

Effects of Mau May War on the Agikuyu Women's Indigenous Knowledge System on Food Crop Production, 1952-1955

Martha Wanjiru Muraya¹, Dr. Geoffrey King'ori Gathungu² and Dr. Lazarus Ngari Kinyua³

¹Department of Humanities, Chuka University, P.O Box 109-60400, Chuka, Kenya
Email: murayamartha@yahoo.com

²Department of Plant Sciences, Chuka University, P.O Box 109-60400, Chuka, Kenya
E-mail: gkgathungu@yahoo.com

³Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies, Kenyatta University,
P.O Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya
E-mail: ngari.lazarus@ku.ac.ke

Published: 19 July 2019

Copyright © Muraya et al.

Abstract

The Mau Mau War was characterized by increased anxiety, anger, and frustration that arose from a continuous feeling of loss of traditional land, land use, labour and freedom to continue with indigenous practices. The Agikuyu people of Kiambu where Mau Mau activities were intensive were mostly affected. Indeed the Agikuyu women strongly supported the Mau Mau war probably out of frustration as they felt oppressed, marginalization and denied access of their traditional land and land use right and resources. This research paper focused on examining the implications of the Mau Mau war on the AWIKS on food crop production. The study employed descriptive research design and historical trend analysis and it was done in three sub-counties of Kiambu West, namely, Limuru, Lari and Kikuyu. Purposive and snowballing technique was used to get the respondents who were the bearers of the most relevant information. The main source of information was the corroboration of oral interviews, in-depth archival records analysis and secondary data. Oral interviews data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and reported using basic simple descriptive statistics. The study used Women and Development (WAD) theory which helped to examine how the activities and the colonial counter- activities of Mau Mau War led to disruption and collapse of indigenous cultural systems especially AWIKS on food crop production hence compromising their very important in agricultural production. The study found out that the Agikuyu women involvement in the Mau Mau war disrupted the indigenous food crop production division of labour through increased forced communal labor and curfews during the Mau Mau war, this limited time for proper utilization of the AWIKS. Moreover, land was alienated and the Agikuyu people were forced into emergency villages where soil degradation, poor soil and overcrowding compromising the effective utilization of AWIKS. The food crops stored and preserved in communal granaries in the colonial emergency villages were destroyed by the many rodents that were breeding in the villages. Furthermore, it was established that the massive loss of lives and withdrawal of energetic Agikuyu men and women from indigenous subsistence agricultural practices, time wastage in war recruitment, in oath taking ceremonies, arresting and repatriation of the Agikuyu women affected the proper utilization of the AWIKS on food crop production. All this implied that the AWIKS on food crop production was destabilized by the political instability that was experienced during the Mau Mau War which may have contributed to a compromised food supply in the household. The study recommended that women should be recognized as important actors in food crop production and in mitigating society's challenges such as food shortages in their society even during the time of political instability and War. Hence the relevant AWIKS on food crop production could be integrated into the modern food crop production practices with a bit of modification of suit the current circumstances

1.1 Introduction

Many African traditional societies developed local wisdom or Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) from an advanced understating of their local environment, local experiments and innovation that helped them to address local ecological limitations and in maintaining a sustainable utilization and protection of natural resources (Brokensha & Warren, 1980). According to Ashley (2000), men and women had different range of indigenous knowledge and expertise depending on their indigenous roles and responsibilities.

Among the Agikuyu people, traditional subsistence food crop production was gendered, with women cultivating legumes such as lablab bean (*Njahi*), pigeon peas (*Njugu*), green grams (*Ndengu*), kidney beans (*Mbosho*), and cereals such as variety of maize (*mbembe ya githigo*, *Nyamukuru*, *Nyamuthaka*, *Njeru*, sorghum (*Muhia*) and Bulrush millet (*mwere*), foxtail millet (*mukombi*), finger millet (*mugimbi*), while men in most cases cultivated tubers and root crops such as sweet potatoes (*Ngwaci*), yam (*Gikwa*), arrowroot (*Nduma*), cassava (*mwanga*) they also planted pumpkins (*marenge*), and gourd (Musalia, 2010). This indicated that women were responsible for producing labour intensive seasonal food crops that required them to be available throughout the year while men grew perennial crops. Therefore, they developed detailed indigenous knowledge systems on production in order to increase food production and to reduce the risk of food crop failure in the community.

They had unique indigenous knowledge systems in observing weather change and climate variation in order to prepare for the planting of food crops in good time. This knowledge system helped them to know the time for seasonal transition from dry to wet season or the vice versa and they were able to prepare adequately for sowing season, weeding season and harvesting (Hobley, 1967); Leacky, 2007). They also had detailed indigenous knowledge system of naturally selecting the best quality seeds for planting to ensure good harvest, better yield and increased availability of food in the households and also commanded detailed indigenous knowledge in farming practices and techniques which helped them to increase soil fertility hence maximizing crop yields. Moreover, the Agikuyu women had intensive knowledge on proper harvesting of food crops, storage and preservation, which prevented the different food crops from being destroyed by pests and rodents or being damaged from rotting. Hence, they were able to sustain food supply in their households up to the next planting season (Cognolo, 1933; Hobley, 1967; Huxley, 1967).

However, in the face of European colonialism in Kenya the Agikuyu people continuously lost access to their land, labor which they used to cultivate the above food crop, they also lost some of their traditional cultural identity including the indigenous knowledge system on food crop production through intensive land alienation, forced labour policies, the colonial commercial cash and food crop production and through socio-cultural segregation. By early 1920s there was increased desire by the Africans to forge a new identity and a sense of belonging. Africans especially the Agikuyu people had begun to lose patience with the colonial government rules. This led to escalating political tension and the spirit of nationalism that rose to an alarming proportion in 1940s and 1950s especially in the Kenyan highland where the intensity of colonialism was greatly felt (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1966). The Agikuyu people viewed that the continued land alienation, forced labour, heavy taxation, loss of cultural identity and freedom by the colonial government had robbed them their land and freedom to practice their indigenous subsistence food crop productions. This increased anxiety, anger and uncertainty led to the rise of political agitation that culminated into the formation of Mau Mau movement to fight for the regain of the Agikuyu alienated fertile land and freedom. The Mau Mau also spearheaded the struggle for Kenya's independence (Elkins, 2005, Castro & Ettenger, 2015).

There are different explanations on the origin of the Mau Mau War in Kikuyuland. Some African Scholars view the Mau Mau as an outlet of shock of drastic change in the Agikuyu life, bitterness, anxiety, tension and an ideological conflict and contradiction. While most of the European Settlers and

Administrators tried to justify the European position in Kenya in their explanation of the origin of Mau Mau rebellion. They argued that the Mau Mau was a desperate move by Africans to revert to their pre-colonial situation, and that it was nothing more than a barbaric movement aimed at imposing terror in the country. Leakey (1954) views that though the Africans had legitimate grievances, the Mau Mau was essentially not a political or economic protest, but a kikuyu civil war between modernists and debased traditionalists. Huxley (1948) & Blundell (1964) discredited the Mau Mau grievances of land and freedom they indeed dismissed the Mau Mau as having no real economic or political grievances while Frost (1978) views it as a civil war that was against the European colonialists and their loyalists who stood between the Mau Mau fighters and the regaining of their lost freedom.

From the above explanations about the origin of Mau Mau war, it is possible that the movement arose from the increased African discontent, frustrations, bitterness, anxiety and anger towards the deteriorating living condition, continuous land alienation, loss of cultural identities, traditional systems and freedom, and the colonial government continuous ignorance of the Africans grievances. Gachihi (1986) indicated that the Mau Mau was a movement that demanded back the alienated land and freedom, which was the main resource and source of the Agikuyu people's indigenous livelihood and food crop production. Since the Agikuyu women were the main custodian of food crop production in the traditional pre-colonial set up, it was possible that the Agikuyu women would strongly support the Mau Mau fighters so that they could get back the indigenous land, where they used to cultivate food crops using their indigenous knowledge systems.

Therefore, the declaration of the State of Emergency in Kenya in 1952 was the violent culmination of the contradictions and struggles built from continuous loss of land, loss of freedom through oppressive labour relations, and forceful imposition colonial government's domination. Clayton (1976) goes on to note that Lari division of Kiambu was very significant in 1952 because it is there that many Agikuyu people were converted to beliefs in the activities of Mau Mau savagery and that the essential nature of Mau Mau was a Kikuyu civil strife to get back their freedom. Hence, given the intensity of the Mau Mau activities in Kiambu District, it is possible that the war had considerable implications on the Agikuyu indigenous agricultural practices and the level of food supply in the households.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the face of European colonialism and intensified settler's commercial activities in the Kenyan highland, the Agikuyu people continuously lost access to their land and the indigenous land use practices. This increased anxiety, anger and uncertainty led to the rise of political agitation that culminated into the formation of Mau Mau movement to fight for the lost land and freedom and its subversive activities were intensified in Kiambu District. Since the Agikuyu women of Kiambu were the main custodian of seasonal food production in the pre-colonial set up, their indigenous food crop production systems were highly disrupted. It is possible that the Agikuyu women strongly supported the Mau Mau fighters out of frustrations, anger, bitterness and the feeling of oppression and marginalization. The Mau Mau War in general and the Agikuyu women involvement in the Mau Mau activities may have had considerable implications on the AWIKS on food crop production. Therefore, this paper focuses on the implications of the Mau Mau War on AWIKS on Food Crop Production. This shed light on how the activities and counter-activities of Mau Mau led to disruption

of AWIKS and therefore highly compromising the important of the Agikuyu women in food crop production.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Women and Development Theory

This study used Women and Development (WAD) theory (Rathgeber, 1990) which draws its ideas from Neo-Marxism and dependence theory. WAD argues that women have always played an important role in the maintenance of economies of their societies as both productive and reproductive actors and they have been part of development processes since pre-colonial time. It was how women were integrated into global capitalism by the core countries that explains their marginalization, subordination, oppression and dependency on men. Rathgeber (1990) also points out that this historical development of the colonial capitalist division of labour was oppressive and was based on structural separation of men from women or local people from foreigners. She also pointed out that women's social invisibility and frustrations during the acceleration of the colonial capitalist production resulted to a feeling of marginalization, anxiety and loss of influence of their own culture. Women's traditional subsistence economic productive role was pushed to the periphery a move that contributed to their subordination and economically dependent on men. WAD helped this study to exam the nature in which the Agikuyu women were integrated in colonial capitalist system, they felt oppressed and marginalized leading to anxiety and frustration that culminated to Mau Mau War and conflict with the Europeans. It also helped to examine how the activities and the colonial counter-activities of Mau Mau War led to disruption and collapse of indigenous cultural systems especially AWIKS on food crop production hence compromising their very important in agricultural production.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Location of the Study

The study was carried out in the Kiambu County, which was initially referred to as Kiambu district during the Colonial period. The Study used the current Kiambu County boundary to communicate clearly, but all the two names refer to the same geographical region. The County is in Central Kenya and is mostly inhabited by the Agikuyu people who are agriculturalists. According to the Kiambu County Integrated Development Plan (2013-2017), Kiambu County covers an area of about 2,543.5 km² and it comprises of 10 Sub-Counties namely: Lari, Ruiru, Kikuyu, Limuru, Githunguri, Thika East and Thika West, Kiambu, Gatundu North, Gatundu South (Appendix 2). According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBs), the Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC) of 2009 indicated that the County's population was 1,602,754 comprising 791,494 males and 811,260 females (KNBS, 2015).

The total land area is 1,878 km² was arable land, 649.7 km² was non arable and 15.5 km². The study was conducted in three selected Sub-Counties of Kiambu West (Lari, Limuru and Kikuyu) that are in the upper highland that were characterized by fertile soils and plenty of rainfall for agriculture (ASDSP, 2013). These three sub-counties were selected because they had very attractive agro-ecosystem that made a higher number of European settlers and Missionaries to settle and interact with the Agikuyu people earlier than other areas of Kiambu upper highlands.

1.4.2 Research Design

This was a descriptive study that used Kiambu West sub-counties to give analysis of implication of Mau Mau War on the AWIKS on food crop production. This design enabled this study to organize data into common frequent patterns that emerged during data analysis and then those patterns were used to give an in-depth descriptive analysis of the Mau Mau war and its implications on the AWIKS on food crop production in Kiambu. Descriptive research design sometimes utilizes elements of both qualitative and quantitative research methodology (Glass & Hoskins, 1984).

1.4.3 Target Population

The whole of Kiambu County had a population of 1,602,754 people while the subject of the study was drawn from a total of 375,781 people in three sub-counties of Kiambu West (Lari Sub-County's had 122,610 persons, Limuru had 129,609 persons and Kikuyu had 123, 562 persons). The respondents were drawn from people who were aged 65 years and above, in Lari Sub-County there were 4,306 persons, Limuru had 5,058 persons who were 65 years and above, and Kikuyu had 5, 683 aged 65 years and above (KNBS, 2015). Therefore, the total targeted population of people aged 65 years and above was 15,047 people from the three Sub-Counties. This group of the population was very important since they were the bearers of most relevant information to the study.

1.4.4 Sampling Procedures

Due to the expansiveness of Kiambu County, it was narrowed down into a manageable research study area. Kiambu County had 10 Sub-Counties and the study sampled three sub-counties from Kiambu West that is; Kikuyu, Limuru and Lari. The three Sub-Counties were sampled purposively on the ground that they had high penetration of European settlers and Missionaries than the rest of Kiambu due their high agricultural productivity. They are located in the Upper Highland zone which was highly fertile, with plenty of rainfall and proximity to Nairobi that provided an environment attractive to the Europeans settlement earlier than other areas of Kiambu. They also had high concentration of colonial native reserves, colonial villages and settlement Schemes also this is the area that witnessed one of the most notorious Lari Massacre of 1953 which claimed the lives of 150 Mau Mau suspects. The highest ranked Wards were Ndeiya, Tigoni/Ngesha, Karai, Kikuyu, Lari/Kirega and Kinale. These Kiambu West Wards are also on record for experiencing severe food shortages during the Mau Mau War.

The study mainly used non-probability sampling procedures and techniques which included purposive sampling and snowballing or chain sampling technique to identify the respondents who were the bearers of the most relevant information on the Mau Mau War.

1.4.5 Sample Size

The Sample size was based on the concept of data saturation which states that when all important themes, experiences and perceptions are uncovered in an interview based research, the information reach saturation and begins to be repetitive meaning that it is unlikely that conducting more interviews will reveal new information (Donna, 2013). Thus, during the study the oral data reached saturation at 68th interview and the justification of a sample size of 68 respondents. The justification of a sample size of 68 respondents was supported by Miller (2012) who stated that a sample size of 6-70 respondents is valid and reliable data depending on the research

1.5 Research Instrument

1.5.1 Interview Guide Questionnaire

Data was collected using in-depth interview guide for key respondents which had two sections. Section A covered the demographic data of the respondents, Section B had questions on involvement of the Agikuyu people in the Mau Mau war and its effects on the AWKIS on food crop production. The interview guide questions consisted open ended and closed ended questions, since this was a historical study that endeavors to reconstruct the past, it relied on respondents' firsthand account and second-hand account of events that took place during the Mau Mau War. In-depth analysis of archival records was conducted and secondary data collection was conducted and all were corroborated to enhance validity and reliability of the information.

1.6 Data Collection Procedure

In examining the effects of the Mau Mau War on the existing AWIKS on food crop production, in-depth oral interviews were conducted with the help of research assistants. In-depth archival records analysis was conducted and secondary data from books, theses, dissertations, journals, periodicals, seminar and conference paper, public documents and official records, local dailies, magazines and electronic information from various libraries and documentary centers was critically analysed.

2. Research Findings and Discussion

2.1 Agikuyu Women's Involvement in Mau Mau War and its implications on AWIKS on Food Crop Production

The State of emergency was declared on 20th October 1952 and caught the Mau Mau unprepared. The colonial government feared the spread of Mau Mau subversive activities to other tribes in the country, and it moved to repatriate Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru from settler's estates and towns to reserves (KNA/MA1/12/46/1952). Consequently, by the end of 1953 there was soaring flow of refugees into the already overcrowded reserves where they depended on government hand-outs for survival. This encouraged thousands of young men from Kikuyu Districts and reserves to move in to the forest in support of Mau Mau to escape the brutality of security forces. The study found out that, thirty (44.1%) of the respondents mentioned that the massive loss of energetic men and women from the kikuyu Districts and reserves affected the Agikuyu traditional subsistence food crop production (Table 1).

Table 1: Effects of Agikuyu Women's Involvement in Mau Mau on AWIKS on Food Crop Production

Implication	Frequency	Percent
Massive loss of the energetic Agikuyu people reduced food crop production workforce	30	44.1
Immense Destruction of food crops and grains storage facilities distracted normal food crop production process	44	64.7
Neglect of use of AWIKs due to women's serious injuries and fear	22	32.4
A lot of food crop production time was consumed during the <i>Muthirigu</i> dances and oath taking ceremonies	12	17.6
Women's recruitment in the support roles in Mau Mau led reduced attention on use of AWIKS on food crop production	41	60.3
Reduced contact between the older and younger generation resulted to little transmission of AWIKS on food crop production	13	19.1
Total interviews conducted	68	100

This implied that majority women who were left in the overcrowded reserves felt the pressure of over diminishing land and most of them were overloaded because they took over the male agricultural roles. This possibly distracted the normal food crop production process and the proper use of indigenous knowledge systems on food crop production such as adequate land preparation, selection of quality seed for planting, use of indigenous farming methods to enhance soil moisture and to increase soil fertility resulting to a decline in food crop yields in the families. The situation deteriorated rapidly after the declaration of the State of Emergency, and mass assassination had already begun in most of the Agikuyu reserves. Those who refused to take the Mau Mau oath were threatened and subjected to ruthless physical violence (Clayton, 1976).

The police report indicated that between May and October 1952, at least 40 people had been brutally murdered majority of them were European loyalists (the African chiefs and government soldiers) [KNA/MA1/12/46/1952]. The climax was the assassination of one of the colonial loyalists the senior Chief Waruhiu and those who witnessed against Mau Mau members (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1966). Animals in the European farms were maimed, brutally slashed and others beaten with nail studded sticks. This forced the colonial government to move to crush the radical Mau Mau rebels in Kikuyu, Meru and Embu Districts through massive force from the Kenya Police, provincial administration, local units of the Kings African Rifles and other British army battalions (Berman, 1992; Castro & Ettenger, 2015). The colonial government executed the Mau Mau fighters through public hanging, strangulation, and mutilation including cutting off the tongue (Elkins, 2005, Castro & Ettenger, 2015).

The most notorious massacres included the Lari Massacre of 1953, which claimed the lives of 150 Mau Mau suspects; the Chuka massacre of 1953 that claimed the lives of 20 adults and a child; and the Hola massacre of 1959 that resulted in the death of 88 detainees (Anderson, 2017; Karari, 2018). Many Agikuyu people in Kiambu both the Mau Mau fighters and home guards were killed and were buried in a channel at Thigio police post in Ndeiya location in the Lari massacre of March 1953, Kireita forest and at Ruthigiti in Kikuyu. In this study, it was reported that most Agikuyu women who sympathized with the Mau Mau were also killed and others were seriously injured or wounded

to an extent that they could no longer continue with food crop production for a very long time (Wanjiru wa Duati, O.I 2017).

Wamoro wa Nderi, (O.I, 2017) reported that all this massive killing of the Agikuyu people led to reduced women work force to continue with effective use of AWIKS on food crop production in the reserves, which may have contributed the severe food shortages that were experienced in Kiambu in 1954-1955. Women often worked in Mau Mau counterinsurgency forced labour program from dawn to dusk until such projects were completed (Davison,1989). Indeed during this time, some Agikuyu women resorted to actual begging for food from the Home Guards in order to feed their children (Gachihi, 1986; Anderson, 2017). Indeed, women from Mutira described how they were "running" to their *shambas* after being released from forced labour. Upon arriving, they first cut maize for cooking that evening, then cultivated in a small area, then go back running to complete their forced labor tasks (Davison, 1989). Therefore, the absence of Agikuyu women from their traditional *shambas* due to insecurity, serious injuries or due to fear and lack of time could not allow them to practice effectively the indigenous knowledge systems such as observation of weather in readiness for planting, proper seed selection properly. They could not have enough time to concentrate in traditional methods of cultivation due to lack of enough time to work on their farms (Wanjiru wa Duati, O.I 2017).

According to 44 (64.7%) of the respondents, the colonial government also used hunger as a weapon against the Mau Mau fighters and their supporter, all the food crops in the *shambas* were destroyed and grain granaries were burnt to ashes (Table 1). This immense destruction of the food crop and properties disrupted the normal subsistence food crop farming, storage and preservation processes. The District Commissioner of Kiambu in 1955 issued an order in July 1955 that any crops that were likely to be a source of food (bananas, sugar canes, sweet potatoes, arrowroots, cassava and maize) for the Mau Mau fighter and their supporter that were in the *shambas* must be slashed, destroyed and burnt. Immediately all crops in *shambas* were cleared on allegation that Mau Mau fighters were hiding there and granaries where dry food crops were stored were burnt completely (KNA/MA1/12/49/1955).

This order implied that a lot of indigenous food crops were intensively damaged which led to drastic loss most drought resistant indigenous crops such as bananas, sugar canes, sweet potatoes, arrowroots, cassava and maize, and cohesion in the indigenous knowledge and skills used by the Agikuyu women to produce them. The plot for each family was roughly a quarter-acre which was not sufficient to produce food for a family and therefore food production went down (KNA/MAA/8/96, 1952). Consequently, this contributed to increased decline in food supply in the household, which was evident by the severe food shortages in 1952-1954 in Kiambu (KNA/DC/MUR/3/2/1943-1953).

Similarly, 12 (17.6%) of the respondents stated that during the Mau Mau war there was also a lot of time that was spent by the gangs of Agikuyu men and women who walked from one village to the other singing the abusive *Muthirigu* dances and in oath ceremonies which could have been used for food crop production (Table 1). It was reported that the *Muthirigu* songs and dances expressed strong ant-colonial sentiment and Mau Mau's obsession with the alienated land and freedom. Agikuyu women joined such *Muthirigu dances* because they were also frustrated and embittered by loss of

land and subsequent right to access and use the land. The process of recruitment in Mau Mau membership which involved the taking of oath of unity took almost a day in deep parts of the Lari forest had far reaching effects on converting many Agikuyu people to belief in the course of Mau Mau war (Leakey, 1952; Carother, 1955; Ng'ang'a, 1977). Wanjiru Wa Duati (O.I, 2017) from Lari-Kabunge a Mau Mau freedom fighter claimed that some of the Agikuyu women were not left behind during the oath taking ceremonies. Many women volunteered to take the general oath of unity, while a few courageous ones who went to the forest Kereita and Aberdare forest were intimidated to take the oath of *Mwito wa Lari* in upland where they vowed to keep Mau Mau secrets.

The Oath taking ceremonies consumed a lot of valuable time for the Agikuyu people and also instilled fear and anger in Agikuyu women. Kershaw (1977) observed that the colonial government was very suspicious about all the Agikuyu people and viewed them as guilty of a crime. They argued that those who had not taken an oath were still guilty because they had not prevented others from not taking. Therefore, it was difficult for the whole community to continue with their normal traditional subsistence food crop production because of fear of victimization (KNA/MAA/8/96, 1952). Twenty two (32.4%) of the respondents mentioned that the oath taking process reduced women's concentration in proper use of indigenous knowledge systems on food crop production (Table 1). Furthermore, it is possible that the actual existence of the Agikuyu women indigenous knowledge systems in food crop production was disrupted by the Mau Mau War massacre due to massive loss of life and displacement of the Agikuyu people.

Although women role in the Mau Mau movement has not been adequately acknowledged, they played very significant supportive roles that were assigned to them by the Mau Mau fighters. Forty one (60.3%) of the respondents pointed out that the recruitment of Agikuyu women in support roles as couriers of important messages and did very well to retain contact with the fighters in the Mau Mau war disrupted the use of AWIKS on food crop production. Women left behind their traditional roles, their children and their families to join the Mau Mau activities, to providing food and sometimes shelter to the Mau Mau fighters, a move that significantly disrupted their traditional food crop production practices (Table 1).

Therefore, according to the findings of this study, it is possible that the Agikuyu women's active participation in the Mau Mau movement by keeping alive through material and moral support had significant implications on the AWIKS on food crop production. Given that the Agikuyu women spent a lot of their time performing the roles that were assigned to them by the Mau Mau fighters such as spying, collecting material provisions for the Mau Mau fighters. It is possible that most of them shortened the time for involvement in intensive and proper use of indigenous knowledge in food crop production such as weather observation, seed selection and proper methods of indigenous farming, seasonal calendar and harvesting. Others could no longer continue with cultivation in their gardens.

It also reduced contacts time for learning and transmission of AWIKS on food crop production from the older women to the younger women's generation. As a result there was a significant lack of cohesion in indigenous food crop production skills implying that the little knowledge system learnt during this time could not be practiced immediately because of political instability. The AWIKS in

food crop production was therefore disrupted and neglected as it was given very little attention because there was very little food crop cultivation that was taking place under such environment of political instability. Therefore, it is evident that the reduced proper utilization of Agikuyu women's indigenous knowledge systems in food crop production during the State of Emergency may have greatly contributed to food shortages in Kiambu region.

2.2 Implications of Colonial Counter Measure during the Mau Mau War on the AWIKS in Food Crop Production

2.2.1 Detention, Imprisonment and Repatriation

During the Mau Mau war, the colonial government used various measures to combat the Mau Mau rebellion. For instance, Agikuyu people were detained, imprisoned, deported and others repatriated back to the reserves, Villagization settlement and land consolidation, a move that had significantly disrupted the AWIKS on food crop production. Thirty three 33 (48.5 %) respondents pointed out that when the Mau Mau broke, the colonial government swiftly passed legislation that gave the Administration and security forces powers of arrest, detain and to repatriate the Mau Mau fighters and their supporters without warrant or trial (Table 2). This move largely disrupted the AWIKS on food crop production. Indeed, according to (KNA/MA1/12/47/1953), this move came after the Deportation Ordinance of 1954 ordered the Mau Mau leaders to be deported and detained without trial a move that disrupted their normal livelihood.

The colonial government also ordered the detention of suspects and participants of Mau Mau or anyone found supplying food, drink, clothes or medicine to the Mau Mau and the Agikuyu people in the squatter also to be repatriated back to their already congested and agriculturally poor reserves. This was meant to restrict the movement of people and isolate the Mau Mau fighters. Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) stated that there were 17,000 Kikuyu convicts and 50,000 detainees with various Mau Mau offenses by 1954 and out of the 50, 000 only 18,000 were actually held in prison for specific offences of activists and captured forest fighter. The rest were just 'passive' supporters of Mau Mau who were not charged of any specific offense. These detainees were exposed to harsh conditions, poor diet and terrible hygienic conditions, hand labour and physical injuries. The Agikuyu women who supplied food, money, ammunition, clothing & information were also arrested and put in detention camps where they were forced into communal labour and experienced all sort of sexual harassment (Shannon 1955). Further, it was reported that there were about 6,800 Agikuyu women in prisons, detention camps and work camps in October 1955 (KNA/MA1/12/49/1955).

Maloba (1994), Branch (2009), & Castro & Ettenger (2015) observed that most of the Agikuyu men and women particularly from Kiambu were moved to the detentions camps in Manyani, Maralal, Mageta, Kisumu, and Nakuru although the number of men was higher than that of women. They left their land and were taken to new places outside Kiambu district where movement was restricted and because of this high numbers of detainees, deportation and imprisonment there was a deepening sense of anxiety and alienation in Kiambu. This disrupted the normal subsistence food production of the people of Kiambu, since majority of men were either in prison, detention, in the forest as Mau Mau fighters or were Home Guards, the active agricultural production was mostly being done by women and children in the reserves.

Table 2: Implications of the Colonial Counter measures on AWIKS in Food Crop Production

Implication	Frequency	Percent
Arresting and repatriating Agikuyu women disrupted the AWIKS	33	48.5
Withdrawal of too many people negatively affected the use of AWIKS on food crop production	35	51.5
Movement into emergency villages reduced women's food crop production and AWIKS	45	66.8
Communal labour & Curfews limited time for AWIKS in food crop production	41	60.3
Total interviews conducted	68	100

It is possible that this overburdening of the Agikuyu women with agricultural production in the reserves and the reduction of women food crop producers by arrests, detaining and repatriating them affected negatively their effective use of indigenous knowledge and skills in food crop production which had a significant contribution to food shortages in the area during this time. According to KNA, OP/EST/1/627/1, 1955 there was severe famine between 1955 and 1956 that was caused by food shortage in Kiambu where forty-five people were reported to have died of starvation-related In November 1955.

However, towards the end of 1950s many Agikuyu men and women from Kiambu were released from detention and prisons and they were required to go through a rehabilitation programme which included being taught modernized methods of soil conservation, use of farm yard manure, and emphasis on cash crop production and fodder crops (KNA/ MA1/12/48/1954-1959).

2.2.2 Villagization Settlement

From 1954 until the end of the decade the colonial government embarked on measures to reassert control and break the links between the Mau Mau in the forest and their supporters in the reserves, as well as to punish the disloyal population. In this study, forty-five (66.8%) of the respondents stated that the colonial government forced the Agikuyu people to move to the Emergency villages (*Ishagi*) a move that changed their traditional food crop production practices. Further, 35 (51.5%) mentioned that the withdraw of large number of people from the reserves negatively affected the utilization of the AWIKS on food crop production (Table 2). This corroborates with the KNA/BV/15/106, 1920-1964 report that in the mid 1954 the War Council adopted the villagization policy as a way of defeating Mau Mau fighters.

Colonial enclosed villages were laid out on an extensive scale and fortified by home guard post, the sight of the village was chosen on security consideration making sure that no food or other provisions reached the Mau Mau fighters. Sorrenson (1967) further explains that by October 1955, more than one million people had been concentrated into 854 villages. Many of their homes were burnt down prior to the villagization programme, a move that brought mass of the Agikuyu people under firm control by Provincial Administration. People were given very short notice to move to villages that were concentrated in very small area, which made it easier for the authority to punish them (KNA/CS/1/14/25/1953-1954). Presley (1992) noted that it is women and children who were mostly

affected by villagization programme because they were usually the majority of population in the villages and they were often singled out for collective punishments.

Wairimu Ngugi (O.I 2017) reported that Emergency villages (*Ishagi*) were established in areas of Kiambu such as Kinari, Lari, Ndioni, Nderu, Thigio, Ruthigiti, Kerwa, Kamangu, Karai that were not well endowed fertile land and with enough rainfall for food crop cultivation (Wairimu Ngugi, O.I 2017). These villages which were in terrible conditions included small huts that were tightly squeezed and were occupied by a range of 15 to 27 people, and the villagers themselves provided materials and labour for building the huts. Due to congestions, the villages became breeding grounds for rats, squalor and disease epidemics (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1966). It was reported that women were forced into communal labour of digging long trenches about five feet wide were dug around the villages and spikes were planted at the bottom, then a barbed wire was placed in and around the trench.

Davison (1989) observed that when working on the trench, the soldiers would line up behind them to beat those who were not working as fast as they wanted. In these villages, curfews were imposed and the communal labour began at six o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening, six days in a week and without pay or food in order to curtail the movement of people. From five o'clock the villagers were given only one hour to rush to their *shambas* to cultivate before the curfew start at six o'clock (KNA/MA1/12/47/1953). The communal work involved hunting for Mau Mau fugitives, clearing bushes and digging trenches, and soil conservation through terracing (Castro & Ettenger, 2015). Large groups of women and men were seen leaving very early in the morning and coming back in the evening. Only one main entrance was used and this is where the guard post was situated.

It was reported that Agikuyu could produce very little food crops because they were moved in villages (*ishagi*) in areas that were very unproductive, semi arid areas with very poor soil such Thigio, Ruthigiti, Kerwa, Kamangu, Karai in Kikuyu and others were moved to the Margin of the Aberdare forest in areas such as Lari, Kinari and Kireita that are extremely cold (Nyokambi O.I, 2017; Phideris O.I 2017). Probably, the movement into these new areas meant that the Agikuyu women were exposed to rapid and drastic ecological changes and that the indigenous knowledge and skills that they used in the reserves were rendered unsuitable in these new ecological zones. This therefore may have contributed to a significant reduction in the use of AWIKS on food crop production and that the indigenous crops such as various legumes, cereals, sweet potatoes, arrowroots were underutilized and most of them abandoned.

Additionally, it was noted that in these new ecological areas the Agikuyu women did not have much experience with the weather variation and did not have accumulated indigenous knowledge of the natural conditions, soils, vegetation, food crops suitability and agricultural methods. Probably, this led to general break down of proper use of AWIKS and practices on food crop production. Furthermore, given the environment and soil degradation that was being experienced by the Agikuyu people in the Emergency villages, it is possible that the Agikuyu women could not utilize well their indigenous knowledge and skills on food crop production and this may have contributed to shortage of food in the area.

Forty-one (60.3%) of the respondents observed that the communal labour and curfews that were set in the Emergency villages disrupted the traditional knowledge and skills in food crop production (Table 23). The communal labour implied that Agikuyu women were overworked, in the villages and time was very limited such that they could only get one hour per day to work on their *shambas* and this was not enough for any meaningful food crop production. Further, and the small plots they were cultivating in the villages were hardly enough to sustain food supply in the households. In their small plots in the villages, the Agikuyu women worked under extreme fear and insecurity because they were oppressed and being beaten by the Home guards and the Supervisors often refused to allow villagers to stop for meals (Presley, 1992). In the villages they lacked enough space to store their food crops and there was only one communal granary that was tightly guarded by the Home guards (Hezra Njehia O.I, 2017; Wamoro wa Nderi O.I, 2017).

This implied that most of the food crops they produced during this time was just for immediate consumptions since they did not have surplus production. Most of the food crops that were kept in the communal granary were destroyed by the many rodents that were breeding in the villages, probably because the Agikuyu women had continuously neglected the use of their indigenous knowledge in food storage and preservation. Furthermore, it was observed that the plants in the villages were being slashed down and burnt by the Home guards so that the Mau Mau fighters don't hide in those farms which led to distraction of the normal food crop production. Therefore, the indigenous agricultural Knowledge, skills and practices were altered by the colonial villagization scheme and therefore the whole of the Kikuyu villages experienced food shortages and starvation.

2.3 Conclusion

The Mau Mau war in Kenya between 1952 and 1955 was characterized by conflict, loss of lives, destructions, escalated tension, frustrations, anxiety and anger among Africans especially those who were in areas with high level of European settlements like in the Kenyan highland. The Mau Mau fighters were agitating to get their alienated land and freedom back, a move that had immense implications on the AWIKS on food crop production. Indigenous food crop production labour was reorganized and to some extent disrupted by increased forced communal labor and curfews that limited time for proper utilization of the AWIKS. Moreover, land was alienated and the Agikuyu people were forced into emergency villages where soil degradation, poor soil and overcrowding limited the effective utilization of AWIKS. The communal food storage and preservation granaries were destroyed by the many rodents that were breeding in the villages. Furthermore, it was established that there was massive loss of lives and withdrawal of energetic Agikuyu men and women from indigenous subsistence agricultural practices, immense destruction of indigenous food crops and time wastage in war recruitment oath taking ceremonies, arresting and repatriation of the Agikuyu women. All this implied that the AWIKS on food crop production was in one way or another disrupted, it was not properly utilized because women's role on food crop production was destabilized by the political instability during the Mau Mau War which may have contributed to a compromised food supply in the household. The study recommended that women should be recognized as important actors in food crop production and in mitigating society's challenges such as food shortages in their society even during the time of political instability and War. Hence the relevant AWIKS on food crop production could be integrated into the modern food crop production practices with a bit of modification of suit the current circumstances. This could go a long way towards realization of Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) 1 on ‘eradicating extreme poverty and hunger’, Kenya’s Vision 2030 and Constitution of Kenya 2010 that guarantee every person right to be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality in the households

REFERENCES

- [1] Anderson, D. (2017) Making the Loyalist Bargain: Surrender, Amnesty and Impunity in Kenya's Decolonization, 1952–63, *the International History Review*, 39:1, 48-70, DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2016.1230769
- [2] Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP). (2013). Retrieved from www.asdsp.co.ke/index.../Kiambu-County
- [3] Ashley, D. (2000). Why Agriculture Development Projects have failed in Sierra Leone: Local Farmers Indigenous Knowledge the Missing Element. *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*, 8(1): 19-20.
- [4] Berman, B. (1992). Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya; The Dialectic of Domination. Nairobi: East African Publishers
- [5] Boserup, E. (1970). *Women's Role in Economic Development*. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- [6] Branch, D. (2009). *Defeating Mau Mau Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War and Decolonization*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- [7] Brokensha, D & Warren, D. (1980). *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- [8] Bunche, R. (1941). The Irua Ceremony Among the Agikuyu of Kiambu District Kenya. *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 26:46-65.
- [9] Cagnolo, F.(1933). *The Kikuyu Their customs, Traditions and Folklore*;Nyeri Mission printing school: Nyeri.
- [10] Castro, P. & Ettenger, K. (2015). Counterinsurgency And Socioeconomic Change: The Mau Mau War In Kirinyaga, Kenya. *Journal of Research in Economic Anthropology*, Volume 15, pages 63-101. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280576855>
- [11] Clayton, A. (1976). *Counter-Insurgency in Kenya, 1952-69*. Nairobi, TransAfrica.
- [12] Davison, J. (1989). *Women of Mutira*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner
- [13] Donna, B. (2013). *Qualitative Interviews; When Enough is Enough*. Qualitative Market Research. www.researchbydesign.com.au. ISBN 978-09-9925065-2-0.

- [14] Elkins, C. (2005). *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- [15] Frost, R. (1978). *Race Against Time, Human Relations, and Politics In Kenya Before Independence*; London: Transafrica.
- [16] Gachihi, M. (1986). *The Role of Kikuyu Women in The Mau Mau*. M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi
- [17] Gachihi, M. (2014). *Faith and Nationalism: Mau Mau and Christianity in Kikuyuland*. PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi
- [18] Hobley, C. (1910), *Bantu Beliefs and Magic with Particular Reference to the Kikuyu and Kamba Tribe of Kenya Colony: Together with Some Reflections on East Africa After the War*; Nairobi: KLB.
- [19] Huxley, E. (1948). *Settlers of Kenya*. London: Chatto
- [20] Huxley, E. (1967). *The Flame Trees of Thika*. Harmond Sworth, Penguin
- [21] Karari, P. (2018) "Modus Operandi of Oppressing the "Savages": The Kenyan British Colonial Experience," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 25 : No. 1 , Article 2. Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol25/iss1/2>
- [22] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2015). *Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC) of 2009*. Retrieved from www.knbs.or.ke on 24 August, 2016.
- [23] Kershaw, G. (1977). *Mau Mau From Below*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- [24] Leakey, L. (2007). *The Southern Kikuyu before 1903*: Nairobi, Richard Leakey.
- [25] Leakey, L. (1954). *Defeating Mau Mau*. London: Methuen.
- [26] Maloba, W. (1994). *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- [27] Miller, D. (2012). Recommended sample size table to achieve data saturation. In: Donna Bonde. *Qualitative Interviews; When Enough is Enough*. Qualitative Market Research. www.researchbydesign.com.au. ISBN 978-09-9925065-2-0
- [28] Musalia, M. (2010). *Gender Relations and Food Crop Production: A Case of Kiambu District Kenya, 1920-1985* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.
- [29] Ng'ang'a, M. (1977). Mau Mau, Loyalists and Politics in Murang'a 1952-1970. *Kenya Historical Review*, 5 (2)

- [30] Presley, A. C. (1992). Labour Unrest Among Kikuyu Women in Colonial Kenya in *Women and Class in Africa* (eds.) Robertson Claire and Berger Iris New York, London, Africana Publishing Company
- [31] Rathgeber, E. (1990). WID, WAD and GAD; Trends in 'Research and Practice'. *Journal of Development Areas*, 24, 489. Available at:
<https://idlbnc.idrec.ca/dspace/bitstream/10625/5225/1/34345.pdf> retrieved.
- [32] Rosberg, C. & Nottingham, J. (1966). *The Myth of "Mau Mau" in Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- [33] Shannon, M. (1955). *Rebuilding the Social Life of the Kikuyu African Affairs*. VOL. 56 No 226 october 1955.

Archival Sources from the Kenya National Archives (KNA)

KNA/MA1/12/46, 1952 Kiambu Annual Report and Handing over Report

KNA/MA1/12/47, 1953 Kiambu Annual Report and Handing over Report

KNA/MA1/12/1/48, 1954-1957 Kiambu Annual Report and Handing over Report

KNA/MA1/12//49, 1955 Kiambu Annual Report and Handing over Report

Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *African Affairs Department, Annual Report 1948-1962*

KNA/CS/1/14/25/ 1953-1954- Concentration of Kikuyu into Villages

KNA, OP/EST/1/627/1, 1955 Memorandum from A.C.C. Swann to Havelock, "Malnutrition" 7 July 1955

KNA/DC/MUR/3/2/6, 1943-1953 Food Shortages

KNA/MAA/8/96, 1952 - Food (and Possible famine) Native Area Position

KNA/BV/6/828, 1940-1953 - Crop Production and Livestock

KNA/BV/15/106, 1920-1964. Agricultural Report Central Province and Kiambu District

Oral Sources

Name	Sub-County	Date	Age	G	Name	Sub-County	Date	age	G
Wairimu wa Ngugi	Lari	23 rd June 2017	80	M	Zippora Nyokambi	Kikuyu	3 rd Nov 2017	66	F
Virginia Wanjugu	Lari	26 th Jan 2018	78	F	Francis Ngumo	Lari	26 th Jan 2018	69	M
Hanna Kanyuira	Limuru	22 nd Sep 2017	81	M	Martin Kinuthia	Lari	27 th Sep 2017	76	M
Muturi Gathecha	Limuru	19 th July 2017	78	M	Mary Wanjugu	Limuru	1 st Oct 2017	77	F
Wamoro Wa Nderi	Lari	16 th June 2017	91	F	Felista Wachinga	Kikuyu	7 th Sep 2017	67	F
Phideris Ng'ang'a	Limuru	29 th July 2017	78	F	Hezra Njehia	Kikuyu	22 nd Sep 2017	101	M
Wanjiru wa Duati	Lari	4 th Dec 2017	82	M	Elastus Muraya	Lari	12 th June 2017	100	M