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**Ad[dressing] the Emergency: A Study into
Dress and Materiality as Mediums of
Counterinsurgency in Late-Colonial Kenya,
1937-1963**

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A Note on Terminology

This study borrows Mary Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher's definition of 'dress' as 'an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body'. This is suitable for analysing colonial representations as it includes forms of bodily adornment such as hairstyles but also accessories attached to the body, including clothes, jewellery and uniforms.¹ Materiality refers to the miscellaneous goods, objects and paraphernalia perceptible in the sources examined.

¹ Mary Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher, 'Dress and Identity', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10 (1992), 1-8 (p. 1).

Introduction

*The essence of empire is control. To control, whether of oneself or of others, everyone must bring a philosophy — Doctrines of Imperialism.*²

Reflecting on her confinement in Kamandura camp during the British colonial counterinsurgency response to the Kenyan ‘Mau Mau Emergency’, Sophia Wambui Kiarie, then only a child, recollected the ‘spectacle’ of Sunday mornings. Sophia recalled watching loyalist women go to church dressed in ‘hats and gloves and beautiful clothes. And the Mau Mau side, women had tatters, the clothes were torn. No shoes, a shoe was a foreign thing.’ For Sophia, the materiality of loyalist women dressed up for church was not only a ‘spectacle’ but a reminder of her otherness and something she could not fathom possessing.³ Sophia was just one of an estimated 1.2 million Kenyans resettled during the counterinsurgency but the spatialised binary she depicts pertains to a lacuna within existing literature: how representations and practices of *dress* and *materiality* were employed as gendered mediums of counterinsurgency in late-colonial Kenya.⁴

David Anderson labelled the Mau Mau (counter)insurgency ‘the great horror story of Britain’s empire in the 1950s’.⁵ Emblematic of British imperialism in Africa, Kenya was treasured by both the metropole and White settlers, reflected in the extensive photographic coverage. This is the first study to exclusively examine dress and materiality as mediums of counterinsurgency in late-colonial Kenya. It does so through interpreting representations of dress and materiality in hitherto neglected colonial photography from four undigitised and underutilised image banks in tandem: the settler genre of Elspeth Huxley and Charles Trotter, both part of the British Empire and Commonwealth Collection at *Bristol Archives*; and the metropolitan photographs of the Colonial Office (CO) and Department of Information (DOI), stored in *The National Archives*, London. Centring representations of dress elucidates the

² Archibald Thornton, *Doctrines of Imperialism* (London: Wiley and Sons, 1965), p. vi.

³ Sophia Wambui Kiarie, interview, Kiambu County, 4th April 2019, quoted in Bethany Rebisz, ‘Violent Reform: Gendered Experiences of Colonial Developmental Counter-Insurgency in Kenya, 1954-1960’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Reading University, 2021), p. 132.

⁴ Moritz Feichtinger, ‘“A Great Reformatory”: Social Planning and Strategic Resettlement in Late-Colonial Kenya and Algeria, 1952–63’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52 (2016), 45-72 (p. 46).

⁵ David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Phoenix, 2006), p. 1.

convergence and tensions between visual narratives of the counterinsurgency at the 'core' and 'periphery' of empire which remain neglected.

We must interrogate this lacuna for two important reasons. First, dress and materiality are innovative and powerful analytical lenses which foreground how the rubrics of colonial rule were 'represented, constituted, articulated, and contested' through bodily praxis.⁶ This methodology disrupts the marginalisation of women in (written) colonial archives to centre women's experiences in histories of counterinsurgency and empire. These lenses demonstrate counterinsurgency strategy was inherently gendered, designed to coercively reconfigure gender dynamics to socially engineer pacification. This was underpinned by the coloniality of gender and racialised, British notions of 'respectability', 'deviancy', 'modernity' and 'primitivity'.⁷ Employing these innovative analytical tools for performing gendered analysis through *visual* mediums, this study augments a burgeoning anthology challenging androcentric narratives with *oral* methodologies. Gender, here, refers to social constructions of feminine, masculine and non-binary identities.⁸

Second, dress and materiality complicate the methodological hegemony of Caroline Elkins's pervasive framework which privileges and sensationalises violence as the determinant of the counterinsurgency.⁹ Through interpreting representations of dress and materiality in hitherto neglected colonial photography, this study demonstrates methodological utility in returning to marginalised 'hearts and minds' frameworks. Whilst readjusting the framework of interpretation may appear to carry intellectual fatigue, my dissertation develops this framework through original mediums, arguing *representations* and *practices* of dress and materiality were intrinsic to counterinsurgency strategy as gendered instruments of control and coercion. This supplements Mau Mau counterinsurgency historiography through

⁶ Jean Allman, 'Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress', in *Fashioning Africa*, ed. by Jean Allman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 1-10 (pp. 1-5).

⁷ For insight into coloniality of gender see María Lugones, 'The Coloniality of Gender', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development*, ed. by Wendy Harcourt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 13-33.

⁸ Katherine Bruce-Lockhart and Bethany Rebisz, 'Discourses of Development and Practices of Punishment: Britain's Gendered Counter-Insurgency Strategy in Colonial Kenya', in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Colonial Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, ed. by Martin Thomas and Gareth Curless (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp. 482-500 (pp. 482-484).

⁹ Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005).

dismantling androcentric narratives whilst reconciling ‘hearts and minds’ with contemporary intersectional frameworks.

Literature

Centring dress and materiality, this study reconciles ‘hearts and minds’ and intersectional approaches which complicates violence frameworks. This review critically articulates a historiographical lineage structured around these three methodological poles to position this study within the literature.

‘Hearts and Minds’

An increasingly marginalised school in Mau Mau counterinsurgency historiography have interrogated strategies which attempted to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of subaltern, metropolitan and global audiences. The seminal work of this approach is Susan Carruthers’s *Winning Hearts and Minds*, the only monograph to foreground propaganda and information control. Examining both domestic and global dimensions to ‘hearts and minds’ propaganda, Carruthers’s chapter on Mau Mau contested previous frameworks homogenising White settlers and the metropole. This dissertation develops Carruthers’s argument that ‘far from the settlers and the colonial authorities sharing a complete identification of outlook, there was considerable friction between the two groups’, but explores tensions through representations of dress in visual narratives.¹⁰ Myles Osborne’s neglected article developed Carruthers’s framework. Whereas Carruthers draws entirely on British archival documents, limiting analysis to the ‘official mind’, Osborne employed Kenyan National Archive material to analyse how information control shaped hearts and minds ‘on the ground’, effectively demonstrating propaganda themes were not static.¹¹ Published in the renowned *Journal of African History*, Osborne’s article has received sparse engagement. This epitomises the state of the field as ‘hearts and minds’ analyses are confined to sporadic articles and chapters.

¹⁰ Susan Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency, 1944-1960* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), p. 146.

¹¹ Myles Osborne, “‘The Rooting Out of Mau Mau from the Minds of the Kikuyu is a Formidable Task’: Propaganda and the Mau Mau War”, *Journal of African History*, 56 (2015), 77-97 (p. 79).

However, both scholars prioritise *representations*. Drawing on *metropolitan* and *settler* archives, this dissertation reintegrates this methodological orientation through unexplored mediums, analysing how *representations* and *practices* of dress and materiality intended to win ‘hearts and minds’ on multiple spatial scales. However, despite writing in the 1990s when gender methodologies penetrated histories of empire, Carruthers surprisingly neglects this dimension. This study, therefore, employs ‘hearts and minds’ frameworks with alternative geographical parameters. Laleh Khalili demonstrates attempts to win ‘hearts and minds’ through coding counterinsurgency as the civilianised option is gendered and (re)configures masculinities and femininities ‘cross-hatched’ with racial and class designations.¹² Miguel Jerónimo’s *repressive developmentalism* framework elucidates late-colonial ‘rehabilitation’ schemes entangled ‘modernity’, social control and welfare as tools for minimising ‘sources of internal dissent’ and ‘enacting imperial permanence’.¹³ Developing these frameworks, Chapter One delineates how efforts towards ‘modernity’ through ‘Western’ practices of dress and materiality were intrinsic to *repressive developmentalism* in late-colonial Kenya, harnessed as instruments for reconfiguring gender dynamics to socially engineer pacification.

Violence Frameworks

The publication of Elkins’s *Imperial Reckoning* and Anderson’s *Histories of the Hanged* marginalised ‘hearts and minds’ frameworks.¹⁴ Writing within an intellectual milieu shaped by the Iraq (counter)insurgency, both sought to delineate the nature and level of violence inflicted on Kenyans but there are nuances in their methodologies. Anderson employed court records to map out the violent behaviour and ideologies of counterinsurgency strategy. Elkins discerned ‘missing’ files in British and Kenyan archives, employing three-hundred oral testimonies revealing systemic violence. Both engendered necessary conversations around approaches to writing histories of colonial violence and ‘missing’ documents.¹⁵ Echoing nationalist interpretations, Elkins’s self-styled historical recovery was employed as an

¹² Laleh Khalili, ‘Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency’, *Review of International Studies*, 37 (2011), 1471-1491 (pp. 1471-1473).

¹³ Miguel Jerónimo, ‘Repressive Developmentalism: Idioms, Repertoires, and Trajectories in Late Colonialism’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, ed. by Martin Thomas and Andrew Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 537-554 (pp. 537-540).

¹⁴ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*; Anderson, *Histories*.

¹⁵ Rebisz, ‘Violent Reform’, pp. 15-16.

‘intellectual prop’ for the politics of reclaiming Mau Mau and ‘democratising’ the past by the state.¹⁶ This pertains to methodological concerns with Elkins’s framework. It abuses auctorial power. Elkins compiles atrocities and revelation narratives which *privilege* and *sensationalise* violence as the determinant of the counterinsurgency, manifest in the genocidal-themed title and use of colonial photography. The ‘pornography of violence’ discernible in photographs of mutilated children *in situ* is no intellectual stimulant to Elkins’s analysis but replicates the colonial gaze.¹⁷ The pervasiveness of Elkins’s methodology is ironically discernible in Daniel Branch’s indirect but intentional challenge to *Imperial Reckoning*’s ‘flawed’ exclusion of ‘loyalists’. Branch argues ‘it is impossible to accurately narrate or explain’ the counterinsurgency without ‘foregrounding loyalists’ but places ‘violence at the heart of the analysis’, exemplifying the difficulty moving beyond Elkins’s framework.¹⁸

Intersectional Approaches

Contemporary intersectional approaches complicate Elkins’s framework by revealing methodological tensions between the empirical significance of age and gender and their absence in existing narratives.¹⁹ Katherine Bruce-Lockhart and Bethany Rebisz cross-referenced oral testimonies with gendered discourses to reveal ‘rehabilitation’ schemes in detention camps were underpinned by racialised notions of ‘respectable’ and ‘deviant’ femininity and Eurocentric understandings of women as the ‘nucleus of the family who could restore social order in their community.’ Rebisz’s doctoral thesis skilfully elucidates Kenyan women navigated paths outside binary categories of agency and victimhood. Whilst Rebisz’s ‘subaltern’ framework examines dress and materiality through visual mediums, this analysis is confined to three pages. Chapter One develops Bruce-Lockhart and Rebisz’s analysis of these ‘gendered geographies of coercion’, demonstrating dress and materiality were intrinsic to *repressive developmentalism* as tools for reconfiguring gender dynamics.²⁰ However, whilst

¹⁶ Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. xii-xv.

¹⁷ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, pp. 42-43, 193; Heike Schmidt, *Colonialism and Violence in Zimbabwe: A History of Suffering* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2013), pp. 12, 29.

¹⁸ Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau*, pp. xvi-xvii, 208-209.

¹⁹ For insight into intersectionality see Kimberle Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (1991), 1241–99.

²⁰ Bruce-Lockhart and Rebisz, ‘Discourses’, pp. 482, 499.

critiquing Elkins's neglect of gender, Rebisz's doctoral thesis operates within the parameters of Elkins's paradigm, framed around the 'gendered topography of terror'.²¹ By centring dress and materiality as analytical lenses this study operates outside Elkins's paradigm.

This dissertation also develops intersectional frameworks interrogating the 'generational' in conjunction with the 'gendered' gaze. Stacey Hynd's qualitative pilot research in British, Kenyan and non-governmental archives challenged the marginalisation of youths, demonstrating age and gender were inseparable vectors of counterinsurgency but analytically privileges youths over elders.²² Paul Ocobock cross-referenced eighty oral interviews with three self-constructed databases from Kenyan and British national archival material to reveal age and masculinity were 'powerful cultural tools' communicating colonial power as age stratified Kenyan communities. This dissertation develops two dimensions to Ocobock's framework. First, Ocobock's 'elder state' thesis, which posits authority necessitated posing as an elder. Chapter Two argues counterinsurgents' constructed juxtaposed male identities of youthful, 'primitive' Mau Mau and 'civilised' elders through representations of dress to graft onto age-related tensions. Second, Ocobock's passing argument that 'reestablish[ing] discipline and respect for colonial authority' was central to youths 'rehabilitation' in counterinsurgency strategy. Chapter Three examines the material culture of the neglected Kenyan Boy Scout Association and Girl Guides which attempted to socialise 'respectable' gender dynamics and a collective imperial identity to engineer generational stability.²³

This is the first study to exclusively examine dress and materiality as mediums of counterinsurgency in late-colonial Kenya, facilitating three broader important historiographical contributions: 1) dismantling androcentric narratives through *visual* instead of *oral* methodologies; 2) foregrounding tensions between 'core' and 'periphery' of empire; 3) reconciling 'hearts and minds' and intersectional frameworks to move beyond the parameters of Elkins's paradigm.

²¹ Rebisz, 'Violent Reform', pp. 2-4, 96-98.

²² Stacey Hynd, "'Uncircumcised Boys' and 'Girl Spartans': Youth, Gender and Generation in Colonial Insurgencies and Counterinsurgency, c. 1954-59', *Gender & History*, 33 (2021), 536-556.

²³ Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), pp. 2-6, 178.

Methodology

This study is underpinned by thirteen photographs and picture postcards captured and disseminated in Kenya, the metropole and for global audiences between 1937-1963, supplemented by references to other images examined but not visually employed. These examples are the product of manually researching two undigitised and underutilised colonial photography archives under supervision: the neglected yet abundant settler genre of Huxley and Trotter stored within the British Empire and Commonwealth Collection at *Bristol Archives*; and sixteen CO folders and 180 images compiled into two folders by the DOI, held in *The National Archives*. With one exception, these thirteen images have not been examined in existing literature. That these images have lacked in-depth study but were valuable enough to be captured, catalogued and preserved justifies comprehensive examination.

The methodological concern pertains to colonial photography archives. For Achille Mbembe, 'writing history merely involves manipulating the archives' with the 'historian and the archivist occupy[ing] a strategic position in the production of an instituting imaginary'.²⁴ Acknowledging Mbembe's argument, this dissertation follows previous studies, approaching archives from the viewpoint production of colonial documentation was violent.²⁵ Archives hold powers of exclusion and construct 'windows into personal and collective processes'.²⁶ As Ann Stoler argues, these processes served to classify and subjugate colonised peoples, and principally negotiate 'rubrics of rule'. My interrogation of images follows the 'archival grain' – the 'patterns and internal structures' of colonial archives – to question and disturb them.²⁷ Visualising counterinsurgency through uncritically employing these image banks risks replicating the colonial gaze, a 'broad, reflexive, and intimate' power dynamic where colonised peoples are interpreted through colonisers' lenses. This subjugates colonised peoples as 'observed objects', extending imperial power by reinforcing fantastical

²⁴ Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and its Limits', in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. by Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishers, 2002), pp. 19-28 (pp. 25-26).

²⁵ Rebisz, 'Violent Reform', p. 30.

²⁶ Verne Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa', *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 63-86 (pp. 63-64).

²⁷ Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 14-16; Daniel Foliard, *The Violence of Colonial Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), p. 6.

perspectives of inferiority.²⁸ As postcolonial theorists have noted, the colonial gaze is structured through the 'complex and intersecting lenses' of class, gender and race.²⁹ My ability to access both archival collections is the legacy of these power dynamics. Furthermore, the DOI collaborated with the public relations officer at the CO to sanitise narratives. Therefore, following Rebisz, ethical considerations frame my examinations as staged scenes were subjective to photographers' representation(s) of 'reality'. Despite concerns, colonial photographs are not redundant sources. Images foreground external discourses constructed to sanitise presentations of counterinsurgency strategy.³⁰ These concerns also characterise settler collections.

Driven by the cultural turn and 'discovery' of perspectives from 'below', scholars incorporated settler images, aiming to subvert hegemonic discourses of metropolitan archives.³¹ Settler photography remains neglected in late-colonial Kenya historiography but as Markus Wurzer argues, historians assumed 'private' collections would offer 'authentic' insights and speak for themselves due to indexical qualities, resulting in descriptive analyses. 'Private' visuals failed to subvert metropolitan discourses due to propagandistic or commercial production contexts.³² Like Wurzer, I analyse images 'social lives' but interpret 'private' visuals as communication tools between the 'core' and 'periphery' of empire. This foregrounds tensions between settler and metropolitan perspectives pronounced in late-colonial Kenya, communicated through competing representations of dress.

To negate methodological concerns, both genres are approached as active commentaries by their makers. This means interpreting visuals in relation to the 'cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which they are embedded'; considering the power relations produced and articulated through ways of 'seeing and imaging'.³³ Following Gillian Rose, I analyse three sites where meanings of images are made: the site(s) of the production of an

²⁸ Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (California: University of California Press, 2010), p. 1.

²⁹ Heather Waldroup, 'The Snark in Samoa: Photography, Privacy, and the Colonial Gaze', *Studies in American Naturalism*, 12 (2017), 171-199 (p. 194).

³⁰ Rebisz, 'Violent Reform', pp. 51-52.

³¹ Markus Wurzer, 'The Social Lives of Mass-Produced Images of the 1935-41 Italo-Ethiopian War', *Modern Italy*, 27 (2022), 351-373 (pp. 351-354).

³² Ibid.

³³ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), pp. 2-3.

image, the site of the image itself, and site(s) of reception.³⁴ This dissertation is concerned with practices but also *representations* of dress and materiality so explores the semiotic and compositional elements of frames resourced to communicate gendered colonial ideologies and power relations.

This study disrupts the systematic marginalisation of women in (written) colonial archives. As analytical lenses, dress and materiality foreground how the ‘rubrics of rule’ were ‘represented, constituted, articulated, and contested’ through bodily praxis, rendering women’s experiences of counterinsurgency visible. As Joanne Entwistle and Jean Allman argue, dress ‘operates at the interface between the individual and the social world’ and this strategic positioning means dress functions as ‘salient and powerful political language’.³⁵ This innovative methodology elucidates Kenyan women’s ‘tactical agency’ in negotiating British attempts to reconfigure gender dynamics.³⁶

The temporal parameters – ‘late-colonial Kenya, 1937-1963’ – are deliberate. Anthony Low and John Lonsdale discerned a ‘second colonial occupation’ from the *late 1940s*, characterised by a ‘great intensification of government activity throughout British Africa’ to ostensibly prepare colonies for self-governance.³⁷ However, cultural dimensions of *repressive developmentalism* predate economically determined and state-centric periodisations. Settler photographs foreground *repressive developmentalism* from the *late 1930s*, continuing until independence.

This study departs from existing literature to analyse the counterinsurgency through representations of dress and materiality in unexplored metropolitan and settler photographs. Following the ‘archival grain’, this innovative methodology contests androcentric narratives through visual instead of oral mediums whilst remaining sensitive to the ‘colonial gaze’ and new significations photographs take on in different spatial contexts.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

³⁵ Allman, ‘Fashioning Africa’, pp. 1-5; Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress, and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), pp. 6-7.

³⁶ This study borrows ‘tactical agency’ from Alcinda Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 26-27.

³⁷ Anthony Low (with John Lonsdale), *Eclipse of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 173.

Structure

This tripartite structure emphasises three interrelated ways *representations* and *practices* of dress and materiality were employed as gendered instruments of counterinsurgency in late-colonial Kenya, as discernible from colonial visual archives.

Chapter One – *The Performative ‘Spectacle’ of Modernity*

This chapter examines how counterinsurgents’ harnessed ‘modernity’ through representations and practices of dress and materiality as coercive mediums of control in counterinsurgency efforts to reconfigure gender dynamics and socially engineer pacification.

Chapter Two – *The Construction and Juxtaposition of Male Identities*

This chapter illuminates how representations and practices of dress constructed and juxtaposed male identities of youthful, ‘primitive’ Mau Mau and ‘civilised’ elders with two rhetorical intentions: reinforcing perceptions of Kenya’s subalternity through domesticising the (counter)insurgency in the metropole to justify the colonial enterprise; and exhorting youths to internalise docile masculinity.

Chapter Three – *‘[A] whole generation has disintegrated’: Material Culture and Youth ‘Rehabilitation’*

This chapter explores the KBSA and Girl Guides through the lens of counterinsurgency, arguing their material culture attempted to socialise youths into ‘respectable’ gender dynamics and a collective imperial identity to secure generational stability.

Chapter One – The Performative ‘Spectacle’ of Modernity

This chapter demonstrates colonial stakeholders coercively harnessed efforts towards ‘modernity’ through *representations* and *practices* of dress and materiality as mediums of control in counterinsurgency strategy. It contests Elkins’s violence framework by foregrounding the pervasive mechanisms of dress and materiality, employed to reconfigure gender dynamics within the ‘rehabilitation’ ‘spectacle’ of winning ‘hearts and minds’. Whilst recent literature differentiates between temporal and substantive conceptions, this study is concerned with how colonial stakeholders imagined ‘modernity’. Therefore, ‘modernity’ is interpreted as a project marked by an imagined temporal discontinuity in terms of a development towards an idealised future.³⁸ Borrowing Foucauldian terminology, this chapter interprets the site(s) these photographs were captured as colonial heterotopias where ‘modernity’ and the hegemonic project of colonialism are performed in cultural and discursive spaces.³⁹ These spaces became disciplinary laboratories for testing models of *repressive developmentalism*, entangling social control and welfare as forms of ‘imagining and enacting imperial permanence’. This chapter develops Rebisz and Bruce-Lockhart’s analysis of these ‘gendered geographies of coercion’, arguing dress and materiality were intrinsic to *repressive developmentalism* for reconfiguring gender dynamics to socially engineer pacification.⁴⁰

The visual representations of heterotopias in Figures 1 and 2 situate the colonial government coercively harnessing ‘modernity’ through *Maendeleo ya Wanake* (MW) to cultivate ‘respectable’ femininity by reconfiguring gender dynamics as a medium of control in counterinsurgency strategy. MW (Kiswahili for Women’s Progress clubs) advanced a ‘self-help’, domestic-centred ‘rehabilitation’ culture. Both photographs were captured in Kabete and dated for use by DOI in July 1962, but it is difficult to ascertain when they were taken. For Figure 1, Rebisz postulates before the 1959-1960 movement out of the camps.⁴¹ Both photos,

³⁸ Matthew Lauzon, ‘Modernity’, in *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, ed. by Jerry Bentley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 72-88.

³⁹ See for example, Peter Johnson, ‘Unravelling Foucault’s “Different Spaces”’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 19 (2006), 75-90.

⁴⁰ Jerónimo, ‘Repressive Developmentalism’, p. 537; Bruce-Lockhart and Rebisz, ‘Discourses’, p. 482.

⁴¹ Rebisz, ‘Violent Reform’, pp. 3, 96.

next to each other in the same archival collection, were almost certainly captured after 1956 when combat reduced and rehabilitation narratives emerged.



Figure 1: Members of a *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* at Kabete ‘learn to make tea’.⁴²



Figure 2: Members of a *Maendeleo ya Wanake* at Kabete ‘knit scarfs on frames’.⁴³

⁴² United Kingdom National Archives (hereafter UKNA), ‘British Empire Collection of Photographs; Kenya; 1944-62’, INF 10/158/11. All images in this dissertation are cropped from the original.

⁴³ UKNA, INF 10/158/10.

In the performative set-up of Figure 1, the women drink tea out of expensive-looking chinaware, epitomising 'respectable' femininity through a European gaze. This incorporates Kenyan cooking traditions through the charcoal oven to heat tea. For Rebisz, this represents 'cultural hybridity', a (post-)colonial term referring to synthesising Western colonisers' and colonised cultural attributes, symbolic of the 'productive power of colonialism'. As Rebisz's analysis skilfully reveals, on the table is a packet of British Brooke Bond tea that established a tea plantation in Limuru, Kenya in 1924.⁴⁴ Erika Rappaport has demonstrated tea was feminised as a 'core part of European culture' and 'agent of civilisation', associated with domesticity and the love women provided to their husbands.⁴⁵ Extending these observations, in imperial imaginaries, consumption and commerce were positive forces facilitating civility and social harmony through creating a 'healthy and temperate self-controlled consumer'. Tea was historically used to teach 'aspirational' women etiquette for comporting themselves in the manner of their superiors. The emphasis on controlling and moving the body in prescribed ways, handling cooking and sewing utensils gracefully, situated 'British culture' as an agent of domestic socialisation, refining body techniques associated with 'respectable' femininity.⁴⁶ This fetishised cleanliness and domesticity whilst centring households as privileged sites of cultural refinement against what Granville Roberts, the CO public relations officer, characterised as an 'evil' Mau Mau external culture.⁴⁷

But there are more pervasive colonial ideologies at play. MW was a 'treatment' related to the 'Pipeline' system developed for detainees. The 'Pipeline' represented how 'suspected Mau Mau detainees moved through a system of rehabilitation before their eventual release back into the African reserves'.⁴⁸ This dehumanising discourse, which implied Kenyans could be 'transitioned' from 'terrorists' to 'loyalists', is reflected in the commercial language of Katherine Warren-Gash, an officer of Kamiti detention camp, who admired the 'finished products' MW generated.⁴⁹ The now 'loyalist' women are displayed as temperate consumers and commodified 'finished products', quite literally 'buying' into the 'civilising enterprise'

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

⁴⁵ Erika Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 4; Rebisz, 'Violent Reform', p. 98.

⁴⁶ Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, pp. 4-6; Rebecca Corbett, *Cultivating Femininity: Women and Tea Culture in Edo and Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), p. 15.

⁴⁷ Granville Roberts, Foreword, *The Mau Mau in Kenya* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), pp. 7-9.

⁴⁸ Rebisz, 'Violent Reform', pp. 4, 82.

⁴⁹ Katherine Warren-Gash, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 89.

through branded tea and Western commercial fashion. This exemplary performance of 'respectable' femininity displays women's bodies as 'ornamented surface[s]'.⁵⁰ Their purpose is crystallised as domestic upon image consumption, reflecting colonial capitalist processes of commodification that understood women's bodies to be most manageable and valuable when reduced to their domestic contribution. MW personifies the coloniality of gender as a medium of domination. Through Western practices of dress and materiality, counterinsurgency strategy attempted to subordinate Gĩkũyũ gender structures, reconfiguring gender dynamics around British conceptualisations of docile femininity which defined women by their domesticity.⁵¹ This strategy was underpinned by Eurocentric understandings of women as the nucleus of families. Thomas Askwith, a Commissioner of Community Development, believed women's 'rehabilitation' must centre around 'natural' maternal concerns for 'welfare' as it was 'more important to rehabilitate the women than the men if the next generation is to be saved'. For policymakers, women could generationally pass on domesticity to socially engineer stability.⁵²

Following the archival grain, the adjective 'tainted' in the CO 1066/11 collection titled 'Rehabilitation Camp at Athi River: Re-Educating Kikuyu Tainted with Mau Mau' insinuates Mau Mau was imagined as a 'disease' contaminating the body politic.⁵³ MW thus represented a 'treatment'. Tea and the boiling process perhaps symbolise not only social harmony but the 'purification' of the Mau Mau 'disease' and 'transition' from 'deviant' to 'respectable' femininity. These gendered heterotopias are performative microcosms of the idealised body politic upon implementing *repressive developmentalism*. However, as Khalili argues, in imperial contexts, gender is 'cross-hatched' with racial designations.⁵⁴ Cultural hybridity reproduced racial hierarchies through subtle features of African households being less 'civilised', with this exhorted 'respectable' womanhood superior to Mau Mau's 'deviant' femininity but inferior to British femininity.

⁵⁰ Angela King, 'The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body', *International Women's Studies*, 5 (2004), 29-39 (p. 36).

⁵¹ Lugones, 'Coloniality of Gender'.

⁵² Thomas Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee: Memoirs and Memoranda of Colonial Kenya*, ed. by Joanna Lewis (Cambridge: African Studies Centre, 1995), p. 145; Bruce-Lockhart and Rebisz, 'Discourses', p. 487.

⁵³ UKNA, 'Rehabilitation Camp at Athi River: Re-Educating Kikuyu Tainted with Mau Mau', CO 1066/11.

⁵⁴ Khalili, 'Gendered Practices', p. 1473.



Figure 3: 'A Kikuyu employee of the government's Agricultural Department sits at a table drinking tea with his wife in their new Western-style home', 1937.⁵⁵

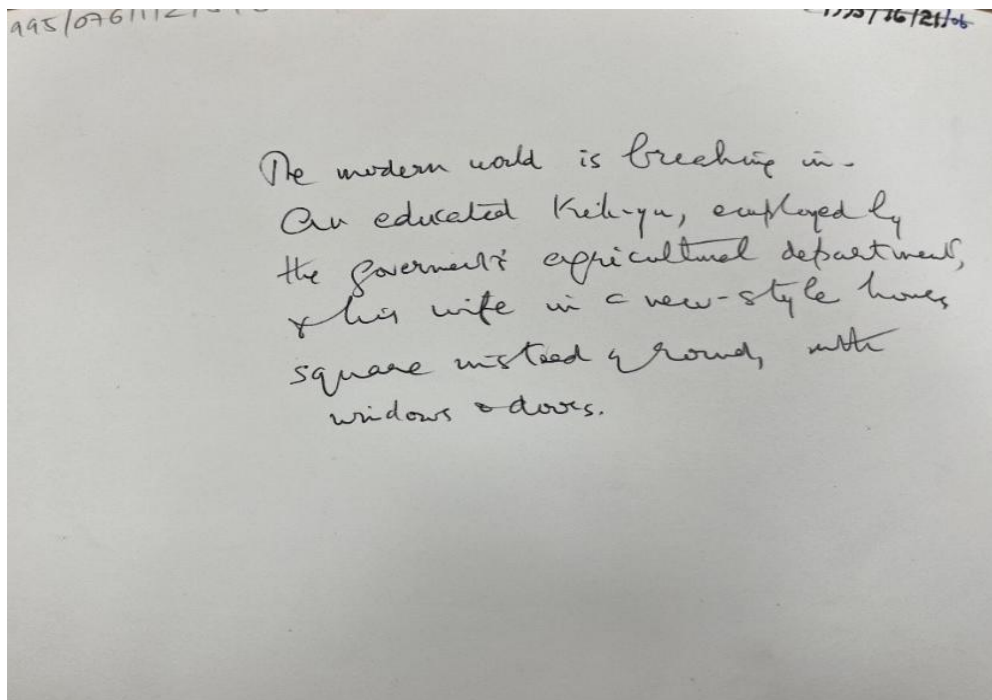


Figure 4: The accompanying text on the back of Figure 3.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bristol Archives (hereafter BA), 'British Empire and Commonwealth Collection' (Huxley Collection), 1995/076/1/2/5/6.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



Figure 5: Agricultural advisors at a tea party in Nandi district, late 1950s.⁵⁷

Elspeth Huxley, the ‘principal chronicler of Kenya’s White settler society’, shared these narratives.⁵⁸ Figure 3 depicts a ‘Kikuyu’ employee of the Agricultural Department sitting at a table drinking tea with his wife in their ‘new-style home’. Figure 5 illustrates a ‘tea party’ of agricultural ‘advisors’. Both capture Huxley’s sensibilities of ‘modernity’. The performativity is pronounced in Figure 3 through the marvelling at tea and chinaware which Huxley captures to imply ‘modernity’ was alien to Kenyans. Again, tea is an imagined ‘agent of civilisation’. Both images display tablecloths which were rare in African households but elucidate colonial fetishisations of hygiene. In August 1957, the Rift Valley District held a ‘Handiwork Competition’ for making tablecloths, conceivably aimed at socialising domesticity.⁵⁹

In both genres, representations of Western dress demonstrate the pervasive restructuring of womanhood. In Figures 1 and 2, the women uniformly wear white dresses covering their

⁵⁷ BA, 1995/076/1/2/4/28.

⁵⁸ Anderson, *Histories*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Rebisz, ‘Violent Reform’, p. 107.

knees with high necklines. In Figure 5, both women are captured in 'Western' white patterned skirts extending beyond their knees. Metropolitan images capture women wearing single-row pearls, symbolic of middle-class status in Anglophone culture.⁶⁰ The semiotics of white implies notions of 'purity', reflecting 'Pipeline' discourses. This is supplemented by the short, neatly combed hair which conveys conformity to 'respectable' femininity contrary to typical representations of Kenyan women wearing headscarves perceptible in the same archival collection, reinforcing the performative purpose of these images in the counterinsurgency.⁶¹

Images remain without definitive meanings until supplemented by accompanying discourses. Huxley provides the link in captions, claiming the 'modern world is breaking in'. The 'educated' Gĩkũyũ has moved into a 'new-style home, square instead of round, with windows and doors' (Figure 4). Huxley's article, *British Aims in Africa*, argued 'now the mold is broken', never in history has 'change struck at a continent so swiftly... bring[ing] material prosperity'. Colonialism "'preserves what is best in the old"... with "what is best in the new"'.⁶² Huxley's culturally hybrid visual and verbal rhetoric reflect 'Pipeline' discourses, capturing 'transitions' from 'primitivity' to 'modernity' as imagined dichotomous categories. Huxley not only communicates 'material prosperity' through tea and fashion but the taxidermy, hanging portrait and 'square instead of round' house layout (Figure 3). In Huxley's imaginary, the 'educated' Gĩkũyũ family now conceive themselves as 'modern' colonial stakeholders. Through representations and practices of dress and materiality, both Huxley and the DOI imagined and enacted imperial permanence, propagating narratives of 'modernity' when colonialism's grip was precarious to justify perpetuating the 'civilising' enterprise.

Complementary narratives may be explained by Huxley's idiosyncratic positionality. Huxley mediated between the BBC and CO.⁶³ Her collections also sporadically contain DOI photographs. Both images here demonstrate a longstanding affiliation to the government's Agricultural Department. However, Huxley's positionality is firstly a White settler. Despite complimentary narratives, there remains perceptible nuances. DOI images display women as 'finished products' with combed hair. Yet, in Figure 3 Huxley presents the woman in a

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁶¹ UKNA, INF 10/158/9.

⁶² Elspeth Huxley, 'British Aims in Africa', *Foreign Affairs*, 28 (1949), 43-55 (pp. 43-47).

⁶³ Wendy Webster, 'Elspeth Huxley: Gender, Empire and Narratives of Nation, 1935-64', *Women's History Review*, 8 (1999), 527-545 (p. 541).

headscarf, capturing a racialised narrative of 'transition' from 'deviant' to 'respectable' womanhood to imply the 'civilising mission' is incomplete. But there are tensions between Huxley's images. In Figure 5, women have short hair, reflecting metropolitan representations. This may be explained by the temporal contexts. Figure 3 is dated 1937 when despite rising anti-colonial participation, there was no insurgency. Huxley is therefore more comfortable challenging metropolitan narratives. Figure 5 is dated '1950s' when Huxley is reliant on metropolitan support against Mau Mau. Despite nuances, both genres propagate predominantly complimentary narratives and complicate literatures on Kenyan clothing which argue colonialism employed a 'tradition-modernity' dichotomy.⁶⁴

As disseminated artefacts, photographs themselves were tools of counterinsurgency, taking on new significations in different spatialities. Figures 1 and 2 were captured by the DOI whose mandate was two-fold: 'ensure that the people of Kenya of all races are kept fully informed of Government's plans, policies and achievements' and publicise British colonial exceptionalism to global audiences.⁶⁵ Images reflecting the 'spectacle' of 'modern' materiality Sophia recalled exhorted Kenyan women to internalise 'respectable' femininity but also sanitised narratives for global audiences, maintaining 'civilising' façades when Britain's imperial position was precarious. This cosmetic function superficially distinguished British from French colonialism following the violent (counter)insurgency in Algeria as local counterinsurgency strategy intersected with global imperial dynamics.

This chapter demonstrated 'modernity' was harnessed at multiple spatial scales through *representations* and *practices* of dress and materiality as gendered instruments of counterinsurgency. Yet, we must caution against reducing experiences to monolithic narratives of oppression. Women's engagement was shaped by ideas of 'moral ethnicity' which Lonsdale argues is the 'contested internal standard of civic virtue against which we measure our personal esteem'.⁶⁶ As Rebisz's intersectional interpretation of 'moral ethnicity'

⁶⁴ Leslie Rabine, 'Not a Mere Ornament: Tradition, Modernity, and Colonialism in Kenyan and Western Clothing', *Fashion Theory*, 1 (1997), 145-168.

⁶⁵ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Department of Information Annual Report, 1955* (Nairobi, 1956), p. 1; Osborne, 'Propaganda', p. 87.

⁶⁶ John Lonsdale, 'Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism', in *Inventions & Boundaries: Historical & Anthropological Approaches to Ethnicity & Nationalism*, ed. by Preben Kaarsholm and Jan Hultin (Roskilde, 1994), pp. 131-150 (p. 131).

argues, women underwent 'ongoing negotiation[s] of their place and role as someone valuable to their ethnic group'.⁶⁷ Photographs demonstrate Kenyan women's 'tactical agency' in negotiating attempts to reconfigure gender dynamics, navigating paths outside binary categories of agency and victimhood from operating 'within' the colonial project.

⁶⁷ Rebisz, 'Violent Reform', pp. 179-180.

Chapter Two: The Construction and Juxtaposition of Male Identities

Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale highlight colonial depictions portrayed Mau Mau as ‘fanatic, atavistic’ and ‘savage’.⁶⁸ This section interrogates the ‘generational’ in conjunction with the ‘gendered’ gaze. It demonstrates colonial stakeholders constructed juxtaposed male identities through representations of dress and materiality, with Mau Mau presented as ‘deviant’, ‘primitive’ youths and male elders as ‘respectable’ adherents to the ‘civilising mission’. Neither ‘youths’ or ‘elders’ are universal categories but social constructs and ‘sites of contestation between, and within, colonial states and local communities.’⁶⁹ This chapter argues competing representations and practices of dress served two purposes in counterinsurgency strategy. First, as disseminated artefacts with ‘social lives’, the rhetorical intention of photographs capturing ‘primitive’ youths was to reinforce perceptions of Kenya’s subalternity through domesticising the (counter)insurgency in the metropole. This presented narratives of the ‘civilising mission’ as incomplete whilst strengthening notions of control, thereby justifying the counterinsurgency and colonial enterprise. Through juxtaposing this to representations of ‘civilised’ elders, Mau Mau was rationalised as youthful aberration from the narratives of ‘colonial modernity’ analysed in Chapter One. Second, photographs and accompanying discourses imply elder practices of ‘civilised’ dress were employed to exhort youths to internalise docile masculinity in Mau Mau ‘compounds’. This analysis develops Ocobock’s ‘elder state’ thesis, demonstrating colonial stakeholders employed representations and practices of dress as powerful cultural tools to graft onto age-related tensions pertaining to manhood.⁷⁰ Throughout images are interpreted as communication tools and at the end nuances between metropolitan and settler representations are contextualised within tensions between the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ of empire.

Figures 6 and 7 manifestly demonstrate the CO and Huxley constructing racialised visual narratives of Mau Mau as youthful ‘primitive savages’. Whilst Huxley’s photograph was captured in 1953 (Figure 7), it is difficult to ascertain when the CO photograph was captured (Figure 6). The stamp on the back states the insurgent was the ‘first gangster to surrender

⁶⁸ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 227.

⁶⁹ Hynd, ‘Youth’, p. 538.

⁷⁰ Ocobock, *Uncertain Age*, p. 6.

under the new terms'. We can therefore infer between the 1953 'Green Branch' surrender scheme and the 1955 'Double Amnesty' policy. Given the stamp refers to the 'new' terms, 1954-1955 appears plausible. January-February 1955 is convincing as other photographs within CO 1066/9 are dated then.



Figure 6: 'Mwangi s/o Kiuru, first gangster to surrender under the new terms'.⁷¹

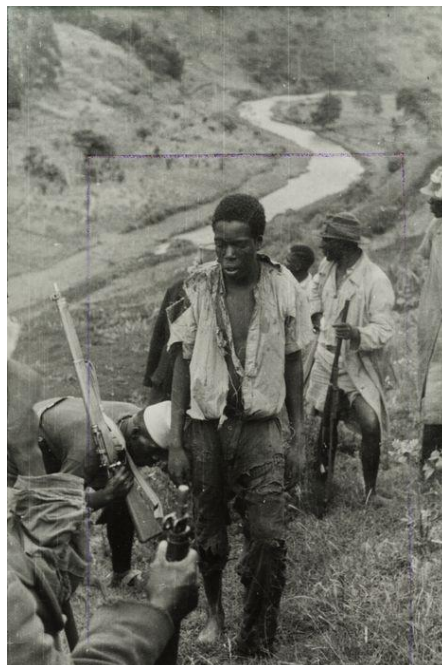


Figure 7: 'A MM gangster arrested by Kikuyu Guard', 1953.⁷²

⁷¹ UKNA, 'Kikuyu Villages and Home Guard Posts', CO 1066/9/837/98.

⁷² BA, 1995/076/1/1/15/2.14.

The photographs perform specific rhetorical intentions: communicating colonial domination through manufacturing visual identities of 'primitive' Mau Mau as *objects* rather than *subjects* to strengthen the fantasy of possession and notion of control when Britain's colonial position was precarious.⁷³ In both genres the insurgents are under the control of an authority, likely photographed for identification. The physically invasive presence of cameras as materialisations of control are themselves gestures of domination.⁷⁴ This was accompanied by contiguous forms of coercion through which 'otherness' was enacted, particularly representations of 'Mau Mau' dress.

Both insurgents are depicted in ragged clothing contrary to 'respectable' representations of loyalist women. This reflected colonial gender dichotomies with men imagined as 'agents of violence' and women inherently peaceful.⁷⁵ In Figure 6, the visual structures of marginality and domination are also captured through the hair aesthetic of dreadlocks. The representations of Mau Mau with dreadlocks and torn dress are ubiquitous throughout archival collections on Mau Mau 'compounds'.⁷⁶ Within colonial imaginaries, dreadlocks were associated with 'primitivity' but also racialised notions of hygiene, criminality and deviancy. This criminal dimension is reinforced by the composition of the frame. The angle is captured from below, so the 'suspect' dominates the space to appear threatening, looking down at the viewer. In Figure 7, Huxley's depicts a 'MM gangster arrested by Kikuyu Guard' wearing a tattered shirt and trousers with no shoes, echoing Sophia's testimony. Captured from above, Huxley's composition reinforced ideas of 'possession' over Mau Mau. Huxley objectifies the suspect, denying the individual the 'right to look' as a tool of domination whilst asserting her own superiority. This is precisely what colonial stakeholders wanted to capture. As David Forgacs argues, through photographs, colonial fantasies could find 'ontological anchorage'. Images were not captured to record reality but instead 'use[d] the anchorage of the real' to strengthen notions of control when Britain's imperial security was precarious.⁷⁷ By exposing dreadlocks, ragged clothing and bare feet, the representations of dress determine and fix the

⁷³ For insight into fantasy in colonial photography see David Forgacs, *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 78.

⁷⁴ Foliard, *Violence*, p. 8.

⁷⁵ Bruce-Lockhart and Rebisz, 'Discourses', p. 485.

⁷⁶ See for example, UKNA, 'Embakasi Investigation Centre for Mau Mau Suspects', CO 1066/14.

⁷⁷ For insight into denying the 'right to look' see Sitar Al-Qahtani, 'The Photographic Gaze: Cultural Displacement and Identity Crisis', *Midwest Quarterly*, 62 (2021), 274-286 (p. 285); Forgacs, *Italy's Margins*, p. 78.

stature and status of Mau Mau, materialising the colonial gaze to demean Mau Mau as inferior, 'primitive' *others*, hostile to 'civilisation' and 'respectable' gender dynamics.⁷⁸ This temporally distanced 'primitive' Kenya from the 'modern' metropole. When considering the 'social lives' of these images, the intertwined narratives of possession, 'inferiority' and threat become potent rhetoric for justifying the counterinsurgency and 'civilising' enterprise.

CO images were quotidianly disseminated through press media.⁷⁹ Huxley's images were not just records but communications. The packaging of Huxley's collections are addressed either for metropolitan consumption or Malmesbury, likely for friends and relatives. Huxley's 'primitive' representations of dress domesticised the (counter)insurgency, penetrating the 'private' sphere of metropolitan homes to reinforce perceptions of Kenya's subalternity and dependency. Although difficult to quantify and despite her settler positionality, Huxley's images would have been impactful as an authority for metropolitan audiences who lacked knowledge of Kenya. Lord Lugard's introduction to Huxley's published correspondence with Margery Perham admired Huxley's 'first-hand knowledge of the country' and 'exceptional knowledge of African life'.⁸⁰

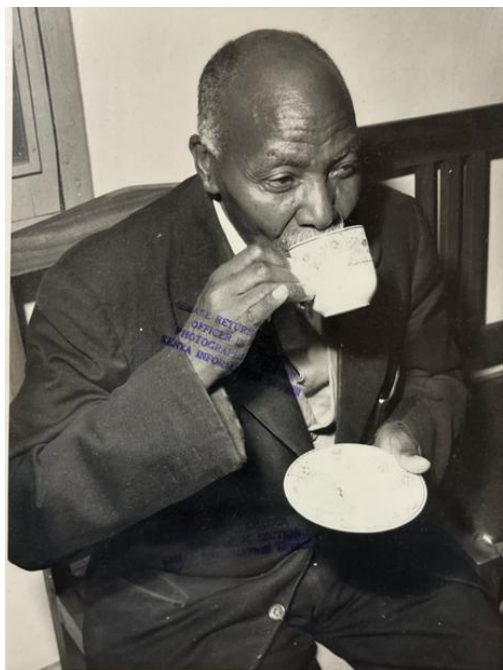


Figure 8: 'Rev. Johanna Njiri, a padre of the African Inland Mission', c. September 1954.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Waldroup, 'Snark', p. 186.

⁷⁹ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁰ Lord Lugard, 'Introduction', in Elspeth Huxley and Margery Perham, *Race and Politics in Kenya* (London: Faber, 1944), p. 3; Webster, 'Huxley', pp. 527-528.

⁸¹ UKNA, CO 1066/11/775/10.



Figure 9: Alan Lennox-Boyd shaking the hand of an elderly Kenyan man during his visit to Fort Hall, Kangema, October 1957.⁸²

In all CO collections examined, representations of ‘primitive’ Mau Mau are confined to adolescents. This was juxtaposed to visual identities of elders. In Figure 8, Reverend Johanna Njiri, a ‘padre of the African Inland Mission’, drinks tea out of expensive-looking chinaware and wears a tailored suit. This symbolises material coloniality and conformity to ‘respectable’ masculinity. Like Figure 1, tea and Western dress are imagined ‘agents of civilisation’. In Figure 9, Charles Trotter, a commercial photographer in Nairobi during the 1950s, provides a supplementary narrative. Trotter captures a publicity shot of Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, shaking the hand of an elderly Kenyan man during his visit to Fort Hall. The elder is illustrated in a tailored suit holding a bowler hat and walking stick, the latter symbolic of authority. The compositional element, with the elder positioned above Lennox-Boyd, perhaps symbolises colonial endorsement of the ‘elder state’. Elders have short hair contrary to representations of youths with dreadlocks, reflecting conformity to ‘respectable’ masculinity which Lennox-Boyd symbolically endorses through the handshake. Through representations of dress, elders are displayed as ‘respectable’ *subjects* conforming to ‘civilisation’ whilst youths are presented as ‘deviant’ *objects*. This reflected ‘loyalist’ characterisations of Mau Mau as ill-disciplined, ‘uncircumcised boys’ who had not ‘attained masculine self-mastery due

⁸² BA, ‘British Empire and Commonwealth Collection’ (Trotter Collection), 2001/090/1/1/18675.

to their youthful composition'.⁸³ By grafting onto the 'elder state', Mau Mau was rationalised as youthful aberration.

This analysis is supported by following the archival grain to compare the titles of archival collections to their contents. Figure 8 is from CO 1066/11 titled 'Rehabilitation Camp at Athi River: Re-Educating Kikuyu Tainted with Mau Mau'. Reverend Njiri is ubiquitous in 'rehabilitation' collections, always in Western dress and although illustrated by himself in Figure 8, is frequently depicted with colonial officials including General Erskine. The captions reveal Njiri was sent into Mau Mau 'compounds' to 'show them the error of their ways'.⁸⁴ Njiri, dressed in 'respectable' British fashion, became a colonial exemplar of docile masculinity which Mau Mau were exhorted to emulate. The CO 1066/7 collection titled 'Kikuyu Loyalists' exclusively contains photographs of elder 'chiefs'.⁸⁵ Together, the titles and contents reveal and entrench the centrality of 'respectable' elders to the 'rubrics of rule' and 'rehabilitation' counterinsurgency strategy.



Figure 10: 'MM suspect under arrest', 1953.⁸⁶

⁸³ Hynd, 'Youth', p. 540.

⁸⁴ UKNA, CO 1066/11/775/10; CO 1066/16.

⁸⁵ UKNA, 'Kikuyu Loyalists', CO 1066/7.

⁸⁶ BA, 1995/076/1/1/15/4.28.

Yet, there are tensions between the genres, discernible through competing representations of dress. In Figure 7, Huxley conforms to metropolitan narratives of Mau Mau youths embracing 'deviant' masculinities through representations of ragged clothing and bare feet. However, contrary to metropole negatives, Huxley seldom depicts elders in 'respectable' dress. In Figure 10, Huxley's composition captures an arrested Mau Mau suspect guarded by two men either side of him, one wearing the uniform of the King's African Rifles and the other an indigenous cloth wrap. On the surface, Huxley compliments metropolitan narratives of an elder embracing docile masculinity, who helped detain the suspect. Captured in 1953, this established the illusion of control when colonial anxieties and Mau Mau support were proliferating. However, Huxley undermines metropolitan narratives through representations of dress. For Huxley, the cloth wrap represents 'primitivity' and the Mau Mau suspect is the only individual with shoes. Even Trotter's image (Figure 9), which captures many elders in 'Western' dress, subtly undermines metropolitan narratives, illustrating many elders barefoot with trousers rolled up. These nuances are perhaps captured to reinforce perceptions of Kenya's subalternity and justify perpetuating the 'civilising mission'. They imply not only Mau Mau require 'civilising' but also elder Gĩkũyũ who, contrary to metropolitan narratives, still wear 'primitive' dress or have not fully 'transitioned' to 'modernity'. This was reflected in verbal discourse. For Huxley, Africans were stuck in 'rigid tribal mold[s]' as is the 'customary way of life of the African... incompatible with westernism'.⁸⁷ But there are nuances in positionalities. Huxley was born and spent most of her life in Kenya. Trotter only settled after establishing a leading commercial photography business in Nairobi and therefore may genuinely be more complimentary to metropolitan narratives.

These perceptible nuances in representations map onto heightened tensions between the *core* and *periphery* of empire during the anti-colonial milieu of the 1950s. Settler photographs function as print capitalism artefacts, performing their imagined colonial 'Britishness' extensively to communicate their commitment to the 'civilising' ethos and persuade the metropole to continue the colonial enterprise. This is perhaps why Huxley illustrates both youths and elders 'primitivity'. However, metropolitan images confine representations of ragged clothing and dreadlock to youths, with elders performatively captured in 'respectable' dress. This was cosmetic. The metropole could retain their façade

⁸⁷ Huxley, 'British Aims', pp. 43-47.

as agents of 'civilisation', ostensibly preparing Kenya for self-governance whilst rationalising Mau Mau as youthful aberration from the narratives of colonial 'modernity' analysed in Chapter One.

Foregrounding the 'social lives' of photographs, this chapter elucidated the rhetorical intention of constructing and juxtaposing male identities through representations and practices of dress was twofold for counterinsurgents'. First, representations of 'primitive' Mau Mau youths' dress reinforced perceptions of Kenya's subalternity, thereby justifying the counterinsurgency and colonial 'civilising' enterprise. Through juxtaposing this to representations of 'civilised' elders, the metropole rationalised Mau Mau as youthful aberration from narratives of colonial 'modernity'. Second, photographs and accompanying verbal discourses suggest elder practices of 'civilised' dress were employed to exhort youths to internalise docile masculinity in Mau Mau 'compounds'. The tensions between genre representations map onto heightened friction between the core and periphery of empire during the anti-colonial milieu of the 1950s.

Chapter Three – ‘[A] whole generation has disintegrated’: Material Culture and Youth

‘Rehabilitation’

In a 1955 speech to the Kenyan Boy Scout Association (KBSA), Governor Evelyn Baring singled out the movement as having a ‘most important role to play’ as a solution to Mau Mau, emphasising its capacity for ‘training the African school boy not only in basic education, but also in the art of citizenship’.⁸⁸ Baring hoped Scout Law’s affirmation a Scout was ‘loyal’ would convince African adolescents to support the colonial regime. Ocobock has noted ‘reestablish[ing] discipline and respect for colonial authority’ amongst youths was central to the ‘rehabilitation’ process, designed to ‘reconstruct Gĩkũyũ manhood’ by socialising youths into ‘proper, civilised male behaviour’.⁸⁹ However, Ocobock’s monograph is confined to the male experience. The role of KBSA and Girl Guides’ material culture in youth ‘rehabilitation’ remains neglected. The only analyses of either institution are Timothy Parsons’s social histories. This chapter rectifies this historiographical shortcoming. It argues Scout/Guide uniforms, materiality and practices intended to socialise youths into ‘respectable’ gender dynamics and a collective imperial identity to reestablish the authority of the intertwined colonial and ‘elder’ state. It does so through firstly critiquing Parsons’s methodology before applying semiotic analysis and cultural-anthropological theories of uniforms to unexplored DOI photographs of the KBSA and Girl Guides. This chapter employs a sociological definition of collective identity as an individual’s ‘cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader [imperial] community, category, practice, or institution’.⁹⁰

Methodological Critique

Parsons is the only scholar to engage with KBSA materiality. However, both Parsons’s holistic monograph and article on KBSA uniforms employ the lens of resistance. Parsons repeatedly returns to the argument KBSA membership afforded African boys ‘respectability’, ‘legitimacy’ and ‘prestige’.⁹¹ Parsons interrogated how Africans used the symbolism of uniform, codified

⁸⁸ Governor Evelyn Baring, quoted in Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 4.

⁸⁹ Ocobock, *Uncertain Age*, p. 178.

⁹⁰ Francesca Polletta and James Jasper, ‘Collective Identity and Social Movements’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27 (2001), 283-305 (p. 285).

⁹¹ Timothy Parsons, ‘The Consequences of Uniformity: The Struggle for the Boy Scout Uniform in Colonial Kenya’, *Journal of Social History*, 40 (2006), 361-383 (pp. 377-378); Parsons, *Race*, p. 21.

through Scouting's Fourth Law ('A Scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other Scout, no matter to what country, class or creed, the other may belong'), to subvert colonial hierarchies. The lens of resistance is explained by Parsons's positionality. Parsons was a Boy Scout which he admits shaped his identity as his own troop 'took it out of step with mainstream American Scouting' through loose interpretations of strict dress codes.⁹² Due to the inadequacy of written Scout material, Parsons stretches sources which fail to buttress his conclusions but employs minimal visual material. Where employed, it is descriptive rather than analytical, illustrating conclusions reached by other means. Colonial visual archives support Parsons argument the KBSA provides insight into masculinity, generational tensions, colonial control, and the 'grammar of citizenship' but complicate narratives of resistance.⁹³

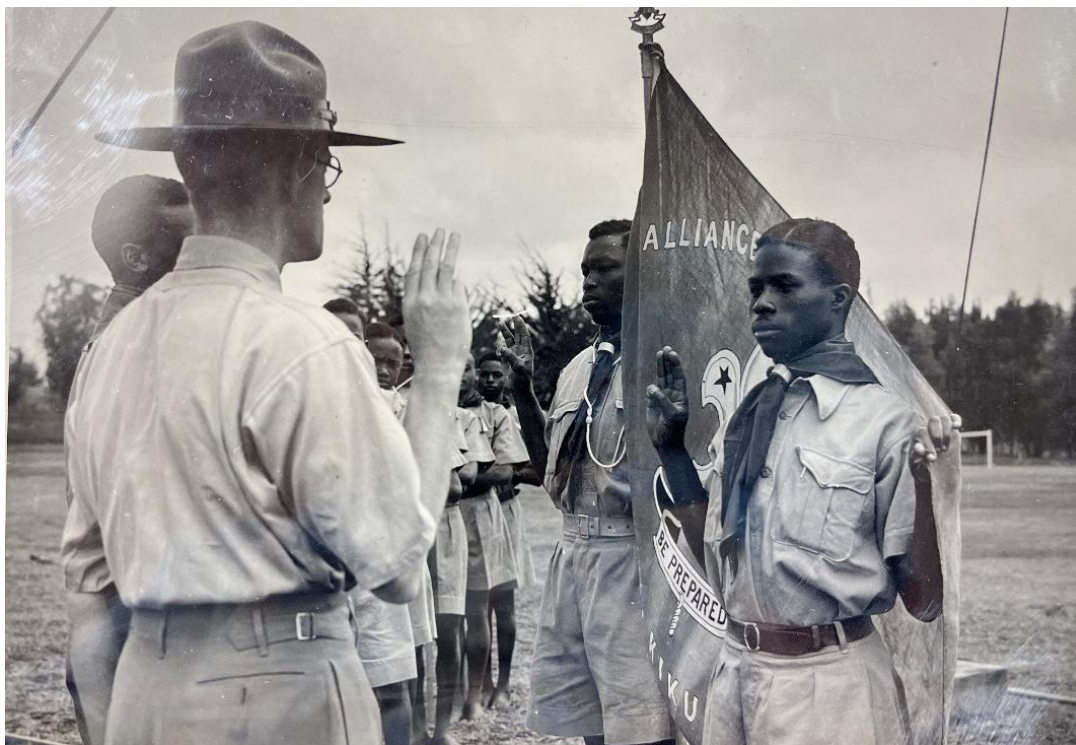


Figure 11: A KBSA cohort are sworn into the Scout 'Brotherhood' through the 'Investiture Ceremony'.⁹⁴

⁹² Parsons, *Race*, pp. xiii.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹⁴ UKNA, INF 10/158/3.



Figure 12: 'African Scout Troop in Training' taking the 'Promise' on the 'Troop Flag'.⁹⁵

KBSA

The representations of KBSA sartorial uniformity and materiality in Figures 11 and 12 situate the efforts of the colonial government to socialise docile gender dynamics and a collective imperial identity to reestablish respect for colonialism and the 'elder state'. The back of Figure 11 states the photograph illustrates a 'Investiture Ceremony'. The recruit is sworn into the fraternity holding a corner of the Scout Flag making the three-fold promise, the first of which is 'to do my duty to God and the King'. According to both stamps, the cohort contains 'representatives of twelve different tribes'.

The semiotics of KBSA material culture suggest an intrinsic role in socialising a collective imperial identity. As material practices of 'modernity', uniforms represent the embrace of

⁹⁵ UKNA, INF 10/158/2.

colonial rationality and the 'power and control of the institution that set it to work'.⁹⁶ The Scout emblem, the heraldic white fleur-de-lis, is printed onto the flag in both images and frequently appears on uniforms, symbolising 'peace' and 'purity'. The five-point stars on the fleur-de-lis stand for 'truth and knowledge'. Both symbolisms reflect 'Pipeline' discourses of Mau Mau as a 'disease' requiring 'purification'. Through KBSA, counterinsurgents' hoped youths would become 'pure' again after renouncing 'misleading' Mau Mau allegiance oaths, instead adopting the 'true' Ten Scout Laws. Although the emblem is slightly obscured in the photographs, the circular bond and reef knot symbolise the Scout 'family' and strength and unity of the collective.⁹⁷ As Jennifer Craik's cultural-anthropological framework argues, uniforms represent control 'not only of the social self but also the inner self and its formation' and in 'developing countries seeking modernity... are often highly elaborate as a demonstration of their actual or desired power'. Uniform practise is central to this process. Scout ties, discernible in both images, signify restraint and neatness. In KBSA contexts this perhaps symbolises youths refraining from joining 'tainted' Mau Mau which Chapter Two demonstrated were captured in ragged clothing, reflecting their 'deviant', 'unruly' character. The process of putting on a tie refines body techniques, regulating behaviours and internalising docile masculinity.⁹⁸

This semiotic analysis suggests uniforms became ideological instruments for reestablishing respect for colonial authority and the 'elder state'. This was underpinned by the racialised ideology of 'retribalisation'. Askwith and the self-described White Gĩkũyũ, Louis Leakey, argued Mau Mau was driven by breakdowns in 'tribal discipline', claiming '[a] whole generation has disintegrated'.⁹⁹ For Huxley, the strongest features of 'tribalism' were 'discipline, loyalty, faith and the sense of community'.¹⁰⁰ Scout uniforms, as aesthetic mediums of control, regulated the milieux of youths, becoming remedies to perceived generational disintegration. Parsons argues uniforms that were 'adventurous' and 'nurtured

⁹⁶ Jane Tyman and Lisa Godson, 'Understanding Uniform: An Introduction', in *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World*, ed. by Jane Tyman and Lisa Godson (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 1-24 (pp. 2, 12).

⁹⁷ 'The Story Behind the Scout Emblem: Fleur-de-lis or Arrowhead?', *Scouts*, <<https://www.scouts.org.uk/about-us/our-history/our-online-exhibitions/scouting-innovations/the-story-behind-the-scout-emblem/>> [accessed: 2 February 2025].

⁹⁸ Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 1-8.

⁹⁹ Louis Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Gikuyu* (London: Routledge, 1952), pp. 78-80; Hynd, 'Youth', p. 541; Parsons, *Race*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ Huxley, 'British Aims', p. 48.

a sense of belonging' controlled youths threatening to 'slip the bonds of generational authority' by suppressing individuality and emphasising loyalty, membership and elite status.¹⁰¹ Yet, in Figure 12, the badges on the sleeve reinforce individual 'achievements'. Uniforms isolated wearers within fraternal albeit hierarchical environments with shared morals to socialise youths into a collective imperial identity.

KBSA uniforms were intrinsic to the colonality of gender, attempting to socialise 'respectable' masculinities that were governable. Uniforms produce a 'powerful collective presence' which shape physical and mental behaviours to develop an 'aesthetic sensibility', inculcating habits of discipline, cleanliness and interdependence.¹⁰² In Figure 12, 'achievement' badges are gendered objects which, acquired through outdoor recreation, codified ideological behaviours aligned with late-Victorian masculinity. This included playing by the 'rules' and putting the team before the individual, socialising youths into docile masculinities that were trustworthy, loyal and obedient (Scout Second Law) and an imagined citizenship within the Scouting 'family'.¹⁰³

This analysis is applicable to King's African Rifles' uniforms which permeate CO collections and are illustrated on the left in Huxley's negative (Figure 10), but also carceral enforcement of white uniforms on youth detainees, captured in Trotter's photographs of Lennox-Boyd's visit to the Kangema 'compound', reflecting 'purity' discourses of the 'Pipeline'.¹⁰⁴ The importance of uniforms is manifest by the lengths policymakers went to protect them from being accessed. The government criminalised wearing KBSA clothing and symbols for those not within the organisation.¹⁰⁵ The illegal use of uniforms received summary convictions not exceeding ten pounds.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, buried in the CO 1066/12 collection is an unreferenced loose paper titled 'Kikuyu Guard Get New Clothing' from the Nairobi Press Office, dated February 1954. It reveals new uniforms became a reward and 'recognition' for

¹⁰¹ Parsons, 'Consequences', pp. 362, 377.

¹⁰² Jennifer Craik, 'The Cultural Politics of Uniform', *Fashion Theory*, 7 (2003), 127-147 (p. 132).

¹⁰³ Katrin Bromber, *Sport and Modernity in Late-Imperial Ethiopia* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2022), p. 24.

¹⁰⁴ UKNA, 'Mau Mau Terrorists Surrender', CO 1066/8; BA, 2001/090/1/1/18673.

¹⁰⁵ Parsons, 'Consequences', pp. 361, 367.

¹⁰⁶ Godfrey Le May, *British Government, 1914-1953: Select Documents* (London: Methuen, 1955), pp. 21-25.

'loyal Kikuyu' efforts, insinuating the centrality of maintaining sartorial uniformity to counterinsurgency initiatives.¹⁰⁷



Figure 13: 'Girl Guides of all races photographed in the grounds of Government House', Nairobi.¹⁰⁸

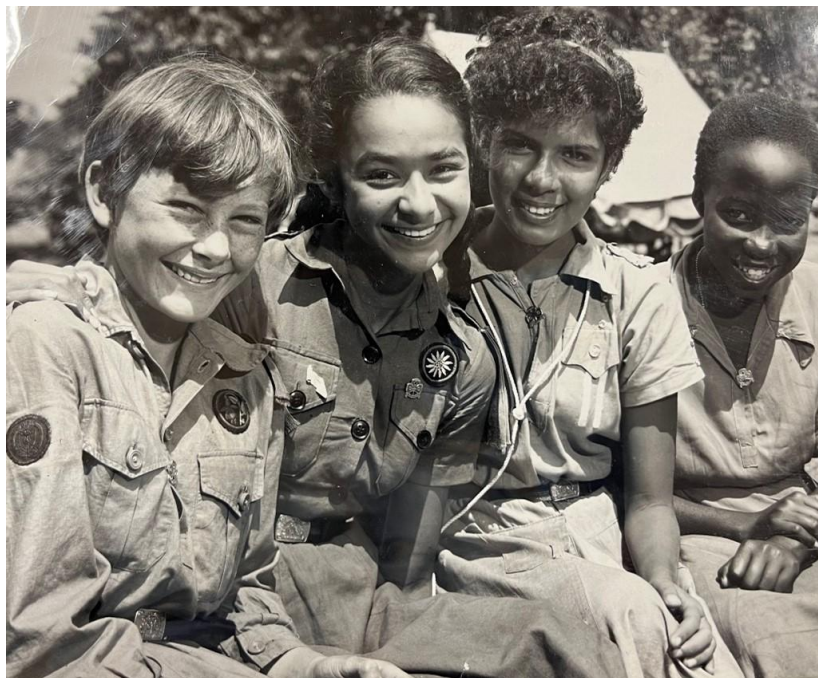


Figure 14: Girl Guides 'representing four races' captured at Government House, Nairobi, January 1959.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ UKNA, 'Kikuyu Guards; Forest Guards Buffs and Home Guards Show their Skill; Women's Home Guard', CO 1066/12.

¹⁰⁸ UKNA, INF 10/158/5.

¹⁰⁹ UKNA, INF 10/158/7.

Girl Guides

The Kenyan 'Girls Guides' have been neglected except for Parsons's short, narrative-based chapter.¹¹⁰ This lacuna is the product of the marginalisation of women in colonial archives. Colonial histories of childhood become histories of boyhood with KBSA the normative experience. However, we can navigate this methodological concern through visual materials. DOI photographs (Figures 13 and 14) suggest Girl Guides' material culture also intended to socialise 'respectable' gender dynamics and a collective identity. Figure 14 is the only image with an established date, January 1959, but as both negatives are close within the same collection, this date appears plausible for both. The stamps on the back suggests both were captured in the grounds of Government House, Nairobi.

Both display cosmopolitan visual narratives, with Figure 14 a microcosm of the imagined 'tolerant' trans-imperial Guide 'family'. According to the stamp on the return, the photographs represent the adaptability of the 'multi-racial' movement to the 'needs of different races' from each sphere of the British Empire. Whilst the KBSA attempted to socialise male youths into docile masculinity to ensure governability, female youth 'rehabilitation' had a more pronounced generational focus. Guiding, like MW, reflected the coloniality of gender, designed to internalise 'respectable' femininity, communicated through the representations of Guides' hair and materiality. Kenyan guides have 'neat' hair contrary to the representations of Mau Mau dreadlocks. In both visuals, guides wear stethoscopes which epitomise British ideals of 'caring' and 'nurturing' femininity, socialising Guides into mothers who can generationally pass on their 'respectability' to engineer pacification. This was underpinned by colonial understandings of mothers as 'makers of moral citizens', with girls heralded as empire-builders/sustainers during periods of uncertainty.¹¹¹

Yet, the spatial compositions imply attempts to instil a collective imperial identity were unsuccessful. In Figure 13, there is an illusion of equality through the standardised uniform and multicultural membership gathered within a tight spatial setting. However, the cosmopolitan narrative is undermined by the subtle positional reinforcement of difference. Different ethnicities are predominantly segregated into each corner of the frame. Even in

¹¹⁰ Timothy Parsons, 'The Limits of Sisterhood: The Evolution of the Girl Guide Movement in Colonial Kenya', in *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement's First Century*, ed. by Nelson Block and Tammy Proctor (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 143-157.

¹¹¹ Stoler, *Carnal*, p. 139.

Figure 14, where this cosmopolitan discourse is performed individually, the 'African' Guide's uniform is discernibly different with no achievement badges. She appears nervous and is captured on the periphery, perceptibly further away and back from her playmates who are tightly compact with arms around each other. This reflected the inter-colonial hierarchies and racialised colonial binaries which imagined Asian subjects as capable of acculturation compared to 'primitive' Africans more resilient to the diffusion of 'developmentalism'.¹¹²

Taking KBSA and Girl Guides material culture together, applying semiotic analysis and cultural-anthropological theories of uniforms to DOI images suggests both associations attempted to socialise docile gender dynamics and a collective imperial identity. This 'rehabilitation' strategy intended to 'retribalise' youths to reestablish the authority of the symbiotic colonial and 'elder' state, generationally engineering pacification. Yet, both appeared to reinforce hierarchical racial thinking which foregrounds tensions between rhetoric and reality.

¹¹² Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 271-342.

Conclusion

By interpreting representations of dress and materiality in unexplored CO and DOI photography in conjunction with the settler visual practices of Huxley and Trotter, this study has demonstrated these mediums were intrinsic to counterinsurgency strategy at multiple spatial levels as coercive, gendered instruments of control. The historiographical significance of this study is that centring dress and materiality complicates and moves beyond the parameters of Elkins's methodologically pervasive paradigm which privileges and sensationalises violence as the determinant of counterinsurgency in late-colonial Kenya. Yet, my analysis is not necessarily antithetical to violence paradigms. 'Developmental' representations sanitised counterinsurgency strategy, concealing violence. Through examining the unexplored, pervasive tools of dress and materiality, this dissertation readjusted the framework of interpretation, demonstrating utility in returning to 'hearts and minds' when reconciled with intersectional approaches. Foregrounding competing representations of dress and materiality between the source bases also enriches understandings of tensions between the 'core' and 'periphery' of empire in late-colonial contexts.

Drawing on neglected visual archives to centre dress and materiality as analytical lenses, this innovative methodology followed and disturbed the 'archival grain', navigating the marginalisation of African women in (written) colonial archives to contest androcentric narratives through visual mediums. Dress and materiality reveal counterinsurgency strategy was inherently gendered, designed to coercively reconfigure gender dynamics around 'respectable' British models to socially engineer pacification, reflecting the colonality of gender.

Chapter One demonstrated dress and materiality were intrinsic to *repressive developmentalism*, entangling welfare and coercion within heterotopias of forced modernisation to socialise 'respectable' femininity. Chapter Two foregrounded the 'social lives' of and tensions between genres, elucidating how through representations and practices of dress, colonial stakeholders juxtaposed male identities of 'primitive' Mau Mau youths and 'civilised' elders. This reinforced fantastical perceptions of Kenya's subalternity, rationalised Mau Mau as youthful aberration and exhorted youths to internalise docile masculinity. Chapter Three analysed the neglected role of the KBSA and Girl Guides in youth 'rehabilitation'

strategies. Their material culture intended to socialise docile gender dynamics and a collective imperial identity to engineer generational stability. The tensions between chapters, notably how colonial stakeholders simultaneously propagated narratives of 'modernity' and 'primitivity', foregrounds the racial contradictions of counterinsurgency strategy and colonialism more broadly. But at the crux of competing representations was a shared rhetorical intention: to justify the counterinsurgency and colonial 'civilising' enterprise.

I conclude by suggesting this study paves the way for future research into histories of resistance. Dress is dialectical, accessible to forces of oppression and liberation. Subjects are rarely passive when confronted with the camera. Flipping the lens can disturb the colonial gaze. Figure 6 from colonial perspectives reinforces notions of 'primitivity' but the intention of the captive is to communicate resistance. This is discernible through the stare and cultural codes of dreadlocks, symbolising resistance to acculturation in the face of the *repressive developmentalism* this study examined.

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