

The Intersectionality of Colonialism and Gikūyū Land Tenure Systems: A Feminist Political Ecology Perspective

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Abstract

The Agikūyū in Kenya revered land as a spiritual gift from God in which communities and nature were inextricably linked to preserve sacred ecosystems and biodiversity. However, the intersectionality with colonialism and the expansion of capitalism propelled by the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, changed the landscape tragically. In 1893, it was affirmed that the ownership of land was by occupational rights and unoccupied land belonged to the colonial state and white settlers. In 1895, Kenya became part of the British East Africa Protectorate and the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902 made Kenya a British Colony, in which by 1915, the Kenyan land became under the British Empire. Many locations especially in Gikūyū areas experienced devastating displacement, landlessness and human adaptations in new ecological conditions, control and resources use in the agricultural pastoral communities. These problems led to political consciousness and in 1954 under the Swynnerton Plan, the Gikūyū land tenure system became the basis for land reforms until 1970s. This paper extends the literature on colonialism and land ownership mainly centering on Africans reacting to the British imperialism and histories of underdevelopment by addressing the intersectionality of colonialism and the dynamic of gendered responses to colonialism at intra-household level, and as the base of history, political and economic systems influencing women, health, and ecology. The focus is on Gikūyū families within the contexts of colonial and post-colonial policies of land consolidation, adjudication and land registration to private ownership of property. The land confiscated by the Europeans, deeply affected the Gikūyū ethnic group, and it was their grievances over land that eventually became Kenya's most controversial political project leading to the conflict between British, and the Mau Mau movement, and finally to independence in 1963. I use a feminist political ecology, which is inclusive to indigenous knowledge and spirituality in order to capture the understanding of and the experiences of communities responding to global processes of political, economic and ecological changes.

Introduction

As an Mūgikūyū, born within the socioeconomic and political structures of Gikūyū culture and nature, land is a spiritual factor in our lives that has to be respected and preserved. Through oral history and children's stories, we were taught that earth and its ecosystems are sacred for the sustenance not only of those alive, but for the departed ancestors. Consequently, one cannot degrade the earth since it provides for the living and dead. The significance of earth is also displayed in times of sickness, bad weather or wars when sacrifices and prayers were performed on a sacred space under a fig tree. When Agikūyū pray, and during the burial of the departed, they face Mount Kenya; see reference of Mt. Kenya below. It was from Mountain Kenya that Agikūyū trace their lineage and as such, nature and culture are entwined.



Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/mt-kenya>:

Our parents were affected by the last waves of domination and control of resources and labor by colonialists and missionaries, propelled by western expansion of capitalism and industrialization that negatively affected our family. 1

1 Kikuyu or Gikuyu (Gikuyu: Gĩkũyũ[γēkōjój]) is a Bantu language spoken by the Gĩkũyũ (Agĩkũyũ) of Kenya. Kikuyu is spoken in the area between Nyeri and Nairobi. The Kikuyu people usually identify their lands by the surrounding mountain ranges in Central Kenya which they call Kĩrĩnyaga.

Mapping Africa's natural resources



Source: <https://panafricanvisions.com/2018/02/mapping-africas-natural-resources-3/>

This process of looting, extracting resources, and social labor were carried out by violence, and annihilation of local communities by detentions, labor camps and displacement of families. Suspected Mau Mau members at a detention camp in Nairobi.

Violence among the Mau Mau community.



Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/we-were-tortured-kenyas-mau-mau-era-detention-centers-65347>

The name Akikuyu or Agikuyu with the prefix ‘A’ is usually used to describe the people as entities and ‘a Kikuyu’ and ‘a Mugikuyu’ for an individual being. To describe the language we say, in singular, “This Kikuyu is speaking Kikuyu or this Mugikuyu is speaking Gikuyu”. In the collective we say, “The Akikuyu speak Kikuyu or The Agikuyu speak Gikuyu”.

This push was accompanied by landlessness, psychological hopelessness, environmental degradation and taxation among other factors. Many locations especially in Gĩkũyũ areas were experiencing devastating displacement, landlessness and human adaptations in new ecological conditions, control and resource use in the agricultural pastoral communities. The families who lost land in high potential areas where climate suited production of crops throughout the year, were pushed into arid and semi-arid reserved areas where only Kenyans were rendered landless by the British. According to the oral history, the Agĩkũyũ had been warned through prophecy by *Mugo wa Kibiru*, the famous great seer, about the coming of the European who would come to Gĩkũyũ country out of the big water [Indian Ocean]. They would come carrying weapons more deadly than the poised arrows and would conquer the country and enslave Gĩkũyũ people.

However, the Agĩkũyũ were urged to fight for their land (Kinyatti, 2008:10) [1].

There will come a people from the East who will look like butterflies. Their skins will be colorless like that of the tree frog, *Kiengere* and you will be able to see the blood flowing under their skins just like in the *Ciengere* (plural). These people will also look like lepers. The *Ciengere* will cause a painful upheaval of the tribal ways and things will never be the same again. These pains will be the birth pangs of good and of bad.

(<https://mukuyu.wordpress.com/tag/urathi-1-wa-cege-wa-kibiru/>)2

The Agĩkũyũ, who considered land as a gift from Ngai (God) fought fiercely and courageously against the colonialists, but found themselves landless and forced to work and pay taxes to the colonial state.

2<https://mukuyu.wordpress.com/tag/urathi-wa-cege-wa-kibiru/> Sep 13, 2014 - THE PROPHET. The greatest and most famous Gikuyu prophet and seer was **Cege wa Kibiru** who lived at or around Kariara near Thika. Because like all great Gikuyu seers he was to become a renowned healer or Man of Medicine, Mundu-Mugo, he later **came** to be known as Mugo wa **Kibiru** that is Mugo.

The colonial villages, like refugee camps, became the homes of those who were pushed away from their lands by white settlers, missionaries, and the colonial state. The villages were makeshifts in which a family often shared a single room without privacy.

In 1953, Waguthi wa Kaloji was a blushing bride. She and her husband were farm labourers for a British settler in Nyeri. Waguthi

was among over one million Kenyans who were forced to live in colonial villages in the then Murang'a, Nyeri and Kiambu districts during the State of emergency. Now aged 90, she recalls that together with her husband, they were resettled in Kirichu colonial village as the Mau Mau war against colonialists raged. One of her lasting memories is how close to 30 women and their children were crammed into tiny mud huts measuring about 20 by 10m. They would take turns to cook whatever little food they could get through rations on a communal fire. It was terrible. We had no food, toilets or freedom. We slept on the ground while those who were lucky had gunny sacks or wooden planks to lie on.

[An example of a colonial village in the reserve](#)



Source: <http://www.newsweek.com/we-were-tortured-kenyas-mau-mau-era-detention-centers-65347->

The makeshifts crumpled during cyclones, and structures were dreadfully destroyed. There were no trees and during dry seasons, wind would sweep away the top of these homes, and the soil would get into the eyes of the children playing outside. Water, food and firewoods in these arid zones were inadequate and it meant that children and especially girls, given gender roles, had to follow their mothers and trek for miles in hot weather in search of firewood and water. The painting below depicts arid zones where ecosystems were eroded leading to soil erosion sweeping away minerals crucial to health. These disproportionately affected women who had a load on their backs as the caregivers and households' managers.



Source: Student Painting (1993)

The rivers were no longer clean and water had turned brown they still do and have become a source of waterborne diseases such as malaria, amebiasis, schistosomiasis, typhoid and malaria among others. These factors shaped early childhoods and climate became an important component of growing-up in the villages. The graves

of ancestors, and the livelihoods embedded in cultural values and ecosystems were also debased and uprooted.

The agricultural and pastoral lands, the major sources of livelihoods for many, were transformed into "White Highlands" for settlers and the colonial state. The transformation of Kenyan "Green Landscape" to "White Landscape" was an embedment of hegemony and moral superiority. This power became the cornerstone for settlers' wealth which deprived families and few animals grazing land which led to malnutrition since there were no longer milk, butter and ghee. The moral superiority was imbued with racialized and gendered ideologies which became the rule of the land. The *Pax Britannica*, a philosophy of divide and conquer became a mechanism of dehumanization and destruction of existing gender relations, families, extended families, and clanships.

The British colonial rule and their policies of land appropriation changed the whole ecosystems in Kenya. This damaged the socioeconomic and political systems, and earth, on which animals, rivers, forests, wetlands, birds, butterflies, herbs, and medicinal plants depended on. The land, social relation structures, and spiritual beliefs, integral to culture and nature were destroyed and eroded. Animals, like the transformation of land for profit and greed, by whites, were not spared since elephants, leopards, lions, giraffes, buffalos, rhinoceros, monkeys, ducks, birds, butterflies became the targets and commodified in sports and leisure for the Europeans. The skins, heads, and ivories were converted into trophies to be displayed in their homes and clubs. To have full control over the Kenyans, dogs and guns were instrumental in the destruction of wildlife and communities. Dogs and white military weapons, became tools in the suppression of the Mau Mau. 3



Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Mau-Rebellion-History-Beginning-End-ebookB08LVMV9SZ?asin=B08LVMV9SZ&revisionId=d63de7df&format=1&depth=1>

The objectivation of these animals like the colonized, were deprived of their rights to move freely in their homelands. Other creatures such as fish, and other amphibians like frogs, salamanders, toads and turtles among others were not secure. The forests and indigenous trees and herbal plants became the victims of the imperial power. The songs of birds and insects and sounds of animals were silenced while traditional dances of the elderly, the youth and children were muted. The production of indigenous foodstuff ceased to be grown, and were replaced by settlers'

production of coffee, tea, wheat, and pyrethrum (*tanacetum coccineum*), including barley for exports. The land had to give room to the white settlers, missionaries and colonial state while depriving Kenyans of their livelihoods.

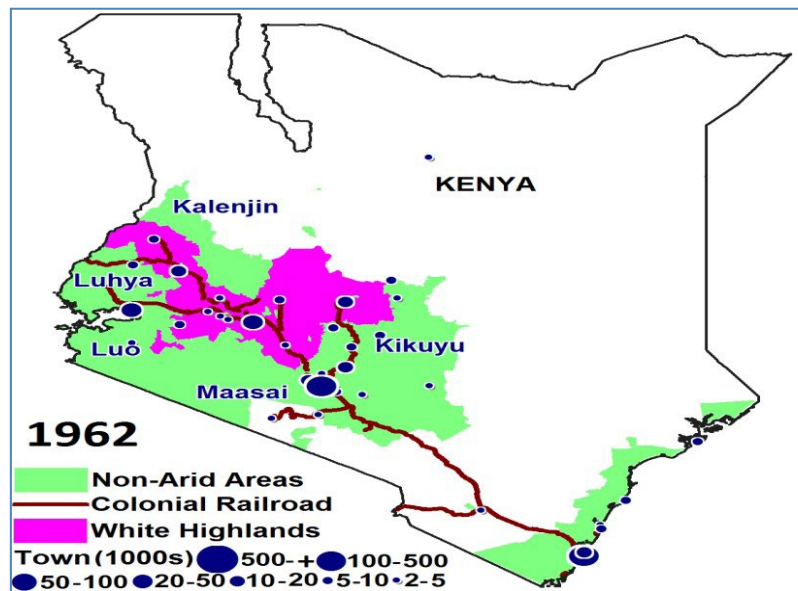
The Gĩkũyũ drinks (*ũcũrũ*) that is made from the fermented grains (millet, sorghum, finger millet etc.), and fermented drinks for the elderly—a mixture of juice from sugarcane, honey and African Sausage (*Kigelia Africana*), became a sin in the eyes of the missionaries and the colonial establishment. Kenyan brewers were subjected to fines and jail. What was implicit in this move was to pave a way for colonialism and settlers to grow barley and wheat for commercial beer. Kenyan “Brewery” became the monopoly of beer brewing which still exists today. Having been deprived of indigenous drinks, families were subjected to polluted water since the ecological systems had collapsed. Social and gender relations were eroded, and women and children were more negatively affected given their gender roles. Climate change through wars, and the destruction of ecological systems shaped the livelihoods of families. The psychological and trauma consternation have been transformational to current generation.

Historical background

In 1893, Lord Lugard pointed out that the East African highlands

(Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) would provide commercial agriculture in demand in Europe, as well as unlimited room for agriculture for white settlements and stock-rearing farms among other business. In order to protect these areas, it was necessary for Britain to achieve maximum control over the area “by giving both the traders and the imperial government the power to acquire the title to deal with land resources of the region” (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991) [2]. It was argued that the ownership of land for Africans was by occupational rights only, and any unoccupied land was to be given to the colonial state and settlers. In 1895, Kenya became part of the British East Africa Protectorate and the settlers had been encouraged to settle in Kenya from 1900, in order to facilitate the building of the Ugandan railway. The railway was an instrument of exploitation of African labor as well as the means of transportation of natural and raw materials out of Africa to Europe for industrialization. In order to have the total control of population and resources, the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902 made Kenya a British Colony, followed by ownership of Kenyan land by the British Empire in 1915. White settlers were encouraged to come to Kenya and by 1920, the settlers had increased, and by 1953, 4000 settlers had owned 7.3 million hectares of land in Kenya. Their objectives were linked to the internal primitive accumulation of capital and consequently, they were there to control the means of production and exploitation of labor, raw and natural resources

Distribution of Land



4 Square: 224,961=582,600 square kilometers Mount Kenya 17,058 feet (5,200 meters)

<http://www.google.com/search?q=Map+of+Kenya>

Kenya: The current population of Kenya is **56,090,080** based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data.

Gĩkũyũ population : The Kikuyu (also Agĩkũyũ/Gĩkũyũ) are a Bantu ethnic group native to Central Kenya. At a population

of **8,148,668** as of 2019, they account for 17.13% of the total population of Kenya, making it the largest ethnic group in Kenya.

The settlers expected full support from the colonial officials for their agricultural production and expansion of ownership of land, and any support for Kenyans’ agricultural production would compete and

jeopardize settlers' agricultural development. Kenyans' production of cash crops for instance, in coffee, tea, wheat, and barley would not only create competition, but also spread diseases to the farms of settlers as well as fuel a class of African farming communities antagonistic to the white farmers. Therefore, to support Kenyans in any way would undermine the political domination of all the whites in Kenya. This was in contradiction to the 1922 Dual Policy which was implemented after the First World War (1914-1918), to ease some of the tensions and challenges the colonial state was facing from settlers and the Indian population as well as from the Kenyans who were fighting against taxation and labor. The objective of the Dual Policy was to have Kenyan agricultural production and that of European agricultural development parallel each other. However, the colonial state conceded to the settlers' pressure and as a result, the dual policy failed the commitments to the welfare of Kenyans.

For the white supremacists and scientific racism backed by the measurement of African skulls (Harding, 1993), assumed Africans were mere savages who lacked sagacity; therefore, they could not develop without the redemption of Her Majesty Government. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 declared all land to become Crown Land, ready for appropriation by the white settlers and colonial state. These steps affected Agikūyū land relations within the contexts of settlement patterns and systems allocation, control and use of resources in the agricultural and pastoral communities, displacement, landlessness and human adaptations in new ecological conditions. Additionally, famines, livestock diseases, and plagues increased which led to political consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s. From 1920, many locations especially in Gikūyū areas were experiencing population pressure against resources-land erosion due to shortage of food. The fixed boundaries in reserves made the situation worse for families, since they were exclusive of non-Africans and internally restrictive of other Africans as well. According to Okoth-Ogendo (1991), the idea of fixed ethnic boundaries became the essential attribute to land and land relations of African communities in Kenya. The impact of this fixity was that it disturbed the equilibrium between patterns of land use and availability of land by making it impossible to acquire permanent rights elsewhere, a factor which was essential for the system.

The negative impact of environmental degradation, displacement of communities, and climate change is not new, it has always existed, but in different forms. History informs the present and present informs the future. The destruction of earth is exemplified by overconsumption of resources by creating wants instead of basic needs. To satisfy these needs, mass production through corporate greed, urbanization, and foreign direct investments (FDIs which claim to have corporate social responsibility, which fall far short of helping communities in the host countries) have become the norm. The maximization is made possible by mostly using labor of brown bodies and capital since capital has to expand to the remotest regions of earth to extract resources. The more capital flows and circulates globally the more devastating to nature and culture. This destruction is exhibited in the devaluation of

relationship between human and ecology leading to the destruction of environment. The globalization of the market, overconsumption and exploitation of resources are devastating to the Global South and if not counteracted spiritually and holistically by recalling the knowledge and practices of indigenous people which were sustainable to earth and its ecosystems, therefore there will be no future for humanity, and biodiversity.

Land tenure

The Gikūyū traditional land tenure systems were spiritually sustainable to culture and ecology and there was a relationship between the families and the land. In the cultural practices and customs, ecology and culture were inseparable and as such, culture and ecology are used interchangeably in this paper. This paper extends the literature on colonialism and land ownership mainly centering on Africans reacting to the British imperialism and histories of underdevelopment by addressing the intersectionality of colonialism and the dynamic of gendered responses to colonialism at intra-household level, and as the base of history, political and economic systems impacting on women, health, and ecology in Kenya. This calls for the examination of the effects of transformation within the traditional land tenure to capitalist private ownership of land that began in 1953 to 1970s under Swynnerton Plan. This policy was implemented to deflect the Mau Mau war against colonial state and additionally, to create a class of progressive Kenyan farmers who would support the colonial state. The notion of 'families' here includes, intra-households, homestead, kinship and lineage ownership of land. The concept of families is not homogenous, thus, land tenure systems, gender relations, and households, need specification within the framework of historical experiences. Gikūyū ethnic group is used as an independent variable explained by social construction specific to their culture, traditions, norms, ecosystems, and gender relations. The choice of land tenure and families within Agikūyū has social, economic and political implications. The Gikūyū land tenure farming systems became the basis for land reforms between 1953 and 1970 in Kenya.

In 1953, under the Swynnerton Plan, based on universal model of economic growth, it was argued that the traditional tenure systems were not conducive to productivity, income and employment (Wangari, 1991). Thus private ownership of land with no regard to different ecosystems, and communities became the only measure of agricultural productivity, employment and incomes. It was assumed that the families that had lost land would create a class of laborers who would in turn be employed by the progressive farmers. During my research in 1990s, there were no differences in the comparison of small-scale farmers in lower non-rainfed areas who had gone through land reforms and those who had not gone through land reforms. Under the Swynnerton Plan, it was pointed out that farmers with title deeds would be motivated to invest in their private lands, since they had title deeds, which they could use to get loans. Instead of investing on lands, the farmers sold their lands without any permission from the Land Board, elders or family members. Some of the farmers money went to

marry more wives or wasted in worthless deals. The issue of credit was problematic to many farmers since they were not familiar with the language and terms of loans, and for these reasons, they were discouraged to go through the process. The capitalist notion of private ownership did not work and instead, it led to displacement, hence, more people without land, food shortages, environmental degradation and destruction of families. The land appropriated by the Europeans, affected the Agikūyū the most, and it was their grievances over land that eventually became Kenya's most controversial political project leading to the conflict between British, the Mau Mau movement, and independence in 1963.

Feminist political ecology framework

The studies about colonialism and land ownership in Africa have mainly focused on African agency reacting to the British imperialism and histories of underdevelopment (Kinyatti, 2008; Kimathi, 2017; Rodney, 1972; Kjekshus 1977; Aze 1997; Murray-Brown 1973; Fanon 1963; Bessis 2004). Other scholars who have addressed issues of African land tenure, land reforms, and gender relations (Kinyatta 1965; Schmidt 1992; Okoth Ogendo 1991; Leo 1984; Parpart 1990; Manji 2006), have not addressed the intersectionality of colonialism and the dynamic of gendered responses to colonial effects at intra-household level, and as the base of history, political and economic systems impacting on health and environment. In order to expand the discourse of land ownership, and resource management, I have used a feminist political ecology theoretical framework. This framework seeks the understanding of, and interpretation of local experiences in the context of global processes of environmental and economic change, decision-making procedures, social, and political perspectives in which gender emerges as a critical factor in shaping resource allocation.

The emergence of gender in this analysis is critically linked to a broader analysis of experiences of women and people of color in general in their struggle with imperialism, colonialism and globalization institutionalized in socioeconomic and political structures in the world systems of power. The effects of gendered rights such as land and property rights as well as legal and customary rights among others are determined by class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and nationality. These factors are embedded in the structures of power relations, domination, and patriarchal forms which shape the systems of ecological change, and the struggles of both men and women to sustain ecologically practical livelihoods in their communities.

The importance of the feminist ecology framework approach is that the sustainability of development is made possible by the implementation of local and indigenous gendered knowledge ("science of survival") which includes activities of maintaining and protecting health and environment at household level, and in the production sector as well as in regional ecosystems (Rocheleau, Thomas-Syater, Wangari, 1996). An aspect of historical approach analysis recaptures processes rooted in earlier forms of indigenous knowledge which provides insights in environmental sustainability and oppressions of marginalized population by the power

structures of economic processes and the state. "History is made while old histories are simultaneously reproduced without most of us ever owing the story told. And we also remember and forget and never know" (Eisenstein, 2004: 25). The devaluation of and humiliation of Africans by western and promoters of development goes back to the 17th and 18th centuries when Europe felt it had scientific knowledge and moral superiority over black people and used *Pax Britannica philosophy*. The justification of Europe to subject Africans as the lower rank of humanity to control and exploit their resources is not so different from the current notion of development in the Global South. "Just as the North set up its own progress as a model for all, it now promotes the idea that its own economic growth is a key factor in global [wealth], since it alone is capable of simulating the world economy; more of the same is needed if living standards are to be raised for the whole of humanity, and any fetter on the development of its own wealth could end up penalizing the rest of the world" (Bessis, 2004:124). These arguments are based on the universal model of economic growth which assumes that the trickle down effects benefit all people regardless of gender, class, race/ethnicity, nationality, religion and sexuality as well as differences in ecosystems between North and South. This is contrary to Agikūyū view of egalitarianism with regard to betterment of society and ecosystems.

Traditional land tenure

The Gikūyū landholdings consisted of more than one field system, located at various distances from each other. This was done to ensure food in case one location did not yield crops due to climate changes or lack of rains. The segmented parcels of land in different ecosystems not only assured food by crop mixing throughout the year, but also sustained environment and health. The system, guaranteed that members of clans ownership of land and even the landless could be adopted by a clan as the members of the family to access to land. "Thus in any given community a member of people could each hold a right or bundle of rights expressing a specific range functions. Each one of these functions carried with it varying degrees of control exercised at different levels of social organization. For example while cultivation rights were generally allocated and controlled at the extended family level, grazing rights were a matter of concern for a much wider segment of society" (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991:17).

Gikūyū land tenure is embedded in culture and ecology and therefore, land to Agikūyū has been a gift from Ngai (God) and it embodies spirituality, culture and nature. As such, families and communities had and still have spiritual association with plants and animals. Many people have sacred trees, mountains, and hills, which are regarded as sacred and are given religious names (Mbiti 1970). National calamities, for instance epidemics and floods are beyond human cause or control. They are attributed to God's activity or to a spiritual being. For instance, if God is angry at our actions or with our leaders; He may reveal *His* anger through floods, earthquakes and the invasions of locusts. Traditionally, culture, and ecosystems are integral to the notions of Agikūyū families going back to the commencement of their creation.

The creation is demonstrated by the oral history of the leanage of Agikūyū. It is pointed out that Agikūyū have “*Nine Clans named after the Nine daughters of Mūmbi and Gikūyū*” the name *Mūmbi*, means a mother who gives birth, nurtures life and protects; for these reasons, mothers intersect with ecosystems to sustain lives and environment. Moreover, the names connect women to the Mountain Kenya from which their parents, *Mūmbi and Gikūyū* came from. This connection between women and nature is further indicated by Merchant (1996); Maathai (1977); and Mbiti (1970). They demonstrate that there is a reciprocal relationship crucial to the sustainability of communities and the environment. In her text, Merchant (1989:6) illustrates that the Elizabethan view of nature was kind and “caring motherly provider, manifestation of the God who imprinted, designed, and planned order on the world. This order imposed ethical norms of behavior on the human, the central feature of which was the behavioral self-restraint in conformity with pattern of natural order. Each organic creature was responsible for maintaining its own place and expressing itself within the natural order and was necessary part of the whole, but was not the whole itself.” This part of the whole is also demonstrated by the birth of a Gikūyū child, who is introduced to the community and ecology.

The Intersection of A Child and Ecology

The announcement of the gender of a child was done ceremoniously through ululations (*Ngemi*), five for a boy, and four for a girl (Wangari 1995). The first communication with a newborn was when the mother chewed a piece of roasted fat from a lamb and gave the juice to the child (Maathai in Merton and Dater 2008). The bond, trust, and relationship between the mother and the child regardless of whether the child was adopted or not was established. The mother and the earth intersected to feed the child through the burial of the placenta and umbilical cord. These were covered with grains in uncultivated land, signifying fertility, strength, faith, hope and resources for future generations (Mbiti 1970). It is through ecology that Africans maintain their relationship with universe, and nature was not for sale. It was the source of livelihoods and people not only interacted with it, but also preserved it. Africans had knowledge of shifting cultivation in agriculture and husbandry that was sustainable to the physical environment and humanity. This knowledge had been archived in the memories of the elders and is disseminated through storytelling.

Gikūyū oral education

Gikūyū language represent the totality of and experiences of people on daily lives, and children is a mode of communication between the mother and child, members of nuclear family (*mbari*) and the clan (*mūhīrīga*). The stories that we learned in childhood portrayed animals, people, and environment and generated invaluable interdisciplinary approaches with a deeper form of communication in understanding ourselves. The stories of animals were used as symbols, of cunning, greed, and manipulation or demonstrating morality, and sympathy. The stories were a channel through which manners were internalized and actualized in social structures. The stories were and still are a venue of learning about our culture and ecosystems and recalling and reclaiming a sense of

discipline, confidence, identity, hope, faith, courage, contradictions, redemptions, and conflict resolutions in the interactions with universe (Mūtongu and Wangari, 2018). It was from our mother’s kitchen that we learned storytelling which provided us with the opportunity to practice social skills such as listening, and sharing.

As we listened to stories, we become familiar with the art and practice of storytelling itself. We imitated story teller’s words and through those elements, we came to know what made stories interesting, exciting, funny and sad. We learned through observations how to pair gestures and words to bring characters and their actions to life. Hearing a story we loved, it inspired interest in learning more about the topic. Children storytelling encouraged us to listen for more stories so that we could too, narrate them to our friends and also finally write them down. Mothers and grandparents played a pivotal role in transmitting cultural values through stories, which incorporated moralities, ethics, proverbs, riddles, myths and religious practices. The interactions of children with their grandparents and aunts have been eroded (Ibid. 2018).

Private Ownership of Land and Colonial Education

The implementation of private ownership of land lacked morality and knowledge for preserving the relationship between the ecology and communities. The process was characterised by racialized and gendered ideologies. The devaluation of Kenyan cultures and their livelihoods were motivated by greed, exploitation of resources and labour. The portrayal of Kenyans as less than human beings and that of women as an embeddment of lust is well illustrated in their educational systems. For the purpose of accumulating more land, the colonial state designed a mechanism to change Kenyan customary land tenure system to capitalist property ownership of land through land consolidation, adjudication and registration. This scheme totally eroded the Gikūyū land tenure system, clanship, extended families and also excluded women and children from ownership of land and other agricultural resources such as credit and extension services. The Title Deeds were designated only for men as the heads of households, consequently destroyed the importance of clanship as an overseer of land matters. This process split families and created a landlessness class, poverty, and environmental degradation. It also resulted into the devaluation of culture (a coded wisdom), deforestation of indigenous trees, environmental degradation. Moreover, it reduced food supply, leading to poor health and increased labour time for women in search of firewood, cooking and subsistence farming. The implementers of land reforms did not perceive land as part of nature intertwined with culture to be guarded by ethics for the sustainability of humanity, biodiversity and ecosystems. They saw it as a source of profit to be accrued by turning land and labour into the production of cash-crop for export. “From the Western philosophy point of view, understanding African philosophy will require the renunciation of the relationship that the West held toward centuries, a relation which has been encoded into its philosophical assumption of African cultures” (Amoto, 1997: 92). The colonialists, perceived the systems of following, shifting, and mixed cropping as unproductive and as such, a hindrance to

productive agricultural production. However, Eze (1997) points out that in African society, observation and experience constituted a great part of the sources of knowledge. Hence, the empirical foundation of knowledge was a catalyst for immediate results in areas for instance, in mixed cropping, rotation of crops, methods of processing and preserving food as well as in medicinal potencies of herbal plants. For example, a Gĩkũyũ indigenous plant Mũkũnyũ (*Ficus sycamorus*) was for the treatment of toothache and bleeding gums (oral history). While oral learning provided ethics and tools to care for ecosystems, the missionary and colonial education was embedded in racialized moral superiority and gender ideologies with no respect for nature and Kenyan communities. The collusion of missionaries with the colonial state led to the eradication of and the negation of indigenous languages, cultural roots and heritage. Education was important as far as it served their interests in the processes of interpretation of African languages, and as cooks, cleaners and clerks among other activities deemed for Kenyans. They portrayed Africans as poor, backward, lazy, irrational, and morally inferior to whites, while women were seen as lazy and sluggish and responsible for adultery, STDS, and unhygienic conditions in the colonies” (Schmidt 1992). The colonial state had no interest in educating African men, women, or girls to acquire tools for liberating themselves from their traditions assumed to hold them back. The curriculum for men consisted of minimal *Reading, Arithmetic, Writing and Religion*, and their training was limited to vocation schools while for girls was confined to domestic science (Ngugi, 1994).

The emergence of a new system of learning changed social, economic and political systems, which were egalitarian. Black men and women were creatures of “poor genes” and were fit only for manual work, thus shaping the education policy of education exclusion for black people. According to Agassiz, “Blacks must occupy the bottom rung of objective ladder...and should be denied social equality, lest the whites race be compromised and diluted” (Gould, 1996: 96-97). Blacks were not considered as humans, but animals who had always played their manual work. African women in the eyes of European, were the embeddement of lust and animal sexuality while the “Victorian racial and gender ideology placed European women on a pedestal and held them up as the embodiment of purity and chastity” (Kjekshus, 1996: 174). The Europeans could not consider African women as major players in reproduction and production in their households and communities. Gender biases and women subordination in Africa was not infused in customs and culture, but rather “linked to specific historical situations of slave- trade. As other periods, the role of women has been active, participatory and competitive in economic and social life” (Kjekshus, 1996; xxvi). According to Schmidt, “European political and religious institutions did not recognize authority in the forms exercised by women....The old ways of acquiring status and social recognition became increasingly dysfunctional (Schmidt,1992: 7). The Eighteenth century view of race was actualized and institutionalized in colonial Kenya and in other African countries. As Peet argues, “the dominant role in the construction of minds was played by the educational ideological

apparatus – that is schools, and universities. Each social group creates or produces intellectuals that lend meaning to that group’s collective experience, binds the group together and helps it to function effectively without much stress” (Peet, 1988:13). The missionaries came to our country and told us to be meek and close our eyes and pray to God, but when we opened our eyes; our land and properties were gone” (Mzee Kiragu, 2016). The missionaries were the scouts to pave the way for the colonization, and to those who suffered through the process of colonialism. As the saying goes, there is no difference between a *Priest* and a white colonialist. The missionaries had a leading role in Britain’s civilizing mission in Kenya, as they did throughout the most of the empire (Elkins 2005: 20).

Missionaries were determined to convert the Africans not just to Christianity but to entire Western way of life. They competed with one another for African souls, with each domination carving out its spheres of influence throughout Britain’s colonies. In [Gĩkũyũ] reserves the Presbyterians, the Anglicans, the Methodists, and the Catholics dominated the Christian scene, establishing mission stations—which included churches, schools, and medical clinics—condemning the heathenness of [Gĩkũyũ] religious and cultural practices, and preaching the values of Christianity, and commerce, and civilization. For the colonial government, missionaries offered civilization on cheap. To the degree that any education or welfare services were provided to local African population, they were delivered largely by missionaries. Of course, the Africans would have to pay school fees and health-care cost; in fact, to earn the right to buy these services the [Agĩkũyũ], like all other colonial subjects, had to renounce their own religion and culture.

Colonialism

Colonialism should be understood within “the indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African peoples in their tragic encounter with the European world, the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the nineteenth into half of the twentieth century” (Eze, 1997:5). According to Said (1994), both imperialism and colonialism are not a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. They are supported and perhaps even encouraged by “impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination:...Out of the imperial experiences, notions about culture were clarified, reinforced, criticized, or rejected” (Said,1994:9). Colonialism took several stages and in each stage left devastation of humans and ecology. According to Eze, (1997: 5), colonialism is,

[A] cluster concept to designate the historical realities of: (1) the European imperial incursions into Africa, which began in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and grew into the massive transatlantic slave trade; (2) the violent conquest and occupation of various parts of the continent by diverse European powers which took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and (3) the forced administration of African lands and peoples which followed this conquest, and

lasted into the years of independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, and – in the case of Zimbabwe and South Africa- into 1980s and 1990s.

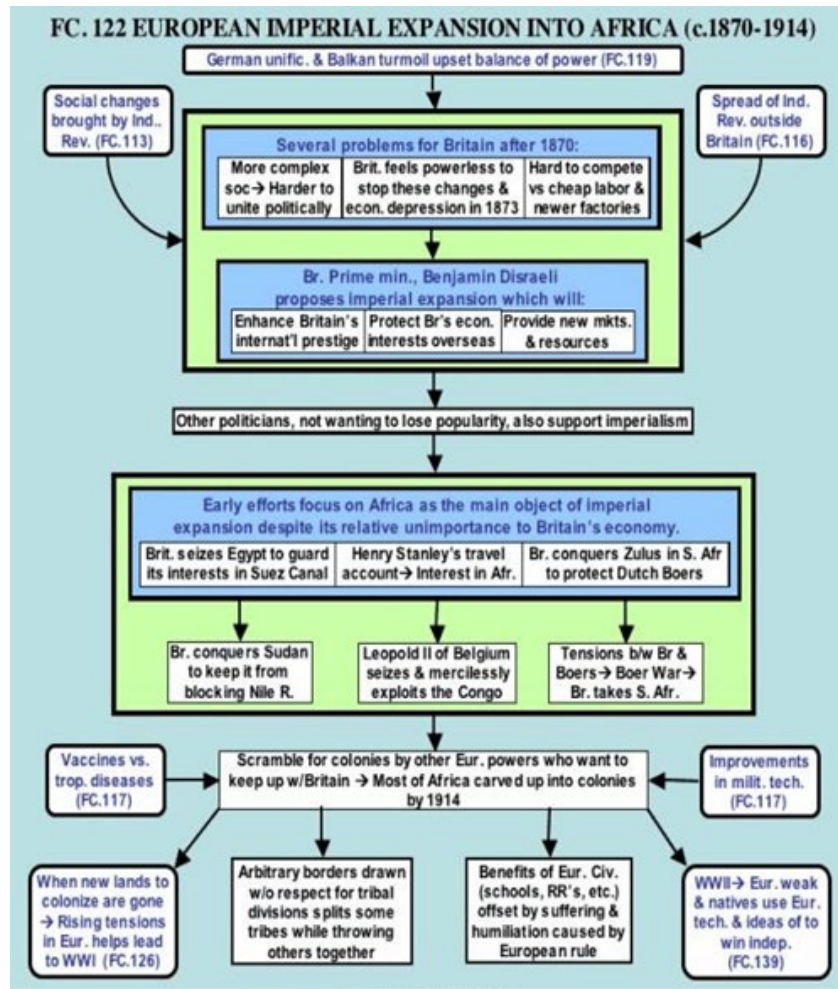
In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were numerous issues which led to colonialization and occupation of Africa by the Europe and few of these were fueled by industrial revolution in which capitalist enterprises were replacing mercantilism. “The Merchant Adventures were deprived of their monopoly of the cloth trade... and the commercial expansions had both undermined existing restrictions of competition and stimulated invention” (Roll, 1974: 93). According to Said (1994;10), the expansion and search for profit were crucial in that there was a high attraction of species, sugar,slaves, rubber, cotton, opium, tin, gold, and silver.

The Kenyan history of colonialism is inextricably connected to a broader context of African experience, which was shaped by the Western countries between 17th and 18th centuries. While British imperial control in Kenya focused mostly on capitalist agricultural production, land, raw materials, labor and state control, elsewhere it was also interested in agricultural production, natural and raw materials as well as human capital. “It dominated India, Burma, Malaya, and a series of stepping stones along the route to India; it occupied half of Africa, from Port Said to the Cape Town; it extended its rule over half the Islands in the specific, retaining its old colonies in North America and Australia and New Zealand” (Mandel 1968:453). The industrial revolution evidenced by the growth of commerce, and a new capitalist class called for expansion of trade to acquire more manufactured goods and control of productive forces transcending Europe to international trade in “pre-capitalist” societies. After the Berlin Conference in 1884- 1885, the expansion of capitalism and appropriation of land, raw and natural resources by Europe set a dark shadow over Africa. The race was setup by the western countries to take each an outstanding piece of land within Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Bit by Bit, throughout conflicts, brutal aggression and agreements, the continent was sliced into the domains of rival powers. The partitioning of Africa was one of history's more

brutal and insensitive episodes. Europeans came in and carved up Africa along arbitrary boundaries that split some tribes up and threw others together. Europeans legitimized this by having the Africans sign treaties that they did not understand the meaning of. They also used forced labor to build railroads, etc., killing thousands in the process. By 1914, practically all of Africa had fallen prey to European aggression...” (<http://www.flowofhistory.com/units/eme/18/FC122>)

According to Bessis (2004) some massacres were so extensive that their effect on population levels was felt for many long years. For instance, toward the half a century, the population of Algeria had decreased by almost one million; and in Central Africa between 1890 and 1920 population fell to a record low. This was partially due to the spread of contagious diseases by European troops and the movement of population following the incursions, “but even more to the massive use of indigenous labour for jungle penetration and portage, the systematic levying of food, extraction methods of the mining concessions, and recruitment for the 1914- 1918 war... There is also abundant evidence that widespread use of forced labour and unprecedented brutal methods of exploitation caused a terrible loss of life in the Congo of Leopold II, Roi des Belges” (Bessis, 2004; 33-34). According to the oral narratives, great-great-grand fathers were taken away to be carriers of both whites and their goods and were subjected to hunger, and beatings. One white person would be carried by four people to trek for miles at times in thick forests, and wilderness in which some became preys of hyenas, lions; and crocodiles as they waded large rivers. They left their families without hope of seeing them again (Muriithi, 2017). The figures below show the scramble and control of Africa from 1870-1914 by the western countries without consultation of Africans. They perceived Africans as not capable of governance, social and economic structures. Therefore Africans had to be tamed by force and at times by limited assimilation where it suited the goals of the westerners to pillage and exploit resources. Their justification informed by the discourse of racialized description of Africa as the ‘dark continent’ and her people as having poor genes and occupying the lowest ladder in humanity, the whites morally felt exempted from their cruelty they inflicted on the continent and her people.



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The new capitalist class in Europe was opposed to economic system of old mercantilism and state regulations and restrictions in international trade. The capitalist market economy within the context of classical liberal ideology embraced individualistic pursuit for wealthy through self-interest. Hobbs argued that, “All people’s motives, even compassion were only many disguised species of self-interest” (Hunt, 1979). This ideology was strongly implemented not only by the colonialists who disguised their agenda to civilize and develop Africa, but also missionaries’ agenda to save the “savages” from hell. However, both approaches consisted of brutality of humanity and embezzling of resources in the continent. Missionaries colluded with colonial state within the context of inequality, paternalism, exploitation and domination of families through appropriation of land and labor in order to establish productive forces and social relationships of production in Kenya. Impelled by individualistic self-interest notion of

moral superiority, and scientific knowledge, penetrated and strongly put roots into African soil to dominate, exploit and control resources. “Around 1885 the British forcibly outset the

Portuguese from East Africa and made Mombasa Island its military headquarters. From 1885 to 1920, the British fought inland wars against African forces” (Kimathi, 2017: ix). To the Western world, Africans were irrational, immoral and had no epistemology, and as such, they had to be tamed not for their benefits, but that of the Western countries. While capitalism has spread all over the world, the greater part of the world has experienced disintegrating effects, without benefiting from its creative side. The expansion of trade opened doors to explore, and exploit raw and natural resources including human capital, a cushion of stability between and among kinships in pre-capitalist societies.

Colonial Impact on Ecology

Capitalism infused with scientific knowledge, moral superiority, gender and racialized ideologies, sexuality, and religion among others, intersected with indigenous Kenyan land tenure systems, ecology, culture, nature, customs, to exploit and appropriate and control farming systems which were environmentally and ecologically sustainable. According to Kjekshus (1977), some oral history, demonstrates that women’s central position in maintaining balanced ecologies in the traditional Kenyan societies was seen in where women’s work involved them fully in the utilization of

available natural resources. “The local environmental balances were disrupted by the European colonialization and the multiple changes that accompanied this process. The study demonstrates that Kenyan women are re-emerging from marginalization to play an active role in creating environmental security” (Kjekshus, 1977: xxvi). The indigenous knowledge is being reclaimed by women mostly in rural areas as illustrated by Green Belt Movement involved in planting trees. Since 1977 when Professor Wangari Maathai initiated the movement, more than 50 million trees have been planted in Kenya. This has become a model for ecological balance, and as a form of incomes and improvement of health for families.

The destruction of ecology was intrinsically connected with the devastation of livelihoods of women and young girls who were subjected to unpredictable and erratic beatings and rapes by soldiers of the crown. Women, given their gender roles in reproduction, production and as caregivers to their communities, were disproportionately affected. Despite the hardships, people in general and in particular women, were resilient in confronting the heartless conditions of colonialism. They found alternatives of survival in the midst of chaos and they still do in post-colonial Kenya. Women’s activism although not homogenous goes back to the pre-colonial period in which “women formed self-help groups and work parties to assist one another during periods of economic and social stress. “This tradition of forming women’s groups to consolidate efforts for addressing problems has carried forward into contemporary period” (Basu, 1995:189).

This is more common in rural areas where they form various groups such as rotating credits, which help women in activities, which generate incomes for families. Women also dominate in the informal sector activities as an alternative of survival (Wangari, 1996). Politically and socially, women played pivotal role in the Mau Mau liberation struggle at home- front as well as in the forest (Kimathi, 2017; Kinyatti 2008; Basu, 1995). The problems of poverty, land, health, and ecological disintegration derive from colonial period and exacerbated in post-colonial era. The pre-colonial narratives from the elders, the archives of oral history, depict a different image of Kenya before Europe looted African resources and land. It was a beautiful land with plenty of resources, socioeconomic and political systems which bound people together.

The coming of the Europeans as pointed earlier, which changed the landscape in Kenya and especially more profoundly for Agikũyũ, was foreseen by an overseer like Mugo wa Kibiro. His prophecy was revealed through the building of a railroad and train.

An Iron snake will be built by the *Ciengere* from the Sea of Rukanga, *iria ria cumbi*, and it will enter the Sea of the Sparrow, *iria ria ihi*. It will not be possible to cut the snake with a machete or spear. A living snake with a bushy head *kihinga*, and bellowing smoke will ride on top of the sleeping snake. It will swallow the *Ciengere* and spit them out. Shortly after the snake’s coming, there will be a big famine and a pestilence that

will nearly finish the people. The *Ciengere* will carry sticks that spit fire and it will be foolish for our warriors to confront them with their spears. The *Ciengere* will fill the whole land (<https://mukuyu.wordpress.com/tag/urathi-iwa-cege-wa-kibiru/ii> (retrieved on January 9, 2018).

The prophecy was about the coming of Europeans, armed with guns and the building of a railroad which started in 1896 when “Mombasa became the political and military headquarters of British imperialism and its main port of call for its vessels in East Africa” (Kinyatti, 2008).

The railway reached Kisumu in 1901 and finally in Uganda in 1903. The train became the tool and power embbeded in the white settlers’ agricultural economy and means of transportation of African natural and raw material to Europe. Guns became the instruments of massacre of humans and animals. As imperialists advanced in the Gikũyũ land, the leaders like Waiyaki would reminded Agikũyũ of the prophecy and urged them to unite and not let the evil deeds happen on their soil (Kinyatti, 2008).

<https://mukuyu.wordpress.com/tag/urathi-wa-cege-wa-kibiru/>

Sep 13, 2014 - THE PROPHET. The greatest and most famous Gikuyu prophet and seer was **Cege wa Kibiru** who lived at or around Kariara near Thika. Because like all great Gikuyu seers he was to become a renowned healer or Man of Medicine, Mundu-Mugo, he later came to be known as Mugo wa **Kibiru** that is Mugo.

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