KUDÉ? KUDEDI! TRY OR DIE

Ethnicity, Class and Masculinity in a Kenyan slum

By Naomi van Stapele

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Glossary

Askari	**Watchman in Kiswahili**
Bikra	**Illegal Brew, first catch in Sheng**
Bop	**1 Kenyan Shilling in Sheng**
Bwana	**Mister in Kiswahili**
Chang'aa	**Illegal Brew in Sheng**
Chochoros	**Small alleyways in Kiswahili**
Chokora	**Street child in Kswahili**
Condé	**Conductor in Sheng**
Damu	**Blood in Kiswahili**
Engsh	**English with Sheng words**
Ganja	**Marihuana in Jamaican English**
Geri	**Gang in Sheng**
Gishage	**Rural area in the Kikuyu language**
Githaka	**Migration in the Kikuyu language**
Harambee	**Pulling together in Kiswahili**
Ithaka na wiyathi	**Land and freedom in the Kikuyu language**
Ituika	**Generation in the Kikuyu language**
Itungati	**In rearguard of the leaders in the Kikuyu language**
Jana	**Yesterday in Kiswahili**
Jazaa numba	**Add the number or join the gang in Sheng**
Juju	**Witchcraft in Sheng**
Kabisa	**Completely in Kiswahili**
Kamjesh	**Youth who fill the matatu's in Sheng**
Kasheshe	**Misfortune in Kswahili**
Kidogo	**Small in Kiswahili**
Kifagio	**Broom in Kiswahili**
kude?...kudedi	**Try or die, or To d…? To die, in Sheng**
Kukes	**Kikuyu people in Colonial English**
Kumi kumi	**Illegal brew in Kiswahili**
Kuni	**Firewood in Kiswahili**
Mababi	**Rich persons in Sheng**
Manoki	**Crazy person in Sheng**
matatu	**Public transport in Kiswahili**
Matunda ya uhuru	**Fruits of independence in Kiswahili**
Mbari	**Lineage group in the Kikuyu language**
Mtaani	**Neighbourhood in Sheng**
Mtiaja	**Neighbourhood in Sheng**
Muhindi	**An Indian in Kiswahili**
Mwizi	**Thief in Kiswahili**
Mzungu	**A white person in Kiswahili**
Ndumba	**Witchcraft in Kiswahili**
Numba tisa	**Number nine in Kiswahili (a matatu-line in Nairobi)**
Nyakunyu	**Whip in Kiswahili**
Panga	**A machete in Kiswahili**
Pili pili	**Chilli pepper in Kiswahili**
Rungu	**A club in Kiswahili**
Samosa	**An Indian snack in Kiswahili**
Shags	**Rural area in Sheng**
Shamba	**A land for cultivation in Kiswahili**
Sheng	**A language mostly spoken by youth in Kenyan cities based on Kiswahili, English and vernacular languages.**
Shida	**Problem in Kiswahili**
Sukuma wiki	**A type of spinach in Kiswahili**
Thaai Thaai!	**Peace in the Kikuyu language**
Thao	**Thousand in Sheng**
Ugali	**Maize porridge in Kiswahili**
Ushago	**Rural area in Sheng**
Wazungu	**White people in Kiswahili**

Maps of Kenya, Central Province, Nairobi and Eastleigh

Map 1: Kenya
found on the following website on 1 December 2006:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Kenya_sm02.png
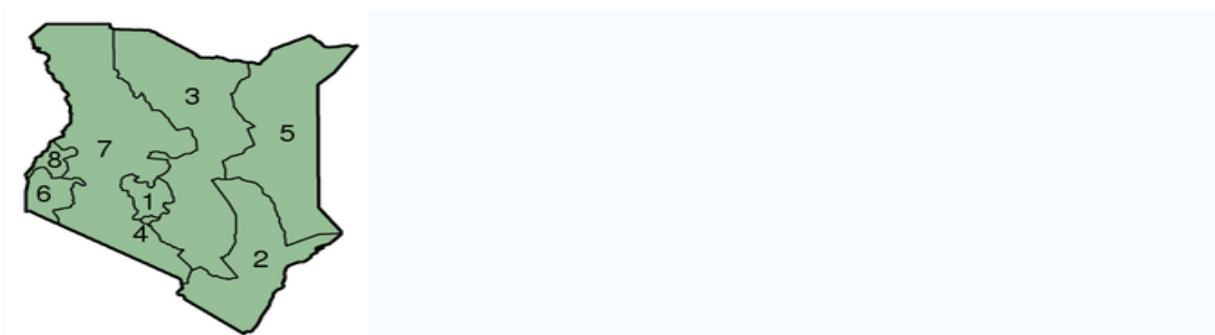
Population

- July 2005 estimate	34,256,000
- 2002 census	31,138,735
- Density	59/km² 153/sq mi

1 Central	5 North Eastern
2 Coast	6 Nyanza
3 Eastern	7 Rift Valley
4 Nairobi	8 Western

Kenya comprises eight provinces each headed by a centrally-appointed Provincial Commissioner, and one area. The provinces (mikowa) are subdivided into seventy-one districts (wilaya'at) which are then subdivided into 262 divisions (taarafa). The divisions are then subdivided into approximately 1,088 locations (kata) and then sublocations (kata ndogo). The City of Nairobi enjoys the status of a full administrative province. The government supervises administration of districts and provinces.

Map 2. Kenyan Provinces found on the following website on 1 December 2006:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenya#Administrative_divisions
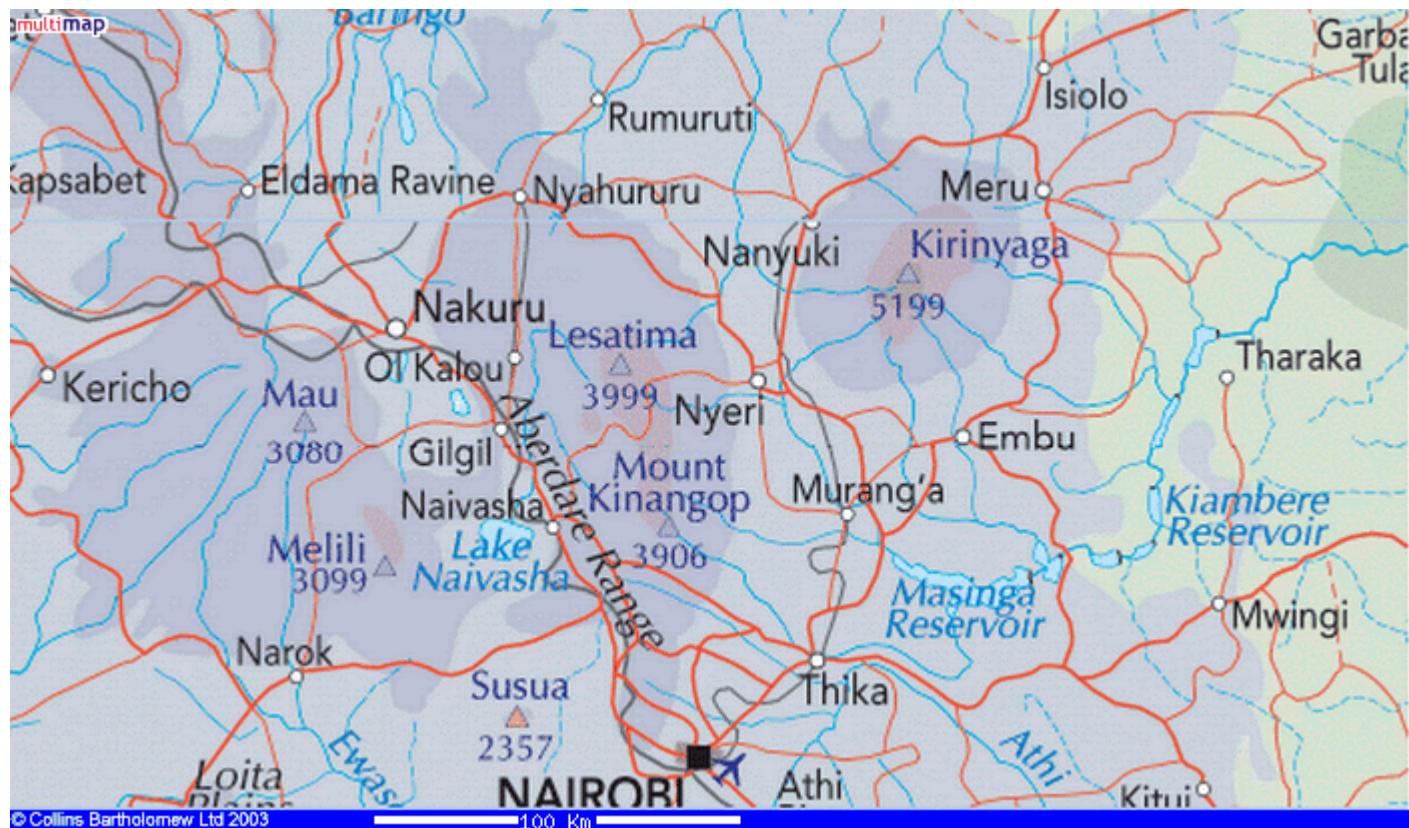
Map 3. Part of Central Province. Thika is in Kiambu District. Kiambu borders Murang'a and this border is marked by the river Chania. This river symbolises the separation between the 'Kiambu' from the 'Nyeri' or 'Mount Kenya' Kikuyu. Found on the following website on 2 December 2006: http://www.multimap.com/index/KE2.htm
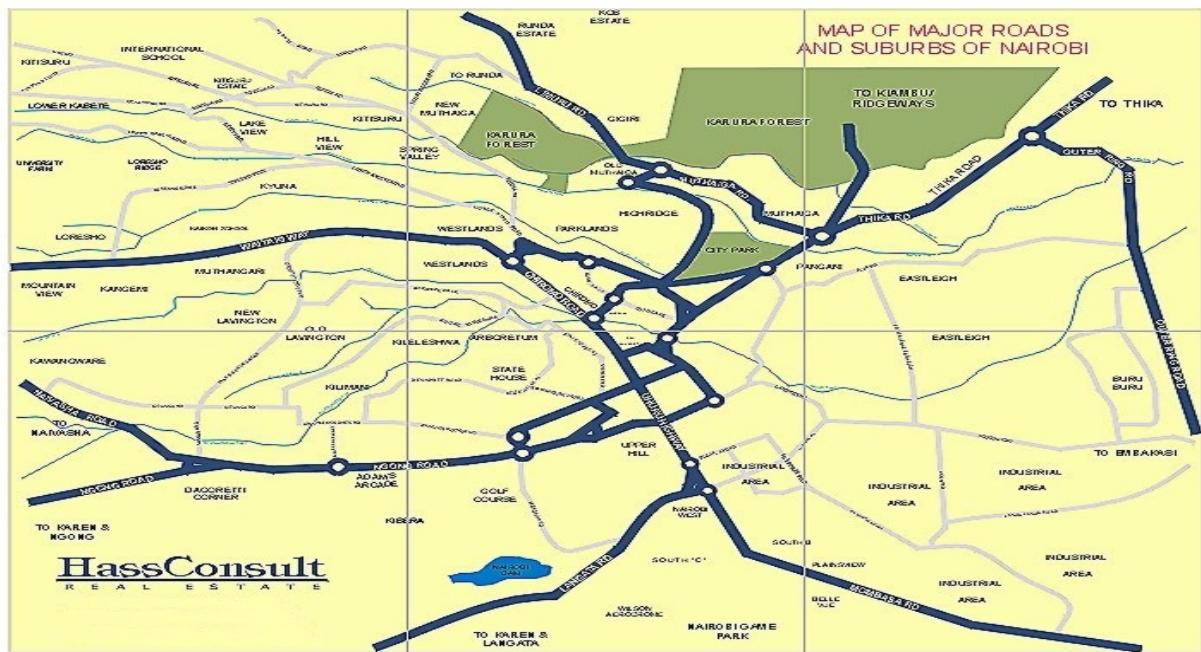
Map 3. Nairobi City Centre and Environment found on the following website on 1 December 2006**: http://www.hassconsult.co.ke**

Country:	**Kenya**
Province:	**Nairobi Province**
HQ:	**City Hall**
Mayor:	**Dick Wathika**
Subdivisions	
Constituencies of Nairobi:	**Makadara**, **Kamukunji**, **Starehe**, **Langata**, **Dagoretti**, **Westlands**, **Kasarani** and **Embakasi**
Geography	
Nairobi	
Area:	684 km² (684 **sq kl**)
Population:	2.5 million (2005 est.)
Density:	?/**km²**
Wider population	
Nairobi Urban area:	3 million

Table 1: Facts about Nairobi City found on the following website on 1 December 2006: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nairobi

Map 4.[1]

Map of Nairobi: North-East/Eastlands. Bondeni Village is between St.Teresa and Huruma estate(roughly)

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[1] Map 4 was found on the following website on 1 December 2006:
http://www.accesskenya.info/maps_city_wnew.asp

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

There is a poster hanging on the wall of a barbershop in Kenyatta Market near Ngumo estate in Nairobi, Kenya, stating that if you want to know what is going in Nairobi you should go to Mathare Valley, a large slum just North/East of Nairobi city centre. At first sight this slum community seems isolated and completely marginalized but I gradually realised that even though the community is economically marginalised it is not at all politically isolated. During my stay in Kenya I found out the truth of the poster at Kenyatta Market. Whether it was a riot in town, tensions over the upcoming referendum on the new constitution[2] or police activity in a failed attempt to reduce the high crime rate in the city, the people in Mathare Valley that I worked with knew what was going on and who were involved. The level of information available in the slum community where illiteracy runs high gave evidence of political intrigue and participation by community members. This participation, as many other aspects of slum life, is invisible to people from outside the slum. The poster on the wall of the barbershop on the other side of town was spot on as Mathare Valley can indeed be perceived as a micro cosmos of Kenyan politics.

1.2. Mathare Valley

Mathare Valley is one of the largest slums surrounding Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and its population is estimated around 160.000 to 180.000 inhabitants. The valley used to be a stone quarry, which is still visible in the morphology of the area, owned by Indian businessmen during colonial times and it was sold to several real estate-cooperatives around 1964. Hundreds of people had already settled there as illegal squatters on the verge of independence in 1963 when several exhausted sites of the quarry closed down. They migrated from rural areas either in search of employment in the nearby city centre or as displaced people after being chased away from the 'white' settler farms.

The main industry in Mathare Valley in the early days consisted of brewing and selling *chang'aa* as it still does today. *Chang'aa* is the backbone of the informal economy here and all other activities, such as prostitution, the selling of drugs and even the selling of firewood and charcoal, are somehow related to it. A *chang'aa* brewer states proudly:

"Our chang'aa is the best. I have never heard of people dying because of methanol, battery fluids or kerosene. We make the pure one. We distribute all over town."[3]

Mathare Valley stretches out for about a 3 kilometres along side Juja road, see Map 4, and is not that wide. Even though it is possible to cross Mathare Valley in twenty minutes I have met people in the slum who had not seen Juja road for more then a year. They were down at the river, the epicentre of

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[2] The Kenyan constitution is a relic from the colonial era and its rather complicated revision process was initiated during the Moi years during the 1990s and continued throughout the first years of the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) era since 2002. After a lot of conflict a new draft was presented in July 2005 and it was decided to have the Kenyan people vote on the draft in a national referendum. Banana was the fruit chosen by members of the NARC government who were campaigning in support of the draft. The orange represented the opposition who were led by several members of the NARC cabinet which clearly shows the division within the new coalition that constitutes NARC. On 21 November 2005 the Kenyan people rejected the draft in a referendum which turned out to be more like a vote of a lack of confidence in the NARC government and in particular in President Kibaki.
See for more information: 1. By Nation Team, 'Police break up demo as Nyachae tables new Draft', *The Daily Nation*, (July 20 2005). 2. Kipkoech Tanui, 'The country is in the moods of bananas and oranges. Its another euphoria once again. The season of fruits is here, enjoy the harvest', *East African Standard*, (September 9 2005). 3. Waihenya Kabiru, 'Kibaki's big referendum gamble', *www.news.bbc.co.uk*, (November 20 2005).
[3] Conversation with Tom, 12 August 2005, Huruma, Nairobi.

chang'aa business, day in and day out either brewing, selling or drinking the illegal brew. It was in this area called Bondeni Village, after the real estate cooperative that owned the land, that I conducted my research on how young Kikuyu men constructed their ethnic identity during the time of the Mungiki movement's dominance in the slums of Nairobi. It was here that the Mungiki movement, a self-proclaimed Kikuyu religious organisation, established itself early 2000 as 'security' and consequently had a strong influence on many aspects of slum life.

Bondeni means low in Kenyan Kiswahili and refers first of all to the morphological valley structure of the slum. In a more abstract sense the word also refers to the social and economic status of the youth living in the slum and in correspondence to the transformation that is taking place among the youth in Bondeni the word Bondé, the word in Sheng.[4] for Bondeni Village is used with pride. On the other side of town a rich neighbourhood is called Milimani which means high in Kenyan Kiswahili and the multiple layers of this contrast are consciously negotiated by the youth from Bondé.

The national importance of Nairobi slums such as Mathare Valley from a political perspective is based on the popular saying that 'the man who controls the slums controls Nairobi.' Approximately two third of the capital city's population resides in the slum making these communities the focus of electoral campaigns in Nairobi District.[5] All the slums together do not occupy more than 5 % of the urban space which gives an idea of the population density of these slum areas. Even though Mathare Valley is not the largest slum it, together with the adjacent slum Korogocho, occupies a central position in political, social and economic conflicts in Nairobi due to a tense combination of ethnic stratification, location and economic deprivation.

Mathare Valley's central position, shared with Korogocho, in the political, social and economic arena of Nairobi, is partly caused by the illegal but very lucrative alcohol industry, the high number of profitable *matatu*[6] routes passing by the slum and by its strategic location only 3 kilometres from the city centre but away from the tourist eye. This location away from the tourist eye decreases the need to restore security which is further enhanced by the fact that the current insecurity in these neighbourhoods gives ample opportunities to corrupt police officers and other government officials to exploit the situation. The large amount of money that goes around in the slum because of the profitability of its informal economy never stays in the slum but is 'reaped' by 'outsiders'.[7] The inhabitants of the Eastlands slums, referring to Mathare Valley, Korogocho and neighbouring slum communities, are not just politically interesting because of their sheer number or as objects of

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[4] Sheng is a Swahili-based patois, originating in Nairobi, Kenya, and influenced by the many languages spoken there. While primarily a language of urban youths, it has spread across social classes to the halls of the Kenyan parliament and geographically to neighbouring Tanzania and Uganda. Originating in the early 1970s in the Eastlands area of Nairobi. Sheng is now heard among *matatu* drivers across the region, and in the popular media. Although the grammar, syntax, and much of the vocabulary are drawn from Kiswahili, Sheng borrows from English and from the languages of the various ethnic groups in Kenya, including Kikuyu, Luo and Kamba languages. I take Sheng not only as a language but as a culture.
[5] Courtesy of Africa Recovery UN, 'Slumdwellers: do they have any land rights?', *East African Standard*, (11 March 2002). Mugumo Munene, 'Ticking time bomb in the slums', *Sunday Nation*, (March 10 2002).
[6] A *matatu* is a privately owned minibus, either a Nissan or a bigger and more colourful vehicle called *manyanga*, that offers alternative public transportation in Kenya next to the KBS (Kenya Bus Service) busses. The name *matatu* comes from *tatu* which means three in Kiswahili and it refers to the prise of this means of public transport at its start in the 1970s. The word *manyanga* means beautiful girl in *Sheng* and it refers to the colours and the disco lights that decorate the larger privately owned busses.
[7] A bar in Mathare selling the locally brewed alcohol *chang'aa* can generate a profit of 200 Euros on a busy day. In general the owners of these bars are people from the wealthier communities surrounding Mathare and they are sometimes organised in gangs. People in Mathare refer to them as the 'Big Fish' and they usually do not earn more than 2 Euros a day working for them. 1 Euro can be set as an average daily income of 1 family living in Mathare whether the breadwinner works in a bar in Mathare, sell vegetables at the roadside or cook in a small restaurant called *hoteli*.

extortion but also because of their low economic status as it is the overriding misconception of the political elite that poor people can easily be bought.

The slums are considered to be full of 'young men for hire', men who will demonstrate, make havoc and even kill for a 'reasonable' price and thus can be easily used as instruments in the application of ethnic politics.[8] This, however, is not the complete picture. The so called 'young men for hire' have developed strategies of resistance within the context of these asymmetrical power relations. They have never been powerless. Since the development of Mathare Valley in the early 1960s 'ghetto boyz'[9], as they came to be known during the 1990s, have been manipulated by but also have themselves manipulated the powers that be.

During critical moments in the history of independent Kenya spontaneous demonstrations, ethnic conflicts and oppositional movements all had strong connections to Mathare Valley. These upheavals generally involved young men from the slum who sometimes chose to organise or join demonstrations against the established order and at other times chose to join the ranks of the government. The reasons behind their choices are not as self-evident as suggested by the phrase: 'the slums are full of young men for hire'.

1.3. Theme, Main-question and Sub-questions

In this Master thesis I want to understand the prevalence of ethnicity in Kenyan politics in the post-colonial period since independence in 1963. Instead of analyzing government politics top-down I aim to approach this theme bottom-up by looking at the young and poor men from the slums who are often mobilised in the use of ethnic politics in Kenya. This approach will shed light on alternative histories that are always under construction. My aim is to unravel how history is re-constructed by young men, whom I term ghetto boys because that is the term they use to refer to themselves, in the construction of their ethnic identity in relation to the ever changing historical contexts and political, economic and cultural circumstances in which they construct their identities. Ethnic identity is not static because it is always under construction and it never stands on its own because ethnic identity only acquires meaning in intersection with other aspects of identity such as class, gender or age.

The dominant discursive[10] structures on ethnicity constructed and disseminated by governments in Kenya in the post-colonial period are constantly negotiated by the people it concerns. Through the process of negotiation the 'young men for hire' may engage in excluded discursive positions or sub-discourses, sometimes in the form of open resistance and debate but more often less clear as part of identity construction. In the construction of their identity the young men may resist or agree with the dominant discourse on ethnicity. Both positions and their middle grounds are fascinating as it will illuminate how presumed powerless people have the ability to make conscious choices according to the context in which they live. This illumination will enable us to better understand under which circumstances their ethnic identity becomes important to them.

The focus of my thesis is ethnic identity construction among young men during the emergence of the Mungiki movement in Bondeni Village because its emergence prompted ethnic mobilisation especially among young men. Ethnic identity is not a topic that can easily be discussed with people as it is a complex and abstract notion. Moreover, ethnicity is heavily politically charged in the Kenyan context, especially during the described period. In Bondeni Village people refer to the Mungiki movement as 'security' or '*wazi*' and '*vijana*' which respectively means rebels and youth in Kiswahili. I have never met anyone in Kenya who said Mungiki out loud without looking nervously over his or her shoulder, not even outside the slums. If we would pass by the Mungiki head quarters in Mathare

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[8] Macharia Gaitho, 'Young Turks', The Daily Nation (october 16 2001).
[9] The term 'ghetto boyz' is the term young men in the slums of Nairobi use to refer to themselves. This term became popular in 1990s with the spread of 'gangsta rap', especially by the 'gangsta rap' from 2Pac.
[10] The term discourse is explained in chapter 3.

Valley, some people would excitedly whisper to me and point to the men sitting in front while others walked on stone-faced trying hard not to catch the attention of the movement's members. The Mungiki movement became a taboo subject after their failed attempt to participate politically on a national level in 2002. People were generally afraid of the Mungiki movement, especially people that had to deal with the movement on a daily basis, the people in the slums and/or working in the *matatu* industry.

The main question of my Master thesis is: to what extent is Kikuyu identity emphasised in becoming ghetto boys in Bondeni Village, Nairobi, Kenya, during the late 1990s and how is this related to longer historical processes of ethnic mobilisation in national politics? The following sub-questions can be derived form the main question: what place did Kikuyu identity have in becoming ghetto boys in Bondeni Village, Nairobi, Kenya, during the late 1990s? Why did the Kikuyu identity have such a prominent place in the dominant discourse on ethnicity by the Moi government during the 1990s? What are the historical contexts of the prominence of Kikuyu identity in national politics in Kenya?

I chose to conduct my research in Bondeni Village because it can be perceived as a micro cosmos of national politics in Kenya as stated in the introduction of this chapter. Bondeni Village is a neighbourhood in Mathare Valley and it is approximately one and a half square mile in size with an estimate of 50.000 inhabitants. The majority of the population is considered by the Bondeni people to belong to the Kikuyu group. Bondeni Village is also said to be the oldest community in Mathare Valley and it is economically relatively powerful because it is the epicentre of the lucrative *chang'aa* business in Nairobi and it borders the main road making it easy for many Bondeni inhabitants to be engaged in the highly profitable *matatu* business.

The historical period of research in this Master thesis is the post-colonial era in Kenya since independence which was declared in 1963. Within this historical period I especially focus on the decade between the 1992 and 2002 General Elections because this decade saw the emergence of the Mungiki movement in the slums of Nairobi and in particular in Bondeni Village.[11] This movement was the most notorious example of ethnic mobilisation in Kenya during that time and it was in political and economic terms the most powerful ethnic based movement in the slums.

The end of that decade president Moi had to give up his power after 24 years during the 2002 General Elections. 2002 was also the year that the Mungiki movement reached momentum and pursued political power first against and later in support of the Moi Government. With a strong grip on the Eastlands' slums and with connections to politically very powerful people the Mungiki movement was a force to be reckoned with. The young Kikuyu men in the Eastlands' slum communities had to position themselves in relation to the strong Kikuyu identity expressed by the movement making this period notably interesting for research on the relation between context and the importance of ethnicity in identity construction among these men.

I focus on the young men in Bondeni Village because the Mungiki movement concentrated on recruiting mostly men in their strategy to expand their control in Bondeni Village. This prompted the young men to (re-)position themselves in relationship to the Mungiki movement and to their own ethnic identity. In this thesis I will especially focus on the re-construction of the history of the Mau Mau guerrilla war in identity construction among the ghetto boys in Bondeni Village. The young men chose to reconstruct the history of the Mau Mau guerrilla war to address present needs and this can be explained by the controversial position this history had in the dominant discourses on ethnicity since independence in 1963. The Mau Mau guerrilla war already became the representation of resistance during the colonial era. I will explain in this thesis why the Mungiki movement's presentation as 'the sons of Mau Mau' spoke powerfully to the imagination of the ghetto boys in Bondeni Village.

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[11]John Githongo, 'Political thuggery is now big money too', *The East African*, (March 11-17 2002).

I also want to establish how ethnicity acquires meaning through the intersection with the other aspect of identities in the construction of identity among the ghetto boys in Bondeni Village. I believe that ethnicity[12] on its own is not very significant in the day to day experience of these boys. In order to understand ethnic mobilisation, the strategic use of ethnicity in politics, from the perspective of the ghetto boys who are, and let themselves be, mobilised it is important to analyse the relationship between ethnic identity and other aspects of identity. In my opinion ethnicity acquires meaning through the intersection with other aspects of identity[13] such as class, gender or age. Furthermore, to understand ethnic mobilisation it is important to understand the way ethnic identity is constantly re-constructed by the ghetto boys in relationship to ever changing contexts and how history is enacted by them in current social realities.

The relationship between ethnicity and other aspects of identity has, in my view, to be analysed from the perspective of the people concerned because of its fluidity. The analysis of their narratives[14] within the historical and social contexts in which these identities are constructed will shed light on the relationship between longer historical processes and the importance of Kikuyu identity in becoming ghetto boys. I will use the perspective of my research participants, the ghetto boys from Bondeni Village, as their reflections on their daily lives can illuminate why and under which circumstances they either join or oppose ethnic mobilisation as part of strategies to gain status or other forms of power. This will eventually contribute to a better understanding of the question why 'these young men for hire' are 'susceptible' to ethnic mobilisation because it sheds light on their strategic motivations and their agency.

The theme of this thesis, the prevalence of ethnicity in Kenya, suggests a historical continuity of ethnic mobilisation in Kenya but when this is read in correlation with the way I have already briefly defined ethnicity and identity construction, possibilities of discontinuities are revealed. The longer historical processes of ethnic mobilisation in national politics are enacted by the ghetto boys in relation to the contexts in which they live and through this they transform the connotation of ethnic mobilisation. In this thesis I will analyse the continuity of the prominence of Kikuyu identity in national politics since the colonial era and at the same time I will illuminate how the connotation of Kikuyu identity was transformed in relationship to continuously changing historical and social contexts.

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[12] I will give a theoretical framework of the term ethnicity in chapter 3 while explicating my own stance.
[13] The term identity and what I mean with identity construction is explained in chapter 2.
[14] I will explain the method I used in chapter 3.

1.4. Research Methodology and Sources

To comprehend the fluidity of ethnicity and identity construction I focussed on the experiences and perspectives of the research participants and the use of the method the analysis of 'narratives against the grain', developed by Karin Willemse, enabled me to do so.[15] I will elaborate on this method in chapter 3 but I would like to conclude here that through this method I was able to analyse the way the young men concerned constructed ethnic mobilisation through their own words and in relationship to the historical, political, economic and cultural contexts in which these men lived.

The main source of information for my thesis were the narratives by the young Kikuyu men in Mathare Valley that I recorded during my field research about which I will share more information in chapter 2. During my field research I have interviewed and talked to many other people besides the young men to get more insight into the history of the slum community, the migration history of, predominately, women to the slum during the 1960s and 1970s, the ethnic stratification of the community and its implications and the emergence of the ethnically based Mungiki movement and other social, economic and political upheavals experienced by the slum community since its beginning. I also have interviewed people, such as community development and social workers, working in the slum to obtain more contextual knowledge on the use of ethnic politics and the process of ethnic mobilisation in the slums. I also have had the rare opportunity to interview two ex-Mau Mau fighters which enabled me to get more insight into the dominant discourse on ethnicity during the colonial era and how this discourse was negotiated by young Kikuyu men at the time.

Besides a large array of interviews, discussions and biographic narratives, the primary sources, I have used both literature and newspaper articles as secondary sources to supplement and verify the information and analysis derived from the oral sources. Although the literature I have used is too extensive to explicate piece by piece in this introduction it is possible to divide it into the two categories of scientific literature and novels. The scientific literature concentrates on the colonial era Caroline Shaw's 'Colonial Inscriptions'[16] on the Mau Mau guerrilla war Elkins' *Imperial Reckoning*[17] on ethnicity Hameso's *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa*[18] and on the political culture of post-colonial Kenya Throup and Hornsby's *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya*.[19]

There are only a few academic works available on the Mungiki movement and I have complemented this lack of information and analysis with discussions I had with a Dutch researcher and with several Kenyan field workers and a Kenyan sociologist.[20]

The novels I have used are books written by contemporary Kenyan writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o[21], Gakaara wa Wanjau[22], and the new generation of Kenyan writers in the *Kwani?*[23] collection and these books have enabled me to get more insight into the aspect of ethnicity, and its intersection with other aspects of identity construction in post-colonial Kenya as it is experienced by 'ordinary' people. Newspapers in Kenya to different extents offer a dominant perspective on historical, political, economic and cultural developments. I have compiled an extensive archive of newspaper articles from the *Daily Nation*, a moderately critical newspaper in the English language during the Moi years, to get more insight into the emergence of the Mungiki movement from a dominant perspective. Other articles I collected from the same newspaper were concerned with the existence of groups

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[15] K. Willemse, 'Mapping selves'. (2004) p. 1.
[16] C. Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions*, (1995)
[17] C. Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, (2005)
[18] S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa*, (1997)
[19] D. Throup and C. Hornsby, *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya*, (1998)
[20] A. B. Karneworff, These Dreadlocked Gangsters, (2004).

[21] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The River Between*, (1965)
[22] Gakaara wa Wanjau, *Mau Mau author in detention*, (1988)
[23] Kwani? Means: 'so what?' in Sheng.

similar to the Mungiki movement in the Nairobi slums, the strategic use of ethnic politics by the Moi government and various economic, social and political developments in the Eastlands' slums since the start of the Multi-party era in 1992 until now.

1.5. Chapters and Structure of this Thesis

In chapter 2 I will first give a theoretical framework on the term ethnicity while further explicating my own stance within the scholarly discourse on ethnicity.

In chapter 3 I will elaborate on the methodology for research and analysis I have used during my field research and in my analysis of the biographic narratives told by my research participants.

In chapter 4 I will introduce my main participant of research and will give insight into the aspect of class in the process of identity construction among young men in Bondeni Village. I have chosen to structure this thesis around one main theme, ethnicity, and two sub-themes, class and masculinity because I found that the relationships between ethnicity and these sub-themes came to the fore most pointedly during my field research. The narratives of the young men all constantly though indirectly referred to these aspects from diverse angles. To place following chapters in context I will first introduce the research participants and the paramount influence class has in the process of identity construction among them in this chapter.

The narratives of the young men further depict both of contemporary and historical developments and I will elaborate on both aspects and their interrelatedness as they are introduced by my research participants. The use of a theme-structure, as opposed to a chronological one, enables me to present the narratives of the men close to how they have shared them with me and introduce historical and contemporary contexts as they are experienced by them today.

In chapter 5 I will elaborate on the relationship between neighbourhood identity and ethnicity. I will give insight into the historical and political contexts that have encouraged the construction of Bondeni Village by its inhabitants as Kikuyu in relationship to 'the other side' which was constructed by people from Bondeni Village as Luo. This chapter will give insight into the question why Kikuyu identity became important to people living in Bondeni Village and how evolvements in national politics further influenced the identification of Bondeni Village as Kikuyu and 'the other side' as Luo by inhabitants of Bondeni Village. The localisation of a Kikuyu identity has greatly influenced the relationship ghetto boys from Bondeni Village had towards their ethnic identity, be it Kikuyu or otherwise.

In chapter 6 I will give insight into the history of the prominence of Kikuyu identity in national politics and how its connotation transformed during different historical periods and among different groups of people. In this chapter I will present the main ideology on Kikuyu identity, and its history, relevant to Bondeni Village. This ideology can be viewed as a sub-discourse to dominant discourses on ethnicity constructed by Kenyan governments since the colonial era. The specific characteristics of this sub-discourse and how it was translated to the locality of Bondeni Village facilitated the emergence of the Mungiki movement in later years.

In chapter 7 I will discuss the emergence of the Mungiki movement in Bondeni Village and how this influenced the process of identity construction among young Kikuyu men in Bondeni Village. As explained above the Mungiki movement prompted an intensification of ethnic identity among young men in Bondeni Village. Ghetto boys either emphasised or downplayed their ethnic identities in relationship to the strong ethnic profile of the Mungiki movement. In this chapter it will also become more clear how emphasising or downplaying ethnic identities can in essence be perceived as strategies to gain status and/or other form of power.

CHAPTER 2: ETHNICITY, A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The main question of this thesis is concerned with the historical, political, economic and cultural contexts in which Kikuyu identity become significant in the construction of identity among ghetto boys in Bondeni Village, Nairobi, Kenya. The question that comes to the fore is: what is ethnicity? In the next sections I will first analytically separate the term ethnicity from 'tribe' and make clear why I use the term ethnicity and not 'tribalism'. Then I will present the theoretical discourse on the term ethnicity and explicate my own stance. Further below I will give a short introduction into the relationship between colonial rule in Kenya and the (re-)construction of ethnic group identity. I will conclude this chapter with a section on the term discourse and on the process of identity construction within which I will explicate the relationship between ethnicity and the process of identity construction

2.2. Tribe or Ethnicity

In popular use in Kenya ethnicity is often still termed as 'tribalism'. I will use the term ethnicity instead of 'tribe' and ethnic politics instead of 'tribalism' because I want to avoid the association with adjectives such as primitive, static, traditional attached to the term 'tribe'. Instead I want to use the ethnicity because it can be universally applied.

Before the 1960s it had been the main venture of anthropology to study 'tribes' and associated concepts of kinship ties and behaviour.[1] The aims of anthropological research in those days were generally directed at supporting the British colonial administration while trying to promote better understanding about differences and similarities between cultures.[2] Following Anthropological research of the time European nations that colonized Africa used the term 'tribe' to describe, comprehend and govern the various communities who suddenly found themselves grouped together in a chaotic and abstract entity, i.e. the colonial state.[3]

The use of the term 'tribe' was based on the then existing notions of 'race'. Stereo types were devised supported by 'pseudo-scientific racism', articulated by so called 'Social Darwinism' and myths were manufactured about the indigenous people of Africa. At the core of the connotation of the term 'tribe' was the belief that Africa and its people had no history or culture. It was assumed that these people were primitive and lived by their natural instincts without art and science or other presupposed signs of development.

The findings of anthropological research were invaluable to the development of 'indirect rule'.[4] This is a style of rule whereby indigenous people were appointed to represent the colonial government in their communities and it was the way the British colonial power established itself in Kenya. The term 'tribe' stood at the core of the ideology that supported the implementation of 'indirect rule'. When anthropological research changed its perspective from studying communities as static and isolated entities to studying communities as dynamic and interactive, the use of the term 'tribe' was replaced with the term ethnicity.[5]

The replacement of the term 'tribe' with the term ethnicity reflects the *zeitgeist* of the early 1960s when many African colonies achieved independence. The term ethnicity aimed to transcend

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[1] S. Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 75.
[2] Ibid. p. 76.
[3] Ibid. p. 18.
[4] M. Mamdani, "Indirect Rule and the Struggle for Democracy: A Response to Bridget O'Laughlin," *African Affairs*, pp. 43-46.
[5] T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (1993) p. 9.

Eurocentric bias because every human being belongs to an ethnic group or nation while 'tribe' was more associated with people who lived in isolated, static and traditional settings.6

"*The term ethnicity can be used to bridge two important gaps in social anthropology: it entails a focus on dynamics rather than statics, and it relativises the boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them', between moderns and tribals.*"7

Ample research has shown that the concept of 'race' on which the concept of 'tribe' was based is scientifically inadequate. Findings have proved that "[there] is often greater variation within a 'racial' group than there is systematic variation between two groups."8 Even though in scholarly use terms such as 'tribe' and 'race' have been largely replaced by the term 'ethnicity' people in Kenya still refer to their ethnic identity as 'tribal'. I will only use the term 'tribe' when it is used by the people themselves when narrating their stories and I will use the term ethnicity as an analytical tool.

2.3. Scholarly Approaches to the Concept of Ethnicity

The main questions that are addressed in theoretical discourse on ethnicity are: does ethnicity have solid 'roots' in the past? Is it a strategic construction or a concrete reality? Is ethnicity the cause of conflicts or merely a feature? In this section I will discuss these interlocking questions while explicating my own stance.

The definition of ethnicity and henceforth of ethnic manifestation fundamentally depends on the theoretical approach and scholarly discourse is dominated by the two very opposite approaches; i.e. the instrumentalist and primordialist approach.

Most approaches to ethnicity agree that ethnicity has something to do with how people identify themselves as belonging to a specific cultural group in relation to other groups in the same social context. In this sense ethnic groups can be defined as groups that "manifest objective characteristics (in language, territory, religion, diet, dress or any of them), subjective (peoples consciousness about their belonging to a distinct social space), or behavioural (distinct codes of behaviour and interaction and of different individual responses within the group and outside the group). The boundaries of subjective and behavioural definitions are fluid."9This definition can be described as the colouring of the term ethnicity, it gives us a rudimentary idea to what ethnicity entails This definition, however, does not say anything about the nature of ethnic manifestations while that is often the focus of research.

From a primordialist approach ethnicity is perceived something that you are born with.10 Moreover, in this view ethnicity is based on biology, on tangible historical realities and on identifiable geographical regions to which a particular ethnic group belongs.11 Primordialists define ethnicity primarily in terms of blood and land. In this approach ethnicity bears similar biological connotations as 'race'. The continuity of ethnic identities between particular groups in a pre-colonial and colonial/post-colonial settings is emphasized because of the biological connotation ethnicity has in this approach.

From an instrumentalist approach ethnicity is conceived as a constructed identity, often a product of elite manipulation, and as a construction ethnic identity is not necessarily based on

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6 Ibid. p. 10.
7 Ibid.
8 T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (1993) p. 4.
9 S. Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa*, (1997) p. 20-21.
10 C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?', 22, (1993) p. 1.
11 M. Baud et al, *Etniciteit als Strategie,* (1994) p. 6.

biology.12 The instrumentalist view claims that ethnicity today has little to do with a distant past because ethnic identification and mobilisation as is visible today has changed drastically with the coming of colonialism. Existing ethnic groups today to a large extent defined their ethnic identity triggered by and in light of all the changes that took place during and after colonialism. Similar insights on instrumentalism have been developed in the research of 'the invention of tradition' in the ideology of Nationalism.13 Ostensibly ancient customs have surprisingly recent dates of origin, "[in] short, they are responses to novel situations which take form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition." 14

My stance is that certain aspects of both scholarly approaches apply to the term ethnicity while other aspects are irrelevant. First of all ethnic identities are (re)-constructed by people in relation to the circumstances they live in and at the same time they are experienced by people as real. In my opinion the question of pre-colonial 'roots' is not that interesting since ethnicity has changed drastically, and indisputably, with the coming of colonialism.15 The emergence of ethnic groups can be the result of elite manipulation, of colonial administrators or through the survival strategies of people threatened by violent repression and exploitation.16 The fact is that most of the ethnic groups in Kenya consider themselves to have 'primordial' bases even if other ethnic groups like the Mijikenda and the Kalenjin in Kenya were constructed during the colonial era.

The interesting question is not about pre-colonial 'roots' but how ethnic identities are constantly re-constructed by people in relation to a changing environment because this can help us understand why, and when, ethnicity becomes an important feature of social relations. Many people who give their primary loyalty to the local community and/or the ethnic group, instead of the state, do so for good reasons. Ethnic groups are often the major engines of development, the closest thing to a social welfare system.17 The fact that ethnic groups exist, and they exist because ethnic identities are experienced and expressed by people, is interesting.18 Ethnicity is real even when it's historical 'roots' are imagined and even when its manifestation has changed and changes in relation to the circumstances it is constructed in. How can ethnicity not be a real experience, a concrete reality, when people are prepared to die for it?19

"Ethnic groups are no less real for existing intermittently, for having fluid boundaries, for having subjective or even arbitrary standards of membership, for opportunistic use of tradition or even for lacking a proprietary claim over a local space. They are real if they are actual people who are united in consciousness of their common ethnic identity however spurious or misguided that consciousness may be."20

The concreteness of ethnic groups is affirmed by ethnic markings which society categorically pins on them, markings which underscore the social existence of ethnicity. In this thesis I hope to focus on the actual experience of people who construct ethnic identities as this can give insight into the reasons behind ethnic mobilisation on a more structural level. I am interested in how and when ethnicity becomes important to people and how they use it as a strategy in social relations and social institutions.

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[12] S. Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 21.
[13] M. Baud et al, *Etniciteit als Strategie,* (1994). p 8.
[14] Ibid.
[15] C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?', (1993) p. 2.
[16] Ibid.
[17] C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?', (1993) p. 2.
[18] Ibid.
[19] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1991) p. 7.
[20] C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?', (1993) p. 1.

2.4. Ethnicity and Group Relationships

Ethnic groups in Kenya generally consider themselves and are regarded by others as being culturally distinctive. The core term to understand ethnicity is the word 'relationship' and relationships are dynamic by nature. It indicates that groups and identities develop in mutual contact rather than in isolation and that these identities are not fixed and therefore they change according to the circumstances in which they are developed.[21]

Moreover, group identities are always defined in relationship to what they are not. This brings about the phenomenon where geographically and/or culturally contiguous groups feel the incentive to assert their differences much stronger in relation to each other than in relation to groups which are geographically and/or culturally more separated. I refer to this process as 'othering'.[22]

I will use a specific ethnic identity only when people belong to an ethnic group by virtue of believing and calling themselves and acting in ways that validate his/her ethnic identity.[23] I chose this approach because it is impossible to develop objective cultural features or draw clear-cut boundaries between existing ethnic groups.[24] Cultural difference is not the decisive feature of ethnicity. Contact between groups and the way that cultural differences are made socially relevant in the interaction between groups are important. These groups must entertain ideas about each other as being culturally different. Ethnicity is in this context a subjective and highly fluid notion of difference and it refers to gain and loss in this interaction.

"Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationships between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have, at least, a minimum of regular interaction. It can be defined as a social identity, based on a contrast vis-à-vis other, characterized by metaphoric or fictive kinship."[25]

The once accepted view that ethnicity was dominant in isolated communities, 'untouched' by the 'civil world', became outdated after research had shown in the late 1960s that ethnicity acquires its significance in social border areas where the group's interest is most at stake and social cohesion is most fragile.[26] According to these findings it is in border areas where the incentive to draw clear distinctions between one group and the other becomes most eminent.[27] Ethnic identities are emphasized, created, invented and/or revitalized and ethnic mobilisation occurs mainly in situations of interaction between groups. Ethnicity is the ideology of group identity in relation to other groups.[28] It is therefore not very surprising that colonialism stimulated ethnic identification in Kenya. Various disparate ethnic groups suddenly found themselves lumped together within the artificial boundaries of a British colony called Kenya.

2.5. Colonial rule in Kenya

As we have seen above ethnic groups tend to be fluid and fragmentary in character and boundaries between them are ambiguous and situational.[29] The British colonial administration imposed 'tribal' labels on the different groups living in the colonial-state in an attempt to comprehend and consequently control the local population. The imposition of clear 'tribal' labels on large

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[21] F. Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, (1969a) p. 17
[22] F. Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries*, (1969a) p. 17
[23] T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (1993) p. 11.
[24] Ibid. p. 11.
[25] Ibid.
[26] F. Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries* (1969a) p.17.
[27] M. Baud et al, *Etniciteit als Strategie* (1994) p. 6.
[28] M. Baud et al, *Etniciteit als Strategie* (1994) p. 6.
[29] T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (1993) p. 90.

categories of people had a strong 'socially reifying' effect on these groups and in many cases they became official names and the group members started using them in their self-identification.30 It is important, however, to remember that in some cases the actual names of the groups were simply labels used by the colonial administration and were rarely ever used by the members of that group themselves.31

Many categorical ethnic distinctions in Kenya existed before colonialism, as argued above, but they were fragmented, more fluid and less institutionalised than modern ethnic distinctions in Kenya.32 In the pre-colonial era many groups were politically organised on the level of villages, clans and lineage groups thus making the need for categorical labels of a larger scale mostly superfluous.

"Complex modern societies seem to imply processes of identity and boundary maintenance which are much more actually felt, and more self-consciously fashioned, than has been the case in other kinds of societies."33

The emergence of contemporary ethnic categories is the result of the formation of a centralised state administration and of the economic conditions associated with the spread of capitalist organization of production and marketing.34 The introduction of a centralised state administration and a capitalist system of production during colonialism integrated different groups into one social system of unprecedented scale.35 Capitalism and the state imposed systematic boundaries and restrictions in Kenya with profound consequences for indigenous social organization, the movement of indigenous groups and for the relations between these indigenous groups. These consequences will be discussed below in relationship to the Kikuyu group.

The British colonial administration had a very small administrative corps in Kenya but it had to govern large territories on a cost-recovery basis.36 The British answer to this administrational challenge was the implementation of 'indirect rule' which meant that the administration relied on collaboration with 'traditional' authority structures. In the colonial perception of African 'tribes' a chief personified 'tribal' authority and among groups that did not have such an institution the administration simply imposed or invented one. Most ethnic groups were designated to live in Native Reserves and each reserve was governed by a government appointed chief who was a member of the same ethnic group. Most African people in Kenya were not allowed to move freely anymore and had to stay within the boundaries of these reserves. Subsequently, people living within these reserves started to identify more closely with each other and the allotted locality.

'Indirect rule' not only transformed power relations within traditional power structures of ethnic groups but it also transformed the relationship between the different ethnic groups who were amalgamated in the colonial state. It instigated intense political competition among them because the ethnic group became the entity through which access to resources could be established often at the expense of other ethnic groups. In the political arena of the colonial state the chiefs, representing the various ethnic groups, were pitted against each other in the competition for these resources. 'Indirect rule' formed the foundation of the colonial 'divide and rule' tactics to avoid a unified opposition and maintain control over its large territories in Kenya. 'Indirect rule' transformed the political

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid. p. 88.
32 Ibid. p. 90.
33 Ibid. p. 89.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid. p. 86-87.
36 C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?', (1993) p. 2.

organisation of ethnic groups and the 'divide and rule' tactics intensified identification with the group identity.

The British colonial state used excessive violence in Kenya to impose its rule. The administration was small and it had to use force to maintain its domination and ensure economic activity by forcing local people to work on the settlers farms. Kenyans who worked as wage labourers were moved from one farm to another to avoid unification.[37] Surprisingly, a strong cohesion developed among those ethnic group groups from which many people, both men and women, were forced out of the Native Reserves by economic hardship to work on the 'white' settler farms. This intensification occurred in Kenya mostly among the Kikuyu group which had a relative high number of migrant farm workers living outside the Native Reserves compared to the other ethnic groups during the colonial era.

Ethnic politics and ethnic mobilisation occurred more frequently and was more intense in former British colonies because the implementation of indirect rule left large parts of traditional structures of social organization intact. These structures facilitated ethnic mobilization. In contrast the style of rule among the French colonizers was characterized by 'administrative centralization' where by traditional structures for social organization, the basis for unity on ethnic grounds, were largely eroded in the process of cultural assimilation.

The British style of colonial rule led more to a ranked system of ethnic stratification because certain ethnic groups were assigned to specific types of occupations and social roles on the basis of cultural traits which were fixed in the stereotypes developed by the colonial administration.[38] This created a system whereby one ethnic group was subordinate to another and social stratification became synonymous with ethnic identity. Social mobility was formally not possible beyond the boundaries of the ethnic group and as a result ethnic identity determined economic status and political interests. This contributed to heightened ethnic identification and solidarity and since the post-colonial governments generally did not reverse this process it had to face its consequences.

An important aspect of the ranked system of ethnic stratification under colonial rule is that ethnic stratification benefited one are a few ethnic groups. In Kenya it was the Kikuyu group which was located near the colonial capital Nairobi. On one hand this group suffered immensely from colonial rule but it also gained the most in terms of education and economic opportunities. It was this group that controlled political and economic power after independence in 1963 and tried to equate its group identity with a national Kenyan identity, a process I have termed *Kikuyuization* in this thesis. This will be further explained in chapter 6.

There is, however, no absolute division possible between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups because the dominant group, in Kenya the Kikuyu group, was also internally divided. Within the Kikuyu group there still is a wide class division between the Kikuyu elite and the Kikuyu poor. The other ethnic groups that are marginalized by the dominant Kikuyu group are able to draw a clear line between 'them' and 'us' and they can built their ethnic identities around this perceived contrast. Members of the dominant Kikuyu group who are equally marginalized find themselves in an identity crisis as they are excluded by the Kikuyu elite as well as by other sub-ordinate ethnic groups. This aspect is very relevant in order to understand the complexity of ethnic identification as here the intersection with class and other aspects of identity comes to the fore. The solution of the Kikuyu poor was to construct a new form of Kikuyu identity labelled as pure, real and genuine in contrast to the polluted ethnicity of their elites who, in their eyes, had betrayed them. I have termed this process *Kikuyuism* and I will go further into the development of *Kikuyuism* in chapter 6.

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[37] S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 92.
[38] Ibid.

2.6. Independence and Post-colonial Kenya

The nationalist struggle and the process of decolonization contributed further to the manifestation of contemporary ethnicity in Kenya.39 The Kenya African Union (KAU), the nationalist movement in Kenya during the colonial era, mobilised ethnic groups into politics. When the movement started to fall apart on the verge of decolonization these mobilised groups were largely transformed into electorate groups supporting their 'own' ethnic leader.40 The national movement was formed solely to achieve independence and all groups within the movement supported that goal. The weakness of KAU was based on the fact that 'one issue' movements lose their legitimacy when that objective is achieved. The groups, or rather their leaders in the nationalist movement, did not develop unity on political, social or economic issues concerning the rule of the new nation after independence. When the nationalist movement disintegrated the only ground for unity that was left was ethnicity and leaders were able to consolidate large support groups through the use of ethnic politics.41 Political ethnicity means that ethnicity is politicized and politics is 'ethnicized' and ethnic groups consequently become political formations with usually no other ideology than serving the groups interest.42 This created a situation of intense and unprecedented competition among these groups and their political leaders at the onset of independence.

The fact that the colonial state never had any legitimacy in democratic terms contributed to the use of ethnic politics after independence. The post-colonial state was left with a civilian population that was fragmented into numerous polities unified and divided by their ethnic identity with little loyalty towards the state.43 A hostile state stimulates people to seek cohesion on other grounds and the ethnic group remained the primary polity for its members.

The post-colonial state inherited artificial boundaries and highly undemocratic political and economic structures from the colonial state.44 The new leaders, ill-equipped and unprepared, faced the enormous challenge to run these new entities.45 The power transfer was preceded by negotiations between the would-be leaders and the British colonial administrations. The project of decolonization in Kenya meant the replacement of colonial rule by a 'puppet regime' under the supervision of the former colonial power.46 Henceforth, the structural roots from the post-colonial state were fundamentally detached from society and profoundly centralist, coercive and paternalistic in character.47

The consolidation and concentration of state power facilitated the institutionalisation of a single party headed by a personal ruler in Kenya. The centralisation of power in the post-colonial state was further enhanced by neo-colonialism,48 the lack of experience in democratic leadership and the lack of a democratic tradition in society at large.

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[39] C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?' (1993) p. 2, and S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 59.
[40] C. Ake, 'What is the problem of Ethnicity in Africa?', (1993) p. 3.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid. p. 4.
[43] S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 64.
[44] S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 66.
[45] S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 64.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid. p. 68.
[48] With neo-colonialism I mean the influence former colonial powers continued to have on the political and economic development of the post-colonial countries after independence.

Furthermore, the growing authoritarianism in the post-colonial state was not challenged by the international community49 during the Cold War for political strategic reasons and plain economic self-interest.

All of the issues discussed above contributed to the entrenchment of client-patronage structures in post-colonial Kenya based on ethnic alliances in both political and economic life. Economic development and nation-building economically, politically and culturally, would have laid the necessary foundation for the post-colonial states to thrive on.50 Lack of experience and with government institutions intact that were designed to create division the new state was incapable of developing meaning to the words 'Kenyan citizen'.

Moreover, the competition between the new Kenyan leaders over the scarce resources available prompted the need for them to focus on building strong support groups based on ethnicity. This situation worsened as the colonial power continued to have control over some of the new states' most valuable economic resources working hand in hand with the upcoming multi-nationals and international lending institutes such as the World Bank and the IMF.51

Directly after independence some prominent African scholars pleaded to redraw national borders in sub-Saharan Africa to better fit the existing ethnic groups.52

A KANU delegate in 1966 at a meeting of the Organisation for African Unity stated for example: 53

"If anyone wishes the right to self- determination let him exercise that right by moving out of the country if necessary but not seek to balkanize Africa further under the guise of so-called self-determination. The principle has relevance where foreign domination is the issue. It has no relevance where the issue is territorial disintegration by dissident citizens." 54

The main debate was whether this fear was grounded or whether these artificial boundaries have proved to be the root cause of subsequent conflict in sub-Saharan Africa.55

The political legitimacy of a nation-state is based on convincing the people that it represents them as a cultural unit.56 The state and cultural identity coincide and the nation-state gives people a sense of identity and belongingness. Nationalism is a variant of ethnicity as both refer to ideas of common origin, culture and language and both are able to engender great emotional force among its members. Ethnic or national identities are also both constructions but there is an important difference between them; ethnic movements do not strive for state sovereignty and when they do they automatically become nationalist movements.57. The issue that emerged was whether cultural unity is essential for a plural ethnic state to become a nation.58

Nations are communities where the citizens are expected to be integrated in respect to culture and self-identity in an abstract, anonymous manner. A definition of a nation usually carries elements of common origin, culture and language, elements that lay at the core of people's identity while that of

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49 With the international community I mean the countries that work together to promote international political stability, health, and economic development worldwide through institutions such as the United Nation, the World Health Organisation and the World Trade Organisation after the end of the Second World War until today.

50 J. Sachs, *The end of poverty*, (2005) p. 73.

51 J. Sachs, *The end of poverty* (2005) p. 189.

52 Two of these scholars were Ali Mazrui and Wole Soyinka. S.Y. Hameso, (1997) p. 70.

53 KANU stand for the Kenya African National Union which was founded in 1964 and which was the political party that ruled Kenya until 2002.

54 S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 72.

55 Ibid. p. 71.

56 T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (1993) p. 101.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid. p. 116.

a state usually refers to people just as subjects to state's sovereign and legitimate authority.59 In Kenya people are subjects, not citizens. The subjects in Kenya share little cultural commonalities, such as ideas of origin, culture, language, with each other. The governing strategies of the first Kenyan governments encouraged 'state-building' and 'nation-destroying' because little effort was invested to bridge these differences in the framework of the new-born states.60 The dominant Kikuyu group equated its identity with a national Kenyan identity excluding the identities of subordinate groups and therefore creating deeply felt social and economic cleavages. The 'nationalistic' ideology of the hegemonic Kikuyu group was particularistic in contrast to universalistic and these mechanisms of exclusion further obstructed the growth of a sense of national unity in Kenya.61

2.7. Ethnicity and Identity Construction

Ethnicity acquires meaning through the intersection with other aspects of identity such as class, gender or age. The historical process of ethnic mobilisation is re-constructed in the process of identity construction. This process is related to the aforementioned other aspects of identities therefore to understand ethnic mobilisation it is important to analyse this relationship. In this thesis I will especially focus on the aspect of ethnicity but as stated above I will not be able to analyse this aspect in isolation of other aspects such as gender and age. Without the intersection the aspect of ethnicity renders meaningless, at least in a scholarly attempt to develop insight into mobilisation on such aspects. In this section I will give a short introduction to what I mean with the term identity and how the process of identity construction is influenced by dominant and sub-discourses on ethnicity and how the process of identity construction again influences the construction of these discourses.

I follow a concept of identity that is not essentialist but strategic and positional.[62] Identification is an important part of identity construction and it is based on experienced commonalities with for instance other people and groups. It is a process that is continuously in progress and in that sense identity always undergoes change and transformation. I take identity as "multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practises and positions."[63]

Identities are constructed within the realms of discourse and therefore within historical and institutional contexts that bring forth discourse. Subsequently, identities are strategically constructed within specific power relationships and can be seen as the product of the marking of difference and exclusion.[64] Essential to our understanding of ethnicity is the reality that identity is constructed through difference. Only in relation to the 'other', to what it is not, can identity acquire meaning. Identities can only function as points of identification because they are inherently exclusive.

"There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender;….identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its result."65

Translating Judith Butler's core idea to the larger process of identity construction, instead of just focussing on the aspect of gender, identity is essentially understood as a performance. Aspects of identity such as gender, ethnicity and religion are in her line of thought something you do rather than who you are. Butler further explicates that we all put on these performances and in this sense it is not a

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[59] S. Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) p. 8.
[60] S.Y. Hameso, *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa* (1997) Chapter 9.
[61] T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (1993) p. 119.
[62] S. Hall, *Questions of a cultural identity*, (1996) p. 2
[63] S. Hall, *Questions of a cultural identity*, (1996) p. 4
[64] Ibid.
[65] J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (1990) p. 25.

question whether to act out a performance but what form that performance will take. The idea that identity is something you do makes identity undeniably fluid and variable because this perception focuses on how individuals behave at different times and in different situations. A cultural identity such as ethnicity or in Butler's theory gender is therefore no longer based on a, supposedly, stable factor such as biology. Identity is an achievement because it is an individual's choice of how to behave in a certain situation at a certain time. A performance can therefore only properly be understood when an individual's choice on how to perform a certain aspect of identity is analyzed in context. This line of thinking opens up a whole new way of considering identity construction as a strategy.

Butler has received much critique on her theory partly because of the mere fact that an individual's choice becomes the centre of attention rather than groups with easily identifiable collective identities such as how women used to be identified in feminist theory and political movements. This opens up a fluid and hard to fathom reality for all of us. Moreover, Butler's individual approach is not first and foremost based on mainstream experiences and practical reality. The majority of men and women still identify culturally with the gender identity that we can find in the heterosexual matrix that constitutes the sex-gender-desire link. When we look at women in less economically developed countries the freedom to choose gender identities becomes even a more problematic issue and consequently the practical reality of Butler's theory becomes somewhat questionable.

I acknowledge Butler's bias to individuality in her theoretical approach of performativity in relation to the process of identity construction as theorized in her book *Gender Trouble*[66] despite some of its shortcomings. She brings the individual to the fore and with it the ability of every human being to make strategic choices in relationship to social, political, historical and economic contexts that are very much reflected in the process of identity construction. However these strategic choices are bound by the historical, political, economic and cultural contexts in which identity is constructed.

I use the term discourse to analyse these contexts. It is difficult to define the term discourse. Looking at all the available definitions actually only confirms the fluidity of its meaning.[67] In this thesis I will follow Michel Foucault and Sarah Mills' very useful interpretation of his definition of the term discourse.[68] Foucault defines the term as follows: "[instead] of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meaning: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practise that accounts for a number of statements."[69] I would like to highlight the second and third interpretation from Sarah Mills of these three definitions of the term discourse as these are the most relevant in the context of this thesis. The second definition made by Foucault, treating discourse as an individualizable group of statements, can be used to identify particular structures within discourses, "groups of utterances which seem to be regulated in some way and which seem to have a coherence and a force to them in common."[70]

The dominant discourses on ethnicity in Kenya refer to the group of utterances and texts but also practises, central in the third definition, produced by the respective governments since independence concerning the construction of specific 'ethnic subjects'. The term sub-discourse refers to the way these utterances, texts and practises were negotiated by the people it addressed.

Intertextuality is at the core of discourse. "Discourses differ with the kinds of institutions and social practises in which they take shape and with the positions of those who speak and those whom

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[66]J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (1990) p. 25.
[67] S. Mills, *Discourse* (1997) p. 6.
[68] Ibid. p. 6.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

they address." 71 Moreover, these groups of utterances are also determined by the social context and they in their turn influence the social context.72 Institutions and social context essentially contribute to the development of discourses and are again themselves influenced by discourses. Discourses are therefore never developed in isolation but in intersubjectivity with and often in contrast to other groups of utterances constructed by people.73

In addition to their intertextual nature, discourses are furthermore developed around 'practises of exclusion'.74 It is important to view discourse as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."75 The 'truths' that are produced in the dominant discourses in society are essentially political in nature because other forms of knowledge, other truths, are excluded in relation to power.76 The statements seem to be self-evident and 'natural' but that is caused by the fact that other, contradicting, statement, which could be equally 'true', are excluded.77 This can be described as 'discursive pressure'. A discursive structure is a system of ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular social context and this pressures people to think within certain parameters. It conditions people in a social context to belief in certain 'truths' while making the opposite almost unthinkable. This again stresses the fact that discourses are not just groups of statements but they are statements that have "meaning, force and effect in a social context."78

Social relationships are relationships of power because they "produce forms of subjectivity and behaviour rather than simply repressing them."79 Power is not something abstract that is imposed on people. People are not merely oppressed by power relations and people don't own power because social relationships and contexts are fluid and in constant transformation. "If power is no longer thought simply as a negative and repressive force but as a condition of production of all speech, and if power is conceived as polar rather than monolithic, as an asymmetrical dispersion, then all utterances will be potentially splintered, formally open to contradictory uses."80 Power is more a form of action or relationship between people which is negotiated in each interaction and is never fixed or stable.81 The notion that repression of acts by those in power simply results in the erasing of those acts is a simplistic model of actions and power relations. Forms of subjectivity are produced in negotiation with existing power relations as resistance to power is contained within the notion of power when it is perceived as a relation. 82 Perceiving power as essentially a relation involves an analysis of the degree of power involved in the relation rather than an assumption that in any power relation there is simply a powerful participant and a powerless one.

Discourse is, as stated above, always in dialogue and in conflict with other positions and therefore discourses are the site of constant disputes over meaning.83 The discursive structure frames the boundaries in which these 'truths' can be negotiated by people.84 It is people who create discourses, both dominant and subordinate, and thus they are able to contest supposed 'truths' even if they are not part of powerful institutions within a social context. These dominant discursive structures

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71 Ibid. p. 11.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid. p. 12.
75 Ibid. p. 17.
76 Ibid. p. 19.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid. p. 13.
79 Ibid. p. 20.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid. p. 39.
82 Ibid. p. 42.
83 Ibid. p. 16.
84 Ibid. p. 18.

are constantly negotiated by the people they address and in this process excluded discursive positions are made available sometimes in the form of open resistance and debate but more often less obviously as part of identity construction. I see individual people as both agents and subjects who are capable of resisting ideological pressures and controlling their own actions.85 The process of negotiating dominant discourses, affirming them, resisting them and/or creating alternatives is complex and inherently hybrid but the concept of agency can illuminate this process. I use intersecting and multiple identities analytically to comprehend the strategic construction of these identities in relationship to the historical, political, economic and cultural contexts in this process takes place.

The constant conflicts between discourses are conflicts over truth and authority. Knowledge is the result of power struggles and in this sense knowledge is in essence not impartial as it serves a political agenda which is evidenced by the fact that we can talk of dominant and subordinate discourses. "Power is therefore a key element in discussions of discourse."[86] The dominant discourse on ethnicity was constructed by the post-colonial Kenyan governments to legitimise their way of ruling the state and to paralyse opposition. The sub-discourse *Kikuyuism* was a way within which subordinate subject could negotiate and resist the 'truths' produced by these dominant discourses. The construction of *Kikuyuism* made an alternative way of thinking available for the targeted people and through this they were able to claim power.

2.8. Conclusion

Ethnic identity cannot be judged at face value. Ethnic identity is not self-evident and can only acquire meaning through the intersection with other aspects of identity. Ethnic identity is (re-) constructed by individual people and groups as a strategy to gain status or other forms of power. Ethnic identity can be perceived as a performed identity in which history is (re-)constructed to meet present needs. Relevant to this thesis is that general ideas of what Kikuyu identity entails are translated in the process by individuals or groups. Henceforth a multitude of fluid and localised Kikuyu cultures and identities exist. These identities and cultures undergo constant transformation because they are continuously re-constructed in relationship to permanently shifting historical contexts and political, economic and cultural circumstances.

In this thesis *majimboism*, Moi's discourse on ethnicity, *kikuyuization*, Kenyatta's discourse on ethnicity, and *kikuyuism*, the sub-discourse constructed by the Kikuyu poor to negotiate both domminant discourses, dominate the intertextuality between discourses on ethnicity in Kenya since the colonial era. This intertextuality determines processes of in-or-exclusion and how other ethnic groups position themselves in relationship to the Kikuyu group. I would like to shed light on how this intertextuality influences and is re-produced/re-constructed by the intersubjectivity of ghetto boys in Bondeni Village. In the next chapter I will explicate the method I used to gather narration of the ghetto boys. I will show how these narrations have been the right tools to get insight into how these young men position themselves in relationship to dominant and sub-ordinate discourses on ethnicity and how they claim power by developing their own strategies within which sometimes ethnicity is downplayed or very much emphasised.

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[85] Ibid. p. 35.
[86] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will first give a snap-shot impression of the environment in which I did research. Then I will proceed with my research plans and the first challenges I encountered before I will introduce my research participants.

There is very little information available on Mathare Valley and the Mungiki movement and I used the method of 'narratives against the grain' to do research to solve this problem of lack of information. I will describe this method in section 3.5.

3.2. An Impression of my Research Environment

Mathare Valley is three kilometres away from Nairobi city centre and is located in the Eastlands area. The Eastlands area is notorious for its high crime rate and low-income families and within Eastlands Mathare Valley stands out particularly. Mathare Valley is more than other slum communities in the Eastlands area a concentration of crime, poverty and deprivation. It is at the same time a centre of activity, energy and creativity. The absolute extremes and the rawness that characterise Mathare are very much overwhelming when you first visit this slum as an outsider. It feels like walking into a pressure cooker of life.

The valley is divided in numerous villages. The boundaries between village communities are not visible to outsiders but they are very much experienced by people living in Mathare. The only way to enter the slum from the main road is through a labyrinth of small alleyways called *chochoros*[1] in the local *Sheng*. An overpowering view of countless low-rising, rusted iron sheet houses with mud walls can be viewed from the main road. Here and there the valley of iron sheet roofs which are dotted with stones to secure the sheets from blowing away by the wind are overshadowed by hastily constructed stone buildings that never seem to be finished. Iron pins stick out of rooftops to enable the building of another floor as soon as enough money is collected. In the meantime they function to hang up clotheslines. Clothes are hanging out to dry virtually everywhere, from balconies, at rooftops, on lines between the small houses. While walking through the *chochoros* you have to dodge these lines of wet clothes, jump over open sewages and avoid stepping into piles and piles of rubbish.

Business is going on all over the place. Women sell neatly piled and freshly washed vegetables in front of their houses, men cook *chapattis*, Indian breads, near kiosks where loud music is played from morning to evening. There are children playing in between and the number of goats, chicken and dogs walking about freely complete the picture of liveliness.

The valley is cut in halves by a dirty river where all the open sewages that run down the valley end up. Here the colour and the liveliness of the drying clothes, the vegetable shops and the small kiosks are replaced by another kind of business. The banks of the river are blackened by the charcoal that is used to brew *chang'aa*, the illegal alcohol on which the slum economy thrives. Men with blood shut eyes wearing dirty, ashy coloured clothes are constantly in the motion of brewing and drinking *chang'aa*. Others gamble. From the bridge you can see what people from Mathare call the *Chang'aa Breweries*; a sight of countless black oil drums on charcoal fires alongside the riverbanks. The drums that are used are old and worn-down and they are known to explode because of the accumulation of heat in the process of brewing. Amidst these dangerous brewing sites children search in the dirty waters for metals they can sell per kilo for a few shillings in a neighbourhood nearby. No colour survives here as it is quickly absorbed by dirt, charcoal dust and sewage. It is a grim picture that reveals the grim reality of slum life.

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[1] *Chochoros* mean small alleyways in *Sheng*.

The bars in Mathare are located near the river to shorten the supply routes. It is easy to trace a bar because you only have to follow the trail of drunkards sleeping of their hangovers on the street oblivious of the goats that chew on their trousers and children who tease them. The bars are full of men from 5 in the morning until 11 in the evening and prostitution is rampant. Rape is as well. Even very young children are not safe to be left at home so they usually tag along to play near their mothers' businesses. The horrible myth that a female virgin can cure a man from HIV/AIDS has caused the increase of the rape of infants as young as 1 year old. Regardless of the many counselling and testing centres that dot the Eastlands area HIV/AIDS is still a taboo subject and condoms are rarely used by men while HIV/AIDS is one of the main causes of death of people living in this slum.

3.3. Change of Research Plans and Participant Observation

My initial plan was to interview and follow four members of the Mungiki movement but on my arrival in Kenya in July 2005 this proved to be too dangerous. The movement was declared illegal after the Kariobangi massacre in March 2002 and it seemed from the surface as if the movement had dissolved. Soon I learned that the movement had stayed active ever since in the slums of the Eastland area of Nairobi having a tight grip on the *matatu* industry.

"The Mungiki have not gone underground, maybe outside the slums but inside they are very much there, in control. The current government does not have any control over the Mungiki. They must be backed up by a power somewhere. But nobody knows how."[2]

In 2004 many stories appeared in the news which claimed that Mungiki-defectors were brutally murdered by members of the movement for leaving the movement so I was aware about the alleged violent nature of the movement before I went to Kenya in July 2005. This made me a bit uncertain whether I would be able to do the research I had envisioned.

I chose not to live in Mathare Valley. The first impression would be that it would be too dangerous for a white woman to live in the slums but I realised during my field research that this does not necessarily have to be the case as being accepted by local people tends to create a tight safety net around you. The question, however, that emerges is whether as a white person you might draw unnecessary attention to the people you are living with and the repercussions after you leave as people may assume that this family has become rich.

All in all it was the best choice to live outside the slum since the slums can be quite a challenging environment to be in. This gave me the distance I needed to better digest my experiences, and reflect on the research process I was pursuing. So I travelled 45 minutes every day to and from the slum by *matatu*, a route that would take me from a crowded, busy and lively 'African' middle class neighbourhood, through the glossy, pompous and cosmopolitan business centre in town to the chaotic and colourful 'ant hill' that constitutes Eastlands.

During my research period I stayed at the house of Dr. Karanja. who, in 1985, initiated and continues to manage several social and economic development projects under the umbrella of a local NGO[3] in Mathare Valley. On my day of arrival we sat down and talked about my research at length and she advised me not to get involved with the movement in anyway as members could take me for a spy which would involve unnecessary and unforeseeable risks.[4]

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[2] Discussion, Dr. Karanja, 13 July 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi.
[3] The local NGO is a Kenyan NGO, founded in 1985 by Dr. K., which has developed several socio-economic development programs in and around the slum area of Mathare Valley near Nairobi. It currently coordinates five interrelated projects: a Micro Enterprise Project, a Primary and Vocational School, a primary and secondary school, an Emergency Center, and a Youth Group.
[4] Discussion, Dr. Karanja, 13 July 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi.

"It is not a very good idea to interview Mungiki members, or former members. They will not talk to you. They will become very suspicious and will think you are investigating them. The other day a former Mungiki member who had converted to Christianity was preaching in town and he was telling people about Mungiki. The Mungiki chopped off his head and left it somewhere in a milk carton to give the message: 'Do not tell or we will kill you!' They are very secretive."[5]

Furthermore she advised me not to tell anyone in the slum that I was doing research as:

"Mathare is a place where things just happen. When I go there I make sure I know exactly what I came to do and when people ask me questions I give a straightforward answer, no more, no less. They see me as much as an outsider as they see you. And they can turn on you, just like that. When you walk there you might think nothing is going on and the next minute people are fighting, it happens in a split second. People of Mathare are always suspicious that police and other outsiders come to take advantage of them all the time so they fight back. It is not good to cause any reason for suspicion because it could backfire on you and on the projects."[6]

I decided to revise my research plan and method of research by following both the method of participant observation and to conduct interviews in order to acquire research data. My research population changed with this decision. I now decided to focus on young men in general living in the slum, instead of only former Mungiki members and I realised gradually that this might give me even more insight into how these men constructed their ethnic identity in relation to the circumstances they lived in, especially as these circumstances were highly influenced by the presence of the Mungiki movement. This movement presented their version of ethnic identity with such a force that it triggered all kinds of responses around the area of Bondeni village in Mathare Valley where a majority of Kikuyu people live. The young men I wanted to approach in my research had to position themselves in relation to the Mungiki movement. Their reflections on their daily lives, a life very much influenced by the presence of this movement, gave me insight into the way they negotiated the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi government in which the Mungiki movement was very much part, as will become clear in later chapters.

During my research in which I used participant observation and in discussions with my research participants I worked with the youth group for five days a week for a period of four months, from 10 July until 10 November 2005. Upon request I do not mention the name of the organisation and all the names mentioned in this thesis are fictional.

The youth program developed naturally in the late 1980s from the initial program activities of the local NGO, founded by Dr. Karanja in 1985. Parents, predominantly single women, in the Micro Enterprise Project were worried about their teenage children who were increasingly getting involved in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse and petty theft, to survive or escape the harsh reality of their daily lives. This prompted the need for the local NGO to provide counselling services to these youth. The counselling activities evolved into the emergence of a vibrant and independent youth group with the objective to help themselves in improving the quality of their life on both a social and an economic level.

Today the youth group consists of 35 members. Over the years the group has developed a number of activities designed to help socially rehabilitate fellow slum teenagers and create economic prospects for members. The activities include drama, peer counselling, school visits, individual

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

training opportunities, educational tours, sports, slum clean ups, AIDS/HIV education, exchange programs with other youth groups both in and outside Kenya and the development of several income generating activities. My work was to conduct several feasibility studies of project plans, to evaluate current programs and formulate recommendations for improvement and to assist the group in organizing a youth camp, an Aids concert and in setting up a cyber café. I was very busy and this work enabled me to first of all be in Mathare Valley, Bondeni Village, without suspicion and through my work I became slowly integrated into the lives of the young men that I had chosen as participants for my research.

In the beginning, members of the youth group would wait for me at a school to accompany me into the slum but later on I was able to move freely as many people in the neighbourhood got to know me. I would often meet the mothers, other relatives and friends of the participants on my way to meet them and soon my days were filled with drinking tea with some, sitting at the shop of others or cooking lunch with yet others. Gradually people opened up to me and I got to learn a lot about their lives, their problems and their aspirations. I had the rare opportunity to experience life in Bondeni Village from the inside for four months, an experience I am indescribably grateful for.

3.4. My Research Participants

The main focus of my field research in Kenya were the young Kikuyu men in Mathare Valley but I have also been able to meet and interview three older Kikuyu men, Grandfather, Baba Gitau and Mr. Maina,[7] who were either involved in the Mau Mau insurgence or who lived in the Kikuyu reserves adjacent to the area from which the Mau Mau fighters were conducting their guerrilla war in 1952 until 1956. These interviews have been very helpful in obtaining a better understanding of how young Kikuyu men at that time negotiated the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the colonial government. The scope of this thesis does not allow me to present their narratives because my focus is the young men from Mathare Valley. The narratives from the older men, however, have helped me to develop a necessary historical perspective required to understand the position of the young men as the elder men share many similarities with these young men in terms of economic and social status.

In the course of my stay selected three research participants, Tom, Buda and Karani, among the young men I met and worked with during the period of my research. Karani, 25 years old, does not come from Mathare Valley but lives in a slightly better neighbourhood called Umoja and he was not a member of the youth group but he worked for the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA)[8] which has strong links to the youth group, as will become clear in the following chapters. Through his work he witnessed the emergence and the spread of the Mungiki movement in both Korogocho/ Kariobangi, the movement's first stronghold in the slums, and in Mathare Valley. His experiences, thoughts and aspirations enabled me to create a broader context in which I could better understand Buda and Tom's stories. Buda and Tom were my main research participants and I spent most of my days with one of them.

Tom, 27 years old, lived in Mathare Valley, Bondeni Village, until he managed to move out three years ago when he became a successful businessman selling *chang'aa*. His business later went

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[7] Upon request I do not use their real names.
[8] Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) is a NGO that was founded in late 1980s to engage the youth from the slum in sports activities and give them different prospects in life through the granting of scholarships and other forms of training. MYSA became controversial within the Mathare community when job-, sport- and other opportunities were predominantly given to people outside the slum while the organization is still using the name of the slum community to attract donors from Norway and The Netherlands. In the context of this thesis the relevance is that these accusations and bitter feelings towards MYSA were shared unanimously among the people from Mathare Valley that I talked to.

down and he had to move from a two-bed room stone house to a one room apartment in Huruma, see map 4, which is adjacent to Mathare Valley. Tom has been a member of the youth group since 1998.

Buda, 26 years old, still lives in Mathare Valley, Bondeni Village and does not have a job or any other type of occupation nor is he educated. He used to be a drama leader in the youth group and he has had a short career as an actor in a Kikuyu television. Nowadays he spends his time helping his sister in brewing *chang'aa*, he gambles, plays football, drinks with his friends and attends youth group activities and makes necklaces to sell to volunteers who regularly visit the slums at the invitation of MYSA. I spent most week days with Buda and often just followed him during his daily activities. After a few weeks he became so used to having me around that he started to send me text messages when I had not been in Mathare for a day or two. I of course also worked in Mathare Valley and sometimes I would go to Mathare Valley just for work related purposes but Buda always managed to track me down. This gave me a safe feeling and Buda introduced me to parts of slum life that I would have never experienced otherwise such as hanging out at the illegal, gambling spot or watching the, again, illegal, brewing of *chang'aa* at the river.

While hanging around, talking to Buda, Tom and their friends for over a period of four months I listened to their conversation, their discussion and occasionally I could ask them questions. I have been able to document many fragments of discussions, most of the answers to my questions and large pieces of the endless conversations I shared with these men. From all this I was able to eventually read their narratives and analyse them through a method I will explain in the next section.

3.5. Methodology of Research and Analysis: Biographic Narratives against the Grain

The use of biographies within scientific research stems from a history of analysing the lives of women and non-western people in the context of feminist researchers, minority studies and oral history, in the search for alternative voices and anthropological perspectives which was championed by for instance L. Langness.[9] In the 1970s there was an increasing interest in using biographies as tools for analysis, for example in the field of women's history, with the aim to record forgotten stories of people who did not have voices in white and male dominated history books. Within this context the creation of new sources, such as interviews, ego documents, diaries and correspondence, within scientific research became acceptable.[10] The collection of biographies through interviews was not just a solution to a problem of lack of sources, they in themselves became objects of study because they gave insight into the lives of people who were before then objectified in those (white and male dominated) history books and here their agency came to the fore.

The method of analysing 'biographic narratives against the grain' developed by K. Willemse enabled me to avoid easy generalisations and black and white dichotomizations of the oppressor and the oppressed or the powerful and the powerless.[11] Instead this method enabled me to look at the less-obvious. It made me to focus on the contradictions, silences and ambiguities that might illuminate the complex reality of the construction of identities and the use of sub-discourses in relation to the dominant discourse. In this thesis I focus on the various ways in which the young Kikuyu men perceived, negotiated and invented strategies to deal with the dominant discourses on ethnicity to "defend their interests and on their possibilities to transform that same discourse."[12] In this way I hope to find out under which circumstances ethnicity becomes a prominent feature in constructing their

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[9] A. Aalten, 'De uitzondering en de regel', p.64
[10] M. Mossink, 'Inleiding' (1988) p. 10.
[11] S. Mills, *Discourse* (1997) p. 39.
[12] K. Willemse, *One Foot in Heaven* (2001) p. 23.

identities and this eventually illuminate why ethnicity is still such a pervasive feature in Kenya today from the perspectives of the young men generally mobilised in ethnic politics.

Positioning has got everything to do with identity as I take the dynamics of multiple and shifting identities as political strategies, a way of dealing with the allotted positions within the dominant discourse.[13] Therefore it is important to search for alternative subject positions, consciously or unconsciously emphasized by the participants, because they are strategically chosen by them to negotiate the dominant discourse.

The biographic narratives obtained through interviews and talks are not biographic narratives in the conventional sense. They are not necessarily chronological stories told by my participants while reflecting on their lives. This way I am able to understand them in their own words. The method of analysing 'biographic narratives against the grain' enabled me to refer more loosely to the narratives of certain parts of the participant's life which are relevant for my Master's thesis.[14]

3.5.1. First Tool of Research: 'Listening against the Grain'

The first tool, which was developed by Willemse in a set of three, to conduct the method of analysing 'biographic narratives against the grain', is 'listening against the grain'.[15] I felt initially limited as I could not interview people directly and therefore direct the process of discussion since I could not be open about the fact that I was even conducting research. The fact that I could not be open about conducting my research gave me a very uneasy feeling and I became more than aware of the power-infested research situation.[16] I tried to calm my apprehension by convincing myself that I was working with the youth group to improve the lives of the members of the group and that I was writing this thesis to contribute to a better situation for them on a more abstract level, but I still felt dishonest. I tried to narrow the power gap by engaging in a more mutual exchange of experiences, ideas and aspirations with my participants and this allowed our discussions to be based more on friendship than anything else.

In the beginning of my research these talks did not go as smoothly as depicted above. It took two months before all three respondents, in different measures, felt free to tell their stories the way they wanted to. I encountered many obstacles in the first half of my research, because I could not work openly, and, in the beginning, my respondents felt insecure about what I wanted to hear from them and what they could share with me. I invested a lot of time in just being with them, working with them and talking with them in order to create a situation of mutual trust and openness and we eventually overcame the first unease. I would sometimes read my notes to them to build more trust between us and they responded to this by either commenting on my interpretations or by highlighting other experiences which in their eyes would create a better understanding of their situations. These reflections turned out to be very helpful and contributed to more contextual knowledge on my part and more depth in the stories they shared with me.

Talks, jokes, discussions, body language, chitchat, intimate conversations and serious reflections on my interpretations constituted the process of exchange between me and the three young Kikuyu men. This is described by Willemse as part of the inter-subjective knowledge production and part of the dialectical process which is at the core of the tool of listening against the grain as I applied it.[17] This process is also the context within which I made my notes, read the narratives and eventually learned to understand them in relation to each other.

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[13] K. Willemse, 'Mapping selves', (2004) p. 2.
[14] K. Willemse, *One Foot in Heaven* (2001) p. 28.
[15] Ibid. p. 27.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid. p. 33.

After a while and I told my participants that I wanted to find out more about their lives to educate people worldwide about the situation they live in told from their perspectives. That was all I could tell without threatening my safety and that of the projects I worked for. They all responded with great enthusiasm and made me promise to let them read, or read to them, the outcomes of our talks. Even though I could not be as completely open to them as I would have wished, I did feel a bit more honest because they now were more aware of the fact that they were taking part in my research and thus they truly became my participants.

In practise our talks did not change. When we went somewhere or worked on a project together, I concurrently would start by asking questions which usually gave enough encouragement to my participants to start telling their own stories in their own words. The questions were either based on previous discussions, incidents and/or experiences we shared together or on issues they wanted to discuss with me. Consequently they directed the process of our exchanges to a high extent. They chose what to talk about, what they said about their lives and what not. I learned that this was an opportunity, in contrast to my initial feelings of limitation, as it enabled me to really listen to their stories in their own words. I merely started with asking questions and as soon as they were talking I listened with fascination and every time one of the participants ended a part of his story I asked another question based upon what he had just told me. I never took notes during our talks because in my experience it obstructed the exchange, created an unnecessary distance and made it more formal. I also never took my voice-recorder with me as it was generally perceived by my participants as intimidating and could also trigger unnecessary suspicion in the community. I took notes when I got home or in the *matatu* on the way when the daylight, or the black-light in the *matatu*, and my fellow passengers allowed it.

It was my initial idea to hire an assistant, an interpreter, as it was my assumption that some conversations were better conducted in a language more familiar to my participants and other informants than English. Dr. Karanja advised strongly against it based on the fact that I could not openly conduct research and more importantly because I had already established some credibility among the Bondeni community, through my work in the past, and a research assistant would only stand in my way. During the practise of my research I realised that being on my own enabled me to develop a closer contact with the people in Bondeni and it made it easier for them to approach me and for me to be flexible in my daily schedules. I would often not know beforehand what the day would bring and, as in my discussions with my participants, I was guided by whatever crossed my path. The language issue turned out not to be an issue after all as all my three participants talked English fluently and I learned to understand the type of Sheng they used quite to some extent. In conversation with older people who did not speak either English or Sheng, my participants interpreted for me and this only contributed to a sense of sharing and a feeling of friendship.

Listening against the grain is not just about hearing words and taking notes of these words.[18] In the context of my research situation my participants largely directed the process of our talks and in this process I tried not to fill the silences straight away or interject when they hesitated. Instead I tried to take these silences and hesitations as part of their reflection and positioning in relation to the dominant discourse.[19] I tried to hear 'implicit messages' that would enable me to understand more about the subtexts which would illuminate more about the way these young men negotiated the dominant discourse.[20] I wanted to understand the narratives of my participants in the context of their surroundings up to an extent that I have occasionally visited actual places with them which they narrated in their stories. I wanted to understand these men in their own words therefore I asked questions about their lives and encouraged them to reflect on their past and present without following

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[18]Ibid. p. 29.
[19] Ibid. p. 27.
[20] Ibid.

a stipulated order. After a while their stories developed shapes and forms that I had not expected and could never have imagined. Thus began the challenge of analysing them.

3.5.2. Second Tool of Research: 'Reading against the Grain'

I want to unravel the static code of the representation of ethnic hierarchy, the ethnic bound construction of subject and object positions, that has penetrated the narrative texts from the participants. The way ethnic hierarchy is represented in these texts is so self-evident that neither the Kenyan narrator nor the Kenyan receptor is aware of it.[21] Through this focus I hope to understand the role of the structural ethnic hierarchy in relation to other forms of identity construction and also the way history is (re-)constructed within these narratives. As I stated in the Introduction mobilisation on ethnic grounds is primarily concerned with other aspects of identities such as class, gender or age. The focus on the structural ethnic hierarchy in my intertextual analysis, which I will explain below, enables me to research this relation which will bring me closer to eventually understanding when, and why, ethnicity becomes the prominent feature of social relations from the perspective of the young, Kikuyu men in Mathare Valley.

The second tool that has been developed by Willemse to conduct the method of analysing 'biographic narratives against the grain' is 'reading against the grain'.[22] The tool 'reading against the grain', like the other tools, enables me to discover the 'layeredness' within a narrative and thus discover the multiple ways in which the young, Kikuyu men constructed their identities in diverse contexts and how they made strategic use of these constructions in relation to the dominant discourse on ethnicity.[23] This tool implies the need to look for alternative meanings represented in the text and it requires extensive knowledge of the context in which these narratives are developed to be able to detect these alternative meanings as a researcher.[24]

I am fascinated by the analytical distinction Willemse makes between a narrative as a text and its context.[25] 'Reading against the grain' is about the reciprocal process between texts and contexts. With this I mean, following Willemse, to read texts in contexts and to analyse the way the context has influenced the text and when possible how the text again influences the context.

A way to uncover the alternative meanings is to look at the argumentation used by the participants. The narrative texts are argumentative which means that when these young Kikuyu men reflect on their past they automatically reflect on the dominant discourse on ethnicity that has influenced their life. What they tell me in their narratives is directed at the dominant discourse and the way they tell their story gives me insight into how they negotiate this dominant discourse. The general view behind this is that: "[p]eople continuously reflect on dominant discourses even when referring to common sense knowledge, whereby these discourses are not only acknowledged, but often negotiated and even adjusted."[26]

The alternative meanings hidden within the narrative text, which can shed light on the way identities are constructed by the participants in relation to the dominant discourse, are not self-evident. It requires reading between the lines and looking for hesitations, contradictions and above all silences.[27] Intertextuality is an important notion within the tool 'reading against the grain' for understanding the narratives of the young, Kikuyu men within its context.[28] The term intertextuality

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[21] Ibid. p. 9.
[22] Ibid. p. 29.
[23] K. Willemse, 'Mapping selves', (2004) p. 2.
[24] Ibid. p. 3.
[25] Ibid.
[26] K. Willemse, *One Foot in Heaven* (2001) p. 30.
[27] K. Willemse, 'Mapping selves', (2004) p. 6.
[28] K. Willemse, *One Foot in Heaven*, (2001) p. 30.

refers to the relation of a text to other texts and with this I mean texts in the largest sense of the word.[29] The principal of intertextuality is that meaning within texts is constituted by the relation of the text to previous texts, or better said by the relation with that which already acquired meaning in a specific cultural context.[30] New texts are constructed with the aid of old elements that acquire new functions and meanings in their new contexts. A text does not only just refer to traceable older texts, intertextuality in its narrowest sense, but also follows existing cultural models or conventions of representation, intertextuality in its broadest sense. In the analyses of such references the objective is not so much to determine the measure of dependence on source texts but to discover which extra meanings are brought to the new text.[31] Stories can reproduce existing conventional meanings which Maaike Meyer has termed cultural texts.[32] The cultural text is a conglomerate of accepted recurring motives and ways of representation concerning a specific theme, such as ethnicity, that organises itself over and over again within new cultural texts.[33] The analysis of intertextuality is thus not primarily concerned with the individual uniqueness of a text, but with the way it reproduces and interprets existing cultural texts.

Important aspects of intertextual analysis are the unconscious references to texts which are in one way or the other part of the cultural climate wherein the texts are both created and received. In this context the term resonance is important. In using the tool of 'reading against the grain' I am interested in looking for structural principles of representation which are active, or resonated, in these texts.[34] The term cultural text is strongly related to the term discourse. The dominant discourse on ethnicity used by the Moi Government interprets and reproduces history and the cultural text on ethnic hierarchy and the sub-discourses used by the participants to negotiate the dominant discourse also interpret and reproduce history and the existing cultural text on ethnic hierarchy. The dominant discourse and the sub-discourses are engaged in a reciprocal process of influencing one another which means that also the sub-discourses have the power to change the dominant discourse.

I, as a researcher and as a subject, also bring extra meaning to a text. I can only think, speak and analyse within the limits imposed upon me by the discursive frameworks circulating at the time that I am conducting my research and writing this thesis. Therefore a problem arises when I start interpreting a text through the notion of intertextuality because the intertextual relations are infinite but my perspective is limited and subjective.[35] I can be critical and try to use alternative perspectives but I cannot think beyond the limits of what can be thought and the limits on what can be classified as knowable. "All knowledge is determined by a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures, and theoretical knowledge is no exception."[36] The analysis of the intertextuality of a text is limited by my personal and professional stance and by my positions within the circulating discursive frameworks.[37] I give meaning to the texts while I am both positioned in the local context in which I conducted my research and in the contexts in which I will read the narratives as meaningful.[38] For example as a white Dutch women working in Mathare Valley I am part of the dominant discourse on ethnicity and my positioning in relation to this discourse will be reflected in the choices I make in the selection of parts of the narratives and the meaning I dictate to them. My reading of these fragments, the reading I will present in this thesis, is thus highly subjective and easily debatable as there are many

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[29] M. Meyer, *In Tekst Gevat,* (1996) p. 18.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid. p. 19.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid. p. 33.
[34] M. Meyer, *In Tekst Gevat* (1996) p. 7.
[35] M. Meyer, *In Tekst Gevat* (1996) p. 23.
[36] S. Mills, *Discourse* (1997) p. 33.
[37] S. Mills, (1997) p. 14-15.
[38] K. Willemse, (2001) p. 31.

other readings possible but my participation in the lives of the ghetto boys and the method of reading against the grain enables me to read the text in context.

My personal and scientific positions influence my analysis. I am a white Dutch woman with strong leftish political affinities and I grew up in the middle of the multicultural society in the Netherlands. I travelled to and worked in Kenya from a very young age which enabled me to develop a broad context in which situations in Kenya can be understood but this will also influence what I see in these texts. My leftish political perspective has great influence on my historical perspective because I choose to focus on 'histories from below' and from non-western perspectives. In this thesis my political and scholarly affinities determined my choice to approach the underlying core-question from the perspectives of the young men targeted in the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi government. I believe that looking for alternative experiences and perspectives will create better insight into phenomena such as ethnicity.[39]

My perception is furthermore narrowed by the analytical category, in this thesis ethnicity, I chose to analyse the texts. It is therefore very important to be self-reflective and make my analysis very explicit so that my choices and selection in relation to my preconceived notions and objective of research are clear to the reader and do not affect the narration.[40] Knowledge is never impartial and I will therefore be quite visible in the text.

In my analysis of the biographical narratives, I aim to discover how the participants experienced a specific social reality and how this experience is related to the reason why and the way in which they constructed their ethnic identities. In this way the participants function as a magnifying glass through which specific phenomena are enlarged.[41] The narratives do not have to be representative of the whole group they just need to give insight to the mechanics of ethnic mobilisation.[42] I propose to make conclusions by looking into shifts in the construction of ethnic identity in relationship to historical contexts and political, economic and cultural circumstances.

The identities, positions and sub-discourses constructed by the young men that participated in my research are also available to other people living in Bondeni Village. Their narratives give insight into how subordinate subjects negotiate subject positions allotted by the dominant discourses and develop sub-discourses in the process. People continuously argue for or against the discursive pressures. The way people argue and how they position themselves in relationship to dominant discourse is rarely clearly articulated but when people narrate stories, especially about their lives, they constantly negotiate dominant discourses. In the formulation of feasible conclusions I will make the individual experience explicit which does not withstand the contribution these conclusions will have to acquire better insights into ethnic mobilisation in general. I will therefore also explicitly state the general conclusion we can draw from the individual narratives. Furthermore, subjective experiences from individuals can open up a new horizon in the development of theory on ethnicity because they enable the incorporation of the voices of the people involved.

In order to acquire insight into the ambiguous nature of how people position themselves and negotiate with the dominant discourses it is important to listen to what they tell us. We have to listen

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[39] See: K. Willemse and A. Aalten.

[40] M. Mossink, 'Inleiding', (1988) p. 17.

[41] M. Mossink, 'Inleiding', (1988) p. 10.

[42] The use of biographical narratives is not uncontested as some scholars have commented that it evolves around a western concept of 'I' which implies ideas about selfhood and society not coinciding with ideas of selfhood and society in a non-Western context. Furthermore, some scholars have expressed their concern about Western researchers using this method because in their opinion existing ideas in Western society about biographies might influence the way these researchers structure non-Western narratives which might alter the original text and meanings expressed.

to their words, the tone of their voice and we have to listen to what they don't say. After listening came the challenge of writing the narratives and analysing them.

3.5.3. Third Tool of Research: 'Writing against the Grain'

Writing biographical narratives against the grain is also subjective and charged with asymmetric power relations as I am the one to select the narrative fragments, to present meaning to these fragments and formulate conclusions based on them. I want to avoid making the young, Kikuyu men that participated in this research into objects and my first step is to assert the biased nature of academic writing. In my representation of the narrative fragments the self-reflexive mode described above will help me to avoid the objectifying mode of academic writing to some extent.[43]

The resonance that I hear in a text is subjective and its relevance should be argued explicitly by me in relation to the meaning that I constitute from a text. I will be explicit about my choices so that my analysis and my contextualizations are understood separately from the interview fragments I have selected from the narratives.[44] The narratives alone would easily compile a book, which is why I have to be selective and can only insert the quotes relevant to my analysis. I will introduce the interview fragments separately from my analysis so that readers are able to distinguish the two but can still understand their relationship.

In writing biographical narratives against the grain it is important to "make room for multiple narrating positions and constructed identities in the narratives…"[45] This is made possible through the fact that I will first introduce the fragments before analysing them so that the fragments are open to multiple readings. I will further explicate the choice of fragments while referring to the larger whole of the 'complete' narratives. I have chosen to represent fragments of three young Kikuyu men instead of representing whole narratives because combining their stories will, in my opinion, shed light on the relation between ethnic identity construction and the different circumstances in which they live from a more in-depth perspective.

3.6. Conclusion

Biographical narratives do not give easy access to the multiple ways in which people construct their identities and position themselves in relation to dominant discourses.[46] The only way, as suggested by Willemse, to do so is to "acknowledge the multiple ways" in which people "as agents construct themselves."[47] 'Biographical narratives against the grain', including the very useful tools of 'listening, reading and writing against the grain', have proved to constitute a somewhat revolutionary method as, in my experience, it enabled me to represent my participants not as 'others' but as 'agents'. This helped me to understand the possible alternative subject positions that these men constructed when telling about their lives and the multiple identities that they constructed in different contexts.[48] These alternative subject positions and the intersection of ethnicity and other aspects of identity, such as class, gender and locality, eventually enabled me to understand under which circumstances young men are susceptible to ethnic mobilisation or not.

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[43] K. Willemse, *One Foot in Heaven* (2001) p. 32.
[44] K. Willemse, 'Mapping selves', (2004) p. 6.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] K. Willemse, 'Mapping Selves', (2004) p. 3.

A critique to this method, already discussed above, is that individual cases are isolated which would make it difficult to generalise conclusions from them. These concerns are serious and need to be taken into consideration but the fact that this method enables me, and other researchers, to understand self-representation of the people involved without objectifying them and to write histories from below in my opinion affirms its value and with it the reason for further exploring this method. Furthermore, the use of this method enabled me to analyse continuities and discontinuities in history regarding the Kikuyu identity because alleged historical continuity of its prominence in national politics acquires nuance when we see how the ghetto boys negotiated the dominant discourses on ethnicity in the following chapters. Even though Kikuyu identity has remained a central issue in national politics since the colonial era, and therefore it is important in the lives of the ghetto boys, its connotation is transformed and is always in transformation. There have been key shifts in history in the connotation of the Kikuyu identity as will become clearer in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4: 10 CENT and 50 CENT!
THE PARAMOUNT INFLUENCE OF CLASS ON THE PROCESS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG GHETTO BOYS IN BONDENI VILLAGE

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will first introduce my main research participant, Buda, his mother Mama Buda and his friend Tom. The main question of this thesis is concerned with the historical contexts and the political, economic and cultural circumstances in which Kikuyu identity becomes significant in the process of identity construction among ghetto boys in Bondeni Village. Early on during my research I sensed a strong relationship between the aspect of class and the aspect of ethnicity in the construction of identity among my research participants. In this chapter I would like to uncover the influence of class on the process of identity construction among the research participants because I argue that class is decidedly related to ethnic mobilisation. This, however, is not an unproblematic or clear-cut relationship. To understand the paramount influence of class and the relationship between class and ethnicity in the process of identity construction among the research participants I will first give an introduction to the locality Bondeni Village. What does living in Bondeni Village mean to Buda, Tom and young men like them? How do young men from Bondeni Village negotiate the subject position of 'ghetto boy' allotted by the dominant discourse on poverty in Kenya? The answer to these questions will give readers an understanding of the local context which will provide readers with a framework to eventually better understand the relationship between class and ethnicity in the larger historical process of national identity construction which I will further illuminate in later chapters. In the following chapters I will also incorporate the relevant historical contexts in my analysis to further explicate the relationship between ethnicity and other aspects of identity in the process of identity construction among these men.

4.2. Introduction of Buda and Mama Buda

Early one morning in August 2005 I stepped out of *matatu* number 46 at Jujaroad and immediately all my senses were activated. Loud and unintelligible music attacked my ears while the smell of garbage, sewage water and barbecued goat intestines attacked my nose. I entered the vast slum of Mathare Valley through an almost invisible alley called *chochoro* in the local Sheng, and found my way in the labyrinth of small alleys to Buda's house in Bondeni Village. Bondeni Village is one of the many neighbourhood communities that constitute the larger slum area Mathare Valley and according to its inhabitants it is the oldest community in Mathare dating back to the 1950s. It was cold and I hoped that Buda's mother would have prepared the milky, sweet tea that is so popular in Kenya.

Buda is one of the many Sheng words there are in this language for father and the reason why he is named Buda is interesting. His mother is a Kikuyu and his father was a Luo who died a couple of years ago.[1] Buda is named after his father's[2] family but he prefers his nickname because his real name confronts him with the fact that he is only half Kikuyu even though he feels little attachment to his Luo side.[3] His father and mother separated when he was about 7 years old and he never received much

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[1] When Buda talked about the past he found it difficult to pin-point years and other data. He sometimes tried upon my request but he explained to me that he thinks more in events than in years. He told me he can tell me what happened in his life but he cannot tell me when it exactly happened. He also never really told me how old he was. Many people living in a slum such as Mathare Valley do not have birth certificates and generally birthdays are not celebrated.

[2] I cannot disclose Buda's real name or even proper nickname because of anonymity reasons I have explained in chapter 2. The name Buda and the history behind this nickname are based on actual facts.

[3] In the next chapter I will go into the conflict Buda experiences because he is half Kikuyu and half Luo.

attention from his father and his father's family. Furthermore, after his brother dies some years back Buda was the only one in his family with a Luo father.

The nickname 'father' was introduced by his mother who started to call him 'father' after her separation from her Luo husband. In Kikuyu tradition she would have named Buda after her father and not after her husband's family because Buda was the second born son in their marriage. In Kikuyu tradition first and second born children are named after their grandparents and it is common to nickname children 'father' or 'mother'. The proper nickname for Buda in Kikuyu tradition would have been *baba* or *guka* which means father or grandfather in the Kikuyu language but Buda explained to me that his nickname was '*Shengenised*' by his friends in Bondeni Village and now everybody knows him as Buda.

I found Buda in his house, a room of two by three meters made of corrugated iron sheets, looking at the things he bought for his soon to be born baby with a mixture of fear and excitement written on his face. His girlfriend was pregnant and might deliver the baby any day now but he did not have a job and the father of his girlfriend was not yet informed of her pregnancy. Only one bed and one chair occupied the room and the walls were bare of the usual Bob Marley posters he used to have all over, even on the ceiling. Most of his belongings were destroyed in the fire that had ravaged the area a couple of months before. With the help of friends and family he was able to rebuild his house and buy the necessary furniture. Buda's circumstances will give you some insight into the depth of the problems people face living in Mathare Valley. No job, no education, a mother who supports him by selling the illegal alcohol *chang'aa* and a pregnant girlfriend.

Buda's mother[4] moved to Mathare Valley from Thika, about 65 kilometres from Nairobi, when her first husband died in early 1970s.[5] She moved to the urban area in search of employment because the work on Del Monte, a pineapple plantation in Thika, did not generate enough income to provide for her five children.

She came from a family of Kikuyu squatters who worked on the plantation since colonial times and she saw it change from a sisal plantation into the flourishing pineapple plantation it is today. Her parents had tried to escape the harsh realities of the Native Reserves in Kiambu during the 1940s by taking on wage labour on the settler plantation. Here they were offered a small piece of land to cultivate and to live on. The Del Monte Company took over the sisal plantation during the mid-1960s and transformed it into a pineapple plantation. The family members who were old enough continued to work on the plantation.

In the 1970s disaster struck as first Mama Buda's father died and was soon followed by her husband making her the main provider of her family as she was the oldest of her siblings. In addition to the great emotional loss the family suffered they also faced an abrupt decline in their income and Mama Buda's earnings were not enough to bridge this gap.

"I had a friend who moved to town (Nairobi, note form NVS). And she came back to visit her family in the rural area. She was my neighbour and she told us stories about Mathare. She told me to move

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[4] In Kenyan culture the official way to address a woman with children is to call her Mama followed by the name of her eldest so or of the name of the child you are familiar with. In my case I called Buda's mother Mama Buda. Mama Buda does not speak English. She told me her story in the Kikuyu language and Buda translated her story to me. I asked him to translate word for word but because of his personal connection to the story he sometimes told the story for her and often added his own opinion to the story. I did not want to ask someone else to be a translator because I sensed that this would have affected the openness how Mama Buda and Buda shared me their family story with me. I regrettably did not have the time to have more than one discussion with Mama Buda.
[5] Discussion with Mama Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

there because business was good. Mathare was not crowded. And we all spoke Kikuyu. There was not much crime or pollution. I learned my business from her and I send money home".[6]

Mama Buda had a friend from the same rural community she came from who had moved to Mathare Valley and when she came to visit her family in the rural area she talked positively about life in Nairobi city. Mama Buda decided to try her luck and she joined the woman in her business of brewing and selling *chang'aa.* Today brewing *chang'aa* is looked down upon by society and it is considered an illegal activity by the Kenyan government. Mama Buda told me that when she arrived in Mathare brewing *chang'aa* was a thriving business and she did not feel bad to engage herself in this kind of business. During this moment of our conversation Buda interjected to explain:

"There was no police station at Pangani (a neighbourhood close to Mathare Valley, note from NVS) so not many police came to disturb…you know…ask for bribes. The ghetto was empty and not much crime so it was good business."

After settling in Mathare Valley Mama Buda remarried a Luo man she had met in Thika and in 1978 or 1979[7] she gave birth to her sixth and last child nicknamed Buda.

"Mathare is not good to live, we have no plot in rural area so Mathare is good, I have no place to go. Land is more important to us Kikuyu but we live by our God. When we see the next morning we thank God. Naomi, We need to build Kayole[8] (Kayole is about 20 kilometers from Nairobi City centre, note from NVS) so we have a place. My house is half Macharia and half Bondeni. This part will be cut off anytime. They can come and demolish this house. You see the woods outside? They demolish the church from Waithaka because his mother's house was illegal. When the fire burned our house we built it up again but they can come and destroy it anytime. We are always afraid. When we have Kayole they can never chase us and we can be buried in our own shamba.[9]"[10]

Mama Buda suddenly became very emotional during our conversation and started to talk about different things at the same time. Buda had great difficulty translating the entangled web of stories from Kikuyu into English. After a while it became clear that she felt great insecurity first of all because the church next to her house was demolished a year before. All constructions in Bondeni Village and in Mathare Valley at large are illegal constructions. The organisation of ownership of plots and constructions is very complicated in Mathare Valley and brokers looking after the interest of different stakeholders further muddle this already intricate situation. The bottom line of Mama Buda's concern was that the people who had demolished Waithaka's church, who had transformed his mother's house into a church after she had died, were claiming a piece of Mama Buda's house. They had threatened to destroy her house and she had no where to go.

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[6] Discussion with Mama Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.
[7] During our conversation we tried to pin point the year Buda was born by reviving personal experiences Mama had when president Kenyatta died in 1978. We narrowed the years down to these two years.
[8] Buda and his mother had been bought a piece of land by American friends of the youth group in Kayole/Mihango when their two adjacent houses had burned down in November 2004. Kayole is about 12 kilometres from the Nairobi city centre but their land was in the adjacent neighbourhood Mihango and there was little transport between Mihango and Nairobi city centre. Travelling to and from Kayole/Mihango on 17 August 2005 took Buda and me 3 hours in total because we had to walk one hour from Kayole to his land in Mihango.
[9] Shamba in Kiswahili is a piece of land that is meant for cultivation in the rural area. In popular use it refers to a place of origin in the rural area similar to how the English word *home* is used by Kenyans.
[10] Discussion with Mama Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

"When we die we don't want to be buried in Langata (A cemetery in Nairobi for poor people, note from NVS). We want our own land to be buried in. We don't want to live in a house and tomorrow they can come and chase us away. We need our own house on our own land.....and Buda needs to be away from Mathare so he can start a business".[11]

American friends of the youth group had bought a piece of land for Mama Buda and Buda in Kayole after their two adjacent rooms had burned down in November 2004. Mama Buda and Buda lacked the money to fence this piece of land let alone built a house on it and during our conversation I realised that they were indirectly asking my help. A large part of our conversation concentrated on the topic of how Mama Buda and Buda could build their house in Kayole and why it was imperative for them to move from Mathare Valley.

One of the reasons Mama Buda was focussing on Kayole during our conversation was the fact that she was about to be evicted by the people who apparently owned a part of the plot she had rebuild her house on. She also mentioned the fear of being buried at the Langata cemetery for the poor in Nairobi because she considered this a nameless death.

Furthermore, she was worried about Buda and felt he was dragged too much into a life of drinking and gambling and not going somewhere with his life. She tried to convince me that he would be able to concentrate on starting a business when he would not live in Mathare because here he had to resist the temptation of going down to the river and join his friends in drinking and gambling every time he stepped out of the house.

Most households in Bondeni Village today consist of single Kikuyu women who have children with different fathers and most of these men do not play a significant role in the lives of their children. Since early 1960s the rural-urban migration of Kikuyu people to what later came to be known as Bondeni Village increased. Generally speaking it were the Kikuyu women who settled while the Kikuyu men usually either moved on or went back to the rural area. I will further explicate why it were the Kikuyu people who migrated in relatively large numbers to Nairobi already since the 1940s in chapter 6.

I talked to some elderly Kikuyu men and women in Bondeni Village and I learned that the different migration history between Kikuyu men and women first of all can be explained by the different motivation to migrate. Women were often forced to migrate after the death of a husband. In Kikuyu culture it is common that after the death of a husband the family-in-law often ceased to feel any obligation towards the wife, instead she was generally perceived as a burden and often chased away from her deceased husband's *shamba* In many stories the woman's family was to poor to take her in again and her only refuge was to try her luck in Nairobi. Men on the other hand generally migrated to the urban area to seek employment while maintaining strong ties with the rural community. Some had already married a woman in the rural area and when they moved to the urban area and ended up living in the slums they usually engaged in a 'come to stay' relationship with women with the prospect to return to their rural wives in the future in the back of their mind.

Moreover, women who migrated to the urban area were generally perceived within the Kikuyu group as morally corrupt and they were further ostracised as a result of that.[12] These women had left the rural community to live in the urban area and with it they, as was the general conviction of the men and elders left behind, had left the moral code of the Kikuyu group. It was generally presumed that women living in slums provided for their families by brewing illegal alcohol, by engaging in 'come and stay' relationship and prostitution. In the judgment of these women people form the rural Kikuyu community did not take the reason for migration into account as the alleged immorality of her

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[11] Discussion with Mama Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.
[12] Discussion with Dr. Karanja. ,13 July 2005 Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

presumed behaviour was generally considered to weigh heavier.[13] These Kikuyu women could often simply not return or did not want to return to the rural area. The single women who ended up living in Mathare share the necessity to provide for their children.

The Kikuyu men on the other hand could return to the rural community with their heads up high and rely on their families. They would generally inherit land from their fathers and therefore had a place to go or collateral to invest at their disposal in times of need. Their economic and social position was far more stable than that of women in the slums during the first decade after independence. This explains the asymmetrical gender relation within Bondeni Village whereby women formed the majority and functioned as the head of the households in the slum.

4.3. Buda and Tom

On 12 August 2005 Buda and I walked to Huruma, see map 4, to visit Tom. Buda and Tom were both youth group members since 1997 and during the time of my research they both lacked a job which enabled me to visit them regularly during the daytime. On our way Buda and I talked.

"I don't want to live in another place. Things are cheap in Mathare. Here in Huruma you might only know you neighbour. I know everyone in my village, they will help me. We are a community."[14]

The strong ties Buda experienced between members of his community are exemplified by the support he and his family received from his community when on 9 July 2005 his niece died. The whole family was grief stricken. His family had endured a lot in the past year and this felt like the final blow to them. Buda's house and his mother's house had burned down and Buda's sister, the little girl's mother, had died some months before his niece died. Devastated and without money for a proper burial Buda sank into a deep depression. The community responded immediately by donating money for the burial as they too had been affected by the little girl's death. They had loved her and it felt for many as if hope had died with her. On Friday 15 July 2005 Buda and his family organised a *harambee*[15] gathering and friends, elders from the community, members of the youth group Buda belonged to and relatives all came to contribute and keep the family company until the funeral the next day.

The cohesion in this community is a survival strategy in essence and it transcends ethnic and other social barriers in times of need as described above. This, however, is not the whole story. Tom had moved outside Mathare Valley in 2004 when his *chang'aa* business had enabled him to rent a two-bedroom stone house in a wealthier neighbourhood in Nairobi; Kasarani.[16] Tom shared with me the following experience:

"One day I was with my friends who are thugs and the police came to my house after here where I do my business. First they ask me if they can buy a gun, I said what gun? They put a gun against my head and told me I was a thug. I explained to them that because my friends are thugs I am not a thug. I live in Kasarani but because people see me moving around they suspect I do bad things. And people talk.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Discussion with Buda, walking from Mathare to Huruma, 12 August 2005, Nairobi,Kenya

[15] *Harambee* literally means 'pulling together' in Kiswahili and was the national slogan used by Kenyatta to support the National Project after independence in 1963. In practise *harambee* implies the organization of fundraising events among community members to enable families to pay for weddings, hospital bills, funerals and education. The philosophy was that it was a reciprocal process whereby at some times you were asked to give and when your time of need arises the community would 'pull together' on your behalf. Sadly this institution has been abused by corrupt politicians to 'buy' voters and was further eroded by the disappearance of cohesive communities through urbanization.

[16] See map 3.

They are jealous I live outside the slum. If you come out they'll pull you down. They will make stories to destroy you."[17]

The above quote is taken from a discussion I had with him when he had already been forced to move to a one-room apartment in Huruma because of his financial situation. In his eyes Huruma was a less-wealthier neighbourhood than Kasarani but still a better place than the 'ghetto' Mathare Valley. Buda commented:

"...Tom cannot move back so he has to stay. Maybe he can work here but people think he is a Big Fish so he cannot move here."[18]

Buda and Tom explained to me that the Bondeni community closes its ranks hermetically against people who are in their perception better off and have been able to move out of Mathare Valley. According to Tom people who have been able to move outside can not really claim support again from the community, even when it concerns family, while the community does expect their support. Buda explained to me later when we were together that moving back is a disgrace because it kills all the hope people in the community have to ever make it outside.

This quote struck me because it made me realise how important it was for Tom to keep up the appearance that he was a successful businessman. Tom eventually had to move back to Bondeni Village in Mathare Valley because he could not afford to live outside any longer and he began a charcoal business which never really took off.

"My business went down when Luo put juju *(witchcraft in* Sheng*, note from NVS) on me. This guy who worked for me took my bike and went to bring* chang'aa *to other slums. Then he did not come back. Five days later he was found dead and his family blamed me, it was my bike and he worked for me. They told me I killed him and they revenged and gave me juju. My business went down* kabisa *(completely, note from NVS). Bad things started to happen and now I live back in Mathare Valley. I tried charcoal business but the juju makes people not to buy from me. I have to go to* Mashambani*(a rural area about 70 kilometres outside Nairobi, note from NVS) to relieve myself from this juju then I will try and make my* chang'aa *business again."* [19]

In the above quote he is surprisingly open about the fact that he was planning to go to the rural area to undergo what he described as a cleansing ceremony to get rid of witchcraft. I tried to ask about this ceremony after he came back from the rural area but he avoided this topic ever since. When I left Kenya on 10 November 2005 he was trying to build up a new *chang'aa* business while living in Bondeni Village.

Buda also experienced a very difficult situation that confronted me again with how important it was for young men like Tom or Buda that people from the community thought well about you. Buda had already attracted a lot of jealousy in the community over his connection with white people like me whom he met through his engagement with the youth group and MYSA. When his girlfriend left him for a wealthier man in the first week of September 2005, after she had given birth to a baby girl a week earlier, Buda became the target of community gossip.

After everything Buda had been through in the months before his girlfriend left him, his house had burned down and he had lost his sister and niece, he was not able to cope very well with yet

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[17] Discussion with Tom, 12 August 2005, Huruma, Nairobi, Kenya
[18] Discussion with Buda, 12 August 2005, walking from Huruma to Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya
[19] Discussion with Tom, 17 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi,Kenya.

another painful experience and he started to drink more heavily than ever before. I would sometimes meet him at 9 o'clock in the morning with a glass of *bikra*[20] in front of him and he was solely occupied with what people in his community said about him. His shock, to my surprise, concentrated on the fact that his reputation had been destroyed and not that the baby girl whom he had named after his mother and me[21] turned out to be another man's daughter, nor was his primary concern that his girlfriend had left him. What affected him most was that he was the centre of all this negative attention from his community. The gossip, as he told me, was that his girlfriend had used him because his house was close to hers and when she went into labour late at night she knew he would take her to a hospital and pay for the bill. A case was brought to the community's chief but the chief ruled in her favour which convinced Buda that the man was bribed. The experience of being the target of community gossip and the lack of support from his chief made him realise that he could not rely on his community in every situation of need and this added to his predicaments.

"I am two people….Buda and BUDA. (He spoke softly when he said Buda but yelled out loud and grinned in a peculiar way when he said BUDA, note from NVS). I want to be Buda but in Bondé *(*Bondé *is the* Sheng *name for Bondeni Village, note from NVS) I become BUDA. They tell me to be BUDA. When I drink I become BUDA. I do bad things, Naomi……………………………………………………Sometimes I feel like I just want to lost. I join gang for stealing and then get shot. I am no one. People in my community think I am no one, so I go drink* bikra *so that they see I am?..I am no one. My girlfriend really cheated me, even at the day of the concert I asked her where she was. She don't know and I felt bad, bwana! I think I could not do anything but I get courage for performing and it was good. Okay, after concert, friends buy something small to appreciate, I was happy. So I drink, I think I have a problem. Every morning I drink. My mother locked her room where her alcohol is. But I can just go to friends ……they like to see me drunk. In my community people don't give you good challenges, they just tell you just drink to discharge your problem. They want to see you down. They talk bad about me, say I am nothing……………………………………………………………….My friends say* jazaa numba *(add a number in* Sheng*, note from NVS) when I am drunk, you know, to join the gang so the number is strong. I can even do that when I am drunk, I really have to stop drinking. At night I don't sleep because of my lady so I drink to forget. When I drink I get boostah! (boostah menas to get energy or courage in Buda;s way of talking, note from NVS)……..I feel like* kude?...kudedi! *try or die, it is* conc *(this is his word to say strong, note from NVS) and I forget."*[22]

'*kude?....kudedi*!' loosely translates itself from Sheng to English as "try or die" in the context it is mostly used. It reflects the reality of slum life; when you do nothing you have nothing and you will die. This phrase is often used by those friends Buda called his 'thug' friends. According to him they say it before going on a 'job' which usually means usually a robbing spree in town. He described to me that the men gather around at their usual spot down at the river and they toast to each other with a glass of *bikra* while saying the phrase: '*Kude?....kudedi!*' Buda told me that it seals some kind of bond between the men and it gives courage which is reinforced by the strong alcohol consumed during

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[20] The first jerry can of alcohol obtained in the process of brewing chang'aa has the highest quantity of alcohol and is considered to be of premium quality, especially when it is brewed in Mathare valley. This first brew is called *bikra* and is twice as expensive as regular chang'aa. From one drum of fermented fluids containing a particular type of maize flower porridge called busa, sugar and yeast, three jerry cans of strong liquor can be produced and only the first one is called bikra. The young men I met and worked with preferred bikra to regular chang'aa.

[21] When the baby girl was born on 30 august 2005 he named the baby after his mother and after me which was a sign of great respect to me because traditionally the girl could only have been named after his mother.

[22] Discussion with Buda, 14 October 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

this ritual. Buda concluded that in the minds of these men crime is the only option in their struggle to survive. Without education and close relations with family members to support them, challenge them and encourage them to pursuit a better life, these men feel they have nothing to lose. Without the feeling that they even deserve a better life these men already feel lost. The feeling of being lost makes the young men able to face the possibility of death involved in going on a 'job'. Without hope life looses its meaning and survival becomes the main focus regardless of the risks involved.

The motto *kude?...kudedi*! is pronounced as a question and an affirmative answer at the same time. It only has one word *kudedi* which literary means 'to die' in Sheng but in the first half of the motto the word is only partly articulated and pronounced as a question. The second half of the motto is pronounced as a confirmation and the whole verb *kudedi* is uttered. The peculiar construction of this motto derives from the educational methods used in most Kenyan schools. Here students are often taught in the following manner: the teacher shows a ball and says in English: 'this is a ball, this is a……' and the children then all reply: 'ball!'. I have met many people in Kenya who talk English but also Kiswahili in this manner. This is caused by the fact that most people in Kenya learned these languages in primary school and often had not been able to follow higher education. Therefore they have never been able to develop their English and Kiswahili language skills beyond primary levels.

Buda explains in the above quote that he feels that there are two Buda's inside of him. The Buda he pronounces with a soft tone is a person he feels is close to who he would like to be. When describing this Buda he uses words such as soft, kind-hearted and good with ladies. This is the Buda who secretly went to a friend who lived outside the slum to undergo training in reading and writing during March 2005. This is the Buda who wants to work hard to pursuit his dream and become a famous actor.

He articulates the other Buda with a loud voice and according to him this personality emerges when he is dragged into what he calls 'ghetto life' which he describes as a life of crime and drinking *chang'aa*. He explained to me that he feels that this side of him comes to the fore when he faces multiple disappointments which make him to turn to gambling and drinking to get some money and forget about his problems. The 'ghetto Buda', or 'BUDA', goes down to the river where the *chang'aa* is brewed and here a young man needs to show he is tough to survive.

"I want my kid to grow up in Kayole and do not bad things like me. Here people have a file on me, I fought people, I have stolen and did drugs so I need to go to Kayole to make a new name so they can say he is just like his dad……One time I had a fight with people from depot field (a football field in mathare, note from NVS). I drank chang'aa, *when I drink I can fight anyone. It was in twenty o one (this is Buda's way of saying 2001, note from NVS) and I gambled then I lost so we had a fight and the woman went to depot field. So I go because she took my money and I want my money. I took a* panga (A machete in Kiswahili, note from NVS) *and I beat her with a* panga, *here and here and here. Then my* geri *(Buda used this word to refer to a gang of friends he normally hangs out with, note from NVS) came to help me otherwise her people would have killed me."[23]*

While telling me this story he smiled at me apologetically but assured me he wanted to tell me these stories so I could tell other people what living in a slum means for people like him. He feels that it made him to be two people because he often felt incompetent to deal with the problems he had to face.

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[23] Visit to Kayole with Buda, 17 August 2005, Kayole, Nairobi, Kenya.

4.3. 'No 50 Cent here': Negotiating the Subject Position of Ghetto Boy

All the young men I met and worked with in Bondeni Village negotiated what I term here the subject position of 'ghetto boy'. The prevalent image in Kenya of people living in the slums is a stereotype typified by words such as backward, dangerous and primitive. In this dominant discourse on poverty the picture of 'a young men for hire' is especially highlighted. In this discourse young men from the slums are considered to be either foot soldiers for criminals or for opportunistic political leaders. The 'ghetto boy' is never a man but a 'boy' who never leads but is always led by other more powerful and knowledgeable men. Fighting this stereotype image society imposed on them the men that participated in my research developed different subject positions that will be discussed in this section.

On a crispy cold morning in September 2005 Buda and I walked down to the river to get hot charcoal from the chang'aa brewers to cook our lunch with. Once in a while we took a day off from Buda's normal activities, varying from helping his mother selling *chang'aa* to assisting the youth group, to cook lunch together for some of our friends. The whole process of buying groceries and cooking lunch could easily take 4 hours and we usually would invite some people we had met along the way to our lunch to broaden our discussions. During these lunches Buda often spontaneously asked our guests the same questions I had asked him during previous talks we had shared and this would sometimes lead to heated debates about topics that were of great interest to me.

When we arrived down at the river that day the men who were brewing *chang'aa* were in the process of filling the jerry cans with *chang'aa.* This complicated process involved cooling the copper coil in the river until all the alcohol was caught in the jerry cans after which the residue in the drum was released from the drums with a loud explosion. The men had to take great care while doing this so we decided to wait before disturbing them. We sat among the men who were gambling close by. They played a complicated and swift game of cards and I looked at all the men gathered closely around each other staring intensely concentrated at the cards. This was their territory. I knew some through my work and some as relatives of friends and all seem to be quite at ease with me, a white woman, sitting amongst them, which gave me an exhilarating feeling. They tried to teach me the game but without a lot of patience because too much was at stake. There was money to be won.

Every time I went down there they offered me a cup of the alcohol they were brewing and I always declined bearing in mind all the health hazards involved as the drink was brewed near the river or big open sewer as one might more accurately describe it. This time the guys insisted more than usual and I drank a sip of the strong liquor. I had tried it before but it still caught me by surprise as the burning sensation of the alcohol made its way to my stomach. I had not had breakfast that morning and the sip made me dizzy almost instantly. This drink was stronger than anything I had ever tasted before. The guys started patting me on my shoulders, laughing complacently and shouting that now I really was one of them, but of course I wasn't.

One guy stood out. Jeff. I had seen him down at the river before. He had a natural authority about him and he looked at me with an amused and slightly defiant look on his face.

"No 50 Cent here!", and he gestured to all the men hanging out at what seemed to be his territory now. *"Here, we are all 10 Cent. We don't get rich or die tryin'……We just try dying!"*[24]

The phrase *'kude?...kudedi!'* came to my mind and the literally meaning of it, 'to d…? to die!'. It felt like Jeff was telling me that they had no hope and that they felt they were the lowest of the lowest but that they at least had to put up a fight before going down.

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[24] Quote from Jeff down at the river, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

The term 10 Cent refers to the famous American rapper 50 Cent. Hip Hop artists are considered 'white' among youth from the slum, ghetto youth, because they live a 'white' life style of owning enormous villas and just focussing on gaining more and more material wealth. American Hip Hop in the Kenyan social context is something for *mababi*,[25] middle class youth, not for ghetto youth. Ghetto youth culture is based on reggae, dance hall and Kenyan Hip Hop, such as Kalamashaka, depicting the harsh living conditions of the 'oppressed' and giving expression to a revolutionary state of mind some of these youth feel burning inside of them. By calling the young men hanging out down at the river in Bondeni Village '10 cent' Jeff, the 'leader', contrasted them to the *mababi,* the 50 Cent lovers, creating a dichotomy between urban middle class youth and ghetto youth in their construction of a class identity.

He did not use the number 10 just by accident. The number 10 is most significant in the context of the Mathare Valley slum. A drink of *chang'aa* is 10 shillings. The drink is sometimes even called '*kumi kumi*' which means 10-10 in Kiswahili. The whole informal economy of the slums revolves around *chang'aa* which makes the number 10, or a 10 shilling coin, a determinant factor in all social, economic and political relations within the slum community of Mathare Valley. A female youth group member from Bondeni Village called Susan explained this to me in the following manner:

"Snacks like vegetable samosas*(spicy Indian inspired pastries with a meat or vegetable filling, note from NVS) are sold at 5 bop (bop means a Kenyan Shilling in* Sheng*, note from NVS) because when you sell them at 10 bop not many people would buy them. People would always choose the drink over the snack. Some women sell* chang'aa f*rom their house, or compound, you know. Prostitution is closely linked to the consumption of* chang'aa*. The price of a prostitute is also related to the price of a glass of* chang'aa *and in very desperate circumstances this means that young women sell their body for just these 10 bop. 'Born for 10 bop and killed for less', that is what we say sometimes."[26]*

"Born for 10 bop and killed for less" refers to the fact that many children in Mathare Valley are born as a result of prostitution and young girls later become prostitutes themselves in order to survive. Many of these young girls are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus and die at a very young age.

Until the age of 16 Buda had lived what was perceived in the dominant discourse on poverty as the stereo typical life of a 'ghetto boy'. He skipped school, became a parking boy, joined a gang, used drugs and engaged in petty theft. He was the last born in his family and his older siblings were either busy working with his mother in the family *chang'aa* business or going to school. Feeling like an outcast in his own family the gang became his substitute family. He was able to leave the gang when his mother decided that the time to circumcise him had arrived.

Buda became a 'parking boy' when he was about 9 years old.

"During the holidays (Buda refers here to the Christmas and New Year holidays, note from NVS) we also want to look clean and go to the cinema. I joined the company, down at the river, they were parking boys. We looked for nails, in the kuni *(firewood in Kiswahili, note from NVS) from construction sites, you know they use for* chang'aa*. We remove the nails or look in the water for nails. We also begged for money, there is a lot of money on the streets. We cheated Indian kids and stole the BMX. Those* Muhindi *(Indian in Kiswahili, note from NVS) kids are rich and know nothing."[27]*

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[25]See footnote 36 or glossary.

[26] Discussion with Susan, 1 November 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

[27] Discussion with Buda, 14 October 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

In this quote Buda explains his motivation for joining a group of parking boys by expressing his dissatisfaction with his life as a 'ghetto boy'. He also wanted to go to the cinema and look clean just like all the other children who came from wealthier neighbourhoods.

"In court I heard that I was a parking boy, a chokora *(*chokora *is the* Sheng *word for street child, note from NVS). I did not know that word. We got beaten. They cleaned us up and we had to sleep in jail, the next day I was released from jail, escape from Sobibor! The judge said we should not show our faces again, they would watch out......Our gang was tough, it was called Mash because of the leader, he was small but tough and he was called Mash. I don't know why, maybe because he was tough. You just saw him, at Toni's place. He walks a bit funny because of a problem with his leg. He never went to school, his career was the gang,..... to rob. Mash was the Bondeni gang and everyone feared us. Not Shanty. Shanty was bigger, near the two bridges."*[28]

A small core of the group of young boys who went to the city centre evolved into a sophisticated gang under the lead of a man called Mash and this group to which Buda belonged also started to rob drunken men in Bondeni Village.

"People started to notice that I was doing bad things. In Bondeni. They started to complain with my mother. She did not love me then. Most of the guys I know were in a gang, ...but some were from families who did not have a stealing heart and they did not start. My family also did not have a stealing heart but I was young. I only had my brother, the rest was older. I felt peer pressure and I wanted material things. I saw friends in good trousers and I wanted good things too. The easiest way is stealing. People really feared us.[29]*"*

Buda used a different motto for himself:

"Never give up life is my motto. I felt like I gave up life when I was a parking boy. I did glue, Marihuana. We had a base, called KANU behind Kiboro, the football field. I was too high and two police came, I tried to fake them (he means he tried to pretend not to be high, note from NVS) then I run away. I went into a bad way and they caught me. They took me to a mud house. They beat me and rubbed my face into the wall so that all the particles of stone stuck in my skin. I went to cool, God is great that night. They tortured us but did not find drugs, we threw it while we ran away. Big rain started. Our luckiness, police went to hide from the rain in the same house we bought the drugs. We told police I am a carpenter. The man and the woman in the house were told to prepare food for the police and we were beaten again. We were handcuffed and chained, the women wanted to give us food but the police told her we would get our food in prison. Then the police asked the man whether he sold Ganja*. We did not look up. My heart said tell the police, but my other heart said don't tell. After the rain stopped, after 4 hours, the police took us on their rounds for bribes. They have a way of talking, their own accent. Police said: 'take them to prison', the other police said: 'we beat them with a Nyakunyu'(a whip in Kiswahili, note from NVS). We had to do push ups on the ground. We pretend not to feel pain. My colleague was stronger. I felt pain, I was only 15! People fight the police but we fear them because they can just shoot you for nothing. They have heir own rights. They took some alcohol and we escaped."*[30]

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[28] Discussion with Buda, 14 October 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.
[29] Discussion with Buda 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mather Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.
[30] Discussion with Buda 21 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

Buda told me numerous of similar encounters with the police in Bondeni Village.

"I think sometimes I could die and I am happy for my change. I could be dead now, shot by police. Or mob justice....."[31]

"I changed when I was circumcised because your company changes. You are not allowed to walk with uncircumcised boys. The guys I walked with were big and had big ideas. I changed, no more sniffing glue. (Sniffing glue is considered to be for children who are parking boys, note from NVS). I slept everywhere before I was circumcised, after that I had my own place. I felt proud and I did not want to disappoint my mother and my brother. Some guys are circumcised too young and they become arrogant, they become from good to bad. For me it was it was the other way, from bad to good. It was on time, I was ready to change and I was ready for the responsibility. The elders from my community educated me on my behaviour, I felt good about that, I felt I could do it. I was circumcised with Singra (a friend, note from NVS). We had to eat uncooked sukuma *(a kind of spinach, note from NVS) as a test of manhood and* samosa *with* pili pili *(samosa's are Indian inspired pastries and* pili pili *is chilli pepper in Kiswahili, note from NVS). They just tell you to eat it. When I did bad things after circumcision they (the Kikuyu elders of Bondeni Community, note form NVS) took me and punished me. They could beat me with a* rungu *(a club in Kiswahili, note from NVS) or a belt,.... that is much worse. My mother can't come in to stop them,.... that would break the custom. One time I decided to lost because of the beating. They took me again and fed me* samosa *with* pili pili. *.....I was 17 when I was circumcised...., sometimes a young lady is invited to torture you but not in my case. Eeeh! That is too painful. After the clinic there is a big party, women are singing and there is food. You are educated by your elders. My age mates and elders come into my room to congratulate me and give me support. Now I am grown-up and people fear me. Sometimes in Kikuyu custom it is too early and young guys become very arrogant. It depends on your mentality. I was sooo bad and it was the right time for me, I became good. I became educated. I was mature enough, ready for it. These other guys might enter gangs and start to do bad things because now they believe no one can stop them. With me it was the other way around."[32]*

Every time Buda talked about circumcision his chest swelled up with pride and the way he spoke about the attention he received from the Kikuyu elders while preparing him for circumcision gives evidence of how important this was to him. He suddenly felt in a position to acquire a new kind of status by following other rules of conduct than set by his gang. He felt a strong desire to be recognised and to be respected, or in his words feared, and at the time of his circumcision he felt he could achieve this by trying to live up to the image of a young Kikuyu man the elders had shown him. The fact that his mother had taken the trouble to organise his circumcision together with the Kikuyu elders from Bondeni Village gave him a feeling of being recognised as a Kikuyu man, despite his Luo father, within the Kikuyu dominated community for the first time in his life. In the above quotes he repeatedly states that for him the change was 'from bad to good' and even when he talked about being punished by the elders every time he slipped back in doing bad things after circumcision he still expressed pride because this gave him a sense of being noticed, of being cared for. It essentially gave him a new sense of belonging and it made him to turn his back to his old life in the Mash gang.

He became a member of the youth group where he learned about life outside the slum. He learned about his talent as a drama leader and he started to dream about becoming a famous actor.

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Discussion with Buda, 14 October 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

"*Never give up life*!"[33] The simple strength of this phrase in the beginning of the above quote struck me and I became aware that it reflected the essence of what he had been taught in the youth group, it reflected hope.

"The biggest cause of my change was circumcision and the change of company. The group helped me later. When Kevin Mwangi (youth leader for many years, note form the author) revived the group in 1997 it changed me more. Going to camps in the forest, no smoking, no glue, no pollution. It was very good to me. I learned things like counselling and about Drugs and AIDS, which made me proud. In the group I learned my skill, Drama is my passion. I got exposed to a lot of things, outside Mathare. I found work as an actor in Kasheshe *(a Kenyan t.v. soap.* Kasheshe *means misfortune in Kiswahili, note from NVS), they (the members of the youth group, note from NVS) gave me support and morale. Njuguna (a former youth leader, note from NVS) helped me the most of all. He was a good leader. I got income. Then the* Asili *group (a new group of actors who worked on a new t.v. show in 2003-2004.* Asili *means origin in Kiswahili, note from NVS) was formed and I was still working, rehearsing with them, but I got paid per script,* 4 thao *(4000 Kenyan Shilling, note from NVS), and they gave me no part for a long time. I had to pay my own transport. They treated me different, not like* Kasheshe. *I became reluctant. I went to gambling again to get my transport. And it made me to relax. I was bringing burden to my friends, they loaned me the money but I did not get a part and could not pay back. Transport was more than what I earned. So then I stopped……………………………*Kasheshe *made me famous, people still call me by that name. You know Naomi, I am illiterate and the group helped me to cram my words, I could not have done all that without the group."[34]*

"We hang around with thugs, they are people like us, they are our friends and we hope that we can invite them to the group (The youth group, note from NVS) to join for activities. Sometimes I gamble or help my sister in brewing chang'aa *to survive but through the youth group I have learned things that keep me away from steeling or other crimes. If it had not been for the group I would have been dead. Many of my friends who are thugs die, the police are ruthless…. they just shoot you. I would not like my kid to grow up here and see the challenges I had to face growing up. You know, in and out of school, drugs, crime, prostitution. Hee it s bad here,* Bwana! *You know it is easy to get a gun here?!?"[35]*

 "We learned to think beyond Mathare. Our friends think this is just it and don't feel challenged. They just go with it ….without thinking there is a future for them."[36]

Circumcision and joining the youth group changed the way Buda negotiated the subject position of 'ghetto boy'. He now contrasts his position, symbolised by the motto he used *'never give up life!'*, to that of his friends who, in his eyes, still live the life of a 'ghetto boy', symbolised by the motto *'kudé? kudedi!'*. He was able to change his positioning when he became recognised by his mother and elders as a young Kikuyu man. In the previous section we have already seen that Buda's positioning is not as steady as portrayed here and it changes to the circumstances he meets in life. On many occasions I have also witnessed him positioning himself as BUDA, the 'ghetto boy', because it gave him an advantage. As a young boy he had already learned that he could sometimes use his 'ghettoness' to get things done.

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[33] Discussion with Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.
[34] Discussion with Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.
[35] Discussion with Buda, 12 August 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya. We had a discussion before our walk to Huruma.
[36] Discussion with Buda, 12 August 2005 Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi,Kenya

"In school I had a problem with reading and writing. I was not as smart as the other kids so the teacher beat me. So many times. I had to sit with my knees on the ground outside the classroom for a long time, until my knees bleed. He also beat me with a stick on my back, hands and head. I became strong, you know, angry but I could not fight him. I asked my friend to help me so I can copy from him so the teacher think I was learning to read and write. When my friends would not help me I beat him and when they tell to the teacher…eeeeh I would beat him. You know, I was from Mathare so they fear me. Later I stopped going to school but my mother does not know, I did not feel good in school."[37]

The frustration that comes to the fore in this quote is most poignant as Buda's life would have looked very different if he had been able to get the right guidance in school. He used his 'ghettoness' to force classmates to do his work so that he could hide his illiteracy and avoid punishment but he was not able to persevere and he eventually took to streets to join his friends.

His illiteracy is one of the main causes for him to struggle with the two Buda's inside of him. While acting in *Kasheshe* he never told his colleagues and bosses that he was illiterate because he wanted to show them that a 'ghetto boy' could be smart and talented. He negotiated the subject position of 'ghetto boy' by frantically showing the outside world that he was the opposite of the image they might have of him. This brought about very painful situations when he forgot his line but could not pick it up by reading from his script. He also anxiously hid his illiteracy from his family because he wanted to keep up the appearance of being a knowledgeable, worldly and experienced young man. He shared with me that his family members would bring him letters thinking he could read and write and Buda tried to uphold this image by secretly asking a neighbour to verbally summarise these letters to him so that he was able to advice his family on the content of the letter.

The 'ghetto boy' rose to the surface with vigour every time disappointment struck. When Kasheshe was taken over by the new Asili group Buda was gradually excluded which made him turn to gambling and drinking again and he tries to explain this by placing the blame with the new group. In his argumentation he clearly states that he had to gamble to get the money for transport and the gambling just took hold of him. In reality the gambling did take hold of him but he was not excluded by the Asili group at first. Other members of the youth group shared with me that it was Buda's own fault as he was unable to attend rehearsals after a while because he had lost his transport money through gambling. Some of the youth group members judged him harshly for jeopardizing such an opportunity but knowing Buda I sensed the deeper fear behind his actions. He could not read the scripts and he exercised hard to memorise them with the help of youth group members but he had told me during different discussion we shared that he sometimes failed to remember sentences in the middle of a shoot and that the other actors then laughed at him. He was too afraid to ask his colleagues for help. He started to feel intimidated by this outside world, a world where he was considered the 'ghetto boy' with a talent but without the proper skills to match it and this made him to seek refuge in a world he did understand and where he could at least pretend to be someone. The boys down at the river, the gambling spot, were in awe of him because he had acted on TV and he had access to the outside world through his membership of the youth group, something they could only dream of.

One day I was with Buda down at the riverside because he wanted to introduce me to some of his friends. Buda was gambling with some friends and other men were busy brewing *chang'aa* while some were just hanging around. One man, Dennis, approached me and we started to talk. It was an interesting conversation and he shared a lot with me about how he viewed his life. At one point he said something that I thought was especially interesting:

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[37] Discussion with Buda, 16 September 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

"When I walk on the street... people see I am ghetto. My hair, my clothes, the way I walk and the way I talk. And they fear me. Then I feel they cannot touch me. You know, they only choose to see our trouble but they never choose to see our struggle.[38] So we can show them trouble, if that is what they want to see!"[39]

I asked his permission to make notes and use his quote in the story I wanted to write. He granted me the permission to make notes and use this quote but all the other things he said were to remain between us.

Dennis had dreadlocks and wore his clothes in a certain way that corresponded in his view with the image people outside the slum had of 'ghetto boys'. He felt safer to explicitly show people on the street that he was from the 'ghetto' because it created a distance between him and 'others' and it made him feel that 'others' could not touch him. The essence of the construction of a sobriquet is that the imposed stereo type is made into a caricature through which it is possible to claim power. Dennis felt more powerful by overtly showing his 'ghettoness'.

Among the men that participated in my research I observed many different ways of negotiating the subject position allotted to them by the dominant discourse on poverty but they all shared a strong feeling of 'us' against 'them'.

"We all have scars. You see Toni, his eye is swollen and Samo's hand .....he cannot move it. It's big. Eeeeeeh, jana *was a fight. You know we went clubbing after your party (I had organised a birthday party, note from NVS) and we went to Ibiza (a famous nightclub in Nairobi city centre, note from NVS). So the others came as well, you know the* wazungu *from the UN. (They had met a few international interns form the UN, note from NVS) and we were dancing. Then this lady, she was dancing with Njoro and her phone was stolen. Eeeeh, Njoro just beat the guy with his head and the others come as well. You know we are all brothers so when you see your brother is in a fight you don't think...you fight. Don't touch us from Mathare* Damu![40]*"*

The sense of 'us' against 'them' does not only reveals itself in violent confrontation with other young men outside the slum. It also influences the development of friendship between young men from Mathare and from outside Mathare. Karani is a friend of Buda but he does not come from Mathare Valley and this means that he is always perceived as an outsider.

"I was called a babi[41] *was teased in MYSA by the brother of Samo, you know Terrence who is coach of Mathare United.[42] I was not part of the family, the ideals, the objectives, the mission, who MYSA is and who MYSA youth are, it never really reflected me. According to the other youth, that is. To me it was like this: MYSA deals with underprivileged youth, that includes estates like Umoja, and*

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[38] 2Pac's lyrics from the song 'Thugz Mansion' is resonated in this quote: "No one knows my struggle, they only see the trouble. Not knowin' it's hard to carry on when no one loves you. Picture me inside the misery of poverty. No man alive has ever witnessed struggles I survived."

[39] Discussion with Dennis, 4 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

[40] Discussion with Buda and a few other youth group members, 11 September 2005. Kiboro, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya. Damu mean blood in Kiswahili.

[41] *Mababi or babi* is a Sheng word which is used to refer to rich people and more specifically to the youth living in the urban estates. It is derived from the word Babylon and it refers to the decadency of how rich people live in Kenya. This reference corresponds with the reggae culture that is so popular in the slum communities. The word *mababi* also increasingly refers to 'wanna be' youth from estates who either try to copy Hip Hop artists such as 50 Cent or youth who try hard to show their ghetto, or street, credibility by copying the style of clothing and speaking from youth from the Eastlands slums

[42] The football team of MYSA playing in the national league.

even Buru Buru, but it started in Mathare for Mathare people. They (people from Mathare, note from NVS) saw the success of the organization and people from outside gaining from it. Youth from Mathare believed it was for Mathare only. Why is it otherwise called Mathare YSA? That is what they told me. The use of the name gave them the feeling they (MYSA officials, note from NVS) were taking advantage of them (people from Mathare, note from NVS). They opened other branches in other places with the same name. They felt bad about me, coming from Umoja, they would feel like: 'he has the balls to become a volunteer but he is not from Mathare!' And I got a job. My superiors told me: 'you have talent to share with the youth', and later on they started to accept me. …. The only difference between me and them is the place where we stay. It is bad to call me a babi *and not know more about me. I struggle just the same. Shit, we lived with my family of four and a family of seven in a two bedroom house but it was still a stone house! The general feeling is when you live in slums, eat in slums…. you have to be ghetto, a Rasta, against the system, you are a rebel. When you cannot get it, you take it. It is an attitude common in youth. Even the ones who don't act upon it, they have the same inner feelings, inner hatred for people who are different than them. It is always about difference of choice, how you dress, if you dress differently you are a* babi*, if you eat* ugali *with a fork you are* babi*, if you don't accept* changaa *you are a* babi*. You are not true. You know why I am a* babi*? Last time in Kiboro I was looking for a place to pee, Toni had to show me a place to pee. I should have just peed anywhere."[43]*

Karani went to school near Korogocho and worked as a volunteer at MYSA in Mathare Valley. His circle of friends consisted of youth from the Mathare Valley and Korogocho. What clearly comes to the fore in the above quote is his desire to be accepted by the youth from the slum as he is clearly arguing against their image of him by stating he struggled as much as they did and that they should not judge him on appearance.

At one time I mentioned to Buda and a group of friends while we were sitting together that I had noticed a huge difference between the *Sheng* spoken by youth from Bondeni Village and by youth from wealthier neighbourhoods such as Umoja, Karani's neighbourhood. I made the analogy with the style of clothing because I also noticed a difference there. In response to my observation Buda said that Karani, who clearly represented a wealthier youth to him, looked and talked different than him and other men from Bondeni Village because he just did not know what the real style was.

"….Karani says Mtaani (Mtaani *means neighbourhood in Sheng, note from NVS) to say his village. We laugh because then we know you are from the estate. We say* Mtiaja! (Mtiaja *also means neighbourhood in Sheng and it is pronounced with a shout, note from NVS) That is the deep Sheng.* Babi's *don't know the deep Sheng."[44]*

"….these guys just wanna copy us 'cause we are true. They don't know the deep Sheng, they don't know what the right stuff is and where to get it (clothes, phones and such items, note form the author). Ha ha ha ha, they even be too afraid to go where we go to get those stuff. They can never follow us'.[45]

In negotiating the subject position of 'ghetto boy' the 'ghetto' style of talking and dressing turned out to be an exceptional tool for these young men to claim power. Physical appearance is important in Kenyan society as a whole but the originality of the style of slum youth surprisingly

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[43] Discussion with Karani, 15 September 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.
[44] Discussion with Buda, 21 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valey, Nairobi, Kenya.
[45] Ibid.

exceeded the style of 'estate youth'[46] while they had less means to develop such a style. 'Estate youth' either seemed to copy American Hip Hop culture or the ghetto style of the 'ghetto youth'. The men I worked with knew how to get the latest Puma sneakers and 'engineered jeans', jeans with a curved seam, which became the trend among all urban youth while I was in Kenya but which started out in the Eastlands Slums. In my observations I saw essential similarities between *Sheng* and clothing style' whereby language and style started out in the slums and were almost religiously copied by the middle class youth who always seemed to lag behind as both language and style were constantly 'under construction' in the slums.

4.3. There are two Buda's: 'BUDA' and 'Buda'

Being a 'ghetto boy' is a subject position all the young men from Bondeni Village that participated in my research had to negotiate. Every minute of every day they were confronted with the stereo type image people in Kenya have about young men from Mathare Valley and it is this image that stands at the core of the dominant discourse on poverty. In the process of negotiation of the allotted subject position we have seen that the young men positioned themselves in different ways in different contexts.

There are three positions that come to the fore most visibly in this chapter but they are never fixed nor do they occur entirely separate from each other in the process of identity construction among these men. For analytical purposes I would like to separately sketch the three positions we have read so far.

The first one is the subject position of a rebel. In this position the general characteristics of the 'ghetto boy' as portrayed in the dominant discourse on poverty are enhanced and expressed with pride. The second position is the subject position of showing the opposite. In this position the young men try to blatantly show that they do not ascribe to the general image of a 'ghetto boy' prevalent in the dominant discourse on poverty by behaving exactly the opposite. The third position is the position whereby the young men present themselves as the flag bearers of the new trends in language and style. In this position ghetto youth culture is presented to youth in general, and widely accepted by them, as the most popular culture in Kenya. I will call this position the 'ghetto is cool' position.

At first glance the 'rebel' position and the 'ghetto is cool' position seem to resemble each other were it not for the fact that they face opposite directions. The resemblance lies in the way men positioning themselves in both ways express certain perceived features of 'ghettoness' with pride. The 'rebel', however, turns his back to society and feels protected by the fear he evokes. The 'ghetto is cool' position is faced towards society and not only aims to belong but aims to trigger admiration at the same time by overtly displaying perceived notions of 'ghettoness'.

All three positions claim power in negotiating the dominant image of what a 'ghetto boy' constitutes. The 'rebel' claims power by the fear he evokes and it enables him to be left alone. The men who position themselves as the opposite image of a 'ghetto boy' claim power by impressing people with how far they have come to achieve certain things. The men opting for the 'ghetto is cool' position claim power by presenting themselves as the trendsetters and 'coolest youth in town'. Interestingly, all the young men refer to themselves as ghetto boys, even above the age of 30.

The 'other' in both the 'rebel' and the 'ghetto is cool' position is the 'babi', the estate youth who is rich but not 'cool' and loves 50 Cent. It is 10 Cent versus 50 Cent. In this sub-discourse 10 Cent represents true 'ghettoness' while 50 Cent represents 'the wannabees'. In the 'rebel' position the 'babi' is looked upon with envy because of his wealth while in the 'ghetto is cool' position the 'babi'

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[46] The youth from, slightly, better neighbourhoods are often called 'estate youth'. The word estate is used in Kenyan English to refer to better neighbourhoods. The proper Sheng name for these youth is mababi as explained before.

is looked down upon because he is perceived as a 'wannabe'. The 'other' in the position of 'showing the opposite' is the 'rebel' because the 'rebel' is the caricature of the 'ghetto boy' the men constructing this position try hard not to be.

All the men I met and worked with displayed these three positions in different contexts and most of the time they were actually negotiating all three at the same time to some extent. Buda is a good example of how these men opt for different positions in relationship to different contexts and how these positions are translated to an individual identity. Down at the river he was 'BUDA', his version of the 'rebel', in the youth group he opted for his version of the 'ghetto is cool' position which combined elements of 'BUDA' and 'Buda' and in Kasheshe and towards his mother and elders he tried hard to show that he was not BUDA. Here he tried vigorously to present himself as 'Buda'.

Buda's version of the 'rebel' position, 'BUDA', is symbolised in his narration by the motto: *'kude?....kudedi!'*. Buda's version of the opposite of the 'rebel' position, 'Buda', is symbolised in his narration by the motto: *'never give up life!'*.

The combination of the two Buda's in how Buda presented himself in the youth group actually reveal that he has never been able to join the group wholeheartedly. At some occasions he positioned himself as 'BUDA' and at other times as 'Buda'. He has never been able to develop a position in the youth group that resembled the third position of 'ghetto is cool' while that was the dominant position of members in the group. The consequence was that Buda never really felt he belonged to the group like he felt he belonged down at the river.

The aspect of class in the process of identity construction by Buda is clearly intersected here with masculinity and ethnicity. Buda's desire to belong somewhere derived from his low self-esteem. Working hard to live up to the image of a young and respectable Kikuyu man as described to him by the Kikuyu elders in Bondeni Village gave him a wider social network to belong to than when he was a gang member.

After circumcision Buda joined the youth group and he emphasized on many occasions that the change he already experienced through circumcision manifested itself even stronger when he became a youth group member. Joining the youth group gave Buda the opportunity to visit places outside the slum, to meet people from other parts of the country and the world, to get knowledge and experiences he otherwise would not have acquired and it even gave him the chance to try his luck as an actor. His family and his friends from Bondeni Village started to see Buda in a different light. He carefully hid his illiteracy to his family, friends and community members because of his self-worth. He felt the need to uphold the image of an experienced and knowledgeable young Kikuyu man however fragile this veneer was.

His illiteracy is Buda's main obstacle in positioning himself as 'Buda' which explains why he resorted to his version of the 'rebel' position most of the time. As 'BUDA' he was less vulnerable because the strategies to acquire status were more familiar to him. Hiding his illiteracy made him exceptionally vulnerable in positioning himself as 'Buda', especially in a locality such as Bondeni Village.

In Bondeni Village people seem to stick together in times of need. It is an image that many young men liked to give me during our numerous conversations. Only a few days after I arrived in Kenya I witnessed the togetherness people experienced myself when Buda's niece died and I saw how supportive the community was to the family. At the same time I thought it was interesting that the ghetto boys I talked to tried to emphasize the supportive side of the togetherness of the community while downplaying the oppressive side which was so visible at the same time. Buda was openly ridiculed when his girlfriend left him and suddenly his illiteracy, his inability to keep a job and the fact that he still depended on his mother for income became food for gossip.

The struggle Buda faced between the two Buda's is a struggle most young men in Bondeni Village face because of the locality they come from, a locality which is defined by a low social-

economic status. A few of the men I met and worked with have been able to escape the dichotomy of the 'showing the opposite' position and the 'rebel' position by becoming the 'coolest youth in town'. In the next chapter I will further elaborate on the historical relationship between locality and ethnicity and how ethnicity is used to further construct a localised identity. Here will become clear why the Kikuyu identity achieved such a prominent place in the lives of the young men in Bondeni Village.

CHAPTER 5: MTIAJA IS MANOKI![1]

THE HISTORIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNICITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD IDENTITY IN BONDENI VILLAGE

5.1. Introduction

In chapter 4 we have seen that most young Kikuyu men struggle between two positions, 'ghetto boy' and 'showing the opposite', while some men have been able to construct a position of being the 'coolest youth in town'. *Mtiaja* is Eatslands' Sheng for neighbourhood. Buda, Tom and other men I met from Bondeni Village often used the word *manoki* to refer to Bondeni Village instead of *mtiaja*. *Manoki* is a Sheng word that means mad and refers to the mental hospital overshadowing Bondeni Village from Thika Road. *Manoki* is a Sheng identity which combines elements from a localised Kikuyu identity and Sheng culture and it is only constructed by youth from Bondeni Village. In negotiating the dominant discourse on poverty it centres on the third position of 'ghetto is cool'.

In this chapter I want to explicate the relationship between ethnicity and the construction of neighbourhood identity in Bondeni Village because it will illuminate partly why the Kikuyu identity played such an important part in the construction of a neighbourhood identity. The main question of this thesis is concerned with the historical contexts and the circumstances in which Kikuyu identity becomes significant in the process of identity construction among young men in Bondeni Village. The reason why and the fact that the Kikuyu identity was used to construct a very localised identity in Bondeni Village explains to an extent the significance of a Kikuyu identity to the young men living there. It will further enable me to analyse why the Kikuyu identity had such a prominent place in the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi Government and how the ghetto boys negotiated this discourse. This will shed light on why the Kikuyu identity was not a neutral identity in the historical, political social and cultural context in which these men constructed their multiple and context bound identities.

5.2. Us and Them: Bondeni and 'The Other Side'.

"*Look at me, Naomi*!" Buda gazes at me through bloodshot eyes having great difficulty to focus at me and coordinate his hands at the same time. "*I am eating Luo and Kikuyu together. I am eating me!*"[2] He kneads a big chunk of *ugali* (maize porridge in Kiswahili, note from the author) in his right hand and scoops a big portion of beans with it before bringing the whole ensemble to his mouth while dropping half of it back on his plate. In the stereotypical image prevalent in Kenya of the two ethnic groups beans represent the Kikuyu group while *ugali* symbolises the Luo group. The other guys in the *hotelli*[3] laugh and start to make fun of him. I look at him and feel sad. Buda is drunk, really drunk, but despite of this state he just managed to clearly pinpoint one of his biggest struggles. He is both Kikuyu and Luo and although he identifies himself as Kikuyu his name puts him squarely in the Luo camp.

"We are from Bondé[4]. *This side. Our community is Kikuyu because we are Kikuyu. Across the two bridges is Luo area and this is Kikuyu"*[5]

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[1] Mtiaja means neighbourhood in Eastlands Sheng.
[2] Spending the day with Buda, 13 October 2005, Mathare Valley, Bondeni Village, Nairobi, Kenya.
[3] A small restaurant in Mathare Valley and other similar slum areas.
[4] Bondé is Sheng for Bondeni Village.

Buda usually followed his mother's lineage and he generally identified himself as a Kikuyu despite his Luo name. In the previous chapter I mentioned that this can partly be explained by the lack of attention he received from his father and his father's family but that is not the whole story. The, perceived, majority of people who live in Bondeni Village belong to the Kikuyu group. Bondeni Village is considered by its inhabitants as the oldest community in Mathare Valley and the land across the river was used to cultivate vegetables until people started to settle there during the 1980s and 1990s. The, perceived, majority of the people who live across the river in an area called Area 4B belong to the Luo group. People from the Bondeni community always refer to people living across the river as 'those from the other side' or 'those Luo across the two bridges' and rarely use the name of the area to refer to this neighbourhood. The cohesion of the Bondeni community intensified and became more focussed on a Kikuyu identity because of this settlement across the river. This made young men in Bondeni Village like Buda to identify with the Kikuyu group more strongly.

To me it was rather peculiar to see how Buda positioned himself as a Kikuyu in relationship to the Luo from the 'other side' taking into account that by the yardstick of Kenyan society, which generally looks at the father to determine one's ethnic identity, he is considered to be 100 % Luo. I learned later that Buda was not the only one who downplayed a part or even his entire ethnic identity in certain contexts. Tom, Buda's friend and fellow youth group member, explains his own self-perception in relation to his ethnic identity as follows:

"I am Kamba. Ha… people always make jokes but I am not Kamba because I eat like a Kikuyu. I don't even know what Kamba food is. Also I talk Kikuyu….not even my own language. My wife is a…? Is a Kikuyu and also my son now he is a Kikuyu. It is good to be a Kikuyu 'cause they are good with money…Ha…Ha…Ha and there are so many people to help you when you are down".[6]

Tom belongs to the Kamba group but he explains in this quote that he feels more Kikuyu, he eats like a Kikuyu and he even talks better Kikuyu than his own language. I have observed many times that Tom laughs out loud without seeming to squirm when peers made jokes about Kamba people. Growing up in Bondeni Village made him to aspire to be a Kikuyu so that he looked more like most of his friends. He even told me that he had always wanted to marry a Kikuyu woman so that his children would be considered Kikuyu.

The strong Kikuyu identity of Bondeni Village can be explained by different factors. Many households are by and large headed by single Kikuyu women and this contributed to a stronger identification of children with the ethnic identity of mothers and women. Buda for the most part identifies with his mother's ethnic identity instead of his father's and Tom identifies his son as a Kikuyu because of the fact that his wife is a Kikuyu. Tom's position towards his own ethnic identity and consequently to that of his son can furthermore be explained by the fact that he wanted to belong to the, perceived, majority ethnic group in Bondeni Village.

"Bondé[7] is manoki…..*no one touches us!".[8]*

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[5] Discussion with Buda, 30 August 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi,Kenya.
[6] Discussion with Tom, 13 September 2005, Huruma, Nairobi, Kenya. Tom does not speak very fluent English and sometimes he talks English the way he was taught in primary school: 'This is a ball. This is a?' And then the children reply: 'BALL!' *"My wife is a…? Is a Kikuyu."*
[7] See footnote 4.
[8] Discussion with Buda, 4 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

Sometimes the young men referred to Bondeni Village as their *mtiaja* but more often they used the word *manoki*. While the word *mtiaja* is used by youth from the whole of Eastlands *manoki* is only used by youth from Bondeni Village. The meaning of the word *manoki* has changed from mad to tough in the way it used by young men from Bondeni Village. The interesting aspect of the use of *manoki* is that it is used by young men from various ethnic backgrounds and Buda explained to me that *manoki* in essence represents Sheng culture in Bondeni Village. Even though the word refers to Bondeni Village where Kikuyu identity is very much experienced as a neighbourhood identity the Sheng culture it represents transcends ethnic boundaries.

In general the young people who most strongly identify with and further create Sheng culture are predominantly youth from slum areas such as Bondeni Village. Although much more research is needed to analyse the relationship between ethnicity and Sheng it is possible to carefully state that many youth who identify with Sheng do so because they lack a sense of belonging and feel detached from their ethnic group. Most young men that participated in my research, however, both identified with the Bondeni Sheng culture, *manoki*, and with the localised Kikuyu identity of the Bondeni community. Born in the urban area they received a sense of ethnic identity through their mothers and at the same time they mingled with members from other ethnic groups. Sometimes Sheng was emphasized while at other times the Kikuyu identity came more to the fore. This created an overlap identity of *manoki* and the local Kikuyu identity of Bondeni Village.

I talked at length with Cucu who is she one of the first Kikuyu women[9] who migrated from Kiambu to Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley in the early 1960s. During our talk, which was translated by her grandson whom I knew for some years, many people came in the room where we sat because she sold *chang'aa* from her living/bedroom. It took me a very long to win her trust and focus on the questions I had prepared. Sometimes we had just reached a personal level when an already drunk customer came in to ask for her attention. As our talk progressed and more people came in I realised that Cucu's customers were very curious to know why this white woman was talking to Cucu. At the end of the day she counted her money and told me amusingly I should come back every day because business had been exceptionally good for a Monday. I on the other hand felt slightly frustrated because I had sat in her room for 5 hours with the feeling I had entertained drunkards more than I had had the chance to really talk to her. When I processed the interview at night I realised that this had not been the case entirely and what she had told me that day was very useful and valid information indeed.

"Many of us came from Kiambu, some from Nyeri, but mostly Kiambu and we shared a culture. We all spoke Kikuyu. Not like today.... now our youth don't even know Kikuyu and that is bad. This side, our side became strong together and we all know each other. Later Luo came on the other side of the river... but much later and at different times. They are not strong together. We were here first and we are like people from God, we love God.... our Christian God and we follow our culture. Mathare Valley is not our gishage *(ancestral land in the rural area in the Kikuyu language, note from the author) because this is not where we were to live from our God."*[10]

Cucu told me that her life did not really change in the beginning as she changed from being a squatter in the rural area to become a squatter in the urban area. She told me that the hundreds of people who moved to Mathare Valley at the same time were all Kikuyu predominantly from Kiambu and there was a lot of space for people to construct small houses. In those days Mathare Valley was a stone quarry and parts of the stone quarry which were exhausted were sold to different cooperatives,

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[9] Discussion with Cucu, 31 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya. Cucu means grandmother in the Kikuyu language and I refer to her as Cucu because it is a sign of respect to call older Kikuyu women Cucu.

[10] Discussion with Cucu, 31 October 2005, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

companies and even families since the 1940s. Since the 1940s people more and more people migrated to the city centre and because Africans were not allowed to live in the city during the colonial era they started to build houses in the surrounding areas and live as squatters. When the exhausted stone quarry sold its last piece of land in 1963 hundreds of predominantly Kikuyu squatters were already residing on the land. Cucu's house ended up staying on government property. No company could buy that land as it bordered the river which flooded the land, and her house, during heavy rains. The other side of the river was bare land which was also owned by the government and some of the Kikuyu women, like Cucu, cultivated it while brewing alcohol down at the river.

The intertextuality resonated in these quotes is the antagonism between the Luo and the Kikuyu group in national politics in Kenya since independence in 1963. Considering this tense relationship in national politics I thought it was interesting that this was also reflected in the creation of contrasting neighbourhood identities in Mathare Valley. The question that came to my mind was the reason why people from Bondeni Village construct the other side as Luo and themselves as Kikuyu.

The superior status experienced by the community of Bondeni Village can partly be explained by the fact that it considers itself the oldest community of Mathare Valley. The people who settled on the other side of the river only started to settle there since the mid 1980s while people in Bondeni Village claim to have lived their since the 1940s and 1950s.[11] The newcomers inhabited the land that was cultivated by the women from Bondeni Village which further caused tension between the two neighbourhoods. This, however, only explains the tension and not the use of Kikuyu and Luo identities to create contrasting neighbourhood identities.

Most Kikuyu women who settled in Mathare came from very poor peasant and squatter backgrounds in areas like Kiambu and Murang'a, see map 5. When they moved to Bondeni Village they brought with them the culture they grew up in and they found solace in nurturing and sharing their culture. Their shared rural/cultural background formed the foundation of social interaction among these women who faced a new and unfamiliar situation in the urban slum.

I was fascinated by the fact that Cucu firmly states that in the past 'we all spoke Kikuyu'. Members of other ethnic groups including the Luo group also migrated to Bondeni Village since its beginning though the Kikuyu group did form the majority from the start. The Kikuyu language, however, was not the only language spoken in Bondeni Village and it is thinkable that in business Kiswahili even dominated social interaction. The fact that Cucu emphasizes that 'we all spoke Kikuyu' sheds light on how she, and many women like her, remembers the past and how she reconstructs her ethnic identity in relation to her neighbourhood. Cucu felt that members of the Kikuyu group were the first to settle in Bondeni Village, she felt that they formed a cohesive cultural community and she expresses regret over the loss of her culture over the years. Maybe she is also expressing regret over the loss of power she associates with her culture.

Since the mid 1980s people from different ethnic groups including the Kikuyu group started to settle across the two bridges on the other side of Bondeni Village. The term 'other' is very significant and is in this context first of all connected to the relationship between settled inhabitants and newcomers. The question that arises is whether the Bondeni community already experienced itself as explicitly Kikuyu before the settlement of newcomers on the other side. I did not have the time to research this but I do believe that there is a relation between the settlement on the 'other side' and the intensification of community identity in Bondeni Village on ethnic grounds.

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[11] I have not been able to verify the claim of people from Bondeni Village that people already settled there during the 1940s. Cucu is the only person I have met that lived in Bondeni Village since the early 1960s. I did not have the time during my research period to further research the history of Bondeni Village thus I am not able to support or object this claim.

Moreover, the term 'other' reflects the antagonism between the Kikuyu and the Luo group in the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi Government which I will discuss in the next section.

5.3. The Jews of Kenya

Many people in Bondeni Village shared with me that they believed that the land on the 'other side' was given by the Moi Government to the newcomers to buy their loyalty. I did not have the time to research the truth of this statement but the sheer fact that many people believe it further illuminates why the 'other side' was constructed by the Bondeni community as 'Luo'. The Kikuyu and the Luo group were pitted against each other in the dominant discourse on ethnicity by the Moi Government to avoid unified opposition of the two largest ethnic groups in Kenya. The main objective of the Moi Government in this discourse was to demonize the Kikuyu group and keep the Luo group at bay and pacified with hand-me-downs such as access to land or other resources. The majority of the people who settled on 'the other side' from Bondeni Village in Mathare were considered to belong to the Luo group and the belief that they were given the land to buy their loyalty increased the construction of contrasting neighbourhood identities in these ethnic terms. To understand how this demonisation influenced the specific construction of a localised Kikuyu identity and the construction of the 'other side' as Luo it is first important to take a closer look at the reason why the Kikuyu group was demonized in Moi's discourse on ethnicity.

During the Moi era Kenya suffered from problems for which the groundwork was already laid by the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, from 1964 -1978. Jomo Kenyatta had been the leader of the nationalist movement during the colonial era. He was detained in 1952 by the colonial government because as a prominent Kikuyu leader he was suspected of having orchestrated the Mau Mau guerrilla war. In prison Kenyatta received a mythical status among many Kenyan people as the new envisioned leader of a free nation and during the first General Elections in 1962 he was elected first president of Kenya. Instead of living up to the image as leader of the 'Kenyan Nation' he increasingly positioned him self as a monolithic and centralistic leader who entertained patronage relationship with loyal cohorts, namely Kikuyu elite. During the early Kenyatta years democracy had been a thin layer of veneer that hid the reality of ethnic bias and ultra-conservative tendencies that lay beneath the surface.[12] Kenyatta's dictatorial leadership was furthermore unchallenged by international pressure because Kenya was a strategic ally in the Cold War on the side of the West.

Jomo Kenyatta died in 1978 and vice-president Moi constitutionally was designated to become interim president to guide Kenya to new elections. President Moi was a Tugen, a small ethnic group which is part of the larger Kalenjin group, and thus he belonged to a minority ethnic group. He faced competition from Kikuyu together with Luo politicians, members of the two largest ethnic groups in Kenya.[13]

Against all odds Moi won the highly competitive and heavily rigged elections in 1979 by portraying himself to be the populist alternative to the old and exploitive, Kikuyu, elites of the Kenyatta years.[14] Given the history of ethnic tensions built on uneven development originating from

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[12] In 1965 Pio Gama Pinto was assassinated, in 1966 Tom Mboya was removed from the cabinet and assassinated in 1969 and Oginga Odinga was expulsed in 1966 who then later founded the Kenya People Union (KPU). The KPU was disbanded by the Kenyatta government in 1969 while its leadership got detained. The assassination of J.M. Kariuki in 1975 revealed the grim face of the Kenyatta government beyond repair and evoked student demonstrations that were repressed with a lot of violence. A. Kisia, 'Kenya and its Discontents', in E. Kalondo, *Kwani?*, (Kwani Trust, 2004) p.299-314, p. 301. It is safe to say that these violent repressions of dissidents were just the tip of the iceberg of what really happened during the Kenyatta era.
[13] D. Throup and C. Hornsby, *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya* (1998) figure 1.1
[14] Ibid. p.28

the colonial era and carried further by Kenyatta,[15] it was not surprising that Moi's ruling strategy was based upon organizing his own ethnic power base around himself.[16] The first thing Moi did when he had won the election in 1979 was to reduce the power of Kikuyu politicians. He also promoted non-Kikuyu politicians and civil servants to solidify his own power-base.[17]

The economic and political problems from the Kenyatta era reached alarming heights during the early Moi years.[18] During the 1980s Moi's regime became more and more autocratic and he positioned ethnic allies into key positions in the state apparatus which expanded drastically under his rule. The Moi government had little access to patronage resources as most of the thriving economic ventures were firmly in the hands of the Kikuyu elite and middle class. Consequently, corruption became a pervasive element in a desperate attempt to keep Moi's 'patronage- client' networks operational. The fact that Moi's 'clients' lacked a strong economic stake, in contrast to the former Kikuyu clients of the first president Kenyatta, was compensated with enormous amounts of bribes and illegal allocation of land.[19] This led to serious inflation rates, up to 27.5% in 1992, as money was printed to meet demand.[20] It became increasingly difficult for the Moi Government to maintain the large state apparatus, which accounted for 47.2% of employment in 1981 and as much as 61.8% in the year 2000.[21]

The Moi government solely supported economic development enterprises selected on ethnic grounds instead of merit, which inevitably translated itself into economic decline[22] during the 1990s.[23] The newly developed ventures lacked the proper experience and connections to replace well established Kikuyu businesses, while the growth of the Kikuyu businesses was hampered by government discrimination. The geographic location of development expenditures markedly shifted from Kenyatta's ethnic and political bases, The Central and Eastern Provinces, to Moi's ethnic and political bases, The Rift Valley and Western Provinces.[24] Furthermore, affirmative action policies were put in place to improve the entry chances of students from the favoured ethnic groups into the prominent national secondary schools. The side effect was an increasing number of graduates demanding employment in the state apparatus. Population growth during the 1980s further pressured the state which was unable create sufficient employment in the mainstream economy.[25]

All the measures described above had been implemented with the intention of building a solid political base but instead they had undermined economic growth, frustrated the influential Kikuyu elite and caused serious inflation rates. Meanwhile the state apparatus had grown beyond its limits. Moi's

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[15] D. Throup and C. Hornsby, *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya* (1998) p. 29
[16] Ibid. p. 49
[17] Ibid. p. 29
[18] B.A. Ogot, 'Mau Mau and Nationhood, the untold story' in E.S.A. Odhiambo and J. Lonsdale *Mau Mau &Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 33. "From 1970 to his death in 1978, Kenyatta established a kind of monarchical court from which he promoted Kikuyu nationalism and entrenched Kikuyu dominance. The other Kenya peoples reacted by further consolidating imagined communities that they had established before 1952. Kenya nationalism died and politics became ethnicized."
[19] The practice of illegal allocations of land increased dramatically during the late 1980s and 1990s, i.e. during the Moi years. "Land was no longer allocated for development purposes but as political reward and for speculation purposes … 'land grabbing' became part and parcel of official grand corruption through which land meant for public purposes….has been acquired by individuals and corporations". R. Southal 'The Ndungu Report: Land &Graft in Kenya', *Review of African Political Economy*, 103, March 2005, p. 142-151.
[20] A. Haugerud, (1995) p. 34.
[21] World Development Indicators, Kenya at a glance (2003).
[22] World Development Indicators, Kenya at a glance (2003).
[23] The economic crisis was further enhanced by the Structural Adjustments Programs (SAP's) forced upon the state by the International Monetary Fund. R. van der Veen, (2002) p.68-69. D. Throup and C. Hornsby, (1998) p. 47. J. Mokaya, 'Poverty reigns 35 years later' *The East African Standard, Kenyatta Day supplement* (October 20, 1998).
[24] F.W. Holmquist, *African Studies Review* vol. 37 no. 1 (1994) p. 93.
[25] F.W. Holmquist, *African Studies Review* vol. 37 no. 1 (1994) p. 91.

political power base became unsustainable. His desperate attempts to stay in power through expanding the state apparatus and instigating the violent repression of the opposition had only increased the problems.

The rising tension was further enhanced by the pressure from the international community who forced Moi to organise multi-party elections after the end of the Cold War by withholding donor money.[26] This pressure meant major moral support for oppositional groups, headed by the Kikuyu elite, who opposed Moi's dictatorship.[27]

An ethnic minority dictatorship such as that of Moi could not get away with merely pretending to follow democratic procedures as Kenyatta had done. It had to reject democracy altogether because it did not have the numbers to pretend to the international community that it had legally won the elections. Moi's regime faced internal opposition that was supported by external pressure from the international community and Moi had to come up with an ideology and strategy to sustain his power. Moi, finding himself in a corner, tried to defend himself with arguments stating that democracy was impossible in an ethnically plural 'nation-state'. Moi wanted to prove to the Kenyan people and to the international community that democracy was dangerous in Kenya. In its discourse on ethnicity the Moi Government made the Kikuyu group the personification of the horrors that democracy would bring, namely the dictatorial rule of one large ethnic group oppressing all others. The Moi Government revived and exaggerated the memories of the time that Kenyatta was president to prove its point.

The main step was to demonise the Kikuyu group in the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi Government which culminated into the ethnic clashes during the 1990s. Here we see a continuity in history because the demonisation of the Kikuyu group had already been applied as tool to 'divide and rule' during the colonial era. The Moi government developed its discourse on ethnicity on the existing foundation of ethnic suspicion that was inherited from the colonial era. This will be further explicated in the next chapter. The demonisation of the Kikuyu group by the Moi Government has proved itself as an effective strategy. The negative images of the Kikuyu group on which Moi's discourse on ethnicity centred had already been disseminated by the colonial government in its propaganda to discredit the Mau Mau guerrilla war. The Kikuyu people were depicted by the colonial government as criminals and ethnocentric barbarians among other things. The 'loyalist' Kikuyu elite, the colonial collaborators, surrounding Kenyatta after independence enhanced the suspicion other ethnic groups harboured against the Kikuyu group as they grabbed lands and promoted ethnic alliances to support Kenyatta. The portrayal of members of the Kikuyu ethnic group as ethnocentric nationalists, criminals, killers, prostitutes and incorrigible thieves in the East African Standard during the Moi era institutionalised what has been termed by a famous journalist as a sentiment of 'Kikuyu phobia'.[28]

The ethnic clashes that occurred throughout the 1990s were instigated by the Moi Government to protract its power. With a pending economic and political crisis at his doorstep in 1991 president Moi played the ethnic card. He aimed at the possible (re)distribution of the lands in Rift Valley to keep

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[26] D. Throup and C. Hornsby, (1998) p. 72.

[27] Mwakenya, which stood for Muungano Wa Wazalendo Wa Kukuomboa Kenya (Union of Nationalists –or Patriotists- for the Liberation of Kenya) was one of the most secretive movements during those days and had at that time no identifiable spokespersons though some publications from writers calling themselves Mpatanishi (the Unifier) and Mzalendo (the Nationalist) found their way to the public. Rumours of a cell-system and the taking of oaths binding its members to secrecy bring memories of Mau Mau in mind though Mwakenya can in essence be described as an oppositional movement of intellectuals among many belonged to the Kikuyu ethnic group but that never constituted as the main criterion for membership. G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p. 36. A. Kisia, 'Kenya and its Discontents', in E. Kalondo, *Kwani?*, (Kwani Trust, 2004) p.299-314.

[28] P. Ochieng, 'Historical roots of our Phobia for the Kikuyu', *The Sunday Nation* (February 25 2001).

his power base of ethnic allies and KANU[29] supporters intact and satisfied. In the light of the economic downfall in Kenya Moi's government was in desperate need of these lands to sustain its client networks. As a result, the main targets of the smear campaigns that were part of the government's discourse on ethnicity were the poor Kikuyu squatters in The Rift Valley Province. The objective of the dominant discourse on ethnicity was to legitimise actions, the ethnic clashes, that would evict these communities from The Rift Valley Province[30] and 'restore' the lands to the ethnic groups that were allied to his regime, such as the Kalenjin and Maasai. According to the government's discourse these groups had 'traditional' rights to the land.[31]

At the core of the governments discourse on ethnicity was the portrayal of the Kikuyu people as arrogant, untrustworthy, 'money hungry' parasites who were plotting to take over the government and exploit the rest of the Kenyan ethnic groups as they had done before during the Kenyatta era. The Moi Government proclaimed openly that they, the Kikuyu group, had had their chance to 'eat the fruits of independence'[32] by circulating leaflets stating that:

"The Gikuyu must clearly know that they had their chance of leadership when their son (Jomo Kenyatta, note from the author) was the first president of this country.......They should not think that they are the only ones able to lead this country......If you-Gikuyus- boast about numbers, we will trim your numbers down in size."[33]

The governments discourse on ethnicity was centred on the term *majimboism.[34]* This term refers to a political system of ethnic federalism that was developed by Moi and other ethnic minority leaders during the last years of colonialism. Moi was not powerful enough on the verge of independence to yield enough support with *majimboism* to win the General Election of 1962. He merged his support base with KANU lured by the prospects of gaining access to recourses in the 'White Highlands' by backing up Kenyatta. The mergence of the ethnic minority leaders, belonging to

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[29] Kenya African National Union (KANU) has been the ruling party since 1963 until 2002 first with president Kenyatta and later with president Moi.

[30] The Akiwumi commission, investigating the ethnic violence of the 1990s in the Rift Valley Province during the last years of the Moi era, concluded that the violence was politically motivated and not caused by ethnic animosities. It identified two key figures, Biwott and Sunkuli, within the Moi government that had allegedly orchestrated the clashes through propaganda and even had been somehow involved in the training of the so called 'warriors'. J. Githongo, 'So, Kenyans, don't hate each other. Violence was political, not tribal', *The East African* (October 21-27 2002).
Gakuu Mathenge 'Opposition dominated Laikipia braces itself for close contest', *The Daily Nation* (July 15 2002).
Nation Team, 'Killings 'a prelude to clashes'. *The Daily Nation* (January 18 2000). This hotbed can still today be perceived as the major Achilles' heel of Kenyan politics and the expectation is that the 2007 elections will again stir up more commotion in this region which is sadly generally accompanied with more violence.

[31] What makes land such a pressing issue in Kenyan politics? Apart from the historical, political and ecological factors, explained above and below in the footnotes, the demographic factor is equally important and this is very well formulated in the following quote: "Given the concentrations of population in the high rainfall areas of the Central Highlands and western Kenya (20% of Kenya's population lives in the drier 80% of the land in the north and east), the pressure upon land (not to mention the remaining wildlife) is increasingly evident, not least because of the scarcity of formal employment and the dependence of the overwhelming majority of the population upon peasant agriculture (which …". R. Southal 'The Ndungu Report: Land &Graft in Kenya', *Review of African Political Economy*, 103, March 2005, p. 142-151.

[32] K. wa Wamwere, (2003) p. 66.

[33] K. wa Wamwere, (2003) 78.

[34] Majimbo is the Kiswahili world for 'federal'. Jimbo means state in Kiswahili, Majimbo literally means 'state' and is also used as 'federal. Majimboism means 'federalism' in Kiswahili. For more information on the history of the term *majimboism* I would like to refer interested readers to the following books: A. Haugerud, *The Culture of Politics in Modern Kenya* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995) and D. Throup and C. Hornsby, Multi-Party Politics in Kenya, (Oxford, 1998).

the Kalenjin and Maasai group, with the ethnic majority leaders, belonging to the Kikuyu and Luo group, in KANU in 1964 silenced the concept of *majimboism* in Kenyan politics until Moi became president of a minority dictatorship in 1978.

Moi's traditional support came from the pastoralist communities such as the Kalenjin and Maasai groups who had been severely marginalized by the colonial regime and who had lost large areas of their pasture lands to 'white', and later on African, settlers and Kikuyu squatters.[35] The concept of *Majimboism* in the government's discourse on ethnicity legitimised the idea of expulsion because it claimed that each ethnic group was entitled to a specific area, its 'traditional' land, and subsequently that group owned all the resources from that land. In this line of thought 'traditional' entitlement overruled official title deeds and other 'modern' allocations of land.

The interesting fact is that the prime targets of *majimboism* were the Kikuyu squatter communities in the Rift Valley Province and not the elite landowners. The members of the Kikuyu squatter communities in The Rift Valley Province suddenly were called migrants, foreigners and second rank citizens in their own 'nation'. In a report conducted by the US State Department 1000 people were killed and between 150.000 and 250.000 people had fled the region by December 1993.[36] This reveals the real motivation for reviving *majimboism* within the dominant discourse. The opposition, largely supported by Kikuyu people, accused the Moi Government of deliberately fomenting violence in order to break oppositional support in traditionally KANU strongholds. [37] The elections were organised on district level and evicting the high number of supposed opposition voters would secure the Rift Valley districts to stay in the hands of KANU.

In 1994 a young female Kikuyu refugee from the ethnic clashes in Rift Valley stated bluntly:

"We are the Jews *of Kenya…. but nobody seems to care. We have been put out of our businesses, evicted from our land, our sons, brothers and fathers have been brutally murdered while we were raped…and still tourist come to celebrate our wild life, just miles from where people have been hacked to death."[38]*

The official response of the Moi government was that the conflicts were a consequence of the resurrection of the multi-party system, stating that democracy as a western concept does not fit the 'tribal' state of mind of Africans and would only fuel ethnic violence. In the perception of the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi government the ethnic conflicts in the Rift Valley Province illustrated the truth of this statement.[39] In the various reports written by independent journalists, representatives of international organizations such as Amnesty International and the Kenyan investigating commissions it was stated that the security forces were extremely reluctant to stop the violence.[40] This again confirms the fact that prominent heads in the KANU government used this violence strategically to secure the majority of votes in the 'traditional' KANU strongholds by

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[35] R. Southal 'The Ndungu Report: Land &Graft in Kenya', *Review of African Political Economy*, 103, March 2005, p. 142-151.
[36] W. Oyugi, (2002) p. 8.
[37] A. Haugerud, (1995) p. 38.
[38] In January 1994 I helped organizing a youth camp for youth from Mathare Valley and among them some were refugees from the ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley Province surrounding the 1992 multi-party elections. I wrote this statement from a girl in the minutes of a counselling session that was held to help these traumatised youth. 14 January 1994, Wilde Life Club, Langata, Nairobi, Kenya.
[39] W. Oyugi, (2002) p. 9
[40] Ibid.

evicting opposition voters. It conveniently also seemed to prove to the international community that democracy destabilizes multi-ethnic societies such as Kenya.[41]

The ethnic clashes in 1990s brought about an influx of poor Kikuyu refugees in Nairobi slums and especially in slum communities where many Kikuyu people had already settled. The stories of the ethnic clashes these refugees brought with them had an unforeseen effect as it contributed to the intensification of a localised Kikuyu identity in these communities. To understand why the Kikuyu people already living in the slums identified strongly with the Kikuyu refugees it is important to understand the close relationship between the Kikuyu squatter community in Rift Valley that was targeted during the ethnic clashes and the Kikuyu squatter communities in the Nairobi slums. I will discuss this close relationship in the next chapter.

The people in Bondeni Village constructed a strong neighbourhood identity within which a localised Kikuyu identity played a prominent part. The intensification of a neighbourhood identity was first of all triggered by the fact that people in Bondeni regarded themselves as the first inhabitants of the neighbourhood. When newcomers started to settle across the river, occupying the small *shamba's* of the Bondeni women , the Bondeni people increasingly pronounced themselves as 'us' versus 'them' and with 'them' they referred to the newcomers across the river.

The reason why the Bondeni community constructed its neighbourhood identity on a localised Kikuyu identity can partly be explained by the fact that many of the single mothers living in Bondeni Village were Kikuyu. It is very difficult to determine whether the Kikuyu group is the actual majority but it is perceived as such, at least by people living in Bondeni. Furthermore, the demonisation of Kikuyu people in general and Kikuyu squatters in particular also contributed to a construction of a localised Kikuyu identity among people living in Bondeni Village. The many Kikuyu refugees from the Rift Valley escaping the ethnic clashes settling in Bondeni Village also contributed to an intensification of Kikuyu identity among Kikuyu people already living in here.

Constructing 'the other side', or Area 4B, as Luo can partly be explained by the antagonism between the Luo and the Kikuyu group within the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Moi Government. The rumour that people across the river were given the land by the Moi Government to buy their loyalty during the elections enhanced this antagonism and the perception that the 'other side' was inhabited by Luo's. I have not had the time but it would be very interesting to research whether the 'other side' regards themselves as 'Luo' and Bondeni Village as Kikuyu as well.

5.4. The Historical Relationship between Ethnicity and Neighbourhood Identity

In the interview fragments presented above it comes clearly to the fore that Tom and Buda both identified themselves with a localised version of a Kikuyu identity and in doing so they denied and/or downplayed their (other) ethnic identities. Moreover, both pronounced their neighbourhood Bondeni Village as Kikuyu in contrast to a perceived Luo dominated area across the river. The relationship between ethnicity and neighbourhood identity has been the result of several historical

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[41] KANU won the 1992 multi-party election with a landslide victory which was partly caused by the fact that the opposition was deeply fragmented on ethnic grounds. Furthermore, international observers at that time had too little knowledge of Kenya's political culture to properly detect fraud and the areas where the ethnic clashes occurred were sealed off for outsiders thus making it impossible to observers to stop and report wrong doings in these regions.[41] Due to his triumphant success Moi could now face both the international community as the Kenyan public with a straight face. He, in his eyes, had been right all along. Ethnic clashes had indeed occurred in the light of the multi-party elections. The fact that his own administration had instigated and fuelled the clashes was strategically swept under the carpet. Moreover, the fact that the opposition had not been able to unify against him because of, again, ethnic differences was very much of use to him and his government in facing the international community.

processes described above. In this respect the migration history of predominantly Kikuyu women to Bondeni Village from the early 1950s on wards has been paramount. The mere fact that processes such as migration generally evolved along ethnic lines augmented the use of ethnic identities to establish social ties between the new immigrants in the urban slum areas.

The political antagonism between the Kikuyu and the Luo group stems from the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the Kenyan governments since the colonial era. The dominant discourse on ethnicity during the Moi era stated, in short, that ethnic hatred is primordial in essence and would always exist because all the groups had inherently different and often conflicting characteristics and interests. According to this discourse all the ethnic groups living within the borders of the Kenyan 'nation-state' had to be controlled and directed by a strong leader from a minority ethnic group to keep all these animosities under control. Highlighted in this discourse was the belief that majority ethnic groups such as the Kikuyu and the Luo groups were dangerous to the other ethnic groups and therefore to the growth of Kenya as a nation. The size of these groups, especially in alliance with each other, formed a direct threat to the political stability of the nation. The only remedy according to this discourse was to keep these groups outside the political realm and away from each other.

The experiences of unity among people in Mathare from different ethnic groups during demonstrations against the police illustrate the relatively moderate importance of ethnicity and its impotence as an explanatory term in trying to understand conflicts among groups and people in Kenya. In contrast to what is often believed in Kenya ethnicity is not a primordial identity which causes animosity between people. Here it comes to the fore that ethnicity is an aspect of identity which can be strategically used to assert differences in areas of competition which could lead to confrontation and even outbursts of violence. The incentive to assert differences, however, generally stems from motivations of economic, political and/or cultural gain.

The Kikuyu identity of Bondeni Village is in essence a very local identity and bears little resemblances with the Kikuyu identity for instance expressed by wealthier Kikuyu people in Nairobi. It becomes clear here that we cannot speak of a Kikuyu identity. There are many Kikuyu identities and it is very difficult to determine what all of them have in common apart from the name. The Kikuyu identity that is so prominently present in Bondeni Village is also not a fixed localised identity. Circumstances change and have a reciprocal relationship with the construction of a neighbourhood identity, henceforth the content and meaning of the localised Kikuyu identity at the core of the neighbourhood identity changes with it. This is well illustrated by the fact that the settlement across the river triggers an intensification of Bondeni's Kikuyu identity while the development of *manoki* transforms the localised Kikuyu identity in the process of identity construction among youth.

The younger generation received a sense of Kikuyu culture and identity from their mothers and they again adapted and reconstructed a new content to what it meant for them to be Kikuyu. The word *manoki* is illustrative of this process. *Manoki* only stands for youth from Bondeni Village and it combines elements from Sheng culture and from the local Kikuyu culture. The word *manoki* changed its meaning overtime. The way Tom and Buda use the word *manoki* and their pronounced affiliation with the local Kikuyu identity express great pride in belonging to Bondeni Village. Buda and Tom were very young boys when people started to settle on the 'other side' but the sentiment of belonging to the oldest and most superior community seeps through their words. As a consequence a hierarchy within a hierarchy was established. In reality this meant that youth who were considered 'ghetto boys' by outsiders reclaimed their status by being Bondeni youth within the context of Mathare Valley.

When Cucu stated that 'this is not our land we were to live from our God' she, interestingly enough, refers to the basic concept on which the dominant discourse on ethnicity was constructed by the Moi Government. In *majimboism* each ethnic group is entitled to ownership of its 'traditional' land and the available resources there. Cucu does not directly addresses the question of ownership but

states that the Kikuyu group was designated 'by God' to live in the Central Provinces and therefore does echo the existence of 'traditional' lands. In doing so she confirms the same ideology that legitimised the killing and eviction of so many Kikuyu refugees the Rift Valley Province during the 1990s. For Kikuyu women such as Mama Buda and Cucu the Central Province from which they had migrated decades ago remained their imaginary home and both stated firmly that Mathare Valley was not their rural area and that land was particularly important to Kikuyu people.

It was fascinating to hear how Cucu shifted between western and Kikuyu identities and how she constructed a synthesis between traditional Kikuyu beliefs and Christianity. She stated in her quote that the Kikuyu people are like people from God. Cucu described herself to me as a 'Born Again Christian' which in the Kenyan context means a form of Christianity that is even more conservative than its counterpart in the United States of America. When missionaries brought Christianity to the Central Province and the White Highlands, the centre stage of colonisation in Kenya, the Kikuyu people who became converted developed a fascinating synthesis between Christianity and Kikuyu beliefs which was partly made possible by a strong resemblance between the Christian myth of Adam and Eve and the Kikuyu myth of Gikuyu and Muumbi, both narrating an ancestral couple from which human kind derived. Many Kikuyu/Christian, or Christian/Kikuyu, churches have developed since the colonial era with Akorino as the most prominent one in the slums of Nairobi today.

Furthermore, Cucu stated that Kikuyu people were the first to settle in Mathare Valley and in Bondeni Village and she, like Buda and Tom, also contrasted the Kikuyu dominated Bondeni Village to the, perceived, Luo community from 'the other side'. In addition she emphasized that Bondeni Village was strong together while 'the other side' was not. The overriding sentiment we can abstract from all these quotes is that members of the Bondeni community feel they have primary entitlements to the land in Mathare Valley based on the perceived notion that they were first and that they are the strongest community. It is difficult not to read a sense of superiority in the way Buda, Tom and Cucu refer to Bondeni and the Kikuyu group.

Taking a closer look at Cucu's quote leads to the conclusion that this sentiment of primary entitlement is also related to the specific character and history of the Kikuyu group as experienced and remembered by people living in Bondeni Village. In the next chapter I will explain that this is not only the result of the tyrannical force of the dominant discourse on ethnicity of the Moi Government or even of the tense relationship between two localities in Mathare Valley.

Cucu confirms the concept of *majimboism* to resist the degrading image of the Kikuyu group that is constructed within the dominant discourse on ethnicity developed by the Moi Government based on this very concept. In her quote the Kikuyu people become a chosen people from God that is meant to live in the promised lands of Central Province.[42] Within Moi's discourse the Kikuyu group is singled out and demonized and it is interesting to see that in response members of the targeted group re-construct this unique position thereby transforming its meaning to very positive and special. The sub-discourse on ethnicity created in response to Moi's discourse constructed by members of the Kikuyu group negotiates this uniqueness as superiority. This sub-discourse is called *kikuyuism* and it has a history that can be traced back to the colonial era. *Kikuyuism* has been constructed in negotiation with the colonial discourse on ethnicity, in negotiation with Moi's *majimboism* and in negotiation with Kenyatta's discourse on ethnicity which I term *kikuyuization.* To understand the development of this sentiment of uniqueness, and even superiority, experienced by many members of the Kikuyu group we have to go back to the colonial era and the Kenyatta years.

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[42] The Central Province has the most fertile farmlands of Kenya and almost 60% of Kenya's agricultural export products come from the Central Province.

CHAPTER 6: KIKUYUISM AND KIKUYUIZATION; TWO SIDES OF THE SAME ETHNIC MEDAL

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I want to explicate the historical development of two major discourses on Kikuyu identity and culture, i.e. *kikuyuism* and *kikuyuization,* and the intertextuality between them. The main question of this thesis is concerned with the historical contexts and the circumstances in which Kikuyu identity becomes significant in the process of identity construction among young Kikuyu men in Bondeni Village. Taking a closer look at *kikuyuism* and *kikuyuization* will enable me to explicate the extent of prominence the Kikuyu identity has in all dominant discourses on ethnicity constructed by Kenyan governments in the post-colonial era. The localised sub-discourse *kikuyuism* constructed by Kikuyu people living in Bondeni during the Moi era to negotiate the allotted subject-position of being 'criminal and ethnocentric' is highly influenced by the longer history of *kikuyuism* and that of *kikuyuization*. The sense of superiority many people living in Bondeni Village constructed, described in the previous chapter, cannot only be explained as a response to the demonisation by the Moi Government or even by the tense relationship between two localities in Mathare Valley. This sense of superiority has a much longer history. To eventually understand how this history is re-constructed to address needs by the young men in Bondeni Village we first have to go back to the colonial era and the Kenyatta years.

6.2. Karani is a 'tribeless' name

While doing fieldwork in Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya for different periods over many years I came across a wide variety of attitudes towards ethnicity and ethnic politics but they all resonated a specific cultural text on the hierarchy of ethnic groups in Kenya. Many people I met and worked with in Nairobi refer to ethnic politics as 'tribalism'. In general they considered it something that the government did but which had no significance in their daily lives other than the obstruction Kenyan people in general experienced on the job market and within government apparatus.

Carol, a friend of Buda and long-term youth member, explained her view to me while discussing ethnic politics in Kenya as follows:

"I come from Dandora and there we don't look at your name to help you when your house is on fire. We don't have ethnic favouritism because we can't afford it. Corruption is at the roots of all evil in Kenya. Without corruption there would be no ethnic favouritism and wealth would be more available to people who work hard. Now people work but they are obstructed because they have to bribe and they don't belong to the right tribe."[1]

By calling corruption the roots of all evil in Kenya Carol clearly draws a boundary between ethnic politics and the experience of ethnic identity whereby she feels that ethnic politics is imposed on people but has little relationship to how people experience their ethnic identity in day to day life.

Furthermore, Carol states strongly that ethnic favouritism, her word for ethnic politics, is not a sustainable reality in slums and other poor neighbourhoods in Nairobi. In her line of thinking no one can rely on government facilities in times of need and therefore they depend on a sense of cohesion based on locality not on ethnicity. Ethnic politics, in her opinion, is a tool for powerful people to acquire more power or resources. Through talking with her I again came to realise that the experience of ethnic identity does not necessarily have to be problematic or significant. You can be proud of your ethnic identity without being antagonistic to another ethnic group. The experience of an ethnic identity

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[1] Discussion with Carol, 9 October 2005, Kiboro, Eastlands, Nairobi, Kenya

certainly does not automatically lead to or explain the use of ethnic politics. The distinction between ethnic politics and the experience of an ethnic identity Carol indirectly makes in her quote is in my opinion essential to understand why many people in Nairobi told me that ethnic politics had little significance in their daily lives. They meant that they were affected by top-down ethnic politics but they did not identify with it. On the contrary, many people I talked to felt victimised by corruption and ethnic politics regardless of their ethnic backgrounds and therefore they felt that ethnic politics is something that was done to them rather than something they would do.

> *"Kikuyu means tradition, a culture, a sense of belonging. If someone calls you Kikuyu, it means you belong to a specific root. Kenya is a tree with 42 roots. As a Kikuyu you can be a contributing member to the Kenya family. Karani is a 'tribeless' name and it reflects how I feel, I feel like a Kenyan, not like a Kikuyu. The Kikuyu are labelled money lovers, thugs and criminals. When they write about crimes there are always Kikuyu names involved who did the bad things. I hated being a Kikuyu and I did not know my language. My family always wanted to talk Kikuyu to me and told me that I have to learn my language. 'What kind of a Kikuyu are you?' The reality is that most urbanites are Kikuyu and they are all engaged in shoddy businesses. A* mzungu[2] *would come and ask someone's name and tribe and then they would go like…. aaaaaah okay,…..and it means you come from the tribe of thieves, the black tribe. They were so dehumanized since colonization. When I saw 'Kitchen Toto I started to understand* 'Kikuyuism' *because of the way the whites were treating Kikuyu but it did not make me feel proud to be a Kikuyu, belonging to the same tribe as the Mau Mau. I don't want to be associated with people who are called* 'kukes' *and savages. I will never marry a Kikuyu."[3]*

Karani is clearly struggling here with his Kikuyu identity. On one hand he describes Kikuyu ethnicity as a 'sense of belonging' and on the other hand he bluntly states that he does not want to belong to this 'tribe of thieves', the 'black tribe', the 'same tribe as the Mau Mau'. He defines being a Kenyan as not being a Kikuyu which is underlined by the fact that he asserts his name as 'tribeless' but besides this contrast he does not give any other substance to what it means to be a Kenyan.

Karani grew up in a neighbourhood in Nairobi where the Kikuyu group formed a minority and he went to a secondary school near Korogocho which was attended by a majority of Luo youth who lived in the inner circles of Korogocho. His perception of his ethnic identity is undeniably influenced by the position he occupied during secondary school.

To understand Karani's position it is important to know that the members of the Kikuyu group have also been the first to settle in Korogocho and this is visible today in the fact that most stone houses in the slum area are owned by Kikuyu people and are located on the outer-circles of the slum community. The members of the Kikuyu group who settled earlier had more time to save money to build stone houses but it does not mean that they are wealthier than their Luo neighbours who live in houses made of corrugated iron sheets in the inner-circles of Korogocho. Poverty is a relative experience and the Luo families in the inner-circles do perceive themselves as worse off by comparing the state of their houses to the stone houses of their Kikuyu neighbours. The explanation for this perceived difference in socio-economic status is often found by these Luo families in the alleged ethnocentric and corrupt traits of the Kikuyu group as constructed in the dominant discourse on ethnicity. This explanation is in fact fuelled by the demonisation of the Kikuyu group within Moi's discourse on ethnicity. Karani met these sentiments when he went to school as a young boy and he has often expressed to me that he was relieved to find out that his name did not directly indicate his ethnic identity.

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[2] Mzungu means white person in Kiswahili.
[3] Discussion with Karani, 15 September 2006, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

The negative stereotypes of the Kikuyu group which were already constructed during the colonial era and which were continued and enhanced by dominant and sub-discourses have influenced Karani's self-perception. He resented the constant reminder of his Kikuyu identity by his relatives who addressed him in the Kikuyu language and denounced him for not speaking his own language. In his late teens Karani started to learn more about the Mau Mau guerrilla war through watching movies such as the 'Kitchen Toto' and he understood more about the process of demonisation within the colonial discourse on ethnicity. Having been indoctrinated by his personal experience during school and by the dominant discourse on ethnicity during the Moi era he never overcame his resentment to his ethnic identity.

I stated above, following Carol, that the experience of ethnic identity does not have to be problematic and has to be viewed separately from ethnic politics in the day to day experience of people. I, however, also gradually came to realise that people from both the Kikuyu group and other ethnic groups in Kenya had difficulty separating ethnic politics and the experience, and expression, of Kikuyu identity in affiliation to the Kikuyu group. Cucu states: '*we are like people from God*' in the previous chapter and I will demonstrate below that this is a significant political statement considering the history of the Mau Mau Guerrilla war and the Kenyatta era.

6.3. Kikuyuism and the Colonial Discourse on Ethnicity

The many Kikuyu people I met in Bondeni Village all negotiated a cultural text concerning the hierarchy of ethnic groups headed by the Kikuyu group. Some of them expressed great pride in being Kikuyu while others such as Karani struggled with the images their ethnic identity evoked and there seemed no middle ground. This cultural text originates from the colonial era and has profoundly influenced all dominant discourse developed one ethnicity since independence in 1963. The term *Kikuyuism* is the core term to understand the cultural text on ethnicity prevalent in Kenya.

Kikuyuism is a word Kenyan people on the streets often use to refer to an aggressive version of ethnic politics favouring the Kikuyu group. It is coined here by Karani in the above interview fragment. It was first used to describe the political ambition of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA)[4] in the colonial era and later the term was used to refer to the ethnic politics of the Kenyatta government. In more recent decades the term *Kikuyuism* was used to refer more loosely to different social and political organizations, such as the Gikuyu Embu and Meru Association (GEMA),[5] striving

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[4] Berman B. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* Volume 30 Issue 3 (1996) p. 314. The Kikuyu Central Association was a Kikuyu interest group with the objective to achieve better economic and political circumstances for the Kikuyu group during the colonial era. It mainly consisted of educated Kikuyu men.
[5] Gikuyu Embu Meru Association (GEMA) is described by G. Wamue as a cultural and welfare organisation with social advancement of the connected ethnic groups as its objective but can in essence be understood as a lobby/network organization that has the objective to facilitate commercial, and political, opportunities for, elite, members of the three ethnic groups mentioned in the name and to safeguard their interest in policy and decision-making processes. G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p.27. Its Kalenjin Maasai Tugen Samburu (KAMATUSA) counterpart follows the same objective and usually the two organizations find themselves opposite of the Kenyan political spectrum, especially when controversial issues such as the 'land-question' are concerned. Philip Ochieng, long term columnist of The Daily Nation, raises the question why reviving GEMA is 'tribalism' and to flaunt KAMATUSA is not. He goes back into history to find out what the roots are of Kenya's "phobia for the Kikuyu". Philip Ochieng, 'Historical roots of our Phobia for the Kikuyu', *The Sunday Nation* (February 25 2001). He seeks, rightly so in my opinion, a part of the explanation in the colonial propaganda during the Mau Mau guerrilla war which depicted the Kikuyu people as 'born terrorists' among other things. He further states that the 'home guard' Kikuyu elite, the colonial collaborators, surrounding Kenyatta after independence enhanced the suspicion other ethnic groups harboured against the largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu ethnic group, as they grabbed lands, see above footnotes, and promoted ethnic alliances to support Kenyatta. The portrayal of members of the Kikuyu ethnic group as killers, prostitutes and incorrigible thieves in the East African Standard during the Moi era institutionalised, in his eyes, 'Kikuyu phobia'. Philip Ochieng touches here on the highly controversial issue of ethnic unity versus national fragmentation in light of the upcoming elections of 2002 and states that this unity does not have to be

to improve the situation of the Kikuyu group and related groups within the Kenyan nation state. The term *Kikuyuism* has changed overtime and to understand its current use and responses and what the relationship is between this term and the cultural text it is important to go back to the colonial era and the first decades after independence in 1963.

The Kikuyu community was already the largest ethnic group in Kenya during the colonial era and still is today covering 21 percent of the population in Kenya.[6] This group lived near the colonial capital city Nairobi during the colonial era and their 'traditional' lands in the Central Province bordered the so called White Highlands[7] making them one of the first communities in Kenya to interact intensively with the colonizers. Members of the Kikuyu group were offered limited education to serve the colonial administration but at the same time the Kikuyu community was demonised to ensure that this privilege was not used to organize a united front against the colonial government.[8] Some members of the Kikuyu community engaged in the Mau Mau movement that fought a guerrilla war in the 1950s against the colonial establishment to fight for *Ithaka na Wiyathi,* which means land and freedom in the Kikuyu language.

In the colonial government's discourse on ethnicity the Kikuyu community at large was equated with the Mau Mau and consequently legitimised the detainment of almost the whole Kikuyu population between 1952 and 1956.[9] Furthermore, members of the Mau Mau movement were pictured as cannibals, savages and as power hungry Kikuyu nationalists who thought they were the only ones able to lead the country after independence because of their educational head start and superior ethnicity. The root of suspicion between ethnic groups in Kenya was planted. The question is why the Kikuyu ethnic group became the main target of the colonial discourse on ethnicity.

The 'white' settlers in Kenya legitimised their entitlement to the land and labour forces[10] with their racist views believing that the African 'race' was biological inferior to them and had to be controlled as Africans were, in their eyes, unpredictable, child-like and sexually aggressive.[11] This racist ideology formed the basis of the dominant discourse on ethnicity that was gradually developed by the colonial administration throughout the colonial era.[12] It changed in tone during the late 1940s from perceiving Africans as inferior and child-like to barbaric and animal-like in correspondence to the growth of resistance from Africans towards the colonial administration and the presence of the settler community.[13]When the Mau Mau movement started to take shape in the 1949-1950 the Kikuyu group became the main focus of the dominant discourse on ethnicity because it was this group that most forcefully resisted the colonial government.

To properly understand the construction of *Kikuyuism* as a sub-discourse, and key shifts in its connotations over time, we must take a closer look at the reasons for the members of the Kikuyu group

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antagonistic to national unity at all. On the contrary, as he states that reviving GEMA could very well contribute to national unity, "…..so why fault them?". Even though it was refreshing to read such a cogent column, especially during the highly competitive atmosphere in the run-up to the 2002 elections, Ochieng falls short of explaining how in practise ethnic unity could contribute to national unity in the political reality of ethnic divisiveness in Kenya.

[6] D. Throup and C. Hornsby (1998) Figure 1.1.

[7] T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 8-9. "When the British government declared a Protectorate over what came to be known as Kenya, Kikuyu settlement stretched northwards of Nairobi to the slopes of Mount Kenya. European settlement of the White Highlands began in the southern district of Kikuyu country".

[8] K. wa Wamwere, (2003) p. 60.

[9] See C. Elkins, (2005).

[10] "The two worlds of colonial society in Kenya were bound together by the settler independence on African Labour and by the increasing incorporation of the African population into the monetary economy as labourers, producers of certain cash crops and consumers of imported manufactured goods". Berman and Lonsdale, (1992) p. 236.

[11] C. Elkins, (2005) p. 12.

[12] Berman and Lonsdale, (1992) p. 236.

[13] C. Elkins, (2005) p. 12.

to engage in resistance against the colonizers. The answer to this question lies in the specific grievances members of the Kikuyu group experienced during the colonial era which eventually led to the formation of armed resistance. In addition, the government's fierce response, the detainment of the almost the entire Kikuyu group and the dichotomy between Kikuyu loyalists and Kikuyu militants, which I will explicate below, all contributed to the intensification of an articulated Kikuyu identity among poor Kikuyu groups during the colonial era. It is this articulated Kikuyu identity that formed the basis for the term *Kikuyuism* in the way Karani used it.

The Kikuyu group was severely affected by colonial rule primarily because the settlers established their farms near clan land. Territorial expansion, *githaka* in the Kikuyu language, had formed the backbone of Kikuyu society in pre-colonial times to alleviate population pressures but with the coming of the 'white' settlers the Kikuyu communities found themselves hemmed in.[14] With the proceeding of colonization the disparate ethnic groups lumped together within the artificial borders of the colonial state were put in Native Reserves to gain more control over them. The population growth among the Kikuyu group within these set boundaries was problematic from the start. This explosive situation was enhanced by the introduction of a cash economy and the tightening grip of hut taxes which forced people to leave subsistence farming and engage in wage-labour. The existing social order was completely disrupted.

Landless Kikuyu *Ahoi*[15] were among the first groups of Africans to work on 'white' settler farms in the White Highlands and in the Central Province. The Kikuyu reserves could not harbour the population growth and the original class of landless workers within Kikuyu culture, *Ahoi*, expanded as it started to include new vulnerable groups of Kikuyu men and women. More and more people were forced out of the reserves to find wage-labour because there was just not enough land to go around. The 'white' settlers attracted these vulnerable groups by giving them a job and a piece of land to cultivate. This gave the wage-labourers a false sense of security because they thought they developed rights on these lands over time.[16] By 1948 almost 29 % of the Kikuyu people were living outside the reserves, forced out by the economic hardship people had to face living in the reserves.[17]

The appointment of Kikuyu 'chiefs'[18] by the colonial administration was considered highly illegal in the eyes of the Kikuyu because they did not have chiefs. Instead their political system was characterized by a council of elders.[19] These appointed 'chiefs' became further discredited by their behaviour towards their subjects as they contributed to the problematic situation people in the reserves had to endure. The 'chiefs' were granted title deeds to clan land and cultivated the land to produce cash crops replacing 'traditional' subsistence farming.[20] In doing so they took advantage of commercial possibilities introduced by the 'white' settlers and at the same time they gradually pushed more and more Kikuyu people outside the proclaimed reserves, killing two birds with one stone. In capitalizing on their economic privileges they secured a steady flow of labour to the 'white' settlers'

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[14] Ibid. p. 12-13, and T. Kanogo (1987) p. 10-11. "Pioneer (Kikuyu, note from NVS) migrants visualised the opening up of the White Highlands as a new frontier…." T. Kanogo (1987) p.15.

[15] T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 10.

[16] T. Kanogo, p.16. Kaffir farming involved a landlord- tenant relationship between the European settler and the African squatter. During the First World War settler agriculture came to a standstill and the squatters took over responsibility for agricultural production in the White Highlands. This increased their belief that they had rights to the lands they cultivated. T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 46. Discussion with Mr. Maina Chura, Kenya, 27 October 2005.

[17] W. O. Maloba, (1993) p. 28.

[18] Grandfather explained to me that the people who were hated by the vast majority of the Kikuyu ethnic group were 'chiefs'. "I worked at a government hospital and I was not hated. The people that were hated were the chiefs. Not teachers or hospital workers, they benefited the community, the chiefs did not". Discussion with Grandfather, 27 October 2005, Chura, Kenya.

[19] C. Elkins, (2005) p. 18.

[20] F.W. Holmquist, *African Study Review* vol. 37 no. 1 (1994) p. 72.

farms. The Kikuyu group can be perceived as the most exploited group under colonial rule while Kikuyu 'chiefs' became among the greatest beneficiaries.[21]

The appointed 'chiefs' and other government employees who gained from working for the colonial establishment were termed loyalists. The Kikuyu people who lost land, who were detained and who supported the Mau Mau guerrilla against the colonial establishment were termed 'militants'. The dichotomy between 'loyalists' and 'militants' created a situation of social, political and economic cleavages and mutual distrust, bitterness and even hatred that left its erasable mark on relations among the Kikuyu group until today. The dichotomy between Kikuyu militants and loyalists still influence social relationships within the Kikuyu group today . I will further explain this below.

From 1937 onwards the government decided to repatriate 'undesirable' Kikuyu squatters back to the reserves. The decision to repatriate was prompted by the 'white' settlers' growing need of land who had finally reached a period of prosperity after the devastating economic crisis of the 1930s.[22] The sudden rise in economic growth during the WO II accompanied with mechanization and technological developments made the large workforce of Kikuyu squatters increasingly redundant. The repatriation inflicted a great feeling of bitterness among the repatriates as people had no where to go. The reserves were already overpopulated as it was and the African quarters in the urban area were characterised by high unemployment rates. Here people survived by brewing illegal alcohol and engaging in prostitution.

Overpopulation of the reserves had reduced soil fertility and accelerated erosion within its boundaries and this affected the areas where these reserves were situated at large, including 'white' settler farms.[23] In an attempt to alleviate the pending ecological disaster without burdening the 'white' settler farms the colonial government implemented several post-war soil conservation programs and restricted Kikuyu peasants to produce cash-crops for the local market.[24] Kikuyu women, as most men had become wage labourers, were forced to work free of charge in these programs of coerced labour, digging miles and miles of terraces. The feeling of bitterness already present among the squatter repatriates spread among other social groups within the Kikuyu group.

As explained above the sudden flow of repatriates, the overpopulation of the reserves, the restriction to produce cash-crops and the forced labour programs led to a widespread feeling of bitterness among different Kikuyu groups. This feeling of bitterness inspired different pockets of resistance such a strikes and demonstrations during the late 1940s.[25] Through initiating these resistance activities many Kikuyu people tried to get government attention for their social, political and economic grievances but the legitimacy of their claims was never acknowledged by the colonial government.[26] On the contrary, the colonial government under pressure from the 'white' settler

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[21] C. Elkins, (2005) p. 19.
[22] L.J. Poyck, (1985) p.41.
[23] C. Elkins, (2005) p. 23.
[24] Ibid.
[25] G. Kershaw (1995) p. 44. The earliest rumours of Mau Mau activities reached local communities in the Rift Valley Province around 1948. The Director of Intelligence and Security reported the existence of a secret movement called Mau Mau in Naivasha on 21 September 1948 and other officials reported Mau Mau activity in Fort Hall, Murang'a, in the same year. It could very well be that this was not necessarily Mau Mau, as the Mau Mau guerrilla did not emerge until 1953, but that the oath-taking ceremonies were mistaken for a secret society. This would affirm C. Elkins' statement that the term Mau Mau derived from a wrong interpretation of the word *muma*, oath in the Kikuyu language. B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, (1992) p. 253.
It was not until 1953 that groups of fighters sufficiently organised themselves to resist the colonial security forces in the forest. Moreover, it is safe to say that the guerrilla grew in momentum and the use of violence by the guerrilla was increased as a result of the conditions Kikuyu people faced during the time of emergency itself, not the other way around. C. G. Rosberg Jr. and J. Nottingham, (1970) p. 277-319.
[26] B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, (1992) p. 273. The official portrait of the colonial government of the Mau Mau guerrilla war denied the real factors that had led to the uprising as it shifted the blame to the 'abnormalities' of

community answered the growing unrest with perpetual and excessive violence which further radicalised resistance. This eventually led to the Mau Mau guerrilla war. [27]

During the late 1940s when more and more resistance activities were organised by Kikuyu people the Kikuyu group became the core-focus of the dominant discourse on ethnicity constructed by the colonial government. The Mau Mau movement was considered to be anti-European and atavistic and Jomo Kenyatta, a prominent Kikuyu and leader of the nationalist movement, was pinpointed as the alleged mastermind.[28] On the morning of 20 October 1952 a state of emergency was declared which materialized first of all in the arrest of Kenyatta and 5 other alleged Mau Mau leaders.[29] The Mau Mau movement was not stopped by this arrest but instead turned more coherent and more violent as more people were now convinced that radicalism was the only solution. On 24 August 1953 Dedan Kimathi, the famous Mau Mau Field Marshal, wrote:

"When KAU (Kenya African Union, the nationalist movement opting for a moderate and constitutional approach, note from author) was proscribed, I congratulated the Kenya Government, for because of that I received many askaris *(soldiers in Kiswahili, note from NVS). Many Africans who were confined in Nairobi said they had been given the opportunity to follow me in the forests, and young men and women and even old men are in the forests for fear of being killed or badly beaten, or being arrested, as it is the government policy and object."[30]*

By removing the moderate, and most visible, leadership within the Kikuyu group, the colonial government had created the very situation they had been afraid of. Kenyatta, formerly criticised for his moderate views by the Mau Mau freedom fighters, became the embodiment of resistance.[31]

The gigantic misjudgement and underestimation of the Mau Mau movement and of the seriousness of the grievances of the Kikuyu people by the colonial government reveals that the government did not take these social, political and economic grievances serious. The marginalised situation of African ethnic groups in colonial Kenya was justified by the fact that they were inferior to the 'white race'. Moreover, the fact that Africans were able to develop rational and sophisticated political analysis of their situations that could form the foundation of social resistance movements was downright unthinkable in the eyes of the colonial government. The emergence of these movements was dismissed by this government with the argument that it was caused by the primitive and intoxicating spell from the Mau Mau oaths and the shrewd manipulation of Kenyatta and his 'cronies'.[32] Elspeth Huxley, considered as a moderate among settlers, formulated the colonial view on Mau Mau adherents and oath-taking as follows:

"The oath-taker is forced deliberately to flout the very deepest of his tribal tabus, to take action which plunge him into so bottomless a pit of degradation that there can be no cleansing, no climbing back

the Kikuyu ethnic group instead of looking at the economic and political crises the Kikuyu group had to face during the colonial era.

[27] The etymology of the term Mau Mau is still debated but I will follow C. Elkins in this thesis. She writes in a footnote that the term Mau Mau first appeared in a British colonial government source in 1948 and that it was not used by the Kikuyu ethnic group initially to refer to the militant movement. It has no meaning in the Kikuyu language. One possible explanation of the term according to her could be that it derived from a distortion by Europeans of the word *Muma* meaning oath in Kikuyu language. C. Elkins, (2005) p.380.

[28] B. A. Ogot, 'Mau Mau & Nationhood' in E.S.A. Odhiambo and J. Lonsdale *Mau Mau &Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 8-34, p. 10.

[29] C. G. Rosberg Jr. and J. Nottingham, (1970) p.280-85.

[30] B. A. Ogot, 'Mau Mau & Nationhood' in E.S.A. Odhiambo and J. Lonsdale *Mau Mau &Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 8-34, p. 22.

[31] C. Elkins, (2005) p. 36.

[32] C. Elkins, (20050 p.36.

into the community of decent men. He is damned forever in his own eyes and therefore desperate, hopeless, irreclaimable. What a weapon of psychological warfare! It is impossible not to feel that a mind, or minds, diabolic in their ingenuity still control enemy strategy and that the gentle-perhaps genteel-minds of high officials operate on a level so different that the two cannot mesh. Courses in civics, training in carpentry, can they reclaim these self-condemned people?"[33]

The colonial government embarked on a widespread military campaign to detain Mau Mau suspects and anyone who could be infected by 'Mau Mau', i.e. the entire Kikuyu population excluding the Kikuyu loyalists such as the government appointed Kikuyu chiefs. 'Mau Mau' became more and more perceived as a mental disease by the colonial government, a disease that had to be put under quarantine.[34] One such military operation to arrest Mau Mau suspects was operation Anvil. On 24 April 1954 government militaries and police officers cleared the streets of Nairobi arresting thousand and thousands of Kikuyu people who were either put in detention camps, work camps or brought to the heavily guarded emergency villages in the native reserves. These camps and villages together formed what was termed the pipeline and in this organisation of different levels of imprisonment people were detained according to suspected ties of loyalty to the Mau Mau movement.

The prison guards in these camps and villages feared the suspected Mau Mau detainees as a result of the propaganda the colonial government had put in motion to avoid the joining of other ethnic groups in the guerrilla war. The core of this propaganda machine was the portrayal of the Mau Mau adherents as cannibals and the prison guards, among which many were Kikuyu loyalists, were enticed to beat the prisoners as they were made to believe that otherwise they would be eaten by them.[35] The 'white' settler community was convinced that Mau Mau suspects were inferior human beings as is evidenced by the following quote taken from a British visitor to the settler community in Kenya in 1953:

"What do the settlers say? They know the primitive East African mentality and that 'black brother' is a thousand years behind the European in outlook, and the 'Kuke', *who are causing the present trouble, are much inferior to the other Kenya tribes in moral qualities. If Europeans were to abandon the country voluntarily, or be squeezed out politically, without the Pax Britannica it would revert to blood-thirsty barbarism.…"[36]*

The Mau Mau and the Kikuyu ethnic group at large were severely demonized, and dehumanized, by the British colonial government which caused irrefutable divisions between ex- Mau Mau fighters/sympathisers and Kikuyu loyalists. It also laid the foundation for tense relationships between the Kikuyu group and other ethnic groups.

The sub-discourse *Kikuyuism* was constructed by Kikuyu people to negotiate the ideological pressures of the colonial government. From the start *Kikuyuism* centred on concepts such as autonomy and ownership to negotiate the dominant discourse on ethnicity that centred on subjugation and demonisation. In the next section I want to go into to the intertextual relationship between *Kikuyuism* and *Kikuyuization*. *Kikuyuism* during the colonial era was constructed predominantly to negotiate the dominant discourse constructed by the colonial government while after independence in 1963 it changed because it was aimed to negotiate *Kikuyuization* constructed by the political elite.

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[33] Ibid. p. 112.
[34] Ibid. p. 140.
[35] Ibid. p. 146.
[36] Ibid. p. 113-114.

6.4. Kikiuyuism and Kikuyuizaion during the Kenyatta Era

Late 1950s the onset of independence became unavoidable in the light of the decolonization fever that spread throughout the continent supported by international pressure from the United States of America.[37] Realising that the times were changing the members of the African nationalist movement, such as Kenyatta, were now contrasted as civilized freedom and nationalist 'fighters' with the savage nature of the 'dark and mysterious' and ethnocentric Mau Mau 'warriors' within the colonial discourse on ethnicity. This strategic change of tone by the colonial government had the objective to exclude radical forces from the transition of power in order to secure a profitable partnership between Kenya and England after independence.[38] Part of this process was the *Kikuyuization* of the state-apparatus. The colonial government prepared the handing over of power by placing Kikuyu 'lolyalists' in strategic places to ensure British influence after independence. Jomo Kenyatta was still perceived as the visible leadership of the Mau Mau. After detention of nearly a decade he had become a symbol of independence and the colonial government could not avoid working closely with him. Jomo Kenyatta became the first elected president of Kenya in 1962 and became the key figure to prepare independence with the colonial government in transition.

The meaning of *Kikuyuization* was changed when Kenyatta developed his discourse on ethnicity. He first proclaimed that everybody fought for independence and therefore he ignored the specific struggle of the Mau Mau movement and large segments of the Kikuyu group.[39] After independence the image of the Mau Mau movement as savages and ethnocentric nationalists could not be easily erased from the collective memory. The Kenyatta Government's solution was to exclude the Mau Mau movement from power and thus accommodate former Kikuyu loyalists, non-Kikuyu, the British government and European settlers.[40] Kenyatta referred openly to the Mau Mau as 'these gangsters' criminalizing the movement within the dominant discourse on national history.[41] The

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[37] When the Second World War ended the United States of America (USA) emphasised the sovereignty of nations in its foreign policy and this ideology became the basis on which the United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945. The European nations that still had colonies were heavily criticised by the USA in the context of the UN and this, and other factors, eventually led to the widespread decolonization of many former colonies in Asia and Africa during the 1950s and 1960s.

[38] T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 163. The British government was able to influence the outcomes of the negotiations of independence in its own favour and in that of the settler community. The settlers were adequately compensated and the British government continued to have considerable economic and political influence in post-colonial Kenya. This has been termed the "…'Europeanization' of the transfer of land and political control in Kenya."

[39] E. S. A. Odhimabo and J. Lonsdale, 'Introduction', in E.S. Odhimabo and J. Lonsdale *Mau Mau &Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 4.

[40] M. S. Clough, 'Mau Mau & the Contest for Memory' in E.S.A. Odhiambo and J. Lonsdale *Mau Mau &Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 251-64, p. 255.

[41] Ibid.
"Kenyatta explained to puzzled freedom fighters that the land transaction did not amount to the purchase of African land but were only compensations to the settler for developing the land". T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 170-1.
A Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA) was founded by ex-Mau Mau fighters and frustrated peasants in the Rift Valley province to fight for land in the chaos of the early 1960s, right before independence. T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 164-5.
The KLFA surprisingly supported Kenyatta in the run-up to independence and this move can be viewed as a sign of ethnic antagonism as the KLFA consisted of Kikuyu and related ethnic groups and the KLFA's expressed the will to fight if Kenyatta's KANU (Kenya African Nationalist Union) would lose in the 1962 elections. Here it comes to the fore that even though they felt betrayed by the Kikuyu elite some members of the Kikuyu squatter community accorded themselves a prior claim to the political leadership in Kenya as this would in their perception translate into access to resources after independence. This believe of prior claim to the country's leadership has been termed by E.S. Atieno Odhiambo as the ultra-ethnic thesis, the pan-Thagicu or ultra-Kikuyu vision, on nationalism in his essay where he described seven different possible theses on nationalism in Kenya. The main idea behind this view was that the Kikuyu fought for independence on behalf of the rest of Kenya's ethnic groups which legitimised the idea that 'Kikuyuism' was the new national identity and the flag of Kenya should never leave the house of Muumbi, the ancestral mother in Kikuyu religion. In 1969 a new oath taking campaign was initiated when Kenyatta's leadership was contested by oppositional leaders reviving pan-Thagicu

problem was that recognition of the Mau Mau would involve sharing the 'matunda ya uhuru',[42] the fruits of independence in Kiswahili, with them and that was one thing the Kenyatta Government and its supporters were not prepared to do.[43]

Behind Kenyatta's façade of democratic nationalism the Kikuyu elite, mainly consisting of former Kikuyu loyalists, were unscrupulously favoured by the Kenyatta Government. Kenyatta's discourse legitimised this ethnocentric favouritism within *Kikuyuization* by claiming that the Kikuyu group were superior to other ethnic groups in Kenya.

Kenyatta's ethnocentric approach created not only tensions between the Kikuyu group and other ethnic groups in Kenya but also among Kikuyu group. The Kikuyu identity of the new elite formed the backbone of 'nationalist' ideas expressed by the Kenyatta Government. *Kikuyuization*, as constructed by the Kikuyu elite during the Kenyatta years, legitimised not only an ethnocentric but also a class focus as it ignored the needs and wants of the Kikuyu poor while looking after its own interest.[44] *Kikuyuization* prompted the transformation of *Kikuyuism* after independence which now became the sub-discourse of many Kikuyu poor to negotiate being ignored in the dominant discourse.

Many ex- Mau Mau fighters and Kikuyu people who came back from the forest or from detention in the late 1950s found that their lands were confiscated by Kikuyu loyalists. These loyalists had been granted these lands by the colonial government. They believed that this injustice would be corrected by the Kenyatta government after independence. To their shock Kenyatta's first act in office was to distribute the former 'white' settler farms among his ethnic cohorts. The large 'white' settler farms were used as patronage resources in Kenyatta's ethnic politics and through this he bought the loyalty of the new, mainly, Kikuyu elite. A majority of the ex- Mau Mau fighters and former detainees became poor Kikuyu squatters in the Rift Valley Province. Only 20 % of the land left by 'white' settlers was divided and distributed to the Kikuyu squatter population in Rift Valley.[45] Here the scarcity of recourses forced the members of these communities to work on the coffee and tea plantations now owned by the Kikuyu elite who had been loyalists during the time of emergency. It is not difficult to imagine that the Kikuyu squatter communities viewed the Kikuyu elite with a great deal of resentment.

The Kikuyu squatter communities protested strongly against what has since been called the 'land grabbing of the White Highlands' and at the core of their resentment stood the conviction that they had fought for independence to get their lands back and not to serve a new elite.[46] Furthermore, being squatters these communities felt vulnerable in relationship to Maasai and Kalenjin groups who with support from Moi's *majimboism* before his mergence with KANU these groups claimed 'traditional' entitlement to the pastures of the Rift Valley Province.[47] They did not shun violence. Ex-

political thought, vowing that Muumbi must rule Kenya forever, and this formed the foundation on which GEMA thrived. The ex- Mau Mau fighters and the squatter communities became disillusioned right after independence when Kenyatta failed to deliver again but then he and his political elite were already firmly established and saw no need to solve the land-issue in the Rift Valley Province. E. S. A. Odhiambo, 'Matunda ya Uhuru, fruits of independence. Seven Theses on Nationalism', in E.S. Odhiambo and J.Lonsdale, *Mau Mau & Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) p. 37-45.

[42] E. S. A. Odhiambo, 'Matunda ya Uhuru, fruits of independence. Seven Theses on Nationalism', in E.S. Odhiambo and J.Lonsdale, *Mau Mau & Nationhood*, (Oxford, 2003) 37-45, p. 37.

[43] T. Kanogo, (1987) p. 173. The nationalist struggle became increasingly characterised by what Kanogo terms 'ethnic parochialism'. The knowledge f the upcoming independence triggered suspicion among the various ethnic groups preparing themselves for their rightful share of the 'independence cake'.

[44] A.D. Smith, National Identity (1991) p. 111. "In Kenya too a process of Kikuyuization is apparent. Here, however, the dominant ethnic community is periodically challenged by other communities, especially the Luo. Nevertheless, the nature of a 'Kenyan' territorial nation is heavily aspirations, needs and culture of the dominant Kikuyu community."

[45] Holmquist F.W. *African Study Review* vol. 37 no. 1 (1994) p. 76.

[46] Turner T.E. and brownhill L. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 22 (2001) p. 1043.

[47] Ibid.

Mau Mau fighters and other Kikuyu men from these communities formed The Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA) to protest against the 'land grabbing' and to fight groups of Maasai and Kalenjin fighters who tried to violently evict them.[48]

The ideology of the KLFA was inspired by the memory of the Mau Mau movement and this memory became the symbol of *Kikuyuism*. In this light *Kikuyuism* can be perceived as a reaction to the exclusion of poor Kikuyu groups in *Kikuyuization.* After independence *Kikuyuism* in negotiation of *Kikuyuization* was first constructed by members of the KLFA and it spread throughout the Kikuyu squatter communities in Rift Valley province. This spread corresponded with the continuing exclusion of Kikuyu poor from government resources and privileges that were granted to the Kikuyu elite.

Although sharing many similarities *Kikuyuization* and *Kikuyism* differ on the way the Mau Mau movement is remembered. The importance of the Mau Mau movement is seriously downplayed in *Kikuyuization* while the Mau Mau movement in *Kikuyuism* is very much idolised and mythologized.

The Kikuyu squatter communities could protest but not openly resist the Kenyatta Government because the only alternative according to them was being dominated by another ethnic group. The thought of being dominated by another ethnic group was in their eyes even further removed from their ideal. This ideal had at its core the belief that 'the flag of Kenya should stand in the house of Kikuyu and Muumbi'[49] where it belonged, a belief shared with *Kikuyuization*.[50] Furthermore, the ideal of *Kkiuyuism* envisioned the recognition and rewarding of the Mau Mau movement and the relocation of all the land 'grabbed' by the elite to the poor Kikuyu people. Feelings of betrayal dominated the perception of the Kenyatta Government but the Kikuyu squatter communities also felt a faint hope that as long as the government leaders were from their own ethnic group things could always change in their favour.

The construction of *Kikuyuism* gave these communities a way of resisting the social, economic and psychological marginalisation they experienced as a result of government politics in the way they lived their lives. *Kikuyuism* was constructed as pure and morally superior in contrast to the perverted and morally corrupted version of Kikuyu identity expressed by the elite in their *Kikuyuization* process. The squatter communities felt very strongly that their Kikuyu identity was the true Kikuyu identity and real freedom for Kikuyu people had not yet been achieved. *Kikuyuism* and the memory of Mau Mau at its core spread throughout the squatter communities because it appealed to feelings of loss and being ignored. Moreover, it gave many people a feeling of heroism because their identification with the Mau Mau movement underlined the sentiment that the struggle for freedom had to be continued and that they were the designated people to fight.

The KLFA's dissolved after a while and different other religious and vigilante organisation inspired by *Kikuyuism* emerged within the Kikuyu squatter communities in the Rift Valley Province. The most famous religious organisation that emerged in the squatter communities was the *Hema Ya Ngai Wi Mwoyo*, which means 'The Tent of the Living God' in the Kikuyu language (hereinafter referred to as the Tent). It was considered one of the main Kikuyu religious organisations during the late 1980s and was founded by Ngonywa wa Gakonya.[51] Wa Gakonya had dropped out of his Christian Secondary school in the late 1950s and he was further educated by rural elders in Kikuyu culture and religion. Here he was taught that reviving the Kikuyu culture was an answer to the problems faced by the Kikuyu people. The Tent's ideology was based on the conviction that truth and redemption is found in African religious heritage and belief systems and it emphasized the idea that Christianity perpetuated 'neo-colonialism'. Here we see another key-shift in history because during

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[48] Elkins C. and Londsdale J. http://www.feltrinelli.it/fondazione/download/Elkins_Londsdale.pdf p. 19.

[49] Kikuyu and Muumbi are the names of the mythical ancestral couple who had nine daughters who brought forth the nine clans of the Kikuyu group.

[50] Elkins C. and Londsdale J. http://www.feltrinelli.it/fondazione/download/Elkins_Londsdale.pdf, p. 20.

[51] Anderson D. *African Affairs* (2002) 101 p. 531.

late 1980s the Kikuyu identity, as constructed in *kikuyuism*, became more and more an identity of explicit protest to the Moi Government.

The Tent was the first organisation founded on *Kikuyuism* that first spread widely beyond the borders of the Kikuyu squatter communities in the Rift Valley province and it had many followers among the Kikuyu poor in the slum areas of Nairobi. The connection between the Kikuyu squatter communities and the Kikuyu urban poor is an obvious one and was already firmly established prior to the Tent's proliferation. When ex-Mau Mau fighters and former detainees found their lands confiscated many turned to the dry lands in the Rift Valley Province but others left to find employment in Nairobi and ended up living in slum areas such as Mathare Valley. Since then the steady influx of Kikuyu people from the squatter communities in the Rift Valley Province into the slum areas of Nairobi has tightened the connection between these two communities

The Kikuyu squatter communities in the rural and the urban area share many similarities based on the fact that both occupy an extremely vulnerable socio-economic position in Kenyan society. During the Kenyatta years both communities grew and were systematically ignored by the government. The marginalisation and the accretion of problems caused by the growth of these communities and a steady decline of the Kenyan economy since the 1980 facilitated the development and spread of *kikuyuism*. This process was intensified when the Moi Government openly attacked, both verbally and physically, the Kikuyu squatter communities in the Rift Valley Province, during the 1990s. The arrival of Kikuyu refugees from the rural area in the urban slums of Nairobi also gave a new impulse to *kikuyuism* that had already been developed here. During the 1990s the element of protest in *kikuyuism* against the Moi Government was transformed into a rebel attitude within which the memory of Mau Mau was overtly expressed. It is this transformation within *kikuyuism* that facilitated the emergence of the Mungiki movement who used the memory of Mau Mau to gain control in the slums of Nairobi during the late 1990s. I will further explain this in chapter 7.

6.5. The Memory of Mau Mau

It is interesting to read Carol's quote in correlation with Cucu's quote. The separation of the experience of ethnic identity in daily life from top-down ethnic politics Carol makes in her quote juxtaposes Cucu's experience of ethnicity. Carol articulates strongly that ethnic background is irrelevant in the context of daily survival and that the experience of an ethnic identity does not necessarily lead to 'ethnic favouritism'. Cucu on the other hand constructs a highly articulated ethnic identity. By stating 'we were here first and we are like people from God' Cucu expresses an experience of a distinct and even superior ethnic identity. The sentiment of being first and of being a chosen people from God is the essence of *Kikuyuism* and it expresses a strong relationship between personal experience of ethnicity and politics. Most members of the Kikuyu group and members of other ethnic groups in Kenya find it difficult to separate personal experience and politics when it comes to the expression of Kikuyu identity.

The fact that since the colonial era many Kenyans view the Kikuyu identity not as a neutral identity in Kenya does not indicate that we can actually speak of a Kikuyu identity. There are many Kikuyu identities and all these identities change because they are constructed in relationship to the continuously changing political, economic and cultural circumstances within which these identities are constructed.

Above I have sketched the origins that laid the foundation for the development of *Kikuyuism* among Kikuyu squatter communities as a sub-discourse during the colonial era and how this changed after independence. The construction of being of unique and superior was a way of the people constructing *Kikuyuism* to negotiate the allotted subject position of the criminal and subjugated Kikuyu subject during the colonial era. After independence the construction of being of unique and superior was a way of the people constructing *Kikuyuism* to negotiate the allotted subject position of

the poor and irrelevant fellow Kikuyu citizen. While *Kikuyuism* changed in accordance to the change in dominant discourse, a sense of superiority remained at its core. It is this sense of Kikuyu superiority that dominates the cultural text, the existing conventional meanings underlying all dominant and sub-discourses, on ethnicity developed in Kenya.

A large part of *Kikuyuism* even now reminisces on the loss of lands and the many grievances the Kikuyu group endured during the colonial era. Many Kikuyu women who migrated to Bondeni Village such as Mama Buda and Cucu still explain their low social, economic status by referring to the wrong-doings of the colonial government to the Kikuyu group. They had been forced to look for work outside the Native Reserves because the colonial government had confiscated 'Kikuyu land' to give to the 'white' settlers. An even larger part of *kikuyuism* today concentrates on the memory of the Mau Mau movement and the detainment of almost the entire Kikuyu population during the time of emergency in the 1950s. It was then that divisions between rich Kikuyu loyalists and poor Kikuyu militants became irrefutable. *Kikuyuism* in Bondeni Village identifies strongly with the poor Kikuyu militants because many inhabitants had lost their land to loyalists during their detainment in the 1950s and upon their return they were forced to move to the urban areas to find work.

Most Kikuyu people I met in Bondeni Village negotiated the notion of superiority, the sense of belonging to an ethnic group with a heroic and traumatic past and the feeling of being entitled to the fertile lands of Central Province. This negotiation either occurred by resisting supposed superiority of the group or by affirming it openly, and even emphasizing it. There seemed no middle ground. I have not met a Kikuyu person who harboured less than intense emotions about being Kikuyu. Cucu affirms her sense of superiority by openly stating that 'we are like people from God' indicating that there is indeed a difference between members of the Kikuyu groups and other ethnic groups in favour of the Kikuyu group. Karani opposes it passionately by insistently claiming that he does not feel like a Kikuyu and that he does not want to be associated with this 'tribe of thieves'.

Interestingly, Karani juxtaposes being Kikuyu to being Kenyan implying that Kikuyu is a traditional identity which stands on tense footing with a modern national identity. In constructing Kikuyu as a traditional identity he refers to the colonial relationship between the colonizers and the Kikuyu people. For ghetto boys in Bondeni Village the colonial history is a very present-day experience and this is visible in the way they construct their ethnic identities. More than 40 years later Karani negotiates the subject position of the criminal Kikuyu subject on which the colonial discourse centred, by actually affirming this position. While affirming it he also transforms its meaning by linking it with the alleged criminal nature of Kikuyu people in Nairobi as constructed in Moi's discourse on ethnicity. The criminal 'Kikuyu-Nairobian' was a subject-position much used as a stereotype of the Kukuyu group by Moi's Government. Here we can see how history is re-constructed by Moi's Government and by Karani and used to address present needs.

Generally speaking, the history of colonisation and in particular the Mau Mau guerrilla war is an item that is often re-constructed in the process of identity construction among young men I met during my research. Some, like Karani, re-construct parts of these histories to explain their unease with their Kikuyu identity while others, like Buda, re-construct parts to explain their pride in being Kikuyu. The explanation of the difference between these ways of negotiating subject-positions and re-constructing historical events such as the Mau Mau guerrilla war has to be sought in analysing present-day contexts. Karani grew up in a majority Luo environment and was ridiculed for it among his peers while Buda grew up in a majority Kikuyu environment and was praised for it by his peers. In the process Karani learned to hide his Kikuyu identity while Buda learned to hide his Luo identity.

The fact that the young men choose to reconstruct the history of the Mau Mau guerrilla war to address present needs can be explained by the controversial position this history has in the dominant discourses on ethnicity since independence in 1963. The Mau Mau guerrilla war already became the

representation of resistance in *Kikuyuism* during the colonial era and in this sub-discourse the Kikuyu loyalists were perceived as the 'other'.

When poor ex-Mau Mau fighters and former detainees founded the KLFA's to protest against the 'land grabbing' after independence in 1963 the Kikuyu elite, among whom many were former 'loyalists', became the 'other'. The memory of Mau Mau was re-constructed to contrast *Kikuyuism* as authentic to the, alleged, perversion of Kikuyu culture and history in *Kikuyuization*.

During the Kenyatta years *Kikuyuism* spread throughout poor Kikuyu communities in rural and urban settings and in each local context *Kikuyuism* was adapted to meet local needs. To give an example of a difference between *Kikuyuism* in two different contexts it is interesting to look at how brewing and consuming alcohol is perceived. Brewing and drinking alcohol can in this sense be viewed as a metaphor of value systems constructed within *Kikuyuism*.

In Cura, a Kikuyu village in a rural area 40 kilometres away from Nairobi city centre, older women were able to brew certain types of alcohol, not *chang'aa*, but they were not able to openly drink it because they would trigger denunciation from the community. Younger women could not brew or drink because this would call associations of prostitution in mind.

Older Kikuyu women in Bondeni Village were able to brew and openly drink all types of alcohol, including *chang'aa*, without condemnation of the community. Drinking *chang'aa* is an essential part of the process of selling *chang'aa*. Men generally want the women who sell to taste the *chang'aa* to prove the safety of the drink. Younger Kikuyu women in Bondeni Village generally assist their mothers or their husbands/boyfriends in brewing. The fact that they don't usually brew and sell themselves has more to do with economic reasons than with values and they can drink, though not in front of people who are older than they are but that rule applies to all young people in Bondeni Village.

Here it becomes clear how *kikuyuism* is adapted to address present needs and to the political, economic and cultural circumstances of a specific locality while negotiating the dominant discourse on ethnicity. In Bondeni Village it would be very difficult to maintain the stereotype of 'a good Kikuyu woman' that is constructed in Cura. The informal economy of Bondeni Village depends heavily on the production and the sale of *chang'aa* and a majority of people living in the village are Kikuyu women. Therefore the crude condemnation of women who brew *chang'aa* so prevalent in Cura's construction of *kikuyuism* was transformed and it became accepted to brew and drink *chang'aa* for Kikuyu women. The traits that characterise the stereotype of 'a good Kikuyu woman' are context bound and they are transformed in the process of negotiation to meet local needs. I have not had the time to further research the role of women in the construction and development of *kikuyuism* in Bondeni Village but I believe they have profoundly influenced the way the young Kikuyu men constructed *kikuyuism*.

Kikuyuism in Bondeni Village has a long history. The majority of the Kikuyu people living in Bondeni Village derived from the Kikuyu squatter communities and the memory of Mau Mau was not a far-fetched myth but a living reality represented by brothers, uncles and fathers who had fought during that war. Many women themselves had been involved in supplying food to the fighters in the forests when they were still living in the rural area. When economic, political and cultural problems accumulated in Bondeni Village during the 1970s the memory of Mau Mau became the symbol of the fate of the Kikuyu poor. Similar to the Mau Mau fighters directly after independence they were disregarded and denigrated by the Kikuyu elite. In remembering Mau Mau a Kikuyu identity was mobilised within *kikuyuism* that spoke of resistance to and disapproval of the Kikuyu elite. This element of resistance in *kikuyuism* was easily transformed to an identity of protest during the 1980s and to a rebel attitude during the 1990s.

The Moi Government's discourse on ethnicity centred on demonising the Kikuyu group and within this group it especially targeted the poor Kikuyu squatter communities in the Rift Valley Province. In the dominant discourse the Kikuyu group was pitted against the Luo group but this does

not necessarily mean that the 'other' in *Kikuyuism* was the Luo group. In the Rift Valley the 'other' in *Kikuyuism* was personified by the Kalenjin and Massai groups living in the neighbourhood while in Bondeni the 'other' indeed became the Luo group. The process of 'othering' within *Kikuyuism* constructed in Bondeni Village did reflect the antagonism of the Kikuyu and the Luo group in the dominant discourse but was prompted by the settlement of people across the river.

Kikuyuization ignored the history of Mau Mau but Moi's discourse on ethnicity brought the memory of Mau Mau back to the fore. It used this memory to construct the Kikuyu group as criminal and ethnocentric in order to warn other ethnic groups of the alleged hidden agenda's of the Kikuyu group in connection to nationalism. The response of people constructing *Kikuyuism* to negotiate these subject positions was to re-construct the Mau Mau war as the demonstration of Kikuyu heroism and entitlement to land and resources. In Bondeni Village more and more Kikuyu people felt that poor Kikuyu had fought for independence but had been denied any reward. In some cases these feelings of entitlement bordered ideologies of nationalism. The Kikuyu group, in this doctrine, was entitled to rule Kenya because of its size and history. For some the Kikuyu group was the only group competent enough to lead the Kenyan nation. *Kikuyuism* became very articulated in Bondeni Village during the early 1990s in response to the ethnic clashes, the demonisation of the Kikuyu group by the government and the settlement of new comers across the river. It was in this context that the Mungiki movement arrived in Bondeni Village and was able to expand.

The arrival of the Mungiki movement and the articulated version of *Kikuyuism* was the context in which the young Kikuyu men constructed their identities. In the next chapter I want to illuminate how these contexts have influenced the mobilisation of ethnic identity among these young Kikuyu men.

CHAPTER 7: MANOKI OR MUNGIKI?
ETHNIC MOBILIZATION IN BONDENI VILLAGE

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will explain that the growth of two very opposite organisations, the youth group and the Mungiki movement, actually derived from the same situation. As described in chapter 5 the youth group is characterised by the *manoki* identity. *Manoki* in essence represents Sheng culture in Bondeni Village. Even though the word refers to Bondeni Village where Kikuyu identity is very much experienced as a neighbourhood identity the Sheng culture it represents transcends ethnic boundaries. The Mungiki movement in Bondeni Village, on the other hand, is characterised by the Mungiki identity on which I will elaborate in this chapter. The ideas about manhood prevalent in the slum community of Bondeni Village demanded the young Kikuyu men to be providers for their families but their socio-economic status disabled them to live up to these expectations. This resulted in what can be described as a crisis of manhood. The young Kikuyu men grew up with mothers speaking Kikuyu and these women gave them some rudimentary idea of what it meant to be a Kikuyu man but the absence of a father forced them to look for external validation of their manhood somewhere else. Without a good example of what a man constitutes and obstructed by abject poverty these men felt frustrated and inadequate. Many men found solace in the formation of brotherhood networks such as the youth group and the Mungiki movement.

The main question of this thesis is concerned with the historical contexts and the political, economic and cultural circumstances in which Kikuyu identity becomes significant in the process of identity construction among young Kikuyu men in Bondeni Village. The following sub-question is addressed in this chapter: what place did Kikuyu identity have in becoming ghetto boys?

The *manoki* identity was the prevailing identity in the youth group and was based on the 'ghetto is cool' position described in chapter 4. The local Mungiki identity was based on *Kikuyuism* and the 'rebel' position described in chapter 4. The young men constructing *manoki* before the arrival of the Mungiki movement already incorporated elements of the localised Kikuyu identity. When the Mungiki movement entered Bondeni Village, however, the young men were prompted to either articulate or downplay the localised Kikuyu identity. Some men were drawn to the Mungiki movement while others wanted to continue to belong to the *manoki* culture. A dichotomy was created between *manoki* and Mungiki and in due course the young Kikuyu men constructing *manoki* increasingly downplayed Kikuyu elements to contrast *manoki* to Mungiki. These two identities represented an opposite direction in society. *Manoki* aimed to belong and adjust while the Mungiki movement turned its back to as well as control society. In this chapter I want to take a closer how the Mungiki movement entered Bondeni Village and how the young Kikuyu men that participated in my research positioned themselves towards the Mungiki movement.

7.2. The Mungiki Movement in Bondeni Village

In the beginning I did not really notice that the Mungiki movement had a strong hold on Bondeni Village. I never even observed its presence and would not have known about the movement's grip on the community in the beginning if Dr. Karanja had not told me about it. In Bondeni Village the Mungiki movement is referred to as security because the movement patrols the dark alleys at night. Men called *askaris* in Kiswahili who guard houses, streets or whole neighbourhoods, is not an uncommon feature in Nairobi as the city is known for its high crime rates. The term security in Bondeni Village, however, referred to a different phenomenon all together. The reality in Bondeni Village behind the term security only gradually, even if partly, revealed itself to me through my discussions with Buda and Tom and my own encounters with Mungiki members. Other people rarely

referred to the security and the other areas of community life the Mungiki movement controlled in Bondeni Village.

The fact that people were quiet about the presence of the Mungiki movement made me very cautious in addressing this issue in my conversations with Buda. It took some time before Buda started to discuss the presence of the Mungiki movement in Bondeni Village on his own accord. One afternoon Buda accompanied me to the bus stop and when we climbed up the cliffs from his house to the main road we passed a group of men who shouted *mzungu*, 'white' person in Kiswahili, to my face. Children called me *mzungu* all the time but adults rarely addressed me in this manner. Moreover, these men had shouted the word very close to my face which had startled me somewhat. Buda urged me to walk on and he looked a bit nervous. He whispered the word *wazi* to me which means rebel in Kiswahili. As soon as we reached the main road and mingled among many other pedestrians he started to talk.

"If they (members of the Mungiki movement, note from NVS) caught you at night doing something bad they can just kill you, they don't care. They are bad. If they see you walking around at night after say 10 they will question you but if they see you a second time they will severely beat you up because then you are up to no good. They have reduced robbery and rape to zero…….. They are good guys. It is safe at night. They patrol the main road but more the chochoros *(the alleys of the slums in Sheng, note from the author) because that is where things happen."[1]*

The movement's grip on the slum contained many more elements and I have met several youth who owed money to the movement. Some had pawned their belongings for cash and to get their belongings back they had to pay back the borrowed amount with stiff interest rates.

"Jana (yesterday in Kiswahili, note from the author) I was drunk, I had a shida *(problem in Kiswahili, note from NVS). I gamble then I lost. I cheated my mother to give me some money but it's not enough. They have my phone. I went to Mungiki people….I had to pay my loss, some of them do gamble and I sit with them. I make friends with them….I was there when you looked for me. They give me some snuff which made me high* kidogo *(a little bit in Kiswahili), not that much. Now I have to give them money to get back my phone. But I have to give them more money eeeeh but they can beat me"[2]*

I had met Buda by accident right after he had pawned his phone to some Mungiki members on Thursday 13 October 2005. He was very drunk and his face was full of tobacco snuff. The Mungiki movement are known to take tobacco snuff so I sensed already that he had been with some Mungiki members. He invited me to his house because he wanted to talk to me.

"They want me to join them. Now they see I have changed, I am with youth group, and with wazungu *they think I have influence. They know even you, Naomi. They are everywhere, you see near Mama Njoro's place, you know near the video store is the office. But I just sit with them, to make friends. I cannot join because my friends will not like it, even me I don't like it. Some Mungiki say I cannot join because I am Luo. Okay my father was a Luo, but I am Kikuyu so I could join. You know, sometimes I want to join."[3]*

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[1] Discussion with Buda, 12 August 2005, Huruma, Nairobi, Kenya.
[2] Discussion with Buda, 14 October 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya
[3] Discussion with Buda, Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya, 13 October 2005.

Buda had a very ambivalent attitude towards the Mungiki movement. On one hand he sometimes leaned towards approving the way the movement had been able to secure the area at night but on the other he hand he told me of many encounters with the movement which had been very difficult, frustrating and painful to him. Buda told me the following story when he wanted to tell me more about his experiences with the Mungiki movement.

"My brother was beaten by his wife with a panga*, then with a broken wine bottle. I was at the base (He refers to* manoki *base, the public toilet before Mungiki took over in 2002, note from the author). I took a Maasai sword and went after her but someone touch me, then I had a stick, from iron we use to make holes in the ground, and beat her like I want to inject the stick in her. She escaped to the road and I went after her and mugged her. She and my brother were big fish, many big mama came and told us to tear the house down. …..At my party(In August 2005 Buda and his mother organised a party for the community who had supported them when Buda's niece died, note from the author) I met her again. She was telling everyone about that she bought the casket for my niece. I wanted to beat her coz she gave my family a bad name. At the* harambee *she and my step cousin only write down 1500 together and now they say they contributed everything……*
I beat her tao tao tao, I did not want her in my party. My mother said she will throw away the food for my friends if I do something to her but I told her I could kill her because she is now in my property. I was relaxing with Peter on some woods near our house. Peter was even there when I beat her but he was far. She did not come but I was tense, every time I hear footsteps, it could be her…….Late at night Peter, Rasta, Toni and I extended the party to town. We crossed Jujaroad but before we crossed two drunk men came from the other side and one was knocked by a van. We tried to give first aid, I was just shocked and the crowd came around it. She was among them and I felt like beating her again but they took me and we walked to Eastleigh. We walked slowly but later I heard that she had sent Mungiki after me to look for me in Eastleigh to kill me. Her boyfriend is Mungiki. She just wanted them to beat me but he wanted to kill me. I stayed low for some days.[4]

Another time Buda shared with me how he was once disciplined by the Mungiki movement in Bondeni Village.

"One day I was punished by Mungiki. I was with a friend who is a thug and he pretended to be a policeman. Said to a man near the two bridges, remember? Come here, empty your pockets. The guy became angry and went away. He was a Mungiki and came back with some of them. They took us to the open place where they discipline people for everyone to see. First the other guy was beaten. We had to strip and he put his head to a tire. His hands were held by one of them. The others started to beat him with a stick like the ones Maasai use. He was screaming they kill him. Now I started to get afraid. This was a big guy, what would happen to me? When it was my turn I told them to better kill me but they beat me kabisa*. These are the scars. They had other members from a village near by to come and beat us so we would not hold a grudge to them in our neighbourhood. They knew me and they said to me, 'Buda we are not beating you we are beating your act', but off course they beat me. After it was finished they asked us for the money. I said I did not do anything in the first place and had no money but I had 1100 shillings (Kenyan Shillings, note from the author). They took it. The other guy, my friend, had 2000 sh. So they earned 3100 shillings. For disciplining us.*[5]

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[4] Discussion with Buda, 14 October 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.
[5] Discussion with Buda, 12 August 2005, Huruma, Nairobi, Kenya.

By providing 'security' the Mungiki movement earned a lot of money in Bondeni Village. Apart from taking money from people who have been disciplined by the movement the Mungiki movement had many other activities to generate income. The amount per activity changes overtime and the overview in this paragraph is based on research between July 2005 and November 2005. At the time of my research each house in Bondeni Village had to pay 30 Kenyan shillings[6] per month to the movement for 'security'. Each small business paid 50 Kenyan shillings, a small *chang'aa* café paid 100 Kenyan shillings, a big *chang'aa* café paid 200 Kenyan shillings and a kiosk at the main roadside paid 1000 Kenyan Shillings a week to the Mungiki movement for security. This was not all. When a *matatu* wanted to start driving a route from a Mungiki movement controlled bus station they had to pay a starting fee of 20.000 to 60.000 Kenyan shillings to the Mungiki movement's cell in the area and on top of that the movement earned 200/300 Ksh. per day per *matatu* for security alone. This did not include the profits the movement reaped form the *matatu's* it owned itself.

Apart from the income the Mungiki movement earned as security the movement generated income by supplying electricity and water to many households in Bondeni Village. Each household paid 250 Kenyan Shillings average for electricity and 100 Kenyan Shillings for water from the tap per month.[7] When people explained this to me they expressed great frustration because the voltage was too strong and it ruined people's equipments. They could not object or bypass the movement because they knew this would be sanctioned with a beating. Furthermore, members of the movement 'owned' the public toilets in Bondeni Village and people paid either 50 Ksh. a month for usage or 2 to 5 Ksh. per visit.

I have not been able to detect all of the income generating activities of the movement in Bondeni Village as a lot of the movement's activities were done underground and people did not really like to talk about it. Some people I met mentioned that the Mungiki movement had some kind of deal with the police but when asked further people shied away from answering. I also have no idea how these incomes were distributed internally among the different Mungiki cells per slum area and within the overall movement. The amounts paid per households and/or business enterprise also changed according to what Buda jokingly called 'inflation rates' and with this he meant that the rate might go up when the movement needed money or when a business seemed to flourish more than usually. I have just tried to sketch here how the Mungiki movement controlled slum life from the perspective of people living in Bondeni Village through establishing itself as security and at the same time I want to clarify here how economically powerful this movement was in this area during my time of research.

One day Buda and I were walking through Bondeni Village and we were stopped by a stone faced man seated in front of a restaurant near the two bridges. He had a piercing look in his eyes and I instantly felt intimidated. Buda laughed nervously and told me we had to greet this man. The man was surrounded by more stern looking men leaning against the wall of the restaurant and they all eyed me without uttering a word. The seated man continued to look at me while addressing Buda in fluent Kikuyu and I greeted him in Kiswahili. I felt insecure to greet him in Kikuyu because I had already concluded that he was a member of the Mungiki movement and he might be offended if I talk Kikuyu as a 'white' person. Buda and the man, whom I later found out was the leader of the Mungiki cell in Bondeni Village, talked for a while and I heard my name being mentioned by both of them a couple of times.

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[6] At the time of my research 1 Euro stood at approximately 85 Kenyan Shillings. An average income of a family living in Mathare Valley was 90 Kenyan Shillings a day and approximately 2500 Kenyan Shilling a month. Rent of a one bedroom house was approximately 1000 Kenyan Shilling. Paying regular security fees for a household, a business and in most cases brewing *chang'aa* constrained the average income of a family household.

[7] F. Mukinda, 'How gangs' clash over illicit brew led to orgy of violence in Nairobi shanty', *The Daily Nation*, 9 November 2006.

When we walked on Buda was unusually quiet and after a safe distance he explained to me that the Mungiki members in Bondeni Village knew who I was and they wanted to know what my exact business was with Buda. When Buda explained that I was working with the youth group the man expressed his approval and said that the youth group had promoted the Mungiki movement during the day of the concert[8] because it was on their ground the concert was held. I would probably have gotten into trouble with the movement if I would have been connected to MYSA or if they had found out I was doing research. After a while I tried to pick up our conversation we had about the Mash gang but Buda clearly also wanted to express some feelings he had about the Mungiki movement:

"Mash was mixed, not just Kikuyu. Shanty (Shanty was the biggest gang in Bondeni Village before the Mungiki movement came, note from the author) was more Kikuyu I think. I don't know. We had no tribalism in Mash and we stayed away from Shanty because they were bigger. The brother of Julius, who is Luo, was in our gang. Mash was like family, like it was a good time. Dressing and eating well, we had money to buy things for ladies. We could go to places. I skipped school and we would be on the street from tea to dinner. In Mash we liked gambling, now we are older, we have become family men and you change friends. So Mash is not a gang anymore. There is no real gang in Bondé *right now. Mungiki is not a gang, they are security. Mungiki did not work with Mash, no Mash went to Mungiki. They came from outside. We hate them. You show them you are friends because we fear them. They have the toilet,* Manoki *base, which was ours, we were the* Manoki *group. They took over in twenty-o-two and use the same name and now we pay them. They had some followers in* Bondé. *When they came into our community, they went to Shanty near the two bridges. Shanty was the biggest gang, eeeeeh they had many thieves, near the two bridges where Mungiki office is now, next to Bokoyoy video show. Some Shanty became Mungiki, there were already some followers in Mathare but most of them came from* gishage. *When they touch you they kill you. They stopped the stealing. They get strong during time of election in 2002. They supported the government to fight the opposition. They were all young guys like me. They don't see I am Kikuyu because of my name but I am. The Mungiki is not a good group, they are harsh, they punish you and kill you, just like that. My mother told me it is not a good group but we could not do anything. They have support in Kariobangi, you know they control Korogocho. When we would fight them they call Mungiki from everywhere, they are just too big to fight. I mean we are just Bondeni."[9]*

At times Buda clearly felt frustrated by the presence of the Mungiki movement in his village and he explains that he befriends them because he and his friends cannot fight a movement that reaches far beyond the neighbourhood boundaries of Bondeni Village. On the other hand he also went to them to ask for help when he lost at gambling and he more than once confided in me that he was tempted to join when he was facing a particular difficult situation.

On 27 September 2005 Buda and I walked from his house to a woman called Mama Njoro and I wanted to talk to her about the history of Mathare Valley. Near Mama Njoro's shop a man started to bother me and I could smell his alcohol breath from a distance. The man, unable to keep his balance, grabbed my arm to stop me in my movement and shouted sexually tinted propositions to me while trying to unzip his pants with his other hand. We attracted quite a crowd and Buda pulled me away into an alley where we were still followed by the drunkard. This surprised me because Buda is known for his hot temper and he had never allowed anyone to touch me or be rude to me before without threatening to use violence. On the contrary, in similar cases before it was me who had to stop Buda from beating someone to pulp. Somewhat relieved that Buda did not get into a fist fight we dodged the

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[8] I helped the youth group to organise an AIDS awareness concert in October 2005.
[9] Walking with Buda and Tom through Bondeni Village, 22 October 2005, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

man by moving through the complicated labyrinth of allies before returning to Mama Njoro's place. When I asked him why he controlled his temper he replied disgruntled:

"We were near Bokoyoy (where the Mungiki headquarters is, note from the author) and you know they would beat me if I do anything to that man. I am sober so they would think I try to rob him……no, I have to tell them first…make a case and then they do something. We have no time for that, let's go!"[10]

Later on he told me that some women at the market had made remarks that he had allowed someone to insult his lady, me, and that he had just fled the scene. It was clear that the presence of the Mungiki movement sometimes frustrated Buda while at other times he used its presence to his own advantage.

"……Across the two bridges is Luo area and this is Kikuyu. Luo from over the river are afraid of us 'cause we are from this village, the village where Mungiki are. When I was campaigning for myself to get my girlfriend I came with this big guy to her place. She was there with her other boyfriend and we scared him. He don't know who we are!"[11]

When I read back all my notes with him about the Mungiki movement he laughed and abruptly said that he would never join the Mungiki movement because his friends from the youth group would disapprove.

The relationship between the interview fragments presented in the above section is that Buda expresses an ambivalent attitude towards the Mungiki movement. Buda told me that he feels that the Mungiki movement are bad and good in one sentence and sometimes he told me that he would never join the Mungiki movement while at other times he shared with me that he sometimes felt tempted to join.

In some of these interview fragments Buda's frustration in relationship to the Mungiki movement becomes tangible. This is clearly illustrated when Buda told me about the time when he was severely beaten by Mungiki members and lost his money to them at the same time. His frustration also comes to the fore in the interview fragment where he depicts of the time when his gang lost their income generating activity of monitoring the toilet to the Mungiki movement.

It is clear that Buda's judgement of the Mungiki movement cannot be cast to one side easily. Though his rejection of the movement and the frustration he experienced in relationship to the movement seemed to dominant his attitude. The knowledge I received that Buda became more affiliated with the Mungiki movement after I returned home from Kenya does changes my reading of his interview fragments in retrospective. I think that at the time of my research he felt more attracted to the Mungiki movement than he dared to admit to me. I was not a neutral person to him. Apart from my 'white' skin and possibly my gender I also worked closely together with the youth group. I will elaborate on the tense relationship between the youth group, representing the *manoki* identity, and the Mungiki movement, representing the Mungiki identity, further below.

The main intertextuality that is resonated in the interview fragments presented above is the image members of the Bondeni community have of the movement. To properly place the way Buda refers to the movement in context it is first of all important to know more about the Mungiki movement at large.

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[10] Walking with Buda through Bondeni Village, Nairobi, Kenya, on 27 September 2005.
[11] Discussion with Buda, 30 August 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

7.3. The Mungiki Movement as a Vigilante Gang

The Mungiki movement was allegedly founded during the late 1980s to protect the Kikuyu squatter community[12] which reached momentum during the ethnic clashes surrounding the 1992 elections in The Rift Valley Province instigated by the Moi government.[13] It is possible that the Mungiki movement migrated from the rural area in the Rift Valley Province to the urban slum areas of Nairobi along with the many Kikuyu squatter refugees escaping the 'ethnic' clashes during the early 1990s. Other people I talked to in Mathare Valley were of the opinion that the Mungiki movement entered the slum as part of a carefully designed strategy to increase its membership and economic stakes. Until this date no consensus exists on how exactly the movement entered the slum and it is my opinion that both stories have elements of truth in them and they probably worked in conjunction with each other. It is very thinkable that Mungiki members already migrated to the urban slum areas escaping the clashes in the Rift Valley Province and later on more members came to actively present their organisation and later on recruit members from the urban slums.

Similar to the Tent[14] the Mungiki movement is primarily inspired by *Kikuyuism* and it also believed that Christianity perpetuated 'neo-colonialism',[15] or globalisation as the Mungiki movement termed it.[16] The memory of Mau Mau at the core of *Kikuyuism* was particularly highlighted in the movement's ideology. In several interviews published during the late 1990s about the Mungiki movement its most prominent leader during those days, Ndura Waruinge, presented the Mungiki movement as a 'the sons of Mau Mau'. He stated that the Mau Mau movement 'came back to Kenya' because independence had not yet been achieved.[17] The Mungiki movement protested against the Kenyan government and western institutes in Nairobi streets and this shows how the movement translated *Kikuyuism* to the current political climate.[18] It called for a return to 'African' political, economic and social traditions to stop the spread of a 'perverted and decadent westernized' culture at

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[12] G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p 39. "For the young ones, (Kikuyu youth in the Rift Valley Province, note from the author) they see this as double jeopardy; loosing their grandparents land through colonialism, and now, their father's lands, through ethnic clashes. It is not surprising that Mungiki was formed in the wake of these social-economic and political crises that the Gikuyu people especially those displaced from the Rift Valley found themselves in."

[13] The Mungiki movement allegedly sprang off from a Kikuyu 'revivalist' movement called 'Hema Ya Ngai Wi Mwoyo' ('The Tent of the living God' in the Kikuyu language or in popular use, the 'Tent'), the most prominent Kikuyu revivalist organization in Kenya during the 1980s. David Rogoncho and Njoroge wa Kariuki, 'Anti-Christ sect group on hunger strike', *The Daily Nation* (February 5 1990).
This is just one article of many during that year that portrayed the 'Tent'. Reading the quotes from its leader Wa Gakonya and looking at the pictures that were printed together with the articles it is impossible not to notice a strong resemblance to the Mungiki movement. The quotes from the 'Tent' leaders and their appearances could even mislead readers to think it were Mungiki members if it wasn't for the fact that the Mungiki movement was not yet known during those days.
I have already mentioned in the introduction that there many stories of origin in regard to the Mungiki movement. In 'Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis' Wamue describes both the connection to the 'Tent' and the more mythical story of 7 young boys, among which its most prominent leaders Maina Njenga and Ndura Waruinge during my period of research, who experienced visions that led to the founding of the Mungiki movement in Molo in 1987 under the auspices of ex-Mau Mau fighters. G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p.43-44.

[14] See chapter 6.

[15] One of the Mungiki leaders explains: "Kenya can't initiate its own development and has sold all it's properties to the west in the name of liberalization". Turner and Brownhill explain: "Mungiki's anti- globalisation stance has its mould in the critical reading of the social economic effects of the excessive restructuring and fiscal policies engendered by the forces of globalisation, the inefficiency and corruption of the ruling elite." T. E. Turner and L.Brownhill, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 22 (2001) p. 1037-41.

[16] G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p. 6, p. 8 and p. 25.

[17] Wamue G.N., *African Affairs* (2001) 100 p. 456.

[18] G.N. Wamue, *African Affairs* (2001) 100 p.453-467, p. 463

the expense of the urban Kikuyu poor.[19] In its ideology the movement negotiated the dominant discourse on ethnicity developed by the Moi government by resisting the stereo types of the Kikuyu group as money hungry thieves. Instead it portrayed its Kikuyu identity as pure and morally disciplined and in doing so the movement clearly resembled earlier organisations that were inspired by *Kikuyuism* such as the Tent.[20]

Whether it was a strategic move or a spontaneous spread a consequence of the influx of Kikuyu refugees it is clear that the Mungiki movement changed during the second half of the 1990s. Besides operating as a rural organization it started to operate as an urban vigilante group with large protection-rackets in the slums of Nairobi. The question is whether we can actually speak of a Mungiki movement instead of multiple variations of Mungiki movements that are somehow linked to one another. More research is needed to answer that question.

The Mungiki movement rapidly grew in popularity and in size in the urban slums of Nairobi during the late 1990s. The national media and the Mungiki leadership estimated its membership around the incredibly high number of 1.5 million people.[21] The height of this number maybe increased by sensationalism or propaganda but it certainly had become a force to be reckoned with in local politics.

The most remarkable change after its urbanisation to Nairobi was the movement's support of Uhuru Kenyatta in the run-up to the 2002 elections. Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of the first president of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta, was the chosen KANU heir to Moi´s throne in the 2002 elections and Moi had been the sworn enemy of the Mungiki movement until then. The Mungiki movement had displayed its hate of the Moi government more than once and still in 2001 it had burned an effigy of Uhuru in a protest rally against the Moi government. Suddenly in August 2002 the Mungiki held a public demonstration in vocal support of Moi´s candidate and this raised eyebrows among the Kenyan Public but more so among sympathisers of the movement.[22]

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[19] G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p. 5.

[20] G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p. 62.

[21] G.N. Wamue, *African Affairs* (2001) 100 p.453-467, p. 454

[22] President Moi ordered a crackdown on the Mungiki movement in 2000 and sometimes meetings from its members were dispersed with violence by the police while at other times the police seemed curiously reluctant to interfere. Waweru Mugo, 'Chaos as Mungiki meeting dispersed', *The Daily Nation* (May 15, 2000).
The Mungiki was outlawed in 2000.Nation correspondent, 'Abong'o outlaws the movement' *The Daily Nation* (26 October 2000).
Later articles state that the movement had never been officially proscribed but the movement also had never registered itself as a formal organization which in the eyes of the government gave it legitimate ground for action to obstruct the movement's activities, albeit occasionally. Out of principle the Mungiki movement refused to seek registration with a government that, according to its leaders, abets poverty and social instability, M. Mwai 'What makes Mungiki Tick?' *The Daily Nation* (23 October 2000).
The relation between the Moi government and the Mungiki changed in August 2002. The Kenyan public was shocked to see the Mungiki movement demonstrate the Nairobi streets in support of Moi's chosen heir, Uhuru Kenyatta. Sunday Nation Team, 'Mungiki agenda in succession race', *Sunday Nation* (August 25, 2002).
Just months after the Kariobangi Massacre when the Mungiki movement, along with 17 other vigilante groups such as the Taliban, Jeshi la Mzee and the Baghdad boys, was officially proscribed by the Moi government the same government allowed the illegal movement to demonstrate in its support. Joe Kadhi, 'Social mischief caused the Kariobangi Massacre', *The Daily Nation* (March 9, 2002).
The Mayor of Nairobi City, Dick Waweru, even gave a speech during the rally and he was backed up by Molo MP Kihiki Kimani. In the period between the Kariobangi massacre, early March 2002, and this demonstration, held at Tuesday 20 August 2002, the Mungiki movement had been quietly expanding their protection rackets in the Eastlands slums but had been out of the public eye giving the impression that the Moi government had succeeded in its missions to stop violence between vigilante groups in the slums of Nairobi by proscribing them. When the Mungiki movement suddenly appeared in the limelight of election politics with the backing of powerful politicians, the Kenyan public was stunned.
I would like to refer interested (Dutch) readers to an excellent and insightful report on this attempt by the Mungiki movement by A. B. Karneworff in A. B. Karneworff, *These Dreadlocked Gangsters. De Mungiki-beweging in Kenia, van neo-etnisch protest naar politieke participatie*, (Vrije Universiteit, 2004).

The conclusion of many perplexed journalists was that the Mungiki movement had become a tool in Moi's master plan to remain in power.[23] President Moi now strategically chose to create division among the Kikuyu group to win the 2002 elections and this replaced his older strategy of pitting the Luo and the Kikuyu group against each other. The 'chosen' KANU candidate originated from Kiambu while the selected leader of the opposition, Mwai Kibaki, represented ´Nyeri Kikuyu´. The so called 'Kiambu Kikuyu' had dominated the political scene during the Kenyatta years which had resulted in unequal development and this had caused great tension among the two regions. The Mungiki movement's support base also consisted of poor rural and urban squatters from whom a majority had migrated from Kiambu making Kiambu the imaginary 'home' of many 'homeless' Kikuyu urban poor. Pitting the 'Kiambu Kikuyu' against the 'Nyeri Kikuyu' in government discourse on ethnicity and political action was aimed at paralysing the potential unity among the largest ethnic group in what turned out to be a fruitless attempt to secure KANU's power, with Moi on the background, for another term.

The exact motivation underlying the movement's support of Uhuru is still covered in mist and has been the target of many speculations. How could a movement that was allegedly founded to protect victims from the Moi government abruptly change colour and support its former enemy? A part of the answer can be sought in the concept of *ituika* in Mungiki ideology. In Kikuyu culture the leaders were allowed to rule for a specific period of time and at the end of that period they handed over the power to a younger generation through a ceremony called *ituika*.[24] The Mungiki movement felt dissatisfied with the Kikuyu elite such as Mwai Kibaki and the Kenyan government since both consisted of old men who utilized corrupted means to hold on to power while the young were kept outside the political and economic realm.[25] Uhuru Kenyatta was a relative young politician and a member of the Kikuyu group which in the eyes of the Mungiki leadership qualified him to get their support. Other, far more opportunistic, motivations were also at play and in the run-up to the 2002 elections the movement's leadership also tried unsuccessfully to gain access into the official political arena.

Many Kikuyu people had felt a certain amount of sympathy for the movement prior to this switch and it had been widely perceived as a revolutionary social movement standing up for the oppressed 'Jews of Kenya'. In 2003 and 2004 the Mungiki movement had lost most of it's credibility among large segments of its followers and sympathisers and it effectively lost 70 % of its

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[23] In a compelling article in the Daily Nation, the columnist Denis Galava elaborates the way the Mungiki movement could have been used by the Moi government: "Why not unleash terror on the slums if it will vanquish on an opponent politically? The ferocity with which violence is meted out on innocent Kenyans attest to how cheaply we value life………Hiding behind the blanket of rent disputes, city godfathers, scared of losing their influence or eager to cash in on the volatile but crucial urban vote, resort to base-instinct of self-preservation." D. Anderson *African Affairs* (2002) 101 p. 550.
The ethnic angle comes gruesomely to the fore in the incident where by members of the Mungiki movement hacked several Luo residents from Mathare 3A and 4B regions to death and injured others upon their return from an opposition rally organized by the Rainbow Alliance in Uhuru Park in September 2002. Bosco Magare, 'Two killed as Mungiki strike slum', *The East African Standard* (September 24, 2002).
A part of the Rainbow Alliance, at that time, constituted of former KANU politicians who had left KANU because they were opposed to the Uhuru Kenyatta nomination as Moi's heir. This alliance was greatly supported by members from the Luo community as Raila Odinga was one of the alliance's spokespersons. Furthermore, newspapers reported at the same time that the Mungiki movement caused havoc in Nyeri by burning a flag from the current president Mwai Kibaiki and intimidated residents to support Uhuru Kenyatta in the 2002 elections. The old conflict between 'Kiambu' and 'Nyeri' Kikuyu elite was revived as Nyeri and the Mount Kenya region was a Kibaki stronghold while Uhuru Kenyatta, following his father's footsteps, had strong ties to the communities living in Kiambu. Correspondent, Police must act on violence', *The East African Standard* (September 25, 2002).
[24] J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, (Martin Secker & Walburg Ltd., London, 1938) p. 196.
[25] G. N Wamue, *Mungiki Movement in Kenya: religio-political analysis*, (Kenyatta University, 2002) p. 52.

membership.[26] The movement went underground when NARC won the 2002 elections but it still remained strong operating as vigilante gang with a large following in the slums of Nairobi. The burning question is whether the Mungiki movement is keeping a low profile now to emerge with force in the run-up to the 2007 elections.

Bondeni Village became the only slum neighbourhood in Nairobi where the Mungiki movement controlled almost all aspects of community life. The Mungiki movement controlled the *matatu* routes in the whole of Eastlands and retained different levels of control in adjacent neighbourhoods but the way the movement had been able to position itself in Bondeni Village was beyond compare. How had the movement been able to establish itself in Bondeni Village? Bondeni Village is a hermetic closed off community to outsiders and as Buda states in the above quotes most Mungiki members came from the rural area. How was the movement then able to enter the slum communities and gain control of so many aspects of life? The answer to this question will bring us closer to understand the intertextuality resonated in the above quotes on the Mungiki movement in Bondeni Village, in particular the ambivalent nature of Buda's attitude towards the movement.

Around 1996 men with dreadlocks sat at various *matatu* bus stops near Bondeni Village and other slum areas in Eastlands with a banner stating '*Thaai Thaai!*'[27] and people told me that they just sat and prayed in an old-fashioned version of the Kikuyu language not many slum dwellers were familiar with. On Sundays the men moved to different grounds such as Kamukunji and Racecourse round-a-bout near Kariokor for prayer meetings. People from the slum at first did not look at them with suspicion as these men did not come across as violent or militant in any way and they resembled different well known Kikuyu religious groups such as the Tent. These men were not from the slum but that did also not raise any eyebrows in those days as many other religious groups in the slum, such as the Tent and Akorino, both Kikuyu based religious groups but very different in outlook, had strong ties with rural communities and during their meetings people from rural communities were often invited to lead in prayer. The rural community of the Kikuyu ethnic group is not far from Nairobi which makes it possible to maintain strong connections between the urban and the rural community.

I noticed that when people talked about the emergence of the Mungiki movement in the slums they all emphasized the look of these men who suddenly had appeared at the bus stations.

"They were always at the stage, just sitting. First I thought they were Rasta but they looked stern faced, they never smiled and just sat for hours on end. They just looked plain weird with their dreadlocks, scars on their faces and brown teeth. They did not speak but took their snuff and prayed. We all knew what they wanted to show us, they completely had that Mau Mau image of fear."[28]

The Tent had sported that look before but members of the Tent never sat at bus stations for days on end praying and conversing with people about its ideology. It is obvious that the later magnitude of the Mungiki movement highly influenced the way people tell these stories as if they could then already foretell that this was a force to be reckoned with. In reality it is more likely that nobody knew and that people just took the Mungiki movement for another Kikuyu religious group.

The Mungiki members started to help the local *kamjesh*, (youth who help to fill the *matatu* buses for a fee, in Sheng), and through this the movement became slowly integrated in the highly

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[26] In 2004 Kenyan newspapers started to report of a 'Mungiki death squad' allegedly founded to haunt down and kill defectors of the movement who had left the movement en masse after its failed attempt at political participation during the 2002 elections and the increase of its use of violence to maintain control in the Eastlands slums. A new oath taking campaign was organized by the Mungiki movement to initiate new young Kikuyu men into a death squad called 'Bagation' which is an acronym for the slogan: 'no bargain over death'. E. Kwamboka, 'How Mungiki Trains Killers' *The Daily Nation* (March 8, 2004).

[27] *Thaai* means peace in the Kikuyu language.

[28] Discussion with Karani, 8 September 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

profitable *matatu* industry. The first stations where the Mungiki movement became visible were near Korogocho in Kariobangi neighbouring Mathare Valley and in Dandora phase 4 and Canaän. People inside the slums who tried to recall how the Mungiki movement emerged and spread, all mention the one thing about the movement that did create suspicion from the start. The members who sat at the bus stations were never harassed by police men. This was peculiar to say the least in the context of the mid-1990s which was a particularly volatile time in the history of independent Kenya. It was a time where two or more people were not even allowed to gather on the streets, the police and the military were visible on the streets and all kinds of organizations, groups and movements nationwide were oppressed, imprisoned and proscribed. People generally explained the fact that the Mungiki movement was left untouched by both forces by stating that the government probably did not see any harm in the movement or by speculating that the movement was somehow backed up by a powerful authority.

The members of the Mungiki movement at the bus stations started to interfere with the *matatu* industry from1997 onwards by first offering help to *matatu's* in trouble.

"We were in the bus, we came from a school outing and we were all young guys making fun and having a great time. When the condé (conductor in Sheng, note from the author) came to ask us for fare we denied and started laughing. Some of us became really rude. He just secured the door and drove passed our school to the bus station in front of our school where the Mungiki sat. Before opening the door he told us we had a choice. We either pay him or we were gonna be beaten by the Mungiki. We all paid without hesitation, we were scared shitless."[29]

The movement did not just discipline rowdy school kids but they secured the bus station as a whole. When a *matatu* was robbed the Mungiki movement tracked down the thieves, when a girl was raped the perpetrator was caught and when things were stolen at the local kiosks the gang who did it was found and beaten for their actions. People sighed with relief as the crackdown of thieves by the Mungiki movement proved to be far more effective than that of the police who were known to be morally corrupt and easily bribed. The Mungiki movement stood out because it was morally disciplined and it imposed its rule of conduct on the bus station by force. The restored security obviously had a positive influence on business in general. People started to appreciate the movement for securing the area and this gave the movement their first entrance into the slum.

Gaining more influence first of all in the *matatu* industry meant that the Mungiki movement had jobs on offer for disenfranchised youth of the slum. The *kamjeshi* who were Kikuyu were the first slum youth to join the movement motivated by the wish to secure their jobs within the *matatu* industry which was increasingly controlled by the movement. Soon they were joined by Kikuyu youth from the slum that had nothing to lose and everything to gain by the economic opportunities the movement could offer them. As the movement gained more and more influence its economic network expanded and it could offer not only jobs in the *matatu* industry but also jobs selling second-hand clothes or roasting maize at the bus station. The movement had established an expansive network of members, sympathisers and followers in the urban are of Nairobi that facilitated the growth of the movement's control in the Eastlands slums. It enabled the movement to provide more and more economic opportunities to new recruits.

The Mungiki movement clearly had two major tools of mobilisation in the Eastlands slums. The first one can be termed as 'ethnic pride' and the second as 'economic gain' as explained above. The youth that felt instantly attracted to the movement were youth that had very low self- esteem. Besides having no economic opportunities, these youth generally had very little knowledge of their roots. The Mungiki members talked to them about their ancestors, about Kikuyu culture and about the

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[29] Discussion with Karani, 15 September 2005, Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

guerrilla war that the Mau Mau had fought against the colonial oppressor. For many young men this gave them a sense of belonging and pride.

7.4. The Violent Nature of the Mungiki Movement: Propaganda or Reality?

In this section I want to discuss a few other intertextual references that will help us to better understand Buda's ambivalence towards the Mungiki movement.

"They are bad. If they see you walking around at night after say 10 they will question you but if they see you a second time they will severely beat you up because then you are up to no good."[30]

I have already explicated the relevance of the number 10 in Bondeni Village in chapter 4. Here I stated that the number 10 is most significant in the context of the Mathare Valley slum because a drink of *chang'aa* is 10 shillings. In the above quote a second most profound meaning of the number 10 in Bondeni Village comes to the fore because the curfew that has a strong hold over the whole community is 22.00. After 10 o'clock at night it is not safe for people who live in Bondeni Village to enter its dark alleys because of Mungiki patrols, you either make it home before 10 p.m. or you sleep somewhere else.

Another strong intertextual reference that is resonated in these interview fragments is the image of the Mungiki movement as being extremely violent. Since the late 1990s the national media in Kenya has portrayed the Mungiki movement as fearless and particularly aggressive.[31] Even though Buda shared with me his own experiences with the movement it is very likely that his perception is influenced by the way the Mungiki movement has been represented in the media. At least until the end of the Moi government in 2002 the portrayal of the Mungiki movement as brutal savages served its agenda. It enabled the Moi Government to deploy the movement to first cause chaos and discredit the opposition and later to mobilise support for its chosen candidate Uhuru Kenyatta.

The question is whether the alleged violent nature of the Mungiki movement was drummed up sensationalism by the media or actual reality. I did not have the time to research the events that have been elaborately discussed in the media but a part of the answer to this question can be found in the above quotes.

It is in my opinion not so much the level of violence used by the Mungiki movement that was so terrifying and exceptional since violence is very much part of everyday life in Kenya. I have been the witness of several mob justice[32] incidents and this made me to realise that the acts of violence allegedly carried out by the Mungiki movement, and meticulously meted out in the media, do not necessarily exceed other forms of violence used in Kenyan streets to maintain some kind of order either deployed by police or by ordinary people. I think the media and the Kenyan public focussed on the alleged use of violence by the Mungiki movement because it brought back in mind the memory of Mau Mau and the way the colonial discourse on ethnicity tried to discredit the movement at that time by portraying the Mau Mau movement as savages. In the way the Moi Government constructed its discourse on ethnicity we can see a continuation since the colonial era of besmirching the Kikuyu group by referring to an alleged violent and criminal nature. The incentive to do so by the Moi

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[30] Discussion with Buda, 12 August 2005, Huruma, Nairobi, Kenya.
[31] K. Opala 'The shadowy world of Mungiki' *The Daily Nation* (April 24 2000).
[32] Mob justice is a phenomenon whereby people take justice into their own hands in the absence of trustworthy police and judiciary institutes. In Kenya these spontaneous outbursts of violence of a group of people directed at a thief in my opinion often exceed the crime committed as the perpetrators, sometimes small children, usually end up dead. Having witnessed several of these incidents I came to the conclusion that on one hand mob justice is born out of necessity but they also sometimes become outlets of frustrations for people who carry out the mob justice. The fact that the perpetrators are killed as punishment reveals in my opinion how entrenched violence is in Kenyan street life.

government resembled the incentive of the colonial government. It demonised the Kikuyu group to 'divide and rule'. By demonising the Kikuyu group 'a second time over' the Moi Government powerfully brought back in mind the propaganda of the colonial government and this time it could refer to a re-construction of the Mau Mau war to prove its point.

The Mungiki movement capitalised on the resentment Kikuyu people in Bondeni Village had towards the negative stereotypes of the Kikuyu group in Moi's discourse on ethnicity. The already seething rebel attitude in the Bondeni version of *kikuyuism* facilitated an open almost anticipating attitude towards the first entrance of the Mungiki movement in the slum. The movement's referral to the Mau Mau movement especially spoke to the ghetto boys. This was further enhanced by the fact that the Mungiki movement was able to restore security in Bondeni Village.

It is furthermore important to understand Buda's references to violence in the context of Bondeni Village. In chapter 4 we have been able to see that violence has been a part of Buda's life since his childhood. He has been beaten by police, friends, teachers and he also has used violence to get material things and to protect himself and people he loved. Life in Bondeni Village and other similar neighbourhoods in Eastlands are more entrenched with violence than any other region in Kenya. It was therefore not the violence used but the size of the movement and its network of cells operating in other neighbourhoods that intimidated people in Bondeni Village. The size of the movement gave it its power and it enabled the movement to paralyse resistance and use violence to install fear.

The Mungiki movement was thirdly able to expand its control in Bondeni Village because it spoke to the historical antagonism between Luo and Kikuyu groups in Kenya and how this antagonism was reflected in the competitive relationship between Bondeni Village and the 'other side'. The Mungiki movement initially was perceived by many as a fortification of *kikuyuism* that characterised Bondeni Village in relationship to the 'other side'. In this respect the intertextual reference in the above quote is particularly interesting. *'Luo from the other side are afraid of us 'cause we are from this village where Mungiki are'.* Here Buda indirectly makes a strong intertextual reference to the Kariobangi Massacre of March 2002 because it was this conflict that firmly established the power of the Mungiki movement in the Eastlands area and ingrained its violent image. This incident has undeniably influenced the way people from Bondeni Village and 'the other side' view the movement and the interrelation between Bondeni Village and Area 4B.

During this massacre which was allegedly carried out by the Mungiki movement 21 people were hacked to death with *panga's*, machetes in Kiswahili, and 31 others were admitted to hospital. Kariobangi, Korogocho, stood under the protection of a predominantly Luo based vigilante group called the Taliban which also had followers on 'the other side'. The massacre was perceived in the media as a violent and disproportional reaction to a fight that had occurred between members of the Taliban and a Mungiki member the day before which led to the death of the Mungiki member.[33] According to media coverage of the movement the Kariobangi massacre was not an isolated incident but can be seen as a symptom of the way the Mungiki started to manifest itself in anticipation of the 2002 elections. In those days newspapers frequently reported about Mungiki members randomly attacking people at bus stations in the movement's attempt to improve control of the Eastlands' slums.[34]

In view of all these articles the Kariobangi massacre seemed to exceed in violence in comparison to all the other incidents and journalists were convinced it had been carefully planned. The attackers arrived in trucks and spread quickly throughout the narrow alleyways of the Kisumu Ndogo

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[33] D. Anderson, *African Affairs* (2002) 101 p. 531
[34] For example in January 2002 11 people were killed in Dandora Phase 4 by Mungiki members from a neighbouring slum area.

and Nyayo neighbourhood in Kariobangi, Korogocho, attacking both innocent people and alleged members of the Taliban.[35]

Interestingly, the Taliban is not a gang. It is a name used by Luo people to refer to Luo men who organise themselves to secure the neighbourhood. The name is also used to refer to Luo demonstrators but the media has adopted the use of the name as if it is an actual gang similar to the Mungiki movement. The name Taliban is in fact a pun to the way people in Afghanistan, in the eyes of the Luo using this name, have resisted American occupation by throwing stones because it is their general perception that Luo men like to fight with stones as their weapon of choice. These men have also been termed Baghdad Boys or Palestinians for the same reason.

The Kariobangi massacre had its repercussions in other Eastlands' slums like Mathare Valley where instantly clashes broke out between Luo and Kikuyu people. In Bondeni Village, the Mungiki movement was already well established and with little effort it counteracted the attack by Luo men from Area 4B at the two bridges on the Mungiki side. When Buda proudly stated that the Luo from the other side were afraid of him because he was from the Mungiki side he referred to this incident and the tense relationship between the two communities which reached its climax during this violent clash. Furthermore, he positioned himself within these relationships identifying strongly with his community and the reputation of the Mungiki movement in neighbouring communities such as Area 4B.

Even though I have not been able to intensively research the alleged outbursts of violence by the Mungiki movement depicted in the media and shared with me by people from Bondeni Village I can conclude that the movement did display violence to improve its control of the Eastlands area of Nairobi. It would, otherwise, have been virtually impossible for the movement to gain control of Bondeni Village. This use of violence, however, has to be understood in the context of Kenyan society which is entrenched with violence. Therefore it is possible to also conclude that the overemphasis in the national media on the movement's use of violence was to a certain extent part of the government's strategy to cause chaos and confusion. It brought back memories of Mau Mau to the minds of the Kenyan public and how the Mau Mau movement was portrayed in the colonial discourse on ethnicity. This very effectively heightened suspicion from other ethnic groups towards the Kikuyu group at large. NARC won the 2002 elections but the suspicion towards the Kikuyu group soon took hold of the general public's judgement of the Kibaki government when it failed to deliver and became associated to a huge corruption scandal. [36]

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[35] D. Anderson, *African Affairs* (2002) 101 p. 531
[36] By correspondent, 'Kenya, caught in the action' 26 January 2006, *The Economist online*: website visited on 12 November 2006 http://www.economist.com/research/backgrounders/displaystory.cfm?story_id=5449872

7.5. Mungiki or Manoki; the Multiple Construction of Manhood

In the numerous conversations we shared during my research Buda would sometimes refer to his ethnic identity as irrelevant and at other times as very relevant. As a young *chokora,* street child in Kiswahili, his courage mattered more than anything and as a member of the youth group his creativity and humour gave him status. Nevertheless, living in a Mungiki controlled area after the Kariobangi massacre being Kikuyu meant rightfully belonging to Bondeni Village. In the day to day survival being Kikuyu or Luo means, relatively, nothing, a customer is a customer and a friend is a friend. Conversely, after the emergence of the Mungiki movement being Kikuyu suddenly had its advantages while being Luo could suddenly bring up questions about 'territorial' loyalty. Buda either downplayed or even denied his 'Luoness' in situations where his 'territorial' loyalty was important. These situations could vary from hanging about with a group of Kikuyu friends from Bondeni Village to interacting with non-Kikuyu youth from other neighbourhoods. I have witnessed Buda doing exactly the opposite while hanging around with a couple of Luo friends from Bondeni Village.

Having observed Buda negotiating all these different identities in different contexts the question that came to my mind was why Buda felt the need to present himself as Kikuyu to non-Kikuyu youth from other neighbourhoods than Bondeni Village while within Bondeni Village he very comfortably switched to presenting himself as Luo among Luo friends. I think emphasizing his Kikuyu part towards non-Kikuyu youth from other neighbourhoods was his tool to show that he was from Bondeni Village and this implicated a certain affiliation to the Mungiki movement. Within the safe boundaries of his own village he strategically brought to the fore what made him to connect with his peers. This could at one time mean emphasizing his Luo part while at other times being Kikuyu might give him a sense of belonging to a group of people. In the youth group Buda neither emphasized being Kikuyu or Luo but he tried to present himself as *manoki*.

The youth group consisted of youth from different ethnic background and even though it was dominated by Kikuyu young men from Bondeni Village they only spoke Sheng with each other and ethnicity rarely played a part in forming friendships. *Manoki* mattered, being tough, cool and good looking mattered. Moreover, a member's commitment to the youth group essentially determined one's status in the group.

It is clear that the aspect of class highly influenced the aspect of gender in the process of identity construction among the young Kikuyu men that participated in my research. Unable to live up to the cultural demands to take care of their mothers, wives, sisters and girlfriends and in search of status and other forms of power these men resorted to the formation of brotherhood networks because here they could create an environment where no unattainable demands were made. In these circles young men could acquire status through showing toughness and discipline, traits these men could develop by staying focussed.

The youth group formulated answers to the crisis of manhood by employing language and style in their positioning as the true bearers of Sheng culture. They did so by following a strict code of conduct which I came to term 'rough discipline' in my mind because the young men did not shun violence in imposing their rule of conduct. To give an example, members were allowed to drink *bikra* any time of the day but never to escape problems. When Buda was caught drinking *bikra* to forget his problems he was severely beaten and teased by his friends from the youth group. Another rule of conduct applied to going out and sleeping in. It did not matter how late the youth went out to a club in the city centre or how much they had drunk there was a saying that sleeping in made you lazy and being lazy was met with great ridicule. Other rules of conduct had to do with what you ate and how you ate it, with never shying away of physical labour or exercise and with protecting your brothers in times of need. I have described most aspects in the previous chapters and here I just want to conclude that looking sharp, staying focussed and acting tough gave these young men power in the youth culture that was dominant in Nairobi. The 'ghetto is cool' position in Bondeni, negotiated by these

men, can also be described as *manoki* pride. These men were proud to be from Bondeni Village and this pride triggered admiration from youth from other, wealthier, neighbourhoods who want to be equally tough and cool.

The Mungiki movement addressed the same crisis of manhood but it did so by expressing ethnic pride. The Mungiki movement also followed a strict rule of conduct. The most noteworthy rule Mungiki members lived by in the context of Bondeni Village was the abstinence from alcohol. The abstinence from alcohol among the Mungiki members was one form of discipline that stood in stark contrast to the lives and behaviour of the other youth who drank *chang'aa* and *bikra* almost as a way of life. It is common knowledge that drunken youth in the slum spend money without thinking about tomorrow. Living in the moment is a survival strategy among these youth as thinking about tomorrow could just cause depression with so many insecurities staring right back at them. The drinking and gambling habits of many youth created a great weakness which was readily exploited by the Mungiki movement in its attempt to increase control. I have seen many Mungiki members gamble and it is very probable that this was allowed to some measure because gambling is a highly social activity in the slums and could be a useful strategy to recruit more members and/or create relations of dependency.

The specific magnetism of the Mungiki movement to ghetto boys from Bondeni Village derived from the locality of Bondeni Village which already combined elements of *Kikuyuism* with a revolutionary mind state prior to the movement's arrival. Consequently the Mungiki movement just had to push the right buttons to show the young men in the community that it concretized these sentiments in a coherent and powerful doctrine with a strong ethnic and rebel profile. The expressions of ethnic pride and the historical references to the Mau Mau movement spoke powerfully to the imagination of many ghetto boys and joining the movement also meant better economic opportunities and the back-up of a wide network of members all over Eastlands. As members/sympathisers of the Mungiki movement the young men gained respect or at least evoked fear which stood in stark contrast to the contempt they used to receive by society for being 'ghetto boys'.

We can see a strong historical continuity here. The Mungiki movement's presentation as the 'sons of Mau Mau' spoke to many young Kikuyu men's imagination because of perceived similarities between the situation of colonial oppression and the status of Kikuyu people and ghetto boys during the Moi era. The dominant discourses during these two periods are characterised by the vocal demonisation and by violent government repression of the Kikuyu group. The Kenyatta era in between, from 1963 until 1978, is characterised by a less blatant repression of poor Kikuyu groups and this required a different process of negotiation. The Mungiki movement and the Mau Mau can, to an extent, be perceived as radicalisations of *kikuyuism* and it is in this respect that the movement's presentation as the 'sons of Mau Mau' became credible to many ghetto boys. We have to be careful in using the term continuity because it might suggest similarities while at the same time *kikuyuism* is in constant transformation to address ever changing contexts.

The main similarity between the youth group and the Mungiki movement, between *manoki* and Mungiki, is the fact that both organisations were dominated by young Kikuyu men from Bondeni Village who were in search of direction. In the light of absent fathers, economic hardship and too many responsibilities to live up to these men sought a sense of belonging in the form of an alternative family. The main difference, however, is that the youth group is open to young people from all ethnic backgrounds while the Mungiki movement is exclusively for Kikuyu people.

The youth group rejected the Mungiki movement from its first attempt to enter Bondeni Village. The rationale behind the group's rejection of the Mungiki movement lies in the fact that the youth group and the Mungiki movement envision opposite directions in society as a solution to the crises faced by its members. The youth group aims for its members to join the urban work force and become successful Nairobi citizens through education funds and business loans. *Manoki* identity gives youth from Bondeni Village the style and language they need to get the confidence to move in the

wealthier cosmopolitan circles of Nairobi city centre. Interestingly, prior to the movement's emergence in Bondeni Village *manoki* had incorporated elements of the local version *kikuyuism*. The Mungiki movement overtly articulated their version of *kikuyuism* and this prompted the ghetto boys constructing *manoki* to emphasise the trans-ethnic character of *manoki* in response.

In contrast to the youth group the Mungiki movement aims for its members to find redemption in 'going back' to 'traditional' culture and value systems. It turns its back to the mirrored glass towers in the city centre that according to the movement symbolises the continued oppression of Kenyans by the West and which only changed from colonialism to neo-colonialism in 1963 and to globalisation during the 1990s. The Mungiki movement envisioned the 'resurrection' of the *Kirinyaga*[37] Kingdom, a Kikuyu kingdom in the 'traditional' Kikuyu lands in Central Province. The Kikuyu group never had a kingdom or similar political structures prior to colonisation making the term 'resurrection' quite interesting as it gives prove of the fact that these ideas were actually entirely new. They were constructed to meet present needs and in the process these ideas combined elements from different cultures, ideologies and philosophies which were then presented as Kikuyu. Ndura Waruinge, former leader of the movement, explained the Mungiki vision of the *Kirinyaga* kingdom as follows:

"It is a bit like the Baganda, Acholi and other traditional Kingdoms of Uganda.....[Our aim is] to unite the Gikuyu people, and eventually all Kenyans in similar kingdoms, to redeem the Gikuyu from Western culture brought about by Christianity and colonialism, to liberate the Kenyan masses from political oppression and economic exploitation and to restore Africans to their indigenous values."[38]

In the eyes of the Mungiki leadership all these kingdoms would consist of one ethnic group which it saw as a primary condition for a kingdom to prosper and these envisioned kingdoms were perfectly able to co-exist peacefully together within the boundaries of the republic of Kenya. The concept of *majimboism* is central to the Mungiki movement's version of *Kikuyuism* and this is essentially an exclusive doctrine. The Mungiki identity gives its member a clear-cut explanation of wrong and right by placing the blame with the West and corrupt Kenyan elite and it provides a solution to the multiple problems these young men faced living in the slums of Nairobi. Already rejected by society they now received the instruments to turn their own back to society and in doing so they claimed power because it became a choice.

The Mungiki movement claims pre-colonial roots and in doing so it wants to claim authenticity to rise above what it views as a split Kikuyu identity present in Kenya today. History, even if imagined, is re-constructed by the movement to address the frustration felt by many Kenyan people today about issues such as poverty, corruption and exploitation by Kenyan elite and international companies. Ethnic mobilisation in this sense has to be understood as a strategy to get political, economic and/or social gain. What we see here is that in a society wherein ethnic mobilisation has been the prime cause of marginalisation and oppression of specific ethnic groups and classes that same tool can be applied in strategies of gain. A very important issue comes to the fore here. It is not a coincidence that *kikuyuism* resembles *majimboism* in terms of exclusivity. In order to negotiate the discursive pressures from *majimboism, kikuyuism* had to strike back with the same force thus it changed the connotation but not the content of the prominence of the Kikuyu group within *majimboism*. The Mungiki movement has been able to give marginalised ghetto boys social status, economic opportunities and political power by using the same ethnocentric strategies the elite has used since independence. The question that comes up is whether the Mungiki movement has overplayed its

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[37] Kirinyaga (or Kirenya'ga) is the name for Mount Kenya in the Kikuyu language.
[38] Wamue G.N. *African Affairs* (2001) 100 p. 459 en 470.

ethnic card by supporting Uhuru Kenyatta in 2002. It seems as if it has but we can only answer that question during the 2007 General Elections because the movement is still very powerful in the slums of Nairobi and we can only speculate on what it will do next.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

Buda became my main research participant because of many reasons. He invited me into his life and I was able to follow him during the day in almost all his activities. He opened up to me and showed me his life with raw honesty and exceptional insights. I was impressed by his willingness to take me along and his ability to reflect on his life but most of all he became my main research participant because I realised that the positions available to Buda were available to many young Kikuyu men from Bondeni Village faced. By making him my main research participant I knew that I would acquire the necessary insights to eventually approach the main question of this thesis: to what extent is Kikuyu identity emphasised in becoming ghetto boys in Bondeni Village, Nairobi, Kenya, during the late 1990s and how is this related to longer historical processes of ethnic mobilisation in national politics?

Buda is a young man from Bondeni Village with a Kikuyu mother and a Luo father. He has been a street child, a gang member, a member of the youth group and recently he is suspected of having joined the Mungiki movement. Representing himself as a Kikuyu young man became gradually more important to him and this can be understood in the historical, political, economic and cultural context of his life and the locality he lived in.

My focus throughout this thesis was ethnic mobilisation. Once ethnic identity becomes significant in the process of identity construction it is mobilised, or has the potential to be mobilised, as a strategy to gain status or other forms of power. In this sense I take ethnic identity as a performative identity. In different contexts we have seen Buda articulate and/or downplay his ethnic identities related to what would bring him the most advantages in terms of cultural, political and/or economic gain.

8.2. Rebel or Star?

Buda and the other young men in Bondeni Village grew up during the Moi era at a time that people in Bondeni Village identified more and more strongly with the Kikuyu group and with a very local version of *Kikuyuism*. The construction of a neighbourhood identity on Kikuyu grounds is the result of many histories and political developments sparked off by the migration of pre-dominantly Kikuyu women to Bondeni Village around the time of independence in 1963. When women such as Mama Buda and Cucu moved to Bondeni Village they brought with them a sense of Kikuyu culture and identity and this was adapted to the needs of the locality. The social relationships in the first urban slum settlements were cemented with these cultural, ethnic, ties resembling the social make-up of the rural communities they left behind.

There are three main factors that contributed to the use of the Kikuyu and Luo identity to create contrasting neighbourhood identities from the perspective of Bondeni Village. First of all, the settlement of people on 'the other side' intensified the neighbourhood identity in Bondeni Village and because many were Kikuyu women speaking the Kikuyu language became a tool of differentiation. Secondly, the influx of Kikuyu refugees in Bondeni Village from the Rift Valley Province and the horrific stories of ethnic clashes they brought with them intensified a sense of ethnic identity and gave new impulses into the construction of a localised version of *Kikuyuism*. Thirdly, the rumour that the people who settled across the river were given the land by the Moi Government to buy their loyalty contributed to constructing the 'other side' as Luo by people in Bondeni Village.

The Kikuyu identity of Bondeni Village is in essence a very local identity and bears little resemblances with the Kikuyu identity for instance expressed by wealthier Kikuyu people in Nairobi. It becomes clear here that we cannot speak of a Kikuyu identity. There are many Kikuyu identities and

it is very difficult to determine what all of them have in common apart from the name. The Kikuyu identity that is so prominently present in Bondeni Village is also not a fixed localised identity. Circumstances change and have a reciprocal relationship with the construction of a neighbourhood identity, henceforth the content and meaning of the localised Kikuyu identity at the core of the neighbourhood identity changes with it. This is well illustrated by the fact that the settlement across the river triggered an intensification of Bondeni's Kikuyu identity

Buda and other young men in Bondeni Village identified strongly with a localised version of a Kikuyu identity and in doing so they denied and/or downplayed their (other) ethnic identities. Ethnicity is further intersected with masculinity and class in the process of becoming ghetto boys.

There are three positions the young men in Bondeni Village construct to negotiate the subject position of the 'ghetto boy' fixed in the dominant discourse on poverty. The first one is the subject position of a rebel. In this position the general characteristics of the 'ghetto boy' as portrayed in the dominant discourse on poverty are enhanced and expressed with pride. The second position is the subject position of showing the opposite. In this position the young men try to blatantly show that they do not ascribe to the general image of a 'ghetto boy' prevalent in the dominant discourse on poverty by behaving exactly the opposite. The third position is the position whereby the young men present themselves as the flag bearers of the new trends in language and style, the 'ghetto is cool' position. All the men I met and worked with displayed these three positions in different contexts and most of the time they were actually negotiating all three at the same time to some extent.

At first glance the 'rebel' position and the 'ghetto is cool' position seem to resemble each other were it not for the fact that they face opposite directions. The resemblance lies in the way men positioning themselves in both ways express certain perceived features of 'ghettoness' with pride. The 'rebel', however, turns his back to society and feels protected by the fear he evokes. The 'ghetto is cool' position is faced towards society and not only aims to belong but aims to trigger admiration at the same time by overtly displaying perceived notions of 'ghettoness'. These ghetto boys are the stars of Nairobi nightlife while the 'rebels' dominate the slum at night. Buda wanted to be a star and tried to be a star but in general he positioned himself as a 'rebel' and it were the 'rebels' who were predominantly recruited by the Mungiki movement.

8.3. Manoki or Mungiki?

In Bondeni Village the 'ghetto is cool' position dominated the construction of the sub-discourse *manoki*. *Manoki* is constructed to negotiate the dominant discourse on poverty and ethnicity and it is a fluid culture which is constantly under construction. *Manoki* as a local youth culture is based on the local version of *kikuyuism*, on urban Sheng culture and on local rules of conduct which I came to term 'rough discipline'. *Manoki* stands only for youth culture in Bondeni Village and it is characterised by a specific type of Sheng which is heavily mixed with words from the Kikuyu language.

The young men's use of the word *manoki* and their pronounced affiliation with the Kikuyu identity express great pride in belonging to Bondeni Village. A hierarchy within a hierarchy was established. In reality this meant that youth who were considered 'ghetto boys' by outsiders claimed power by being Bondeni youth within the context of Mathare Valley. The appropriation of style, and language, by slum youth was also a way to claim power in their relationship with *mababi,* youth from wealthier neighbourhoods.

The fact that youth from Bondeni Village constructing the sub-discourse *manoki* are predominantly young men brings us to the aspect of gender. The ideas about manhood prevalent in the slum community of Bondeni Village are mainly derived from the Kikuyu culture and translated to the locality of Bondeni Village. These ideas demanded of the young men to be protectors of the family's

status and honour of the women in the family. Men were perceived as providers for their families but their socio-economic status disabled them to live up to all these expectations. Many young men I met in Bondeni Village experienced a crisis of manhood. This crisis first of all originated from the socio-economic situation these men lived in. Here we see how gender, ethnicity and class are very much interrelated in the process of identity construction among these men. It is important to note that ethnicity in this process only holds relative meaning. The Kikuyu identity is only meaningful in this process because it is strongly attached to the locality of the young men and because their mothers referred to this identity when giving them a rudimentary idea of what it meant to be a man.

The crisis of manhood actually proves to be of far greater importance in the identity construction of young men in Bondeni Village even though ideas on manhood are derived from cultural, and therefore largely ethnic, backgrounds. It is clear that the aspect of class highly influenced the aspect of gender in the process of identity construction among the young Kikuyu men that participated in my research. Unable to live up to the cultural demands to take care of their mothers, wives, sisters and girlfriends these men resorted to the formation of brotherhood networks because here they could create an environment where no unattainable demands were made. In these circles young men could acquire status as men and other forms of power through showing toughness and discipline, traits these men could develop by staying focussed to rules of conduct they themselves constructed.

The growth of the two very opposite organisations in Bondeni Village, the youth group and the Mungiki movement, discussed in this thesis can be explained by the fact that both organisations addressed the crisis of manhood experienced by the young men and offered alternatives to them on how to gain status as men and other forms of power. The youth group and the Mungiki movement, however, envision very opposite directions in society as a solution to the crises faced by its members.

The youth group aims for its members to join the urban work force and become successful Nairobi citizens through education funds and business loans. *Manoki* identity gives youth from Bondeni Village the style and language they need to get the confidence to move in the wealthier cosmopolitan circles of Nairobi city centre. *Manoki* contains Kikuyu elements but only in connection to the locality it sprung from. On the whole, young men expressing *manoki* pride did not necessarily belong to the Kikuyu group and in this respect *manoki* is inclusive.

The Mungiki movement aims for its members to find redemption in 'going back' to 'traditional' culture and value systems. It called for a return to 'African', read Kikuyu, political, economic and social traditions to stop the spread of a 'perverted and decadent westernized' culture at the expense of the urban Kikuyu poor. The Mungiki movement formulated political, economic and social alternatives to the cosmopolitan circles of Nairobi city centre because it perceived those circles as oppressive and deceiving. The Mungiki identity contains fixed ideas of what it means to be Kikuyu and at the core stand mythologized images of the Mau Mau movement and pre-colonial Kikuyu culture. Mungiki is exclusive in essence because its membership in solely open to people belonging to the Kikuyu group.

The young men constructing *manoki* before the arrival of the Mungiki movement incorporated elements of the localised Kikuyu identity. When the Mungiki movement entered Bondeni Village, however, the young men were prompted to either articulate or downplay the localised Kikuyu identity. Some men were drawn to the Mungiki movement while others wanted to continue to belong to the *manoki* culture. A dichotomy was created between *manoki* and Mungiki and in due course the young men constructing *manoki* increasingly *de-kikuyuised* or downplayed Kikuyu elements to contrast *manoki* to Mungiki.

Young men like Buda and Tom, i.e. youth who negotiated the dominant discourse on poverty by positioning themselves predominantly as the 'rebel', increasingly constructed their Kikuyu identities in strong affiliation with the Mungiki movement. Tom is a good example of the fact that

belonging to a different ethnic group, i.e. the Kamba group in his case, does not necessarily obstruct identification with the Kikuyu identity. Mobilising a Kikuyu identity in this respect has to be understood as a strategy to get political, economic and/or cultural advantages. In the context of Bondeni Village the Mungiki movement and the youth group were groups through which members could acquire access to these advantages. From 2002 onwards the Mungiki movement became more powerful than the youth group. In the context of Bondeni Village and of their lives constructing ethnic mobilisation gave many young men better access to resources, status and other forms of power. Here it comes to the fore that in order to really understand in which historical contexts and political, economic and cultural circumstances ethnic mobilisation occurs we first have to include the locality and the biographic narratives of the people constructing these identities into our analysis and not take ethnic identity at face value. This will eventually enable us to develop a better understanding of ethnicity.

The title of this thesis, *kudé? kudedi*! try or die, is symbolic for the contexts in which these young men construct their multiple identities. They use aspects of these identities in developing strategies not just to gain politically, economically and culturally but they use these aspects to survive. Within the development of these strategies they constantly re-construct history to meet their present needs. For some this meant to emphasise a Kikuyu identity, and the memory of Mau Mau, to belong to the Mungiki movement while others downplayed their ethnic identities in *manoki* to distinct themselves from the Mungiki movement. Bondeni Village is an environment of daily struggle to physically survive but besides economic survival the title of this thesis also refers to the cultural and political survival these young men strife for. On a more abstract level the title of this thesis, in my opinion, is a representation of the force, the focus and the fight these young men display in their struggle for daily economic, political and cultural survival.

8.4. Kikuyuism and Majimboism

The dominant discourse on ethnicity during the Moi era was characterised by the ideology of *majimboism* and stated, in short, that ethnic hatred is primordial in essence and would always exist because all the groups had inherently different and often conflicting characteristics and interests. According to this discourse all the ethnic groups living within the borders of the Kenyan 'nation-state' had to stay confined to their 'traditional' lands and should be controlled and directed by a strong leader from a minority ethnic group to keep all these animosities under control. Highlighted in this discourse was the belief that majority ethnic groups such as the Kikuyu and the Luo groups were dangerous to the other ethnic groups and therefore to the growth of Kenya as a nation. The size of these groups, especially in alliance with each other, formed a direct threat to the political stability of the nation. The only remedy according to this discourse was to keep these groups outside the political realm and away from each other. Demonising the Kikuyu group was Moi's effective strategy to avoid unified political opposition from the Luo and the Kikuyu group.

The antagonism between the Kikuyu and Luo group and the growing focus on differences between ethnic groups in *majimboism* at the core of Moi's discourse on ethnicity was reflected in *Kikuyuism*. To my surprise *Kikuyuism* actually confirmed *majimboism*. In order to resist the ideological pressures from the dominant discourse people constructing *Kikuyuism* changed the connotation but not the content of the dominant discourse. It too expressed the entitlement of each ethnic group to its 'traditional' lands and brought it to a new level. In addition *Kikuyuism* increasingly started to express not only entitlement to the fertile lands in Central Province, the imagined homeland of the Kikuyu group, but its rhetoric was increasingly expanded to a national context stating that the poor Kikuyu, as ex-Mau Mau, had fought for independence and therefore were entitled to a share of the national cake. In Bondeni Village these growing feelings of entitlement among poor Kikuyu groups were translated to the local context and constructed by 'othering' Area 4B as Luo.

Kikuyuism had already spread from the Kikuyu squatter communities to Bondeni Village during the 1960s and 1970s and at that time the focus of this sub-discourse was on purity and morality. The people constructing this sub-discourse negotiated the subject position of being irrelevant as fixed in *Kikuyuization,* the dominant discourse on ethnicity of the Kenyatta Government. They constructed themselves as pure in contrast to the, perceived, perverted Kikuyu elite and thus claimed pride. *Kikuyuism* at that time stated that the Kikuyu elite had deviated from true Kikuyu culture while they were the true bearers of Kikuyu culture and history.

Kikuyuism transformed overtime and meant different things in different historical contexts and political, economic and cultural circumstances but the memory of Mau Mau and a sense of superiority have been elements that remained of great importance to all variations. The memory of Mau Mau and alleged superiority have been elements that played a key part in the construction of dominant discourses on ethnicity since colonial times. It is not surprising, therefore, that in negotiation of these discourses these elements remained of equal importance only there connotation was transformed in the process.

The construction of being of unique and superior was a way of the people constructing *Kikuyuism* during the colonial era to negotiate the allotted subject position of the criminal and subjugated Kikuyu subject during the colonial era. At that time the Kikuyu loyalists were perceived as the 'other'.

During the Kenyatta era remembering the Mau Mau war with honour in *kikuyuism* was an act of subtle defiance because *Kikuyuization* centred on the denigration and even utter disregard of the Mau Mau war. At the time the Mau Mau movement was re-constructed as a movement that had fought to protect the authenticity of Kikuyu culture and history. When poor ex-Mau Mau fighters and former detainees founded the KLFA's to protest against the 'land grabbing' after independence in 1963 the Kikuyu elite, among whom many were former loyalists, became the 'other'.

In Moi's discourse on ethnicity the memory of Mau Mau was used to bring images in mind of the alleged criminal and ethnocentric nature of 'the Kikuyu group' and in response *kikuyuism* re-constructed the history of the Mau Mau war as a protest movement. During the ethnic clashes of the 1990s the Mau Mau war became the representation of the rebel movement in *kikuyuism* and the Mungiki movement capitalised on that sentiment.

The Mungiki movement translated *kikuyuism* into an ideology of a resistance movement in response to the ethnic clashes orchestrated by Moi and here we see strong historical continuity. The Mau Mau movement was not a movement at first. During the 1940s and early 1950s there was a reciprocal relationship between the level of harshness of how the colonial government treated Kikuyu groups and the radicalisation among these groups. Eventually this culminated into the Mau Mau guerrilla war but only after the *en masse* detainment of Kikuyu people. The Mungiki movement can also be perceived as a radical off-spring of a much longer development. *Kikuyuism* and the many different organisations that derived from this sub-discourse such as the Tent al preceded the emergence of the Mungiki movement. We can even trace the development of *kikuyuism* back to the Mau Mau guerrilla war and maybe even before that. The radicalisation of *kikuyuism,* in the form of the Mungiki movement, was triggered by the harshness of the Moi Government during the 1990s and can in this sense be compared to the Mau Mau movement. The presentation of the Mungiki movement as the 'sons of Mau Mau' reveals the fact that its leadership was well aware of this historical continuity.

Besides a strong historical continuity we also see here how key shifts in history and changes in the dominant discourses on ethnicity are directly reflected in the construction of sub-discourses negotiating these discourses and allotted subject positions. *Kikuyuism* in post-colonial Kenya has changed and will continue to change but the prominence of Kikuyu identity in national politics and individual lives and the memory of the Mau Mau war have played a central part until now and I don't expect that to change in the near future.

The relentless demonisation of the whole, or specific sections of, the Kikuyu group in all dominant discourses since the colonial era had its bearing on political, cultural and economic relationships between ethnic groups ever since. A sense of superiority at the core of *Kikuyuism* was a way for poor Kikuyu groups to negotiate these subject positions and claim power. Most Kikuyu people I met in Bondeni Village negotiated the notion of superiority, the sense of belonging to an ethnic group with a heroic and traumatic past and the feeling of being entitled to the fertile lands of Central Province. This negotiation either occurred by resisting supposed superiority of the group or by affirming it openly, and even emphasizing it. There seemed no middle ground. It is this sense of Kikuyu superiority that dominates the cultural text, the existing conventional meanings underlying all dominant and sub-discourses, on ethnicity developed in Kenya.

The fact that since the colonial era many Kenyans view the Kikuyu identity not as a neutral identity in Kenya does not indicate that we can actually speak of a Kikuyu identity. There are many Kikuyu identities and all these identities change because they are constructed in relationship to the continuously changing historical contexts and the political, economic and cultural circumstances within which these identities are constructed.

8.5. Suggestions for further Research

Many questions remain unanswered in this thesis. Before going into these questions I would like to briefly sketch a context which has only been briefly mentioned in this thesis due to the limits of the scope of this research.

The 1990s were a decade in Kenya's recent history that was characterised by globalisation. In the 1990s, following the end of the Cold War, global economic integration increased rapidly.[1] The economic aspect of globalisation concerns the worldwide economic integration supported by the innovation of communication techniques. The level and nature of worldwide economic integration is debatable but it is a fact that after the fall of the 'Berlin Wall' in 1989 more countries joined the international market than during the Cold War period, 1945-1989, and this had global repercussions on an economic, cultural and political scale. During the 1990s a few cosmopolitan Kenyan elite benefited from the economic opportunities globalisation offered them whereas economic decline and rapidly expanding urban slums typified the more general experience of globalisation in Kenya.

The cultural aspect of globalisation concerns the social phenomena resulting from worldwide economic integration or exclusion. In many scholarly texts considering the cultural aspects of globalisation the homogenization effects of this process are overemphasized.[2] It is often overlooked that the process of homogenization appears to lead to a stronger articulation of cultural contrasts.[3] Tension exits between globalisation and identity as people's awareness of "being involved in open-ended global flows seems to trigger a search for fixed orientation and action frames, as well as determined efforts to affirm old and construct new boundaries."[4]

In order to properly understand the reasons why the Kikuyu identity became significant to many young men in Bondeni Village it is important to analyse the development and the rapid spread of the Mungiki movement during the 1990s in the context of globalisation in further research. I would like to propose that the Mungiki movement should be analysed as a result of the process of

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[1] J. Sachs, (2005) p. 48.
[2] B. Meyer and P. Geschiere, 'Introduction' in B. Meyer and P.Geschiere, *Globalization and Identity. Dialects of Flow and Closure*, (Blackwell, 1999) p. 1.
[3] Ibid. p. 2.
[4] Ibid.

creolisation.[5] In constructing a radical form of *kikuyuism* the Mungiki movement incorporated many elements from different cultural backgrounds and presented this as 'pure' Kikuyu culture. It is possible to analyse elements from reggae culture, socialism and from cultures from other ethnic groups. The concept of creolisation enables us to understand the Mungiki movement as a result form increased contact and interaction between cultures in a context of asymmetrical power relations from a bottom-up perspective.

Furthermore, it is important to compare their process of identity construction to that of young Kikuyu women in Bondeni Village. The young men are driven by a crisis of manhood but is there also such a thing as a crisis of womanhood? What is the relationship between ethnicity and gender among young Kikuyu women in Bondeni Village? And among older Kikuyu men and women? And how do members of other ethnic groups in Bondeni Village experience their ethnic identity in relationship to the perceived majority ethnic group?

Another important question that remains unanswered in this thesis is how the people living in Area 4B view the people in Bondeni Village? Do they also regard themselves as Luo and Bondeni Village as Kikuyu? Does the Taliban represent a similar sub-discourse as *kikuyuism*? Can we expect the emergence of a Luo movement similar to the Mungiki movement in Area 4B?

The most important suggestion for further research I have is concerned with the fact that Sheng culture and the Mungiki culture emerged in the whole of Eastlands almost at the same time, during the 1990s, among the same groups, i.e. predominantly young men, and in negotiation with the same discourse, i.e. the dominant discourse on ethnicity and poverty. Is their a historical relationship between these two cultures and how do other groups, such as the Taliban, relate to both cultures?

My incentive to propose such a research is based on the realistic expectation that urban slums in developing countries will expand rapidly in the coming decades. Some prospects even estimate that within several decades 60 % of the world population will live in urban settings and the majority of this growth will occur in developing countries. [6] This will raise the pressure on these urban slums beyond our current imagination. The mounting pressure might activate an incredible enhancement of conflicts in these slums, especially when the growth in population in developing countries is not accompanied with an increase of economic opportunities in these countries. Better insight into the historical, political and social background of tense and competitive relations between groups within the urban slums, and the avoidance of ignorantly labelling these conflicts as 'ethnic', might contribute to the development of better solutions to promote socio-economic development and prevent violence.

This thesis has shown one thing above all and that is that within the slum the conditions for these solutions are very much present. These conditions are very much connected to larger historical processes of in-and-exclusion and we can only acquire insights in the social dynamics of groups in

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[5] . van Stipriaan Luïscius *Creolisering: vragen van een basketbalplein, antwoorden van een watergodin.* (Erasmus Universiteit, 2000)

[6] In the 2004 report on the state of the world population The United Nation Population Fund concludes that in 2030 60% of the world population will live in urban settings and the majority of this growth will occur as a result of 'natural fertility' rather than migration. Africa will reach an incredible 54 % of its population living in urban areas in the coming decades. Almost all of the world's total population growth in this period will be in urban areas of developing countries. The United Nation Population Fund, 'State of world population 2004 report' found on the following website on 2 June 2006: *http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2004/english/ch4/.* The estimates in this report are based on: United Nations, 2004. "Executive Summary." *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision.* New York: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.

slum communities if we take these historical contexts in consideration when formulating solutions. Even if the global economic relations between North and South cannot be changed and the North will continue to obstruct economic growth of developing countries to benefit its own, as it has done up till now, it is still not a lost battle. It is my opinion that further research, as suggested here, will show the great potential of the people living in urban slums. This potential can grow with the right assistance from the North, assistance that respects the agency of these communities, into a force of development that has the ability to eradicate economic deprivation and conflicts from within.

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Buda in Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

Tom, Huruma, Nairobi, Kenya.

Karani, Umoja and Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

Mama Buda in Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

Cucu in Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Karanja in Ngumo, Nairobi, Kenya.

Grandfather in Cura, Kiambu District, Kenya

Baba Gitau in Nakuru, Kenya.

Mr. Maina Cura in Kiambu District, Kenya

Other youth members of the youth group in Bondeni Village, Mathare Valley, Nairobi, Kenya.