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## **The Multiple Histories in Kenyan Liberation Literature and Implications for Contemporary Realities**

By

Hellen Roselyne L. Shigali

### **Abstract**

Much of Kenyan fiction and history to date focus on or alludes to the colonial invasion, occupation and its aftermath including the struggle for liberation and post—independence challenges. Ordinarily the two disciplines are assumed to be contrasting -- history being generally factual while fiction is creative imagination. This article disrupts this assumption. It examines the connection between the two in the constructions and reconstructions of multiple histories that exist in Kenyan repository. Both disciplines adapt aesthetic strategies to create usable pasts that have implications for current political realities in the country. Whereas creative writers acknowledge the fictionality of their texts, professional historians insist on the factuality of their constructions. Critical analysis of selected texts from both disciplines is guided by Roland Barthes, Hayden White and Peter Gay’s frameworks which essentially erase the supposed boundary between history and fiction. The scope is limited to five selected from the many in Kenyan fiction and history which engage the armed struggle phase of the liberation struggle. The objective is to explore the implications of the multiple histories in the texts to current realities. Overall it becomes clear that the over-emphasis on the Mau Mau armed phase of the struggle and its manipulation in distribution of national resources and political power is contestable. There is documentation of what is described as “the other Mau Mau.” In which case, Mau Mau becomes an umbrella concept for all forms of resistance to British invasion, occupation and its aftermath. The political class has embraced exclusive constructions as the real and only truth. This article vouches for the all--inclusive approach advanced by Maramogi Oginga Odinga and William R. Ochieng’ among others.

**Key words:** Multiple Histories, Liberation Literature, Kenya, Oginga Odinga, Mau Mau

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### **Introduction**

Much of Kenyan literature either focuses on or alludes to the nation's colonial encounter, particularly the struggle for independence. In this article the term literature encompasses both historical and literary texts. The combination assumes that both forms of writing entail constructions and reconstructions of knowledge that are fundamentally narratives of the same era and national experience from varied vantage points. This creates the need to interrogate multiple histories and literary artifacts in Kenyan repository. Whereas the literary artists acknowledge and celebrate their multiple texts as fictions, professional historians insist on the non-fictional status of their creations. The recurrent discourse between the late historian William Ochieng, and literary Ngugi Wa Thiong'o signified this contest. Yet as Roland Barthes noted, both disciplines entail narration and we are therefore not "justified in contrasting poetic and novelistic discourse, fictional and historical narrative" (Barthes 1970:145). Barthes's argument is amplified by Hayden White (1978) who equates the historical text to a literary artifact. And Peter Gay concludes that "history is an art much of the time, and it is an art by virtue of being a branch of literature" (Gay 1974:186). Kenyan colonial encounter has engendered both the concise historical texts and historical novels. This article engages the contest between the two disciplines by analysing five texts that are generally assumed to signify different forms of knowledge. They include Oginga Odinga's autobiography; *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967), Tabitha Kanogo's historical text *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-1963*(1987) and Sam Kahiga's historical novel *Dedan Kimathi-the real story* (1990), Maina wa Kinyatti's *Thunder from the Mountains: Mau Mau Patriotic Songs* (1980) and William R. Ochieng's 'Thunder from the Islands: Mau Maus in Western Kenya'(2002). The focus is on the aesthetic strategies by which construction and reconstruction of Kenyan history is achieved by these writers, each of whom provides new insights into post-colonial reality.

Kenya is a former British colony and one of the African countries in which the decolonisation process involved armed struggle among other strategies which include discussion with the British government at Lancaster house. All the strategies of resistance to foreign domination are summed up as nationalism and aspiration to nationhood. Nationalism implies collective aspiration to creation of a united nation state by a given people. Nationhood presumes unity of purpose, recognition of a common history and culture shared by the groups seeking liberation from foreign domination. In this sense the Kenyan nation is assumed to have been born at celebration of independence at midnight on 12 December 1963. For many years since then the Kenyan people have lived together in relative peace and seeming unity to the extent that the country was metaphorically described as an island of peace in an ocean of conflict in Africa.

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Indeed, it appeared so in contrast from other countries in the East African region: Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Rwanda. In retrospect, it is now clear that what the metaphor implied absence of open warfare in Kenya. But absence of war is not synonymous with peace. Beneath the facade of peace and harmony lay many divisions and conflicts that negate the very assumption of nationalism and nation state. The divisions emanated from historical injustices, various forms and levels of otherness, and conflicts which have led to sporadic eruption of violence around national elections' time since 1992. The 2008 post-election violence that ended in many deaths and displacement of people from their homes, and several national leaders arrayed in the International Criminal Court (ICC) created a crisis in the country. In this article, I link the contemporary experience to the construction and reconstruction of multiple histories to be found in Kenyan national repository that either focus on or allude to the nation's colonial encounter especially the armed struggle generally termed Mau Mau. I analyse five texts that represent the colonial era in Kenya but achieve different histories or usable pasts that underpin groups' and individual's claim to power and national resources. The texts represent just a few among the many constructions and reconstructions of multiple histories of Kenya by different schools of thought. They are selected for purposes of scope. This article interrogates the aesthetic strategies by which each of the authors achieves construction and reconstruction of the information about the same historical era in the same country into a different history.

The authors' divergent points of departure are demonstrated thus:

...according to Odinga's the date and place of birth of the revolt cannot be clearly pointed out, there were many beginnings and many origins. There was seething revolt among the people on numerous levels, some national, some tribal, some expressive of the simplest form of anti-white hostility. There was a labyrinth of clandestine committees and organizations of one kind or another (1967:123).

Odinga suggests a multiplicity of beginnings and resistance strategies and hence a holistic view of the struggle against colonialism which surpasses the armed struggle 1953 –1956. On the contrary Kanogo identifies a specific place, time and manner of origin of the armed struggle that she foregrounds at the centre to the liberation struggle:

It was at Olenguruone that the use of oath as a tool of massive mobilization was initiated as squatters and Olenguruone residents accelerated their struggle against the slavery of the White Highlands. This laid the foundation for the rebellion (1987:5).

Kanogo's standpoint stated with such finality even contradicts the historical facts on the origin of the Mau Mau movement in others areas of central province, by Dedan Kimathi's faction of KAU for example. Her objective to foreground Mau Mau as the central resistance is contestable.

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However, it is noteworthy that she achieves by using literary techniques of emplotment in terms of selection of events and setting.

On his part, Kahiga focused on an individual who was generally assumed to be the leader of the Mau Mau movement: Dedan Kimathi. Kahiga's aim was to correct what he perceived as misrepresentation of this individual and the movement he led: "my purpose, in setting out, was to render, as closely to the facts as possible and in a documentary fashion, the essence of the Mau's spirit and the dynamics of the movement he led" (author's notes). By focusing on one historical personality out of the many who were involved in the struggle, Kahiga constricts its scope even further. However, he somehow redeems the exclusivity in his literary construction by dramatising the assistance that Mau Mau forest fighters received from the outside world beyond central province.

Professional historians – cum- other academic activities Maina wa Kinyatti and William R. Ochieng have interesting and rather contradictory titles: *Thunder from the Mountains: Mau Mau Patriotic Songs* (1980), and *Thunder from the Islands: Mau Mau in Western Kenya* (2002), both of which constrict and expand the setting of the armed struggle respectively. The former edited by wa Kinyatti are songs and poetry about the struggle that revolve around the following themes: the demand for land, the call to arms, heroism, torture and imprisonment, traitors and collaborators. At a deeper level, these are central themes in colonial capitalism everywhere as Ochieng argues: "fundamental ideological the kikuyu faced were characteristic features of colonial capitalism" (Ochieng: 2002, 182). He goes on to explore the significance of the detention Camps for Mau Mau captives in Mageta, Sayusi and Oyano islands in Lake Victoria. He raises very pertinent questions in the introduction to his essay the answers to which he considers to be more enlightening than the preoccupation with a biased view of one community's participation in the Mau Mau war that was but one of a myriad of resistances:

In the past, most research about the *Mau Mau* has dealt solely with Issues concerning the Gikuyu, because this Kenyan people were the predominant force behind the movement. As a result, one crucial issue has not been examined in any depth and details; namely what role, if any, did the other Kenyan communities play in the Mau Mau How was *Mau Mau* perceived by other Kenyans? Was it supported and morally by the rest of the colony? If not, was this lack of support due to lack of information about the *Mau Mau*'s aims, or was it due to antipathy against the Gikuyu? How crucial was British propaganda in driving a wedge between the *Mau Mau* activists and other Kenyans? (Ibid. 182).

These five authors' texts are assumed to signify different forms of knowledge but they employ aesthetic strategies that constitute narrative fictions which abound in divergencies. Whereas the boundaries of divergencies so represented may seem to fall between the texts, other forms and levels exist within each text thereby complicating the crisis in society. The complexity

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is achieved by use of traditional strategies of construction of narrative fiction: setting, emplotment characterization, theme, and style.

In *Not yet Uhuru* Odinga sets the timeframe of his story to coincide with his adolescence. He estimates that he must have been born about October, 1911 or 1912. The story ends shortly after he disagreed with Jomo Kenyatta the first president of Kenya and formed his own party: Kenya People's Union (KPU) in 1996. This scope in time enables him to reconstruct Kenyan history in a manner that foregrounds himself at a time when his conflict with Kenyatta had backgrounded his contribution and that of other groups in Kenya besides the Kikuyu elite class. The timeframe also enables Odinga to select events and actions that affected all the people in the colony in addition to land alienation that affected mainly Central Kenya and the Rift Valley Provinces. He can simultaneously expand the setting in space to include the whole county and avoid centering Central Kenya.

Odinga's emplotment demonstrates choice and order of events and actions meant to encompass the whole country, but in a manner, that foregrounds his personal contribution to the struggle for independence. The autobiography starts with association with community leadership at a very early age "At the feet of village elders" followed by his rise in politics, his struggle against the whites in school and church. He explains his attempt to achieve independence through business and later how he rose to be a political force in Kenyan politics. But it is his emplotment of Mau Mau movement and party politics that reveals his perspective on Kenyan liberation history. He discusses the Mau Mau movement as one of the many similar events in a chapter titled 'Peasants in Revolt'. Although he recognises the issue of land alienation as critical and the development in party politics, Odinga still backgrounds the Mau Mau movement in various ways. For example, he acknowledges the essence of oathing and Olenguruone resettlement scheme crisis, but he understates the purpose of the oath –that it was only meant to resist forceful eviction from the land. He later acknowledges the seriousness of oathing with respect to forest fighting but still claims that the leader Dedan Kimathi had disowned the term Mau Mau.

In the chapter on 'Peasants in Revolt' Odinga provides a detailed account of events, actions, groups, and personalities who contributed to the revolt countrywide. His main objective in this chapter seems to have been to reconstruct the history of this period by decentring the armed struggle and elevating all other expressions of resistance against British colonialism in Kenya. He concludes the chapter by summarising his perspective thus:

We in Kenya have still to write our history of these years. For this the men who founded and led KAU and other patriotic and political organizations, those who spent the emergence years in detention camps and, above all, the forest fighters will have to combine. The story is for more complex than the official versions make out. Many streams flowed into the movement, some converging on one another and joining up, others flowing along their own course till they were joined in the final flood and revolt. Until Kenya sets the record straight our

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people will not fully understand how we are today on the road to full independence (1967:122).

Although Odinga succeeds in decentring the Mau Mau movement, he fails to identify the alterities within the movement. He only draws a boundary between moderate party politics of Kenya African Union (KAU) and radical politics of the younger generation who advocated the use of violence. He presents Dedan Kimathi as the undisputed leader of the latter but as Kahiga shows in the historical novel, there were many factions and many divisions within the movement and its leadership. In the chapters that follow, Odinga is at pains to construct himself as a committed nationalist and his leftist ideology as the guiding principle for a second liberation. He examines the first liberation that never was from a social, economic and political point of view. In his view, there were many divisions after 1963 than there were before. Whereas the previous major division was essentially racial, after declaration of what he calls flag independence, there were multiple class conflicts, tribalism, clanism, and nepotism. On the economic plane the distribution of resources particularly land which was at the centre of the struggle was not addressed resulting into further divisions. Since he was new to the way the new government handled this issue he there depicted himself as the voice of the people against whom other political voices were to be judged. For him, many voices in the new government were neo-colonial echos.

By centring himself as the ideal leader, Odinga constructs his own forms of otherness particularly in terms of gender. Although he dedicated his autobiography to Kenya African National Union (KANU), to the youth and women among other groups, he does not give any detailed account of their contribution to the struggle. As an autobiography; *Not Yet Uhuru* is a site for identity construction and reconstruction. Odinga uses it to reconstruct his identify as a superior democratic nationalist by backgrounding many other players in the struggle. It is not clear whom he expects to participate in the second struggle for liberation or what form the struggle is to take. In my view, that the sporadic violence that has been experienced in Kenya over time is a manifestation of that struggle. The 2010 construction for example is one of the signifiers of genuine Uhuru (freedom, independence) or second liberation. The themes that underpin each of the chapters in *Not Yet Uhuru* are carefully selected and delineated to restore Odinga's image as a major cornerstone stone in the continued struggle for liberation at time when he had been humiliated and isolated by Jomo Kenyatta.

Unlike Odinga who adapts a holistic view and attributes decolonization process in Kenya to expressions of anti-colonial hostility, the professional historian Tabitha Kanogo focuses on the economic base of the settler system and land alienation as the major cause of the struggle for independence. Kanogo's title, her introductory and conclusive remarks emphasise her attempt to foreground squatter experience and effect in Kenyan decolonisation process at the expense of any other factor. She introduces her narrative as follows:

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Establishing colonial rule in Kenya and attempting to turn the country into a white settlement area has a profound effect on the local African population. Not only did the alienation of African lands (For European settler occupation) disinherit and dislocate many Africans, but the subsequent development of settler plantations and mixed farms created a demand for a larger number of labourers. But, since no African labour force was readily forthcoming, the colonial government adapted a combination of financial and political measures to create the required labour (1987:1).

The financial and political measures that were adapted such as taxation and forced labour affected the whole country. That explains why many groups harboured and expressed anti-colonial hostilities. And Kanogo concludes her narrative thus:

The history of the Kikuyu squatters in the Rift Valley has thus been one of ardent determination to survive –there were even some moment of prosperity – amidst an oppressive colonial situation. But in the White Highlands, the interaction between squatter strategies for survival and settler suppression constituted only one aspect of the colonial conflict. It was enough to destroy white supremacy, but not enough to realize the peasant dream (1987:181).

Although Kanogo alludes to other aspects of the colonial conflict, she foregrounds the squatter contribution in the decolonisation process to such a degree that it becomes the standard Other against which other alterities are to be judged. She gives undue credit to the events in Olenguruone scheme crisis. Not only does she represent it as hotbed of protest but also credits it with leadership in militancy.

The Olenguruone crisis had thus played an important role in injecting militancy into both squatter and Central Province Politics ... The seeds of the violent protest that characterized the next phase of Kenya's history had been sown in Olenguruone before being transplanted to the Settled Areas and Central Province, for it was in Olenguruone that the ideology that questioned that legitimacy of colonial rule in the White Highlands in particular, and in the country as a whole, was first born (1987:120).

Oginga Odinga would vehemently disagree and argue that many individuals and groups were questioning the legitimacy of colonial domination long before Olenguruone happened. Harry Thuku's 1922 movement is a good example. Kanogo's school of thought seems to underpin the perspective on decolonization held by the Kikuyu community to date. In turn the other ethnic groups view the Kikuyu as the expansionist and exploitative Other. It is not unusual to hear a Kikuyu ask other Kenyans if they contributed to the struggle and therefore by what

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virtue the latter can claim political leadership. The irony is that many of the Kikuyu who have dominated Kenyan politics over the years qualify to be the Kikuyu Other. Many of them are descendents of members of the tribe who did not directly participate in the armed struggle and some who were homeguards fighting against their fellow tribesmen. Others are beneficiaries of missionary education which propelled them in the elite class. These latter Kikuyu groupings have the propensity of appealing to tribal sentiments whenever their material base is threatened, but as the renowned Kikuyu writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o insists, there are only two ethnic groups in Kenya—the haves and the havenots.

Kanogo's setting in time and space is limited to squatter experience in Central and Rift Valley Provinces of Kenya. Her bias is most visible in her narrative of the Kikuyu experience in the Rift Valley where there were other groups/ethnic groups living as labourers on settler farms. She contends that the labourers from other ethnic groups were temporary migrant workers and only Kikuyus were squatters who had moved to the area all their cultural practices and considered it as home. Her chapter on 'Politics of Protest: Mau Mau' is best read in conjunction with Odinga's 'Peasants in Revolt' to understand the alterities, silences, and erasures therein. The two authors portraits affirm Levi-Strauss' observation that "authors do not always make use of the same incidents; when they do, the incidents are revealed in different lights. And yet these are variations which have to do with the same country, the period and the same events...(qtd in White 1978:44).

Kanogo attributes the destruction of white supremacy in the White Highlands to Kikuyu squatters and the Mau Mau guerilla warfare while Odinga attributes the same to many factors. However, the two converge on the gains and losses of independence where they argue that the real fighters in and out of the forest were the losers in the struggle because independence only benefitted comprador elite middle class. Both authors note that the land issue was not resolved and remained a cause of conflict.

The land issue was one of the pressing issues which defined differences within the Kikuyu ethnic group after 1963. The forest freedom fighters and all the victims of land alienation had expected resettlement and compensation, but they were shocked to discover that the new government had no such plans. There were few settlement schemes but the expectation of free land was categorically opposed by none other than the first president Jomo Kenyatta who reneged on his party's earlier campaign promises:

I did not say that African should idle and wait until Uhuru to get land for nothing. All that I said was that the present government should get down to work and face realities and help the landless, unemployed Africans, that if there was any land going it ought to be given to somebody who needed it and not the man with 500[Acres]or however much he may have (qtd. in Kanogo 1987:171).

According to both Odinga and Kanogo, failure to settle this issue was tantamount to betrayal and it was the beginning of a new class struggle. The Kenya Land and Freedom Army continued its activities underground for some time. There were other discontented groups as



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Odinga's text shows. This means that the supposedly independent Kenya was not a united nation. Efforts to resettle the landless in the Rift Valley Province underlie the tribal clashes that have been experienced in Kenya in the last four general elections. Therefore, for both writers it was 'not yet Uhuru' for many groups in the country.

Kanogo gets credit for highlighting the contribution of women and children in the Mau Mau war. She notes that five percent of the forest army comprised women and girls who engaged in actual combat. Odinga does not highlight women's contribution except in his dedication. This gender aspect is important because women constituted yet another betrayed group. Jomo Kenyatta's first cabinet and subsequent ones were a men's –only business.

Overall both the autobiography and concise historical texts lay claim to fact and truth, yet the conflict and contradict in various ways thereby reinforcing levels of otherness. Interestingly Sam Kahiga the historical novelist also lays claim to fact and truth. His focus is on the leadership of the forest guerilla warfare. His setting in time and space is limited to the three years-1952 to 1955-during which the warfare was active, in Central and Rift Valley Provinces of Kenya. Kahiga's physical map closely resembles that of historian Kanogo but differs drastically from Odinga's. Kahiga's timeframe is even more constricted than that of the other two authors.

In the author's note at the beginning of the story Kahiga declares that his aim is to deconstruct and reconstruct the representation of Mau Mau movement and its popularly acknowledged leader Dedan Kimathi:

To most people Dedan Kimathi, the man who led the Mau Mau movement in the forest in the fifties, has remained a shadowy and enigmatic figure. Attempts to portray his heroic and fascinating life have produced varying results, ranging from historical distortion to artistic idealism (1990: blub).

Kahiga did a lot of research with the aim of correcting the anomaly, but the limitation of his scope to the leadership of the movement entails various forms and levels of otherness beginning with his setting, emplotment, characterisation /participant, and themes Kahigas's objective enables him to construct what he describes as 'a credible flesh –and –blood Kimathi, capable of laughter, anger and love and who evokes in us not only admiration but also anger and disappointment' (1990: blub)

Based on his authorial declaration, Kahiga's main achievement may seem to lie in the construction of the Other Kimathis and the Other Mau Maus. Despite his authorial intention to reconstruct earlier constructions, Kahiga's premise is replete with unexamined affirmations of these very constructions. He takes the constitution and function of the Mau Mau movement as a given. In this sense his narrative approximates to Kanogo's which gives Kikuyu forest fighters credit for dismantling white supremacy in Kenya. For him, there is a major boundary between the forest fighters and the significant other agitators but whose function he backgrounds. His

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focus on the personality of Dedan Kimathi constricts his scope even further as he proceeds to scrutinize this individual's strengths but also his many weaknesses.

In the real story, Kimathi is not the undisputed leader of the guerilla movement –and it was not one movement but several factions that converged on some issues and diverged on others. Within the faction that was relatively loyal to Kimathi there were silent protests the leader's high-handedness, elitism, arrogance, and dictatorship. The conflict between the literate Kimathi who was the secretary and semi-literate Stanley Mathenge the chairman of the sub-movement was a major obstacle to unity among the fighters under them.

Despite the oaths that supposedly bound forest fighters, Kahiga exposes internal conflicts, contradictions, and even lawlessness among the challenges that they faced. Towards the end of the movement there were four different groups in the forest. These included the initial Mau Mau fighters loyal to Kimathi who were identified with the Kenya Parliament he formed, the Kenya Riigi which supported Stanley Mathenge, Komereras which were splinter groups, and pseudo-gangsters comprising of deserters and captured former forest fighters who were being used by the colonial government to hunt down their former colleagues still in the forest. Even within Kimathi's group there was a sub-group led by one Kago. This group engaged in defiant activities outside the forest in broad daylight and did not have women. One might even categorize women as a fifth group in the forest even though they operated within the men's groups.

Kahiga's representation of women differs from Ngugi Wa Thiongo's in *A Grain of Wheat* for example. In the latter, the women provided information and food, and they were mainly limited to non-combat space. The few who found their way to the forest continued with the traditional female gender roles. Kahiga deconstructs this stereotypical portrait. He represents girls and women as part of the forest army performing different roles including being seers such as Rahab who acts as an adviser to some group leaders such as Kabuku. The girls are often seen going about their duties with guns hanging from their hips. Kahiga particularly foregrounds women by presenting a critical evaluation of Dedan Kimathi from the point of view of Agnes Ndiritu, a young girl who kills a home guard and escapes to the forest. Agnes's image of Kimathi changes when she encounters him on several occasions in the forest:

Before coming to the forest, her image of Kimathi had been of a man with a long sword going around the country like an angel of death, cutting down the enemy. Now she was getting used to the real man-a tired, rather melancholy man with books and a stack of papers, obsessed not with killing, but with organizing the killing. He hardly ever left the forest, hardly ever fires a shot, for he didn't need to, and many outside the forest had the wrong image of him (Kahiga 1990:120).

Agnes was to discover many other character traits of Kimathi particularly the negative ones. Through Agnes Ndiritu, Stanley Mathenge, Yakobo Kabuku and Kago, Agnes's brother Theuri, Kahiga succeeds in portraying the Other Kimaths. As Theuri realized "although he erhad been close to Marshal and considered himself as one of the very few people who knew the real

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Kimathi, he knew nothing of the man” (Kahiga 1990:306). There were many Kimathis. There was the one who had all the qualities of leadership that could hold a movement together but there the other Kimathis whose negative qualities led to the disintegration of his army and eventual capture.

In the whole narrative, Kahiga portrays various levels of otherness within the restricted scope. In the epilogue, there is yet another group –the elite group that had taken over power at independence to exclusion of both Kimathi’s Kenya Parliament and his rivals –the Kenya Riigi that had been tricked to enter negotiation with the settlers. Overall, the exit point of the real story was one of disunity and betrayal within the African camp involving a myriad of otherness in party politics outside the forest and the same inside the forest. Kimathi had been captured by his former soldiers led by Kabuku and hanged. The remnants of his army and other factions had scattered all over. Those who remained in the forest and came out soon after independence like Agnes and her son were entering a world in which their expectations had been pushed to the periphery of independence or altogether excluded.

Kahiga’s whole historical novel should be read against Odinga’s chapter on ‘Peasants In Revolt’ and Kanogo’s Chapter on ‘Politics of Protest: Mau Mau’ to discover the various alterities within and across the texts, and most importantly how the usable histories therein underpin contemporary Kenyan society that is replete with divisions. To date surviving Mau Mau fighters association is fairly active. They have a case, not against the various Kenyan governments that ignored their plight, but against the British government. As that goes on Kenyan governments maintain harmonious diplomatic relations with the British. As wa Thiong’o would insist, this is a case of two Kenyas and two British.

## **Conclusion**

The most appropriate conclusion to this article would be an attempt to answer the pertinent questions raised by Ochieng. In so far as all “natives” were subjected to the same characteristic features of colonial capitalism such forced labour, new cultural practices, taxation and so on, they all resisted in various ways. In this, Ochieng concurs with other scholars such as P. A. Pavlis, J. Kamunchulu, and Edith. A. Miguda who attempt to expand the scope and understanding of the armed phase of Kenyan liberation struggle. Interestingly wa Kinyatti who celebrates songs from the mountains acknowledges complimentarity of other Kenyan communities in the struggle. In *Mau Mau: A Revolution Betrayed* (2009) while identifying the origin of the term Mau Mau, he states that it has been “immortalized by Kenyan people because it symbolizes their collective heroism against foreign domination, and their undying love for freedom, liberty and justice.

In other words, it has become synonymous with Kenyan national patriotism, anti—imperialism, military acumen, and most importantly, democratic revolution”. So it cannot be that only one community is credited with all these national attributes. Back to Ochieng’s questions on the contribution of other communities, firstly in terms of their own resistance to features of capitalist colonialism as it affected their region and secondly contribution to the armed struggle materially and morally. Odinga documents details of support for the Gikuyu

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from many sources. He discusses the role of political parties that had national membership and the concerted efforts that released Jomo Kenyatta to take over power at independence. It is now consensual among scholars that the latter was never a Mau Mau fight. It also clear that resistance against imperialism took many forms and levels, therefore centering Mau Mau as manifested in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley as the only form of liberation struggle is a deliberate act of exclusivity which has extended into current politics.

One is persuaded to concur with Odinga's metaphor of the flood of revolt that was filled by resistance waters from many sources. But that unity of purpose has been replaced by constructions of usable pasts that signify inequalities because participation in the liberation struggle. The implication is conflict and disunity. Therefore, there is urgent need to weigh exclusive constructions that engender current conflict and disunity against inclusive reconstructions that promise unity and genuine nationhood. The texts analysed in this article can enable patriotic Kenyans to visualise another perspective, besides the "official" version of history and its implication for the current state of the nation.

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