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Colonialism, Weaponisation of Ethnicity & Intermittent Political Violence:

Showcasing Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, 1895-1963

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Abstract

Ethnic conflicts have increased across the globe, and especially after the Cold war; and indeed affected various countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. In most of these cases, it has been triggered by struggles for the meagre resources and domination of political power. In Africa, studies on ethnic conflicts have indicated a strong interplay between ethnicity and the colonial phenomenon. This article endeavours to connect the intermittent political violence in Uasin Gishu, Kenya, within the purview of the colonial phenomenon particularly, when the violence was viewed historically as a process and not an event. It hypothesizes that the violent subterfuge of ethnic communities in Uasin Gishu and other portions of the rift valley were the result of the despair and fear perceived by native communities as a result of presumed economic and political setbacks during the colonial era. To this end, the initial research study was guided by three theories, namely: Primordialism, instrumentalism and relative deprivation theories which reinforced each other as the lens through which to make sense of the connection between colonialism and the said intermittent political violence. The study is based on a research project that employed the historical method from the dual perspectives of interpretivism philosophical outlook and qualitative approach. The main submission, in this research article, is that the coming and settlement of the colonialists led to the growth of toxic ethnic relations within the Rift valley region that were initially non-existent. This situation was further exacerbated after independence (1963), as the political elites became the new drivers of the vice.

Key words: Colonialism, Ethnic-weaponisation, Political-violence, Usin-Gishu

Introduction

In pre-colonial Kenya, population pressure was not a concern and the village homestead was characterized by a self-sufficient economy, and ethnicity was experienced rather than rationalized (Bedasso, 2017). Ethnicity per se was not a

factor used for social, economic, or political gain, but was a given, a way of identification. Neither were different communities hated or loved on the basis of their ethnicity until the arrival of colonialism. Colonialism set the stage for ethnicity and ethnic affiliation as one of the most common origins and agents of political violence. The dislike the Kalenjin have for the Kikuyu and the other non-native communities in Uasiin Gishu emanated from the creation of European settlements during the colonial period. The creation of more reserves for the non-Kalenjin communities in Uasin Gishu meant less land for grazing or farming for the Kalenjin, a predicament which they were not ready for. Consequently, these other communities were not welcome in their land. In spite of this dislike, there was no report of ethnic violence between these communities and Kalenjin until after the entrenchment of political differences under colonialism. Politically instigated ethnic violence was brought about under colonialism by three different factors: political competition, deep ethnic cleavage and conflict over land distribution. These factors have contributed to political violence in Uasin Gishu witnessing weaponisation of ethnicity by the political elite. According to Field (2018), weaponized ethnicity arises out of the irrational fear of particular people of colour, tongue or tradition that can easily be manipulated to affect political, economic, and social structure of a particular place.

We have traced the intermittent political violence in Uasin Gishu within the colonial phenomenon. As already noted, the article hypothesizes, in this regard, that the violent subterfuge of the Kalenjin community in Uasin Gishu and other portions of the rift valley is the result of the despair and fear perceived by native communities as a result of presumed economic and political setbacks during the colonial era. Carotenuto and Shadle (2012) offer insight on this violence by describing the nature of colonial-era violence towards Africans. Colonial settler experience in Kenya was frequently documented as notably violent:

> South African settlers were among the most barbaric in their treatment of Africans. President Moi has been quoted as stating, 'Kenyans cannot accept the type of prejudice that is practiced in South Africa.... Mrs. Thatcher, the British prime minister, cannot comprehend the racists' actions in South Africa. We are familiar with them since some of them lived in Uasin Gishu, and we know that they used to beat Africans instead of cattle.' (Warigi 2013, p.1)

In the early years, a significant number of Kenyan settlers originated from South Africa, bringing with them their own distinctive notions of race and brutality, which they inflicted mostly on African labour. In reality, these Afrikaners had the reputation of being Kenya's most violent and quick-tempered settlers. In 1921, Native Punishment Commission members noticed the pervasive use of physical violence by white employers, despite the NLC's warnings and collection of evidence to the contrary (Native Punishments Commission, KNA/AG/7/2/1924), and in Governor Denham's communication to the secretary of state in 1925 (KNA/AG/7/2/1925). Consequently, as is often the case, the violence meted on victims of weaponised ethnicity has oft bordered on sadism including torture, forced circumcision, beatings, and even the beheading of some victims: actions which are reminiscent of the colonial era brutalities which Africans underwent in the hands of some settlers and or colonial administrative machinery. We thus sought to establish the role played by colonization, how it bred ethnic tensions, and how these ethnic differences were ingrained. Oucho (2010) identifies four parts of the colonial heritage that are essential to this investigation into the core causes of ethnic violence in Kenya in general and that finds application in specific context of Uasin Gishu. These are; the country's coterminous ethnic-administrative boundaries; the unsolved "land question"; the conflict-prone migrant labour system that produced agricultural labourers and squatters; and an imperial constitution.

Theoretical framework

The research article is theoretically guided by three theories, namely: Primordialism, instrumentalism and relative deprivation theories which were used to reinforce each other. Primordialism theory is linked to the ideals of German Romanticism, especially in the writings of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Johann Gottlieb Herder. Ethnic conflicts, according to primordialism, result from enduring innate traits that are frequently utilized as the foundation for ethnic groups in pursuit of a shared objective. These linkages include a shared culture, lineage or familial relationships, language, and religion. They are societal "givens" one cannot live without, and they link one to one's family, neighbour, and fellow believer by their very nature (Geertz, 1996). According to this view, people participate in conflict because of the ties that bind them, and they risk their lives for the welfare of the entire community. Here, ethnic battles are conducted on the basis of "we" and "them" identity. Emotions are a fundamental motivator for members' passion for their organizations and their dislike of other groups (Horowitz, 1985). This aspect is relevantly illustrated by Jonsson (2007), as she discusses the conflicts in Northern Ghana, when she aptly notes, thus:

> In order to understand the repeated outbreaks of large-scale inter-ethnic violence in the NR which culminated in the 1994-1995 war, group conceptions of history, tradition and ethnic identity must be taken into account as they interact with perceptions of land rights and discrimination. (Jonsson 2007, p.8)

Primordialism as a theory is significant in recognizing the persistent strength of ethnic relationships and its members' devotion to it. Political scientist Osman (2007) asserts that primordialism, which focuses on sub-national loyalties and solidarities ingrained in the collective consciousness of communities, can serve as an epistemological and conceptual framework for exploration in the social sciences. Despite acknowledging that "primordialism is admittedly not without its flaws and problems," the author suggests that it offers a unique perspective for inquiry, similar to other conceptual and theoretical traditions in the social sciences. The advantage of this idea is that it frequently highlights how senseless ethnic conflict is (Turton, 1997). The theory overlooks the social, economic, and political dynamics within which these conflicts erupt and paints a picture of pessimism by viewing ethnic wars as perpetual and unavoidable. (Pargeter and others, 2016). According to Kataria, (2018) the strength of ethnicity comes in its ability to engender commitment and desire. When this power is abused, however, it may result in violent confrontations. Ethnicity is integral to political practice and, therefore, manipulable and open to appropriation and reinterpretation by political actors for instrumental reasons. This adage is affirmed by Steeves who notes that,

> the key to understanding Kenyan politics is that political leadership is grounded in ethnic communities… Aspiring politicians must gain the support of their ethnic community whether at the level of their sub-clan, their clan or the community as a whole. This means that those who have been elevated as leaders must fight for their community at the centre and bring valued resources back home. (Steeves, 2006, p. 4)

Since communities have often lived together in peace, their ethnic affiliation alone cannot lead to animosity. Therefore, this research article employed the instrumentalist theory as well to explain how the ethnic identities and bonds were used as a tool to ferment hostility to achieve personal, political, economic and social benefits by the elites. The instrumentalist account, according to Smith (2005), "rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, in the argument over (white) ethnic persistence in what was meant to have been a successful melting pot." This new theory aimed to explain such tenacity as a result of the acts of community leaders "who exploited their cultural groupings as venues of mass mobilization and as constituents in their fight for power and resources because they considered its use more successful than social classes." In this concept of ethnic identity, "ethnicity and race are understood as instrumental identities, structured to serve certain objectives. Ethnicity in this sense thus becomes the strategic basis for coalitions seeking a bigger share of scarce economic or political power and therefore, a tool for limiting resources to a small number of persons.

The instrumentalist perspective views ethnic conflicts as having political overtones and places emphasis on cultural, political, and territorial arguments (Carment, 1993). For instrumentalists, ethnicity is a resource elites utilize to construct group identity, govern group membership and borders, and make claims and extract state resources (Glazer & Moynihan 1975). Ethnic elites are also prone to exaggerate and exploit ethnic distinctions to project potential antagonism resulting from inequalities and power gaps within their community to the elites and subjects of other communities (Nafziger & Auvinen 2002). While instrumentalism stresses elite manipulation or politicization of ethnicity as the root cause of grievances that lead to ethnic conflicts, it cannot independently explain why individuals mobilize along ethnic lines so quickly, cooperatively, and successfully (Ruane and Todd 2004). Instrumentalism is operationalised alongside primordialim in recognition of the ability of ethnicity to preserve a feeling of "common blood," shared ideals, similar interests, shared dangers, and most importantly, the essential sense of solidarity required for collective action. On the downside, instrumentalism does not provide the emotional substance of conflicts such as rape and senseless murders, which are not generated by elites, but which they recognize and appeal to (Ruane & Todd, 2004). Primordial theory thus supplemented this component. In this study, instrumentalism informs on how the elite have weaponized cultural aspects of ethnicity in Uasin Gishu by converting it into a tool to mobilize support for their selfish interests such as political power, political posts, state resources, economic gain. Since the elite in society are opinion leaders, they use their status to manipulate people by feeding them with information as well as appealing to their community's socio-cultural identity in order to get support from their ethnic group and mobilize them against their perceived protagonists. The rational power conserving elite strategies and ethnic affiliation alone was not enough to address the intermittent political violence phenomenon's complexity. Hence the need to complement these two theories with relative deprivation theory.

Robert K. Merton devised the relative deprivation theory, which was later articulated by Walter Runciman and Ted Gurr (Longley, 2021). Ethnic conflict is more likely in states when minorities face economic discrimination, disparities in living standards compared to other ethnic groups, and uneven access to public resources such as land and money. This

theory was applied to account for the deep underlying feelings of perceived exclusion, historical injustices, and marginalisation of certain ethnic groups and how these perceptions have been exploited by the political elite against and for certain ethnic groups in Uasin Gishu therefore driving these communities into committing violent acts for political expediency at the behest of the political elite. The definition of relative deprivation may be obtained from the works of its most accomplished practitioners. Gurr (1970) argues in his book, "*Why Men Rebel*" that individuals get unsatisfied when they believe they have less than they might and could. Over time, this discontent evolves to anger and revolt against the (actual or perceived) source of their deprivation. According Gurr (1970), Relative deprivation is the discrepancy between expectation value of an individual and their ability to meet and fulfil this expectation. In this sense expectations includes goods and life conditions people see as belonging to them while valued capabilities can be described as goods and life condition they can achieve. Such a discrepancy cannot go on for long without some form of social violence occurring. According to Gurr, "discontent resulting from the impression of relative deprivation is the fundamental, inciting condition for collective violence" (Gurr, 1970).

The research article thus endeavoured to trace the development of weaponised ethnicity and intermittent political violence in Uasin Gishu by discussing the development of these incidences and their political connotations during the colonial period basing on the primordial, instrumentalist and relative deprivation theories. The theories, in this way, attempted to show how the genesis of these shared social, cultural, economic and political aspects had been manipulated and politicized by the colonial regime, and later by the bourgeois political elite to gain certain advantages. The theories are used in this sense to show how the traditional feelings of loss of Kalenjin land and other economic resources, as well as the fear of loss of political power, have all been used to mobilize the Kalenjin, Kikuyu and other communities in Uasin Gishu by the political elite against each other. The theories further explain the response of the various ethnic communities to the social, political and economic developments in Uasin Gishu during the colonial period by describing how certain socio-political and economic events have been manipulated.

Establishment of colonial rule; Uasin Gishu region

The dawn of the 20th century marked the beginning of colonization in Kenya. After colonization of the territory, and construction of the railway, Morgan (1963) avers that the colonial office received several reports about the suitability of the vast lands for European settlement. One such report was from Sir Harry Johnston who was able to report of a territory (after the construction of the Uganda Railway) that was admirably suitable for a white man's country. According to Johnston, the territory was uninhabited for miles while in other areas the inhabitants were wandering hunters who had no settled homes. He was also of the opinion that those Africans in the area who seemed to have permanent residences, were to be found in the lands outside the healthy area suitable for European settlement. Njenga (2015) highlights that European immigration commenced in the early 1900s, driven by the British government's agenda to establish not only a conventional colonial export economy but also a settler culture characterized by vast estates reliant on forced local labour. This endeavour was facilitated by favourable climatic and geographical conditions: fertile, well-watered uplands, known as the "White Highlands," surrounded by a much larger African area, the majority of which consisted of lower-lying, arid regions, some suitable for grazing and others not, with significant portions infested by tsetse flies, alongside tropical coastal areas. Douglas (1965) echoes similar sentiments regarding this phenomenon.

As a result of these reports on the suitability of climate and the general aptness of these lands for agriculture and European settlement, by 1903, some of the initial settlers who knew about the agricultural potential of this area like Van Breda from South Africa, started seeking for leases from the government to enable them settle and begin practicing agriculture. In 1903, he applied for land on behalf of himself and his two brothers. Other pioneer Europeans settlers to arrive in Uasin Gishu, were the Boers from South Africa led by Van Reinsburg who had previously inspected the plateau. In 1906, he organised the Reinsburg trek which led to the arrival of several Boers into Uasin Gishu. (KNA, DC/UG/2/1- Uasin Gishu District Political Record File, 1909-1933). Youe (1988) also reiterates that Afrikaners were the first to settle in the Uasin Gishu. For more effective access into the interior, the British then embarked on the improvement of infrastructure, beginning with the construction of the Kenya –Uganda railway.

The British who colonized both Uganda and Kenya needed the Kenya–Ugandan railway for various reasons. Ogonda (1992) gives details as to some of the reasons being: to gain control over the river Nile and increase contact between Africans in the hinterlands. It would also help to end the practice of slave trade, to provide easy transportation for the natives, settlers, traders and missionaries, to carry goods to the markets from the rural areas and the outside world, to give access to the protectorate to the sea, to ensure that the cash crops produced reached the world markets and to strengthen

colonial rule over colonies. The colonial administration also realised that the railway was a good way of earning revenue from which colonies could be run and, on this Morgan, (1963) explains that the absence of traffic made it impossible for the railroad to make a profit. As the railway traversed heights deemed appropriate for European occupancy, settlement was encouraged to generate money for the railway and taxes to fund administration. Munene, (1992) alludes to the fact that the arrival of the British and the construction of the railway through Nandi land led to a protracted war between them and the Nandi led by their *Orkoiyot;* Koitalel Arap Samoei. The challenges posed by Nandi are described in part by Hutingford (2012) who describes the beginning of British administration of Nandi in 1896 as stormy and difficult for the first ten years. The recalcitrant nature of the Nandi, led by their *Orkoiyot*, forced the British to send several military expeditions against them. After the last expedition sent at the end of 1905, which saw the assassination of Koitalel Arap Samoei, the Nandi submitted to the new conditions, and their land became a Reserve.

The eventual defeat of the Nandi unfortunately led to massive alienation of their land and displacement. Consequently, their protracted resistance cost lives, livestock, and land. They lost ancestral land that was located in the southern Uasin Gishu Plateau. This region was made available for European colonization. Additionally, the land alienation of 1906 robbed the southern Nandi of grazing lands and salt licks for their cattle. Delivering a discourse on the arrival of the British in Nandi land from 1895, Gold (1978) narrates that this arrival came to be viewed as a serious threat to Nandi position. At the same time this invasion of their territory provided an incentive for greater political unity. With time, as the British came to appreciate the military capabilities of the Nandi, they started developing myths surrounding them. The Nandi were labelled as warlike, truculent and thievish to denigrate them and hence justify the destruction of Nandi economy and political structure. Some of these colonial labels have lingered on to date and apart from being used by other communities to refer to the Nandi, they also seem to have been adopted by the Nandi as a whole thus reinforcing their culture.

Morgan (1963) proposes that land alienation did not occur until after the completion of the Uganda Railway, which reached Nairobi in 1899 and Lake Victoria in 1901 and considerably stimulated settlement, as an explanation for the delay in land alienation. The surrender of the Nandi paved way for the wholesome occupation of their fertile lands, followed by the establishment of reserves into which they were pushed. Hutingford (2012) reports that European settlement, which had begun on a small scale on the Uasin Gishu plateau before 1905, began to increase. The colonial government embarked on approaches of oppressing and exploiting the Africans to ensure they were impoverished to a level that they would seek and even compete for wage labour from settler farms. The strategies included, but were not limited to: creation of reserves, taxation, squatter system, *kipande* system, among others. These colonial strategies led to competition for scarce resources among Africans and in some instances encouraged the development of ethnic animosities and stereotypes which have lingered to date and are also unfortunately used by the political elite to brew intercommunity hatred and political violence.

Land alienation and creation of reserves in Uasin Gishu region

Native reserves were introduced by the colonial regime in the year 1902 (Karari, 2018). According to Matson (1972), the Nandi were moved from Uasin Gishu plateau to Nandi reserve as vast areas of their land was alienated for settler occupation. These reserves were ethnically defined as administrative units within which Africans were expected to stay. Some of the reserves are present day districts and locations. In the view of Lynch (2011), these ethnic reserves played the role of exacerbating ethnic cleavages and identities, which only increased ethnic feelings and tendencies after independence. The Reserves were under the administration of the colonial regime. Interestingly, Njenga (2015) observes that the majority of Africans were forced to reside in "reserves" outside the Highland region, which were being steadily destroyed as the population and cattle grew. In addition to serving as zones of distinct existence, the reserves served as labour reservoirs on European property. It should be noted that for Africans, it was the insufficiency of savings coupled with the requirement to work for a living, which forced them to continue providing labour to the Europeans. Further, the colonial regime introduced the Soldier Settlement Scheme (Kipchirchir *et al* 2022). According to oral evidence,

> About three wazungus stayed in the big house in Chepsaita but the house belonged to Major Scott. Major Scot was given the land in Chepsaita scheme as a gift by the British government for his work in the British army. They also built the house for him. He was also given more than 500 Boran cattle. These cattle had been confiscated from the people who were resisting British rule as a punishment. Other European settlers were Maxton Milla who was at Chepkemel, J.K Russ at Magut. Major Scott died after an accident at the railway but the wife had left earlier. (Paul Chuma, OI, Chepsaita, 21/07/21)

This plan to settle British ex-soldiers like Major Scott, led to additional land alienation from Africans and the resultant influx of more settlers. Indeed, the colonial regime went ahead and introduced new legislation which, among other things; restricted the mobility of Africans, and reduced their wages, while increasing taxation. The new legislation

also empowered the local administrators like chiefs to actively enforce labour laws and consequently, more Africans found themselves seeking for wage labour from the settlers besides the lost land. Since the beginning of colonization, when the Germans and subsequently the British imposed laws and practices that drove people off their ancestral lands and set one ethnic group against another, Kenya has seen a long history of land disputes. According to Kanogo and Ogendo, land in Kenya perceived as unoccupied by British settlers was designated as Crown land, indicating territory where the Commissioner acted on behalf of the Queen of England, as stipulated by the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902. Additionally, such land was categorized as Trust Land, as noted by Kanogo (1987) and Okoth Ogendo (1989). The most fertile and climatically favourable portions of these lands were designated as the White Highlands, reserved specifically for European settlement and agricultural activities. Africans were confined to reserves, while the Indians were restricted to the urban centres.

The white farmers in Kenya recruited inexpensive migrant labour primarily from the Nyanza and Western provinces, along with some individuals from Central Kenya who harboured the dual aspiration of employment and land acquisition. This recruitment practice was particularly prevalent as white farmers initiated commercial farming endeavours across different regions of the country, establishing significant presence in the Rift and Associated Highlands (Ominde, 1968). As a result of massive land alienation and the pathetic conditions in the native reserves, many Africans sought refuge on settler farms where they were allowed to build small huts, keep limited cattle, and engage in small subsistence farming. The major condition was that they work on the settler farm for a stipulated number of days. According to Karari (2018), the onset of colonialism therefore affected the socio-economic and political structure of the Nandi and greatly affected how they interacted with their neighbours. The kikuyu people too had suffered from land alienation and as a result, many of them found themselves in the rift valley as squatters or labourers and made up a large population of outsiders in this area during the colonial period. Other communities including Luo, Kisii, Luhya, Iteso among others, also arrived in the area at around the same time (Leys, 1975). The Kikuyu had lost 30% to 70% of their land to British settlers between 1902 and 1903. Atieno- Odhiambo (2002) elaborates on the resultant plight of the Kikuyu leading to direct conflict with the alliance of the European settler and the colonial state. Due to this, Kikuyu land hunger was established. It compelled those who had lost their land to relocate to the Rift Valley, where they settled as squatters.

Unfortunately, the Nandi associated the appearance and reappearance of the Kikuyu to the Uasin Gishu District after the MAU MAU purge to Colonial council's destocking of their livestock. This was because the Nandi believed that the councils' harassment of their livestock was a means of removing them so that they might be replaced with Kikuyu labourers who had no livestock. This and the negativity spread by the colonial regime about the Kikuyu during the MAU MAU, set the stage for ill feelings, suspicions and burgeoning of ethnic hostilities between these two communities. Later migrations of other communities into Nandi were also not welcomed since they were perceived as intruders. Apart from altering land tenure systems, the colonists' inclination towards favouring specific African ethnic groups and endowing them with additional privileges, including land rights, established the groundwork for land-related tensions in regions such as Rift Valley and Central Kenya (Boone, 2011). Oucho (2010) provides an overview of this phenomenon, highlighting that Kenya's colonial history fostered a conflict-prone internal migration system, leading to occasional conflicts between migrant labourers (and squatters) and migrant settlers against "host communities. Apart from the squatter system, taxation was another technique implemented to compel Africans to give labour for the Europeans.

The Land quandary in Uasin Gishu

When Kenya achieved independence, the land question was not completely resolved. The white settlers had the option of retaining the land they had gained within the colonial period and this left them with the choiciest of land within the Rift valley. The other option was to sell their land to the government under President Jomo Kenyatta (Africa Watch, 1993). Individual farmers who were squatters were able to buy for themselves land or collectively via cooperatives and schemes. Many Kikuyu were able to acquire land that had previously belonged to the Kalenjin and the Maasai because they received aid at independence from President Jomo Kenyatta (Africa Watch, 1993). Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's founding president, was the principal architect of land transfers. He made use of his unassailable position to establish his relatives, likely using the constitution that enabled Kenyans to dwell wherever in the country (Oucho, 2010). In the 1960s and 1970s, a huge number of Kikuyu came into the Rift valley region from the overpopulated central province, which was mostly the result of land loss (Kanogo, 1987).

Unlike the Kalenjin and Maasai, Kikuyu were not pastoralists but farming was an established practice within their communities. Kalenjin had not been interested in acquisition of title deeds as they had the communal perception in

ownership of land. In contrast, the Kikuyu were ardent farmers and prior to being marginalized and being pushed into reserves, they had been having a keen interest in the ownership of land. Therefore, once they landed in the Uasin Gishu and other areas of the Rift Valley, these immigrants began farming in earnest, while some of the Kalenjin who were the inhabitants of these lands, wallowed in poverty after the loss of their land. Kenya, like the majority of African colonies, was created by colonialists. This creation was wrong from the start and was thus a catastrophe in the making, as the created region brought together many ethnic groupings, some of whom had little to no cultural links while others may have been antagonistic to one another. Depending on a number of factors, culturally varied ethnic populations were a panacea to conflicts unless those in charge made a concerted effort to foster tolerance. As already seen, by the end of colonial rule, the Uasin Gishu had already been populated by different communities, thus establishing a potential tinderbox for conflicts. The establishment of Kenya as a British protectorate played a significant role in altering the social, economic, and political position of the Kalenjin in Uasin Gishu, according to an examination of the repercussions of colonialism in Uasin Gishu and Rift valley in general. Further loss of land led to change of lifestyle among the Kalenjin, changes which were forced upon them hence resisted; these included, providing labour on European farms and homes, education, Christianity and the acquisition of land, among others. The rejection by the Kalenjin of European ideals was based on the distrust they had for the Europeans as a result of their earlier encounters, as well as the pride they had as a people. Unfortunately for the Kalenjin, some of these changes, even though they adopted them, were done so too late since other communities had already been engaged by Europeans to take various positions within Kalenjin land. Lynch (2006) contends that the establishment of strict administrative boundaries, the regulation and supervision of native reserves, and the dependence on provincial administrators all served to reinforce macro-ethnic identities and eventually fostered the development of a concept known as ethnic territoriality. The associated introduction of settlement schemes in the 1960s intensified ethno-political tensions which then led to what was a keen to hidden violence. In Rift Valley Province, local communities harboured resentment towards the land redistribution initiative, perceiving it as biased in favour of the Kikuyu community. Land alienation as a result of settlers acquiring land from "natives" acted as a precursor for creating ethnic rifts between different indigenous communities. According to Oucho (2010), the Maasai, Kalenjin, Kikuyu, and Mijikenda, who were the most impacted in Kenya, have not had their position rectified. The majority of their land has slipped into the hands of other Kenyans outside the native communities and land-buying corporations.

Weaponization of Kalenjin as a Community

The arrival of other communities into Rift Valley, coupled with the dwindling of and competition for resources including land slowly made the Kalenjin to coalesce for their survival. This situation, therefore, saw the coming together of the several formerly independent but culturally and linguistically related communities into the Kalenjin in the 1940s. According to Mwanzi (1975), the Kalenjin speaking people did not come from anywhere, therefore, they came together rather than spread. The views of Mwanzi were echoed by a respondent, who stated thus:

> Kalenjin means I say to you or tell you. They were galvanized and brought together by Moi for political reasons so that they can be a big mighty strong group like the GEMA for the sake of controlling more resources, to have a bigger voice in politics, to have them control the passage of bills in parliament. They have more seats therefore they can get many things done for their people" (James Macharia, OI, Turbo, 16/12/2021).

The respondent reiterates that the Kalenjin identity has been used by the political elite in the pre-independence period to mobilize them so that they can have a greater political and economic impact. Opondo (2014) also notes that, in their struggle for a stake in sharing the national resources, politicians often identify ethnicity as handy for bargaining of resource access. This view had been shared by Kipkorir (1970) who stated that the term Kalenjin, in addition to being a recent coinage, is also unpretentiously artificial and political in origin, and that the term is currently used to describe a group of related communities and is traced back to World War II.

Jenkins (1996) emphasizes that the Kalenjin groups united in opposition to British colonial dominance. The British interacted with each group separately. The Kalenjin were basically the last ethnic group that the British controlled militarily. And it was as a result of this colonial experience that the different highland Nilotic peoples gathered to lobby for their concerns before the British colonial authority. According to Atieno-Odhiambo (2002), ethnic identification as a survival strategy in emerging urban social formations has been the bane of conventional anthropological research in colonial Africa. In Kenya, this explains the formation of the Mijikenda as a unique identity from the Swahili community in Mombasa in the 1930s and the Kalenjin as a group conceived by colonial broadcasting services in the 1950s.

In the view of Omosule (1989) the Nandi speakers were not referred to as the Kalenjin until the early 1950s when they emerged as a major ethnic group in Kenya. Until then they were generally referred to by scholars and colonial administration officials as the Nandi Speakers. Some of the Nandi speakers that coalesced between 1940s and 50s to form the larger Kalenjin included the Kipsigis, Terik, Keiyo, Sabaot, Pokot, Marakwet and Nandi. Weighing in on the debate on the convergence of the Kalenjin, scholars (Krantz 2022; Kipkorir1970) argue that Kalenjin political stance first came into focus in the 1940s, in the form of the Kalenjin Union, an organization of ex- servicemen, and then through the actions of Kalenjin students at Alliance High School like Taaita Towett who formed the Kalenjin club and in the Makerere College. Krantz (2022) notes that the term gained wider currency in the 1950s and became part of an effort to forge a stronger sense of collective cultural identity. In fact, according to the District report (1962), some Kalenjin members of Uasin Gishu district sought a meeting to form a non-political Kalenjin Social Club in April 1962.

According to Lynch's perspective, such developments aided the colonial regime's goal of divide and rule by making administration simpler. As in the instance of the Luhya ethnic group of Western Province, whose collective identity was forged from nine linguistically related nationalities, the colonial authority was involved in some type of ethnic re-engineering. This was accomplished mostly for administrative convenience. Lynch argues that the persistent restriction of political mobilization of ethnic groups resulted in the emergence of new forms of ethnic identity through fusion. The formation of the 'Kalenjin' ethnic group from several Kalenjin-speaking subgroups throughout the middle of the twentieth century is a prime example. The establishment of the Kalenjin identity was a deliberate effort by prominent local politicians to increase their negotiating leverage in an increasingly ethnicised environment (Lynch 2011; Omosule 1989). Once the ruling alliance was firmly anchored on ethnic grounds, the Kalenjin-speaking elites were confident that a bigger ethnic base would strengthen their position in the national political arena. The core reasons for the creation of Kalenjin community and its protection, elicited some primordial reactions from Kalenjin elite who on many occasions swore to protect their land and resources even to death. One such political elite was Murgor who was ready to engage ballistically for and on behalf of his community. This is in agreement with the primordial tendencies of communities. According to (Bayar 2009; Kaliyev 2021) ethnicity originates out of similarities such as kinship, is fixed after construction, and finally shaped by conflicts with neighbouring communities. The threat faced by the Kalenjin communities during the colonial era and particularly on the eve of independence, forced them to coalesce for their political and economic survival.

Colonialism, political mobilizations and ethnic suspicions in Kenya

Kadima and Owuor (2006) assert that an analysis of the development of political parties in Kenya from independence to present underscores a significant dependence on and manipulation of ethnic sentiments as a means to secure political power. The foundation of African 'reserves' in 1915, according to Bedasso (2017), is a significant milestone in the establishment of ethnicity as the principal basis for political organization in Kenya. The colonial authority divided the native reserves into a number of homogeneous ethnic groupings. African ethnic communities responded to the colonial negation of democracy during the 1920s by initially establishing ethnic political associations (Ndege, 2018). They included the Kikuyu association, Young Kikuyu Association, East African Association, and Kikuyu Central Association in central Kenya; Young Kavirondo Tax Payers' Association, Kavirondo Tax Payers and Welfare Association, in western Kenya; Ukamba Members' Association, in Ukambani; Coast African Association, and Taita Hills Association, at the coast. Munene (1992) notes that African agitation against grievances had peaked after World War I when various communities came together to complain. During World War I, many Africans had been thrown together as members, of carrier corps with promises of rewards. It was unfortunate that after the war, these Africans witnessed white soldiers being rewarded with land from fellow Africans while to the contrary, the Africans were rewarded with reduction in wages, forced labour, native registration and increased taxes, thus increasing African grievances after the war.

The absence of other platforms upon which to base political appeal made ethnicity the most natural basis of political organizations. Most of these early political associations addressed local issues and grievances. According to Atieno-Odhiambo (1985), the early political associations articulated and aggregated grievances against taxation, poor working conditions and land alienation in their specific regions. The brief review of the early political associations formed before 1939 shows a pattern that would later influence the political scene once the colonialists left. All the associations formed were ethnic in nature in the sense that their members were all from the same nationality. All the groups also had a common goal, i.e., fair treatment, return of alienated land, representation in the LEG-CO and independence (Ajulu, 2002). The early political associations played a key role in widening the ethnic gap that was created through activities of the colonial regime.

The traditional ethnic cleavages created by colonial regime and later widened by early political associations later led to some of the worst incidences of political violence in Uasin Gishu and the country at large (Berman 1976).

According to Atieno-Odhiambo (2002), the nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideals expressed by Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya were utilized to fight the ethnicity rhetoric espoused by the settlers and their newly found allies; Daniel Arap Moi, Masinde Muliro, Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano, and Jeremiah Nyagah (Gathogo 2020). These allied African elites opposed to nationalist approach also opposed quick independence and the reintegration of the Kikuyu into Kenya's mainstream political group. Instead, they insisted on land reforms before independence. In 1960, this group formed the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU); a political party. Moi, Ronald Ngala, Masinde Muliro, and Taita Towett were the key proponents of this group. These leaders feared "Kikuyu-Luo dominance" in a future African state, and in order to safeguard against these predictions, they incited ethnic conflict along the Luo-Luyia boundary in eastern Gem and around Maseno. William Murgor, a Kalenjin lawmaker, vowed in 1962 to expel all non-Kalenjin from the Rift Valley. Moi, on the other hand, swore he would shed his blood to ensure that regionalism was enshrined in the independence constitution. These leaders refused to be part of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and as already noted, formed the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) on the basis of fear of the political future. This fear arose out of the fact that two communities, Luo and Kikuyu, dominated the leadership positions in KANU. Among the founding leaders of KANU were Jomo Kenyatta- a Kikuyu, who served as president, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga- a Luo, who served as vice president, and Tom Mboya- also a Luo, who served as secretary general.

Due to the perceived danger of nationalism, the regionalist leaders adopted a defensive stance as a negotiating position for the distribution of power following independence (Nyong'o, 1989). This led to the establishment of ethnic suspicions which have been the bane of Kenyan politics to date, and has resulted in ethnic animosities and attendant political violence. Munene (1992), claims relatedly that, there was a Kalenjin politician, known as Bwana Firimbi, who would blow his whistle after dark and incite his people to start harassing members of other communities, in the vicinity. Relatedly, William Murgor encouraged his Kalenjin tribesmen to prepare their spears and await his signal for the commencement of a war to expel non-Kalenjins from the Rift Valley. Starting in 1961, ethnic clashes engulfed the Rift Valley Province that also hosted the Uasin Gishu district. Ethnic groups such as the Kikuyu, Luhyia, and others, who had resided in the region for many years, were branded as foreigners. Their houses were burned, and the majority of them were forced to flee, becoming refugees (Ajulu, 2002).

Here in, therefore, is seen the inklings of ethnic animosities in the Rift Valley area erupting into violence. Unfortunately, such incidences were either not taken seriously, were ignored, or had the blessings of the politicians in the Rift Valley. As a result, ethnicity and political violence in Uasin Gishu has refused to die since it is always watered by ethnic sentiments and activities prompted by politicians, and subsisting in the capital of the colonial period. Ultimately, when KANU and KADU joined to form a coalition government, this coalition helped to create a new "ethnicity" of prominent public officials and political elite who always remembered their "biological ethnicities" whenever votes were needed or when trying to discredit an opponent (Munene, 1992). This phenomenon eventually set the stage for the intermittent political violence which became recurrent especially in Uasin Gishu region of Kenya.

Other impact of Colonialism on ethnicity in Uasin Gishu

Before colonialism, various peoples were in a state of movement, of settling, or of expansion. In the process, they interacted in one of two ways: trade or war. This was the dynamic process which colonialism disrupted. Colonialism froze people where they were. In this way, the colonialists helped to create a myth of traditional homes: Thus, the Luo, the Luhya and Kalenjin, Mijikenda, Kikuyu, Somali and Akamba were made to believe that they belonged to a particular geographical zone only (Munene, 1992). This process was reinforced by alienation of huge tracks of land for European use and the creation of native reserves to contain Africans. These reserves were then described as traditional homes. The reason for these reserves was political. It was to keep various Africans, apart and prevent them from coming together against the colonialists. Therefore, the machinated differences between the Luo, Kikuyu, Kamba, Luhya, Kalenjin, were reinforced at each and every opportunity (Munene, 1992). The colonial administration consequently ended up labelling certain communities as belonging to certain ethnic groups and went ahead to delimit boundaries accordingly. It has been argued that by declaring that certain individuals belonged to specific communities, the colonial regime discouraged peaceful interactions between these communities. Although one of the reasons for the separation was to prevent intercommunity raiding and warfare, inadvertently, the colonial government drastically reduced other intercommunity activities such as trade and marriage ties that had always existed to ameliorate tensions between these communities. Elders in the

community were often tasked with the responsibility of limiting excessive interethnic strife. The main reason was that raiding severely limited opportunities for the trade, as well as intermarriages. Yet, aspects of interaction were often necessary for a community's economic well-being and also ensured communities received help to cope during times of hardship. Thus, in essence, colonialism sharpened the wedge between different communities, a phenomenon that post-independence political leaders exuberated for their political gain.

Job categories were also used to discriminate these communities hence developing a myth about the capabilities of each community whereby the Luo were said to make good fishermen and dockworkers, the Akamba stopped being traders and became good watchmen, while the Kikuyu became tenant farmers, traders and domestic workers. Ethnic relations in Kenya, therefore, have been affected by these colonial myths and attitudes (Munene, 1992). The myth of tribal homelands, created in the colonial period to serve British interests, has become so well entrenched that today it is still possible to hear politicians describing other Kenyans as "foreigners" in supposed "tribal" homelands. A pattern thus was established in colonial times that emphasized "tribal" differences when common grievances against the colonial government 'united them. It has been carried over to the post-independence period. Certainly, the current leaders of Kenya cannot be accused of not learning from this history.

Further, the British had the assumption that Africans were organized into "tribes," thus leading colonial authorities to rely on "tribal" structures (Sandbrook, 1985, pp 49-50). Consequently, they maintained precolonial systems of power in respect to African customary systems whenever feasible. British indirect control entrusted local administration to indigenous chiefs, monarchs, or other authority with traditional claims to power, allowing them to rule essentially autonomously so far as they collaborated with colonial authorities (Lange and Dawson, 2009). Local agents were permitted a high degree of autonomy, including "executive, parliamentary, and judiciary powers to govern social interactions in their chiefdoms" (Lange and Dawson, 2009). Local agents were tasked with collection of taxes for the government and adhering to the parameters established by the British Residents, although they were otherwise essentially independent. This concentration of power in a single place prompted Mamdani (1996) to refer to the successful form of government that would evolve from British indirect control as "decentralized dictatorship." The decentralized dictatorship resulted in the creation of a cabal of African chiefs and paramount chiefs who often abused their position, harassed their peers, and amassed fortune; a creation that has persisted to date and has been exploited by political elites for their own personal gains at the greater expense of the community.

Summary and conclusion

The colonial period left hefty imprints on the lives of the Kalenjin people. These imprints were to later on have an impact on the manner in which the Kalenjin lived, as well as their relationships with the immigrant communities in Uasin Gishu. The arrival of settlers and the establishment of colonial rule led to massive land loss due to the colonial land policies which appropriated Kalenjin land for European settlement. The loss of Kalenjin land was historic in many ways; it resulted in loss of livelihood for the Kalenjin who were initially pastoralists, forcing them to start adopting agriculture. Many of them lost their livestock due to colonial destocking policies and lack of pasture. Some Kalenjin communities were forced to immigrate to neighbouring countries and communities. Other Kalenjin people were forced to seek wage labour just like the immigrant communities on settler farms, and yet just before the arrival of the Europeans, the Kalenjin were reigning supreme and had subjugated most of their neighbouring communities. It should be noted that one of the worst calamities that befell them was that the prevailing circumstances forced many of them to swallow their pride as a community as well as the fact that they lost their land which in essence, was their identity as a community. It is noteworthy that the last two factors have continued to have an impact on Kalenjin interactions with other migrant communities in Uasin Gishu.

Some of the early political associations and parties formed during the colonial period, were initially aimed at addressing local issues affecting their communities. Thus, it was only natural that the Kalenjin politicians engaged the colonial regime with a view of seeking solutions to the land question for the Kalenjin. Thus, these politicians were more concerned with resolutions like a constitution that would ensure protection or redress of their people's land problems to prevent further encroachment, and ensure security. In a bid to protect their people, these politicians coalesced all the Kalenjin peoples together, for they realised that by uniting their people, their strength in numbers could be used as a political bargaining chip. In their zeal to protect their people's resources, some of these politicians roused ethnic pride among the Kalenjin while at the same time kindling seeds of ethnic animosity against the immigrants by championing *Majimboism* and territorialism.

Most of the outsiders who settled in Uasin Gishu during the colonial period, were majorly labourers who came in need of jobs that could be found on the settler farms. The native Kalenjin population was also in need of the same for their survival. This competition for scarce resources eventually played a role in building underlying causes of animosities between the two groups of communities. The deprivation of the Kalenjin original land espoused the application of relative deprivation theory since most of the later ethnic conflicts and political violence were driven by the resultant unresolved historical injustices originating from the alienation and subsequent loss of communally owned land in Uasin Gishu. This then later led to more ethnic animosities between the Kalenjin and these communities especially beginning shortly around the onset of independence since these non-native communities were already better placed than the Kalenjin politically, socially, and economically. This situation was further exacerbated after independence in the struggle for political space and recognition. Kalenjin political leaders often made it fodder during political campaigns especially amidst settlement of other nationalities in Uasin Gishu, and continues to influence weaponized ethnicity and intermittent political violence in that region of Kenya during electioneering moments.

It is noteworthy that at its inception, the main concern of the study was to explore the connection between the colonial phenomenon and intermittent political violence that characterize the electioneering moments in Uasin Gishu, Kenya. To this end, the main submission of the study is that colonialism as a phenomenon, forms a critical historical juncture from which to make sense of the said intermittent political violence.

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