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*Western Washington University*

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**Narrating Colonial Realities: Discourse, Difference and the *East African Standard* in  
Colonial Kenya, 1922-1954**

By

Devin Smart

Accepted in Partial Completion  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

Advisory Committee

Chair, Dr. Louis Truschel

Dr. George Mariz

Dr. Ricardo Lopez

**MASTER'S THESIS**

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Devin Smart  
July 21, 2011

**Narrating Colonial Realities: Difference, Discourse and the *East African Standard* in  
Colonial Kenya, 1922-1954**

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By Devin Smart

July 2011

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the *East African Standard*, a settler newspaper in the Kenya Colony, as a discourse to see how it represented the Europeans and Africans who lived inside the colony. This analysis, through looking at events in 1922, 1939 and 1954, stresses the relationship that ideas have to the material contexts in which they are produced by assessing the ways that changing historical realities outside the *Standard* affected the discursive constructions of Africans and Europeans present inside the newspaper. Moreover, this thesis adds to the historiography of analytical categories by demonstrating the instability of concrete definitions for race, class and ethnicity in the Kenya Colony. Understandings of these concepts changed according to the particulars of a situation and, critically, they were rarely used in isolation, but rather these concepts dialectically informed each other in such a way that “statements” inside the newspaper could rarely be termed either “racial,” “ethnic” or “class-based.” Therefore, this thesis situates itself as a history of ideas about how the colonial government and settler society in Kenya developed ideological understandings of themselves and Africans, and as an examination of the continuity and change of these conceptions during more than three decades of the Kenya Colony’s history.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Louis Truschel, who first introduced me to the field of African history many years ago, and from whom I have learned much about this continent's past. I am also deeply grateful to the other two members of my thesis committee, Dr. George Mariz and Dr. Ricardo Lopez. Dr. Mariz has been instrumental in broadening my understanding of British and European history, and Dr. Lopez, through my being his teaching assistant and with many conversations in his office, has enriched my view of the study of colonialism and the histories of peoples outside of the "West." I would like to additionally thank Dr. Jonathan Miran who has importantly shaped how I view the African past and the practice of history.

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## Introduction

This thesis seeks to examine the position the *East African Standard* within the racial, ethnic and class-based discourses that pervaded Kenya during its colonial period.<sup>1</sup> As the main European settler newspaper, the *Standard* occupied a unique discursive space that reveals the plurality of colonial views on African society. Methodologically, this thesis does not mean to use the *Standard* as a companion to other sources in order to explain generally colonial discourses during this period, but rather the newspaper *itself* is the object of inquiry. More to the point, my objective is to understand how the ideas presented in the *Standard* created a dynamic and fluid historical space in which the newspaper formed a *discourse*, as this notion has been theorized by Michel Foucault.<sup>2</sup> Inside the Kenya Colony, this newspaper was a contributor to, and a product of, the larger structural discourses that informed settler ideas during this period. From this, the language the newspaper's staff used to write articles held a particular connotation in the context of colonial Kenya, but, as these authors deployed it in specific stories, the meaning of this language was simultaneously reconfirmed and reshaped.

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<sup>1</sup> For brevity, I will refer to the *East African Standard* from here on as the *Standard*. However, at the beginning of each chapter, on first reference, I will again use the full name, but then after refer to it only as the *Standard*. Additionally, I will only briefly discuss "class" in this introduction because I cover it extensively in Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault defines discourse as "a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation." More than this, though, this discursive formation does not "form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance in history might be indicated (or if necessary, explained)." Instead, Foucault argues, we need to see how a discourse is "not an ideal, timeless form that also possess a history," but instead "it is, from beginning to end, historical." In this way, the discourse described here, composed by the *East African Standard*, is not a definitive representation of what colonial discourse in Kenya "was," but instead the analysis in this thesis provides a look at the historically conditioned and temporary features of this discourse that can be seen in specific editions of the newspaper. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* and *The Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 116-117. Caroline Martin Shaw has also drawn from Foucault's concept of discourse as a method to study colonial ideas in Kenya. See her work *Colonial Inscriptions: Race, Sex, and Class in Kenya* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 18-22.

In examining this discourse, I am not attempting a systematic analysis of each edition of the newspaper from its founding until the end of colonization because such an effort is well outside of the scope of this thesis. Rather, I have selected *moments* from the colonial period during which tensions between the state and Africans forced the *Standard* to make declarative statements about the “Other.”<sup>3</sup> Specifically, these moments I examine include the violence by the state against Africans who were protesting the arrest of Harry Thuku in 1922, the 1939 strike by African workers in Mombasa, and Operation Anvil in Nairobi during 1954. In all three of these moments, we can see the tension between the British “civilizing mission,” the ideological rationalization of their rule in Africa as a “modernizing project,” and those Africans who rejected this blatant paternalism and directly challenged the colonial state. In analyzing these tensions, I am attempting to discern how officials and settlers used the discursive space of the newspaper to try to control and place order over events and people.

Methodologically, when studying the discourse of the *Standard*, one should avoid isolating any single story. Instead, the meaning taken from any one article needs to be considered within the context of the space it shared with others inside the newspaper. As readers moved from one story to another, the ideas imparted by one would have affected how they would interpret the set of ideas presented in the next. Considered in this way, the single article takes on a much broader meaning when understood as part of a discourse because its position within a larger relationship of ideas can be revealed.

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<sup>3</sup> In this thesis, I am limiting my inquiry to how officials and settlers viewed *Africans*, but East Indians were also a prominent “Other” in colonial Kenya. Indians have a long history in Eastern Africa that stretches back to the pre-colonial period when coastal Swahili exchanged both culture and commerce with them through oceanic trade in the Indian Ocean World. This connection was expanded during the colonial period when thousands of Indians came to Kenya to build the railroads of the British Empire. The history of the Indian diaspora in East Africa, and how these migrants have interacted with both the British and Africans, is an important part of this region’s history, but it is not part of my focus in this thesis.

Therefore, the discourse created by the *Standard* provides a view of colonial conceptions in which individual voices tend to fade and a collective, although contradictory and disparate, voice emerges.

### **Imperialism and Difference: The Colonial “Other” in African History**

In order to fully address the connections between categories of difference and imperialism during the colonial period in Kenya, one needs to expand the analysis beyond its national borders and the disciplinarily ones of history. The discourse of the *Standard* was embedded within global colonial discourses, and therefore this study allows us to think both about the particular—the *Standard*—and the general—the larger colonial discursive structure. For these issues, history, sociology, anthropology and literary studies have contributed to the scholarly debate on colonial realities. Although this thesis is concerned most directly with colonialism in Kenya, a more contextualized appreciation of this history can be obtained by considering the larger arena of power relations that have existed between the West and its various “Others.”

Of particular relevance to the approach of this thesis are the ideas developed by Edward Said in his influential work *Orientalism*. Said, trained in literary analysis, opened up new areas of research into the power relationships behind Western representations of the “Other” with his study of the discourse of “orientalism.” Though Said’s study focused on the West’s creation of the “Orient,” I see much in his observations—as other scholars have as well—that can be applied to how we think about the discursive practices of imperial actors in sub-Saharan colonial Africa. Specifically, his notion that *to know* the “Other” is to have the ability to better control the “Other” in a relationship of power finds resonance in colonial Kenya. One sees in Said’s analysis the implication of when the

observer holds a *descriptive* position *vis-à-vis* the colonial “Other” and how this bestows the power to describe and define and, consequently, “to dominate.” That is, the ability to categorize and employ simplified knowledge of the “Other” allows for more fluid control and administration of the colony. The hegemonic actor, a British colony in this instance, relies on a variety of tools to produce this knowledge. This thesis examines one such tool, the *Standard*.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Said’s ideas can be paired with the concept of “identification” theorized by Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker. These authors use the term identification to organize the various practices employed by individuals and institutions to identify people within society. While the state’s ability to categorize does not manifestly create someone’s identity, it can play a critical part in the process of identity formation from its hegemonic role in setting the field of possible categories that are employed by individuals in society.<sup>5</sup> I am interested, specifically, in those that pertain to race, ethnicity and class, although such discursive practices can certainly be aimed at divisions of gender, nation, or other categories of difference. However, with the concept of “identification,” we also must consider Said’s formulation that the European project of creating its “Other” also played a crucial role in how “Europe” defined itself. This is an idea that has greatly influenced subsequent scholars by providing a more nuanced

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<sup>4</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 31-36. For examples of authors writing on Africa who have been influenced by Said see Christopher L. Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), and Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 26-36. Said’s own thinking on the relationship between knowledge and power was heavily influenced by Michel Foucault’s idea of “power/knowledge,” which contends that one cannot separate knowledge as an independent field from power. Instead, Foucault argues, power and knowledge imply and produce one another. This theoretical assumption similarly guides how I see the production of knowledge in the *East African Standard*. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 24-28.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Cooper with Rogers Brubaker, “Identity,” in Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), 70-73.

understanding of European identity, and influences this study as well because, as will be shown, the categories and descriptions of Africans in the *Standard* created boundaries that defined *both* Africans and Europeans within the colony.<sup>6</sup>

However, I should emphasize that this thesis is not in any respect a history of the way *Africans* viewed themselves, but rather it is the image of them that Europeans wanted to create for their own purposes. More to the point, I do not intend to draw any distinctive link between representations in the *Standard* and how these may have affected actual identities in practice. Such a history could be written, but it will not be done here. In this way my approach is similar to Said's in *Orientalism*, and to that of Kevin C. Dunn in his application of Said's methods to the Belgian Congo, because what is revealed in these sources does not *necessarily* correspond to any everyday experiences of Africans in the colony. Therefore, this study can most accurately be termed a history of ideas. Within this, however, as Cooper and Brubaker observe, the monopolistic position of certain institutions involved in identification allowed them to set, to a certain extent, the categories available for actors to employ when creating identities, but, as these authors also point out, identification is only one part of the varied practices that produce identities. We must therefore leave open the question for other studies as to how these *ideas* factored into the production of European and African identities in colonial Kenya.

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<sup>6</sup> Said, 1-2. For examples of the effect of this idea on subsequent scholarship see, for example, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Also, Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 19. Miles and Brown write in more abstract theoretical terms, but the idea of defining the self as one defines the "Other" remains. For a more developed treatment of this by Cooper see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). All of these works will be addressed in more detail below.

Within these limitations, then, this thesis is a history of ideas about what Kenyan settlers thought their colony had been, was, and could be.<sup>7</sup>

However, this thesis must be further complicated by engaging Africanist historiography because this literature reveals how colonial knowledge was produced in a complex web of imperial power relations. To proceed, we must examine recent scholarship that has challenged past conceptualizations of power in colonial situations. Within this, these authors have done much to move beyond the binary characterization of Africans as either collaborators or resisters in their relationship to the colonial state. Notably, David Robinson has employed the concept of “accommodation” to describe imperial rule in the French colonies of Senegal and Mauritania. Robinson situates the notion of accommodation within Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony whereby the state exercised power in the “Senegalo-Mauritanian zone” in a limited fashion that depended on constant points of negotiation between Africans and French officials. That is, power was not absolute, and the French were required to rely heavily upon African mediators to administer the colony. Though Robinson does not discount the eventual product of colonization—an unequal relationship of power between colonizer and colonized—he does want this to be seen as a more gradual process of “intensification.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, an integral part of this negotiation was the role of these African mediators in the production of colonial knowledge because French officials knew little of the land they were trying to control. Consequently, these officials drew from the information given to

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<sup>7</sup> Said, 4-5; Dunn, 26-36; Cooper and Brubaker, 70-73.

<sup>8</sup> David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000), 1-7. For a succinct summary of the scholarship revised by the idea of “accommodation” see, Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founder of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 141-142, and in Robinson, 41-47. Babou also employs the concept of “accommodation.” See Babou, 141-174.

them by Africans to create colonial categories. This, in many ways, reorders the way we need to think about identification in colonial settings because the knowledge produced was not simply a European product, but was a blend of the knowledge provided by Africans with varying motives, which was then employed by Europeans to construct their categories of the “Other.” This issue of knowledge production will be further expanded below.<sup>9</sup>

Considering “race” more broadly, it is important to understand that race, like other discursive creations, and its corollary, racism, have a particular history and any description of them requires one first to locate these terms temporally and geographically. Moreover, as recent writing within this historiography has shown, to purport that a definition of racial practices can be found is an illusory endeavor because to track the history of an idea, for the notion of races is certainly an idea, will only reveal the multiplicity of its expression over time instead of a stable, transhistorical definition.<sup>10</sup> More broadly, the post-modern deconstruction of race, ethnicity, gender, nation and other units of categorization has left scholars with innovative new methods to investigate the past, but also with some clear problematics.<sup>11</sup> A central question for this thesis is: how does one actually engage in a study of, for example, class or race without reductively restricting the frame of analysis? In a general sense, the problem is that these concepts are the discursive products of disparate historical processes and, because of this, may not

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<sup>9</sup> Robinson, 50-51.

<sup>10</sup> This work I am referring to is that of Jonathon Glassman. I will be examining his contribution in great detail below. Glassman, “Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar’s Newspaper Wars,” *Journal of African History* 41, no. 3 (2000): 395-428, and Glassman, “Slower than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa,” *American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (2004): 720-754.

<sup>11</sup> For an example of such work on gender see Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December, 1986): 1053-1075. For the nation see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006). Ethnicity and race will be address in significant detail in the body of this thesis.

serve effectively as broad analytical categories. That is, when scholars are engaged in studies of race, ethnicity, or otherwise, they are binding their own perspective by the terms created by past scholars and a broad field of historical subjects. By intending to produce a study, for example, on the nation or to read how race was employed in a particular society, the scholar has assumed, to some extent, that these categories can be thought of as analytically distinct, or that these categories are sufficient.<sup>12</sup> For the concepts of race and ethnicity, recent writing by Jonathon Glassman argues effectively for a theoretical framework in which scholars can try not to approach race and ethnicity in such restrictive ways.<sup>13</sup>

The center of Glassman's argument is that race and ethnicity, rather than existing in conceptual isolation from one another, need to be considered as related expressions of "a common discourse of difference." Glassman is arguing against the interpretation that assumes that race and corresponding racist practices are an exclusively European creation. He argues that this reductionist view of "racial thinking" depends on creating a strict definition that rigidly assumes these ideas arose exclusively from the Enlightenment and, following this, places their practice primarily within the scientific racialism of the nineteenth century. Looking beyond such formulations, Glassman asks,

What happens if we abandon the fixation on scientific doctrines and instead recognize racial thought as *a shifting field of discourse, a general set of assumptions that humankind is divided among constituent categories*, each which is distinguished by inherited traits and characteristics [emphasis added]?

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<sup>12</sup> Cooper has observed similar methodological problems, among others, in his deconstruction of identity, modernization and globalization. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*. His chapter on identity was written with Brubaker and is where their concept of identification is derived.

<sup>13</sup> Glassman's ideas on this subject can first be seen in his article Glassman, "Sorting out the Tribes." He much more explicitly develops his approach in Glassman, "Slower than a Massacre."



Glassman further argues that scientific racism should be seen as “historically specific manifestations of a much broader trend in Western thought—and in human thought more generally.” Moreover, one of the central ideological precepts of this racism—the binary discourse of “civilization” and “barbarism”—has been far from an exclusively European conception, and, in fact, was a predominant theme in many African belief systems.<sup>14</sup> From this, he argues that the analytical walls that separate *ethnicity* and *race*, as well as *nation*, need to be conceptualized in a more fluid way because, under close analysis, it becomes clear that much thought characterized as “ethnic” or “national” is in fact based on the key premise of racial thought: the “aura of descent,” the notion that there is some element about these identities that is predetermined and inherent amongst members of these particular groups. In sharing the “aura of descent,” Glassman urges scholars to understand how these concepts are constituted within this “common discourse of difference.”<sup>15</sup>

A further theoretical basis to help us move beyond such restrictive studies can be found by pairing Sean Hanretta’s recent criticism of the use of modernity and modernization as analytical tools and Stuart Hall’s application of Gramsci’s ideas to race and ethnicity. Hanretta, first, points out that modernization needs to be thought of not as an analytical tool, but as “a figure of rhetoric that informs a set of strategies, a conceptual

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<sup>14</sup> Glassman, “Slower than a Massacre,” 720-728. For more on the effect of the ideas of “barbarism” and “civilization” on European thought see Miles and Brown, 32-44, and Dunn, 26-36, amongst many others.

<sup>15</sup> Glassman, “Slower than a Massacre,” 720-728. Other recent studies of race have contributed to a more historically complex view, but they still ultimately miss Glassman’s notion of “a common discourse of difference.” One key intellectual precursor that Glassman credits is the work of Robert Miles in which Miles articulates how race needs to be thought of as an ideology or, more succinctly, as an idea. However, his analysis, done with Malcolm Brown in the most recent addition, nonetheless maintains the paramount position of race as a distinct analytical category and misses the more subtle dialectic between these concepts that Glassman observes. Miles and Brown, 7-10. Additionally, David Goldberg’s recent work effectively places race and racism within its relationship to the European Enlightenment, but he still somewhat restrictively sees race as a discrete process and only passively notes its relationship to other categories of difference. David Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Blackwell: Cambridge, MA, 1993), 14-89.

tool used by people in our narratives rather than as something that happens to them.” That is, such *historical* concepts prove much more useful to study when we stop characterizing them as discrete *processes*, and instead see them as linguistic devices that people use to describe their social reality. Separately, Hall explains how, with race, one should think at a “historicized level of abstraction” and to avoid the assumption that there exists a “law of development” for racial practices. Additionally, when considering race, Hall argues that “[w]e need to understand better the tensions and contradictions generated by the uneven tempos and directions of historical development.” Together, these formulations provide us with a conceptualization in which race and ethnicity, or other categories, are not set modalities that play out according to prescribed rules of production, but instead have existed as highly contextualized *rhetorical* strategies employed by historical actors with *varying motives*.<sup>16</sup>

The more rigid studies on race and ethnicity restrict the possibility that historical actors perceived of these ideas in ways that defy binary classifications of thought. As will be argued below, in studying the way the British Empire in Kenya constructed its vision of Africans, one needs to understand, as Glassman does, the dialectical relationship between ethnicity and race, and with other categories of difference. That is, at times, the *Standard* made statements that could be deemed “racial” or “ethnic” in nature, but often such terminology fails to understand how these statements contributed simultaneously to

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<sup>16</sup> Sean Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community* (New York: Cambridge, 2009), 273-274; Stuart Hall’s contextualized approach to race and ethnicity mirrors much of how this thesis views these issues and he avoids the reductionism present in the studies of many of his contemporaries. However, he does not address the need for a break from the Eurocentric vision as Glassman does. Moreover, although his analysis on the relationship of class with race does much to remove race from reductionist economic interpretations, Hall does not see the dialectical relationship between race and ethnicity, derived from Glassman, that ultimately informs this study. Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 435-440.

*both* the racial and ethnic, not to mention class, categories that the colony worked to create. Consequently, under these conditions, the assertion that a particular statement was *either* “racial” or “ethnic” becomes problematic.

Turning more specifically towards Africa, ethnicity has occupied a prominent place within the continent’s historiography. Since the late 1970s, there has been a well-articulated revision of essentialist, primordialist and ahistorical notions of African ethnic, or “tribal,” identity, which most commonly found their expression inside the academy within functionalist anthropology.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to such interpretations, John Iliffe’s 1979 analysis of the “creation of tribes” in Tanganyika provides a more historicized view of identity in East Africa. East African pre-colonial identities, Iliffe contends, were not static or immutable, but instead they constantly shifted between multiple points of reference—ranging from varying familial ties to a larger “tribal” identity—and were employed situationally. Importantly, Iliffe does not deny the existence of larger organizational identities, forged most significantly through warfare, but, nonetheless, during this period “groups and identities had remained so amorphous that to write of them is to oversimplify them.” From this situational pre-colonial period, Iliffe conceives of a nuanced process in Tanganyika where the Germans and then British created “tribes” through various colonial practices. While Iliffe certainly outlines the European influence on these late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century identities, he also stresses the

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<sup>17</sup> An example of the functionalist vision of a fixed, ahistorical notion of ethnicity can be found in Jacques J. Maquet, *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda: A Study of Political Relations in a Central African Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). A revision of this thesis and a more historically contextualized interpretation of ethnicity in Rwandan history can be seen in Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

agency of Africans in their formation, which is a trend the following historiography developed further.<sup>18</sup>

Following Iliffe, Terrance Ranger's highly influential 1983 essay "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa" showed how, during colonialism, Europeans brought their own conceptions of social organization into the colonial situation, which they then imposed onto African society. By placing this into the colonial structure, these "invented traditions" created more rigid notions of "tribal" identity. However influential this initial essay was, Ranger reassessed his own contribution in the early 1990s. Perhaps most useful is his critique of the word "invention" to describe the process through which traditions were created in Africa. He astutely observes that "invention" implies a much too sudden and quick action, and can also suggest a one-sided European process of formation when, in actuality, Africans also played crucial roles in these creations. Ranger suggests, instead, the use of Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities." With this, Ranger is advocating a more *historicized* view of "tradition"—ethnicity being within this—that allows the possibility that these traditions were perhaps "invented" at one point, but over the longer view of history these ideas were indeed "reimagined" in multi-contextual ways. This approach problematizes the notion of "invention" in that any specifically European efforts to discursively create African "tribes" needs to be limited to merely one aspect of a much larger process of identity formation that includes Africans at pivotal stages and occurs over a longer period of time.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 318-341.

<sup>19</sup> Terrance Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds Eric Hobsbawm (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-262; Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa," in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa* (Houndmills, UK: MacMillan Press, 1993), 62-107. For another important contribution to this revision of ethnicity in African studies see Leroy Vail's introductory essay in his edited volume on Southern Africa.

In important ways, these revisions have done much to move beyond primordialist visions of ethnicity. However, in a 2003 article, Thomas Spear argues that these revisionists ultimately still see ethnicity being “created” through collusion between Europeans and African elites. The central issue is the way these constructionists dismiss “tradition” as the simple “invention” or “creation” of these colonial administrators and elite Africans, but in fact, he argues, these “traditions” have a longer history than these commentators allow. What is conceived as “tradition,” Spear contends, needs to be seen as part of a discourse that extends much further back than the beginning of colonial rule. As a discourse, it has a particular internal composition that social actors draw from to explain their reality, but, like all discourses, it is inherently unstable and constantly shifting. What Spear is primarily arguing is that scholars need to see the “traditions” that were solidified during the colonial period being based, at least in part, on pre-colonial African practices. That is, they did not simply appear as constructions of Europeans and African elites. He writes: “Thus we need to approach the study of ethnicity historically, starting well before the onset of colonial rule and continuing after.” Spear contends, then, that rather than these identities being just an “invention” or that they were only “imagined,” they can also be thought of as a “transformation” of previous ethnic affiliations.<sup>20</sup>

As much as anything, Spear’s argument rests on a conceptualization of colonial power similar to Robinson’s, which this thesis has previously addressed. Again, this is a view of colonial power that recognizes its limitations because of the colonial state’s

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Leroy Vail, “Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History,” in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. by Leroy Vail (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1-18.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Spear, “Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 44 (2003): 3-27. For more on Robinson, see pages 6-7.

constant need to rely upon local Africans to administer the colony.<sup>21</sup> This recent criticism by Spear, along with the work of Robinson, requires that I properly qualify what this thesis aims to do, or to what I think the *Standard* can tell us about racial and ethnic discourse in colonial Kenya. A cursory glance at the articles inside this newspaper leads one to see it as a European discourse, but this historiography does not allow such a simplistic reading. In some ways, the *Standard* can be thought of as both a representation and producer of European conceptions about African society, but these very colonial conceptions themselves, based partially upon what Europeans learned about pre-colonial African ideas, and forged through a dialectic between Europeans and elite Africans, elude a simplistic categorization as a European discourse.<sup>22</sup> I do not purport to resolve this complex issue of knowledge production in this thesis, but it does demonstrate the discourse's complex dialectical and contextual nature.

Returning now to this issue of "race," we must recall Hall's point that race, as a concept, is historically and geographically conditioned and one should not expect to find that racism exists "everywhere *the same*."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, thinking about Glassman's contribution as well, scholars need to consider how ideas of race manifested themselves in particular ways during the colonial period of Africa's history. In terms of race, the imperial state functioned under a basic racial dichotomy of white and black when it came to relations between Africans and Europeans. This binary vision existed as an organizational given that informed the way all other relationships and conceptualizations could take place within the colonial reality. Dane Kennedy, who sees this dichotomy as a

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> The notion of ethnic identities forming from a dialectic between European and African thought come from Vail, 1-18.

<sup>23</sup> Hall, 435.

crucial element to the organization of settler colonies in Africa, remarks how settlers maintained this idea through symbolic cultural boundaries that separated white settlers from Africans. However, the economic dependence of settlers upon African labor brought these two communities into constant contact. Kennedy argues that the white settler drive to guard the lines of white settler culture so vigorously was a constitutive part of their effort to maintain their dominate position based upon racial distinction.<sup>24</sup> Within this, we must see how the ethnic and class categorizations that occurred during the colonial period were duly shaped by this racial dichotomy. That is, the colonial state could essentialize individuals as either Luo, Kikuyu or Maasai, or as a working class, from which the colonial state would assume that, from each category, certain characteristics would follow. Nonetheless, for the state, they were first *all* Africans, or, in more explicitly racial terms, “black,” which defined material and discursive colonial boundaries. Race, then, as a category, functioned as a broad organizing principle of the imperial project that clearly delineated the lines that defined power relationships. Ethnicity and class, within this, performed similar functions, but at a more micro level. It could dictate relationships between Africans as well as their particular position, as a specific ethnicity or class, *vis-à-vis* the colonial state. Therefore, though all Africans were labeled with a “racial” identity of “black,” the very definition of that racial category could shift depending upon one’s ethnicity or class. These colonial attempts at a top-down identification process determined, in impactful ways, the types of lives the state *tried* to impose upon the individual.

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<sup>24</sup> Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 1-8.

However, one must also distinguish that class, ethnicity, and race did function in different ways inside the colonial setting. If one takes race, ethnicity and class as being specific manifestations of a “common discourse of difference,” as this thesis does, that does not mean that there did not exist historical concepts and categories that were thought of as *racial*, *ethnic* or *class-based*. What it does allow, though, is for us to not close off our analysis towards an understanding that allows us to see how, in the historical context of colonial Kenya at least, these ideas dialectically informed one another. Within the *Standard*, one is struck by how racial terminology dominated the discourse about Africans for much of the colony’s history. The terms “native” and “African” served as code for “black” in the newspaper and were how these actors were portrayed to the reading audience. However, the predominance of racial terminology creates a historical tension when one considers the critical place that the idea of ethnicity held within colonial discourses. In the case of the 1922 massacre of African protesters outside Nairobi’s prison, the subject of Chapter One, the crowd was primarily composed of Kikuyu and this was made clear in the newspaper. However, terminologically, most of the statements made about the protesters did not refer to them with this specific signifier, but instead opted mainly for the term “natives.” Under such conditions, an “either/or” analysis that studies these practices as producing either racial or ethnic statements cannot capture the complexity of colonial ideology because these articles informed a discourse simultaneously on *both* the Kikuyu and the “natives.” A reader cannot easily distinguish whether the statements defined the ethnicity or race of an actor because there was no rigidly marked distinction between them. Therefore, in the *Standard* statements were made that referred to a racial category—the “native”—as well as to an ethnicity—the



Kikuyu being the example here. However, these terminological designations should not be mistaken for a coherency within the discourse that allowed readers to carefully place statements into assigned categories. Instead, these ideas appeared in ways that defy such binary conceptualizations and they rather constituted a “common discourse of difference.”

### **Ideas of Difference in the Kenya Colony**

As stated above, this thesis is an examination of *colonial discourses* in Kenya, as opposed to actual African identities in practice. Therefore, in my examination of the literature on Kenya, I am focused much more on works that treat the way Europeans viewed Africans during the colonial period instead of those more specifically on African identities.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, Kennedy’s work on settler ideology and culture in the Kenya colony is an important contribution to this historiography. Kennedy offers evidence that the settlers themselves were not a unified and confident colonial force, but were very much divided along class and ethnic lines. Moreover, the colonists were acutely aware of their position as a numeric minority in which their situation was one where “power was matched by fear, arrogance by anxiety, disdain by suspicion.” Despite their own divisions, the settlers created a “myth of solidarity, even classlessness” that allowed them to combat these tensions created by their numerical position in the colony. Kennedy observes that settlers maintained racial borders by setting up “symbolic boundaries” along racial lines between themselves and Africans. These “symbolic boundaries” took

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<sup>25</sup> For writing on African ethnicity in Kenya, the first major work was Jomo Kenyatta’s 1938 ethnographic study of the Kikuyu. Though an effective refutation of many European stereotypes about Kikuyu culture, Kenyatta also very much reproduces many of the deficiencies of the structuralist-functionalist anthropological school. Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Kikuyu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965). For more historicized interpretations of the development of ethnic identities in central Kenya, see Godfrey Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu, 1500-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) and Charles Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

many forms from the legal codes that privileged Europeans over Africans, to efforts at limiting access to English in order to retain its symbolic exclusivity, and even to restricting the diets of African laborers to simple food staples in contrast to what their European employers ate. These material-discursive efforts were driven, Kennedy argues, by the reality that settlers relied constantly upon Africans in workplace relationships, which brought constant interaction between settlers and Africans in the “economic sphere.” As a result, Kennedy contends, settlers could not also maintain the physical boundaries separating them from Africans so they consequently felt the needed to monitor closely the “symbolic” ones that demarcated white from black in the “social sphere.”<sup>26</sup>

Following Kennedy, Caroline Martin Shaw’s 1995 study of discourses in colonial Kenya, both European and African, extends many of the ideas within Kennedy’s study into a broader context. Whereas Kennedy focused on the settler community and ended his analysis in 1939, Shaw’s study spans the entire colonial period and incorporates African discourses into the analysis. Both monographs are largely analytic studies of race in colonial Kenya, but they do briefly address the place of ethnicity within colonial discourses. Kennedy suggests that, because the pastoral Maasai were “aloof” from the Europeans, they did not threaten the “symbolic boundary” of whiteness in the same way the Kikuyu did, who were often in close economic relationships with Europeans. He argues the settlers admired the Maasai because they stayed closer to their pre-colonial practices, whereas the Kikuyu “adapted most rapidly to the requirements and opportunities of colonial rule.” Meanwhile, Shaw contends that, in the European imagination, the Maasai were seen as the “noble savage” and the Kikuyu as the “spiteful

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<sup>26</sup> Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 148-166.

servant.” Settlers used these tropes that had been developed in the context of American history, and were available, she argues, because they had become part of the “master narrative in the West, one where Maasai and Kikuyu could be assimilated.”<sup>27</sup> Although these studies do effectively detail how settlers used notions of race to categorize the African “other,” ethnicity, though addressed, largely remained a peripheral issue in these works. Moreover, these authors do not adequately develop the relationship between race, ethnicity and class as analytical categories.<sup>28</sup> This thesis hopes to add to this somewhat neglected space within the writing on colonial Kenya.

### ***The East African Standard and Historiography***

In terms of method and approach, Antoinette Burton’s 1994 analysis of feminist periodicals in Britain, and their relation to the British Empire in India, most closely resembles what I seek to do with the *Standard*. Burton shows how various feminist newspapers in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain created the idea of “the Indian woman” in order to forcefully assert that British women could be part of the “public sphere,” as they were the maternal protectors of these colonial subjects. In this way, Burton argues that the construction of “the Indian woman” was a constitutive element of creating a feminist middle-class female identity during this period of British history.<sup>29</sup> Though much can be compared between these feminist periodicals and the

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<sup>27</sup> Shaw, 1-13, 189-191; Kennedy, 160-162.

<sup>28</sup> Shaw does effort to point out how “lower” classes were thought of as a different race in England, and how this may have affected European ideas about Africans, but her overall treatment of class in her study is quite limited. Shaw, 186.

<sup>29</sup> Antoinette Burton employs the concept of the “public sphere,” as theorized by Jürgen Habermas. Habermas developed this idea by looking at the historical formation of “public opinion” and its relationship to the “public sphere” in European bourgeois democracies. As states emerged out of the Enlightenment and began to slowly democratize, citizens became more and more invested in governmental policy. Newspapers arose as the primary location from which the “public” could find information about their government and express their ideas about it. Newspapers, for Habermas, are critical institutions that work between and link “private” and “public” interests. Ideally, for Habermas, newspapers should serve as the instrument of the

*Standard*, there do remain important differences as well because of the historical contexts in which they were produced. The feminist periodicals were written *in* Britain, while the *Standard* was created in a colony. As a result, these constructions served different purposes in their respective contexts. The feminist writers thought of their subjects in a much more abstract way and were created instrumentally in order to assert their status in the “public sphere,” *within* Britain. On the other hand, the colonial writers in Kenya produced their ideas about Africans with a view to how it would affect actual relations *between Africans and Europeans*. That is, while “the Indian woman” was a central character in the feminist narrations, this creation was not concerned so much with how British women would actually interact with Indian women. Instead, these writers created this discursive “Other” in order to affect their own place within their society. In contrast, the *Standard*’s constructions directly referenced actual relations between the “Self” and the “Other” that had or could occur. Moreover, these feminist authors were seeking a place within the “public sphere,” but the *Standard* was already a part of the colonial monopoly on the distribution of knowledge in Kenya’s “public sphere.” In these ways, Burton’s study provides an example of how periodicals formed a part of how the “Self” and the “Other” have been created historically, but the very acknowledgement of its

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citizens to influence the state, but he points out how, over time, newspapers have come to collude with elite-state interests to provide the illusion that people can actually influence power through public opinion. For the purposes of my thesis, I do see the *East African Standard*, depending on the context, separately expressing settler and governmental interests depending on the context. However, as I will argue, the newspaper also supported both groups simultaneously when settler and state interests intersected, as they often did. For a concise summary of Habermas’ concept of “public sphere,” see William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994), 7-13. Habermas first articulates this concept in Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

historicity requires that we examine closely how geographic and temporal contexts have altered these practices.<sup>30</sup>

In a specifically Kenyan context, the *Standard* occupies a paradoxical place within the historiography of this country's colonial period. While it is one of the most commonly cited sources by scholars, its position as a historical space within Kenya has largely been unexamined. Usually, the newspaper's role in historical studies entails its use as one among many sources that are examined collaboratively. However, historians have not critically engaged the *Standard* itself, and the newspaper has remained an unproblematic space occasionally mined for settler voices on particular issues. Moreover, it has actually not been historians, but media scholars who have provided the largest amount of material on the history and role of this newspaper in Kenya's past. Even here, coverage is thin and consists usually of a loosely outlined background history for studies of contemporary media in Africa. From these media studies, however, we can discern general features of the newspaper's history as part of the Kenya Colony.<sup>31</sup>

Probably the most useful writing concerning the *Standard*, and the most deliberate attempt to place it historically, is a Master's thesis written in the 1960s. Though composed for a Master of Arts in journalism, Lonnie R. Huff's 1968 thesis takes a historical approach to the press in Eastern Africa, and his thesis provides an extensive

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<sup>30</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 97-125.

<sup>31</sup> A.M. Jeevanjee, an Indian, founded the *African Standard* in 1902 in Mombasa, but in 1905 he sold it to A.G.W. Anderson and Rudolf E. Mayer who renamed it the *East African Standard*. During the next two decades the newspaper absorbed other newspapers, moved to Nairobi and quickly rose to be the most prominent publication amongst the administrative and settler populations. During the colonial period, the newspaper covered almost exclusively stories that concerned the European population, but, as decolonization became more and more likely, the newspaper expanded to cover news of African and Indian populations by the end of the 1950s. The newspaper still exists today, but it competes with other dailies and has shortened its name to the *Standard*. John Baptist Abuoga and Aggrey Mutere Absalom, *The History of the Press in Kenya* (Nairobi: The African Council on Communication Education, 1988), 1-28.

historical background for the *Standard* and newspapers generally in East Africa. However, it largely avoids any detailed analysis of the actual written content within the *Standard* and opts instead for useful, but ultimately general, statements about the newspaper such as: “All the members of the *Standard* Group [which includes the *East African Standard*], oriented with a pro-settler policy.” Beyond these generalizations, Huff’s analysis also makes a problematic distinction between “non-political” or “neutral” government and settler publications and the “political” newspapers produced by Africans. These characterizations overlooked the distinctly political discourses of colonial newspapers. Nonetheless, Huff’s thesis is invaluable for outlining the history of newspapers in East Africa and provides a chronology difficult to find elsewhere.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1970s, William A. Hachten and Dennis L. Wilcox each published monographs that examined the role of the media in African societies. Hachten shows, like Huff, how the *Standard* functioned as “the spokesman of the conservative white settlers.” Wilcox, likewise, emphasizes the hegemony settlers maintained over newspapers and mass communication in general. Similar to Huff’s, both of these assessments are broadly useful and effectively describe the conditions of communications during the colonial period, but in certain ways these are overly simplistic explanations. These studies create an image of a transhistorical, unified and homogenous voice that emanated from the newspaper when, as this thesis will argue, one needs to place the *Standard* in its particular historical context in order to understand which colonial “voices” were dominating the discourse.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Hachten, writing more generally about settler

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<sup>32</sup> Lonnie R. Huff, *The Press and Nationalism in Kenya, British East Africa* (unpublished master’s thesis) University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1968, 1-110.

<sup>33</sup> Huff probably comes closest to providing a more complex view of settler newspapers when he argues that at times the newspaper supported state policies and opposed them at others. This, though, still treats the

newspapers in Central and East Africa, falls into the same “objectivity” trap as Huff when he states that the settler newspapers were more of a “*news-oriented* press, unlike the African-run papers of British West Africa which were mainly polemical newssheets.” In this characterization, he misses the distinctly *political* project in which newspapers like the *Standard* were engaged. That is, the neutrality he assumes about the content in these newspapers by his compound adjective “*news-oriented*” does not account for highly subjective narratives present in these articles—narratives that directly served the political interests of the settlers and the state.<sup>34</sup>

Later, the 1988 work of John Baptist Abuoga and Absalom Aggrey Mutere does suggest there may have been divisions within colonial society reflected in the newspaper. They point to how the colonial press allowed settlers to protest certain state policies, and, at times, used their influence to sway the government. However, this interpretation still allows for a unified settler voice within the newspaper. While divisions did exist between state administrators and colonists, their interests often overlapped within the newspaper and, at times, competed for space. In a 1992 monograph, however, Dhyana Ziegler and Molefi K. Asante move away from this view as they do not separate settler and administrative interests into a binary and assert that colonial newspapers appealed to both groups.<sup>35</sup>

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*East African Standard* as a unified voice. However, in contrast, this thesis argues that *within the newspaper itself* there were many different voices that did not always agree. Huff, 38.

<sup>34</sup> William A. Hatchen, *Muffled Drums: The News Media in Africa* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1971), 200; Dennis L. Wilcox, *Mass Media in Black Africa: Philosophy and Control* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 1-15.

<sup>35</sup> Dhyana Ziegler and Molefi K. Asante, *Thunder and Silence: The Mass Media in Africa* (Trenton: African World Press, 1992), 24; Abuoga and Absalom. Their monograph focuses closely on the history of the African press in Kenya and thus provides only minimal analysis and information on the *East African Standard* during the colonial period.

On another issue, Abuoga and Mutere effectively demonstrate how the colonial state understood the importance of controlling the communicative space in which information was spread within the colony. Moreover, to understand how this newspaper was a crucial component of identification in colonial Kenya, one needs to consider how it competed with other discourses. These authors demonstrate how the state carefully monitored African authorship of newspapers. Initially, African journalism was banned altogether, though by the 1920s and 1930s the state began to allow “a moderate African press” in order to appease Africans. However, the subdued nature of the material these African journalists were allowed to publish still left the power of information largely in colonial hands. In reaction, Africans created an independent press, although most of it was repressed following the declaration of the Emergency in October 1952.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, broadcasting, the other main communications outlet in the colony, fulfilled a role similar to that of newspapers during the colonial period. Carla Wilson Heath argues that, since broadcasting’s introduction to the colony in the 1920s, its content was either directly aimed towards meeting the needs of a European audience or, if the medium was available to Africans, its information was calculatingly controlled to serve “educative” purposes that would support colonial notions of social, political and economic organization.<sup>37</sup> The settler media, then, with the *Standard* foremost among them, held a near monopoly on discourse in the “public sphere.” One must be careful to not take the impact of this too far because many other ways to communicate ideas besides newspapers existed. Nonetheless, in colonial Kenya’s “public sphere,” the state consciously placed the

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<sup>36</sup> Abuoga and Mutere, 1-37.

<sup>37</sup> Carla Wilson Heath, “Broadcasting in Kenya: Policy and Politics, 1928-1984,” (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1986), 1-127.



colonial voice and approved African ones in a position to be the dominant actors in the process of identification.

Furthermore, Dhyana Ziegler and Molefi K. Asante point to a deeper understanding of how newspapers served an important role in the production of colonial states. They write of settler newspapers generally that,

First, it provided the settler community with news of the metropolitan base. Secondly, it gave the settlers a sense of cohesion by reporting on events, personalities and the activities of the colony.

The preponderance of coverage on white settler interests, they argue, meant that news coverage of Africans was nearly absent.<sup>38</sup> Heath also shows that broadcasting contributed to such communalism when she remarks “that Kenyaradio gave isolated whites on farms a sense of being in touch with others like themselves.” She also notes how Lord Delamere, a leading settler and one-time owner of the *Standard*, thought that the expansion of broadcasting could aid in forming a wider colonial identity in the form of an East African Federation.<sup>39</sup> The comments of these analysts can be expanded when considered with Benedict Anderson’s observations about the role of newspapers in the formation of “imagined communities.” Though the Kenya colony was not a “nation,” there did exist a sense of differentiation from the metropole, and newspapers were important actors in creating this separation. In this way, the observation of some media commentators that these newspapers served as primary ways to stay *connected* to the metropole needs to be qualified. They allowed for a connection to be maintained, but also

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<sup>38</sup> Dhyana Ziegler and Molefi K. Asante, *Thunder and Silence: The Mass Media in Africa* (Trenton: African World Press, 1992), 23-26. Louise M. Bourgault followed with another general look at media in Africa in 1995, but on the issue of settler newspapers she does not provide any further interpretive difference from the preceding studies. Louise M. Bourgault, *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 153-172.

<sup>39</sup> Heath, 58. Heath also notes how in independent Kenya, the Voice of Kenya radio broadcasts were designed to “projected a national image and philosophy and promote national unity.” *Ibid.*, 137.

they were a critical element in creating the “imagined community” of the Kenya colony as a separate and distinct entity. One must remember the tentative nature of the colony and its relatively short history. British settlers only started to arrive in any kind of sustained number in the early twentieth century, which, if we consider that the first moment this thesis will examine occurred in 1922, does not allow much time to conceive of a collective history. Most settlers shared the commonality that they were British, but a Kenyan settler identity certainly had a much shorter history. The shared reading of a colonial newspaper allowed the settlers to perform what Anderson calls a “mass ceremony.” This both private and public act allows the reader to be:

aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated by thousands (if not millions) of others whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.

From this, we can consider that the *Standard* created a space in which a shared notion of a settler community could be ritualistically repeated and reconfirmed. Critically, though, this was an “imagined community” that defined itself along racially-based “symbolic boundaries.” While Kenya’s European community had its internal divisions, the dominance of news about settlers and administrators and the absence of Africans in this coverage made it clear that whiteness was the unifying signifier amongst the settlers’ “imagined community” that the *Standard* participated in creating.<sup>40</sup>

Thinking more broadly about texts concerning colonial Kenya, David Maughan-Brown, in his 1985 monograph, identifies literature as a particularly useful place to analyze settler ideologies. Particularly relevant is a comment he does not fully develop:

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<sup>40</sup> Anderson, 32-36. Anderson also deals with settler identity *vis-à-vis* the metropole in the case of the Spanish Empire in the Americas. Although, one should observe that there were great differences between the way Spanish settlers and the their metropole interacted than did British colonists with their home government. Most notably, full Spanish citizenship came into question if one were born in the colony as opposed to Spain. *Ibid.*, 47-65; Kennedy, 148-166.

The ‘romance’ or detective story enthusiasts, having set out to simply satisfy their enthusiasm, come away ‘knowing’ a bit about ‘Mau Mau’ and ‘the African,’ or *having had what they gleaned from newspapers confirmed from its acceptance by people who ‘know’ enough to write books* [emphasis added].

Here, he is suggesting that a critical element in how knowledge of the “Other” was created in the colonial setting was how newspapers, or novels for that matter, did not create their discourses in isolation from other texts or forms of knowledge. The *Standard* was one type of colonial text that created, reflected, and reformulated colonial ideologies, but it did so in a dialectical relationship with other texts in the colony. Though writing about Kikuyu intellectual practices, Derek Peterson’s comment on the relationship between reading and writing is cogent to this issue: “Once we conceive of reading as more than a private, cognitive exercise, we are free to explore the wider intellectual field in which readers and writers compose.” More to the point, Peterson sees reading as an interactive process where there is indeed an intended meaning by the author, but that readers also freely interpret texts according to their own circumstances. While the discourse of the *Standard* certainly reflected a meaning desired by the authors of its various articles, readers themselves also held a critical position in how these ideas about Africans were interpreted, and then employed in other contexts.<sup>41</sup>

This thesis, then, is the history of a discursive space created by the *Standard* that existed only as its readers continually reproduced it through their ritualized reading of the newspaper. One difficulty this thesis faces is that I can only present one particular reading of this discourse—my own. As a researcher, I will try to place how these ideas *may have been* perceived by colonial readers because of the surrounding historical

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<sup>41</sup> David Maughan-Brown, *Land, Freedom and Fiction: History and Ideology in Kenya* (London: Zed Books, 1985), 1-16, 110; Derek Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2004), 6.

context, but, ultimately, reading remains a highly subjective act and any attempt to present how this discourse may have been perceived will remain inherently limited. With this problematic, I do not know if particular readers read all the articles in a certain edition as I have done in order to reconstruct the discourse. Thus, we must consider that certain of these historical actors may have seen this discourse differently. Moreover, I cannot unearth the personal experiences of the multitude of colonists who read these articles and how that may have impacted their consumption of this information in unexpected ways. What also further complicates the analysis of this discourse is that there were Africans, though limited in numbers, who also read this newspaper, and they certainly must have experienced this discourse in different fashions.<sup>42</sup> I point out these issues not to diminish what will be argued in this study, but to attempt to acknowledge the limitations for historical writing on discourse. With the absence of sources written by individuals telling me exactly what they were thinking as they read the newspaper and how much or what parts of it they read, I must take the step of providing a view to what *could have been* perceived by these actors. Therefore, I see the *Standard* as a discourse that formed a discursive space in colonial Kenya that was experienced in a multitude of ways that depended both on the subjectivity of the individual, and on the personal approach the reader took in consuming the information available in the newspaper.

By studying this space, I hope to encourage historians of colonialism to look at newspapers as valuable, though also complex and historically contingent, sources for examining colonial discourses. In this thesis, I outline a model for a methodological and theoretical framework from which newspapers can become more than mere static

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<sup>42</sup> Despite the overwhelming Euro-centric nature of the content in settler newspapers, there was, nonetheless, a small African readership. Hatcher, 203.

resources historians draw from for source material, and instead are seen historical objects in their own right. I believe this is a critical step towards a more complete understanding of colonial discourses as newspapers held such a dominant place in the intellectual-ideological world of colonies. In the task of examining colonial discourses, we must seriously analyze not just the ideas themselves, but also the sources from which they came. This thesis, therefore, is a starting point in the effort to complicate and expand the study of newspapers and their position in colonial discourses.

## **Chapter One**

### **Defining a Massacre in Colonial Kenya, March 1922**

In East Africa, the period from the late-nineteenth century until 1922 was one of vast changes for both Africans and the settlers who colonized Kenya during this time. For Africans, though, one must be careful to not conclude that the imposition of colonial rule in Kenya marked the end of pre-colonial forms of social organization and the creation of an entirely new reality. While life in colonial Kenya changed considerably since pre-colonial times, Africans retained many pre-colonial beliefs and practices, and even chiefs, perhaps the most explicit attempts of the colonial powers to impose a new order, reflected power relationships that had existed before colonialism.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the ability of the colonial administration to exercise power was sporadic, tentative and, at crucial points within the colony, shared with African chiefs, or “big men.”<sup>44</sup> These conditions created a colonial society that was self-conscious about its ability to rule and vigilant in attention towards those the state and settlers were trying to make into their subjects. John Lonsdale cogently remarks about the colonial period that “The violence of conquest was thus never complete.”<sup>45</sup> In order to better understand how this context influenced the coverage by the *East African Standard* of the colonial massacre of African protestors in 1922, a brief historical background covering this period is required.

### **The Creation of the Kenya Colony and African Responses**

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<sup>43</sup> Marshall Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs and Politicians, 1918-1940* (Niwet, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1990), 3-29, 178-190.

<sup>44</sup> From 1895 to 1920, the Foreign Office ran the colony as a protectorate under the title the “East African Protectorate,” but, in 1920, the area was transferred to the Colonial Office, became a colony and was renamed as the “Kenya Colony.”

<sup>45</sup> John Lonsdale, “The Conquest State of Kenya, 1895-1906,” in Bruce Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), 15.

The issues of land and labor in colonial Kenya are key elements to understanding how the settlers and the state thought of and interacted with Africans. Initially, the impetus for creating a settler colony in Kenya arose from pressure to make the Uganda Railway, completed in 1901 between the East African coast and Uganda, economically viable.<sup>46</sup> Up to this point, the British presence, in present-day Kenya, had been the failed British East Africa Company and independent Europeans who were not officially connected to the metropole. However, the completion of the railway, writes Kennedy, “fundamentally transformed this state of affairs.” Under this new push towards colonization, settlement began at a slow pace. For these settlers, the state allocated land, most dramatically in the Kenya Highlands, which were seen as “vacant” due to the devastating famine and disease that had struck the interior of East Africa in the late nineteenth century. While African conceptions of land ownership were different from those held by Europeans, the land in the Central Highlands was certainly an area the returning Africans expected to retain control over. The colony, though, took over these lands by both dubious “legal” means and through outright theft by settlers from the African inhabitants. Through various methods, the eventual result was settler possession of African lands and European settlement in these areas. As late as 1903 there were only 30 settlers in the Kenya Highlands, but by 1914 their number had risen to 5,348. Despite this increase in population, the settlers remained very much in the minority compared to Indian immigrants, many of whom arrived as indentured workers to build the railroad, and to Africans, the vast majority of Kenya’s population.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Though one might reasonably wonder why Britain was in East Africa at all, such an assessment of the ideological and geo-political factors that pushed European countries to colonization during the “Scramble for Africa” is well beyond scope of this thesis. Therefore, I have kept the focus decidedly local.

<sup>47</sup> Kennedy, 22, 42; Clough, 19-21.

However, despite their *numeric* minority, Europeans quickly began reordering the economy to serve their needs. The most pressing problem from a settler perspective was their desire for African labor to make their agricultural schemes possible, but Africans at this time were uninterested in wage labor on European farms. To create the conditions for an economy of wage labor, the colonial administration urged local Chiefs to “encourage,” or force, if not termed euphemistically, Africans to work. In addition, there were regulations and other strategies employed that restricted the ability of Africans to live sustainable lives away from the colonial sphere. One such example was the 1902 Hut Tax, which often resulted in Africans working on European farms to earn money to pay the tax.<sup>48</sup> These regulations were made to seem even more ridiculous from the reality that Africans were generally more successful farmers than the Europeans. Nonetheless, in the Kenya colony, European cultivation was to be prioritized.<sup>49</sup>

For the colony, many commentators have analyzed the diverse composition of the settler population that came to Kenya, and, particularly, the complex relationship between the administration and the settlers. Europeans coming to Kenya during this period can be separated, generally, into administrative officials, the working classes, missionaries, upper-class British settlers, Afrikaners migrating north after the end of the Boer War, and, following the end of World War I, former British military personnel. Though there certainly were colonists from Britain’s working class and some Afrikaners, colonial Kenya’s settler identity can be seen as being primarily represented by the upper-class of Britain’s society. Kennedy suggests, in fact, that the landed classes from Britain who

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<sup>48</sup> Clough, 21-23.

<sup>49</sup> Kennedy notes that African farms performed better to the point that one official questioned why the government would favor European farmers and suggested instead that African farmers could provide the colony’s produce. Kennedy then comments that such a position was “so subversive” that it “was conspicuously ignored.” Kennedy, 29.



migrated to the colony viewed Kenya as an opportunity to return to a more feudally-organized society. Their status in Britain had slowly been declining from the onslaught of industrialization and the rise of a new, wealthy bourgeoisie, and they saw in Kenya a chance to return to the older model of feudal paternalism. Though, this neo-feudalism was also distinctly capitalistic, Kennedy observes, because “[p]roperty and profit were the central pre-occupations of the society they made in Kenya.”<sup>50</sup>

However, between this settler dream of recreating the English landed aristocracy in Kenya and its actual creation stood the colonial administration and its ideological trappings of the “civilizing mission.” Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale observe how the state wanted to see itself, or to have others perceive it, as a “relatively autonomous and disinterested apparatus acting in the general interest.” More than that, the state saw itself, in line with the “civilizing mission,” as the arbitrator between African labor and the exploitative settlers. However, this vision was fraught with contradictions. Since 1902, the state had been enacting the very laws that forced Africans into wage labor on European farms, and, in addition, until 1921 state agents actively participated in labor recruitment among Africans. The state tried to address these latter contradictions when it attempted to remove its “visible” autocratic practice of labor recruitment and return to its paternalistic and “objective” role. Though, as Berman and Lonsdale point out, the colonial administration never “detached” itself from the interests of the settlers or from the direct exploitation of African labor. For indeed their labor policies towards Africans were always aligned within the colony’s *raison d’être* of capital accumulation by settlers.

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<sup>50</sup> Kennedy, 42-47.

Even more directly, the state itself forced Africans to work on public projects, and local administrators used their authority to exploit African labor.<sup>51</sup>

In this way, Berman and Lonsdale allow us to see through the distinctions that colonial discourse tried to maintain between the settlers and the state, which were, in consequential ways, politically-inspired abstractions. In actuality, the state set the legal structure for settler exploitation of labor and, at times, the state and its agents actively participated in these activities. Indeed, the very nature of the colonial situation inextricably bounded their interests together, and the *Standard* needs to be considered within this context. The previously mentioned analysts who characterized the newspaper as the “settler voice” in contradistinction to the administration do not adequately account for the ways in which state and the settler interests intersected. The *Standard* contained voices that spoke to settler positions explicitly, but, at a more implicit level, they also undergirded the state’s interests. These intersections are part of what this study seeks to reveal.

Following the early settlement, the impact of World War I changed the composition of the settler community through the influx of military officers coming to Kenya after the war, and, as Marshall Clough points out, the war also affected the lives of Africans in the colony. Most directly, the loss of life amongst the Kikuyu from participation in the German East Africa-Tanganyika campaign and from famine was approximately 120,000 people. After this devastation, the Kikuyu clearly needed time to recover, but the government, short on funds, only increased their repressive labor schemes in order to produce revenue. The post-war ardently pro-settler governor, Sir

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<sup>51</sup> Bruce Berman and Lonsdale, “Crises of Accumulation, Coercion and the Colonial State,” in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 101-122.

Edward Northey, increased African taxes by one third for the second time in two years and instituted the *kipande* registration system, modeled on Southern Rhodesia's, in order to restrict the movement of African laborers. This system required that all male Africans wear a small metal-box with a worker identification card around their necks. Additionally, officials and chiefs stepped up labor recruitment—with the violent coercion that entailed—and, when male labor was not available, forced women and children to work. The state and settlers justified these measures as necessary by the colonially constructed idea of “African idleness.” To make matters worse, Africans feared—correctly—that more land would be lost to the settlers as small tracts were alienated in Kiambu and due to the Soldier Settlement Scheme, in which the government encouraged soldiers to migrate to Kenya through preferential land deals.<sup>52</sup>

Africans soon began to organize in protest against these infringements by the state, and Harry Thuku himself, the leading African activist of this early period, attributed his own involvement in oppositional politics to these repressive post-war policies.<sup>53</sup> However, the first formal African political organization created in Kenya was the Kikuyu Association (KA), founded in 1919, which was not exclusively, but primarily, led by chiefs and served their interests in land disputes with the government. Two years later, Thuku created the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) in June of 1921. These two organizations existed amicably enough at first, but later during that same month they went in different directions after disagreements at the Dagoretti Conference where both groups had met with the government. Following this separation, and in order to exercise a broader appeal the YKA became the East African Association (EAA) in July, and, after

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<sup>52</sup> Abuoga and Mutere, 9; Clough, 45-48; For how World War I changed settler society, see Kennedy, 53-76.

<sup>53</sup> Harry Thuku, *An Autobiography* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), 16-20.

intense confrontation between the EAA and KA in Thika in late July, Harry Thuku began a galvanizing campaign for support amongst the African population. In this effort, his ability to inspire was undeniable. His main message was against the repressive labor regime imposed by the state, and the crowds of 5,000 to 7,000 people who attended his speeches demonstrated that his message resonated amongst the African population. His successes drew worry not only from administrators and missionaries, but also from the rival KA. During this time, chiefs from Kiambu and the local missionaries submitted requests to the government to arrest Thuku under the Removal of Natives Ordinance of 1909. With the legal machinery behind them, police officers arrested Thuku on March 14, 1922.<sup>54</sup>

### **March 1922: Colonial Violence and the *East African Standard***

After his arrest, Harry Thuku was placed into a jail cell in Nairobi located across the street from the settler-frequented Norfolk Hotel. That evening, his supporters began to congregate outside the prison and stayed through the night and, by the following day, the crowd had swelled to 2,000. Thuku, decades later, remembered waking up in his cell that day and looking out the window to see a “large crowd was building up.” The following day, Thuku continued, “the crowd grew really large, perhaps seven or eight thousand.”<sup>55</sup> When Thuku’s associates were unable to obtain his release, women in the crowd, most prominently Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru, urged the men to do something. Responding, the crowd then moved towards askari soldiers who opened fire and killed many protesters, with estimates ranging from 21 to 54 people.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Clough, 48-60; Cora Ann Presley, *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 53-55, 108-113.

<sup>55</sup> Thuku, 33.

<sup>56</sup> Clough, 60; Presley, 112-113.

To understand how the *Standard* reported this massacre, we begin with the March 16, 1922 edition of the newspaper, which covered Thuku's arrest and his supporters' subsequent rally. This article reveals how, even before any bullets had been fired, the newspaper had already begun to construct an image of Thuku and the protesters useful for the colonial state. In the headline and within the article, Thuku was cast as a "native agitator," which delegitimized him as a political actor, and, as a strategy, fits with the larger colonial project to discredit Africans politically.<sup>57</sup> As mentioned, Thuku was the leader of an established protest movement that was against the repressive labor practices of the colony, but, within the article, any reference to his actual politics was absent. The only hint the newspaper revealed concerning Thuku beyond his being an "agitator" was that officers had removed materials that contained "libellous reference to a missionary at Fort Hall and to Kinanjui, the paramount chief of the Wakikuyu." Using these techniques, the *Standard* disarmed Thuku as a political actor by painting him as an "agitator," rather than an activist, and his views were libelous instead of legitimate.<sup>58</sup> Moving from Thuku to the protesters outside his jail cell, the newspaper reported that "3,000 armed Kikuyu ... marched into town to the Police Station and demanded the release of Thuku," and that "[a]nother band of *armed pirates* [emphasis added]" were recruiting others to join the protest. Like Thuku, these protesters were robbed of the possibility that they may have held actual grievances against the government. These apolitical "armed pirates" were merely a dangerous and uncontrolled force that must be contained. Though the settlers

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<sup>57</sup> Bruce Berman, "Bureaucracy and Incumbant Violence," in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 240-242.

<sup>58</sup> "Native Agitator Arrested," *East African Standard* 16 March 1922, 5.

were not to be worried, assured the article, because “all the necessary precautions [were] being taken.”<sup>59</sup>

Thinking about this newspaper as a discourse, though, we want to see how ideas in one article from the *Standard* intersected and reacted with others. With this in mind, to the right of the article just examined was one simply titled “Coffee Planters,” which covered a colonial meeting in which members of a planters’ board addressed the issue of “Native Registration.” In this article, the newspaper and the officials it cited were defending registration against recent proposals to end it. Along with these members, the newspaper itself dropped its “objectivity” inside this “news” article when it declared that “[t]he political effect of its repeal would be disastrous to our prestige.” The newspaper argued that if the colony repealed registration it would seem as though the authorities had done so because of pressure exerted by Africans, and would thus confirm the ability of Africans to challenge state policy. In paraphrasing the planters’ positions, the newspaper wrote that registration “had given them the chance really to *control and discipline* their labor [emphasis added].” These techniques were then couched within Britain’s “civilizing mission” because this policy was in fact “in the interests of the natives.” However, this system only worked for the “good native,” while being a “disadvantage to the bad” because the “good native” used registration to “assume individuality” and to carve out a niche as a worker, while for “bad natives” it exposed their criminal records. Consequently, this system had a didactic quality as well because it could teach Africans “that it was a serious handicap to them to have been in prison and fewer of them would run the risk of going there.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “Coffee Planters,” *East African Standard* 16 March 1922, 5.

Taken together, these two articles reveal elements of settler concerns in the Kenya Colony during the early 1920s. In the colonial mind, the newspaper's coverage of Thuku and the protesters evidenced a justification for the retention of registration in the adjacent article. Registration allowed settlers to "control and discipline their labor" through the administrative categorization of them as either "good" or "bad" Africans. For the reader, the consequences of uncontrolled "Natives" were on display in the article on Thuku in which "3,000 armed Kikuyu," who were accompanied by another "band of armed pirates," had flooded into Nairobi. Though economic exploitation was certainly a part of the *kipande* system, the pernicious desire to "control" the "Other" should not be underestimated. In fact, the actual economic benefits of registration were probably negligible. Indeed, one farmer at the meeting complained how the fee that came with the return of a worker was not worth the trouble.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the article provided statistics showing that, since the system had been introduced, worker desertions had decreased from five to one worker per thousand. The *kipande* system certainly kept more Africans on settlers' farms, but not at a rate that dramatically increased profits. What we can see, though, is how this system effectively allowed the colony to bring "order" over the African population. Settlers and the state now had a systematic way "to know" and begin to categorize their workers into a binary of "good natives" and "bad natives." The "natives" gathering in Nairobi certainly must have fallen under this latter designation and, moreover, explained to the reader why such a system was needed.

Here, there was also only a tentative and even amorphous line drawn between ethnic and racial discourses. The discussion by the planters was couched exclusively in racial terms in their reference to the racially designated "native," but the neighboring

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

article on Thuku did let the reader know that these “bad natives” were Kikuyu. Moreover, the bulk of labor relationships between Africans and Europeans in the colony involved the Kikuyu so, while the planters may have spoken on a racial level, their formulations were primarily in reference to the Kikuyu. Therefore, the “racial” discourse on the “Native” laborer did inform the ethnic category of Kikuyu, but, at the same time, this was a dialectical relationship because the activities in Nairobi, designated in ethnic terms in the newspaper, also addressed settler concerns about Africans more generally.

Both articles were sent to press, however, before the March 16 shootings. The following day, the context changed, and the newspaper had to address the use of violence by the state against the protesters. In its narrative of this event, the *Standard* created an image of this colonial violence that could be palatably consumed by the settler audience in ways that made these events understandable according to their ideas of themselves and Africans. This colonial framework was contained within the text, but it was also evident in the actual layout and structure of the initial story that addressed the violence. For this article, the lead headline did not let on that the shootings had occurred, but instead was titled “The Native Outbreak.” Immediately, this headline focused on the action of the Africans instead of the state. Only in the first subhead did readers find out that shots had been fired, and not until the second was it revealed that people had actually been shot. However, in the first subhead, readers saw the newspaper’s first attempt to take control over the definition of the events. It read: “Police eventually have to fire on rioters.” The use of the word “eventually,” applied to the actions of the police, calls to mind the exercise of restraint. We learn that shots were fired, but only after careful, and long consideration. Meanwhile, this calm use of force by the state was contrasted by terming



the protesters “rioters,” which connotes irrationality and danger to the public at large. Clearly, before the first word of the article would have been read, an interpretive framework had been set.<sup>62</sup>

The structure of the article itself also betrays the colonial framework the newspaper employed as one must read through 10 paragraphs before arriving at a description of the violence itself. Before this, the audience was told how the protesters stayed in their positions despite the best efforts of the government to convince them otherwise. The authorities announced that Thuku would not be released and that it was best for the protesters to return home, but his advice was not heeded. The newspaper then reported that,

a general movement of the crowd caused a rush at the fence, in which a police officer was knocked down and stone missiles were thrown at the Police. The Police fired, and immediately the mob scattered over the railway line and towards the town and station in a panic.

Following this, the main focus became safety and solidarity. The audience was told that the King’s African Rifles, a colonial force composed of Africans under European officers, had dispersed the other groups of protesters throughout Nairobi. The *Standard* continued by stating that any economic differences the settlers may have had with the government needed to be put aside during this colonial crisis and that the authorities would be assured of “the unquestioning support of the entire European population in any steps it may take to maintain law and order.” After these reassurances, the newspaper printed the government’s explanation of what happened, which closely followed the

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<sup>62</sup> “The Native Outbreak,” *East African Standard* 17 March 1922, 5.

version put forward by the newspaper and thus unified the government's and the settlers' narrative of the violence.<sup>63</sup>

This initial coverage of the massacre is telling both for how the settler newspaper sought to portray the “Other,” and also for how settlers saw themselves within colonial Kenya. The newspaper attempted to remove any culpability by the state for the violence by assuring its audience that police patiently waited and only fired when absolutely forced by the *action* of the protesters. This redirection of the actor was key. Instead of focusing on the action of the state's police—who fired and killed people—the reader was directed to the action of the Africans. It was they, the “rioters,” who caused this violence to happen, not the state. This defensive posture was reinforced with calls to unity within the European community. To protect the “imagined community” against this threat, contended the newspaper, internal division must be dropped in favor of a singular, racial identity.<sup>64</sup>

The next day the *East African Standard* published an editorial, which obscured the line between race and ethnicity. Titled “THE KIKUYU,” the editorial evoked the colonial trope of the “semi-civilized African.”<sup>65</sup> Kennedy points out how this was primarily used in reference to mission educated Africans who the settlers saw as holding only a “veneer” of “civilization.” This attitude reflected the European notion that Africans were better suited to stay within their own culture instead of being “spoiled” by Western influences, and, functionally, this idea served as “a rationale for ensuring the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Kennedy notes how settlers in Kenya publically tried to maintain an image of “white solidarity” to ease their fears that came with their position as a numerical minority in the colony. His contribution to this issue is address in more significant detail in note 75. Kennedy, 137-138, 179-192.

<sup>65</sup> “The Kikuyu,” *East African Standard* 18 March 1922, 4.

immutability of [African] dependence.”<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Berman links this to stereotypes that Europeans held of African politics in Kenya in general, and towards the Kikuyu in particular. He notes that Kikuyu politicians were seen “as ambitious and intelligent, but also secretive, deceptive and conspiratorial.” To discredit the political grievances of these Africans, colonists portrayed them as “detrified natives” and “half-educated Africans,” who were a minority manipulating the rural masses. The African masses, the myth went, really would have sided with the colonial state, but were being unduly influenced by these self-interested politicians.<sup>67</sup> Employing this trope, the article did not use subtle allusions, and the author, unnamed, quickly laid out the problem. Thuku, a “half-educated native,” had been exerting undue influence over the “uneducated minds” of his followers. This only reinforced the need, the author clearly thought, to have a governmental apparatus in place that could control Africans within the colony. To do this, the author argued for the centralization and formalization of laws concerning the government’s approach towards Africans. The consequences of inaction were on display for all to see in Nairobi. If nothing was done, “the native must continue to be the victim of those whose ‘little knowledge is a dangerous thing.’” To accomplish the newspaper’s goals, the author advocated creating the proposed Commission for Native Affairs. With this, the author consciously acknowledged, though not in this language, the need “to know” more and control knowledge about the “Other” in order to administer the colony more effectively.<sup>68</sup>

Days later, on March 21, the newspaper covered the inquiry into the violence that had started the previous day. The title of the article, “The Native *Riots* [emphasis

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<sup>66</sup> Kennedy, 160-165.

<sup>67</sup> Berman, “Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence,” 240-242.

<sup>68</sup> “The Kikuyu,” 4.

added],” continued to confirm the colonial interpretation of the events. This was not to be called a massacre, a shooting, or other terms that could confuse who was to blame. The state had been defending itself against a “riot,” and the content of the article that followed was embedded within this framework. The article was largely a paraphrasing of witness testimony, and, from these statements, we are consistently told how the Africans, who were often termed a “mob,” were informed many times not only that Thuku would not be released, but that if they continued to protest that force would be used against them. With the Africans refusing these instructions and then moving towards the police line, the police witness, in a paraphrase of his testimony, deemed that “the danger of the situation demanded the order to fire.” Moreover, the various witnesses continually stressed how the state did *everything* it could to calm and disperse the crowd, and it was only after the authorities had exhausted all these possibilities that they resigned themselves to use force. The newspaper reported, in reference to the above-mentioned witness, that “He had no hesitation in saying that after 18 hours’ forbearance that that was the only thing that could overcome the such a crisis.” Moreover, this witness also employed the trope of the “half-educated African” when he stated that his 20 years of experience in Africa told him that the “natives” could not have “[withdrawn] their labors from their European employers on their own initiative, as it was foreign to all former tactics.” Instead, the witness speculated that perhaps there had been “other influences at work.”<sup>69</sup>

The next day, coverage of the inquiry continued in the newspaper. Though witness after witness repeated the colonial interpretation of events, some interesting developments in the discourse were also present. The preceding day, witnesses reported that the “police” were the ones who had shot the protesters, but in this edition the

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<sup>69</sup> “The Native Riot,” *East African Standard* 21 March 1922, 5.

newspaper revealed that it was, more specifically, the *askaris* who shot the protesters. This subtle shift in definition has a potentially profound effect upon how the violence would have been interpreted by the reader. Though an arm of the state, the *askari* riflemen were in fact Africans and, consequently, it was not Europeans who had shot the protesters. However, their actions, as an arm of the state, still needed to be vehemently defended. Before the shootings, the *askaris* had been “remarkably good tempered throughout the morning” and had “showed extreme restraint. It was a marvel they stood so long.” Finally, faced with a difficult situation, we are told that “nothing but firing could have stopped [the protesters].” It should also be noted it was Europeans who provided all of these conclusions about the behavior and mental state of the *askaris* as opposed to the African police themselves. This is instructive to the primacy afforded to settlers and officials in the “public sphere” when it came to whom the state allowed to *define* and to *describe* “reality” in the colonial setting.<sup>70</sup>

Also accompanying this article, on the right side of the page, a government statement explained the violence to the African community. Its author, G.V. Maxwell, the Chief Native Commissioner, followed the same tactic as the *Standard* by depicting Africans as the main actor in causing the violence. Thuku was the antagonist in this narrative because his,

incitements to disobedience of government orders and his attempt to set himself up as leader of the people of this country has led to a catastrophe which has deeply grieved his Excellency and all Europeans.

In this version, the government and the settlers existed only in their sympathy to the victims, while all the blame fell squarely on Thuku. Moreover, continued Maxwell, the government had foreseen the troubles that Thuku posed for Africans and had tried to

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<sup>70</sup> “Last Week’s Riot,” *East African Standard* 22 March 1922, 5.

explain the dangers of Thuku to them, but these best intentions were ignored because “the younger men who believed themselves wise because of a little education thought better.” Even still, we are told how the government had realized that their tactics would not work so they arrested Thuku for the sake of the Africans, “in order to turn them from that path into that of safety.” Finally, the actual violence itself occurred because the protesters “believing in Harry Thuku and not the Government would not listen,” and, influenced by African “agitators” in the crowd,

they attacked the police lines with the result we all know: 10 were killed [an extreme under estimate of the actual fatalities] and many wounded who are now being tended in the government hospitals.<sup>71</sup>

After his first remarks, Maxwell became overtly didactic, stating: “Now let everyone listen.” Then he decisively drew the boundaries around who, in the colony, had the right to access and distribute knowledge, and how “the African” *should* act within the colonial sphere. Maxwell contended that it was the “elders,” or colonially-appointed chiefs, who had “wisdom” and not “young men,” and that “knowledge is not with the uneducated African, but with the educated European.” Additionally, he stressed the justice and openness of the colonial administration because the government “brings no hurt on those who have not deserved it and is always ready to listen to those who speak honestly.” He then outlined the clear governmental machinery in place from which Africans could redress their grievances. He contended that those in rural settings with grievances should look to the government by consulting their chief and those in urban areas should find the Resident Commissioner.<sup>72</sup> Beyond the condescension and paternalism, this statement reveals how the administration saw Thuku as a threat because

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<sup>71</sup> “An Official Statement,” *East African Standard* 22 March 1922, 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

he was operating, as a political dissident, beyond the officially designated “public sphere.” The knowledge he held and spread about the condition of his fellow Africans did not fit into the administrative structure imposed by the authorities, nor did it correspond to the reality in colonial Kenya they wanted to create through measures such as the *kipande* system that sought to bring order and neatly categorize the movements of Africans throughout the colony. In the case of Thuku, though, once he was unable to produce change within the official colonial channels by working with the KA, he left the controlled sphere of the colonial state, and, with mass rallies in the rural areas, created his own political space. Clearly this did not align with Maxwell’s vision of African participation in the colonial state, and his statement was an unambiguous effort to return to the watchful eye of the state those Africans who had followed Thuku, and to discourage others who might act similarly in the future. Maxwell implicitly warned that those who challenged the state’s monopoly on knowledge and tried to act outside of the administratively controlled space would inevitably suffer a fate similar to those fired upon on March 16 in Nairobi. Instead of such foolishness, he contended, Africans should rely on the just treatment they would receive if only they would trust the colonial state.<sup>73</sup>

In later issues, on March 24 and 25, the *Standard* published articles reporting court appearances of African protesters who had been arrested in connection with the March 16 violence and protests. Interestingly, the voice of an African, an *asarki*, did finally appear in the newspaper, but in a constricted way. This non-Kikuyu *askari*, Obonyo Ochieng, described a specific circumstance that occurred on the early morning before the shooting, but his testimony did not describe the actual violence that occurred later that day. Even here where an African voice was able to speak, Europeans retained

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

their monopoly in defining the violence. Additionally, the accused Africans also had their voices heard in the article, but the presiding judge ultimately qualified their comments, seemingly designed to avoid a jail sentence, when he decided whether their testimony held legal standing. The judge, and not the testifying Africans, defined what they did and why they participated. In one such instance, the judge determined, as paraphrased by the newspaper, that it was “difficult to believe anything the accused said.”<sup>74</sup> In these articles, where Africans actually had a space to voice their opinions within this European-controlled “public sphere,” the knowledge they attempted to communicate was nonetheless restricted by what it could describe and, critically, Europeans ultimately determined the validity of the actual statements.

Returning to settler reflections on the March 16 violence, we can also find their views in other articles that did not directly address the protest. From an article covering the local Convention of Associations, we learn that it passed a motion that included a statement about the violence. Though it largely followed the narrative of the violence put forward by the newspaper and the government, one particular section further elucidated the settler position. Specifically, the article revealed a certain paranoia regarding the reception of colonial actions in the metropole with the remark that “he realized the officials had a public and a Press to consider and [that] already questions had been asked in Parliament.” In this passage, the subtle outlines of a self-conscience, settler identity can be detected, as they were thinking about how the metropole viewed them, *as a group*. In other words, the settlers and officials themselves were accountable to the British public and government for the actions of the colonial state, as a discrete entity separate from the

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<sup>74</sup> “The Riot,” *East African Standard* 24 March 1922, 5, “Riot Case,” *East African Standard* 25 March 1922, 2.



metropole. In this, they were creating the categories of “us,” the colony, and “them,” those in the metropole.<sup>75</sup>

The remainder of this article, along with an editorial in the same edition, further explains how the settler narrative of this violence was situated in a larger colonial context. Under a subhead entitled “Veterinary,” the newspaper detailed how the convention addressed laws regulating movements of African pastoralists between the reserves in order to sell their cattle. The contested issue was whether this should be allowed because it risked the spread of disease from African cattle to the Europeans’. The “clean” practices of European farmers were contrasted with the “disease” that was to be found amongst African cattle. If these Africans were allowed less restricted access, “with the free movement of these cattle, farmers would be unable to protect themselves against disease.” Europeans had been trying to “clean farm by farm and district by district,” but a change in policy “would be fatal to the cleaning of the country.” To protect “clean” European cattle from the “diseased” African livestock, the committee agreed that African movements needed to be restricted. Though they quibbled on whether there should be one or multiple exits from each of the reserves, there was no dissention from the motion that “The Veterinary Police Force controlling the Reserves shall be increased forthwith ... and *boundaries of the reserves shall be patrolled by police in plain cloths.*”<sup>76</sup> The editorial, meanwhile, examined a different, although related, issue in its assessment of the

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<sup>75</sup> “The Convention,” *East African Standard* 28 March 1922, 3; Kennedy argues that a critical element in the formation of a settler identity and culture in contradistinction to the metropole was derived from “the myth of a classless white society.” At level of public discourse, he argues, settlers envisioned themselves as having moved past the class distinctions that plagued European societies, and saw in their colonies a classless settler society that was defined on racial rather than class lines. Kennedy views this identity forming in reaction to their position as an extreme numeric minority within Kenya. Of course, this public identity clashed with the reality of unequal class relations among the white settlers. Kennedy, 137-138, 179-192. In the following chapters, I will address how this settler identity also formed in reaction to the Mombasa strikes and Operation Anvil.

<sup>76</sup> “The Convention,” 3.

Report of the Land Tenure Commission that addressed the “development” of the “Native Reserves.” Like the farmers, the author of the editorial emphasized the importance of guarding the borders around the reserves. The author wrote that “entry to the Reserves” needed

to be jealously safeguarded, but we cannot regard that right of entry widely exercised and controlled as other than a *most valuable instrument for native development*.<sup>77</sup>

Both these articles reveal a colonial desire to restrict African movements. One reason for this was that it could prevent the spread of disease and would allow Europeans to properly “clean” the African landscape. The other motive articulated was that such restrictions would allow Europeans, as the active participants, to “develop” passive Africans. This required not only restricting interactions between Africans and Europeans, but also between Africans themselves. This betrays a desire by the colonials to have workable and autonomous African units, or “tribes” or ethnicities, that could be manipulated by the colonial state.<sup>78</sup>

For the relationship between ethnicity and race, a March 31 *Standard* editorial reveals the extent that settler interpretations of the Nairobi Incident were embedded in the existing colonial discourses on Africans, but also how the violence reshaped that discourse. Within this, the colonial narrative on the violence and protests fit into a

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<sup>77</sup> “Our Great Asset,” *East African Standard* 28 March 1922, 4.

<sup>78</sup> During the following days, the *East African Standard* printed another report on the convention in which the veterinarian continued to stress the need to control disease. “The Convention,” *East African Standard* 29 March 1922, 3; As well, coverage of the trials of Africans continued. In one such article, we see the most sustained acknowledgement by the newspaper that it was not only Kikuyu involved in the protest, but in court there was also “a Masai, a Meru, a Karvirodo, and a Wakamba.” This seems to be more reflective of the ethnic makeup of Thuku’s EAA in which he tried to draw from many groups across Kenya. However, despite this one article, the colonial discourse on the “riot” overwhelmingly characterized it as a Kikuyu action. For this specific article see “26 Natives in the Dock at Nairobi,” *East African Standard* 29 March 1922, 5. Coverage of the trials also appeared in “The Riot,” *East African Standard* 30 March 1922, 4.

broader colonial concern about uncontrolled African movements and the corresponding efforts of the state to bring a *categorical order* over both African bodies and geographical space.<sup>79</sup> The specific editorial saw in the Board of Native Affairs a solution to these worries. The author articulated a concern that, at that current moment, the colony did not *know* enough about Africans. Even “Dr. Anderson, who knows the African as well as most of us, confesses the surprise the past two years have brought him.” However, the knowledge acquired through this board was to serve a particular purpose. The “civilizing mission” required that “knowledge of the natives potentialities” be rationally and “objectively” recorded and understood in order to serve “the final destiny and purpose towards which we are training [Africans].” The author emphasized the racial paternalism of this vision when he stressed the necessity of this project for the future of the colony, writing that where Africans would be in ten years time “lies mainly in the decision of the white colonists of the country now.” To achieve these goals, the author continued, the primary pedagogical method of the colony should be “discipline, (and sharp discipline).” In all this, the author placed the Nairobi violence as a symptom of this larger problem, which could be avoided in the future with this board that “is beyond comparison the most vital body this colony has yet proposed.”<sup>80</sup>

This editorial shows particularly well how the disparate statements that composed the *Standard*’s discourse interacted with one another. The author believed that the violence in Nairobi was a systemic manifestation of a larger problem that stemmed from

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<sup>79</sup> By “categorical order,” I mean this in the Saidian sense addressed in the introduction to this thesis. This was the drive to define in a “knowable” way that which was unknown in the colony both in terms of people and geography. As Said informs us, this describable “knowledge” was sought in large part because of its significance for power relations between Europeans and Africans. As the state acquired more and more knowledge of the colonial domain, it increased its capacity and efficiency and, consequently, the easier it became to “dominate” their colonial subjects. Said, *Orientalism*, 31-36.

<sup>80</sup> “A Board of Native Affairs,” *East African Standard* 31 March 1922, 2.

the colony's limited "knowledge" about Africans. To bring order to the colony, the *kipande* system was clearly one strategy, but additional measures were needed. Materially, the strict physical preservation of the borders surrounding the reserves was one approach, but this author clearly valued the need to formalize control over ideas as well. From this, we can see how the newspaper's narrative of the Nairobi violence was both drawn from this discourse, but also reshaped it. The desire to control African movements by employing a "discourse of difference" that corresponded to both racial and ethnic conceptualizations was the discursive structure from which the *Standard* created these statements. However, these very statements shaped the broader colonial discourse because they established an urgency for action and provided a reference point that colonial authors could use for their ideas about Africans, and, in the material sense, to demand a more strict enforcement of the borders of the reserves.

The analysis of the first moment examined by this thesis is only one instance of how varying historical contexts confirmed and reshaped colonial discourses on Kenyan Africans, and contributed the creation of a distinct settler identity. Already, we can see that any notion of an "objective" newspaper does not hold. During March of 1922, the *Standard* composed a narrative about the massacre of African protesters that corresponded to colonial notions of the "Self" and the "Other." Within this framework, the newspaper constructed a view of the massacre in which the violence was prompted by the action of Africans, not the state, and, terminologically, they were not protesters, but "rioters." Moreover, the newspaper provided a context in which these actions could be understood and prevented in the future. This discourse explained that the problems settlers were experiencing were due to the state's failure to more fully restrict African

movements, and that the state's knowledge about them was too limited. Through the *kipande* system, the maintenance of strict borders around the reserves, and, perhaps most importantly, the Board of Native Affairs, the newspaper revealed to the settlers how these issues could be resolved. Additionally, this analysis helps to revise the idea that the *Standard* represented exclusively settler views that contrasted to the official positions of the state. As both Lonsdale and Kennedy have observed, the composition of settler society cannot be simplistically characterized by presenting the supposedly competing interests between settlers and the state, or between the classes. Competing colonial visions of Kenya certainly did exist, but we also need to be cognizant of the areas where they intersected. From this analysis of the colonial reaction to the violence that occurred in Nairobi, one can see how the state and the settlers worked within the discursive space created by the *Standard* to forge ideas about themselves and Africans.

## Chapter Two

### **The Creation of an African Underclass: Race, Class and the 1939 Mombasa Labor Strike**

A central issue that historians confront in their studies—particularly those that encompass any considerable period of time—is the tension that can arise between continuity and change. This tension comes out of the need to analyze how historical forms change over time, while also considering how historical practices can retain certain elements from their previous patterns of organization. Certainly, historians strive to avoid ahistorical characterizations of social structures and practices, but, simultaneously, they need to observe that, over time, historical subjects can retain certain features from their previous forms. As this chapter begins, this study finds itself within this tension in that it must account for the ways in which colonial discourses on African and settler identities changed over time, yet continued to manifest elements from their past representations.

This chapter shifts the focus of analysis temporally and geographically, but maintains the larger goal of examining colonial discourses published in the *East African Standard*. Its time period advances nearly two decades, from 1922 to 1939, and, geographically, moves to Kenya's main coastal city, Mombasa, from Nairobi. The analytical frame is also expanded because, as this thesis examines African labor history more directly, the issue of class becomes more prevalent in colonial discursive constructions. In regard to my analysis of colonial Kenya, I owe a particular intellectual debt to the work of Frederick Cooper. His 1987 monograph, *On the African Waterfront*,

provides much of the contextual and historiographical basis for this study of the *Standard's* coverage of the 1939 strikes in Mombasa.<sup>81</sup>

As a moment of agency against the colonial state, the Mombasa strike did not exist in a vacuum defined by the colony's borders. Inside Kenya, African labor began its push back against capital during a 1934 dock strike, but similar movements also occurred during this period across colonial Africa, and even in Asia and Latin America. In Africa, these strikes continued into the 1950s and forced the colonies to, as Cooper puts it, address "questions about the most intimate details of work and the lives of the workers." These strikes inside Kenya, Cooper argues, caused "a conjuncture, a turning point, a break, a rupture" in the way Europeans thought about African labor, as well as African society more generally. Before these strikes began to erupt in the 1930s, African labor in the Kenya Colony existed on an informal and day-to-day basis. European companies would hire day laborers who sometimes lived in the cities, but often these Africans still maintained close ties to the rural areas from where they came. They did rely on their wages, but these workers also maintained social and economic connections with their villages; a socio-economic arrangement that has been termed "part-time proletarianization." This state of affairs was acceptable to the state and capitalist interests because it *seemed* as though this restricted labor's ability to organize, in that workers, constantly shifting both jobs and locations, lacked the degree of centralization required to form class consciousness.<sup>82</sup>

However, actions by African strikers in the 1930s radically shifted this colonial understanding. Once it became clear that Africans could indeed organize despite their

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<sup>81</sup> Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, xii, 1-12.

lack of a permanent and consistent work life, the state needed a new understanding of African labor that would fit more easily into the colonial economy. Cooper argues that before this “crisis of ideas” about Africans, colonists wanted to believe in a fixed African social structure in the rural areas, one that provided stability to the workforce. Though this mythologized colonial vision of static African societies did not actually exist, it was a powerful idea that shaped the ways the state sought to order African labor. However, under these strike conditions, Cooper argues that officials looked to reform labor’s structure much in the same way that capital had done in Europe when its structural arrangements contributed to the formation of the European “working class.” To do this, the state needed an African labor force that was invested in the colonial economy. More to the point, it wanted a stable and consistent labor force, even at the risk of increased worker organization, in order to create employees more firmly entrenched within the colonial economic system. This required clear lines to be drawn around this African working-class identity whereby these laborers would become a distinctly *urban* working class, which would consequently cut off their connections to rural life. Such new African laborers would become, as had their counterparts in Europe, the “modern working man.” This was a colonial imaging of class that they hoped would, as much as anything, make African labor “predictable.”<sup>83</sup>

Cooper also brings into focus the issue of colonial knowledge about Africans during this period. He argues that before these strikes employers did not have an interest in *knowing* about their African laborers, but, under this new drive to create the ideal African worker, official records and documentation of Africans increased and became an acute concern of the state. Although Cooper’s characterization of this as a new

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., xi, 1-12.



phenomena in regards to African *urban* labor is cogent, the colonial desire to know the African was not so new if one looks beyond the city. Recalling the previous chapter, the Nairobi Incident excited colonial fears about their limited knowledge of the African “Other” nearly 15 years previous. In response, the colonial discourse present in the *Standard* argued that these problems could be solved by asserting greater control over the movement of African bodies and by formally creating a bureau, the Board of Native Affairs, where the colony could produce knowledge about Africans. In this way, the discourse surrounding the 1939 strike in Mombasa was composed with language that had a history in the Kenya Colony. As this thesis takes for its theoretical and methodological basis that a discourse is always *historical*, as Foucault has observed, I am not suggesting one merely take what was learned about colonial discourse of 1922 and blindly apply it to the coverage of the 1939 strike. Rather, in this analysis of the newspaper’s coverage of the strike, I am keeping in mind the discursive strategies that preceded it, but, at the same time, investigating its newly historicized manifestations. This chapter does not argue against Cooper, but, rather, builds on his findings. I aim to focus not only on colonial conceptions of Africans, but also on how these creations can be seen as related to ways in which the settlers viewed their own community during this time. Cooper’s analysis tells us much about how the state wanted to see Africans, but I seek to, again, explore the Saidian process of how when creating the “Other,” one is also simultaneously defining the “Self.”

### **The 1939 strike and the creation of an African Working Class**

By 1939, British Kenya had become a much more stable colonial entity than it had been during the 1922 massacre of Africa protesters. However, the nature of what

colonial society and its corresponding economy would be was still being debated. Though the racially-conceived “symbolic boundaries” persisted as lines that demarcated access to and roles within the social, economic and political realities inside the colony, questions remained about what types of roles the state would *attempt* to impose on Africans, and about how the settlers themselves fit into the local context of Kenya as well as the global one of the British Empire. Though many studies have focused upon how conceptions of race and ethnicity informed settlers’ discursive ideas, the study of the 1939 strike shows how class was also a potent element informing the settler fantasy of creating a “docile” African underclass.<sup>84</sup> What also becomes clear when looking at this strike is how, as class rose as a sociological marker within the colony, ethnicity seems to have faded, *temporarily*, from view in this particular historical context as race and class, together, became the paramount categories from which Africans were “identified.”

One day before coverage of the strike began, we can see the relationship between race and class taking shape inside the *Standard* in a story reporting on a restoration project undertaken by settlers along the Tanga River. The settlers there had been quite displeased with the activities of Africans living along the riverbanks, and the newspaper reported, using racial terminology, that “natives” had been “burning and destroying large forest trees,” and, additionally, that along the river these Africans had set up “the inevitable cash crop shambas.” To remedy this issue, the state responded by moving in

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<sup>84</sup> I employ the term “docile” as Foucault uses it conceptually in *Discipline and Punish*. In this book, Foucault articulates how he sees disciplinary practices as one of the defining features of the creation of the “modern” period in the Western world. In brief, what he means by “discipline” is the collection of practices employed by institutions across society that utilize subtle techniques to fashion the subjectivity of individuals. The end result of this process is the production of “docile bodies” that respond more easily, even subconsciously, to the stimuli of their given society. I clearly see in Kenya the desire by the state to carry out such a regime of discipline on the African community, and, to perhaps a lesser extent, upon the settlers as well. Therefore, Foucault’s work importantly informs my analysis in this chapter. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135-169.

quickly to remove the Africans and, from these actions, that “some convictions were incurred.” With the area now cleared of Africans, the colony was considering “beautifying” this “destroyed” area by landscaping and through creating a path along the river. Though short, this news brief revealed critical elements of how these settlers viewed the Kenya Colony in 1939. More than mere farmers, the Africans described in the article represented a threat to the colonial project of fashioning a controlled and disciplined working class. Even assuming that these farmers would have sold their crops to Europeans, they nonetheless were attempting to create an economic space beyond the regulatory “gaze” of the state. Consequently, this formation of African labor would not be directly subjected to the discipline of a European employer. Moreover, this African economic activity, practiced outside the purview of the colonial system, was presented to the reader as an *irrational* force that had “destroyed” the riverbanks. Therefore, the newspaper depicted the arrest and removal of these Africans as a justifiable response to this African-run economy of labor. Consequently, with the Africans gone, the state and settlers could now move in and “rationalize” the space recently degraded by Africans.<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, inside this article, we can see the intersections between race and class that were forming inside Kenya during this period because the “racial” status of the farmers, as Africans, informed how the settlers viewed their capacities as laborers. These Africans, away from “guidance” by Europeans, were only deemed “capable” of engaging in activities that “destroyed” the land and required the intervention of colonial authorities to reorder the space along “rational” lines through the “beautification scheme.”<sup>86</sup> What may have been most troubling to the authorities here was how these Africans were

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<sup>85</sup> “Beautifying Scheme at Thika,” *East African Standard* 27 July, 1939, 5.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

creating social and economic space beyond the “gaze” of the colonial state. In looking to bring Kenya’s Africans into the Euro-Western capitalist order, the settlers needed, as Cooper observed, a “stable and predicable African labor force.” Those Africans along the river represented the “delinquent” members of the colony who needed to be fashioned into an amenable working class.

The first article addressing the strike appeared in the newspaper the next day, and, though it was short and direct, it elucidated themes that it would greatly expand upon in the days to come. Ethnicity, as a terminological distinction, was again absent within this initial article. The Africans were labeled as “native employees,” and thus existed for readers only as a homogeneous racial bloc. The other important element that arose out of this article, in sharp contrast to the discourse that surrounded the 1922 massacre, was that the newspaper acknowledged that these strikers may have actually held legitimate grievances. In 1922 a particular feature of how the *Standard* portrayed the massacre was that the Africans who had assembled outside Thuku’s jail in Nairobi were to be understood as a faceless mob bereft of any “rationally” conceived political motives. Moreover, the newspaper consistently explained and argued to its readers that these Africans were an uncontrolled and “irrational” threat to the stability of the newly formed Kenya Colony, and, thus, all actions by the state were depicted as justified. In 1939, however, the newspaper informed its readers that the “natives” went on strike in order “to demand increases in pay.”<sup>87</sup> This shift within the colonial discourse needs to be

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<sup>87</sup> “Natives on Strike at Mombasa,” *East African Standard* 28 July, 1939, 1. Another interesting article that appeared on this day was one covering the Kikuyu Central Association led by Harry Thuku in which he applauded a move by the colonial government to redistrict the “Native Reserves and Leasehold Areas” into the “Native Lands.” This quite positive representation of Thuku as an African who now functioned willingly *within the colonial structure* was in stark contrast from 1922 when he became the chief antagonist of the newspaper’s narrative about the massacre. This article serves as a clear example of some of the large

understood through the change in the local and global historical context since the 1920s. As will be greatly expanded upon, this shift did serve a particular ideological end for the European community.

Following this initial article, newspaper coverage of the strikers was absent for the next two days. During this lull, though, the *Standard* published more stories that help to better understand colonial discourse in the Kenya colony in 1939. In an editorial entitled “Romantic Business,” the author assessed what the newspaper determined to be the poor working performance of “office boys” in the colony, and, the author revealed a colonial desire for a systemic structure that could “produce” young African males who would aspire to become effective and motivated office workers.<sup>88</sup> The article pointed out how, at the current moment, the “office boy” was a,

human gramophone who sits on a stool outside the door today and at intervals says “Ndio, Bwana” [“Yes, sir,” in Kiswahili], and saunters inside to carry a couple of files next door and gossip with his friends in the corridor until he happens to hear the next irate shout.

Rejecting this current situation of what the newspaper viewed as a group of passive and uninterested African workers, the author argued that the state needed to utilize the “arts of propaganda” to form an atmosphere within the colony where the settlers could “inflame the mind of the office boy with unbridled ambition” about what might be possible for them if they engaged in the emerging colonially-controlled economy. To do

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shifts in the colony that had occurred since 1922. “Kikuyu Provincial Association,” *East African Standard* 28 July, 1939, 29.

<sup>88</sup> Here, and with the other editorials I analyze, I am faced with the limitation that the *East African Standard* did not publish the names of the authors of the articles. Thus, I must somewhat awkwardly always give reference either to the abstract “editorial,” “column,” or “author” instead of specifically identifying who held these opinions. However, as I address in the introduction of this thesis, my goal is not to identify any singular person’s views on settler and African societies, but instead I want to look at how the disparate and largely anonymous ideas in the newspaper formed a discourse that could be accessed by reader of the newspaper. For more on my methodological approach to analyzing the *Standard*, see pages 1-3 and 22-31 in the introduction.

so, the article explained, these messages should be imbedded in all the media these young Africans might encounter, from films, cartoons, books, and the radio.<sup>89</sup>

This article connected to the larger themes contained inside the colonial vision of Kenyan society in which African workers were seen as raw materials to be shaped and molded by the actions of the state and settler community. Moreover, if Africans were permitted to decide their own fates, the article from the previous day had illustrated how independent African economies would literally destroy the land. However, in this most recent article, it seemed that even if African laborers were under the guidance of a European “*bwana*,” the employers and the state were not being diligent enough in crafting the appropriate working “mindset” in this laboring class. These workers were uninspired, the editorial contended, because they had not been fully instructed on the possibilities that could come from participation in the colonial economy. Confidently, its author contended that, through subtle manipulation of media content, a more productive and inspired working class could indeed be “created.” These statements should be seen as having been part of a larger colonial project in which the administrators and settlers envisioned themselves as part of a large-scale socio-economic project. These colonials, it seems, were literally setting out to alter the *minds* of their African subjects so they would better adjust to the new colonial realities. Africans, of course, as independent actors, remained entirely absent from the discussion as, at all times, the drivers and shapers of future realities were to be Europeans. The idea that Africans themselves might shape their own destinies in positive ways was not a part of this colonial discourse.

Moreover, a critical point to understand from this article is the overt *intentionality* of these colonial actions. Often, historians are left to make subtle inferences about what

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<sup>89</sup> “Romantic Business,” *East African Standard* 29 July 1939, 5.

colonial authorities may have meant by their policies and actions because of the haphazard nature of the historical archive. However, we have here clear evidence of a direct desire by the state to manipulate the discursive reality of Africans in order to better serve the interests of capital and the settlers. What arises out of this article, and the previous one dated from July 27, is an articulated colonial vision in which the European community was engaged in a linear project of “modernization” in the Kenya colony with the intent of incorporating Africa, and Africans, into “modern” capitalist realities.<sup>90</sup>

Two days after these first stories on July 31, the strike reappeared in the newspaper in an article that introduced the notion of “contagion.” For this idea, the newspaper cautioned that the strike might not remain limited to its current scale because it could, potentially, spread quickly throughout the colony. Indicating to readers this fear, the headline of the article posed the question: “Houseboys next?” This query simultaneously brought many colonial fears to the fore because “contagion” changed the way the strike would be interpreted by the settler community. Though the situation appeared to be largely under control, the newspaper brought forward new anxieties about why *everyone*, not just business owners, needed to be vigilant to rapidly bring this issue to a close, lest Africans begin to organize and spread their ideas. Despite the outward appearance that work disruptions were confined to the industrial sphere, the newspaper warned its readers that this might rapidly change:

One well-known Mombasa householder ... stated that his cook and houseboy, who have been with him for some time, and, who it is alleged, had no intention of going on strike, were threatened with violence while on their way to work in the early morning on their way from Makengo.

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<sup>90</sup> At this point, I will limit my discussion of the much contested issue of “modernity,” or its processual corollary, “modernization,” because in the next chapter on Anvil this will be one of the main themes addressed.

This altered framework allowed the strike to take on a much wider significance not only for all other businesses, but also for settlers who had Africans working in their homes. Before, it had merely been an abstract issue between labor and management. Now, though, the line between industrial and domestic labor was at risk of being crossed, and, as the article communicated, it seemed possible that these Africans, “who have been with him for some time,” might perhaps turn against their employer. This potential violation of domestic tranquility certainly created a new understanding of the strike where anyone could be affected. Importantly, this also revealed that distinct lines had not yet been drawn sufficiently between divisions of labor in the Kenya Colony. From this article, the dangers of an ill-defined workforce were on clear display for the readers of the *Standard*.<sup>91</sup>

With “Houseboys next?” outlining potential problems, an article five pages further into the newspaper indirectly proposed possible causes for the strike. With the headline “Native Housing and Family Life,” the story covered a report released by a European doctor that detailed the “unsatisfactory conditions” of “native housing” in the growing urban centers of East Africa. Most troubling, the article pointed out how families had to live in single rooms. While on the surface this disclosure may seem rather benign, and even productive, we need to also consider these comments in the context Cooper brings forward about how management wanted a “predictable” labor force. Luise White has also pointed to 1939 as the moment when colonial officials began to form anxieties

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<sup>91</sup> “Houseboy’s next?” *East African Standard* 31 July 1939, 5. This notion of “contagion” was not limited to the Mombasa area. When workers in Dar es Salaam also began to strike, this concept was quickly redeployed by the *East African Standard* when it observed that “It is alleged that the ring leaders came from Mombasa.” Additionally, the newspaper noted, “The strike later *spread* to native car drivers [emphasis added].” “The Tanga Strike,” *East African Standard* 10 August 1939, 26. The coverage of this strike continued in two following articles. “Grave turn in Strike at Tanga,” *East African Standard* 11 August 1939, 1, and “Confidence restored at Tanga,” *East African Standard* 12 August 1939, 5.



about how largely male boarding-room housing was creating the worrisome “lonely African.” Separated from the domestic influence of a wife and family, these men often resorted to political and militant activities during their “idle” time. These officials, White argues, wanted stable homes, composed of a husband, wife, and children inside a single family, self-contained apartment, to be fashioned in the African neighborhoods in order to temper the politicization of African labor. Through these measures, these families could become “productive” units in the colonial economy. Thus, the comment by the author in “Houseboys Next?” wherein the author addressed demands for “free accommodation” by striking workers, can take on a new understanding when viewed in this context. The attentive settler reader could have easily seen the connection here between unstable, independent African male workers without “families” and all the discursively ill-defined and uncontrolled African men streaming into the streets in colonial Mombasa.<sup>92</sup>

After another brief lull in coverage, the subject of the strike returned to the newspaper on August 2 in the form of a specific news article, and, less directly, in a column that assessed the status of “native policy” in the colony. Continuing the narrative of “contagion,” the article “Strike *Spreads* to Port [emphasis added]” detailed how the fears of a growing strike were quickly being realized as the “contagion” was moving quickly through the colony. The article instructed its readers that “it is anticipated that owing to intimidatory methods the trouble will spread to the permanent dockers.” Importantly, the repeated allegation that Africans were striking only because of threats by other Africans occupied an especially critical rhetorical place within the settler narrative

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<sup>92</sup> “Native Housing and Family Life,” *East African Standard* 31 July 1939, 7. Luise White, “Separating the Men from the boys: Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Central Kenya, 1939-1959,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 23, 1 (1990): 1-25.

of events. This particular contention by the newspaper effectively disconnected these new strikers from the previous ones. It would seem, the newspaper urged, that these Africans working in homes and down on the docks were mostly happy with their current situation and were probably protesting solely because of the undue influence of some isolated “agitators.” Such an approach reflects traces of how the *Standard* characterized Thuku, and his fellow intellectuals who critiqued the colonial state in the early 1920s, as leading astray otherwise contented Africans into protest movements that challenged the colonial state.<sup>93</sup>

Though this previous news article required some use of subtle inference to inspect colonial intentions, the column on “Native Policy” appearing the same day made plain their plans for the African population. Additionally, though this article was most explicitly about “Native Policy,” its implicit meaning revealed much about how settlers saw themselves fitting into the emerging colonial sphere. The column itself was a direct reaction to an assessment of the Kenya colony by Lord Francis Scott, from the elected members of the Legislative Council, in which he determined that the colonial “Government no longer had the respect of the “Native peoples.” Responding to this criticism, the editorialist, with the specter of Africans protesting in the streets, conceded that their current “Native Policy” had not produced satisfactory conditions in Kenya. However, he added that this should not be seen as settlers’ fault because this situation existed as a result of the passivity that the home government forced upon settlers in the administrative domain. The primary issue, the author contended, was that “Native Policy” was being dictated by far away British bureaucrats who did not “understand” local conditions in Kenya. However, the situation could be reversed if settlers asserted

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<sup>93</sup> “Strike Spreads to Port,” *East African Standard* 2 August 1939, 7.

themselves and took control over local decisions concerning the lives of Africans. In stressing the point, the column insisted: “The Government of Kenya is either a Government of Kenya or it is merely the mouthpiece for a distant authority.”<sup>94</sup>

In assessing the particulars of the “Native” issue, the author argued the reason the colony was not yet “producing” the right kinds of Africans was due to an *institutional* problem. The editorial claimed that the colony had left far too much responsibility in the process of “producing” Africans to private organizations.<sup>95</sup> Instead of this, the colony needed a single, state-run bureaucratic machine that could take over from the localities and centralize power inside Kenya. The author hoped this would reverse the direction in which “the African” was currently headed. Most troublingly, the editorial lamented that the long dreamed-of “new” African who was supposed to emerge under colonial tutelage was not materializing. Any difference they had seen in “the African” thus far had not been “a change for the better.” Arising from these systemic failures with “Native Policy,” the author asserted that “the African” that one sees “in the towns, is at his tragic worst,” and that, from these administrative failures, “The present strike in Mombasa is just another reaction.” To counter this, he implicitly proposed that more force was needed in putting down the Africans when he disappointingly assessed that this “Agitation is allowed to proceed without firm official retaliation.”<sup>96</sup>

In contextualizing these various points, this article reveals many different elements of the colonial mindset during 1939 in Kenya. Critically, it exposes a deep

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<sup>94</sup> “Strike Spreads to Port,” *East African Standard* 2 August 1939, 6.

<sup>95</sup> Speaking broadly, the most pernicious private institution in the minds of the settlers was the schools run by the Kikuyu. Importantly, education exists as a central societal institution, and plays a predominant role in how and what types of citizens, or subjects, are “made.” These schools, the article proclaimed, “are doing work the government should seek to do.” Clearly, any African control over the content in schools presented a problem to a colonially-inspired vision of Kenya’s future.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

anxiety Europeans in Kenya held about the nature of their relationship with the home government in Britain, and, moreover, it betrays a strong desire on their part to be separated, at least administratively, from the metropole. The author's response to Lord Francis' report revealed a palpable sense by the colonists that those fellow Britons at home did not have the proper "understanding" of local realities and were being unfairly critical. If Kenya was to be successful, the author argued the most obvious solution for moving forward should be to place more power and decision-making capacities into the hands of the settlers themselves. These sentiments serve as evidence of an emerging "settler" identity as something distinctly different from the identities of those who remained in Britain. Indeed, as the author observed, the settlers were those "whose homes were permanently established [in Kenya] and whose children will have to carry the eventual burden of the results of present-day policy." In this quote, by pointing to a communal history that settlers shared in being "permanently established," the author was rhetorically separating the settlers from those who lived in the metropole by drawing borders around their shared past, present and future, *as settlers*.<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, the *Standard* tied a critical component of this shared identity to the success of how settlers were "developing" Africans because, as the editorialist observed,

Ultimately the people who have made their homes in this country have to live with the kinds of Africans we are producing ... [and] that if there is any blot on the Kenya record the people in the colony will be blamed for it."<sup>98</sup>

While this settler identity at this point was not necessarily moving towards a separatist movement from Britain, the subtle assertions of differentiation between settlers and those who lived on the home islands had certainly emerged. Critically important as well is how

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

settlers were now tying their own success and identities to whether or not they could remold Africans into “proper” subjects. These colonists did not want only to be part of a broader imperial project in which they and Africans were merely pieces of an empire blindly administered from Britain, but instead they, and the Africans they ruled over, would grow and change according to conditions particular to the Kenya Colony.

The following day, August 3, another editorial brought into focus the strategies the settlers used to discredit the Africans protesting in the streets of Mombasa. Though the *Standard* in 1922 had little trouble casting aside the grievances of the Africans who had gathered outside Thuku’s jail cell, the context in 1939 was different and required more subtle techniques. In 1922, Africans had assembled in Nairobi to protest Thuku’s arrest, and, from this, the newspaper and the state cast them aside as not understanding the laws of due process and that, instead of protesting, they needed to allow the judicial machinery of the colony to play out. Nearly 20 years later in Mombasa, though, these Africans were *striking as laborers*. By 1939, the labor movement had established itself as a prominent social and political force within British society, and, therefore, the colonists, acting within the British Imperial sphere, could not so easily dismiss these Africans because their actions, as strikers, corresponded to a recognized form of legitimate political expression. Acknowledging this reality, the columnist wrote:

There can be no desire on the part of any section of the Kenya public, either official or unofficial, to deny the rights of workers of *any race to secure removal of genuine grievances, if they exist, or to improve the conditions of labour* [emphasis added].

In this passage, the author allowed that Africans indeed had the right to redress issues they had with management through the recognized mechanism of striking. However, and this is key, the editorialist quickly qualified this statement within the particular context of

this specific strike because it “was directed towards paralysis of the community” and thus had “gone beyond the limits.” The author saw Africans using the tactic of striking but “without much sense of responsibility.” Therefore, the editorial concluded, the strike by the African workers needed “to be actively discouraged by the full authority of the state.”<sup>99</sup>

These passages show that the editorialist understood the need to respect the *language of labor relations* when analyzing this issue. Indeed, the newspaper, reflective of the larger colonial discourse in Kenya, realized that if Kenya were to be incorporated into the wider field of capitalist economies, the labor issue had to be addressed, and, within the context of 1930s Britain, a common understanding existed that workers had a defined right to petition management. Clearly, this column shows that this same discourse of worker’s rights had emerged in the Kenya Colony. The editorial nonetheless managed to disqualify these Africans from this right by combining the shared language of labor relations with the colonial discourse on Africans. Thus, even though the author could not deny that Africans had a right to strike, these particular strikers, so the editorial informed us, were not behaving as “rational” actors, a crucial element of the colonial discourse on African labor, and therefore were not engaging in legitimate civil action because they had gone beyond the allowable bounds of public comportment by potentially creating a “paralysis of the community.”<sup>100</sup>

In this way, the author was seemingly not denying strikers the rights due them within the ideological space of the British Empire. Instead, readers were shown how the present situation in Mombasa was actually the “fault” of the African strikers, rather than

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<sup>99</sup> “Labour troubles in Mombasa,” *East African Standard* 3 August 1939, 4.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

capital or the state, because they were not striking “correctly.” Moreover, though tacitly acknowledging at certain points the grievances of the workers, the editorial’s main message worked to diminish the potency of laborers’ claims against management. In this effort, the author repeated the trope of “intimidation” by a small number of Africans over others who were supposedly happy workers. Following this, the column went on to proclaim that “behind movements of this kind there is always irresponsible agitation.” Combining these two utterances, we can again see a clear effort to isolate any displeasure with the colony and capital as being only held by a “troublesome” minority of Africans that “infected” others with their rhetoric and intimidation. All these efforts combined to remove culpability from business owners and the state and instead to focus it on those few Africans who looked to challenge the colonial hegemony over deciding labor conditions in Kenya.<sup>101</sup> Also, this article argued that Africans were not really yet “capable” of going on strike since they were not ready to act “rationally” in their own interests because they still remained susceptible to “agitators.” In this, we can see clearly how ideas of race informed how the settlers were constructing a *docile* African working class.

The next day, on August 4, the newspaper’s front-page headline read: “Mombasa getting back to Normal.” It seemed that “Normal,” in this context, meant Africans working peacefully within an economy defined on European, and not African, terms. Moreover, this piece displayed the fiction the Kenya colonials tried to maintain that there was, in the colony, a separation between the interest of capital and the state.<sup>102</sup> In the final subhead, the newspaper reported that “the Government will leave a settlement to the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Berman and Lonsdale, “Crisis of Accumulation,” 101-122. This work by Berman and Lonsdale, and its relevance to what is studied in this thesis, is address more fully in Chapter One on pages 32-33.

employers,” and thus gave the impression that the state would act only as an impartial mediator between the two sides. However, despite this statement by the newspaper, the article quickly revealed that the state quite directly placed itself behind the interests of business. In describing the “police method” that led to the end of the strike, the newspaper wrote that,

Lorries carrying about 20 askari each patrolled the town and when a congregation of natives was observed the askari leaped to the ground and made for the crowd with batons down. In all cases there was no resistance and no hand-to-hand conflict took place. The crowd scattered and took to their heels.

The *Standard* reported this blatant state-run intimidation unproblematically as “effective police work.” More than anything, the tone of this reporting suggests that the state was not really so interested in actively listening to the issues workers had with management, but instead were working as an extension of capital’s interest in order to end the strike, or, what the newspaper had termed “the trouble,” and return the colony to “normal.”<sup>103</sup> Clearly, the lines separating the interests of settlers, the state and capital were not so clearly drawn in colonial Kenya.

Following this coverage on August 4, news articles and editorials on the strike become fewer and fewer as the story rapidly faded out of the “news-cycle,” and, as the year was 1939, the global impact of World War II and how it would affect Kenya returned as the dominant theme within the newspaper. However, before leaving this “moment” in Kenya’s history, a number of related articles in the proceeding days can help us to better understand the state of colonial discourse during the late 1930s in Kenya. Stretched over nearly two weeks, three connected articles addressed the state of Kenya’s settler youth population and their prospects within the colony. Taken together, these

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<sup>103</sup> “Mombasa getting back to Normal,” *East African Standard* 4 August 1939, 1.



articles reveal a palpable anxiety that the settlers held about how their society was “developing.” The specific issue examined in these articles was the condition of the apprentice system in the colonies and the apparent lack of interest by settler youth in engaging the institution. In these articles, we can see the common notion that colonial life could “contaminate” and “corrupt” Europeans—a trope that had long been a part of most imperial discourses. The older generation of settlers, most of whom had not been born in the colony, were exempted from this concern, but the youth of the country, who only really knew life as settlers, “will grow up in an atmosphere of too complete dependence on the African and these young people would acquire conceptions of standards of life and responsibility which cannot be maintained or justified.” In other words, the colonial exploitation of Africans was breaking down previously held class distinctions among Europeans. However, as the colony “developed,” the author clearly thought that this lifestyle could no longer be supported by the actual material conditions of the colony. As the column noted:

It was all very well to cling to these ideas in the earlier years when the white community was small and composed of people who were well supplied with the essentials of a very comfortable life but we now have a large and rapidly increasing population who must be fitted into a far more practical social outlook.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, these articles reveal how settlers were not only concerned about the “types” of Africans being “produced” in the colony, but also about the “type” of settler youth being “created.” The editorialist was arguing against the notion that the foreign colonies would be home to a “new aristocracy,” as the Kenya Colony had seemed to be in its early days. Instead, the settlers needed to defend their autonomy against the metropole by creating their own class of local administrators and, at the same time, remain

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<sup>104</sup> “Young Kenya: The Problem of the Apprentice,” *East African Standard* 7 August 1939, 4.

connected to the “modern” global empire by training “young men and women who can hold their own in the Colonial Civil Service elsewhere, especially in Africa.”<sup>105</sup> Looking across colonial society, the author also forecasted how Africans might fit into this future administrative-economic structure. Significantly, similar to the developing discourse of labor rights, overt racism was also *slowly* becoming a much less tenable premise upon which to fashion a society, and so the author, when “imagining” the future of Kenya, had to at least reference a far off idea of equal access by settlers and Africans to the colony’s resources. Thus, the column contended, they should avoid forming a society based upon “racial isolation” by creating job opportunities to those of “other races” but, in qualifying this point, added that, for the settlers, the “ultimate advantage could be preserved for its own youth.”<sup>106</sup>

From the ideas in these articles, we can begin to trace together the various pieces of colonial discourse present in the *Standard*’s coverage of the 1939 strike in Mombasa. Returning to the problematic that the historian faces between continuity and change addressed at the beginning of this chapter, the newspaper coverage of this strike demonstrates how the shifting ideological and material realities of the Kenya colony had altered the discursive strategies that colonial authors employed in understanding the world around them. However, there is also strong evidence that they still hung on to many of the techniques used to frame the 1922 massacre. The largest material change within Kenya that affected this discourse was the colonists’ efforts to incorporate themselves into a capitalist economy that would be forcefully controlled, administered

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<sup>105</sup> “Careers for Kenya’s Youth,” *East African Standard* 17 August 1939, 4.

<sup>106</sup> “Young Kenya,” 4.

and protected by the European colonial government.<sup>107</sup> To achieve this goal, *both* the European and African populations needed to be more strictly placed into their “appropriate” roles within this structure for Kenya to become “modern.” For the settler community, as the three articles on the colony’s youth detailed, young Europeans in Kenya had been “corrupted” by the opulence provided by the exploitation of Africans, and, in some ways, were perhaps reverting back to a pre-capitalist feudal fantasy of ruling as a landed aristocracy. However, as the newspaper forcefully pointed out, the changing administrative and economic structure present in the local conditions within Kenya, as well as from the global British Empire, would no longer support such lifestyles. If the colony was not to become merely a faceless appendage of the metropole, the *Standard* warned, settlers needed to actively join the system by engaging with the imperial structure. Ironically, the newspaper, in its final assessment, seemed to be arguing that they, the Europeans in Kenya, needed to be “modernized” as well.

As for the African population, the settlers had clearly set out to form a racially-based underclass of African workers to perform the necessary labor of the colony. In this effort, however, the colonists were now facing what they saw as the perils of rapid urbanization. In their reading of the situation, the settlers perceived there to be an undefined mass of male African workers who lived and worked in these cities, but also who moved freely between urban and rural settings. In what Cooper has called a “crisis of ideas,” the settlers felt the need to place a more “rational” order around the lives of these workingmen so that they might become “more predictable.” By August 10 of 1939, the *Standard* was already trying to draw larger lessons for the colonial order out of what had happened in Mombasa. As Cooper has also observed, during this period there was a

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<sup>107</sup> Cooper, *Along the African Waterfront*; Lonsdale and Berman, “Crisis of Accumulation,” 101-122.

movement to “improve” conditions for African workers through better housing and higher wages. However, he notes, these efforts were governed by an arithmetic that tried to strike the right balance between paying these workers as little as possible, but still just enough so they would not rebel.<sup>108</sup> In this column, the editorialist observed that this balance was, at present, weighted too far on the exploitative side in remarking that during “the recent unrest in Mombasa ... the causes were to be found on the pressure on the lower wage earner of the bad social conditions, particularly the cost of housing.” In light of a recent report on Nairobi, the author warned, these conditions were not limited to Mombasa and needed to be addressed quickly if such incidents were to be avoided in the future. Most directly, these Africans needed to be placed into secure “family” housing in these emerging industrial centers where a man, on his wage, would be able to have a home where he could house his wife and children, and, presumably, live a more “stable” life.<sup>109</sup>

Considering what the research in this chapter reveals, the most surprising and interesting development, in analytical terms, is how ethnicity played almost no part of the discursive constructions in the *Standard*, and, instead, race and class became the two central tools from which the newspaper “imagined” Africans. This makes sense, though, if we consider that the primary goal in these articles, and the colony more broadly, was to create this “stable” and “predictable” African working class. What the settlers wanted to do, at this point, was to centralize, rationalize, and, of course, simplify knowledge and understanding of Africans, as laborers. What was important was not whether someone was Kikuyu or Swahili, but whether they were a farmer, a “houseboy,” or a laborer, and,

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<sup>108</sup> Cooper, *Along the African Waterfront*, 53-54.

<sup>109</sup> “Natives in Nairobi,” *East African Standard* 10 August, 1939, 4.

once placed into a particular working relationship, that one identified with and retained that position. This highlights the necessity that researchers consider that changing material realities impact the ideological worlds of their subjects. Though ethnicity, as a terminological-ideological product, was central to European colonial projects in Africa, particular historical conditions did not always call for the use of ethnicity as a sociological marker. Clearly, for this moment in Kenya's history, the move towards a capitalist economy required racial and class divisions to be intensified, while ethnicity became only a marginal concern within the discourse.

However, conditions soon rapidly changed inside the Kenya colony following World War II. In 1939, officials and settlers certainly faced some issues concerning their ability to administer and control the colony, but, at the same time, the European community held tremendous confidence that they had come a long way towards establishing their "community," and that they consequently envisioned themselves remaining the power in Kenya for the foreseeable future. However, during the 1950s the context radically changed with the rise of the Mau Mau movement, which contested the very idea of Kenya remaining a British colony. With the settlers' world transforming around them, the issue of ethnicity returned to the center of their discourses.

### Chapter Three

#### The “Clean-up” of the “No’er-do-wells”: Ethnicity, Modernity and the Colonial Understanding of “Operation Anvil”

“Those of us who were non-Kikuyu, we were free to go home.” – Tom Mboya, on his experience as a Luo during Operation Anvil in April of 1954.<sup>110</sup>

The 1939 labor strike in Mombasa demonstrated that ethnicity was not always a dominant element within colonial constructions of African identity. Though many important studies have clarified the central place ethnicity held in colonial discourses, we must take care not always to assume its presence. In 1939, the historically contingent circumstances surrounding the strikes in Mombasa made race and class the primary sociological markers the *East African Standard*, along with the larger colonial apparatus, tried to impose upon Africans. Historians, thus, should strive not to over-determine the ideological frameworks settlers used in understanding the colonies they wanted to create. While ethnicity was an element in the larger imperial discursive project of creating “useful” African identities, the material demands of capital and urbanization in 1939 required a more homogeneous, racially-based class structure to take shape in the colony in order to produce a “rational” labor zone where industry, government, and even domestic employers could more easily utilize African workers. However, by the 1950s, the emergence of the Mau Mau movement radically changed the context of colonial Kenya.<sup>111</sup> Driven by the drastic alteration of the material conditions this brought to the

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<sup>110</sup> Tom Mboya, *The Kenya Question: An African Answer* (London: Fabian, 1956), 19. I first read this passage quoted in David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: Norton, 2005), 202.

<sup>111</sup> I will greatly expand upon the history of Mau Mau in this chapter, but, in brief, Mau Mau was an African resistance movement that sought many goals within Kenya. For the state, the most disturbing of these was the movement’s aim to end colonial rule. In one sense Mau Mau was anti-colonial, but it has also been interpreted as a civil war between the supporters of Mau Mau and “loyalist” Africans who sided with the colonial government. This conflict, in its many forms, started sporadically in the early 1950s and officially ended in 1959 when the “State of Emergency” was lifted in the Kenya Colony. The writing on

colony, the signifier of ethnicity reemerged as a principal category, along with race and class, in the colonially-constructed vision of African identities.

Mau Mau, as a historical moment, was interpreted and experienced in many ways depending upon one's location temporally and geographically (urban/rural, coast/interior, etc.), as well as one's position within the colony's racial, ethnic, class and gender structures. My particular entry point into this complex web will be the *Standard's* newspaper coverage of Operation Anvil in April and May of 1954.<sup>112</sup> Anvil was a joint military-police action that attempted to wrest back control of Nairobi from Mau Mau, and it marked the rapid acceleration of the colonial authority's brutal campaign of mass detention and imprisonment of the Kikuyu-speaking populations that had started in 1952 with the declaration of the Emergency. Through this analysis, I hope to demonstrate how the extremities of the Mau Mau situation did indeed cause new forms of rhetorical reasoning to arise in how settlers were explaining their actions against the African population. Additionally, these discursive strategies can be seen as a redeployment of older practices and ideas that had long dictated colonial thinking about the settler community and the Africans who lived within Kenya's borders. First, though, we must understand how the colony had changed since 1939, when the government and settlers had attained a *relative* sense of colonial stability, because, by 1954, the context had shifted sufficiently enough that state authorities saw the mass imprisonment of most of an entire ethnic population as an appropriate response to solve their colonial crisis.

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Mau Mau is vast, but three important recent works are Anderson's monograph listed in the previous note, Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), and Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>112</sup> To avoid repetitiveness, from here on I will additionally refer to Operation Anvil as "Anvil," capitalized, and "operation," uncapitalized.

## **Post-War Nairobi, Marginalization, and the Creation of an African Resistance Movement**

Nairobi, by World War II, had become a large and sprawling capital city in the heart of the Kenya Colony. Situated halfway between Mombasa and Kampala, Uganda, Nairobi quickly outgrew its humble origins as a stop off on the rail-line and was fast becoming the most significant urban center for all of East Africa. Surrounded by fertile farmland in the surrounding areas, the city and its temperate hinterland were preferred by most settlers to the humid, tropical climate found on the coast. As it rapidly expanded, Nairobi's population quickly came to reflect the racially-based class lines that defined social relationships throughout the colony. Europeans, who held a monopoly on government and, along with a small group of East Indian elites, possessed most of the available capital, used this position to isolate themselves from the rest of Nairobi's inhabitants in posh, low-density neighborhoods situated on the hills surrounding the city. Meanwhile, the Asian population, composed mainly of East Indians, were themselves split along class lines. The elite, business-owning East Indians lived in the middle-class Parklands in the northern part of town, while the workers lived in much more modest housing near the commercial zone. However, the white and Asian communities represented less than half the population of the city. During the 1940s, more than 65 percent of Nairobi's residents were Africans, of whom the majority were Kikuyu. Moreover, ethnicity inflected the class composition of the African community as the small, nascent African middle class consisted almost entirely of coastal Swahili and Luo, while the poorer domestic and industrial workers were overwhelmingly Kikuyu. All the



Africans, though, regardless of class status, were crammed together in extremely high-density housing in the Eastlands neighborhood.<sup>113</sup>

Importantly, this racial geography was not incidental to natural migration patterns. Instead, it directly reflected the goals of the settler vision of colonial society. The location and movements of Africans within the city always, according to the settler world's ideal, were to correspond to their role *as laborers*. They were to live in their own neighborhoods, separate from whites and Asians, and Africans were only to cross into European residential and commercial sections of town when they were performing as workers. Nairobi was to be a settlers' city, ordered by a strict racial hierarchy along the model of urban South Africa and what was then Southern Rhodesia. As David Anderson notes:

Black and white rarely mixed in colonial Nairobi, anymore than they did in Johannesburg, or Harare, except in the roles of master and servant. And that was how the white highlanders liked it.

By the end of the 1940s, it may have seemed to many white settlers as though this racial fantasy was coming true. Following moderate growth for most of the colony's history, World War II and its aftermath proved to be a boom for Kenya's economy as Britain looked to its colony for help in rebuilding the exhausted and war-torn metropole. The colony received large amounts of both private and government investment, and the colony's cities and businesses were growing rapidly. However, this colonial dream quickly and suddenly began to unravel as, at the start of the 1950s, foreign investment

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<sup>113</sup> Anderson points out that the reason these class lines were drawn ethnically was largely due to geography. The Luo, from western Kenya, and the Swahili, being from the coast, both originated far from Nairobi. Therefore, most of the migrants of these communities only traveled the long distance to Nairobi if they had some promise of a secure, skilled job. Meanwhile, the Kikuyu, largely from the Rift Valley, lived relatively close to Nairobi so poorer, less skilled workers, could easily make the trip to Nairobi in search of work. With some exceptions, Luo and Swahili made up most of the middle-class workers, while Kikuyu filled most of the low-paying, non-skilled positions. Anderson, 181-190.

dramatically slumped and thus halted the boom, and the settlers were simultaneously faced with the rise of Mau Mau. As the 1950s began, the very future of the Kenya colony seemed as though it was being called into question.<sup>114</sup>

Meanwhile, for the Africans living in Nairobi and the surrounding rural areas, living conditions had been steadily worsening. One of the principal causes of their hardships was when, starting in the 1940s, settlers who lived in the “White Highlands” began to forcibly remove Kikuyu “squatters” from their farms. “Squatting,” as it was colloquially termed, had long been an informal compromise struck between Kikuyu farmers and Europeans who had moved onto the most fertile land in the highlands. Though far from ideal for the African farmers, they were allowed to “squat” and cultivate lands that were not being used by settlers, and they usually worked for European farmers, in some capacity. However, with the post-war agricultural boom and increased mechanization of farming techniques, Europeans wanted to farm as much land as possible, while employing less African labor. During this period, many “squatters” were evicted outright, while others were allowed to remain, but were forced to switch from being self-sufficient farmers to underpaid farmhands.<sup>115</sup>

The resultant mass migration away from the highlands of over 100,000 African “squatters” caused radical demographic change that altered the material conditions of many Africans resident in the Highlands, Rift Valley and Nairobi, and became a critical part of the origins of the Mau Mau war. In searching for new homes, many people tried to return to the Kikuyu reserves which they, or their parents and grandparents, had left 40 years ago for better economic prospects in the Highlands, but these migrants often found

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<sup>114</sup> Elkins, 22-23; Anderson, 181-190.

<sup>115</sup> Elkins, 22-25; Anderson, 23-28.

that relatives who still lived there to be stretched much too thin to accommodate them. Many, therefore, moved into Nairobi to look for work in this post-war boomtown. These tens of thousands of newly urbanized Africans, however, exacerbated what was already an acute problem of over-crowded housing in Kenya's largest city.<sup>116</sup>

Meanwhile, the settler community in Kenya had also not been static since 1939, as it had undergone its own transformations. Between the late 1930s and 1950s, the settler population doubled in size. The biggest factor in this growth was the influx of British migrants, mainly military veterans searching for economic opportunities following the end of World War II.<sup>117</sup> In addition to these demographic changes, ideological fissures within the settler community widened as clearer marks of differentiation could be detected in competing visions for Kenya's future. Though, as Dane Kennedy points out, all settlers retained the idea of white superiority, which remained a given that informed their ideologies. Within these ideological systems, Kennedy discerns two distinct "camps" inside Kenya's European populations during this period: the "conservative extremists" and the "liberal paternalists."<sup>118</sup>

For the conservatives, they viewed Kenya's Africans as inherently atavistic and "backward," and, looking to the present and future, had no intention of trying to incorporate them into colonial society. Instead, this group saw Kenya's future as a "white" state that would be strictly ordered by racial hierarchy in which blacks would be segregated from whites. Politically, these settlers envisioned a possible separation from

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Anderson, 345;

<sup>118</sup> Dane Kennedy does concede that these two categories, to a certain extent, reduce a much more complex field of ideological viewpoints in the Kenya colony, but maintains that they nonetheless usefully reflect the ideologies at a broad level. Dane Kennedy, "Constructing the Colonial Myth of Mau Mau," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, 2 (1992): 241-260.

Britain's control, and even considered the possibility of forming a federation with the Rhodesias and South Africa as a group of Anglophonic white-settler dominated states in Africa. Moreover, inside Kenya, these settlers were "dissatisfied" with how the *Standard* was covering the colony. In response, conservative extremists created their own publications that embraced their ideas for Kenya's future. The first such newspaper was the *East African News Review* in 1946, which underwent many editorial and name changes until it was closed down near independence.<sup>119</sup> The liberal paternalists, meanwhile, constructed a less extreme vision of Kenya than that of the conservatives, but one that nonetheless was very much a product of the racial discourses that dominated colonial thinking on Africans. As Kennedy observes, these "liberal" settlers were "equally as sure of the superiority of European civilization as the conservative extremists." The most defining feature of this body of settler thought was how they bought fully into the "modernization" impulse that sprung out of the "civilizing mission"; the "civilizing mission" being the ideological premise that undergirded and "explained" colonial rule as a "paternalist" enterprise.<sup>120</sup> Under this set of assumptions, liberal paternalists saw themselves as the educators and "modernizers" of their African subjects, and believed that, through these methods, Africans could be incorporated into a society where they could participate in the public sphere of the colony in "something close to parity" with the white community. In other words, they imagined a multi-racial society,

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<sup>119</sup> Kennedy, 241-247; Abuoga and Mutere, 35-36.

<sup>120</sup> The "civilizing mission" formed as the ideological companion to the explicit economic and political exploitation that accompanied colonial rule. European colonial powers, under the auspice that their form of civilization was superior to all others, contended that, through empire, they were spreading their way of life around the globe in order to create a new world order that would be for the benefit of all. In essence, they would "modernize" the world. This rationalization served as the "explanation" for why European empires extended their influence and took over nearly every corner of the globe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the British in the lead. As with other parts of the British Empire, this narrative was a potent ideological force in the Kenya colony.

and had largely come to terms with the reality that, through the paternal guidance of the European community, Kenya would *eventually* become an independent country.<sup>121</sup>

From these divergent settler perspectives on the Kenya Colony, argues Kennedy, two distinctly different views of Mau Mau arose. For the conservatives, Mau Mau confirmed their greatest trepidation concerning “the African.” They saw Mau Mau as an African effort inspired only by their inherent “brutal anarchic instincts” and that the Kikuyu were engaged in a racial-ethnic struggle in which blacks would reverse the colonial order so that they could subjugate whites, and that the Kikuyu themselves would rule over other Africans. In this interpretation, any compromise with Mau Mau was futile because they were “irredeemable,” and such actions would only serve to feed their desire for power. Moreover, for the conservatives, any reference to African economic, political or social hardships brought on by colonialism was irrelevant as an explanation because Mau Mau’s violence was the inevitable reaction that arose from African “bestiality.” Regarding accommodation towards social equality between Africans and Europeans as “racial betrayal,” they instead advocated brutal repression of Mau Mau and the institution of a system of harsh discipline to keep all Africans in line.<sup>122</sup>

While for conservatives Mau Mau was a confirmation of what they already believed about Africans, for the liberals, Kennedy contends, Mau Mau “was in certain respects even more traumatic” because Africans seemed to be rejecting their paternally-inflected social project of “modernization.” The liberal paternalist explanation of Mau Mau centered on finding a way to keep Africans “redeemable,” but without legitimizing political content of their revolt. Their solution to this problem was to diagnose the

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<sup>121</sup> Kennedy, “Constructing the Colonial Myth,” 241-260.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 245-246.

Kikuyu as suffering from a “mass psychosis” brought on by overly rapid “modernization.” That is, Africans rose up in revolt not because they held carefully articulated grievances with the colonial government, but, instead, the violence of Mau Mau was a reaction to a “crisis of modernization,” where the Africans had been ripped away too quickly from their “traditional” lifestyles. In this view, brutal measures by the state were understood not as random acts of violence, but instead as part of a “rehabilitation” program meant to “help” Africans recover from the “shock” of “modernization.”<sup>123</sup>

The Mau Mau movement that these settlers and officials feared so much can perhaps be dated back to 1943 when *oathing*, long an important cultural practice among the Kikuyu, became a tool for the political mobilization of the squatters who had been evicted in the Olenguruone region of the White Highlands.<sup>124</sup> Though this small-scale rebellion was fairly quickly defeated, oathing steadily continued and quickly drew in more and more Kikuyu, both as active and passive participants, and served them as an alternative political structure to the oppressive state. By the early 1950s, oathing practices, and the corresponding dissident political body it formed, were raising anxieties among colonial officials as the movement spread across central Kenya’s rural areas and even into the cities. The building tension within Kenya snapped on October 9, 1952, when Senior Chief Waruhiu, an African “loyalist,” was assassinated in his car. This came after a string of violent acts against and even murders of other loyalists and one settler, in which the authorities suspected Mau Mau. Weeks later, under strong pressure from the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 250-255.

<sup>124</sup> Oathing practices varied widely depending upon the context, but they can generally be described as a ritualized induction into Mau Mau whereby the inductee would become bound to the movement. Kikuyu would often voluntarily and excitedly undergo an oath, but there were also many instances where people were either forced or acquiesced to social pressure to take the oath. Elkins, 25-27.

colonial government and the settler community, London granted the Kenya Colony the right to declare a “State of Emergency,” which effectively granted the colonial authorities *carte blanche* to arrest, detain, and act independently from the metropole in their efforts to suppress Mau Mau.<sup>125</sup>

Meanwhile, inside the shantytowns of Nairobi, Mau Mau was spreading fast amongst the poor, mostly Kikuyu, working classes. However, while immense solidarity had been struck between poorer Africans in these neighborhoods, a split rapidly developed between Mau Mau adherents and *relatively* more affluent middle class Africans, particularly those who worked for the government in various capacities. As Mau Mau became more organized, violent crime increased rapidly in Eastlands, and to a lesser extent in other parts of Nairobi. The primary targets of this violence, however, were not Europeans, but middle-class Africans who had been singled-out as colonial “collaborators,” who were labeled as *tai-tai* in reference to the European-style ties they would often wear. Moving into 1953 and 1954, Mau Mau assassination attempts against “*tai-tai*,” often successful, were taking place almost every day in the Eastlands neighborhood.<sup>126</sup>

Following the start of the Emergency in October of 1952, the colonial state developed a series of authoritarian tactics in their attempt to suppress Mau Mau’s rapid growth. Their general approach was to restrict the movements of all Kikuyu, and, through a series of organized raids, they would either expel from Nairobi those Kikuyu suspected of participating in Mau Mau, or the state would place them in a slowly developing system

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<sup>125</sup> Elkins, 22-35. Anderson, 61-62.

<sup>126</sup> Anderson, 190-200.

of prison camps.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, the Emergency also sparked the beginning of wide-scale trials and then executions of Kikuyu by the colonial government. Anderson has estimated that the state executed 1,090 Kikuyu in connection with Mau Mau by the end of the 1950s, and, moreover, that over half of these Africans were killed for crimes as minor as possession of a firearm or for administering oaths. However, despite these harsh measures, Mau Mau maintained a strong hold inside the city of Nairobi, as the militants were seemingly able to absorb these efforts of the government without throwing off their movement's momentum.<sup>128</sup>

Dissatisfied with the lack of success from their smaller raids like Operation Jock Scott in 1952, the government decided, in secret, to engage in a much larger assault upon Mau Mau in Nairobi to shift the momentum of the war. In this effort, Operation Anvil was born. The plan was brutal, cold and simple. Every African present in the Eastlands would be "screened" to determine his or her connection to Mau Mau. Detained Africans from other ethnicities would be quickly released, but, as for the Kikuyu, except for those who were established "loyalists," they would be detained until further notice. Operation Anvil commenced on April 24, 1954, and began early in the morning before most Africans had left their homes for work.<sup>129</sup> Historian Caroline Elkins provides a chilling description of how April 24 began:

Loudspeakers affixed to military vehicles blared directives: pack one bag, leave the rest of your belongings in your home, and exit into the streets peacefully. ... People were picked up on the streets or at their places of work, or the security forces knocked down their front doors down with swift kicks and rifle butts.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Elkins, 121-174.

<sup>128</sup> Anderson, 181-200, and, for the statistics on executions, see the table on 353.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 200-201.

<sup>130</sup> Elkins, 121-122.



The operation continued for over a month until authorities declared Nairobi to be “cleared.” The results devastated the Kikuyu community. During this period, over 50,000 Africans from Nairobi had been “screened,” and 24,100 of them, primary men, were relocated into prison camps. Moreover, officials estimated that only 700 of those detained had actually engaged in criminal acts, and thus 97 percent of those jailed were, at most, only passive supporters of the movement, and many others were known to be against it.<sup>131</sup> Additionally, one can accurately think of Operation Anvil as the beginning of the formation of a wide-scale detention system that the state constructed to detain nearly all of the Kikuyu population. By December of 1954, more than 70,000 Kikuyu were being held in detention camps, and, starting in 1955, all rural Kikuyu were “repatriated” into “villagization” schemes by the British government, which were constructed rural villages where Kikuyu movements were closely regulated by armed guards who patrolled the borders. Therefore, at certain points during the 1950s, combining the populations of the prison camps and those restricted to guarded villages, over one million Kikuyu had been placed under some form of detention by the colonial government.<sup>132</sup> Such extreme measures of brutality and authoritarianism required some sort of “explanation” because even the British Empire, at least rhetorically, saw itself as the spreader of the ideals of the Enlightenment; that is, liberty and equality. Inside the pages of the *Standard* during the early days of Operation Anvil, the newspaper revealed a set of rhetorical strategies that attempted to *explain* what was happening in the homes and streets of Nairobi.

### **A brief on method**

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<sup>131</sup> Anderson, 205. Elkins points out that almost everyone in the Pipeline, the name of the prison system, was male, but that a “few thousand” women, deemed to be too “hardcore,” were also sent to a camp in Kimiti. Elkins, 151-152.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.; Elkins, 235.

That Mau Mau was a singular moment in Kenya's colonial history is clearly reflected in the record left by the *Standard*. For the issues addressed in the previous two chapters, the newspaper's coverage of these events was significant, but the reporting on Mau Mau was exponentially larger than anything produced for the 1922 massacre or the 1939 strike. For Mau Mau, the overall coverage had been under way for at least four years before Operation Anvil in 1954, and, once the operation was underway, there was a veritable explosion of articles on the subject appearing in the newspaper. Even on the day before Anvil, April 23, when no one in the public yet knew of the plan, seven articles appeared in connection with Mau Mau, and, when one peers at the preceding weeks, it becomes clear that such a volume of stories on the conflict was a normal occurrence inside the newspaper. In facing this vast volume of articles written on Mau Mau and Operation Anvil, in this chapter I will shift my organizational approach in presenting the research for this chapter. For 1922 and 1939, I was able to analyze fairly closely in the body of the thesis most of the articles that were written on these subjects because the smaller quantity of them made this manageable. For Operation Anvil, though, focusing upon *every* related article to this subject, as the total is well over 100, would be overly detailed and, moreover, highly impractical and cumbersome within a single chapter. Therefore, I have chosen to format this chapter much more thematically than the preceding two. From my review of all the relevant articles, I will gather the many disparate statements they contain and present the themes that tied them together.

#### **“Explaining” Operation Anvil in Colonial Kenya, April-May, 1954**

As the *Standard* hit the newsstands on the afternoon of April 24, 1954, Operation Anvil had been under way since early morning, and the newspaper had prepared a

lengthy front-page article detailing the day's action. In the headline of this first article, "Forces sweep city for 5,000 Mau Mau," the newspaper tried to temper the magnitude and brutality of the action in two ways. First, with the word "sweep," we are introduced to the vocabulary of euphemistic signifiers that the newspaper would employ to describe the operation. Second, the headline strategically chose the figure of "5,000 Mau Mau" to provide a sense of scale for how many people this operation would affect. This number referred only to the number of "Mau Mau suspects" the government was after, and obscured the reality that the "screening" process would involve the imprisonment of an estimated 30,000-40,000 Kikuyu, Meru and Embu, which the article revealed inside the story, on fourth paragraph, and that *every* African inside the city would be "screened."<sup>133</sup>

This headline was the beginning of the newspaper's effort to soften the edges, rhetorically at least, around what was an act of extreme hostility against the African population inside the Kenya Colony. Along with "sweep," as the most common euphemism to signify "mass detention," other phrases were employed to hide from view the reality on the streets of Nairobi. The newspaper also euphemized the operation as a "clean-up," "cleaning process," "drive," "comb-out," and only once did it concede that Africans had been "detained." Moreover, for the network of prison camps that would hold tens of thousands of Kikuyu, often for many years, these were simply termed as benign sounding "reception centers." This "softening" of Operation Anvil reveals that we can, here, detect the influence of the "liberal paternalist" element of colonial thought.<sup>134</sup>

Ideologically, these euphemisms served the dual purposes of allowing liberal-paternalist

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<sup>133</sup> "Forces sweep city for 5,000 Mau Mau," *East African Standard* 24 April 1954, 1. These terms, in varying forms, appear in nearly all articles related to Operation Anvil, but for some prominent examples also see "New measures in comb out," *East African Standard* 27 April 1954, 1, "Nairobi," *East African Standard* 1 May 1954, 4, and "Anvil sweep cuts crime," *East African Standard* May 5 1954, 1.

<sup>134</sup> For more on in depth look at liberal paternalists, see pages 86-88. Kennedy, 241-260.

settlers to maintain the fiction of their moral superiority over Mau Mau, and allowed them to send a more palatable narrative to the British public that was following the story back in the metropole. Additionally, the liberal paternalists needed to continue to believe in the “civilizing mission,” which was their *raison d’être* for staying in Kenya. Supportive of *eventual* decolonization, they placed themselves on a *civilizational* high ground over Africans that required them to remain in Kenya to “impart” their “knowledge” to their subjects. If they faced the true horror of Anvil, their existence in Kenya, ideologically at least, would cease to have meaning. Moreover, these settlers, unlike many of the conservatives, closely identified themselves with the British metropole and sought its approval and support. Therefore, they needed to craft a discourse on Anvil that would “make sense” to the liberal sections of the British public and Parliament.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to the euphemistic language regarding Anvil itself, the *Standard* used linguistic strategies that left little doubt about who, specifically, the antagonists and protagonists were in its version of Anvil. From the very beginning of its coverage of the operation, the newspaper consistently divided the African community into the sorts of categories that would best serve the colonial order. For example, readers of an April 24 article were made to understand that the operation was most certainly not an act against “the African,” in general, but instead was focused on “All Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribesmen living in the city.” Therefore, Operation Anvil was, at its core, to be experienced “ethnically” by Nairobi’s Africans. This same article also stated that, though other non-Kikuyu would also be screened, “members of other tribes not affected by Mau Mau would be allow to return to their homes.” However ethnically targeted this language

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<sup>135</sup> For more reactions in Britain to Mau Mau, Operation Anvil and the Pipeline, see Elkins, 275-310.

was, this discourse still evidences the continuation of the dialectic between racial and ethnic “statements” in Kenya because, ultimately, *all* Africans, as a racial group, came under government suspicion and would be “screened.” As soon as the ethnicity of the detainees could be determined, though, those from the non-“tainted” groups were released.<sup>136</sup>

From these early statements by the newspaper, we can see the rigid binary the *Standard* was developing between the Kikuyu-speaking “tribes” and the other Africans in the colony. This discursive act rhetorically isolated the Kikuyu, allowing the newspaper to attack them and their status within the “community” freely without involving other Africans. These tactics were a markedly different approach from those employed in 1922 and 1939. In both of those cases, race remained the newspaper’s dominant identifier through the use of the term “native,” but here ethnicity played the central role in determining how Africans would be represented. This strategy was imperative to the liberal paternalist’s vision of the colony’s future. If *all* the Africans had been deemed “infected,” this would have been a stunning refutation of the “civilizing mission.” However, if the insurgency could be limited to the Kikuyu, then Mau Mau, as a challenge to the colonial order, could be viewed as an aberration within a much larger group of Africans who, apparently, “approved” of the actions of the state.

Moreover, in addition to isolating the Kikuyu, the newspaper also worked to form a homogeneous representation of this larger “African” population, and to create the appearance of their consensus views on Anvil. Beyond the obvious “loyalists” who actively worked to support the government’s efforts against Mau Mau, the newspaper

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<sup>136</sup> “Forces Sweep City,” 1. I found the word “tainted,” as a signifier used for Kikuyu, Meru and Embu groups, from an article on page four of the same edition. “Contrasts in the Nairobi Locations,” *East African Standard* 24 April, 1954, 4.

also wanted to demonstrate that the “everyday” African was quite happy to see these actions against the Kikuyu. On May 1, an article pointed out how, from the “clearing out” of the African neighborhoods, “The morale of the non-Kikuyu residents of the African locations ha[d] been raised.” Moreover, the *Standard* sought to sever the Kikuyu from the Nairobi “community” by linking contentment of Africans to that of the white and Asian communities when it stated that “there is a *general* easing of tension that has so long oppressed *all of those* whose homes are in the city [emphasis added].”<sup>137</sup> Of course, many Kikuyu also occupied homes in the city, but they were not included in this “imagined community.”

Additionally, the state provided material advantages to those deemed generally “African” instead of specifically “Kikuyu,” as the newspaper reported “that the houses emptied by the exodus are made available to *Africans of good character and good standing* [emphasis added].”<sup>138</sup> This complex discourse was here working at both ethnic and racial levels. Ethnically, the statements in the newspaper drew distinct lines around the Kikuyu-speaking groups, which were being reinforced by the legal machinery rounding them up and sending them off to prison camps. However, all other African identities were again blurred into a more homogeneously conceived group of “Africans,” which seems to have, at least in part, replaced the term “Natives.” The many disparate African groups bounded together inside this racial identity were represented as unproblematically endorsing Anvil, and, consequently, the state. The newspaper in this way played into the liberal paternalist’s hopes for Kenya. With a strict discursive space established between “Kikuyus” and other “Africans,” re-enforced through material

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<sup>137</sup> “Nairobi,” *East African Standard* 1 May 1954, 4.

<sup>138</sup> “Ibid. Also see “Drop in Crime,” *East African Standard* 5 May 1954, 6.

penalties and rewards, those “infected” Kikuyu could be “cured” during confinement in the prison camps of the Pipeline, while the “civilizing mission” could continue with those other “Africans” who “accepted” the colonial order.

Significantly, for the settlers and the administration, Operation Anvil required not only precisely defining the borders around different groups of Africans, but also demanded a reassessment of the “Self.” Again reflecting the liberal paternalists, the newspaper sought to articulate an understanding of Anvil that aligned with how these settlers and administrators saw themselves. The newspaper also sought to “soften” Anvil by situating it within the discourse of “modernity.”<sup>139</sup> That is, Anvil was not to be understood as a random, haphazard and vicious attack upon Africans by “irrational” actors; instead, the operation was conceptualized as a calculated action conducted through the administrative efficiency of a “modern” state. Seeing themselves as the beacon of “modernity” in East Africa, liberal settlers and the colonial government needed to place an administrative rationality over their actions. In this effort, the newspaper provided a version of Anvil stressing the government’s adherence to a body of laws and procedures. In this regard, nothing the state was doing, so the logic played out, was beyond the framework of the idealized twentieth-century “modernized” state. Indeed, the types of obviously draconian measures to which the government resorted in Kenya were

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<sup>139</sup> Here, and for the rest of this thesis, I will keep the term “modernity,” along with its other grammatical forms, in quotations to reflect the problematic state of this conceptual term. I use the term as a historical concept that informed the ideological strategies of European colonial actors. Importantly, I am not employing “modernization” as some sort of an inevitable process launched out of the “West” that then spread to the rest of the world. Instead, I lean more towards explanations that look for multiple avenues that certainly include the European Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, but also consider the wider “non-Western” sources and improvisations of “Global developments.” That stated, here, I am referring to the Western notion of “modernization” because that is how the colonial government and settler community would have largely understood it, and, therefore, is how it is expressed in their discourses. For a prominent example of the critique of, what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls, “first in the West, then elsewhere” historicist notions of modernity, see his *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

supposed to have been the acts of despots and fascist dictators. However, in Kenya, the colonial community had to confront the reality that the state had consciously isolated an ethnic group, condemned it to mass arrests, imprisonment, and, for over 1,000 Kikuyu, execution. This state of affairs *should* have been an untenable reality for the liberal paternalists, as “modernizers.” From this, one can clearly see in the articles that appeared in the *Standard* a concerted effort to explain Anvil through a *language of “modernity.”*

When using the term “modernity” in this context, I am referring to its particular conceptualization that developed during the European Enlightenment wherein people imagined the state as an entity composed of a group of laws designed to protect personal liberties and property rights through a form of government that would be, more or less depending on the state, representative of “the people.” Moreover, in a post-World War II context, these Western states during the Cold War era of the 1950s held themselves up as the foil to repressive dictatorships in the Soviet Union and its satellites as well as the fascist countries defeated during the war. The reality of Anvil’s repression meant that the *Standard*, reflective of liberal paternalism at this point in its history, needed to linguistically contextualize the brutality of Anvil within the socio-political logic of a modern state; despite however obviously their actual actions contradicted the idealism of “equality” and “liberty.”

Inside the newspaper, this language of “modernity” showed up in the many lists, statistics, assessments and continual restatements of the regulatory framework that codified the legality of Anvil. On the first day of coverage, April 24, readers were provided with a four-point list on the “reasons” for the operation: (1) Mau Mau’s strong presence amongst the Kikuyu in the city; (2) Mau Mau’s influence over other African



“tribes”; (3) the need to restore “law and order”; and (4) Nairobi’s place as the centralized hub for Mau Mau’s organizational and operational needs. In the same article, the newspaper also featured the comments of H.G. Turnbull, Minister of Security and Defense for the colony, who emphatically insisted that the state’s actions were not “indiscriminant,” and that all efforts were being made to avoid problems for “decent members of society.” However, just below these statements, he revealed that all male Kikuyu, regardless of whether or not they pledged their allegiance to Mau Mau, would be detained for at least one month as the administrative procedure sorted itself out. Once proven they were not “black” or “grey,” the terms for the two highest levels of commitment to Mau Mau, they would be released.<sup>140</sup> These statements show the inherent tension within the colonial discourse on Anvil. On one side, we are assured that the state was acting “rationally” because the Operation was prompted not by compulsion, but instead had been enacted because, so the newspaper argued, of thought-out reasons arising from the necessity of responding effectively to Mau Mau. Moreover, all steps were being taken in the effort to not draw in “decent members of society.” However, the *Standard* then revealed, just below, that the state was, in fact, *indiscriminately* detaining, for at least one month, *all Kikuyu* for “processing.” The “modern” logic of Anvil, it seemed, was that ethnic identity was, within the context of the officially sanctioned “State of Emergency,” a condition sufficient for the suspension of due process and basic human rights.

Two days later, on April 26, as the number of Africans arrested reached 13,000, the newspaper reassured its readers that the “the overall plan was proceeding smoothly and a considerable degree of success had been achieved.” Explaining further, the article

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<sup>140</sup> “Forces sweep city,” 1.

overwhelmed the reader with statistics and details of the day's operation by following Africans from their arrests in the morning to their placement into prison camps by the evening. The story concluded by citing officials who assured that African inmates' possessions would be "cared for" while they were detained. The overall impression for the reader was that a "system" created through intensive organization and planning had been set in place in Nairobi in which all Africans would first be ethnically defined and then, if Kikuyu, would be further classified according to their commitment to Mau Mau. Moreover, in an accompanying article, readers were informed about that, through a new set of laws, Anvil was legally sound because the government now had the authority to "temporarily detain" Kikuyu, Meru and Embu for questioning in "reception centers" for "not more than six months." These new regulations had been made public through their publication in the *Official Gazette*.<sup>141</sup>

These two articles reflected critical elements of what the "modern" state, in its theorized condition, could offer its citizens in responsive bureaucratic mechanisms, transparency, and with policies that followed the established laws. The *Standard* portrayed the Pipeline, the name for the system of "screening," arrests and then indefinite imprisonment of Kikuyu, as being guided by a set of preconceived policies that were "producing results" wherein Kikuyu were classified, treated, and returned to society when deemed appropriate. Therefore, the state, as depicted in the *Standard*, had created a tightly controlled and successful administrative machine designed to seek out and then "rehabilitate" Mau Mau members that, everyone was to understand, was functioning in a legal-rational framework. Indeed, the "laws" that legalized Anvil had been published and were available for everyone to see. Whether this message was wholly received and

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<sup>141</sup> "13,000 Africans," 1; "Regulations," *East African Standard* 26 April 1954, 1.

accepted by the liberal-leaning sections of the British public and parliament is doubtful, as Elkins has suggested.<sup>142</sup> What this does demonstrate, though, is how the liberal paternalists continued to remain so intensely wedded to the ideological premise of the “civilizing mission.” Anvil, for them, was an unfortunate, but necessary, action by a “modern” state that was required in order to bring “civilization” to Kenya.

Beyond the overt authoritarianism ushered in by Anvil, colonial theorists of the Kenyan state also envisioned within the pages of the *Standard* the new reality that would be needed once the extra-legal authority of the Emergency had been relaxed. Beyond the use of force utilized for the operation, the more long-term project of “disciplining” the African population required the more subtle techniques of the “modern” state.<sup>143</sup> Only two days after the start of Anvil, a “news” article and an accompanying column assessed a speech given by Sir Frederick Crawford, the acting governor of the colony, in which he advocated the need for, as the newspaper summarized his words, the “closer and more intensive administration of the Kikuyu areas.” Moreover, the newspaper author commented that “the future of the Kikuyu cannot be left entirely in the hands of their own leaders,” because “they will need the support and guidance of the administrators.” These tasks were to be carried out by government officers “who combine sympathy and consideration with a firm sense of justice and discipline.” In this effort, the governor recommended the deployment of a judicial and bureaucratic force into the reserves composed of “more district officers, more police officers, and more agricultural officers.” These efforts would create and enforce a “controlled” and “rational” space in which the

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<sup>142</sup> For Elkin’s examination of how the British public and Parliament perceived Mau Mau, see Elkins, 275-310.

<sup>143</sup> I use “disciplining” here in the Foucauldian sense of the word. See note 85 in Chapter Two for more on Foucault’s ideas on discipline and the “modern” state. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135-169.

colonial government could more easily dictate the discursive and physical reality of the Kikuyu.<sup>144</sup>

In ways similar to the discourse on the 1922 massacre, these actions displayed the government's desire to more easily obtain and influence *knowledge* in the colony, and, through this accumulation and manipulation of it, to more effectively control the Kikuyu population. Beyond the plan to augment the number of administrators and officers in the reserves, the newspaper also unveiled the government's new program of "passbooks," strikingly similar to the old *kipande*, which was a system that would combine the practices of knowledge production with their attempts to physically control the Kikuyu. In this ethnic targeting, the government declared that, during the next six months, all members of the Kikuyu, Meru and Embu tribes, though not other African groups, who worked outside of the reserves would be required to register for passbooks. If any of these Kikuyu-speaking applicants were to be unable to acquire one of these "passport[s] to respectability," they would "be removed from the city immediately."<sup>145</sup> In this way, the state was attempting to implement its colonial fantasy, with at least one ethnic group, in which the movements of Africans within Nairobi would correspond only to their status *as laborers* functioning "rationally" within the capitalist colonial economy. Stated most explicitly, a May 1 column proclaimed that:

The system of administration of the African locations must be so strengthened and improved that there is *firm control over the movements of Africans* and *adequate knowledge* at the disposal of the Administration and Policy Departments at all times concerning what is happening [emphasis added].<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> "More controls for Kikuyu Areas," *East African Standard* 26 April 1954, 5; "Law and Order," *East African Standard* 26 April 1954, 4.

<sup>145</sup> "New orders for control over Kikuyu," *East African Standard* 27 April 1954, 5; "Passbooks," *East African Standard* 4 May 1954, 4.

<sup>146</sup> "Nairobi," *East African Standard* 5 May 1954, 4.

We see here, as in 1922, a strong connection in the colonial mind between knowledge and its efforts to physically control the African population. As a solution to Mau Mau, following the overt force of Anvil, the government saw the need to reengage in the process of generating strategically useful “information” about Africans. In this case, “information,” presented as a neutral accumulation, in fact entailed a subjective process of deciding who, among the African population, were “Kikuyu,” and, further, which Kikuyu were “fit persons” and which were “undesirables.”<sup>147</sup> Through these processes, the state further fortified the boundaries around ethnic identities by creating material consequences for Africans that resulted from how state located them, ethnically, within its system of identification.

Through this increase in administration and the introduction of “passbooks,” the newspaper continued to try to explain Anvil through a language of “modernity.” Anvil, again, far from an irrational, indiscriminant and repressive act, was depicted as a legal-rational response by a “modern” state that had been put into an extreme position. Yet, even this rare acknowledgement that the imprisonment of the Kikuyu population may not be the most desirable solution, the *Standard* still defended these actions as “necessary” and reiterated how they were being implemented by the rational machinery of the state’s bureaucracy and judiciary. Anvil and the larger Emergency, readers were told, would last only until the Mau Mau situation had been controlled. Then, these measures would be scaled back and an “enhanced” state would take over in those “troubled” areas through an intensification of bureaucratic knowledge production that would aid in restricting African movements. All these post-Anvil efforts, it was explained, were needed to retain the

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<sup>147</sup> “Passbooks,” 4.

“beneficial results” of the operation and to help the colony avoid “a return to the old conditions.”<sup>148</sup>

When analyzing colonial thinking on Operation Anvil, one needs to be careful not to read these events teleologically through the lens of decolonization that was just on the horizon. Though the colony did not last a decade after the start of Anvil, theorists and practitioners of the operation were not working under this assumption. For some of them, decolonization was a possibility, but one that would not occur for many decades to come. Though, presently, Anvil may appear to have been an extreme last ditch effort to hold onto the colony, for the administrators and settlers, they were fighting over the *future* character of the colony. Instead of seeing Mau Mau as the culmination of Kikuyu grievances that called into question the validity of the state, they viewed it as a temporary bump in colonial Kenya’s linear-progressive historical trajectory. From this conceptualization of Mau Mau, colonial thinkers produced their ideas on Anvil. Convinced of the *superiority and necessity* of their “civilizing mission” to achieve “modernization,” they could always find justification for their actions during the operation as long they made reference to the broader organizing principle of “modernity.” Therefore, the language of modernity was everywhere present in the colonial discourse on Anvil from the actual description of the operation with the vast detail of its predictable machinery to the post-Anvil plans to tighten legal and administrative control over the Kikuyu population.

The colonial discourse on Anvil, and Mau Mau more broadly, also displayed the dramatic return of ethnicity as a sociological marker in Kenya. The *Standard*, in ways not seen in its coverage from 1922 or 1939, explicitly and consistently identified the

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<sup>148</sup> “Nairobi,” 1 May 1954, 4.

“Kikuyu, Meru and Embu” tribes as the groups that would be wholly targeted for government action. In addition to these rhetorical boundaries, the government further codified these distinctions by providing material rewards and penalties including handing Kikuyu housing over to other groups and requiring all and only Kikuyu speaking-workers outside the reserves to register for the passbook system. During Anvil, ethnicity served the state as the most useful category when identifying Africans. As Mau Mau represented an unavoidable challenge to the saliency of this British colony, ethnicity allowed the government to seal boundaries around the problem. In the *Standard*’s narrative, since the Africans who were causing all the “trouble” were only from the Kikuyu-speaking groups, it was able to construct a new racial block of “Africans,” absent the Kikuyu, who still “supported” the colonial project. Ethnicity, in its use during Operation Anvil, allowed the Kenya colony, as an ideological construct, to continue along its path toward “modernization.”

## Conclusion

The discourse the *East African Standard* created was a complex formation that evidences how ideas, as historical objects, maintain certain elements of their structure over time, but that they are also contingent to the specificity of their historical and material context. This thesis has presented a history of ideas about the *Standard* and the discourse that emerged from inside its pages through three periods of British colonial rule in Kenya. Each of the three *moments* examined demonstrated that the way the British colonials viewed Africans was never fixed. Instead, their ideas constantly shifted according to the new realities brought on by altered historical contexts. From 1922 to 1954, the Kenya Colony transformed from a tentative settler colony where officials were trying to figure out how to populate and create a viable community, to one in the 1950s integrated into the global-capitalist British Empire. In 1922, the *Standard* saw their own society as well as the Africans in the colony through the lens of an early, exposed, and tentative colonial project. Faced with an articulated challenge to their colonial designs, the *Standard* produced tropes and narratives in the newspaper that “explained” the massacre of African protesters in Nairobi in ways that served government and settler needs. As the decades passed, the situation in Kenya changed substantially as more Europeans arrived, Africans became significantly more “urbanized,” the colony entered more fully into global relationships, and discourses of racial, social and political equality *slowly*, and *sporadically*, crept into the intellectual world of Kenya. Though the *Standard*’s discourse adapted to these new realities, many of the ideas from 1922 reemerged in the descriptions of the events of 1939 and 1954. The goal of this thesis has



been, in large part, an effort to resolve the tension between the continuity and change evident in this discourse.

Most unique to the discourse surrounding the 1922 Nairobi Incident was how the newspaper felt the need to speak *racially*. This applied to both Africans and Europeans in the colony. In the *Standard's* coverage of the incident, African protesters were identified with the racial signifier “Natives” even though it was clear most of them could have been termed “Kikuyu.” The newspaper easily could have termed this a “Kikuyu” protest, but the *Standard* consistently, with only rare exceptions, referred to the actions of the “Natives.” Moreover, for the European community, the discourse explicitly tried to *de-class* and *de-ethnicize* the administration and diverse group of settlers into a single, racial identity. At the height of the coverage, we can remember how the *Standard* called on settlers to, at least temporarily, forget any conflicts they had with the government and to provide “the unquestioning support of the entire European population in any steps it may take to maintain law and order.”<sup>149</sup>

This racial language betrays the insecurities the government and settlers felt about their place in East Africa. Through the 1910s and into the 1920s, the state had been trying to tighten its grip on power through increased taxation and by expanding its administrative reach over Africans. Though holders and exercisers of a great deal of force, British power in this region was not total, and the newspaper's discourse was acutely aware of this precarious position. Moreover, many Africans did not passively accept Europe's incursions on their land, economic life and political sovereignty, and they responded with the many protest movements that arose during this period. Faced with this direct challenge, racial language became the most useful rhetorical strategy for

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<sup>149</sup> “The Native Outbreak,” 1.

the colony's efforts to solidify a unified, racially-conceived opposition to African agency. While class and ethnicity would have splintered the white community, race allowed colonials to combine their interests against those of Kenya's Africans. Sharp divisions did exist in actuality between administrators and settlers, as well as the different classes and ethnicities, but, in the early 1920s, the colony was not yet confident enough to face this African challenge as a divided force.<sup>150</sup> As the decades passed, these intra-European divisions would continue to widen and take new forms, but the racial divide would remain the most consequential form of *difference* in the Kenya Colony.

In the 17 years that elapsed between the Nairobi Incident and the 1939 Mombasa strike, the colony changed dramatically, and one of the primary drivers was the process of urbanization. Working for government, industry and domestic services, Africans laboring for European employers became a prominent feature of the urban economies in Nairobi and Mombasa. As workers in Mombasa began to strike against poor housing conditions and low wages, the discourse inside the *Standard* addressing this story accounted for and responded to how Kenya had been transformed. Instead of the restrictive racial discourse from 1922, the newspaper incorporated a language of class in identifying the striking Africans. The *Standard*, fearful of an *undefined* African race, sought to use the language of class to bring some "order" over these many different groups of Africans working in Mombasa. Functionally, ethnicity would have only further diversified what the colony already saw as an overly disparate class of workers. Capital wanted a "stable" and "predictable" working class, as had been produced in Britain, that would function,

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<sup>150</sup> Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 182-186.

exclusively, under the growing capitalist economy in Kenya, and therefore would become easier to monitor, and, of course, control.<sup>151</sup>

Race, though, remained part of these class constructions because the administrative changes were aimed at creating an *African* working class that would serve the *white*, settler-controlled economy. Moreover, the newspaper also envisioned the creation of a white class of workers. In 1922, the colony retained its early identity as an outpost for fading British gentry, but by 1939 the settler population had greatly expanded to include many Europeans without abundant financial resources or prominent social status. The *Standard* vocally worried if the colony was “corrupting” their youth into believing they could lead the same opulent lives as the early, wealthier settlers had. Rather, these settlers, the newspaper argued, needed to become “moderns” and join the *administrative class* of the British Empire. Instead of slipping back into feudal times by relying exclusively on the exploitation of “the African,” they needed to embrace their place in Britain’s global “modernizing” project. In a sense, the newspaper was expressing a concern that its own settlers were not fulfilling their class obligations. Both Africans and Europeans, it seemed, had class-based identities they were expected to play. Though, these class identities, and the socio-political power they provided, were to be distributed *racially* in the Kenya Colony.

Additionally, Africans could no longer be so easily dismissed from the political and social realm of the public sphere as they had been in 1922. Globally, through the efforts of labor unions, nationalist movements inside colonies, and protests by oppressed minorities, transnational discourses on equality and human rights were *starting* to disrupt racial oppression, exploitation of labor and authoritarian colonial regimes. Though still

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<sup>151</sup> Cooper, *On the African Waterfront*, xi, 1-12.

quite nascent, these ideas were slowly creeping into the *Standard's* discourse. By 1939, the newspaper could no longer merely dismiss African rights. However, even though the newspaper acknowledged that, as workers, these strikers could protest, the *Standard* ultimately circumscribed this right by qualifying that these Africans were not striking “correctly” and, through this, were risking the safety of the colony. Therefore, the newspaper concluded, the state was justified in intervening to stop them. Though elevated in the colonial mind to a “working class,” from which they were awarded certain rights, their racial status as “Africans,” or “blacks,” still ultimately determined their fate in the eyes of the colonial system.

While 1922 and 1939 demonstrated how race and class were critical elements of European ideas about Africans, Operation Anvil in 1954 brought ethnicity to the center of the *Standard's* discourse. With Mau Mau, the colony faced Africans explicitly rejecting the colonial project. For conservative settlers, this was to be expected within their views of African society, but for liberal paternalists this was, to borrow Cooper's phrase, a “crisis of ideas.” Conservative settlers easily saw Mau Mau as further proof of the “irredeemability” of the African population, but liberals wanted to imagine their role in Kenya being part of the larger “modernizing” impulse of the British Empire. Understanding themselves to be “helping” Africans in their transition into “modernity,” this rejection shattered the liberal paternalist's ideological pretext for being in Kenya. As they were not willing to consider decolonization in 1954, they decided the draconian force entailed in Anvil was justified because it allowed them to bring the wayward Kikuyu back into the colonially-controlled sphere. In this effort, ethnicity was the discursive tool that propped up the liberal paternalist “explanation” for Anvil. By

drawing distinct *ethnic* lines around a specific group of Africans, these settlers were able to isolate the Kikuyu as an aberration. They were to be the exception to an otherwise contented African population, and these Kikuyu would be brought to detention camps and “cured” of their “disease” of Mau Mau. Once they had been treated, these Africans could be returned to normal life, except for increased surveillance of their movements.<sup>152</sup>

Moreover, this explanation reflected the identity liberal paternalists had constructed for themselves. Crucial to their designs of making Africans “modern” was that they, themselves, were already “moderns.” As such, these settlers, and the country they were working to create, needed to act as a “modern” state. This meant they could not, theoretically at least, detain or execute discontented Africans in their population. Of course, with Anvil, they in fact did detain every African in Nairobi, incarcerate, for some time at least, every male Kikuyu, and, ultimately, executed more than 1,000 people. For the liberal paternalists to guard their identity as “moderns” and not be seen as violent despots, Anvil needed to be constructed as a rational, calculated, well-planned operation, only done because of the extremity of the situation, that would “produce results” by returning the colony to “normal.” The discourse inside the *Standard* participated in the creation of this view of the operation by consistently framing Anvil through a *language of modernity*.

Though I have focused thus far on how the discourse changed from 1922 to 1939, and again from 1939 to 1954, key tropes and techniques did consistently appeared in all three moments. Perhaps the most common “character” who appeared in *Standard*’s narratives was the African “*agitator*.” This colonial creation was an elemental part of

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<sup>152</sup> For more on the analogy of Mau Mau as a “disease” in the African population that needed to be “cured,” see Elkins, 106-107.

how Europeans thought of Africans during the colonial period. The role of the “agitator” in colonial discourse was to temper and even dismiss any displeasure Africans voiced against colonial society, government or the economy. The protesters of Thuku’s 1922 arrest, the strikers of 1939 and the large majority of the Kikuyu population in 1954 were actually, so the *Standard* wanted people to see, not really displeased with their situation as colonial subjects, but had only been “led astray” by “agitators” who had duped the masses into following foolhardy anti-colonial projects. This idea served the dual purpose of creating an image that most Africans were happy with the colonial order and, importantly, also disqualified them as legitimate political actors. Clearly, went the logic of the *Standard*, these Africans were not capable of governing themselves because they too easily could be “unduly influenced” by people with malicious intentions. Instead, so this implied, African political rights should be limited and Europeans were needed as a paternal “guide” to “help” Africans along the “correct” political path. For conservatives, this meant Africans would remain indefinitely as a racial underclass to the white settlers. For the liberal paternalists, Africans would eventually become “modern” and assume control of their own state, but this would be far in the future.

Another constant within the *Standard*’s discourse was its obsessive desire to have greater knowledge about Africans, and, through that knowledge, use it to better control African movements and more precisely define their position within the colony. Surrounding all three moments, the *Standard* consistently called for administrative bodies to be formed that could acquire, catalogue and employ information about Kenya’s Africans. These voices inside the newspaper feared the “unknown” African; the African who could not be “termed.” Africans needed to first be “black,” as a race, then they

needed to be Kikuyu, Swahili, or other possible ethnicities, and finally, after these first two designations, they should be placed into a social class that corresponded to a colonially determined role within the capitalist economy. These identities needed not only to be “created,” but also be static, and then made known and spread throughout the colony by a centralized bureaucratic machine. From this fixed set of knowledge, administrators, capital and settlers would have a “predictable” subject population they could control. As my thesis looks at times when the state was visibly losing control, one can see why the newspaper, and the larger colony, expressed great anxiety about not knowing enough about “the African” during these moments.

Finally, race, as an indentifying concept, consistently appeared in the *Standard*’s discourse that arose from its coverage of these three disruptions of the colonial order. However, the predominance of race within this discourse also leads to the central historiographical contribution of this thesis. Coming to research these three “moments” in Kenya’s history, I wanted to see how ideas concerning race, ethnicity and class interacted within the newspaper’s discourse about Africans, as well as the settler and administrative populations. Any scholar who approaches the colonial period of Africa’s history needs to be quite aware of the heavy burden these concepts placed upon this period because colonialism in Africa was perhaps as much a discursive as a physical imposition on the peoples and geography of the continent. European powers set out to not only conquer physical space, but also to reshape the cultural identities of the people they were colonizing. The ideas of racialism that had emerged from the European Enlightenment, that were then expanded during the nineteenth century, were a central part of how Europeans conceptualized Africa and Africans. Ethnicity and class both came to the fore

and faded away from the *Standard*'s discourse at different points, but race was always there. Africans could be Kikuyu, Maasai or part of an emerging industrial working class, but they were always, first, "black."

However, race is itself not a static concept. It is worthwhile remembering again Stuart Hall's point that, when studying race, one must consider "the tensions and contradictions generated by the uneven tempos and directions of historical development," and that one should not expect that race and racism are "everywhere *the same*."<sup>153</sup> Ideas of race, ethnicity and class exist only as abstractions until actual individuals access and employ them in real historical situations. In each individual discursive act, the meaning of the concept is personalized to that specific person, in that specific historical context, and, consequently, the idea changes. The evidence in this thesis suggests that, when notions like race, ethnicity or class appeared in the *Standard*, the newspaper tailored which concepts it used and how it defined them to the particulars of each situation.

In March of 1922, the colony needed race to be highly restrictive and draw unassailable discursive borders around "white" and "black" so they could present a unified front against Africans. In 1939, though, lines between "white" and "black" began to blur, if only a little bit. Whereas in 1922 "black" Africans could not speak legitimately in opposition to the state, by 1939 the shifting context meant the newspaper included them within a more global identity as a working class. Being a working class, these Africans conceivably had the same rights as their white cohorts in Europe. In this expansion of the definition of "black," the *Standard* was following the interests of capital in trying to help form a stable class of African laborers, and consequently shifted the understanding of race in the colony. However, by 1954, ethnic identities, most especially

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<sup>153</sup> Hall, 435-440.



those of the Kikuyu, needed to be conceived in a highly restrictive fashion in order to hold together the crumbling ideology of the liberal paternalists. Ethnically, Kikuyu-speaking peoples had to be precisely “known,” while the rest of the African population was to fade into a faceless “black” race. However, this “black” identity had changed again as well. As liberal paternalism pushed the Kikuyu away using ethnicity, they further incorporated other Africans into society through their supposed mutual fear of Mau Mau. The colonial community, that included Africans for liberal paternalist settlers, needed to bond together to fight off Mau Mau. These liberal settlers still imagined Africans as subjects, but the understanding of who belonged to the “community” had changed substantially since 1922.

This examination of colonial discourse in Kenya is also instructive more broadly for the study of the past through analytical categories. Though general definitions of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “class” can be tentatively discerned, these concepts also need to be seen as deeply tied, in ways that alter their meanings, to the historical contexts in which they are used. Moreover, these concepts often work with one another in ways that can make it difficult to determine if a discourse is exclusively racial, ethnic or class-based (or any other number of categories).<sup>154</sup> Critically, these analytical categories must be seen as *highly contextual* because, in colonial Kenya, an African’s identity was usually inflected through two and sometimes all three of these concepts simultaneously depending upon what the context demanded, and this therefore problematizes their status as discrete categories. Additionally, the evidence in this thesis shows how scholars of Africa should be cautious never to *assume ethnicity*. Though ethnicity was a constitutive

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<sup>154</sup> Again, this point is my extension of the work on race and ethnicity done by Glassman in his article “Slower than a Massacre.”

part of the colonial project in Africa, settlers and officials forged their ideas about Africans instrumentally, and, often, ethnicity simply did not fit their needs. Instead, this thesis has shown how race alone, or race and class, at times much better served the *Standard* for how they wanted to shape ideas about the colony and the Africans who lived inside its borders.

As a part of broader colonial discourses, the *Standard* had a great capacity to spread its ideas in the colony because it was the primary newspaper read by the administrative and settler populations. From an editorial perspective, the newspaper's ideological leanings adjusted as the decades passed. During 1922 and 1939, the newspaper did not seem to maintain an explicit position as either a liberal or conservative newspaper. In its specific coverage of these two crises, the newspaper can perhaps be thought of more broadly as "pro-colonial," even if that sounds a bit simple. Consistently, the newspaper worked as an active agent of the government and all settlers *against the interests of the Africans*. This meant the newspaper supported a broad range of the colonial population from administrators and lesser bureaucrats, to police and soldiers, and to farmers and industrialists. Importantly, though, this does not mean that during these decades the newspaper did not have particular partisan preferences, but my focus upon two crises in which the larger colonial project was threatened meant the newspaper prioritized racial unity over other interests in these circumstances. However, this changed by 1954 as the coverage of Operation Anvil revealed the newspaper to be squarely favoring liberal paternalists. During the 1950s, two clearly divergent positions emerged about what Mau Mau was and how it should be handled. The conservative extremists, while they had some supporters in the government, did not hold the same sway over the

administration as the liberal paternalists did. The *Standard*, long a supporter of the government, placed itself squarely on the side the “modernizers.” The conservative extremists, meanwhile, created their own publications to spread their views on Kenyan society.<sup>155</sup>

Though the *Standard* still exists today as one of Kenya’s newspapers, during the later 1950s and into the 1960s, it moved away from its identity as a “settler” newspaper and began to provide broader coverage of Africans and Indians living in Kenya as the “winds of change” swept through British Africa.<sup>156</sup> During the colonial period, though, the newspaper did constitute one of the primary sources of information firmly controlled by administrative and settler interests. Along with a slowly growing radio industry, newspapers were the means by which people acquired their information about their region and the rest of the world. As the *Standard* held such a critical place in how people “thought” about Kenya, we need to better understand how it constructed colonial reality inside the pages of the newspaper. Many scholars have long drawn attention to how knowledge was a critical element to colonial regimes, and clearly in Kenya this newspaper was one of the main voices that shaped the intellectual world of the colony.<sup>157</sup> This thesis has examined how the *Standard* responded to colonial crises, which is important, but they were only one element of larger body of writing this newspaper left behind in the archives. This thesis hopes to be the start of a better understanding of how the *Standard* played its part in creating the Kenya Colony, and, looking forward, to urge

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<sup>155</sup> Abuoga and Mutere, 35-36.

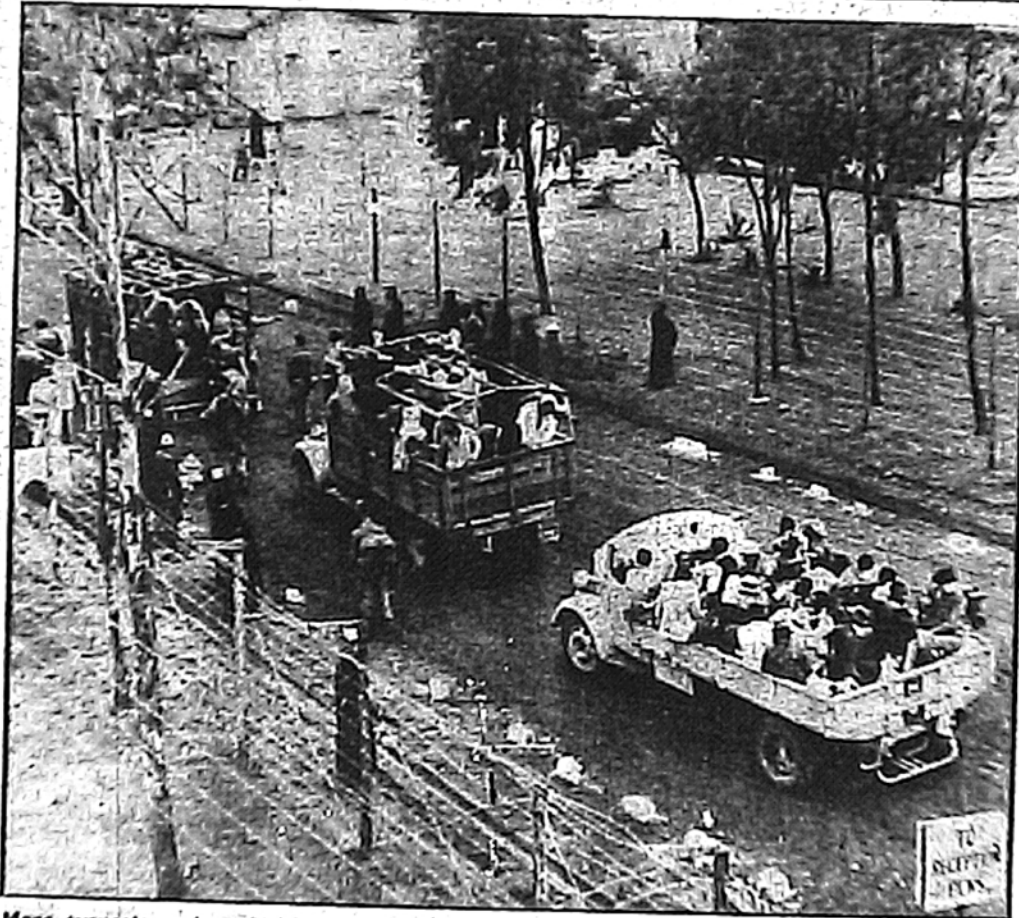
<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>157</sup> In particular, see Said. For my analysis of his work, and its impact upon the approach of this thesis, see pages 3-5 in the introduction.

other scholars to see how newspapers in other parts of Africa played a role in constructing the ideological apparatuses of colonial states.

# African Standard

Nairobi, Monday, April 26, 1954



More suspects arrive at the Langata camp which last night was reported to be full to capacity.

**Nightly 999  
system for  
Mombasa**

**RUSSIA SEEKS  
GUARANTEE**

**Australian diplomats' departure**

Figure 1. Two days following the start of Operation Anvil, the *East African Standard* published this photo of Africans being taken to the Langata detention camp. As the caption notes, the camp was already full. Credit: 26 April 1954 *East African Standard*, 1.

...he said "Even Lord Dela-  
...not do his farming  
...without the help of  
...and the railways were  
...not built without the  
...of Indians"

A second resolution, proposed  
by H. P. MacDonald, dis-  
...the recent constitu-  
...changes — because of the  
...and manner of their intro-  
...their disregard of the

Mr. Thomson: "Can you as-  
...the House that in any con-  
...sultations, Her Majesty's Gov-  
...ernment will tell Dr. Malan that  
...the statement recently made by  
...the Prime Minister before the  
...recess has the general support of  
...all sides of the House?"

Mr. Foster: "I think it best to  
...let the matter rest on the state-  
...ment made by the Prime Mini-  
...ster."

agreement following trade  
...trade footholds in the "closed  
...land" of Tibet and easing  
...two-way travel and pil-  
...grimages.

In exchange, China will  
...establish three trading agencies  
...in Indian cities — New Delhi,  
...Calcutta and Kallimpong, the

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...justify  
...Consul  
...other  
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...affair

## EAST AFRICAN POWER & LIGHTING CO., LTD.

THE BEARER OF THIS CARD

PETER MAGODI

is employed by The East  
African Power & Lighting  
Company Limited as a

METER READER

and his photograph and  
signature appear opposite

issued at NAIROBI

this 9<sup>TH</sup> day of OCT 1952

J. J. DU BARRY  
METER & INSTALLATION ENGINEER

Signature of Bearer

F 137A-400-932

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

Gives notice to the Public that for the next few  
weeks it is necessary to continue Meter Readings until the hours of 6 p.m. Mondays  
to Fridays (incl.) and also on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

Meter Readers can be identified by brass identity plate over left-hand pocket and  
East African Power and Lighting Company's red Employment Certificate contain-  
ing photograph.

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Dev)

Figure 2. Looking to ease the anxieties of the settler community, the East African Power and Lighting Co. used the *East African Standard* to communicate to its customers that its employees could be properly "identified" by the visibly present "brass identity plate" they wore. Credit: 1 May 1954 *East African Standard*, 7.



Police and troops engaged on "Operation Anvil" yesterday switched their attention to Kariakor, one of the oldest African locations in Nairobi. Nearly 4,000 people were picked up and more than 1,000 were detained for further investigation. In the foreground Africans parade to produce their documents.

**First civilian  
canteen for  
troops**

## **POLICE OFFICER FACES BRIBERY CHARGES**

*Alleged request for £50*

**A** EUROPEAN Assistant Inspector at Kingsway Police Station, Oliver Lawrence Ward, appeared in Nairobi Resident Magistrate's Court yesterday on two charges of soliciting and accepting £50 from an Asian, Pyarali Hassam, in order to omit to institute proceedings against him.

Ward elected to be tried by jury.

Mr. Hassam told the Magi-

this conversation to Chief Insp. J. Littleton and other police officers and he was given a packet

Figure 3. This is a photo of one of "screening" days during Operation Anvil in Nairobi. These Africans, lined up, would be ethnically classified, and, if a male Kikuyu, would be sent to a detention camp. Credit: 6 May 1954 *East African Standard*, 5.

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