wa Mungu. Again, further research on Kaggia's sect might reveal interesting facts, but in the present state of our knowledge, no conclusion as to Mau Mau origins can be drawn from Kaggia's religious carreer. His evidence rather runs counter to any hypothesis

on the religious affiliation of Mau Mau, because he mentions explicitly that he left most of the work of the religious movement to others when he decided to turn his whole effort to trade-unionism (Kaggia 1975: 76).

A last question to be considered in this chapter is to what extent the Mau Mau movement was anti-Christian. Kenya Christians, during the Emergency, never doubted the anti-Christian nature of Mau Mau and many of them were profoundly convinced that the Emergency war was a struggle of the forces of light against the powers of darkness. All the missionary publications from the Emergency period reflect a spirit of religious fervour and exaltation. Two quotations will suffice to show this:

> 'The tales I have heard (...) are of first-century Christianity: of men and women, boys and girls who really believe in Jesus and so are not afraid to die. Some do die. For all it is a possibility to be reckoned with. Yet they are happy and at peace: triumphant and not bitter. I have never seen anything like it before' (Mau Mau. What is it ...14).

> 'People ask me "How do you know those who are resisting the Mau Mau?" It is easy to know - you cannot miss them. Their radiant faces and indeed their whole bearing mark them out. This is the Christian Resistance Movement, and the main attack of Mau Mau is upon these people' (Bewes 1953: 209).

E.W. Wisemann's booklet, in particular, definitely belongs to the realm of martyrology and contains some pages that could figure in any anthology of 'Saints' Life-Stories'. Studying Mau Mau publications, however, one discovers that the real situation was not as clear-cut as the missionaries and African Christians believed it to be. Somewhat surprising are, for example, J.M. Kariuki's remarks on his activities in detention-camps:

> 'There was a Protestant missionary working at Manyani (...). He used to talk with me about our troubles and he had a great influence for the good there. He asked the Commandant to allow me to speak about Christianity in the other compounds and I did this (...). I used to speak in this way because I was a Christian and nowhere in the oath I had taken was Christianity forbidden (...). I see nothing contradictory in being both a Christian and also taking the Oath of Unity' (Kariuki 1963: 96-7).

Claims of this sort are nevertheless exceptional. Mau Mau oathing ceremonies undoubtedly went counter to the basic tenets of Christianity, and most Mau Mau members were well aware of this, as for example Karari Njama:

> 'As a Christian I had undergone a contrary faith for the oath I had taken was mainly based on Kikuyu religion, belief and superstition' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 121).

It remains to be seen, however, whether 'contrary to' also means 'hostile to'. Some clauses of Mau Mau oaths certainly express hostility towards Christianity and towards the missionary enterprises in Kenya, such as the following examples:

> 'I shall never help the missionaries in their Christian faith to ruin our traditional and cultural custom' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 119).

> 'If I should ever take part in the Christian Revival meetings, may this oath destroy me' (Leakey 1954: 90-91).

This verbal hostility against Christianity was sometimes matched by physical violence. According to J.W.C. Dougall (s.d.: 5), at the end of 1954, at least a hundred members of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa had been slain by Mau Mau and other Christian Churches had suffered in the same way. This can certainly been seen as a deliberate attack on African Christians, but another interpretation is also possible. In my opinion, the key problem was not that Mau Mau was rabidly anti-Christian, but that many Kikuyu Christians were outspokenly anti-Mau Mau. Especially during the first phases of the oathing campaigns, the only people who deliberately refused to take the Mau Mau oath as contrary to their faith were the practicing Christians, and this was one of the main factors leading to the failure of Mau Mau plans to unite the whole Kikuyu people as a body behind the movement. Kershaw's data show in fact that practising PCEA-members were far less involved in oath-taking than other categories (traditionalists, members of Independent Churches and non-practicing Christians). It should be noted that the Christian Revival Movement, often mentioned in oathing clauses, formed the main anti-Mau Mau stronghold in Kikuyuland. This movement was not only extremely unreceptive to Mau Mau ideology, but it also functioned as a fully-fledged and competitory 'counter-society', in the same way as Mau Mau. As such it was the main obstacle to the Oath of Unity. As Rosberg and Nottingham put it:

> 'The Revival Movement is described in terms reminiscent of (...) (the) description of the moral effect of the oath in restoring honesty and loyalty to society. Stolen property has been restored, lies have been acknowledged, immorality and drunkenness have been brought into "the light" and confessed, reparation is made wherever possible' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 295).

In my opinion, the Mau Mau fury against Christian movements of this kind can be accounted for by the fact that they were movements for spiritual renewal and not so much by their being Christian as such.

As for the anti-missionary stand of Mau Mau, the sources at our disposal are rather confusing. According to Lavers (1955: 14), 'As strongholds of loyalist influence, the missions were constantly attacked, and in may cases burnt down', while African nuns were in many cases abducted and taken to forest hideouts. However, only one European missionary seems to have been killed during the Emergency (Kushner 1964: 797), and most of the attacks on missionary posts seem to have obeyed materialistic motives (i.e. raiding for food and money), rather than ideological ones. According to Merlo-Pich (1961: 135) the Mau Mau fighters had even received instructions not to assault European missionaries personally, and on some occasions the lives of Catholic priests were indeed spared when Mau Mau gangs attacked their missions (La Croix, March 5, 1953).

It has to be emphasized, finally, that Mau Mau was never a monolithic movement and that it counted in its ranks people who may have wanted to destroy every vestige of Christianity in Kenya, as well as people who, although hostile to Christianity, only bore a grudge against it in so far as it hampered the realisation of Mau Mau aims. Some of them, like J.M. Kariuki, even considered themselves to be true Christians in spite of the oath. It is therefore an error to conclude, as most of the Kenya missionaries did, that the main aim of Mau Mau was to 'destroy Christianity'.

d. Other references to traditional Kikuyu culture

We have seen that Mau Mau, as a movement of cultural renewal, referred to many traditional Kikuyu customs and symbols such as initiation and second birth, judicial oaths, magic and the cult of Ngai. It remains to be seen now whether our inventory has been exhaustive. This is probably not the case. In his description of the batuni oath, Njama mentioned, for example, the use of a Kikuyu knife and a Kikuyu needle, and I already suggested that this might be an allusion to the traditional itwika rites. This is an interesting theme that I will now explore a little further.

Traditionally, Kikuyu males were divided into two generation sets, the Maina and the Mwangi; each person belonged to the same set as his grandfather, his father belonging automatically to the opposite set. At

any point in time, one set, and only one, was considered in Kikuyu law as the 'ruling generation' holding political power. At regular intervals political authority passed from one generation to the other, and this handing-over of power was punctuated by a series of ceremonies, called itwika, that lasted for several years. As these ceremonies were hedged with mystery and secrecy, anthropologists working amongst the Kikuyu have had great difficulties in understanding the mechanisms of this aspect of Kikuyu politics so that many points remain controversial or doubtful.

> 'The literature', says G. Kershaw, 'differs considerably about the length of the period covered by a generation set. Dundas does not give a specific length; Tate gives four or five generations to a century, i.e. a length varying between 20 and 25 years; Routledge gives 30 years; Hobley 15 years or so; Kenyatta between 30 and 40 years; Lambert "normally the gap between the average ages of a man and his first born" for Southern Kikuyu country, for Northern Kikuyu country 30 years, and for Fort Hall more than 30 years (...). Most authorities are in agreement that a Mwangi generation took over from a Maina generation in the last decade of the nineteenth century' (Kershaw 1972: 155-156).

Normally, a new itwika should have occurred towards the end of the 1920s, and indeed: 'An attempt was made to organize a ceremony in 1929, but it was not in accordance with Kikuyu custom and, therefore, not recognised as a genuine hand-over of power' (Report on the Sociological Causes ...: Appendix II). The second part of these lines are rather an understatement; in fact, the 1929-itwika was prohibited by the Kenya Government, probably because the administration was afraid that an independently organized handover of power would sap the authority of Government-appointed chiefs belonging to the 'wrong' generation. In my opinion, this was a short-sighted decision that led to much confusion and unrest in Kikuyu-land. While in pre-colonial times the exercise of political power obeyed strict rules, colonial intervention rendered these rules inoperative, with the result that no Kikuyu leader, and more particularly no appointed chief or headman, could now claim that his authority was legitimate and in accordance with tribal norms.

Given this lack of legitimacy of political power in Kikuyuland, it can be asked whether the Mau Mau revolt was not, consciously or subconsciously, meant to be a new itwika? It is difficult to give a definite answer to this question. To my knowledge, no Mau Mau text ever explicitly referred to the itwika ceremonies and there has probably not been a conscious attempt by the leaders of the movement to take over tribal

power in the traditional manner. Several indications seem to suggest, however, that Mau Mau adherents nevertheless were motivated by considerations that can be traced back to the traditional itwika-concept. As we have seen, during oathing ceremonies a needle and a knife were used to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion, and these objects symbolized female skill and male power in the traditional itwika ceremony. The names of some of the Mau Mau 'armies' are also of some significance. The Nyeri army was in fact known as the 'Ituma Ndemi Army', while one of the Fort Hall armies under Kimathi's command used to be called the 'Gikuyu Iregi Army'. According to tribal legends the Iregi generation (literally: the 'innovators') had been the first in Kikuyu history to initiate an itwika, by revolting against a tyrannical King, while the next historical generation, the Ndemi (literally: those who cut, i.e. those who cleared the forest) had been called thus because they symbolized the return to normal activities and to political stability after the revolt (Kenyatta 1953: 186-187). By identifying themselves with the first generations in Kikuyu history, the Mau Mau forest fighters implicitly symbolized their claims of being a new 'ruling generation', although they did not explicitly say so.

Many Europeans, during the Emergency, were even convinced that Mau Mau was deliberately meant to be a traditional hand-over of power. These views were expressed in the Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya (1954: 11):

> 'A suggestion was made to us, both by leading Kikuyu and by highly responsible and knowledgeable non-Kikuyu that the originators of Mau Mau timed their outbreak so that it coincided with the normal time for the taking over of "tribal power" by a new generation (...). Those who hold this view suggest that the usual ceremonies for the taking over of tribal power should now be performed by loyal Kikuyu, e.g. the Kikuyu Home Guard, who should also denounce the attempted Mau Mau usurpation'.

The suggestion of staging a 'loyalist' itwika was not taken over by the Kenya Government, but attempts were indeed made to denounce Mau Mau as an usurpation of Kikuyu tradition. In the Report on the Sociological Causes Underlying Mau Mau (1954: 1) we find the following paragraph:

> 'The Committee has been asked to state whether, in its opinion, Mau Mau has gained any substantial support from a pretence that its assumption of power is in accordance with the Itwika custom adapted to present day needs (...). It is evident that Itwika was a ceremony instituting the transference of power from one genera-

> tion to the next. It had nothing whatever in common with a revolution, such as Mau Mau, which would seek domination by its adherents over all other members of the tribe without any regard for the age group system which it was Itwika's main purpose to preserve. In spite of this there is probably some truth in the suggestion that Jomo tried to represent Mau Mau as somehow rooted in the old traditions. The pretence (...) is far from the truth. The Committee finds as a fact that Itwika and Mau Mau had no real connection whatever'.

Technically speaking, the Committee certainly had a point. As is indicated in an Appendix, Mau Mau, first of all, took place too early, as the real itwika ceremony, had it not been outlawed, was not due to be repeated until about 1959. This is not altogether incorrect, but, as we have seen, the real interval between two itwika is an object of controversy in the literature, while the limits of each itwika were rather elastic, the ceremonies lasting for several years. It is moreover reported in earlier publications that the initiative for a new itwika normally had to be taken by the younger, non-ruling generation while the ruling elders tried to postpone their 'abdication' with all means and as long as possible. We should therefore not calculate too rigidly the exact date of the itwika that was due to take place sometime in the 1950s.

The Mau Mau 'itwika' was, however, an usurpation of power in another sense. Although the alternating generations were by no means 'biological' generations in the sense that all the young men belonged to one generation and all older men to the opposite generation (this may have been the case in ancient times when the generation sets were first initiated), it is nevertheless a fact that the traditional itwika only affected adult men in their early forties or older, as only they could be members of the political and judicial councils that ruled the different political units in Kikuyuland. Younger men, whatever their generation-set, had no access to these councils, and an itwika taking place before they had attained political majority, had therefore no effect on their political status. Had Mau Mau therefore been an itwika in the traditional sense, one would have expected it to drain a large following from amongst the 40-60 age brackets. This, as we shall see later, was not the case. Mau Mau recruited predominantly amongst the 20-35 age-groups, i.e. groups that had no part in political power according to traditional custom. Seen in this light, Mau Mau does indeed go against tribal law.

Another point to be mentioned here is that Mau Mau, if it referred to

itwika notions at all, did not specifically appeal to one generation, i.e. the one that was due to take over political power in the 1950s. Kershaw's data do not reveal any significant difference in oathing behaviour between the different 'generations', although this point seems to have played a minor role within the Mau Mau armies, if we are to believe the Annual Report for Nakuru District, 1954 (p. 11):

> 'A new oath called the "Mugwikaka" oath came to light. It was sa consist of a bestial and disgusting ceremony which took place in the Aberdares in March to mark the change-over of control from the Mwangi age grade to the Irungu. Dedan Kimathi and Mbaria belong to the former and the Mau Mau felt that they had not been sufficiently successful in prosecuting the war and therefore the transfer of control to the younger age grade had become desirable. The actual ceremony was said to have been conducted by the witch-doctor, Kabereri, in the Aberdares on the 30th March'.

Neither Njama, nor Wachanga, who took part in most of the important Aberdare meetings, mention such a gathering and it was probably only the work of a few disgruntled, numerically unimportant rank-and-file combatants. It demonstrates, however, that traditional ideas of alternating generations did preoccupy at least some Mau Mau members, although the movement as a whole was not exclusively the work of one generation and appealed more to the spirit of the itwika than to the letter. Mau Mau undoubtedly violated the letter of the traditional itwika, but it conformed to its spirit in so far as it sought to reestablish the possibility and the legitimacy of sudden, though democratic, political changes. I agree therefore with V. Neckebrouck who urged that more research be done on this particular point and who himself pointed out some other analogies between Mau Mau and itwika:

> 'Beaucoup d'auteurs se basent sur le sens de la justice sociale et raciale animant les rebelles pour fonder une interprétation moderniste du Mau Mau et rejeter l'explication du mouvement au moyen de catégories et symboles traditionnels. Mais, n'est-ce pas oublier qu'une des épisodes de l'itwika consistait précisément dans un "temps de purification" au cours duquel le pays était "nettoyé" de toutes les injustices? Des anciens, accompagnés de guerriers, faisaient le tour de leurs circonscriptions territoriales respectives pourchassant et châtiant assassins, voleurs et autres criminels. C'était un temps considéré comme propice au règlement de vieilles querelles et de vieux comptes. Comme l'itwika, le mouvement Mau Mau visait à obtenir un changement de régime politique. Mais le sens de la justice qui l'inspirait, et dans lequel on tend à discerner des influences modernistes, peut tout aussi bien être rattaché à l'institution traditionnelle elle-même. En outre, nous avons déjà noté au passage que beaucoup de raids Mau Mau (...) entendaient explicitement redresser des injustices commises par des

> Kikuyu eux-mêmes contre des frères dans la tribu. Les raids assumaient ainsi la même fonction que l'ancien "nettoyage du pays"' (Neckebrouck 1978: 345).

I therefore conclude that Mau Mau, at least subconsciously, referred to the spirit of the traditional itwika, and that the time of the revolt more or less coincided with the period in which a new handing-over of authority was due, with the restriction that it was probably staged a few years too early, according to the 'time-tables' calculated by some previous authors. It is, moreover, more than a mere coincidence that the Kikuyu Central Association, the most radical political body in Kenya during the inter-war years, was founded in 1925, when a new itwika was being prepared, and that it was also during this period that the female circumcision controversy between missionary circles and Kikuyu cultural nationalists matured into an open conflict. Two authors at least have pointed to a direct connexion between these events (Bennett 1963: 64; Middleton 1964: 359).

In the course of colonial rule, Kikuyu political history apparently has been marked by 'hot' periods (1922-1932; 1950-56) and 'cold' periods (1910-1922; 1931-1950) that alternated according to a rhythm rooted in pre-colonial history with its periodic changes of ruling generations. This underground rhythm, this largely subconscious pulsation of Kikuyu history, has probably not survived independence, although even on this point a few doubts remain, at least in my mind. Although a new itwika is only due sometime in the 1980s, I would like to know whether or not J.M. Kariuki, in his anti-establishment campaign in the 1970s, ever referred to itwika notions? No mention is made of this in English publications, but has anybody ever made a thorough analysis of Kariuki's political speeches in Kikuyu? This might be an interesting theme of research for a Kenyan political scientist.

A last remark on Mau Mau as an itwika in disguise might be appropriate. As we have seen, the Committee appointed to investigate into the sociological causes underlying Mau Mau claimed that Mau Mau, as a revolution, had nothing in common with the traditional itwika ceremony as an institutionalised transfer of power from one generation to another. This seems correct at first sight, but not altogether so on second thought. In order to demonstrate this, I refer to Gluckman's classical distinction between 'rebellion' and 'revolution':

> '(...) in certain types of society, when subordinates turn against a leader (...), they may only turn against him personally, without

> necessarily revolting against the authority of the office he occupies. They aim to turn him out of that office and to install another in it. This is rebellion, not revolution. A revolution aims to alter the nature of political offices and the social structure in which they function, and not merely to change the incumbents in persisting offices (...). I am going to argue (...) that these rebellions, so far from destroying the established social order, work so that they even support this order' (Gluckman 1959: 28).

Now it is undoubtedly true that the traditional itwika belongs to the category of what Gluckman called 'rituals of rebellion', while Mau Mau as an anti-colonial revolt, is a revolution in Gluckman's terminology. But this ceases to be the case when Mau Mau is considered as a movement for cultural renewal, and more particularly as a new itwika. In so far as Mau Mau adherents acted as a new 'ruling generation' they were definitely not out to destroy the established Kikuyu social order, but they revolted against the incumbents, and illegitimate incumbents at that, of 'offices' that were meant to persist. In a way, they did not act against the Kikuyu political order, but were trying to save it. Their aim, in so far as it was explicitly expressed at all, was to take up again the thread of Kikuyu history where previous generations had left it. This is entirely in agreement with Gluckman's definition of rebellion, with the addition that this internal rebellion served the cause of a 'revolution' against foreign domination.

The Mau Mau movement attempted to take up the thread of Kikuyu pre-colonial history in yet another way, i.e. by referring to Kikuyu primary resistance movements against colonial conquest at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. This point was made by A.A. Mazrui, in an article published in 1975:

> 'This rebellion against British rule and white settler occupation of African land constituted the first major resurrection of the warrior tradition in recent East African history (...). The fighters in the Aberdare hills and forests became for a while the true heirs of that heritage of primary resistance. The Kikuyu went back to reactivate primeval symbolism and to resurrect important elements of traditional virtues as a basis for establishing a military solidarity against the colonial presence in Kenya' (Mazrui 1975: 77).

Although A. Southall claims that the Kikuyu 'were never looked upon as noble warriors by the colonial administration, but rather as crafty thieves', and that they were not an outspokenly martial tribe (Southall 1977: 172-173), I think that Mazrui is basically

right. It is true that the Kikuyu never fought the colonial invaders as a body (they lacked the centralized political institutions that would have enabled them to do so), but several sections of the tribe did resist and were only defeated by extensive 'punitive' expeditions (Cf. Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 13ff.). These sectional primary resistance movements were later on concealed by the colonial authorities which gave the Kikuyu their undeserved reputation of a tribe of cowards. It should also be noted that the Kikuyu had a longstanding tradition of raiding (and being raided by) the Maasai for cattle and wives, so that there was indeed a warrior tradition to fall back upon.

As for the actions of the forest fighters, there is a striking similarity between their hit-and-run warfare and their raids for food and weapons on the one hand, and the traditional raids against the Maasai on the other. As in ancient times, the Mau Mau combatants took advantage of their familiarity with the forest areas and staged a mainly defensive war, a kind of warfare in which they had always excelled. On the ideological level, however, Mau Mau went rather back to primary resistance models. We have already seen that the murder of Mr. Gray Leakey was a deliberate re-enactment of what many Kikuyu believed had happened to Chief Waiyaki when he was deported by the British at the end of the 19th century (Wachanga 1975: 43). This reference to Waiyaki is not an isolated case and several Mau Mau sources explicitly mention the connexion between this historical leader and the Mau Mau revolt, as for example, G.G. Gikoyo, who claims that:

> 'The Mau Mau movement and the zeal and dedication with which it fought for the liberation of the country, was the outcome of a rememberance of the last bitter words of Elder Waiyaki wa Hinga when he recalled his treaty with Captain Lugard' (Gikoyo 1979: 316).

According to Gikoyo, these words of Waiyaki to the Kikuyu people were:

> 'Never let the white race take over our land, for it is a legacy that Ngai endowed us with and said we should never abandon' (Gikoyo 1979: 318).

In another text, a booklet called The Prayers of Waiyaki (written by Mbugua Njama and published in 1952), Waiyaki is again referred to in a slightly different context:

> 'When Waiyaki died he prayed earnestly that God would resurrect him (...). So Waiyaki was born again as a young child with another name (...). It came to pass, as God wished, whose wisdom never fails, that he followed the very route he had followed to Kibwezi, and he went to Europe, where (...) he finally obtained what had caused him to go to the land of the strangers for eighteen years. When the time came for him to return home he came back and the people saw him with their own eyes and welcomed him with much praising for they knew what he had gone to get for them (...). Now the Waiyaki of whom I am speaking, the one who was born again is of course Jomo Kenyatta' (Quoted in Ogot 1977b: 286).

Kenyatta was therefore not only put on par with biblical personalities and prophets, such as Jesus, Moses and Abraham, but also with a historical Kikuyu leader. Waiyaki is mentioned most frequently in Mau Mau literature, but others are also recalled occasionally, such as Chege wa Kibiru, the seer who had prophesied the coming of the Europeans at the end of the 19th century (and their ultimate departure), and some war leaders (Cf. Kinyatti 1980). Mau Mau, as a cultural renewal movement, deliberatedly and consciously sought inspiration in Kikuyu history and revived the heroes of the primary resistance movements that were defeated by the Europeans half a century before. To Mau Mau adherents, the colonial period was in a way an interruption of autochthonous history and they went right back to the point where Kikuyu history had come to a sudden halt.

e. The Limits of Cultural Renewal

Mau Mau, as a movement of cultural renewal, was undoubtedly 'tribal' or ethnic in nature. The culture its leaders and followers wanted to revive was a Kikuyu culture and in its ceremonies the movement used symbols that were essentially Kikuyu. This appeal to Kikuyu values, though indeniably a most powerful tool to unite the Kikuyu people, was nevertheless a double-edged weapon that finally harmed Mau Mau as an anti-colonial revolt. The organizers of the oathing campaigns very soon had to face a fundamental and unsolvable dilemma: the more they drew near to their aim of cementing the unity of their own ethnic group, by multiplying the use of typically Kikuyu symbols, the more difficult it became for a non-Kikuyu to recognize himself in the mirror Mau Mau held up to him. As its main symbols and values had no meaning for him, he tended to be excluded from

the movement beyond appeal.

At the national level, therefore, Mau Mau as a movement of cultural renewal was incompatible with Mau Mau as an anti-colonial revolt, although cultural renewal and anti-colonial strife went hand in hand at the Kikuyu level and reinforced each other. Stepping across the borders of Kikuyu culture would automatically have led to a mutilation of Mau Mau as a global social and cultural phenomenon. As we have seen, the most sophisticated leaders of the movement, such as Kubai and Mutonyi were aware of this problem and had considered getting around it by 'inventing' oaths and ceremonies suitable for other ethnic groups (Cf. Mutonyi s.d.: 112). In October 1952, however, these plans had not yet matured and the dilemma remained unsolved all through the Emergency. By emphasizing the cultural renewal aspect of their movement, the Kikuyu condemned themselves to wage the anti-colonial struggle alone, or at least mainly so.

This lack of support from other ethnic groups does not mean that these communities had no problems or grievances or that they were satisfied with the colonial system as it existed in Kenya in 1952. However, the Kikuyu had been affected in a very specific way by colonial rule. Lack of space, and also lack of knowledge in the actual state of research, do not allow me to deal more extensively with this aspect of Mau Mau, but it is of interest to quote at least two authors who recently made some valuable suggestions in this field. As for the land problem, that is fundamental for a correct understanding of Mau Mau, as we will see later, R.M. Breen argues that:

> 'Land grievances differed in each of Kenya's African societies due to the varying effects of the land losses. The effects were not solely related to the amounts of land lost, since each society's social structure, land tenure system, population density, political organization and a number of other factors determined the extent of the stress caused by land alienations. It was the pastoral tribes such as the Maasai and the Kalenjin who suffered the greatest loss of land in Kenya and to whom the losses were probably the most detrimental (...). (However), land losses, although smaller among agriculturalists than pastoralists, had far more serious political effects. There was greater economic and social commitment to specific pieces of land among agriculturalists, and because population densities were naturally higher, alienation caused greater population displacements. The political significance of land losses caused by European settlement was greatest among the agricultural Kikuyu, particularly those resident in the Kiambu area'
> (Breen 1976: 26-27).

It is also common knowledge that the Kikuyu were more affected by colonial rule in the sense that they responded more eagerly to the challenge of colonialism than other ethnic groups in Kenya and tried to cash in on the possibilities offered by the colonial system in the modern economic sector: education, wage labour, etc. This dynamism and entrepreneurship that is characteristic of Kikuyu personality is related to some fundamental economic, social and political traits of Kikuyu culture. R.L. Tignor analyzed this nexus of factors, comparing more particularly Kikuyu, Kamba and Maasai reaction under pre-World War II colonial rule:

> 'In contrast (to the Kikuyu) the Kamba and Maasai remained aloof from schools and wage labouring although high taxes coupled with the impact of the depression began to undermine the economic self-sufficiency of the Kamba and drove some of them out of the reserve into the wage labour market. Livestock served as a barrier against colonial control (...), for the Maasai and Kamba were able to sell their pastoral surplusses and thereby pay their taxes. They looked upon their flocks as a safeguard against the distasteful undertakings they saw the Kikuyu engaged in (...). Whereas the Kikuyu saw the size of their landholdings decrease as a result of land alienation to Europeans and their increases in population, Maasai and Kamba herders saw their flocks increase and their wealth in traditional terms grow. Thus, they did not feel the same economic pressure to leave the reserves in search of paid labor or to look to education to open up new occupations' (Tignor 1976: 9).

Moreover, says Tignor,

> 'The Kikuyu were more rapidly colonized than the Kamba and Maasai because they afforded the colonial overrulers more levers of control. The Kikuyu had already a relatively dense population and a poorer stratum of tenant farmers when the British occupied the country. The poor and economically weak were vulnerable to colonial domination. The Kikuyu created a group of active collaborators through whom British colonial violence was channelled and the new colonial economy and polity established' (Tignor 1976: 11).

This group of 'active collaborators' is then analyzed by Tignor in the following terms:

> 'The fact that the Kikuyu created powerful collaborating chiefs and the Kamba and Maasai did not is clear. The reasons for this variation are more difficult to discern. Part of the answer rests with the Kikuyu leaders themselves. Men like Kinyanjui, Koinange, and Wambugu were extraordinary political entrepreneurs (...). But more important the Kikuyu had the social and economic ingredients capable of sustaining rule by chiefs (...).

> The Kikuyu had powerful families before the coming of the British, and there were a multitude of ways in which dependent individuals could be attached to these independent landowning units (...).
> The coming of the British interjected a new actor on the Kikuyu political scene, and enterprising Kikuyu, sometimes even individuals without any previous power or landholdings, arose to take advantage to the British presence (...). Kamba and Maasai did not have the same economic and social ingredients, for they did not have dependent relationships' (Tignor 1976: 65-66).

These, then, are some of the reasons that explain why the Kikuyu, when they rose against colonial rule, were not followed by the other Kenya tribes, besides the fact that the latter could not possibly identify with Mau Mau as a typically Kikuyu movement for cultural renewal. However, this does not mean that they automatically adopted an entirely negative attitude towards Mau Mau. The Nakuru District Annual Report, 1953 (p. 26) notes for example that:

> 'Undoubtedly the feeling grew and was fostered that whereas the other tribes did not approve of the bestial and pornographic rites of Mau Mau, yet they sympathized in the way the Kikuyu appeared to have woken the world up and to have drawn attention to problems of land, educational facilities and conditions of life generally among Africans of all tribes in Kenya'.

As we have seen, in a few isolated cases, especially in Maasailand, non-Kikuyu took part in fighting in the forest and passive wing support by other Kenya tribes seems to have been somewhat more extensive. No such support has ever been mentioned for the Coast Province, at least not to my knowledge, while for Western Kenya only some isolated cases have recieved attention in the literature. The best known Mau Mau supporter in this area seems to have been ex-Senior Chief Mukudi of Samia and Bunyala who, although already an old man (he was born around 1881), decided to take the Mau Mau oath in 1953 and to recruit the Banyala into the movement. His activities included the setting up of an oathing centre in Sesenye forest and the collecting of money to support Mau Mau, but he was arrested in May, 1954, together with some thirty followers, before his initiative had matured and could result in mass support in his area (Cf. Ogula 1974). Other alleged Mau Mau supporters from Western Kenya were J. Ajwang and S.P. Okal, two leading Luo from Nakuru who were arrested in 1954 (Nakuru Annual District Report 1954: 4).

More alarming was the situation in the Kamba areas. Even official sources admit that Kamba Nairobi dwellers took the Mau Mau oath

in some numbers, and that some of them, especially in Machakos District, had set up an organization that offered support to Mau Mau in the way of food, clothing and other supplies. However, the situation in the Kamba rural areas remained quiet throughout the Emergency. The extensive recruitment of Kamba into the ranks of the colonial army and police, all through the period of colonial rule, has created a more conservative tribal mentality, used to discipline and 'civic behaviour', so that Mau Mau found less fertile ground (Leakey 1954: 106). Ironically enough, in some cases Kamba prison and detention-camp warders were discovered to have indulged in oath taking, together with the inmates of the very same camps they were supposed to guard (Nakuru District Annual Report 1954: 19). Again, these were rather isolated cases, not representative of the overwhelming majority of the rural Kamba. It can also be asked whether their behaviour reflects a genuine commitment to the cause of Mau Mau as such, or should rather be seen as an attempt to take out insurance against eventual future developments.

As we have seen already, some Maasai, and more particularly Maasai-Kikuyu halfbreeds, joined and even led armed terrorist gangs, and it is also from Maasailand that reports reached the Central Government with regard to wide-spread oathing in the rural areas. K.J. King, quoting the Narok District Annual Report, 1954, claims for example that 'at a conservative estimate (...) 85 per cent of Maasai living on the Mau, Meleki and the plains had taken the oath' (King 1971: 25), and this oathing campaign seems to have been initiated quite early in Mau Mau history, i.e. in June 1949 (Corfield 1960: 99). An interesting point is that, according to an official document seen by Kershaw, a 'milk-oath' seems to have been developed in Maasai-land, which means that Kubai's wish to devise suitable oaths for other tribes was indeed implemented occasionally. Relations between the Kikuyu and the Maasai, however, had always been strained, and had consisted, in pre-colonial times, of a mixture of trade, intermarriage, cultural borrowing, raiding, and warfare. This ambiguous relationship persisted during the Emergency. Although some Maasai took the oath, others volunteered to fight Mau Mau in the traditional war-regiment manner. With the authorization and the help of the authorities, one such regiment of Maasai warriors did

indeed see action against the forest fighters, but it 'fared rather poorly' (Pavlis 1977: 268). This is not surprising as Maasai war tactics, developed in the wide, open plains where they used to herd their cattle, were not adapted to forested areas where the Kikuyu had always had the advantage.

These brief remarks about the attitudes of other ethnic groups during the Emergency confirm the opinion shared by almost all observers that Mau Mau was predominantly, almost exclusively, a Kikuyu affair, the Embu and Meru being considered here as belonging to the enlarged Kikuyu family. Moreover, even if the Kamba or the Maasai had taken up arms against colonial rule at the same time as the Kikuyu, we probably would not have been able to speak of one Mau Mau revolt or movement, but rather of a coordination of two revolts initiated simultaneously. The emphasis on Mau Mau as 'The House of Gikuyu and Muumbi' and the symbolism of the oathing ceremonies exluded any communion with other ethnic groups at the cultural level. A movement similar to Mau Mau would have been possible elsewhere in Kenya; the Mau Mau movement, however, was condemned to remain circumscribed to the Kikuyu.

At the end of this rather extensive chapter on Mau Mau as a cultural renewal movement, I would like to make one more point and suggest that Mau Mau was probably the last attempt in history to save Kikuyu culture. I am basing this hypothesis on some remarks made by M.L. Pirouet in a conference paper read at Leiden in 1979. After mentioning the enormous advances of Christianity in Central Province after the Emergency and after independence, Pirouet says:

> 'Kikuyu informants (...) including those favourably disposed towards traditional medicine and religion, insist that both are now practically non-existent among the Kikuyu. What has happened to Kikuyu culture during the last 75 years perhaps explains what is, if these claims are true, a most unusual situation. According to Kikuyu tradition God was associated with the mountains of Kikuyu country (...) and the traditional system of land tenure had divine sanction. The annexation of Kikuyu land by settlers and land alienation by government for schools, roads and markets did not simply rob the Kikuyu of land, it called in question their whole religious system. Why had God not defended them and maintained them on the land he had given them? The most traumatic period was during the Mau Mau emergency' (Pirouet 1979: 17).

Basically these remarks seem to be correct and in a way confirmed by Mau Mau sources. Wachanga, for example, reports the following

prayer said by Dedan Kimathi during a forest meeting:

> 'God help us to win this war (...). If we win it, God is the winner and should we lose it He will be the loser' (Wachanga 1975: 167).

Eventually, Ngai lost the war in behalf of his people, leaving many individual Kikuyu with overwhelming feelings of 'emptiness', and the Kikuyu people as a group with an entangled mass of undigested memories and sentiments of defeat and frustration (Cf. Buijtenhuijs 1973: 104 ff). Pirouet then goes on to say that:

> 'Thousands of Kikuyu have now settled right outside the home-lands given them by God, and are alienated from the values of traditional life. They have turned to business, to amassing land, to property speculation almost frenziedly, and perhaps to compensate for what looks like a kind of spiritual vacuum, the old patterns and values having disappeared. They have also turned to the churches, sometimes in resignation rather than hope' (Pirouet 1979: 17-18).

Although it can be said that the amassing of land was one of the central values of traditional Kikuyu culture (the title of Kershaw's doctoral thesis: The Land is the People is well chosen in this sense), it looks indeed as if Kikuyu culture is by now irremediably beyond the point of no return, and that Mau Mau not merely lost a military battle (later on to be transformed into a political victory) but first and foremost a cultural battle. The last in Kikuyu history? Unless the now banned G.E.M.A. (Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association) also had a dimension of cultural renewal. We are rather badly informed about this somewhat mysterious, but allegedly very influential society and it is impossible to conclude on this point. New research would be useful and would enable us to see whether Mau Mau as a movement for cultural revival had any successors at all or whether it really was the last-ditch stand of Kikuyu culture. (6).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MEANING OF MAU MAU: ANTI-COLONIALISM

a. Land

Should we limit our analysis of Mau Mau to its dimension of an attempt at cultural renewal, we would have no difficulty in demonstrating that it was essentially a 'tribalist' movement. As an anti-colonial revolt, however, Mau Mau goes beyond the realm of tribalism to become an all-Kenya, and sometimes even pan-African movement, at least in intent. A careful analysis of its political and social aims will provide us with sufficient evidence for this thesis.

As an anti-colonial revolt Mau Mau had two main aims that are reflected in the name the forest fighters gave to their armed forces: 'Land Freedom Army'. This label places Mau Mau somewhat outside the mainstream of the nationalist movements that have flourished elsewhere in the Third World since 1945. National Liberation Front in Algeria, National Liberation Front in Vietnam, Nationalist Party in Indonesia, National Liberation Front in Mozambique, Movement for the Liberation of Angola, all these labels emphasize one single aim: political freedom. Mau Mau, on the contrary, also emphasized the free access to land as a major goal of the revolt, a goal as important as political freedom. This is borne out by many documents, such as the collection of Mau Mau Patriotic Songs edited by Maina wa Kinyatti (1980). The most striking element in these songs is the obsession with the 'stolen lands' question. This is especially true of the first part of Kinyatti's anthology which contains pre-Emergency 'mobilization songs': 28 out of a total of 42 songs are partly or entirely devoted to the land question, i.e. exactly two thirds of them, while the theme of national liberation comes out second only. The same remark holds for G.G. Gikoyo's memoirs. If we are to believe this author, oath administrators, in all the ceremonies in which he took part, exclusively stressed the redemption of the stolen lands as the aim of Mau Mau and did not even mention the goal of national freedom (Cf. Gikoyo 1979: 34-35, and 50), although Gikoyo himself, in an Appendix on Mau Mau's political platform (pp. 320-322), does refer to political independence. Within the context of the colonial history of Kenya and more particularly the specific way in which British colonization affected the Kikuyu, this emphasis on the land question is not surprising. It must also be noted that

Gikoyo, and Kinyatti's mobilization songs, are probably especially representative of the rank-and-file members of Mau Mau. The most sophisticated leaders of the movement, and especially the pre-Emergency Central Committee members, seem to have been more preoccupied with freedom. Mutonyi claims, for example, that:

> 'Our main objective was to demonstrate by action that Africans were fed-up with European imperialism. We had noted that the demands made firstly by K.C.A. and later K.A.U. as constitutional political organizations had fallen on deaf imperialist ears (...). We wanted to force the issue of independence (within three years!)' (Mutonyi s.d.: 99-101).

In his manuscript the references to the land question are rare, and the same holds true for Kaggia's memoirs (1975). On the grass-roots level, however, the land question seems to have been all-important, and this leads us to an interesting question. As has been noted by J.R. Sheffield (1973: 9), only seven percent of Kenya's land was alienated to European settlers. Even when taking into account that these seven percent included over one-fifth of all available agricultural land with high potentialities for successful cultivation, this seems a relatively minor portion, considering that 49 per cent and 87 per cent respectively were taken by European settlers in Rhodesia and South Africa. Yet, as far as I know, the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya became much more focused on the 'stolen lands' aspect of colonial rule than has been the case in Zimbabwe or South Africa. It would be an interesting theme for comparative research to find out why this has been so. Unfortunately, my own knowledge of Zimbabwean and South African political developments is limited and I am unable to provide any clues that might lead to a satisfactory answer to the above question. The only thing that can be said is that for the Kikuyu, even in pre-colonial times, the question of land tenure has always been paramount, as it was, in Kenyatta's words, 'the key to the people's life' (Kenyatta 1953: XXI; see also p. 21). It is possible that most Zimbabwean and South African ethnic groups have a less direct and sacred bond with their land and that this is one of the reasons why the land question never took on the same proportions as it did in Kenya.

Coming now to the more limited problem of Mau Mau land claims, we have to be aware that it is not sufficient to establish that Mau Mau wanted land. More specific questions have to be answered that can be summed up in the following line: who wanted which land, for

whom, and for what purposes?

Let us first of all consider the question which land Mau Mau members wanted to redeem. One fact clearly emerges from the body of existing evidence: Mau Mau never fought to get back only those lands that were really lost by the Kikuyu to Europeans in the beginning of the 20th century; it set a much wider aim, although this wider aim was never specified in detail. As was mentioned by Tignor:

> 'The major alienations in Kikuyuland occurred between 1903 and 1907 and were focused on the southern part of the Kikuyu area (Kiambu district) (...). According to the report of the Kenya Land Commission (1934) the total amount of unequivocal Kikuyuland encroached upon by Europeans was 125 square miles (...). Of this total over 93 square miles were in Kiambu district' (Tignor 1976: 26-27).

Even if one considers that the exact amount of lost land has probably been underestimated by the 1934 Commission, it is nevertheless quite certain that Kiambu lost about six-sevenths of the land unjustly alienated from the Kikuyu. If, therefore, Mau Mau had merely aimed at recovering the land really lost, agitation and fighting would have remained largely circumscribed to Kiambu District or at least taken a more desperate character there. As we have seen, this has not been the case. Kiambu rather lagged behind in Mau Mau participation, especially during the Emergency, and this is still one of the main Mau Mau enigmas to be solved (Cf. Chapter Six). We have therefore to admit that Mau Mau had wider aims and that, curiously enough, the only Mau Mau sections that really fought for land actually lost were the marginal Maasaï gangs led by Ole Kisio and Ole Ngapien, whose initial purpose seems to have been the restitution of the former Maasaï lands in Laikipia (Corfield 1960: 209).

As for the Kikuyu Mau Mau following, it is quite clear that for them the 'stolen lands' covered all European-owned land in Kenya, and more particularly the Rift Valley areas, although these had never been Kikuyu land, but had belonged to pastoral tribes such as the Maasaï, the Nandi and the Kipsigis. An interesting question in this context is whether these facts were still known at the time of the Emergency or whether Leakey's claim is true that, as a result of deliberate lies by Kikuyu political leaders, 'by 1950 there were thousands of the younger generation of Kikuyu who had come to believe - absolutely - that the greater parts of the "White Highlands" (...) had formerly

been Kikuyu land' (Leakey 1954: 23). It seems indeed exact that at least some Kikuyu considerably exaggerated the amount of land alienated. Wachanga claims for example in his memoirs that: 'In Kiambu District the whites robbed three-fourths of the land, and in Murang'a and Nyeri they took one-fourth of the land' (Wachanga 1975: XXVII).

Although Wachanga does not specify whether or not he includes parts of the Rift Valley in these stolen lands, this quote shows that his knowledge of the real facts was rather limited. Other sources are less clear, however. If one reads G. Muriuki's A History of the Kikuyu carefully, one gets the firm impression that no Kikuyu seriously believed that all the White Highlands had once been Kikuyuland; Muriuki's 1966 informants, in fact, seemed to know quite well where the real boundaries of pre-colonial Kikuyuland were.

In fact, the whole land question was much more subtle and complex, and was not confined to the mere question of who had owned what land when. In order to understand Mau Mau claims to the White Highlands, one has first of all to keep in mind 'the "divine right" of every African to a piece of land, firmly held by all Kikuyu' (Corfield 1960: 11). This right had been a reality before British colonization, but the settler invasion had changed all this and had affected the Kikuyu more particularly, because:

> 'Unlike nearly all other tribal groups, who had enough land to cushion the impact of a foreign civilization, the Kikuyu from the outset had little surplus or marginal land to bring into use in adjusting to the new order' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 6-7).

Maps of land distribution in colonial Kenya show us indeed that, within a few years after the beginning of colonial rule, the Kikuyu areas were suddenly surrounded by European-owned farms and ranching-land, except in those areas where altitude rendered agricultural activities inoperative. It is at this point that another Kikuyu line of reasoning, largely subconscious but nevertheless effective, creeps in.

> 'The Kikuyu', says Corfield, 'at first attempted to base their claims to most of the White Highlands on spurious evidence of prior occupation. There is perhaps a loose but illogical reasoning behind this claim. When in the old days a family, by reason of increase, wanted some land, it just went and cleared a piece of virgin land. If, therefore, by some miracle of fate their

> population, in spite of famine and disease, had increased, and by another miracle of fate their enemies had disappeared from the scene, the surplus population would, as a matter of course, have expanded into the fringe areas of the White Highlands. Ergo the White Highlands were potentially a part of Kikuyu country' (Corfield 1960: 11-12).

Although Corfield's wording of the problem can be disputed, he refers indeed to real facts. For some centuries before the coming of the Europeans, Kikuyu society had been an expanding system, and this slow but steady geographical expansion had even been one of the constant and most striking features of Kikuyu history, a feature that had helped to solve many internal Kikuyu problems (Cf. Neckebrouck 1978: 331, and Buijtenhuijs 1971a: 45-46). Therefore, the encounter between the Kikuyu and the European settlers was in a way a clash between two 'imperialisms', with British capitalist imperialism the most powerful. However, Kikuyu 'imperialism' had not laid down arms altogether after the land alienations of the first decades of the 20th century. On the contrary, through the squatter system, the Kikuyu participated in the colonization of the Rift Valley, and if they did not contribute much capital to the enterprise, they undoubtedly took charge of the quasi-totality of the labour investment. Therefore, they surely had some 'legitimate' claims to Rift Valley land.

At this point, we have to change our perspective slightly. We have seen how the original Central Province Kikuyu, as an expanding social system and as a competitory imperialism, came to consider the Rift Valley areas as part of the 'stolen lands' problem without regard to previous occupation rights. What about the squatter sections of the Kikuyu people? They were even more inclined to consider themselves as the rightful 'owners' of the White Highlands.

> '(...) given the vast extent of many European estates', says R.L. Tignor, '(...) Kikuyu squatters did not regard themselves as employees or labourers but rather as colonists who had claimed new land for their mbaris. To Kikuyu emigrants, the Rift Valley was a new frontier, much as Kiambu had been a nineteenth-century frontier. When Europeans began to fill up this area in the 1920s and 1930s and sought to limit Kikuyu emigration and even turn people off estates, their action was met with disbelief, resistance and bitterness. The Kikuyu who were forced to leave felt much the same as those Kiambu Kikuyu who had been dispossessed before World War I' (Tignor 1976: 107).

This has undoubtedly been at the background of much of the squatter agitation in the White Highlands; at the grass-roots level, at least,

it has probably been the main driving factor, as was suggested by Furedi:

> 'The squatter movement which eventually came to constitute an important component of the Mau Mau revolt was not interested in the demands for constitutional reform and the nationalism of KAU. As one of the local leaders of the squatters put it: "If the colonial government would have been smart enough to give us land we would have never thought of fighting"' (Furedi 1974b: 498).

Furedi's statement is confirmed by T.M.J. Kanogo:

> 'All my informants made it clear that the battle was for land. The paradox is that they all cited the White Highlands when asked what land they were fighting for' (Kanogo 1977: 249).

Kanogo then unfolds a very interesting line of argument that merits quotation at some length:

> 'The Kikuyu squatters' participation in Mau Mau amidst apparent apathy amongst the other migrant labour groups in the White Highlands is paradoxical. Given that the recovery of "lost land" has been portrayed as one of the major reasons that led to the outbreak of Mau Mau, one is left to wonder why the tribes which lost more land than the Kikuyu did not in a like manner put up a resistance during Mau Mau (...).
> Research in the Nakuru District has revealed a 'custodian' approach amongst the Kikuyu squatters in that they seemed to have felt a corporate need to redeem the lost lands of Kenya - regardless of whom they originally belonged to. Such an outlook can be accorded a two-fold interpretation. One is that the political consciousness amongst the Kikuyu was well ahead of the others, hence the Kenyan as opposed the localized outlook (...). (But), one cannot overlook the second interpretation which is even more plausible. Reference to Kikuyu migrations (or infiltration as the colonial government called it) into lands belonging to other tribal groups are numerous in the colonial records. The Maasaï, Embu, and Abagusii are amongst the many tribes which constantly appealed to the colonial authorities in relation to the Kikuyu "menace" (...). The issue of infiltration has been belaboured in an attempt to portray one aspect of Mau Mau that few scholars have given thought to - that possibly inherent in Mau Mau was an expansionist motive exemplified by earlier Kikuyu infiltration and later by the squatter participation in Mau Mau, with the ultimate aim of occupying the White Highlands' (Kanogo 1977: 249-251).

Kanogo is undoubtedly right in her second interpretation. The Kikuyu squatters' 'custodian' approach to Rift Valley land certainly did not flow forth from an all-Kenya perspective; in my opinion, it is even doubtful whether the outlook of the majority of the squatters was pan-Kikuyu. Karari Njama, in fact, explicitly indicates that, somewhere in the middle of 1954, a conflict arose within the Mau Mau Aberdare Armies, opposing Dedan Kimathi and the Rift Valley leader General Kimbo.

> '(...) we learned that Kimbo regarded himself as the representative of the Rift Valley and all the fighters who had made Rift Valley their home before repatriation (...). In his speech, Kimbo referred to WE (Rift Valley people both in the forest and in the reserve) and YOU (the Central Province people). He claimed that the Rift Valley people had lost all their property and were helpless. In his comparison he said that HIS people contributed more for land and freedom than the Central Province' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 374).

A few months later, in a private conversation, Kimbo is again alleged to have claimed that:

> 'Mburu Ngebo Army people were the owners of Rift Valley and that they wouldn't like to see a person from the Central Province becoming their master who would divide unto them their lands' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 402).

Kimbo's aims seem to have been very narrow and particularistic, as he even refused to consider the sharing of the White Highlands with his fellow Kikuyu from Central Province. The latter, in their turn, mostly conceived the problem of the 'stolen lands' as a purely tribal, Kikuyu problem. Mau Mau hymns and prayers exclusively refer to the lands given by Ngai to Gikuyu and Mumbi, as in the following examples:

> 'Oh God, the most powerful! (...). We have raised our hands to show you that the soil you gave our forefathers is now being used by strangers who have robbed us of our lands, our gift and inheritance (...). We believe that you did not create us so that we might become servants of other people in the lands you blessed to our Father Gikuyu and Mumbi' (Mau Mau prayer quoted in Barnett and Njama 1966: 162).

> 'Warriors of Kikuyu awake,
> Ye who cannot see that the old man grows older.
> If you sleep the foreigners will seize our wealth
> And then what will the children of Mumbi feed on?'
> (Mau Mau song quoted by Kariuki 1964: 85).

Only very exceptionally are non-Kikuyu groups mentioned in Mau Mau texts relating to the land question. One of these is a speech by Dedan Kimathi, at a meeting in August 1953, in which he praised the Mau Mau fighters 'who are ready to die so that all the Kenya people, irrespective of their tribe or their help, may get freedom and land to cultivate' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 247). If Njama quotes Kimathi correctly, this is one of the few places where a forest fighter seems to have given some thought to land hunger amongst other ethnic groups. J.M. Kariuki also quotes some Mau Mau songs about the land or 'the

country' belonging to the Black people and not only to the Kikuyu (Kariuki 1964: 154 and 177-179), but the most outspoken example is a song partly written by himself. As he had completed his secondary education and was detained as a passive wing member, not a forest fighter, I am afraid he is not quite representative of Mau Mau thinking with regard to the 'stolen lands' question. Generally speaking, the Mau Mau fighters and their supporters aimed at conquering the White Highlands for their own kind, not for others. In this context, Kikuyu 'imperialism' never became Kenya African imperialism.

This even lasted until after the Emergency. As I have shown elsewhere (Buijtenhuijs 1973: 136-138), the 'battle for the Rift Valley' was still going on in the early 1970s, several ethnic groups, amongst whom more particularly the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin, trying to outbid each other in order to buy as much land as possible in the now Black Highlands. Among the Kikuyu buyers I even found a few groups of ex-Mau Mau fighters who tried to implement the old Mau Mau aim of recovering the 'stolen lands' by peaceful means, and who behaved in much the same manner as the Kikuyu have always done during their history of tribal expansion and creeping 'imperialism'.

b. Freedom

If Mau Mau was a tribal movement insofar as it aimed at the conquest of the White Highlands for the Kikuyu, this was not the case with the second aim of the movement: freedom. Although the armed revolt was fought almost entirely by the Kikuyu, the Embu and the Meru, most of the freedom fighters were aware that their struggle was not limited to the cause of their own people. No Mau Mau text mentioned the liberation of the Kikuyu or hinted at the foundation of an independent Kikuyu state as the ultimate aim of the movement. On the contrary, all Mau Mau documents speak of African freedom, a new Kenya, or even Pan-Africanism. Many examples can be quoted to demonstrate this, such as, for example, the comments of Karari Njama regarding the lack of commitment to the armed struggle in Kiambu District:

> 'Why should I keep myself worried about Kiambu District while there are many other districts which don't bother themselves with the Kenya freedom but who would be the first to enjoy that freedom? "Never mind", I said to myself, "Jesus Christ died

> alone to save the world's people from sins - He freed all the people from the sins' slavery by his blood. Our blood, we who have volunteered, will free Kenya from colonial slavery and exploitation" (Barnett and Njama 1966: 298).

In these lines the political future of Kenya as a whole is consciously assumed as the ultimate Mau Mau aim. Of course, there have been exceptions and the words of the main Mau Mau leaders about freedom for the whole of Kenya were not always listened to by the rank-and-file, especially during the later phases of the Emergency when central command lines had been destroyed by Security Forces' operations. M. Mathu, for example, relates a significant event that happened in September 1954 after a successful Mau Mau raid on a prison at Embakasi during which many prisoners were set free:

> 'Before we left, one of the prisoners who had stayed with us now asked if he might join the group. A few of us thought it was all right, but Kariuki rejected the idea because the man was a Luo. "This is a Kikuyu struggle", he said, as most of the others nodded their heads in approval, "and we don't want any Luo to have claims on us after the victory is won." I felt this was a very narrow view. It was an "African" as well as a "Kikuyu" struggle we were engaged in; why weaken ourselves by rejecting the help of other tribes?' (Mathu 1974: 52).

Kariuki's decision went counter to Mau Mau central command directives and is not representative of the Movement's ideology at the higher levels. We have seen already that the pre-Emergency Central Committee had tried to devise suitable 'Mau Mau' oaths for other tribes and had not meant the Kikuyu to arise all alone in armed revolt. During the Emergency, the help of other ethnic groups would have been highly appreciated by Kimathi and the other forest generals. At several times during forest meetings these leaders did discuss the possibilities of sending emissaries to other ethnic groups such as the Kamba and the Maasaï in order to mobilize their warriors (Cf. Barnett and Njama 1966: 255). The almost exclusive Kikuyu recruitment of the Mau Mau armed forces certainly did not reflect the aims of the leaders of the movement, but was forced upon them by the circumstances and more particularly by the fact that the Emergency was declared too early, when the plans to spread Mau Mau to other tribes had not yet been implemented.

We are now in a position to sum up our conclusions on Mau Mau ideology. In my opinion, nobody did this more aptly than D.L. Barnett who concluded his analysis in the following words:

> 'My own investigation of Mau Mau ideology (...) has shown it to be a rather complex phenomenon containing at least four major aspects or components; namely, secular, moral-religious, African national and Kikuyu tribal. The weighting or importance attached to these several aspects (...) changed over time and varied from group to group (...).
> The secular aspect of Mau Mau ideology (...) had both an African national dimension, centering largely around the aim and concept of "freedom", and a tribal dimension framed in specific Kikuyu claims to alienated land (...).
> The non-secular or sacred aspect of Mau Mau ideology was framed largely in terms of moral-religious precepts, according to which the secular aims of the revolution were seen as sanctioned and legitimized by a higher, supernatural power (...).
> Together with their incorporated secular aims, these moral-religious precepts and beliefs (...) performed an important unifying or integratory function (...). To the extent, however, that this was achieved through the use of specifically Kikuyu symbols, persons of non-Kikuyu tribal affiliation tended to be excluded, if not alienated, from the revolutionary movement' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 199-201).

This is a skilful and well-balanced abstract of Mau Mau ideology, and we could have left the matter here were it not that even to-day not all scholars seem to be convinced by Barnett's analysis. In Kenya, more particularly, heated debates are still continuing on the question whether Mau Mau was a tribal or a nationalist movement, and we have to consider these debates before concluding this chapter. One of the central figures in these discussions is B.A. Ogot who took up the question in 1977 and formulated his point of view in the following words:

> 'Was Mau Mau the culmination of nationalist struggle in Kenya? This is another question which is often discussed in emotional terms, and any attempt to inject rigour into the analysis is usually condemned as "revisionist" (...).
> To equate Mau Mau with Kenya nationalism is not only confusing but unfair to both movements. The general nationalist movement in Kenya had followed the general pattern found in many Third World countries. Its ideology was liberal, rational and nationalistic. It operated within the colonial economic system.
> Tamarkin adopts the useful distinction (...) between KCA, KAU and Mau Mau. According to this distinction, Mau Mau includes only groups and leaders who had advocated the employment of organized violence in the pursuit of their political, anti-colonial cause (...). True, the political aims of KCA, KAU and Mau Mau were the same - all wanted land and independence. But Kaggia is perhaps right in insisting that these were three distinct organizations which should be studied separately (...).
> If we accept this thesis, then it follows that Mau Mau was more of a short-lived break in the peaceful development of nation-

> alism in Kenya (...). Its incipient radical ideology was rejected by the nationalists in both KANU and KADU who continued from where KAU had left off (...). The Mau Mau ideology (...) was already rejected by 1960 by the nationalist forces. How can we then regard Mau Mau as the pivot of Kenya nationalism?' (Ogot 1977a: 169-172).

And in another article, also published in 1977, Ogot concludes that:

> 'From our brief study of Mau Mau hymns, it is evident that, because of their exclusiveness, they cannot be regarded as the national freedom songs which every Kenyan youth can sing with pride and conviction' (Ogot 1977b: 286).

Several arguments can be opposed to Ogot's views. As for his analysis of Mau Mau hymns, I would argue, as I have done before, that Mau Mau as a cultural renewal movement was tribal rather than nationalist, but that the fact that Mau Mau was not entirely a nationalist movement does not automatically imply that it was not nationalist at all. Mau Mau was an ambiguous and many-sided phenomenon that cannot be dealt with in either/or terms as we shall see later. Ogot's line of argument implies, moreover, that African nationalism has to be culturally rootless, because with a few exceptions all African cultures were 'tribal' and do not fall in with the current national boundaries of the majority of the African states. Should the independent African states throw overboard all their cultural traditions in order to become nations, or is it possible to maintain part of its rich cultural heritage by juxtaposing and blending the different ethnic cultures that flourished within their national boundaries? As we have seen, this was what the 'national' Mau Mau leaders aimed at when they proposed to devise oaths and ceremonies rooted in the cultural traditions of all the ethnic groups that now make up Kenya.

A second point is that it is not enough for both KANU and KADU to have rejected Mau Mau's radicalism, to put the movement automatically outside the bounds of nationalism. Ogot's argument suggests that Third World nationalism is by definition peaceful, liberal, rational and operating within the colonial economic system. To my knowledge, this has never been demonstrated beyond doubt. Mau Mau may be a nuisance for the leading Kenyan nationalists of to-day, who indeed are peaceful, liberal and rational and who operate within the neo-colonial economic system, but it is not enough simply to reject it because of this.

Neither Kenyatta and his associates, nor arap Moi, have an exclusive monopoly on Kenyan nationalism per se, and all we are allowed to say is that Mau Mau has been pushed outside the mainstream of Kenyan nationalism by historical circumstances. This does not exclude the possibility that it represents another brand of nationalism, as has been argued by Kinyatti (1977: 304) and Gordon (1977: 344). We should not forget that one of the reasons why Mau Mau was able to develop at all was precisely that the peaceful and liberal branches of Kenyan nationalism had failed to attain their objectives. As Spencer puts it:

> 'During the first four years of its existence (...) KAU was generally a failure. It stirred up expectations it could not fulfil and made promises it could not keep. This failure is crucially important in the party's history, for it led to a movement within and around KAU that resulted in the explosion of "Mau Mau"' (Spencer 1977: 157).

This national, political dimension of Mau Mau should always be kept in mind when assessing the movement's tribal or national character. Moreover, Mau Mau, although military defeated, helped the more moderate brand of Kenyan nationalism back into the saddle:

> 'The Mau Mau rebellion', says R.C. Perkins, 'provoked political change in Kenya. Late in March 1953 James Griffith, the colonial secretary of the former Labour government, suggested sending a parliamentary delegation to examine the Kenya situation. Griffith's proposal led to a visit to Kenya by a bipartisan delegation during January 1954' (Perkins 1968: 15).

This delegation, in its report, suggested political changes and a re-organisation of the government. Oliver Lyttleton, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, thereafter introduced the constitution bearing his name, a constitution that was clearly 'a product of the emergency' (Perkins 1968: 15). Mau Mau, then, by its very existence, blew up the obstacles on the road of political, constitutional progress and allowed political moderates such as Mboya, and later Kenyatta again, to win back the initiative they had lost in the pre-Emergency days. Or, in the words of D.F. Gordon:

> 'For African nationalism, Mau Mau was a battle lost but at a cost so high to the opposition, that ultimate victory was more easily won. In the process, however, nationalism itself was transformed. With the shift in the focus of struggle from the forests (...) into the halls of Legislative Council in Nairobi, a different style, and substance, of nationalism became dominant' (Gordon 1977: 344. My italics).

A third argument can be opposed to Ogot's views. One of his main errors, in my opinion, is that he, and many others with him, systematically opposes tribalist to nationalist, as if these two terms were always and under all circumstances mutually exclusive. Mau Mau was undoubtedly a tribal movement in many respects, but as a tribal movement it was not hostile to other ethnic groups in Kenya. It was rather a case of what I have called tribalism serving the nation. When Dedan Kimathi, for example, proposed to the Aberdare forest fighters to found a 'Kenya Young Stars Association' of which they would all become members, he introduced his idea by saying that one day Jesus had spoken to his disciples in the following way:

> '"You are the Light of the world (...). Let your light shine unto all". "We get light from the sun, moon and stars", said Kimathi. "Now, since the government has taken away our sun, Jomo Kenyatta, and the moon, all the other political leaders - and even all the big stars have been arrested - only the young stars are left shining over the country (...). As Jesus has told his disciples, I tell you. You are the KENYA YOUNG STARS; keep on shining till the Sun and the Moon are released' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 307-308).

It is clear then that the forest generals did not consider themselves as the real political leaders of the country and that their revolt was in a way a revolt by proxy, at least in their own eyes. Although they were later rejected by the national KANU leaders, they did not reject these leaders during the Emergency days but claimed to act in their name, i.e. in the name of genuine nationalists, according to Ogot. That this was not just false modesty and idle words is shown by the answer given by General Kareba of the Mount Kenya Army to the Kenya Government's surrender offer in early 1954:

> 'Our demands are Independence and land (...) and if the Government wishes for peace, our leaders, now in detention, must be released. They are the politicians and can argue for our national Independence. If this is done, the Forest Fighters will stop the war' (Itote 1967: 189. My italics).

A similar answer came from Dedan Kimathi and the Aberdare groups:

> 'Finally, we would like to meet Mr. Jomo Kenyatta or his representative (...), Mr. Chief Koinange, Mr. James Beauttah, Mr. E.W. Mathu, M.L.C., Mr. W.W. Awaori, M.L.C., and Mr. W. Odede, M.L.C.' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 352).

It should be noted that the last two leaders were not even Kikuyu politicians, but KAU leaders from Western Kenya which gives the Mau Mau

conditions for peace-talks an even more nationalist flavour. Again, when K.H. Wachanga, in March 1955, actually started negotiations with Government delegates, this with the benediction of Stanley Mathenge but against Kimathi's orders, he tried on several occasions to associate some of the detained political leaders with the talks. Apart from some of the ex-Forty Group leaders, he too mentioned Eliud Mathu and W.W.W. Awori (Wachanga 1975: 111), although Mau Mau leaders had agreed beforehand that no one was to mention the name of Jomo Kenyatta for 'we did not want the government to know whether or not he was connected with Mau Mau' (Wachanga 1975: 108). (1)

In the same vein, when the Aberdare forest leaders decided, in late 1953, to found the Kenya Parliament as a representative body for the whole of Kenya, some of them went out of their way to explain that this was only a temporary solution. Wachanga, for example, told the forest fighters present at the meeting that 'the Parliament we had just formed was only for the duration of our armed struggle. I said that a civil Kenya Parliament would be formed after uhuru. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and other political leaders then in detention would lead it' (Wachanga 1975: 41-42). Karari Njama voiced his opinion in about the same terms: 'I think it is high time we elected our Kenya Parliament members and let them run the country until the big stars, the moon and the sun will take over the rule' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 326). Other examples of this self-effacing attitude of the forest leaders are available (Cf. Wachanga 1975: 29-30; and 170), although I have to admit that not all the evidence dovetails and that there are a few contradictory indications in the literature. We have seen already that pre-Emergency Central Committee members such as Kubai, Kaggia and Mutonyi on several occasions clashed with Kenyatta and his Kiambu associates and that Kenyatta sometimes even felt himself menaced by them. In the same way, Kimathi seems to have made the following remark during one of the forest conferences:

> 'Let us make this very clear. If one of the KAU leaders or anybody else gets in our way, we will cut him down just the same as we have done to those who stood in our way' (Kinyatti 1977: 296).

This to show that Mau Mau sometimes pretended to be a separate political force, independent of the national KAU leaders. In spite of this, I think that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that

the Mau Mau movement, although largely a Kikuyu movement by recruitment and in terms of its symbols and ceremonies, wanted to serve a group of political leaders - some of them Kikuyu and others not - about whose national outlook there can be no doubt. In my opinion, this proves sufficiently that the Mau Mau fighters did not think exclusively in tribalist terms, and for this reason I am convinced that the question of whether Mau Mau was a tribal or a nationalist movement is a faulty one. Mau Mau was both.

An interesting point is that Mau Mau displayed a strikingly similar parallel with the history of post-World War II Madagascar, when the Island was troubled by an armed insurrection initiated in 1947. As in Kenya in the case of Mau Mau, the Malagasy insurrection had been planned and prepared by a network of secret societies acting independently of the moderate nationalist party (the Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache, three of whose leaders were members of the French National Assembly) but at the same time infiltrating its local branches, just as Mau Mau did in Nairobi and in Kikuyuland. When the fighting broke out, the colonial authorities acted in the same way as their Kenyan counterparts were to do in 1952: they arrested the moderate M.D.R.M. parlementarians as the secret planners of the revolt although these, just as Kenyatta, emphatically denied any connection with it. In fact, the secret societies had only used the party, or rather some of its branches, as a cover, without the approval or even the knowledge of its leaders. The insurgents, however, although disavowed by the moderate nationalist leaders, went on claiming to act in their names:

> 'Quant aux parlementaires', says J. Tronchon, 'leur nom est sur les lèvres de tous les insurgés. Les premiers avions de forces françaises qui survolent la zone d'insurrection sont acceuillis en libérateurs: on croit en effet qu'ils transportent les députés. Aux propositions de déposer les armes qui leur viennent des autorités françaises, les insurgés répondent que seuls les députés peuvent décider de la poursuite ou de la cessation des hostilités (...). Beaucoup de conjurés ont été convaincus d'obéir à des ordres de révolte émanant des députés' (Tronchon 1974: 83).

In order to demonstrate this thesis Tronchon quotes a document the insurgents dispatched to the colonial administration:

> 'Lorsque vous vous sentirez battus, et que vous désirerez nous faire votre soumission, que ce soit avec nos députés que vous

> vous expliquiez. Car si ce sont nos députés qui nous disent clairement que la guerre est finie, nous le croirons' (Tronchon 1974: 155).

The similarities with the behaviour of the Mau Mau generals during the surrender talks are striking indeed: the same spirit of a revolt by proxy that we have observed in Mau Mau seems to have pervaded the mentality and the activities of the 1947 Malagasy insurgents. I wonder whether there are other examples of such ambiguous and unilateral relationships between grass-roots insurgents and more sophisticated and moderate political leaders elsewhere in history, either in Africa south of the Sahara or in other continents.

c. Mau Mau: Progressive or Reactionary?

When dealing with the agrarian dimension of Mau Mau, I set out to answer the following questions: who wanted which land, for whom, and for what purposes? I have supplied some tentative answers to the first part of this question, but the last part still remains unanswered. It is to this subject that we will turn now, taking as our starting point a remark by E. Wolf to the effect that anthropologists will have to ask:

> '(how) much the action of a peasantry in rebellion and revolution is prompted by traditional patterns and to what extent a peasant revolution produces not only an overturning of political power holders but an overturning in the patterns of the peasantry itself' (Wolf 1973: XVII).

It is quite evident from all Mau Mau documents that the movement did not intend to initiate the second overturning mentioned by Wolf. As D. Kaufmann puts it:

> 'Mau Mau's goal - the regaining of land -does not involve a change in value in the society because the land would still be owned by individuals' (Kaufmann 1977: 176).

The rural people who made up the majority of the Mau Mau fighters, in fact, did not desire the abolition of private property; they wanted land for themselves and for their fellow Kikuyu, land to be owned and cultivated privately. In no Mau Mau document do we find references to collectivistic or even cooperative agriculture. To this extent, the Mau Mau adherents belong to the 'little tradition' and have nothing to do with any revolutionary socialist tradition.

This remark not only holds for the agrarian dimension of Mau Mau but can also be applied to other aspects of the movement's ideology. This becomes especially evident when we study the urban dimension of Mau Mau. As we have seen before, urbanites, especially Nairobi dwellers, played an important role in the movement before and during the Emergency, more than I was able to discern in 1971. Yet, and this is one of the reasons why I initially underestimated the urban component of the revolt, Mau Mau has no urban, 'proletarian' or trade-union ideology.

It is indeed a striking fact that trade-union commitment to the movement is not reflected in any Mau Mau document such as hymns, songs and prayers, while the agrarian (i.e. the 'stolen lands') dimension of the movement is evident in the overwhelming majority of these documents and the nationalist dimension in many of them. The main reason for this is that between 1947 and 1952, the main thrust of African labour organizing moved from class-conscious interracial activity to nationalist rebellion (Stichter 1978: 155). African labour union leaders like Kubai, says Stichter:

> '(...) were willing at critical points to subordinate the goal of workers improvement qua workers to the nationalistic goal of political independence under the rule of the African middle class. Improvement for workers seemed impossible until colonial rule was ended; thus, ending it tended to become the primary goal. The shift of emphasis becomes apparent when for example Fred Kubai (...) decided "to bring the force of the African workers into KAU" (...). The decision implied a wider consciousness of African grievances under colonial rule, rather than simply class ones' (Stichter 1978: 165).

Although I am not quite sure whether the decision to switch from action along class-struggle lines to nationalist rebellion was a conscious one, as Stichter suggests, I entirely agree with her that proletarian class-consciousness was conspiciously absent in Mau Mau thinking and ideology. No Mau Mau document, for example, ever formulated specific workers' demands such as higher wages, better housing in urban areas, social security or unemployment regulations. On the contrary, all these documents are exclusively concerned with questions relating to land and national independence. The same can be said with regard to the earlier Forty Group, all whose actions were confined to the rural areas. I therefore entirely disagree with some Kenyan historians and creative writers who insidiously try not only to emphasize the nationalistic dimension of Mau Mau, in which they are right, but

also present the movement as 'part of the world-wide anti-colonial onslaught' (Kinyatti 1977: 287). Kinyatti, who is the leading exponent of this way of interpreting Mau Mau, claims for example that:

> 'The Movement pointed out clearly to the Kenyan patriots the road of the armed struggle, stirring up a vigourous nationalist upsurge throughout the country in which the workers and peasants became an independent leading political force. In essence, this historic event marked a fundamental turning point in the history of the Kenyan anti-imperialistic resistance. It saw the death of KAU as a petty-bourgeois political force, combined with the birth of a new leadership of workers and peasants based in the countryside' (Kinyatti 1977: 294).

Compared to Kenyatta's KAU, therefore, Mau Mau is alleged to be a 'still higher stage of our people's struggle' (Kinyatti 1977: 294). In their play The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, which they present as 'an imaginative recreation and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasants and workers in their refusal to break under sixty years of colonial torture and ruthless oppression by the British ruling classes', Ngugi wa Thiong'o and M.G. Mugo (1976: VIII) follow the same line of argument. A few lines of their play, said by Kimathi when in prison, clearly reflect this 'leftist' interpretation of Mau Mau:

> 'With unity, discipline
> Along correct lines
> People's lines
> With unity and discipline
> In our total commitment to
> The liberation of us
> Who sweat and labour
> We can move mountains' (Ngugi and Mugo 1976: 69).

In this play, Kimathi is painted as a kind of Kenyan Mao Tse Tung, with a 'correct', i.e. implicitly Marxist, interpretation of history, and acting along class-struggle lines. In my opinion, this is a distortion of the historical facts. Kimathi never talked about 'workers' or 'people's lines' and his analysis of history and Kenyan society was far removed from any brand of Marxism. Mau Mau undoubtedly wanted to be a nationalist movement, but it never was or pretended to be an anti-imperialist workers' and peasants' war in the Chinese or Vietnamese sense. (2) As I have said, it would be vain to search for leftist or proletarian leanings in Mau Mau documents, a fact that is moreover borne out by Kinyatti's own anthology of Mau Mau Patriotic Songs (Kinyatti 1980)

which clearly reflects Mau Mau's obsession with the 'stolen lands' and subsequently with national independence, but does not contain any song carrying workers' grievances and only one specimen that has anything to do with trade-unionism.

I therefore feel no difficulty in dismissing Kinyatti's interpretation of Mau Mau as a masterly piece of wishful thinking; yet I have to admit that his collection of Mau Mau songs poses a more general problem to which some thought should be given. Until very recently, the only English version of most of the known Mau Mau songs was the translation by L.S.B. Leakey (1954) (who, by the way, characterized them as 'hymns' and not as patriotic songs, a significant difference in itself). I have not made a thorough and exhaustive comparative study of Leakey's and Kinyatti's versions, but it is evident that they differ considerably, as for example in the following case:

> 'The Book of the Kikuyu is Holy, it helps me to be good, it is my guiding principle when I go to join the Kikuyu.
> The Book is Kenyatta, it is he who leads me, it is he who saved me by his blood' (Leakey 1954: 69).

> 'The book of Gikuyu is holy
> It helps me to be honest
> It is my political guide
> When I join the people's army.
> The book is 'Mau Mau'
> It shows me the way
> To fight for the liberation of my country
> And free it from British slavery' (Kinyatti 1980:43).

I am ready to admit that different versions of the same song may be current in Kenya, but I am afraid that this does not entirely explain the differences in the example quoted above. It is a well-known fact that Leakey's translations of Mau Mau hymns were vigourously denounced as biased and 'subjective' by the defendants and defence council during the Kenyatta trial at Kapenguria (Leigh 1954: 97), and I certainly have my own doubts on this point. Leakey, although undoubtedly a fluent Kikuyu-speaker, was far too much a party in the conflict, a 'concerned' scholar with a preconceived idea of Mau Mau which he wished to validate at all costs. The same is probably true for Kinyatti, although I have no proof for this, except for the fact that his versions of Mau Mau songs run counter to current interpretations of the deeper meaning of Mau Mau. In my opinion, Kikuyu-speaking scholars have an urgent task here and should set out to establish the exact meaning of the Mau Mau

songs, for if Kinyatti's translations are correct and not biased by the use of 'leftist' terms, many established ideas about Mau Mau would have to be reconsidered.

For the time being, I maintain my opinion that Mau Mau had no proletarian or 'leftist' ideology and that this is one of the main differences between the Kenyan anti-colonial revolt and the almost contemporary uprising in Cameroun that was initiated in 1955. As in Kenya, urban trade unions played an important role in stirring up the troubles in Cameroun and they represented the most radical wing of the nationalist movement (Joseph 1977: 55). But, although the U.P.C. (Union des Populations du Cameroun), the political organization that was to take the lead in the revolt, was, like KAU, a nationalist movement with the overriding aim to encompass the totality of the colonized society of Cameroun (Joseph 1977: 218), trade-union influences in U.P.C. ideology remained much more outspoken than was the case with KAU.

> 'One of the factors most responsible for the retention of a radical outlook by the U.P.C. was its close links with the militant trade union organization, the U.S.C.C. The role of U.P.C. militants in assisting the trade union movement was explicitly stated in the party statutes and derived from the party's conception of itself as being chiefly representative of the most exploited sections of the population' (Joseph 1977: 224).

In the Camerounian case, therefore, the trade-unionists, although partly integrated into the nationalist party, retained their working-class-consciousness, contrary to what happened in Kenya. Moreover, several leading members of the U.P.C., including its General Secretary, Um Nyobe, and its President, Félix Moumié, were definitely Marxists, to the extent that the movement, when in exile in the 1960s, split along lines which coincided with those dividing the communist camp into Moscow- and Peking-oriented wings. The entire literary production of the U.P.C., both before and during the armed uprising, reflects this Marxist, proletarian bias, contrary to what we have observed in the case of Mau Mau. Why these differences in ideological outlook between two more or less contemporary movements? Internal factors, specific to Kenya and Cameroun, probably provide part of the answer to this question, but my limited knowledge of Cameroun bars me from going any deeper into this point. Another factor that certainly played a major role originates in differences between the respective colonial powers, Great Britain and France.

In France the Communist vote represents about 15 to 20 per cent of the electorate, and Communist-influenced labour unions are very influential in public life. Immediately after World War II, representatives of this current in French politics massively came to the help of the new-born African political parties and trade unions and profoundly influenced their ideological leanings. In Great Britain, on the other hand, Communism is hardly a political force to be reckoned with and Marxist influences in the trade-union movement are less outspoken. Kenyan trade unions, therefore, received no help from radical politicians in London. On the contrary, when it was decided to send a U.K. Trade Union advisor to Kenya, the person selected, a Mr. Patrick, turned out to be a very moderate personality who seems to have aimed as much at keeping the Nairobi unions quiet as at helping them, and who conceived trade unionism as a corporatist activity, not a broader political one. The only radical influence on unionists of the Kubai-Kaggia type came from a few Kenya-based Asian union leaders, particularly from Makahn Singh who professed to be a Communist, but whose influence on his Kenyan colleagues rapidly waned after 1950, the moment Mau Mau really took off.

Having observed the absence of a proletarian undertone in Mau Mau ideology, we are now able to say something more about urban commitment to the movement, and especially the commitment of wage-earners that emerges clearly in Kershaw's data. The point I want to make here is that these urbanites, and wage-earners more generally, probably did not indulge in Mau Mau activities as urbanites and/or workers, but rather as <u>frustrated peasants</u> who had no land or not enough land to make a decent living, but who were still peasants at heart, and moreover peasants who wanted to become farmers, i.e. grow cash crops (Kershaw, personal communication). In other words, they were workers by class-position, but peasants by motivation. As is noted by Stichter, many of them participated in Mau Mau:

> '(...) partly in the hope of bettering their economic condition as wage-earners and partly for another, different reason - the hope of regaining access to their traditional means of production and returning to peasant status' (Stichter 1975: 264).

This, then, is the background of the high participation of workers and wage-earners in Mau Mau: theirs was not a 'proletarian' protest but rather <u>a protest against proletarisation</u>, and this explains why radical, leftist aims were never incorporated in the Mau Mau political platform.

The Mau Mau urbanites, then, acted largely as peasants, and moreover as Kikuyu peasants, to the extent that they did not consider organizing their movement on class-lines together with proletarians and city-dwellers of other ethnic groups. It is therefore legitimate to characterize Mau Mau as a peasant revolt, in spite of high urban commitment to oathing and in spite of the importance of Nairobi as a source of supplies and recruits during the Emergency. I wonder to what extent this can also be said of the U.P.C.-revolt in Cameroun. As we have seen, the Camerounian urbanites were much more influenced by Marxist ideas, but I do not know whether the U.P.C. grass-roots adherents too were after all frustrated peasants rather than radical proletarians, like their Mau Mau counterparts.

Having established that Mau Mau cannot be considered a 'progressive' movement, I will turn now to a different interpretation of the revolt that places it at the other end of the political spectrum in describing it as 'reactionary'. For a long time, until the beginning of the 1960s, this has even been the dominant interpretation of the movement, voiced by all the authors who paid tribute to the European myth of Mau Mau. In their eyes, Mau Mau was 'primitive' and 'atavistic', and represented a 'return to the bush and to savagery'. There also existed a more scientific version of this myth which used less loaded, more 'neutral' terms, but which did not differ much from the European myth in its more cruder forms with regard to its interpretation of the deeper meaning of Mau Mau.

Two Dutch scholars are quite representative of this school of thought. J.D. De Roock, for example, claims that the causes of the revolt are complex, but that the whole body of socio-economic, socio-religious and socio-psychological causes that brought Mau Mau into being, finally all originated in 'a failure to adapt to modern European civilization by a people that was still primitive not so long ago, an acculturation phenomenon by consequence' (De Roock 1955: 595). And the same author goes on to say that 'the Mau Mau movement should be considered as the spiritual and material resistance of a people forced to abandon its own culture and against the forced imposition of a new form of society' (De Roock 1955: 609). A.H.J. Prins, in his turn, affirmed that Mau Mau was 'undoubtedly a counter-acculturation movement' (1955: 129). Such interpretations are based on the idea that Mau Mau was a refusal of the present as well as of the future, and a passionate effort to return to a kind of tribal golden age. Even G. Balandier fell in

with this hypothesis when he said that the Mau Mau revolt 'est certes destructrice d'un présent inaccepté, mais elle reste surtout une force orientée vers un passé introuvable plus que vers un possible avenir' (Balandier 1960: 18). I would not have mentioned these rather old-fashioned interpretations of Mau Mau, were it not that a few recent writers have raked up this line of argument once more. R. Whittier, in his introduction to Wachanga's memoirs, claims for example that:

> 'The revolt was essentially a 'reactionary' movement. The goals were not utopian, not those of a new order nor of social reform, but rather were those of a return to a more palatable past. The Freedom Fighters were fighting to restore their traditional, tribal way of life. They wished for an end to unrepresentative governmental interference into their lives. They wanted to return to a past unencumbered by hut tax, poll tax, bench terracing, crop restrictions, alien chief system, etc. Although the rhetoric was that of regaining lost land and freedom, the reality was that of returning to pre-European times' (Whittier 1975: XV).

The facts we have gathered in the course of our analysis of Mau Mau as a movement of cultural renewal and as an anti-colonial revolt are sufficient to enable us to critically examine such 'counter-acculturation' interpretations. It should be noted first of all that a few Mau Mau documents seem to bear out this line of argument. One such document is a letter by Dedan Kimathi, dated May 23, 1954, and addressed to a Mr. Salehe Kibwana, which says:

> 'Do not hate Kikuyus if you are an African who desires land and freedom in future. Remember and re-memorize the best of land and the best of national freedom knowing you will not be cheated and that we Kikuyus want to return our people to our old state of living when there was no way for civilization' (The Letters of Dedan Kimathi 1979: 20).

Such statements, however, are exceptional in Mau Mau literature, and this particular one is rather ambiguous in the sense that Kimathi, in the same breath, referred to a return to the Kikuyu past as well as to land and freedom, while the end of his letter definitely had a Pan-African flavour.

We should also note that Mau Mau was undoubtedly matched by a re-flourishing of certain tribal practices that had all but disappeared in 1952. I have already described the first Mau Mau oath as an all-out mobilization of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Kikuyu and we have seen how much the forest fighters were influenced by traditional religion and magic. But there is even more to this. As KCA did in the late

1920s, Mau Mau again stirred up the debate in favour of female circumcision and emphasized the importance of this external sign of tribal affiliation in its oathing clauses (Cf. Barnett and Njama 1966: 119), although it has to be said that no specific action was undertaken in this field by Mau Mau leaders or members. In the wake of female circumcision several other tribal customs reappeared. With regard to the squatters who were returned to the Reserves during the first months of the Emergency, Njama observes for example that:

> 'Most of the Kikuyu who were repatriated (...) from the Rift Valley had unhealed wounds of ear-piercing and scarification and continued to teach others a thing which they had abandoned for many years. In fact, a flow of going back to magic, witchcraft, seers, prophets, ceremonies and sacrifices and the old superstition had started' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 122).

Return to the past then? In fact, the problem seems to be much more complex as soon as one starts asking questions about the deeper meaning of the penomenon. Njama provides us with an important clue when he says that:

> "Though the oath clung on Kikuyu traditions and superstitions, yet the unity and obedience achieved by it was so great that it could be our only weapon to fight against the white community' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 121).

Seen in this light, i.e. as a means in the anti-colonial struggle and not only as an end in itself, Mau Mau traditionalism becomes a much more ambiguous phenomenon. We have seen that Mau Mau, as an anti-colonial revolt, did not simply aspire to a return to the tribal past, but was rather moved by an ardent desire to get access to the modern world, an access obstinately barred by the racialist colonial system that obtained in Kenya in 1952. We have seen also that many Mau Mau fighters saw their struggle as a 'revolt by proxy' and that they were ready to efface themselves in favour of more sophisticated leaders like Kenyatta, who, in their eyes, were the only people capable of building the new, modern nation they dreamt of. Contrary to Whittier, I think that this was more than mere rhetoric. Consequently, Mau Mau traditionalism was authentic in its form only, not in its content. I tend to think, therefore, that the term traditionalisme par excès de modernité, coined by J. Favret in a study of rural movements in independent Algeria, can also be applied to Mau Mau. Like the Algerian peasants in the Aures and in Kabylia, the Mau Mau guerilleros were not hostile to the modern world, and it was only after the failure of

modern means of action, such as the constitutional campaigns of KAU, that Mau Mau fell back on tribal custom as a way of getting into the building of the modern world through the back door, after having been refused access at the main entrance. In other words, Mau Mau is a counter-acculturation movement only to the extent that real acculturation was impossible under the conditions prevailing in Kenya in the 1950s.

We can therefore conclude that Mau Mau was not traditionalist or 'reactionary' in political content, but I would also argue that Mau Mau traditionalism was not even really authentic as to its form. Many authors have been mistaken on this point, including G. Kershaw who claimed that:

> 'Mau Mau, a section of which had propagated a resurrection of so many "traditional" features of Kikuyu culture did not succeed in this. In insisting on certain aspects of Kikuyu culture as "traditional", to be maintained without change throughout history as a condition for being truly Kikuyu, it violated the essence of Kikuyu culture in which social organization was a vehicle to express and give form to ideas how men should live, a vehicle which did not need to be permanent, sacrosanct or unchanging' (Kershaw 1972: 205-206).

I entirely agree with Kershaw's remarks on the essence of Kikuyu culture, but I would argue that Mau Mau did respect the essentially changing nature of this culture to the full. As we have seen, Leakey severely criticized Mau Mau for violating tribal custom in its oathing ceremonies and he was technically right on this point. These very elaborated, rich ceremonies were <u>not a return to the past, but a return to the sources</u> of Kikuyu culture. They represented cultural innovation, the beginning of something new. Even Carothers, a leading exponent of the European myth of Mau Mau on many other points, did recognize that Mau Mau represented a 'third way' somewhere between a return to the tribal past and full-scale Westernization (Carothers 1954: 10). Mau Mau members were not in favor of the tribal culture of yesterday but of a new culture to be created in future, a new culture based on Kikuyu custom but not necessarily in its traditional form (3).

This thesis is born out by the fact that the most traditional-minded sections of the Kikuyu were not the ones who parti-

cularly indulged in Mau Mau. In his study of the anti-Mau Mau Loyalists, B.A. Ogot claims for example that 'Loyalism was partly a revolt of the elders against the activities of the young people which they regarded as a violation of the traditions and customs' (Ogot 1972: 140). As for the specific case of the Meru, the most determined body in its opposition to Mau Mau was the Njuri Ncheke, the traditional council of ruling elders who were the guardians of tradition and tribal law (Kamunchuluh 1975: 215). Dr. Kershaw's Komothai data also carry indications to the effect that the most traditional sections of the Kikuyu, and particularly polygamists and older men of the highest elders' ranks, were not to be found in Mau Mau. To characterize Mau Mau as 'reactionary' seems therefore contrary to the truth. The most one can say about Mau Mau as a movement for cultural renewal is that it was neo-traditional. As for Whittier's allegation that Mau Mau was reactionary in the political sense of the word, I would oppose his statement to a quotation from E. Wolf where he argues that:

> 'The peasant utopia is the free village, untrammeled by tax collectors, labour recruiters, large landowners, officials. Ruled over, but never ruling, they also lack acquaintance with the operation of the state as a complex machinery, experiencing it only as a "cold monster" (...). Thus, for the peasant, the state is a negative quantity, an evil, to be replaced in short shrift by their own "homemade" social order. That order, they believe, can run without the state; hence, peasants in rebellion are natural anarchists' (Wolf 1973: 294-295).

'Anarchist' seems to me a much better qualification of Mau Mau grass-roots ideology than 'reactionary'.

A final remark has to be made at the end of this chapter. Mau Mau, with its decentralized, fluid command structures, was never a monolithic bloc, neither in its organization nor in its ideology. Different tendencies or wings coexisted within the movement, and it also went through different phases over time. In the 1950-1952 period, Mau Mau, under the leadership of the better educated Central Committee members and still influenced by the moderate Kiambu leaders, undoubtedly was a rational, political and nationalist movement, in spite of its overwhelming Kikuyu recruitment. At that time Mau Mau 'traditionalism' was only traditional in form, but it was used as a means in a modernist struggle for freedom. At the other hand, the situation had sensibly changed by 1956. At that

time, Dedan Kimathi, lost in his prophetic dreams, seems to have lost sight of the rational, political dimension of Mau Mau, maintaining only its religious-cultural dimension. Mau Mau traditionalism, at that point, had become a way of life and not only a means in the political struggle.

Between 1952 and 1956, then, Mau Mau slowly slipped backwards, its 'atavistic' and 'tribal' aspects getting the upper hand over its modern nationalist side. The main reason for this is that the circumstances of the Emergency slowly but surely pushed the movement into a position of extreme isolation. The first step on this road was set in October 1952 when the colonial authorities arrested most of the movement's educated leaders. Although their message about national liberation had been heard by the Kikuyu masses and had been assimilated to a certain extent, their disappearance from the political scene meant a political mutilation for Mau Mau insofar as the uneducated peasants and workers were now the only ones to remain and carry on the struggle. Although they continued to refer to these leaders and to the political ideals they represented (the 'revolt by proxy' aspect of Mau Mau), they did so rather 'clumsily' and in the manner of the unsophisticated peasants they were.

A second step on the road to isolation was set in the course of 1954 when the forest fighters were cut off from their passive wing supporters in Nairobi and the Kikuyu Land Unit by Operation Anvil and the government's villagization policy. Until then, these rather loose contacts with the outside world, had, from time to time, brought some fresh air into the dark forests of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares. In the summer of 1954, however, the Mau Mau armies were forced to retreat into their mountain sanctuaries, and the forest progressively became their only horizon. Left on their own, living in smaller and smaller groups with only a minimum of contact among themselves, the forest fighters then implemented a return to the past that only characterizes the last phase of the revolt, and not the whole Mau Mau period as tenants of the European myth would have it.

It is also quite clear from the memoirs of Njama, Wachanga and Gikoyo that different currents of opinion existed within the

Mau Mau armed forces and that the tensions between them mounted as time went on. As early as the summer of 1953, Njama broke with Mathenge and joined Kimathi's camp because the former, in his eyes, was too much under the influence of seers and superstition. In the spring of 1955, the Aberdare forces finally split into two openly hostile groups, respectively behind Kimathi and Mathenge. Apart from personal animosities and Kimathi's dictatorial style of command, a cleavage between 'educated' and 'non-educated' leaders was at the background of this conflict. This is at least Njama's version of the events when he sums up the words spoken by Kahiu Itina, Mathenge's second in command, during a Kenya Parliament meeting late in 1954:

> He claimed that education and illiteracy could not work together. He said that all educated people were somehow affiliated to the religion and faith of the missionaries - which were totally against Kikuyu religion and revolution (...). In general, he objected to being led by an educated person (...). No matter whether they were leaders in the forest, they rejected many of the old customs and tribal tradition which Kahiu Itina and many others believed we were fighting for as part of our freedom' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 397-398).

Although Wachanga, an 'educated' general who remained faithful to Mathenge until the end, might not entirely agree with Njama's version of the Kimathi-Mathenge conflict, it is certainly true that there existed two tendencies within Mau Mau at that time, one composed of 'traditionalistes par excès de modernité' and the other of outright traditionalists.

Another characteristic feature of the Mau Mau revolt has to be mentioned here because it illustrates Mau Mau's adhesion to the modern world as well as the fundamental ambiguity of this adhesion. I am thinking of the fascination of the forest fighters with the symbols and signs of modern power that is more particularly reflected by their use of British military ranks. During his forest career, Kimathi did all he could to institutionalize a military hierarchy on British lines, with field-marshalls, generals, brigadiers etc. Towards the end of the war this led to a considerable inflation in military ranks, every fighter wanting to be at least a captain, which made a British journalist say that Mau Mau was 'an army without privates'. In my opinion, this fascination with British military ranks

should be seen as an attempt to identify with the modern world. This is at least the interpretation put forward by G. Balandier when analyzing the Fang clan movement in Gabon with all its 'dignities',

> 'qui étonnent par les 'grades' retenus, empruntés aux organisations administratives et militaires ayant assuré l'emprise du colonisateur, et par la multiplicité des fonctions prévues (...). Ces innovations ont un aspect psycholgique de grand intérêt. Elles montrent l'attachement nouveau aux termes qui expriment fortement l'idée du pouvoir, et, par une sorte de démarche magique de la pensée, le besoin de 'posséder' ceux-là pour accéder à celui-ci' (Balandier 1957: 186-187).

Such acts of adhesion to the modern world were also current in the passive wing of Mau Mau: Mau Mau judges, for example, have been reported to have worn wigs similar to those of their British counterparts (Manchester Guardian, November 18, 1952), while a Mau Mau urban leader was furtively 'consecrated' in Nairobi cathedral during a nocturnal ceremony (Time, March 21, 1955).

The fundamental ambiguity of this phenomenon clearly appears in Njama's description of the ceremony during which Dedan Kimathi was simultaneously consecrated Prime Minister of the Provisionary African Government, Knight Commander of the East African Empire, and elder of the kiama kia mathaathi, a function that took place in March 1955 and was modelled on traditional ceremonies of investiture. Njama himself had some difficulties in retaining his dignity during the celebration (Barnett and Njama 1966: 441-443), and it is clear that he only participated with his tongue in his cheek. In spite of his scepticism, this event demonstrates the wish of the Mau Mau military leaders to strike a balance between modern and traditional elements and to multiply the references to the symbols of power of both the Kikuyu and the Western world. It bears witness to the fundamental ambiguity of a movement that cannot be explained in terms of either/or without mutilating it as a global social phenomenon.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MEANING OF MAU MAU: CIVIL WAR

> 'In theory Mau Mau was anti-white, but in practice the terrorists killed nearly a hundred times as many Africans as Europeans. During the Emergency more Europeans were killed in traffic accidents within the city limits of Nairobi than were murdered by terrorists in the whole of Kenya' (Goodhart 1958: 17).

These sentences are a faithful reflection of the facts: according to official estimates, 32 European civilians were killed by Mau Mau during the 1952-1956 period, as against 1,819 Africans (Corfield 1960: 316).

These figures indicate that Mau Mau was not only a movement for cultural renewal and an anti-colonial revolt, but that it also had a third dimension: that of a civil war. In this chapter I will try to answer the question: why this civil war?, because it will help us to come to a better understanding of the complex phenomenon that Mau Mau really was.

In answering this question, we have first of all to remind ourselves that violence between people of the same race is a relatively frequent phenomenon in colonial societies. Fanon, taking as his starting point the situation in Algeria before the war of independence, tried to explain this internal violence in the following terms:

> 'In the colonial context (...) the natives fight among themselves. They tend to use each other as a screen, and each hides from his neighbour the national enemy. When, tired out after a hard sixteen-hour day the native sinks down to rest on his mat, and a child on the other side of the canvas partition starts crying and prevents him from sleeping, it so happens that it is a little Algerian (...). When, after having kept out of his way for weeks he finds himself one day cornered by the caid who demands that he should pay "his taxes", he cannot even enjoy the luxury of hating a European administrator; there before him is the caid who is the object of his hatred - and the caid is an Algerian (...). Veterinary doctors can throw light on such problems by reminding us of the well-known "pecking order" which has been observed in farmyards. The corn which is thrown to the hens is in fact the object of relentless competition. Certain birds, the strongest, gobble up all the grains while others who are less aggressive grow visibly thinner. Every colony tends to turn into a huge farmyard, where the only law is that of the knife' (Fanon 1967: 248-249).

A few years before Fanon published the French version of his book (1961), the British Labour M.P. Fenner Brockway already followed the same line of reasoning in an article devoted to the specific case of Mau Mau. In order to explain why the Mau Mau guerilleros

committed most of their crimes against people of their own race, and not against Europeans, Brockway argued that the frustrations the Kikuyu were subjected to in their daily lives were easily turned against those who were nearest to them, i.e. those responsible for local administration such as the African chiefs and the members of the Local District Councils who served as a screen between the local population and the European rulers (Franc-Tireur, December 5, 1952).

We have also to remember that in a colonial society the colonizers are, generally speaking, well protected and that it is much easier for insurgents to kill traitors amongst their own people. This was certainly the case in colonial Kenya where almost every European, even before the Emergency, disposed of a large stock of firearms and knew quite well how to use them. During the Emergency this war potential was upgraded to the point that most European farmers were able to withstand a regular siege of their isolated homesteads. Intra-Kikuyu violence has to be considered in the context of these general colonial 'laws', but Mau Mau violence at the same time obeyed a logic of its own. To the extent that Mau Mau was an initiation-society aiming to unite the Kikuyu people entirely and solidly under its anti-colonial banner, those Kikuyu who remained neutral or who actively oppposed the movement were not only considered enemies, in the same way as the Europeans, but as traitors worse than enemies. This comes out clearly in some of the Mau Mau 'Hymns' published by L.S.B. Leakey:

> 'Let the hypocrites among the tribe remember that the time will come when they will be like "Judas".
> The time has come for all these hypocrites to be burned'
> (Leakey 1954: 59).

The arguments developed above explain to a certain extent the high number of casualities among the Kikuyu civilian population during the Emergency. In order to better understand the deeper meaning of Mau Mau we have also to consider another question: which were the categories or sections amongst the Kikuyu that were particularly victimized by Mau Mau violence? I will particularly try to discover to what extent Mau Mau has been marked by traditional conflicts. A careful analysis of traditional Kikuyu culture and society reveals the existence of at least three fundamental cleavages:

1) A potential conflict between landless tenants (ahoi) and landowners.
2) A potential conflict between young men and elders.

In my 1971 book (Buijtenhuijs 1971: Chapter XII), I argued that the first conflict, between landowners and landless tenants, became manifest during the colonial area and that it expressed itself in Mau Mau during the Emergency. Today, I am convinced that the situation in the field was less clear-cut than I thought before, and I will therefore try to elaborate a more subtle analysis of what really happened.

According to Barnett, the conflict between landowners and landless tenants or poor peasants did not play a significant role in the Mau Mau revolt. This author claims that:

> '(...) due largely to restrictions placed on the cultivation of cash crops, the retention of traditional systems of land tenure and cultivation, and the dearth of economic opportunities, labor-exporting peasantries such as the Kikuyu tended to develop as relatively homogeneous aggregates (...). It is suggested here that this "leveling" effect of European settlement, i.e. the creation of a relatively uniform and impoverished peasant mass, when coupled with the intensifying struggle for scarce fertile land against the economically and politically dominant white settler elite, greatly increased the likelihood of unified political action among the Kikuyu' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 35).

This image of an impoverished homogeneous peasant mass does not correspond with the facts, although it is rather difficult to discern what the situation really was in the field. Let us first consider the position of the landless tenants or ahoi. A preliminary question pertains to the percentage of ahoi on the total Kikuyu population. When I published my first book, I did not have any factual information on this point, and it was only some years later that I discovered an article by L.S.B. Leakey claiming that probably more than 50 per cent of the Kikuyu were ahoi (Leakey 1956: 189). According to more recent publications this estimate is much too high, although it might be correct for the extreme Southern part of the Kikuyu country (Neckebrouck 1978: 114). In Komothai location, Kershaw traced 76 ahoi families and 272 landowning families (Cf. Sorrenson 1967: 213), and for the Kikuyu as a whole she estimated that ahoi- percentages varied from less than 10 per cent of the total population to at least one-third, according to the current systems of land tenure (Kershaw 1975-76: 176). The highest percentages probably obtained in Kiambu, the 19th-century

frontier district, while Nyeri and Murang'a had fewer ahoi.

In traditional Kikuyu society the position of muhoi had been relatively advantageous. Kershaw claims for example that:

> 'In the Kiambu systems, a man's socioeconomic status did not depend primarily on whether he was a muhoi or an owner, and there were distinct advantages to being a muhoi. It was possible for a muhoi to be wealthier than an owner. He did not need to take animals from his flocks to help make payments to the Ndorobo (from whom the land had been bought, R.B.), he did not need to contribute to the many sacrifices which pertained to the land ancestors (...). Given an abundance of land, he could cultivate as much land as an owner. Because he had larger herds he could obtain more wives than owners and in this way increase the land under his cultivation. A move into the higher ranks of the elders' hierarchy was costly and a drain on his herds for gifts and ceremonial purposes. Owners might not always be able to make the desired moves due to the depletion of their herds. Ahoi, however, rarely lacked goats for such payments and might well move ahead of owners in the elders' hierarchy' (Kershaw 1975-76: 177).

I do not quite agree with Kershaw on this point, not because the facts she supplies are incorrect, but because I have the impression that her description is somewhat one-sided. In spite of the advantages inherent in their situation, ahoi were nevertheless in a position of dependents who had received land rights as a favour. Even if this did not happen often in traditional Kikuyu society, they could be evicted at will by the owners, albeit within strictly defined limits with regard to standing crops. At the other hand, a landowner with many ahoi was in a position to manipulate his clients in order to improve his political and social standing, a strategy that was commonly used by pre-colonial Kikuyu leaders (Tignor 1976: 65-66). If this had not been the case, and if ahoi had been the only ones to benefit from the system, as is implied in Kershaw's analysis, one wonders why landowners would have taken tenants at all. As is well known, the average Kikuyu is far too shrewd to act against his own economic and political interests, and we should therefore assume that controlling as many people as possible was a political and social asset.

Another point to be considered is that the political career of a Kikuyu male depended to a large extent on his personal merits and capacities and not on ascription. In the beginning of his career, however, a young man could benefit from his genealogical position

within his mbari (the extended landowning family) which constituted the first arena where he could demonstrate his aptitudes for public affairs. As ahoi did not belong to a mbari they were at a disadvantage, in the sense that they had to be late starters out of necessity. Being a muhoi, therefore, was not always an asset, but could also be a liability.

However this may be, it is an undisputed fact that the position of the traditional tenants markedly deteriorated under colonial rule, this more particularly because of the alienation of land to the benefit of European settlers and the consecutive hemming-in of the Kikuyu territories, which deprived the tribe of its traditional possibilities of migrating into virgin land. These developments have been skilfully analyzed by G. Kershaw:

> 'In the past, large land-based mbari rights of ownership or muhoi rights of use could be claimed on many grounds. The abundance of land allowed a great deal of personal latitude in arrangements and ranking of land rights. But in the twentieth century a drastic reversion took place, from scarcity to abundance of people. This change is the background to twentieth-century rural developments, in which those who have land attempt to minimize the rights to its use or ownership by others and to enhance their own position.
>
> The first group affected by increasing land scarcity were the ahoi (...). The second group (...) were the younger descendants of the joint mbari. They were often the sons of younger wives who reached maturity at the same time as the grandsons of senior wives and who were also demanding land. In the past, when land became scarce, the senior regiment simply moved out and left the land to the younger segment. Now the senior segment could no longer do so, and the juniors' redistribution claims were ignored by the seniors' (Kershaw 1975-1976: 183).

As is indicated by Kershaw, several related problems arose out of European settlement: ahoi at first tended to become impoverished by lack of suitable grazing land and were altogether evicted in a second stage; conflicts arose between different sections of the same mbari with the junior sections often losing the battle; and finally inter-mbari conflicts arose, mainly because of the creation of a group of wealthy people with an interest in the modern sector of the colonial system (chiefs and members of native courts, teachers, policemen, clerks, etc.), a group that used the money earned in the modern economic sector to buy land, which made them not only wealthy people, but moreover big landowners. As a conse-

quence, extensive and expensive land-litigation became a common feature of life in the rural areas during the 1940s and the early 1950s, and this definitely influenced Mau Mau violence. M.P.K. Sorrenson claims for example that:

> 'The conflict over land lay at the bottom of much of the unrest in the Kikuyu reserve during the post-war years and which was to develop into the Mau Mau revolt - as much a civil war between the Kikuyu as a revolt against the colonial government. If the politicians were mainly concerned with attacking the chiefs on political grounds, many of the rank and file were more concerned with attacking them, sometimes physically, to settle scores over land. Many grievances over land were in fact "settled" by the sword during the Emergency' (Sorrenson 1967: 80).

And a few pages further Sorrenson reveals that 'near the end of 1953 the District Commissioner of Kiambu admitted that half of the murders in the district during the past year had been due to land cases' (Sorrenson 1967: 101). This was particularly the case with the Lari massacre, the bloodiest Mau Mau action against Kikuyu civilians and the result of a long-standing land feud, while the same holds true to some extent for the Marigi massacre in Komothai (Cf. Kershaw 1972: 329-331). We can therefore conclude that Mau Mau, in so far as the free access to land was one of its main objectives, not only claimed the land occupied by Europeans, the 'stolen lands', but also the land of other Kikuyu, and more particularly land acquired by more or less 'illegal' means.

It has to be noted that the civil war aspect of Mau Mau was not only or mainly due to a conflict between landless tenants and landowners, as one could have presumed on the basis of the latent cleavages in traditional Kikuyu society. As ahoi were only a minority compared to the total Kikuyu population, their grievances, although real and influential in later developments, cannot explain the mass following Mau Mau obtained during the height of its battle against colonial rule. Processes initiated during the colonial period which led to the creation of a class of wealthy land-owners also played a role, and it would therefore be more correct to say that Mau Mau reflected a general conflict between 'Haves' and 'Have nots' within Kikuyu society. Using data supplied by Sorrenson and others, G. Lamb comes to the following general conclusion:

> 'The active loyalists were government servants such as chiefs, and those Kikuyu who by commercial activity or the acquisition of non-mbari land had acquired an interest in the system which the forest fighters threatened. Sorrenson's assertion that the active loyalists were from the "landed and wealthy classes" is supported, for example, by an analysis of the Githunguri Home Guard (Kiambu) by the District Officer in charge of it. Eighty-four per cent of the Unit's leadership was classified as "rich or very rich", and of the rank and file numbering 609 men, just over 50% fell into the same category, with a further 23% listed as "above average in wealth". Sorrenson comments: "There is no reason to suppose that this generalization was not also true of Fort Hall and Nyeri". At the other end of the scale, the core of the forest fighters, or at least of that majority which came from the rural areas, consisted of those who had little or no land - dispossessed ahoi, repatriated migrant labourers, and former holders of (...) plots which had been taken over by more fortunate or more astute lineage members. Allied to them, it appears, were the bulk of the small peasants, who had been subject to increasing pressure in the years preceding the Emergency from the breakdown of the communal system and population increase' (Lamb 1974: 14).

These lines summarize the now current opinion on Mau Mau, and I have only found one contradictory statement in the whole literature. The Nakuru District Annual Report 1954, states:

> 'There are a number of lessons to be learnt from the events of the past two years. The first is that wealth seems to be little deterrent to subversion. The leaders of Mau Mau in the Londiani Settled Area were almost without exception wealthy Kikuyu, some very wealthy indeed' (p. 3).

I do not quite know how to assess this completely divergent opinion, but I would suggest that the Londiani D.O. may have confounded Mau Mau and Kenya African Union leaders who, according to Tamarkin (1976), were indeed often rather wealthy businessmen. As this mistake was frequently made before and during the Emergency, this hypothesis seems the most plausible one, unless, for specific reasons to be determined, the situation in Londiani Area was different from that obtaining elsewhere.

As we have seen in Lamb's quotation, the characterization of Mau Mau as a civil war, although commonly admitted, is based on rather scanty factual indications, the Githunguri Home Guard percentages appearing as the only concrete evidence. Kershaw's Komothai data supply some more clues, although it has to be said that her data are not all that conclusive. They tend to demonstrate,

however, that the more wealthy peasants, and especially cash crop farmers were not inclined to take the oath, but that the situation was rather confused at the bottom of the scale, subsistence peasants being more involved in oath-taking than ahoi or the landless. We can therefore conclude that it would be a simplification to present the Komothai 'Mau Mau' movement as a war of 'Have nots' against 'Haves'. I am even tempted to argue that this situation may not have been particular to Komothai area, and that the above pattern could be of much wider application. Taking the lists of people who were known to be in the forest in July 1955 and whose land was confiscated by the Government, Sorrenson comments:

> 'Although there were obviously regional differences there would seem little doubt that between one quarter and a half of those named in the confiscation orders were landless - or were at least designated as landless by the committees. Moreover those who possessed land were seldom large holders: from the lists available and which also specify acreages it would seem that the average holdings did not amount to more than two or three acres. But too much should not be made out of this: in many instances, it would seem, the committees responsible for defining the confiscated land considerably underestimated the areas owned by those named' (Sorrenson 1967: 106).

These comments fit in with the Komothai data. Although the Kikuyu 'Haves' were definitely not involved in Mau Mau, the civil war aspect of the revolt was not so outspoken as some authors have suggested. Rather than 'Have Nots' fighting 'Haves', a situation obtains where 'Have nots' are joined and even outdone by 'Have littles', who represented the majority of the Kikuyu population.

A second point I want to stress here is that the civil war apect of Mau Mau has not only been exaggerated, but that there was no nation-wide civil war between different social classes. It would be more correct to say that what occurred was an infinite series of local civil wars and that people took up positions for or against Mau Mau according to local factors and local disputes not automatically related to each other. In my opinion, the situation prevailing in the field is well summarized in the following lines:

> 'In many places, age-long feuds that had existed between various groups even before the days of the oath were unconsciously brought into play during this crucial period and complicated the situation even further. Such feuds were over such matters as family or clan ownership of land; the power struggle

> between sub-clans, especially over the question of who should become chief during the colonial administration; and sheer jealousy when one member of clan seemed to be making much progress in life while his other clansmen were left behind' (Wanyoike 1974: 189).

In some of these feuds matters of landownership loomed large and 'Haves' were opposed to 'Have nots', but this was not always the case. The conflict between Senior Chief Waruhiu and the Koinange family, for example, was a conflict about political power between two very wealthy families and yet it had a considerable influence on Mau Mau recruitment.

In conclusion, I am tempted to argue that the civil war aspect of Mau Mau has been emphasized too much, and that, even where it existed, it was not an independent variable, i.e. that there would never have been a civil war in Kikuyuland but for the crusade against colonialism and the White Highlands system. In reality, anti-colonialism was the independent variable, as was stated by General China during his interrogation:

> 'Q: Why does Mau Mau concentrate on attacking its own tribe?
> A: If you want to go away in a car and you find the back tire is punctured, you have to stop and mend it before you can go on'
> (Interrogation of...: 28).

I do certainly not deny that local factors played an important role in Mau Mau recruitment at the grass-roots level. These factors should be studied and the individual motives of Mau Mau participants should be analyzed in order to understand Mau Mau recruitment patterns. However, on the level of ideology, a revolutionary movement is more than the sum of the motivations of its individual grass-roots adherents. This applies not only to Mau Mau but also to social movements elsewhere, as for example in Europe. In the French film, Lucien Lacombe, the 'hero', a young man in search of adventure, first tries to join the French anti-Nazi resistance movement, is refused because of his youth, and finally ends up in the German police fighting the 'maquisards'. I am convinced that quite a few people who took part in the resistance movement in German-occupied Europe were adventurous youngsters of the Lucien Lacombe-type, but this does not alter the fact that the resistance movement as a whole was moved by anti-fascist, democratic ideals. The same is true for Mau Mau. As G.G. Gikoyo says:

> 'We fought under conditions of extreme hunger, cold and torrential rain. But we braved all these for we had a dream. We saw a dream whereby all our children could enjoy complete equality with those of other races' (Gikoyo 1979: 322. My italics).

Indeed, people do not fight a war, and even less a lost war, if they don't have a dream. This is the main reason why I maintain that the civil war aspect of Mau Mau, with its sordid feuds and petty motivations, should be considered merely as a dependent variable when compared with Mau Mau's anti-colonialist dimension.

Although there was no open conflict between elders and younger men of the warrior age-groups in traditional Kikuyu society, it is certainly true that the Kikuyu polity was a gerontocracy and that elders and warriors were sharply set apart, each of them having different roles within the community. It is therefore of some interest to examine the behaviour of different age-categories during the Mau Mau crisis. Most authors share the opinion that Mau Mau was essentially a revolt of the younger men. Already in 1951, the Central Province Provincial Commissioner noted in his annual report that the majority of the Mau Mau members where 'youngish men of no particular standing' (Corfield 1960: 121). This statement was confirmed a few years later by Njama, according to whom most of the forest fighters were beween 25 and 30 years old, older men being rare in the forest (Barnett and Njama 1966: 174).

Of course, one is tempted to explain this disproportional percentage of young men amongst the forest fighters by the fact that the younger men, in all wars and in all revolutions, bear the brunt of the fight because they are physically the most apt for this task. However, this hypothesis does not seem to fit the specific case of Mau Mau. If age had not played a more significant role in Mau Mau recruitment, one would have expected the Kikuyu Home Guard, the other fighting group, also to recruit mainly young men. This, however, was not the case, as is indicated by the Githunguri Home Guard statistics quoted by Sorrenson: 23 out of 25 camp leaders were over 45 years old, while 387 guards were older than 45, with 423 under this age (Sorrenson 1963: 7). These facts are all the more significant as even most of the forest generals were between 25 and 35 years old.

Kershaw's Komothai data confirm this picture and demonstrate that oath-taking was indeed related to age, older men being rather

reluctant to commit themselves, while young men of the 19-25 category had by far the highest score.

Some Mau Mau 'hymns' indicate that this opposition between young men and elders was not merely a statistical phenomenon, but that Mau Mau members were keenly aware of it:

> 'Tell the elders to shut up, they let our lands be taken. Tell the young men to rise up in arms so that our lands be returned to us' (Leakey 1954: 71).
>
> 'The whole land is nothing but darkness and the squatter system, when the young men want to rise up, they are told "The time is not yet"' (Leakey 1954: 61).

P. Goodhart is therefore right when he characterizes the forest fighters as 'angry young men' (Goodhart 1958: 41).

Interestingly, this was not the first time in Kikuyu history that young men tried to shake off the yoke of the elders. Referring to the situation in Gatundu Division during the Great Famine of 1898-9, G. Muriuki says:

> 'Imitating the company and government forces, some Kikuyu warriors arrogated to themselves the powers and functions of the traditional council of elders and warriors (...). In fact they were no more than an unprincipled band of marauding brigands who terrorized all and sundry (...). This was a completely foreign phenomenon in the history of the Kikuyu and the ruthlessness of these outlaws has only been outmatched by the behaviour exhibited by both protagonists in the Mau Mau conflict (...) with which it has been compared' (Muriuki 1974: 94-95).

Such a comparison was indeed made by Kershaw who, following T.G. Benson's Kikuyu-English dictionary, proposed an interesting explanation of the word Mau Mau:

> '" The name is said to have first been applied towards the end of the nineteenth century to a band of young men who terrorized a locality in the Kiambu district". The word suggests the ravenous gobbling of a goat or the way in which a hyena eats' (Kershaw 1972: 177).

Although I have my doubts about this hypothesis (the word was first used in the Rift Valley, although admittedly a Kiambu-dominated part of it, and at a time when Mau Mau members had not yet even planned to take to the forest), it is nevertheless significant that both events seem to have been linked in the minds of some people.

What is the deeper meaning of this revolt of the 'angry young men' against the elders? I would first of all suggest that, at this level, Mau Mau was not a revolution, but a rebellion. As is indicated by the hymns quoted above, the young men did not attack the elders *per se*, and did not want to proceed to fundamental changes in the system, but rather blamed their predecessors for having failed in their task to safeguard the land, i.e. the heritage of Gikuyu and Mumbi. In other words, they rose against the elders, but in defense of the highest interests of Kikuyu society. The same sort of argument fits here as when we analyzed Mau Mau as a new *itwika*.

The active participation of young men in Mau Mau probably also had another aspect. It has often been noted that the imposition of colonial order and peace in Africa rendered superfluous the functions of the younger men as protectors of the community and condemned them to a life of idleness and inaction. This has certainly been the case in Kikuyuland, and several authors have emphasized the moral disorientation of the young Kikuyu males who had lost their traditional functions of warriors and tribal policemen without finding any compensation in the set-up of modern, colonial society. Can we therefore say that the young Kikuyu of the early 1950s, through the Mau Mau revolt, tried to recover their traditional warrior functions? Can Mau Mau be characterized as a warrior class *à la recherche du temps perdu*? A.A. Mazrui (1975: 77) claims in fact that the forest fighter's revolt 'constituted the first major resurrection of the warrior tradition in recent East African history', and in my opinion this statement is correct. The *Anake wa Forty*, as is indicated by their name, initially at least acted more or less as a traditional warrior regiment and I am tempted to believe that this way of thinking, consciously or subconsciously, also influenced the behaviour and the mental universe of the forest fighters.

Before turning to the role of women in Mau Mau, a few words on the so-called Loyalists seem appropriate. We have mentioned them in passing at several occasions, and as they too are part of the general Mau Mau scene, their recruitment patterns and motivations are worth studying. This has been done by Ogot in his article *Revolt of the Elders*, where he asked the crucial question: to what were the Loyalists loyal? According to Ogot, a first group of Loyalists, the genuine ones in colonial terms, were loyal to law and

order and to constitutionalism, but they were probably a minority, as is indicated in some contemporary confidential documents written by colonial administrators who suggest that 'anti-Mau Mau' would be a much better characterization of the Home Guards than 'Loyalist' with its implicit notion of loyal to the Kenya Government.

As is indicated by the title of Ogot's article, and as we have seen when dealing with the allegation that Mau Mau was a 'reactionary' movement, the second group of Loyalists comprised the elder 'traditionalists that were loyal to age-old traditions and customs' (Ogot 1972: 142). A third group, in Ogot's words, 'seems to have been loyal to nothing but Mammon' (Ogot 1972: 142). These were the wealthier people who had a stake in the colonial system and wanted to safeguard their interests (1). They were probably quite numerous, especially towards the end of the Emergency when Loyalists were favoured in many ways by the colonial administration (Cf. Ng'ang'a 1977: 306). A fourth and important group of Loyalists consisted of the genuine Christians, and especially the members of the Revival Movement, 'who were loyal to their faith' (Ogot 1972: 142). It should finally be noted that local factors often played a considerable role in the motivations of the Loyalists, as was the case with Mau Mau members. V. Neckebrouck claims for example that, in Meru district:

> 'L'attitude des loyalistes pendant la révolte Mau Mau s'explique entre autre par le fait que les Meru voyaient dans ce loyalisme une garantie contre une éventuelle colonisation de leur pays par les Kikuyu' (Neckebrouck 1978: 23).

This opinion is confirmed by Ogot and by Kamunchuluh.

Until now, our conclusions on Mau Mau as an attempt to bring about the unity of the Kikuyu have been rather negative. It should be recognized, however, that Mau Mau also achieved a kind of 're-conciliation' between men and women, who were strictly set apart in traditional Kikuyu society, and between whom latent hostility could be discerned (Cf. Buijtenhuijs 1971a: 29-33). As we have seen, other traditional cleavages, such as those between young men and elders, and between ahoi and landowners, to the extent that they persisted in modern times, had a negative effect on Mau Mau as an attempt to unite the Kikuyu. Reasoning by analogy, one could hypothesize a similar effect as for the latent opposition between men and women,

with, theoretically, two different possibilities. First of all, the rather improbable situation of a 'suffragettes' revolt claiming not only political freedom but also equality between the sexes, in response to which men would have tended to take sides with the colonial Government. Secondly, the more likely situation of an exclusive male revolt shunned by the overwhelming majority of their female counterparts. In reality, Mau Mau undeniably brought about a rapprochement between men and women in the common struggle against colonial rule.

Although K. Santilli asserts that 'women may have played a greater role in Mau Mau than is generally acknowledged' (Santilli 1977: 143), it is certainly not true that the participation of women in Mau Mau has been denied altogether. According to Carothers (1954: 12), for example, right from the beginning some observers even suggested that women were the real instigators of the movement. It is not true either that 'unlike their Algerian and Senegalese sisters, no Frantz Fanon or Ousmane Sembene has dramatized their contribution to Independence' (Santilli 1977: 143). In at least two 'Mau Mau' short-stories (Esther by S. Kahiga and The Return by J. Ngunjiri) the hero is a heroine, and especially in the case of Esther a very 'positive' heroine at that.

Until recently, however, we did not have at our disposal many concrete facts concerning the role of women in the Mau Mau revolt. The only hard facts were supplied by Barnett who maintained that the percentage of women amongst the Aberdares forest fighters never surpassed 5 per cent (Barnett and Njama 1966: 226). This is a rather low percentage, but we should also remember that there were only 98 women amongst the I,024 African victims of Mau Mau examined by J. Wilkinson (1954: 310-311). This suggests at least that women were not particularly hostile to Mau Mau even if their presence in the forest was limited (2).

Kershaw's Komothai data allow us to get a more factual picture of female participation in oath-taking. They show first of all that both men and women have a positive 'Mau Mau' score; although men score somewhat higher, the difference is not that significant. A striking fact is that female oath-takers tended to be older than their male counterparts . According to Kershaw, this discrepancy

between the sexes is probably due to the fact that oathing, which required payments to be made by the new initiates to the oath administrators, started mainly among the young men. In traditional Kikuyu culture, payments for initiation were always made by young men to their elders, and it was therefore difficult for young men to oath their fathers, real or classificatory. Payments by older women to young men were unknown in Kikuyu law, but at least they did not run counter to tradition. Therefore, young men initiated in Mau Mau could eventually oath their 'mothers'. This hypothesis sounds plausible, but other factors also may have played a role.

It should be noted that it was during the Mau Mau period that women, for the first time in Kikuyu history, actively and massively participated in politics. During the early periods of colonial rule, their participation had only been sporadic. In 1922, a woman, Mary Muthoni Nyanjiri, is said to have played a leading role in the Harry Thuku riot, but, as far as I know, women remained conspiciously silent during the KCA-missionary conflict on female circumcision, although the issue was highly relevant to them. Later on, respectively in 1934 and 1938, two women's riots occurred in Meru and Ndia, but in both cases typically female grievances were at stake and the demonstrations did not develop into broader political action (Lamber 1956: 100). The first attempt to associate Kikuyu women to political life was probably made after World War II by Peter Mbiyu Koinange in the context of the Kikuyu Independent Schools; according to Koinange himself (1955: 49) the African Women's League, which had set as one of its tasks the raising of funds for the schooling of girls, had about 10,000 members. After the war, women also participated in considerable numbers in the protest against terracing schemes in Fort Hall, in 1947 as well as in November 1951, and demonstrated against cattle dipping early in 1952, again in Fort Hall, although in all these cases local KAU leaders or Forty Group youngsters were behind the demonstrations. Mau Mau, then, was the first political organization to be joined massively by women.

During the Emergency, women played an important role in the passive wing of Mau Mau, serving as food-carriers, occasional cooks and nurses, scouts and spies, but also as seers and oath-administra-

tors. Santilli rightly remarks that their contribution to the struggle was mainly limited to the 'traditional female economic role' (Santilli 1977: 146) and that 'male accounts of forest life do emphasize women's roles as mistresses and the way women used their sexuality to aid the forest fighters' (Santilli 1977: 148). It is true that attractive girls sometimes used their charms to lure African traitors, soldiers or policemen into traps, and that Kikuyu prostitutes sometimes demanded rounds of ammunition for payment when offering their services to members of the Security Forces. Not all female Mau Mau participants, however, remained confined to these feminine roles. In the course of the Emergency the Aberdare generals decided, in fact, that women should be officially recognized as 'warriors' and that they should be allowed to receive ranks up that of colonel (Santilli 1977: 148).

This last bit of information suggests that there were also Mau Mau women leaders, a fact confirmed by several sources. General China mentions the existence of chief women scouts in the reserves (Itote 1967: 281-282), while Gikoyo mentions female guard commanders (Gikoyo 1979: 92) and separate women's committees in many villages (Gikoyo 1979: 278). Interesting remarks on leading women in Mau Mau are to be found in Kanogo's article:

> 'Another lady who stayed for about two years in the forest was so hardened that when she left the forest she could not contemplate marriage, since she had become arrogant and could not stand possible subordination from marriage. It is evident that there is a need to document the changed roles that women played in the course of Mau Mau (...). Traditionally amongst the Kikuyu, a woman did not attend, let alone participate in a "decision-making" meeting. This was not the case during the Mau Mau period. Wanjiru Nyamarutu represented the movement in areas as far from Nakuru as Githunguri. There is room for more research here' (Kanogo 1977: 249).

I certainly do agree with this remark. Until today, 'all the existing first-hand accounts of Mau Mau forest fighting are written by men (and) they are unable to address the issue of female organizational patterns, simply because of their limited exposure to them' (Santilli 1977: 147). Maybe this gap in our information will be filled one day by the memoirs of a female forest fighter.

As female members of Mau Mau did not show marked hostility towards male members, one is tempted to conclude that the old clea-

vage between the sexes did not play any role during the Emergency. If one analyzes the motivations of the female Mau Mau fighters it appears, however, that the traditional division of male and female economic tasks nevertheless may have been an important factor, without the protagonists being necessarily aware of this. Under colonial rule, the position of Kikuyu women, and particularly of those in the lower economic strata, sensibly deteriorated when compared to the position of men. As was argued by Kershaw, in traditional Kikuyu society the ownership of land was a male privilege, but agriculture, with the exception of a few 'male' crops, fell within the women's sphere of work and decision-making:

> 'A woman, having received the land, assumed full managerial rights and decided what and where to grow her produce, with whom to cooperate in her work, and whether or not she desired to produce a surplus. If she choose the latter, then it was her right to dispose of the crops as she saw fit, assuming her own family was sufficiently provided for and guests were taken care of at all times' (Kershaw 1975-1976: 179).

Animal husbandry, on the contrary, was the province of males and the same holds for the direction of social, legal and ritual affairs. A first point to be noted is that during the period of colonial rule, husbandry as well as politics lost much of their importance; land scarcity, consecutive to European settlement and a demographic 'explosion' of the Kikuyu population initiated in the early 1930s, severely reduced the possibilities of keeping large herds, while the elders' councils were incompatible with colonial administration. Kikuyu males, therefore were deprived of their traditional tasks, while women continued to carry the full work-load that had always been theirs. After World War II, this led to important changes in the roles of men and women within the Kikuyu family, although the consequences differed according to socio-economic strata, as was demonstrated by Kershaw. In families that had no land or not enough land, the following situation obtained:

> 'Both husband and wife regard the wife as responsible for providing the family with the needed sustenance. She has maintained the traditional role and has added to it the onerous obligation of finding the means to do so' (Kershaw 1975-1976: 189).

Although in this case the wife's decision-making powers increased, her economic situation deteriorated because of land scarcity and

increased responsibilities, the husband often being absent in order to earn a money wage (Kershaw 1975-1976: 190). In those families with land adequate to grow basic foods, the situation remained about similar to that of the pre-colonial period, with only minor changes in male and female roles. Still another situation obtained in those families with seven or more acres of land which allowed the growing of cash-crops. These crops being considered 'male-crops', women lost a good deal of their independence in economic decision-making, although this was compensated by a higher standard of living and an increase in social status (Kershaw 1975-1976: 191).

These situations, although admittedly quite different, had one point in common. Whether the husband was engaged in wage-earning activities or in the growing of cash-crops, he participated in the modern world (education had also been largely restricted to males), while his wife remained confined to the traditional economic sphere. It is probably in the context of this widening gulf between the sexes, that the active participation of women in Mau Mau has to be seen. Mau Mau solicitated the participation of both men and women, if only because its nature as a secret society required the oathing and initiation of as many Kikuyu as possible. In this way, Mau Mau provided the Kikuyu women with a possibility to jump the widening cliff between them and their menfolk, a jump many of them undertook with enthusiasm. Mau Mau not only wiped out the traditional differences between men and women in the sphere of public life, it also offered a short-cut to the modern world. I suggest that this is the main reason why the diffuse dissatisfaction and malaise among women did not turn against their male counterparts, but found an outlet in a common struggle.

It should be noted finally that this short-cut to the modern world was not always an easy way for women, and especially for those who took to the forest. Male reactions were often mitigated and ambivalent. Santilli comments:

> 'In fact, male forest fighters spend more time in their books discussing the conflicts and tensions the women's presence generated in the forest, than they do examining any of the women's positive contributions to the struggle' (Santilli 1977: 148).

This is certainly correct as is shown in the following quotation from Karari Njama's memoirs:

> 'To feed and defend women (...) is an unnecessary burden to our warriors. Sleeping with them would bring calamity to our camps, weaken our itungati (warriors) and, probably, they would become pregnant and would be unable to run away from their enemies, and they would be killed. No child can survive in this condition. For generations, women had been a source of conflicts between men. Wouldn't some of these girls, the ones brought into the forest against their wills, surrender and give the Government much information about us? I wished I could get them all out of the forest and let them face their fates in the reserves like the others' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 242).

Some of Njama's arguments seem rational, such as the obvious difficulty for a woman with child to participate in a hit-and-run guerilla warfare. The fear that sleeping with women might bring calamities to the warriors may also have been sincere. Traditionally a warrior taboo against sexual intercourse had been respected, a taboo well adapted to the traditional short-lived raids against the Maasai. Initially, the forest generals prohibited sexual relations, especially between male and female forest fighters (which incidentally demonstrates that they never expected a protracted war), but as time passed, this rule proved to be impractical, 'so that leaders authorized liaisons and required them to be formalized before the entire camp' (Santilli 1977: 148). Of course, this created tensions and conflicts within the armies, given the limited numbers of women in the forest. Many Mau Mau leaders and privates, moreover, seem to have been haunted by the idea that they might be betrayed by women. This may have happened in a few cases, but men were as much, if not more, tempted to betray as women, as was demonstrated by the easy recruitment of the pseudo-gangs. Closing this chapter, I would like to quote General China, who recognizes at least that his fears of betrayal may have been unjustified:

> 'Girls were forbidden to associate intimately with our soldiers, especially with the rank and file. A woman who becomes emotionally involved with a forest fighter and then quarrelled with him might neglect her duty, either deliberatedly or unwittingly. Perhaps in so restricting them we did them an injustice, for the women at all times did a fine job, but we could not afford to take unnecessary risks' (Itote 1967: 78).

CHAPTER SIX: THE KIAMBU ENIGMA

We have seen earlier, when analyzing Mau Mau recruitment patterns, that Nyeri and Fort Hall Districts were heavily over-represented in the forest, while Kiambu contributed little to the armed struggle. This was not only a statistical reality, but a situation sharply resented by many of the forest fighters who, in their later publications, often recalled the 'Kiambu enigma' with perplexity and/or anger. Karari Njama, for example, comments:

> 'Kiambu, the most advanced and educated district, seemed to have abandoned the revolt, I thought (...). The Kiambu people are the originators of the oath and all the ideas behind the Movement; why should they surrender when it is red hot? Wouldn't they like to harvest the fruit they planted?' (Barnett and Njama 1966: 297-298).

M. Mathu, in his turn, when remembering the situation in Hola Detention Camp in early 1958, has this to say:

> 'I soon learned that there was a strong undercurrent of conflict in the Open Camps between Kiambu detainees and the other Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (...). They were generally more advanced in education and had contributed many important leaders to KAU and the underground movement. Nevertheless, it was believed by Fort Hall and Nyeri Kikuyu that while Kiambu people started the Movement they didn't contribute much to the fighting once the revolution began. We also resented Kiambu people thinking they were better than other Kikuyu and acting superior' (Mathu 1974: 83).

Even harder words are spoken in the as yet unpublished memoirs of James Beauttah and Eliud Mutonyi, and it can therefore be said without exaggeration that the complaint about 'Kiambu dragging its feet' is about universal in 'Mau Mau literature'.

This lukewarm behaviour of Kiambu is all the more difficult to explain as it defies some established and commonly hold opinions about Mau Mau. First of all, the land alienations that occurred in the beginning of the 20th century to the benefit of European settlers, are often considered to be at the root of the revolt. When explaining how she came to organize her research project in Komothai during the Emergency, Kershaw says for example:

> 'Conversations with the Kikuyu, many of whom were not involved personally in Mau Mau, had stressed repeatedly that the drawing power of Mau Mau had been that it channelled the deep anger which was felt by the Kikuyu about the land alienations (...). Land alienation narrowed the choice of area down to Kiambu' (Kershaw 1972: 7-8).

Kershaw was actually right on the question of land. As was mentioned by Tignor:

> 'The major alienations in Kikuyuland occurred between 1903 and 1907 and were focussed on the southern part of the Kikuyu area (Kiambu District) (...). According to the report of the Kenya Land Commission (1934) the total amount of unequivocal Kikuyuland encroached upon by Europeans was 125 square miles (...). Of this total over 93 square miles were in Kiambu district' (Tignor 1976: 26-27).

Even if one considers that the exact amount of lost land has probably been underestimated by the 1934 Commission, it is nevertheless quite certain that, proportionally, Kiambu lost about six-sevenths of the land unjustly alienated from the Kikuyu.

Following this line of reasoning, Kershaw, however, was led to select an area not representative for Mau Mau in the sense that it remained fairly 'loyalist' and did not contribute much to the forest fight. This is especially true for mbari ya Igi, which lost a considerable amount of land and which, still in 1956, faced the problems 'concerned with land which had been lost to Europeans and the consequent problems of allocation and distribution of the remaining land between the members of the Kikuyu land owning groups' (Kershaw 1972: 13-14). This specific problem, however, only concerned the 3 to 4 per cent of the Kikuyu who had really lost land and who were concentrated in Kiambu District; Fort Hall and Nyeri people, as well as many of the Rift Valley squatters, had quite different problems that are not sufficiently accounted for by some of the current theories about Mau Mau.

It would certainly be wrong to conclude that the 'stolen lands' did not play a role in Mau Mau (Mau Mau 'Hymns' and memoirs provide us with overwhelming evidence to the contrary), but we are led to conclude once more that the land question should be considered in terms not directly related to the exact amount of land alienated and to the specific groups that actually lost land. A first point to consider is that, although less land was alienated in Fort Hall and Nyeri Districts, some areas were nevertheless lost to European settlers or set aside for public purposes, and that these 'pin-pricks' were in themselves sufficient to awake fears. This sense of insecurity was aggravated by the persistent refusal of the colonial authorities to provide Kikuyu landowners with individual titles to land such as were held by European farmers, a refusal that was consistent with

current legislation on land matters:

> 'By a number of Orders in Council and legal decisions, by 1902 all "waste land" in Kenya had officially become the property of the Crown and could be alienated (...). African ownership rights to land were denied on the ground that their forms of tenure did not constitute ownership under the British definition of the concept. It was only a small step for the British Crown to assume the rights of land ownership denied to Africans. This was done by the Crown Lands Order in Council of 1915. Though it provided for the gazetting of African occupied land into protected Reserves, this land became Crown land' (Breen 1976: 20).

A third step was set in 1921, when Supreme Court Justice Barth, in a Kiambu land case, ruled that Africans were only 'tenants at will of the Crown' on their own duly occupied and cultivated Reserves-land, which meant that they had no security whatsoever on their shambas. As European settlers, all through the colonial period, constantly clamoured for more land to be set aside for their use, African, and more particularly Kikuyu, sentiments of insecurity were kept alive right up until the Emergency. P. Gourou is therefore right when he concludes that, although the Kikuyu did not lose their land under colonial rule, they lived in constant fear that they might lose it in the future (Gourou 1954: 335).

As far as land is concerned, this is indeed the root cause of Mau Mau, and the fact that some land was actually alienated can not in itself explain the troubles leading to the declaration of the Emergency. Seen from this angle, it does not matter very much whether or not land was actually alienated in Fort Hall and Nyeri, and Kiambu's low commitment to the armed struggle, although it still has to be explained, is not contradictory to the situation of land-ownership prevalent in the early 1950s. A second point that has to be emphasized is that, in so far as the question of the 'stolen lands' did play an important role in Mau Mau, it had acquired a quite new dimension as time passed. During the early period of colonial rule, those people who had really lost land were probably the first, and for some time the only ones to protest. Gradually, however, the 'stolen lands' question became a general grievance of the Kikuyu, much as the question of Dantzig and Sudetenland had become a general grievance in Nazi Germany. In other words, the stolen lands problem had become a national irredentia-problem, stirring up the nationalist feelings of many Kikuyu, irrespective of who had owned the

land before alienation.

We have 'solved' by now a small part of the Kiambu enigma, but other mysteries remain. Mau Mau has often been pictured as a civil war between 'Haves' and 'Have-nots', an interpretation I have partly endorsed, although with some qualifications. The intriguing point, however, is that here again Kiambu scores higher than the other Kikuyu Districts and would therefore seem a much better candidate for 'hard-core' Mau Mau commitment. All known facts demonstrate that the preconditions for a civil war between 'social classes' existed in Kiambu more than elsewhere. Big landowners, for example, were a more common feature of the Kiambu rural scene. Referring to the situation after land consolidation at the end of the 1950s, M.P.K. Sorrenson reveals that:

> '(...) only 8,700 out of 38,900 holdings at Kiambu, 4,400 out of 37,800 holdings at Nyeri, and an estimated 2,700 out of 37,600 holdings at Fort Hall were 7.5 acres or more (...). In Kiambu there were only 2,000 holdings of fifteen acres or more; in Nyeri only 300 holdings; and in Fort Hall an estimated 300 holdings' (Sorrenson 1967: 224-225).

Although these facts do not entirely reflect the situation prevailing in 1952, they do provide some indications about the pre-Emergency period. We know, moreover, that the practice of 'irredeemable sale', a practice unheard of in tribal law, had been widely accepted in Kiambu, much more so than elsewhere, and that this is one of the factors explaining the larger number of big landowners in the district. As Sorrenson puts it:

> 'In 1941 the District Commisioner at Kiambu reported that: "hundreds, possibly even thousands of acres have changed hands by 'irredeemable sale' during the past ten or fifteen years, and most of this has gone into the hands of a very few people, including chiefs, tribunal elders and the educated minority"' (Sorrenson 1967: 40).

The situation was different in Nyeri and particularly in Fort Hall. Although in Nyeri the custom of redemption of sold land seems to have been abolished (Sorrenson 1967: 78), less land had changed hands than in Kiambu. As for Fort Hall, 'the most conservative of the three Kikuyu districts'(Sorrenson 1967: 165), even the attempts at the abolition of redemption had not been 'particularly successful' (Sorrenson 1967: 78). In Nyeri and Kiambu, moreover, 'there were persistent Kikuyu demands for titles, but in Fort Hall the Kikuyu

were less concerned' (Sorrenson 1967: 165), a fact confirmed by G. Lamb who, in the same breath, nevertheless claims that 'Fort Hall was probably the most determinedly pro-Mau Mau district in the country' (Lamb 1974: 12-13). (1)

Stemming from land sales and the slow but irresistible creation of a class of wealthy land-owners was the rising tide of land litigation in the Kikuyu Reserves.

> 'Land litigation', says Sorrenson, 'had become serious in Fort Hall before the Emergency, though again not as serious as in Kiambu. In 1952 £ 7,480 was spent in court fees on land litigation in Fort Hall but this was only a third of the sum spent in Kiambu' (Sorrenson 1967: 165).

I have no information about the situation in Nyeri, but it seems, again, that Kiambu was leading as a district rented by 'class-conflicts'. However, this high potential for civil war does not correlate with high Mau Mau commitment, at least not during the period of forest fighting. Should we therefore conclude that the civil war aspect of Mau Mau never existed but in the minds of some European observers? Probably not altogether. The civil war dimension of Mau Mau has certainly been exaggerated, but internal disputes and 'class'-conflicts did play a role during the Emergency, although in a much more subtle way than was thought before. This is demonstrated very skilfully by G. Kershaw when she compares the differential behaviour of mbari ya Thuita and mbari ya Igi in Komothai location. As for Thuita, the community lost part of its land to European settlers and was generally impoverished, but there were few internal conflicts:

> 'They had few ahoi and so had only to a limited degree conflicts between the male rights to mbari land and the female links to mbari land. All this means that in the 20th century their problems are not seen as created by each other but by the alien power of the colonial government and the European settlers who had deprived them of their land (...). Hence their heavy participation in Mau Mau, which promised them liberation' (Kershaw 1972: 271).

The situation in mbari ya Igi was quite different, due to a different system of land tenure. Here too, land was lost, but this led to internal conflicts; consequently, from 1930 onwards Igi-men became involved in extensive and expensive land litigation:

> 'The internal problems which were of such deep concern to them left them little time for what did not directly concern them

> as mbari members. However frustrating they found the political situation as a result of European colonial government, however dissatisfied they were with working conditions and wages, however discontented they might be about the lack of educational opportunities for their children, their main concern remained their mbari land. For this reason (...), when Mau Mau started recruiting its members (...), the men of the mbari were more concerned with their mbari affairs for which they needed a solution, than with the promises made to them about a more distant future' (Kershaw 1972: 328).

Consequently, 'when Mau Mau turned into a localized civil conflict, the mbari of Thuita had little violence while Mbari ya Igi had a massacre' (Kershaw 1972: 271). In other words, internal conflicts correlate negatively with Mau Mau oathing, but positively with internal Mau Mau violence. As internal conflicts were more frequent in Kiambu, as is suggested by the data quoted above, it becomes more understandable why the District was less involved in forest fighting, but had the highest amount of local murders and massacres during the Emergency (near the end of 1953, the District Commissioner at Kiambu admitted that half of the murders in the district during that year had been due to land cases: Cf. Sorrenson 1967: 101). I therefore suggest as a working hypothesis that the civil war dimension of Mau Mau was more pronounced in Kiambu than elsewhere and that this hampered the creation of a general anti-colonial front, while in Nyeri and Fort Hall, in the absence of such bitter conflicts, Mau Mau could concentrate its attacks on the European enemy, which partly explains higher commitment to forest fighting.

At another point, again, Kiambu's low Mau Mau commitment poses a problem. It has often been said that Mau Mau was related to land scarcity and land hunger, which is certainly true for the Kikuyu people as a whole. However, by the late forties, 'Kiambu district was the most densely populated of the three Kikuyu districts' (Kitching 1980: 119), although densities were also high in some parts of Nyeri and in the 'middle belt' of Fort Hall (Sorrenson 1967: 58 and 177). Related to this high population density is the fact that Kiambu District had the highest proportion of migrants:

> '(...) the 1948 census revealed facts regarding the source areas of Kikuyu migrants. About 42 per cent of Kiambu Kikuyu (...) lived outside the district. The figure for Nyeri district was 32 per cent (close to the Kikuyu average) and for Fort Hall (...) 22 per cent' (Soja 1968: 55).

These migrants partly went to the Rift Valley where they settled down as squatters. Although I do not dispose of a total breakdown of the squatter population according to district of origin, Kiambu people probably made up the majority of them: when the Kikuyu squatters were evicted from the White Highlands at the beginning of the Emergency, Kiambu had to face the problem of absorbing 37,000 people, while Nyeri and Fort Hall received some 20,000 people each (Clayton and Savage 1974: 353). As several authors claim that Mau Mau originated amongst the squatters (which is correct) and that these continued to play an important role in the movement all through the Emergency, one wonders how to explain Kiambu's low participation during the armed struggle. One way out would be to argue that Kiambu remained quiet for the very reason that so many of its inhabitants had left for the White Highlands, i.e. that this massive emigration removed those people with the highest 'risk factor' with regard to revolutionary activities from the district. There may be some truth in this argument, but I am not quite convinced by it myself.

Kikuyu migrants also went in great numbers to Nairobi, which again poses an embarrassing enigma. From 1950 onward the most radical 'Mau Mau' politicians mainly exercised in Nairobi, and it is a commonly-held opinion that political radicalism radiated from the capital to the outlying districts, especially in 1951 and 1952. As Kiambu migrants were numerous in Nairobi, one would therefore expect Kiambu people to have been particularly exposed to radical political influences and consequently most tempted to engage in political violence. Again, this is not reflected in Emergency behaviour. A possible explanation of this apparent contradiction has been suggested by Rosberg and Nottingham:

> 'The Kikuyu living in Fort Hall District (...) developed a different relationship with Nairobi. While most of the Kiambu Kikuyu can commute daily to the capital, the Fort Hall Kikuyu who decides to work there for any length of time has to take up local residence. Though he may retain every possible link with his home, he rapidly becomes more committed to the urban way of life' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 76).

The same, of course, holds for Nyeri, and this deeper commitment to urban life may explain in part why migration to Nairobi had different effects in Kiambu as compared to the other Kikuyu districts.

We have seen now that Kiambu's low commitment to the armed strug-

gle is not contradictory to some current theories about Mau Mau, although quite a few questions remain unanswered and some contradictions unsolved. We have not tried yet to search for the reasons why Kiambu behaved differently from the other Kikuyu areas. To this question we will turn now. A first hypothesis to be considered is that Kiambu remained outwardly quiet as the result of a conscious decision of the Nairobi Mau Mau leaders during the Emergency. This opinion was voiced, for example, by F. Kitson (1960: 32) and mentioned by Clayton:

> 'Throughout the Emergency, Kiambu's position was special: From the insurgents' point of view it was preferable that the district, with all its lines of communication and supply from Nairobi to insurgent groups, should remain reasonably quiet' (Clayton 1976: 26).

In my opinion, this hypothesis, although it was widely believed in administrative circles during the Emergency, cannot stand up to analysis. First of all, if the Nairobi Central Committee leaders had really decided to do all they could to keep the British Army out of Kiambu, their post-Emergency writings become inexplicable. I have quoted several examples of Mau Mau complaints about Kiambu go-slow tactics and indifference to the cause; the bitter words of E. Mutonyi are particularly relevant here, because he acted as Nairobi Mau Mau chairman during the period in which such a decision is supposed to have been taken. Recent publications, moreover, have led me to doubt that Kiambu District was all that crucial for Mau Mau communications and supply-lines. Mutonyi himself says:

> 'We had only one line of contact with the forest and our point of contact was Thika, where our Nairobi agent met a forest agent and exchanged information' (Mutonyi s.d.: 146).

More detailed information is supplied by G.G. Gikoyo who also claims that recruits from Nairobi, on their way to the forest, passed through Thika and then proceeded to Kandara Division in Fort Hall; Gikoyo specifies, moreover, that:

> 'Once fighters left Nairobi, their first stop was at Kassarani where they were received by a man known as Mucina whose duty it was to organize a coverage by vigilant sentries of the route through Ndarugu to Thika' (Gikoyo 1979: 303).

Ndarugu is one of the seventeen Kiambu locations, the most eastern one, exactly north of Nairobi. This area, therefore, had to re-

main quiet, because the main Mau Mau communication line passed through it, but there was no reason to generalize such a decision to the whole of Kiambu District. It is of course possible that some less important supply lines passed through other parts of Kiambu (there is some evidence for this in Muchai 1973: 21), but I do not think that this can have had much influence on the participation of Kiambu District in forest fighting. The 'Kiambu had to remain quiet' hypothesis, in my opinion, can be laid to rest.

A factor that may have played an important role in Kiambu's aloofness of the armed struggle is that the district was the most 'modernized' of all the Kikuyu areas and that Kiambu people, as a whole, had therefore much more to lose. E.W. Soja has demonstrated indeed that the Kiambu Kikuyu were the most economically and politically modernized and those of Fort Hall the most strongly traditional and resistant to change, with Nyeri dwellers somewhere in between, i.e. 'progressive, well-educated but selectively traditional'. According to this author:

> 'This threefold difference among the Kikuyu holds true for nearly all the conventional measures of modernization. It is an outstanding example of the differentiation within ethnic groups caused by the unevenness of modernization' (Soja 1968: 55).

Several observers, among whom colonial administrators as well as independent scholars such as Kershaw, have suggested that this may have influenced the behaviour of the Kiambu Kikuyu during the Emergency. Related to this is the suggestion that the nearer one lived to Nairobi and the amenities of urban life, the less one was prepared to accept the hardships and risks of forest life. Although I do not possess any factual evidence to support this hypothesis, it seems certainly worthwhile as a possible clue and should be followed up by more research.

Another point to be kept in mind is that Fort Hall, and especially Nyeri, had the advantage of their peripheral location with regard to the center of state control and were moreover nearer to the extensive mountain and forest areas of Nyandarua and Mount Kenya. As has been argued by E.R. Wolf (1969), these factors increase the 'tactical power' of potentially revolutionary peasant categories all over the world. This has certainly been the case in Kenya where the forest gangs were very much dependent on the logistical support and

supplies provided by their home locations, as was demonstrated by Barnett. It is evident that Kiambu District was at a disadvantage with regard to tactical power and mobility, while Nyeri, bordering on two forested mountain areas, was in a particularly favourable position. This may very well explain to some extent why Nyeri Kikuyu played such a dominant part in the forest fight.

Another hypothesis came to my mind only recently when reading P. Rogers' article on early British-Kikuyu contacts. In his own abstract, Rogers says:

> 'This article argues that trade rather than confrontation was the predominant theme of the early years of interaction between the Kikuyu and the British. It suggests that the Southern Kikuyu in particular enjoyed an important initial period of co-existence with the British, the economic basis of which was a rapid expansion in the 1890s of an already existing trade in agricultural produce with caravans moving along the road to Uganda (...). It was significant that the British did not at any time prior to 1900 deploy at Fort Smith a permanent garrison of troops' (Rogers 1979: 268-269).

This pattern, however, was not repeated when the British encountered the Northern Kikuyu who had remained aloof to the caravan trade and were hostile to intrusions into their territory. In the beginning of the 20th century, therefore, fierce battles occurred as well in Fort Hall as in Mathira and Tetu. In Tetu and Mathira moreover:

> (...) a combination of vulnerability to Maasai attacks and intermarriage with them had led to considerable cultural borrowing of military characteristics, with a particular emphasis upon warrior organization unmatched by any other Kikuyu group. Warrior social status was high, the period of warriorhood being nine years rather than the five years customary elsewhere (...). There was in effect, in both Tetu and Mathira, virtually a standing army' (Roger 1979: 267).

G. Muriuki's evidence confirms some of Rogers' remarks and leads us even a step further. He first of all states that probably half or more of the Mathira and Tetu population is of Maasai origin, or has Maasai blood, and then goes on to say that:

> 'At the close of the nineteenth century, the Mathira had almost evolved into a sub-tribe, a process which dated back to the first half of the eighteenth century. Their extensive assimilation of Ndia elements, and the widespread absorption of the Maasai and the Athi, led them to acquire singular characteristics such as their distinctive dialect, which set them apart from the rest of their kinsmen, even within Gaki district itself. Their emergence as a sub-tribe was only arrested by the arrival of the British' (Muriuki 1974: 67).

These remarks by Rogers and Muriuki lead me to two suggestions with regard to differential Mau Mau recruitment. It seems first of all that the areas with the highest Mau Mau activities during the Emergency were those where British penetration in the beginning of the 20th century was effected by military rather than peaceful means. Traditions of 'primary resistance' were therefore still alive in the minds of Fort Hall and Nyeri people, and this may in itself be a factor of some importance in explaining their active participation in Mau Mau. (2) It is interesting to note that I have found exactly the same pattern in Chad, where the Frolinat revolt, directed against an independent African Government, but with heavy anti-neo-colonial overtones, mainly touched those regions that had staged a determinate resistance against French colonization, while those areas that peacefully came to terms with the French stayed aloof from the revolt (Buijtenhuijs 1978: 412-413). In fact, I am not the only author who has come to a conclusion of this kind. Referrring to the post-independence Zaïre rebellions, Cl. E. Welch Jr. says:

> 'The Kwilu experience highlights the importance of indigenous traditions of resistance (...). In fact, exhorting individuals to take up arms in the absence of both delegitimization of the regime and a tradition of resistance may well backfire (...). Thus, historical continuities in African political violence should be expected (...). The role of the Makonde in the political history of Mozambique indicates such continuities, as does the involvement of the Bapende of Zaïre in political violence' (Welch 1977: 90).

By themselves, such continuities are not sufficient to account for the occurrence or the absence of political violence, but I think that they certainly play a role, in combination with other factors. This may have been the case in Kenya during the Emergency, and more research would be welcome in this field.

A second point that comes out, both in Rogers' article and in Muriuki's historical study, is the existence of considerable political, social and cultural differences within the Kikuyu tribe in the 18th and 19th centuries, i.e. before colonization. These differences, although mitigated by the common experience of colonial rule, were not entirely erased during the 20th century and they resulted in what J. Spencer called 'the essential parochialism of Kikuyu politics' (Spencer s.d.: 3). Especially relevant to our subject are the differences between Kiambu and Fort Hall (and secondarily Nyeri) dwellers,

that are perceived by many Kikuyu, such as for example James Beauttah:

> 'Those of us from Murang'a believe that we are true Kikuyu because Gikuyu and Mumbi, the founders of our tribe, lived in our district (...). Our brothers from Nyeri believe that they share this closeness to their ancestors and our sense of special 'Kikuyu-ness'. They also believe they are better fighters and more resourceful. The people from Kiambu on the other hand, tend to look down on Murang'a and Nyeri. They think they are more clever, better educated, and more modern. I shall always watch the people from Kiambu very closely. They are too cunning and selfish (...). Most of them are cowards. They betrayed our freedom fighters too often to doubt that' (Quoted in Spencer s.d.: 21).

This traditional rivalry between Northern and Southern Kikuyu certainly played a role during the Emergency, and this all the more so as it was kept alive by a different political evolution under colonial rule. It is to this subject that we will turn now, because it has probably been one of the main factors leading to Kiambu's absence in the forest fight. As this factor has already been described extensively by Rosberg and Nottingham (1966), by Spencer (1977), and by Clough (1978), I will try to be as brief as possible and only recapitulate the main conclusions of these authors.

A first point to be remembered is that, although it is difficult to give an exact date for the beginning of African party politics in colonial Kenya, organized political activity started shortly after World War I, with the Kikuyu Association. This body was founded by rural Kiambu Christians, with the help of Canon Harry Leakey, and it first demanded Christian representation on the chiefs' councils that judged tribal land cases. Only somewhat later did the Association become involved in the Kiambu grievances about land alienations (Spencer 1977: 24-25). The Kikuyu Association was a rather moderate body whose leading members held administrative posts as chiefs and headmen, and was in a way an organization of 'Haves'. It should be remembered that land could only be alienated from those who had land, and that quite a few of those who lost land, did not lose all of it and therefore remained 'Haves'.

The moderate character of the Kikuyu Association became particularly evident during the summer of 1921, when the Kiambu chiefs quarreled with Harry Thuku, a more militant Nairobi leader, although originally from Kiambu, who at first had tried to cooperate with the Kikuyu Association, but at the same time headed an organization

of his own, first called the Young Kikuyu Association (a highly significant name!) and then the East African Association. At the end of July 1921, Thuku was officially repudiated by the Kikuyu Association, a decision that brought about the first split in Kikuyu politics. The interesting point is that at that time, the split already tended to follow regional lines. As Rosberg and Nottingham put it:

> 'The Kikuyu Association effectively controlled at least the southern half of the Kiambu District, and Thuku made little headway here. But in the Church of Scotland Mission (C.S.M.) at Tumutumu (...) (Nyeri R.B.), Thuku made several converts. At Weithaga and Kahuhia CMS stations in Fort Hall District, Thuku had lit a flame that never expired in the storms to come' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 48-49).

This pattern was to repeat itself all through the colonial period. First of all in the middle of the 1920s, after the banning of the East African Association consecutive to the Harry Thuku riots of 1922. About Kikuyu politics in 1924, James Beauttah makes the following illuminating remark:

> 'I found people more involved in politics than ever: but it was just one group of people. The Kikuyu from Murang'a were the only ones carrying on the struggle: the others were afraid of the Government (...). You must understand something here, you must remember that after the 1922 Thuku incident, Kiambu and the other districts deserted us. Only the Murang'a people were left. Seven of us decided to start a new political group (...). Because Murang'a is the centre of Kikuyu, its heart land, I thought the proper name for the new body would be the "Kikuyu Central Association"' (Quoted in Spencer s.d.: 11-12).

The new KCA, therefore, started as a Fort Hall organization and although headquarters were soon moved from rural Kahuhia to Nairobi, which allowed people from other areas to join more easily, the Fort Hall origins of the movement were never entirely forgotten. This was demonstrated by the split that occurred in 1935, when Harry Thuku, now turned a moderate politician after long years of detention, broke away to found the Kikuyu Provincial Association: 'The result', says Spencer, '(...) was to split the KCA pretty much on Fort Hall, non-Fort Hall lines, to throw it back, in terms of its constituencies, ten years' (Spencer 1977: 104). Although some of the Kiambu dissidents rejoined KCA within a few years, it is nevertheless clear that Fort Hall District unwaveringly upheld a tradition of more militant politics, while moderate influences often

prevailed in Kiambu, with Nyeri somewhere in between.

The same pattern more or less prevailed after World War II. Although Kiambu District was considered the most politically active area and the heartland of Kikuyu politics by many observers (Cf. Sorrenson 1967: 151), moderate influences, such as exercised by some of the now aging KCA leaders and by Jomo Kenyatta and his associates, again served as a break on radicalism and political violence. This was evident in the 1946-47 period, when anti-terracing demonstrations occurred in Fort Hall and Nyeri but not in Kiambu (3), and again in 1951 when anti-terracing and anti-inocculation riots remained limited to Fort Hall. These fundamental features of Kikuyu politics were finally carried over into the Mau Mau period, as is indicated by Rosberg and Nottingham:

> 'In Kiambu, with its long history of KCA control and organization, the goat oath had been administered for several years on a selective base (...) and with great care by a few experienced elder nationalists. Their policy was slowly to persuade the élite to join the nationalist movement through taking an oath. In most parts of Kiambu, even during the Emergency, oaths remained an instrument of moderation and indeed control. In Nyeri and Fort Hall, however, few people had taken an oath by 1950, although in that year an acceleration in its administration began, increasingly directed from Nairobi. Oaths in these districts quickly developed into an instrument of mobilization for violent action, and their administration and direction came increasinly into the hands of relative newcomers to the political scene' (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966: 248-249).

Our general conclusion has to be therefore that Fort Hall, and to a lesser extent Nyeri Kikuyu, although probably less involved in politics as a body, were inclined to political militancy throughout the period of colonial rule while the Kiambu Kikuyu, although overall the most politically active, developed a tradition of moderate, constitutionalist politics besides the more militant one. It is an interesting paradox that this tradition of moderate action probably developed for the very reason that land was effectively alienated in Kiambu. As I have suggested before, some of the people who lost land, and sometimes the most clamorous among them, were chiefs or headmen and moreover fairly wealthy people. In Fort Hall and Nyeri, where alienations had been limited, these people, having no substantial grievances, altogether abstained from anti-colonial

politics, and thus left the floor to the militants, while their Kiambu counterparts agitated for the return of the stolen lands. This automatically drew them into the general current of anti-colonial politics, where they exercised a moderating influence on the radicals, as their status of chiefs and landowners did not particularly predestine them to violence. This hypothesis runs counter to established opinion with regard to the causes of Mau Mau, but I think that it may be fairly near the truth and that it should be examined in the light of new evidence as yet to be discovered. It should, moreover, be related to Kershaw's remark with regard to Igi being too much involved in their own mbari affairs to be able to respond enthusiastically to the call of Mau Mau and the oath of unity. This seems to have been a general problem that persisted over time. Referring to the mid-1930s, when the announcement of the Kenya Land Commission (or Carter Commission) created hopes in Kikuyuland that the 'stolen lands' would finally be returned, J. Spencer comments:

> '(...) the question of land was not only so visceral, but so parochial, particularly in Kiambu where the mbaris (...) were concerned about their land first and tribal land second - that the KCA found it difficult to organize on a Kikuyu-wide basis' (Spencer 1977: 101).

A last point remains to be mentioned with regard to the 'Kiambu enigma'. We have seen that internal socio-economic conflicts are partially responsible for Kiambu's low commitment to the Mau Mau cause. This implies that internal strife was less frequent and/or less bitter in Fort Hall and Nyeri. Although this appears to be correct with regard to socio-economic conflicts, the same does not hold true for political cleavages, at least in Fort Hall. R.L. Tignor noted for example that:

> 'In Fort Hall chiefs failed to establish the same administrative continuity and control that characterized Kiambu and Nyeri Districts. Its local government was marked by more violent contests for power and cruder techniques of administration (...). Through Kinyanjui's political astuteness the competition for political offices was regulated and mitigated among the southern Kikuyu. Large scale disputes were not common. This was not so among the Fort Hall Kikuyu where a cohesive ruling elite did not emerge. There, competition for office was intense (...). The Kikuyu poltical record books contain references to innumerable factional rivalries' (Tignor 1976: 46 and 57).

Referring to a particular case, i.e. the dispute that occurred, before World War II, in the Chania-Maragua division between the Mathanjini mbari and chief Njiri, Tignor (1976: 58) claims moreover that 'this rivalry played an important role in politicizing the location', the Mathanjini massively joining the KCA. As old Chief Njiri was an outstanding Loyalist during the Emergency, I would not be amazed if the conflict also influenced Mau Mau recruitment patterns in the area. This leaves us with a problem that touches upon an important general question with regard to revolutionary movements: are internal tensions within a dominated society conductive to insurgency or not?

As far as I have been able to see, socio-economic strife in Kiambu hampered rather than favoured Mau Mau recruitment, while internal political strife in Fort Hall is positively correlated with high Mau Mau commitment. It seems therefore that there is not just one general rule and that the the effects of internal cleavages within a dominated society depend on local circumstances. In the case of Fort Hall, the absence of a cohesive ruling elite possibly also meant the absence of an efficient counter-weight against radicalism in the sense that there was no dominant native establishment devoted to the cause of the British administration, so that local in-fighting could more easily spill over into the general political arena. At the same time, chiefs and headmen could more easily be perceived as colonial stooges as they did not have the possibility to side with the 'commoners' in the struggle for the return of the 'stolen lands', no land having been lost in Fort Hall.

All in all, we have to conclude that some of the factors that are commonly considered as having been at the root of Mau Mau seem to become rather dubious when seen in the light of the Kiambu enigma. This is especially the case with land alienation and internal conflicts about land, variables on which Kiambu scores much higher than the other Kikuyu Districts. I readily admit, however, that I have not been able to solve the Kiambu enigma altogether and that more research is needed. I would suggest that absolute priority should be given to local studies in Fort Hall and Nyeri. Grass-roots studies such as those by Furedi, Tamarkin, Kershaw, Kamunchuluh and others have considerably increased our knowledge about Mau Mau, but as Mau Mau commitment was deepest in Fort Hall and Nyeri, it is in these

areas that new research might be most fruitful. As memories grow dim and many Mau Mau members, or adversaries, have already disappeared, time is running out and Kenya scholars should act as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SOME WIDER PERSPECTIVES: MADAGASCAR AND CAMEROUN

At the end of an African journey, in February 1964, Mr. Tsjou-en-lai, then prime minister of the Chinese People's Republic, declared urbi et orbi that the perspectives for revolution in Africa, in his opinion, were excellent. Today, most observers no longer share this viewpoint, if they ever shared it, and certainly not as far as rural insurrection is concerned. Recent experiences have shown in fact that it is extremely difficult, under the conditions prevailing in Africa south of the Sahara, to launch a successful peasants' revolt. This was already so during the colonial era when the situation was relatively clear, because it was easy to identify the common enemy. The failure of the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, of the 1947-Madagascar war and of the UPC insurrections in Cameroun strongly remind us of this difficulty. As far as one can judge, conditions are even less favourable in post-colonial Africa.

In the light of these considerations, a comparative study of the three peasant revolts that did occur in colonial Africa (Madagascar, Kenya, Cameroun) seems to be a path of research that could yield interesting results (1). It is not my purpose here to undertake such a study, first of all because my knowledge of both Madagascar and Cameroun is limited, and secondly because the literature on both cases is scanty. As for Madagascar, only one scholarly study has ever been devoted to the 1947-events, i.e. J. Tronchon's thesis, a thorough work revealing much relevant information but somewhat hesitant in its general analysis. The literature on Cameroun is a bit more extensive, especially since the publication of R.A. Joseph's historical study, but even here, there is no comparison with the flow of books and articles devoted to Mau Mau. The only thing I am able to do therefore is to indicate some interesting leads that might be followed up by future researchers.

As for the Malagasy insurrection, one can first of all point to some similarities between this case and the Mau Mau revolt. The global 'colonial situation' of Madagascar, for example, had some points in common with the colonial scene in Kenya, in so far as Madagascar too was dominated by an important and noisy European settlers' community which, more than once, demonstrated its preferences for a kind of Malagasy national independence under white leadership

(Tronchon 1947: 110) and that did not hesitate, during the Emergency, to pour oil on the flames of the revolt in order to further its own cause. Although the Malagasy settler community did not provoke the revolt, as has been suggested by some contemporary observers, and although violence by the incumbents may have played a less important role in Madagascar than in Kenya, this background of noisy and reactionary settler politics constituted an important element of the general context within which the Malagasy insurrection occurred.

Another fascinating similarity between Mau Mau and the Malagasy revolt has already been mentioned in our analysis of Mau Mau as a revolt by proxy. As in Kenya, the insurgents, who mainly belonged to the 'common' people of uneducated peasants, with some support of sections of the sub-elite, claimed to act as trustees of the moderate nationalist 'évolués' who represented Madagascar in the French National Assembly. Many of them probably sincerely believed that they had received the green go-ahead light from the nationalist leaders, who were moreover convicted by colonial judges for having organized the revolt, although, as soon as the fighting broke out, they did everything in their power to dissociate themselves from it and even openly condemned political violence (Tronchon 1974: 55). This leads us to a point of general interest, i.e. the relations between the common people and the autochthonous élite within a dominated society in revolt against its oppressors. I am convinced that the 'revolt by proxy'-syndrome has occurred in other parts of the world and in different historical periods, as, for example, during the Camisards' revolt in the French Cevennes in the beginning of the 18th century, but I have as yet insufficient evidence to demonstrate this hypothesis beyond doubt. Nevertheless, it seems to me that this would be an interesting path for further research.

The organization of the Malagasy insurrection and the kind of warfare it opted for, or was forced of necessity to opt for, provide us with another field for comparative study.

> 'Pour coordonner leurs actions', says Tronchon, 'les chefs des forces malagasy sont gênés par un double handicap: la difficulté naturelle des communications dans une région densément boisée, au relief extrêmement tourmenté; l'absence de moyens modernes à leur disposition tels qu'un parc automobile, un service radio, etc. Assez nombreuses pendant la période offensive de l'insurrection, les conférences au sommet visant à établir des directives générales se font rares' (Tronchon 1974: 48).

This sounds quite similar to the situation prevailing in the forests of Central Kenya during the Emergency, although it has to be said that the Malagasy forces, during the first phase of the insurrection (April-July 1947) were able to stage all-out attacks on small towns with several hundreds, if not thousands of combatants and that they represented a real threat to the French colonial forces, much more so than Mau Mau ever was for the British Army. This probably because many ex-World War II servicemen, as well as other members of the colonized sub-elite (teachers, subordinate civil servants) joined the revolt, which was not the case in Kenya.

The Malagasy revolt, moreover, had the dimension of a civil war, as was the case with its Kenyan counterpart. Tronchon comments:

> 'Ainsi en certains endroits, l'insurrection a pu apparaître comme la manifestation violente d'un conflit de générations. D'une manière générale, on est frappé par la jeunesse des insurgés et des conjurés. Ailleurs, le mouvement apparaît comme la mise en question des pouvoirs exclusifs détenus par tel groupe social, ou de la pression exercée par tel autre' (Tronchon 1974: 164).

However, there are also important differences between the Mau Mau revolt and the Malagasy insurrection. Although I have argued that Mau Mau was not the 100 per cent 'tribal' movement some of its adversaries wanted us to believe, it is nevertheless true that it remained almost exclusively limited to the Kikuyu and the related Embu and Meru tribes. The Malagasy revolt, at the other hand, was able to transcend the 'tribal' dimension to a much greater extent:

> 'Il est frappant de constater que les insurgés adopteront pour emblème le drapeau rouge et blanc du royaume de Madagascar, marqué désormais par dix-huit étoiles représentant de manière symbolique les "18 tribus" malgaches' (Tronchon 1974: 141).

This was not only a professed ideal (Mau Mau, to a certain extent, did exactly the same), but something that also materialized in the field during the revolt. Tronchon emphasizes 'le brassage extraordinaire de toutes les "tribus"' during the Madagascar Emergency, and claims that 'il en est sans doute peu qui n'aient pas eu au moins quelques-uns de leurs membres mêlés à l'insurrection' (Tronchon 1974: 168).

Generally speaking, one can say that the Malagasy insurrection seems to have been more 'sophisticated' than Mau Mau. As for its nationalist dimension, this can probably be explained by the fact

that before colonization, Madagascar had known the beginnings of political unity under the umbrella of the Merina Kingdom, which provided the insurgents with a historical precedent to fall back upon. More generally, I tend to think that the presence of some members of the colonized sub-elite in the ranks of the Malagasy revolutionary forces is the most important factor to take into account here. An important question to be answered, then, is why these people took sides with the insurrection in Madagascar (as well as in Cameroun) but not in Kenya.

With regard to the U.P.C.-led revolts in Cameroun, again, several similarities with the Mau Mau uprising can be detected. There is first of all the fascinating mixture of national and 'ethnic' features emphasized by authors such as Johnson:

> 'One of the ironic facts about the Union, and an element that seriously affected its impact, was that despite its universal objectives - reunification, independence, and modernization - it was quite particularistic in its organizational base. Although its appeal reached far beyond, its structure and leadership came almost exclusively from the Bamiléké, Douala and Bassa peoples, and these groups reflected very different outlooks and conditions. Whether the Bamiléké and Bassa wings of the party differed much in their policy preferences during the early phases of the rebellion is less certain than that the organization of the guerilla activity in these areas was closely wedded to and shaped by their widely different tribal cultures and structures' (Johnson 1970: 679).

The U.P.C. insurrection, in fact, is not just one single revolt but rather a combination of at least two revolts, not always coordinated and not even always synchronized. Seen from the outside, the more or less sophisticated, Marxist-oriented U.P.C. leaders did give a semblance of unity to the insurrection, but in the field the Bassa and the Bamiléké rebels hardly cooperated with each other, and both rebellions were profoundly affected by the nature of the traditional societies within which they operated. As for the insurrection in the Bassa areas, led by U.P.C. General-Secretary Um Nyobe, Johnson mentions the following characteristics:

> '(Um Nyobe's) success depended upon his ability to incorporate the maquis into the traditional structures of the Bassa people and to utilize traditional symbols of authority and influence. To quarter, feed, and train guerilla bands, for example, it was crucial that he have control of land (...). Um Nyobe obtained access by relying on connections and influence among members of various Bassa secret societies' (Johnson 1970: 680).

This is confirmed by G. Chaffard:

> 'On découvre (...) que l'U.P.C. (...) s'est efforcé de faire revivre les anciennes structures des clans et des sectes, et de ressuciter les pratiques traditionnelles affaiblies par l'action des missions et de l'administration (...). La tradition clanique et les coutumes foncières du pays bassa ont à ce point pénétré le mouvement insurrectionnel que les maquis ne peuvent s'installer que sur des terres appartenant aux individus qui les composent' (Chaffard 1967: 381 and 386).

This suggests an interesting parallel between the Bassa maquis and Mau Mau as a movement for cultural renewal, but no author, unfortunately, has elaborated upon this point for the Bassa case. At other points, however, both cases seem to have been rather dissimilar. As far as I have been able to see, traditional Bassa culture had not much in common with traditional Kikuyu culture, and the same seems to hold for the political, social and economic context in which both revolts occurred. More parallels seem to exist between the Kikuyu and the Bamiléké, and a comparative study of the reactions of both these peoples to colonial rule might be particularly interesting (eventually the Ibo of Eastern Nigeria might be included in such a study).

First of all, the Bamiléké, were exceptional in Africa because of their very high population densities. J. Hurault (1970: 2) gives for the whole of Bamiléké country an average of 120 inhabitants per square kilometer, while some chiefdoms in the Bafousam Subdivision had, already in 1946-47, attained density figures of over 800 persons per square mile (Levine 1964: 60). It is quite clear that these population densities and the resulting land scarcity were at the root of many Bamiléké problems. The Bamiléké are also similar to the Kikuyu in that land tenure is one of the most fundamental aspects of their life, an aspect without which it is impossible to understand their social and political system. Again, in Bamiléké society, as in Kikuyuland, the social structure was essentially democratic and open. As Hurault puts it:

> 'Loin d'être combattue par la coutume, la mobilité sociale constitue la raison d'être et si l'on peut dire le moteur de l'ensemble du système d'institutions des Bamiléké. La promotion personnelle est ouverte à tous, dans le cadre des sociétés coutumières de la chefferie' (Hurault 1970: 6).

As a result of these facts, the Bamiléké, who are the largest ethnic group in Cameroun, have been very prone to migration; by

1954, at least a 100,000 Bamiléké, on a total of about half a million, were estimated to have taken up residence elsewhere in Cameroun (Joseph 1977: 8). Bamiléké who migrated to the major towns of Cameroun have tended, moreover, to try their hand in risky employment like commerce, where personal enterprise is a necessary prerequisite for success. Like the Kikuyu (and the Ibo), the Bamiléké appear in the literature as a people of individualistic, dynamic and 'aggressive' personalities ready to take advantage of every opportunity coming their way, and this was reflected in their political behaviour under colonial rule.

There are, however, also important differences between the Kikuyu and the Bamiléké, especially in land tenure modalities. To start with, land in Bamiléké country is not 'owned' by individuals or extended family groups, but by chiefs who dispose of all the land in their chiefdoms and are responsible for allocating plots amongst their 'subjects'. Normally, these plots are transmitted by inheritance within the family of the men enjoying the usufruct of the land, but the chiefs, at least theoretically, retain the right to take back a plot, and this actually does happen in the case of gross misbehaviour or when a man tries to sell his plot to people outside his immediate surroundings. If a man dies without a legal heir, the land automatically returns to the chief.

The system of inheritance is also completely different in Bamiléké country. In Kikuyu society, land is devided in equal parts amongst all the male descendants of a landowner, with the result of land fragmentation and uneconomic small plots. Under Bamiléké customary law, however, property is indivisible, and only one son becomes the legal heir. This need not even be the oldest son of the family for a man is free to designate among his sons the one he thinks the most fit to receive his inheritance. This system not only governs the passing on of economic assets from father to son, but also the transmitting of 'social' or 'political' assets because the same descendant who takes over the family plot, will also inherit the 'titles' of his father and his position in the different 'societies' of the chiefdom.

This means that at each succession some descendants did not become heirs and were excluded from economic property and political influence. As long as land was not a scarcity factor, the chiefs would

allocate new plots to these younger brothers, which meant that they did not suffer unduly from this way of settling inheritance problems. However, when land did become scarce during the colonial period, no outlet remained for these 'dispossessed' people, their only chance being to emigrate to rural areas outside Bamiléké land or to the towns. Most specialists of the Bamiléké revolt agree that the insurrection was initiated by and carried on by these disgruntled and embittered 'outcasts' of traditional Bamiléké society and especially by those who had to face the hardships of modern African town life with its high rate of unemployment and its difficult living conditions. Moreover, the power of the chiefs, traditionally restrained by a council of notables, had become much more autocratic under French rule, with the result that there were, in each chieftaincy, a number of notables with specific grievances concerning their loss of influence, and that violence had beset the Bamiléké areas for many years (Johnson 1970: 682). Finally, in the adjoining Mungo area, Bamiléké labourers and sharecropppers had managed, over the years, to emerge as a sizeable rural bourgeoisie, which brought them into conflict with the autochthonous population (Joseph 1977: 142-148).

It is therefore not surprising that the Bamiléké revolt, much more than the Bassa insurrection, was characterized by internal violence and bloodshed. Johnson comments:

> 'It is clear from the turmoil and competition among Union sympathizers in the Bamiléké areas, and from the significantly greater number of casualities and amount of property damage there, that objectives were less specific and impersonal than in the earlier Bassa rebellion. Although the rebellion was used as a cover for the violent settlement of many personal disputes in both areas', this aspect seems to have been central in the Bamiléké case (...). The extensive destruction of public welfare services, and the limited number of Europeans attacked, suggest a campaign designed simply to intimidate local residents' (Johnson 1970: 685).

These remarks echo some of the observations made on Mau Mau, and a comparison of the civil war dimension of both revolts might be very fruitful.

Another field of comparative research could be the role played by the urban environment in Kenya and in Cameroun. As we have seen earlier, in both cases the capital city (Douala is Cameroun's economic, although not its administrative, capital) considerably influenced the diffusion of radical ideas in the countryside and the

recruitment patterns of the revolutionary movement. In Cameroun this led to the insurrection acquiring a markedly urban, 'proletarian' and modern ideology, which has not been the case in Kenya, for reasons that should be investigated more thoroughly.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Anake wa Forty means 'The Warriors of 1940', i.e. those young men circumcised in 1940.
2. This is one of the conclusions of J. Spencer's pioneering doctoral thesis (1977), a conclusion that runs counter to the hitherto current image of KAU as a strong and active national party.
3. Urban is taken here in the sense of people living temporarily or permanently in towns, irrespective whether or not they 'felt' themselves as 'urbanites'.
4. I would like to note in passing that this is a misinterpretation of Fanon, who argued, in fact, that anti-colonial revolts are always initiated in the rural areas but that the urban lumpenproletariat is likely to act as the 'spearhead', introducing the revolution in the towns.
5. Cf. our previous analysis of how the Kenyatta - Koinange moderates in Kiambu lost control over the urban militants.
6. It is of some interest to note that in the apparently calm setting of Kiambu in 1950, civil servants were still able to distinguish between KCA and Mau Mau, a distinction that became blurred during the heated pre-Emergency days when the colonial administration, as a body, lost its calm, and charged wildly against any form of African political activity.
7. Kershaw is tempted to believe that many of these new associates were motivated by the following -moderate- line of argument: 'Kenyatta has been arrested as the main Mau Mau leader - He is a good man - Therefore Mau Mau is a good thing and I must join'. This may have been true in some cases, but other hypotheses are possible: some of the new initiates may have been forced to take the oath (Cf. Mutonyi), others may have been fence-sitters who took the oath as a kind of insurance now that fighting had broken out, while still others may have been people of the very militant type who only joined Mau Mau now that the earlier period of hestitation about the movement's line of action had come to an end.
8. Wachanga gives much higher total numbers for Nairobi recruits, but as many of his figures are undoubtedly inflated, I suppose that this is also the case on this point. As far as the dates are concerned, some of his information is consistent with Mutonyi's evidence. It should be noted also that Mutonyi may be right as far as numbers are concerned, but that the large 'contingents' he mentions very probably travelled in small groups and did not march to the Aberdares in closed ranks as his narrative suggests.
9. It has to be mentioned that the nominal lists used by Sorrenson comprised many people who had no land at all; no previous search had been done, so that these figures are not biased in the sense that they only include landowners.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. It should be mentioned also that Wachanga is the first author to give some details on Mathenge's death. Mathenge was the only important Mau Mau leader never accounted for by the Security Forces, and in 1958, he was still mentioned as being 'at large' in official documents. It has repeatedly been rumoured in Kenya that he is still alive and hiding in Ethiopia or the

Sudan. Wachanga met Mathenge for the last time at the end of May 1955, Mathenge never showing up for a later appointment. Wachanga comments:
'It is my belief that he was killed by the Security Forces at Munyange Forest (...). Later, Colonel Waruthita confirmed that this had happened, although he did not tell the government. The government did not know whom it had killed, because Mathenge's head had been shattered' (Wachanga 1975: 135).

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. This quotation is based on notes taken during Balandier's lecures. Neither he, nor Mongo Beti, can be held responsible for its exact wording or for eventual mistakes.
2. This version of the events is not conform to reality, but many Kikuyu seem to have believed it. Waiyaki was deported by the British and died on his way to the Coast. However, he was not buried alive or upside-down, although he may have died from a fractured skull suffered in the scuffle before his arrest (Clough 1978: 57).
3. Maina wa Kinyatti (1980: 43) gives another version of this 'hymn' in which Kenyatta's name is replaced by 'Mau Mau', while no mention is made of Kenyatta as a saviour.
4. According to Wachanga (1975: 40) this meeting took place in late 1953.
5. When I wrote these pages, I had not yet read J. Murray's excellent article on the Watu wa Mungu. Although this author is very cautious in her conclusions, her article does not contain any indication in favour of Rawcliffe's hypothesis (Cf. Murray 1973: 214-216).
6. A recent book, The Kenyatta Succession, by J. Karimi and Ph. Ochieng, has a chapter devoted to GEMA (pp. 55-69). The authors claim that 'although ostensibly a "welfare" organization, Gema was, in fact, a political party within Kanu' (p. 18). They also disclose some of GEMA's economic and financial enterprises, but they do not mention eventual cultural aims of the association.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. An interesting point is that the forest fighters never seem to have mentioned the names of the real 'planners' of Mau Mau, i.e. Kubai, Kaggia, c.s. Did they really ask for Kenyatta, or did they only mention him in their post-Emergency memoirs as a proof of their loyalty to him?
2. In a recent interview in a Dutch newspaper (De Volkskrant, August 15th, 1981) Dr. Mugo admitted that the English version of The Trial is too Marxist and stereotyped in tone, and that the Kiswahili translation renders much better the language of the peasants in revolt.
3. According to J. Tronchon, the same holds true for the 1947 Malagasy insurrection that represented 'un retour aux sources de l'âme malgache pour promouvoir une véritable restructuration de l'ensemble de la société (...). Ce retour aux sources de l'identité malgache n'est pas d'abord un retour au passé. Il est vécu comme une renaissance, comme la seule voie possible pour l'avenir' (Tronchon 1974: 167).

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. According to Furedi, this category was almost absent in the settled areas:
   'Support for the Mau Mau movement was widespread throughout the farms. Many Government officials were impressed by this unity when they failed to form a core of loyalist Kikuyu to fight on their behalf. This was not the case in the Kikuyu Reserve. There, a group of missionary educated Kikuyu literati, landowners and businessmen, closely tied to the colonial system, constituted the basis for a class of collaborators' (Furedi 1974b: 498).
2. According to the China interrogation (p. 39) there were no women in the militant wing of Mau Mau in the Mount Kenya sphere.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. This, incidentally, seems to contradict my own suggestion that general insecurity about land was at the root of Mau Mau. Did the Fort Hall Kikuyu feel this insecurity less than their counterparts elsewhere, as these facts seem to indicate; and if so, why were they nevertheless 'the most determinedly pro-Mau Mau'? Much research remains to be done on particular aspects of Mau Mau.
2. Kiambu people often referred to Chief Waiyaki as a 'primary resistance' leader, but it has to be remembered that Waiyaki was a 'political martyr', rather than a war leader.
3. This may also have been related to the fact that there was less 'landlordism' in Fort Hall, and therefore more terracing, a practice almost universally hated by the Kikuyu (G. Kershaw: personal communication).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The revolutions in the ex-Portuguese colonies and in Zimbabwe, in my opinion, belong to a slightly different category, as they took place at a time when most of the other African countries were already independent, but the comparative study I am proposing could eventually be enlarged to include these cases.

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