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Identities and the colonial past in Kenya and Tanzania

BA dissertation by Laura-Catalina Althoff
published as a CERS working paper on the MGR archive

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to explore the relation between the colonial politics of tribalism in Kenya and Tanganyika and the present day ethnic identities and conflicts in the two post-independence nations. Reasons for diverging post-colonial developments can be found in slight differences in the colonial administration, but also and mainly in the different political approaches implemented by Kenyatta and Nyerere. Thus patronage led to an essentialisation and racialisation of ethnicities in Kenya, which can be juxtaposed to an almost “ethnicity-blind” situation in Tanzania, created through the radically egalitarian Ujamaa. The argumentation of this study is, apart from the relevant literature, based on nine interviews conducted in Kenya in July and August 2013. These clearly demonstrate the current ethnic tensions in Kenya, but present alternative narratives as to where these originated from, as the colonial “invention of tradition” is not perceived as such in retrospect. The last section of this paper also considers the most recent developments and detects a renegotiation and convergence of ethnic identifications in Kenya and Tanzania.

Contents

- Introduction** _____ **2**
- 1 Overview of definitions, concepts and debates** _____ **5**
 - 1.1 Identities _____ 5
 - 1.2 Ethnicity _____ 5
 - 1.2.1 *Ethnicity and hierarchy* _____ 7
 - 1.2.2 *Ethnicity and ‘race’* _____ 8
 - 1.3 Debate between essentialisation and homogenisation _____ 10
- 2 The impact of colonialism** _____ **11**
- 3 The contemporary Kenyan perception of ethnicity as natural** _____ **17**
 - 3.1 “What makes you Kikuyu, Kamba or Luo?” _____ 17
 - 3.2 “What has colonialism got to do with it?” _____ 18
- 4 Post-colonial developments** _____ **23**
 - 4.1 Kenya _____ 23
 - 4.1.1 *The fight for independence and Kenyatta’s formation of a ‘Kikuyu-centric state’* _____ 24
 - 4.1.2 *Essentialisation up to ‘race’-like ethnicities* _____ 27
 - 4.2 Tanzania _____ 30
 - 4.2.1 *Nyerere’s ujamaa, a unity-oriented ideology* _____ 31
 - 4.2.2 *Overhomogenising the new nation?* _____ 35
- 5 Future and negotiation – Kenya/Tanzania daima or celebrating multiplicity?** _____ **37**
 - 5.1 Debate between essentialisation and homogenisation revisited _____ 37
 - 5.2 Situational negotiation and positive ethnicity – towards a middle ground _____ 39
- Conclusion** _____ **46**
- References** _____ **49**
 - Interview material _____ 53
- Appendix** _____ **54**
 - 1. Full version of the interview transcripts _____ 54
 - 2. Diagrams _____ 65

Introduction

In the beginning I was really sure that [...] these guys [=Kikuyu] are not going to just not like me because of my tribe. Until, one day, in my class [...] [with] a friend of mine [...] I told him 'The politicians should not control our lives.', and he was like 'You are a good person. But the other Luos, I don't like them. And if I'm [=was] given a gun, I would just shoot them. [...] If we have to fight, then I will fight for my tribe.' And that's when I realised that tribe [=tribalism] is real. [...] So I felt like, maybe if I'm in a group of Kikuyu [...] then I would hesitate to start saying, 'I'm a Luo'. That's just for my security.

Adam Onyango (interview no. 5, 1:04:12-1:07:01)

This quote summarises the core of the Kenyan tribalism problem, and at the same time illustrates its ambivalence: before engaging more closely with the subject, one might think of tribalism as an abstract phenomenon that has no place in the real world, and no objective justification. Yet the interview material collected for this study clearly shows that tribalism in Kenya is so real and relevant that ethnicity had to become the focus of this research project on East African identities. In the interviews with Kenyans from various backgrounds, it seemed like tribalism was something that no-one really wanted or understood, apart from politicians who instrumentalised ethnic groups to gain votes, and that otherwise brought nothing but personal harm and destruction. At the same time, potential origins in the colonial past were hard to retrieve.

This absence of reference to the colonial politics in the creation of ethnic identities lead to further questions. Did the European administration practices really have no substantial impact on ethnic identities? If they did, why did this provoke conflict and political tribalism in post-colonial Kenya, but could be utterly counter-balanced by Tanzania's charismatic leader and unifying political strategy? Thinking about these phenomena more abstractly, we need to ask: what is ethnicity? If it is a historically specific cultural construct, how can it have such real impacts on people's lives? Should a conflict between two groups, whose differences seem so small and arbitrary to the European eye, not be easily solvable? Would it be possible to raise awareness about how these identities were actually shaped and invented by colonial officers, rather than having existed since their genesis described in a story of origin? And could this awareness help to abolish ethnic identifications, and thus tribalism? But if ethnicity has its counter-parts in the real world, in people's minds, in workplace

discrimination, in election results that resemble ethnic censuses, can it really just be wished away by means of sociological deconstruction?

These questions shall be answered in the present work. Chapter 1 one is concerned with setting the basis for the debate by defining the main concepts, identity and ethnicity, and their relation to power dynamics and the ascription of 'racial' characteristics as one way to exercise power¹. Chapter 2 includes an analysis of the historical events and dynamics of the colonial period that critically shaped ethnic identities. Chapter 3 puts this outcome in perspective by juxtaposing contemporary Kenyan's perceptions of the genesis and content of ethnic identities. Chapters 4 and 5 open the debate about the different post-colonial political strategies and ideologies and their significance for working towards peace and freedom of personal cultural expression: how much expression of ethnicity and celebration of cultural differences is necessary for ensuring psychological health and empowerment for Kenyans and Tanzanians? How much awareness of the historical dynamics, how much deconstruction of tribalism and racialised ethnicities do we need for conflict mediation? How are even the most recent developments linked to colonialism? And can the contemporary negotiation of ethnicity help diminish the significance of negative ethnicity and thus create peace?

¹ 'Race' is used in inverted commas, following Miles' (2009) argumentation, in order to make it clear that this work speaks about 'race' as a social construct that affects people's lives rather than a biological fact. Similarly, 'Black' is spelled with a capital letter and 'white' in lower-case in order to highlight that they are not genetically different groups of people, but that 'Black' is a self-denomination term used by Black political thinkers and activists such as Noah Sow.

I proceeded likewise for terms like 'tribe' or 'tribal' and 'tradition' to stress that they are often abused with the aim of depicting African societies as backward, static and conflict-ridden. While the terms are still necessary for the argumentation, they were put in inverted commas in order to deconstruct their common usage as objective designations and thus the belief that 'tribes' are natural and that certain cultural practices are static and regressive.

On the contrary, racism and tribalism represent forms of discrimination based on the very beliefs that 'race' and 'tribe' are natural categories, and as this discrimination is real, the terms need not be challenged or deconstructed, which is why they were not put in inverted commas.

Besides theoretical approaches and historical analyses drawn from literature, the argumentation is based on nine interviews conducted with Kenyans² and personal encounters and experiences made in Kenya. This means that the focus is unwillingly slightly biased towards the Kenyan case, because a broader and more graspable picture of Kenya could be gained, especially on contemporary Kenyan politics and ethnic tensions. Amongst the informants, Luo preponderate, which may prejudices the argumentation against other groups. Yet in the context of the existing literature on Kenyan ethnicity, which is mainly concerned with the Kikuyu, this work may contribute a new perspective. Further, while the literature was wide-ranged, reliable and well-balanced between the two countries concerning the colonial period, specific accounts of ethnic relations in the post-colonial period in Tanzania were scarcer than for Kenya, which may also have influenced the focus.

Yet the lack of sources also indicates a relative absence of strictly ethnic conflicts in Tanzania. Religious and 'race' conflicts have greater relevance and thus superpose ethnic conflicts in academic research. For example, articles about 'ethnic conflicts' in Tanzania (such as Campbell 1999) often concern themselves solely with conflicts between whites, Indians and Black Tanzanians, and no 'tribal' conflicts in the narrow sense are mentioned. Thus the close focus on inter-ethnic conflicts may have somewhat distorted and dichotomised the comparison between Kenya and Tanzania by creating the impression that Kenya is more divided, when, with a broader understanding of ethnicity, 'tribal' conflicts in Kenya could have been compared to 'race' conflicts in Tanzania. Yet the emphasis is deliberate and seems justified against the background that a predominant majority of Kenyans and Tanzanians are, of course, Black Africans (e.g. 98% of Tanzanians in 1961, Ghai 1974, p. 109).

A text in its linear form is not always ideal; and complex contexts can sometimes better be mapped in a diagram. This is why, for a better understanding, the argumentation has been visualised in three diagrams, which can be found in the appendix.

² Further information on the informants and on how to read the interviews can be found in the references part at the back and in the appendix.

Chapter 1: Overview of definitions, concepts and debates

Before starting any argumentation about identity in the colonial and post-colonial contexts it is inevitable to first define what identity is and how identification works. The focus of this work is ethnicity as one facet of identities, which is particularly relevant in the studied context. It is clear, however, that it is impossible to treat ethnicity separately from other divisive forces such as 'race'.

1.1 Identities

As Fuss (1995) elaborates, identities are produced in the process of identification, which is ambivalent in two ways. Firstly, we define our identity with regard to what divides us from others, yet simultaneously take into account our similarities with others and our wish to belong to their community. Secondly, we have some space for individual negotiation and self-definition, while our identity always remains dependant on how others perceive us and what qualities they ascribe to us. Therefore, identification is always a balance between dissociating oneself from others on the one hand, and trying to belong on the other, which means questioning and renegotiating the self. This dynamic, which can lead to 'othering', exclusion and segregation, but also "alignment", "assimilation" and "submission" (ibid.), happens not only at the individual, but also at the collective level: individual agency and negotiation are limited by the structural forces of society, i. e. the leading discourses and representations available for identification. Considering this dialectic character of the formation of identities, it becomes obvious that identities are multi-dimensional and fluid, that is, constituted of many different facets, layers and roles. This is how the use of 'identities' in the plural is understood in this work.

1.2. Ethnicity

"Ethnicity is the enduring and systematic communication of cultural differences between groups considering themselves to be distinct. It appears whenever cultural differences are made relevant in social interaction" (Eriksen 2002, p. 58). Ethnicity is thus produced by a specific form of identification, one that takes culture as a starting point.

Ethnic identity formation, same as identification in general, can be seen as more or less stable, according to how culture is defined: ethnic groupings can be seen as clear-cut, concrete and unchanging boundaries defined by characteristics such as language, dress, food, symbols, and also geographic origin and 'memories of a shared past' (Bulmer 1986, cited in Ratcliffe 2004). Other perspectives question the objectivity of 'culture', which they see as a historically specific social construct, and therefore see ethnicity as more situational, negotiable and political (Eriksen 2002, pp. 53f). These sociological approaches have been termed 'primordialism' and 'situationalism' or 'instrumentalism' (Young 1986, pp. 449f).

Primordialists present 'pluralist theory' as a concept to explain intercultural difficulties in post-colonial societies. In his analysis, J.S. Furnivall states that at the colonial encounter, pluralist societies were created in which

ethnic groups were integrated through economic symbiosis [...] and the political domination of [...] the colonial masters, but [they] were otherwise socially discrete, as well as being distinctive concerning language, religion and customs. There were no shared values in these societies [...] (Furnivall, cited in Eriksen 2002, p. 48).

M.G. Smith defines the plural society as "a unit of disparate parts which owes its existence to external factors, and lacks a common social will" (Smith, cited in *ibid.*). In this way, cultural differences and the colonial encounter could be seen as simple reasons for post-colonial conflicts.

This the part about cultural differences has also commonly been voiced by contemporary Kenyans, yet could be criticised as too simplistic and deterministic: "listing traits of objective culture" (Eriksen 2002, pp. 53f) can be dangerous because it justifies and naturalises cultural and even "racial" (Barth, cited in *ibid.* pp. 53f) divisions. Primordialists have therefore been accused of reifying essentialist notions of cultural groups, often by advocates of the 'situationalist' or 'instrumentalist' paradigm: Barth argues that "since ethnic membership must be acknowledged by the agents themselves in order to be socially effective [...] [t]he discontinuity between ethnic groups is chiefly a social discontinuity, not a cultural one" (*ibid.*). He and other scholars such as Cohen reason that, as culture is socially constructed and highly

fluid, ethnicity can be negotiated differently according to historical, regional and individual contexts (Eriksen 2002, pp. 53f). This can entail a mere situational adaptation to the social surroundings, for example, where people identify differently at home or in public (Ratcliffe 2004), or assume another proportion where ethnicity is used and instrumentalised politically. In the post-colonial context, this can create the phenomenon of 'political tribalism' (Lonsdale 1996) which "turns the state into a clientelistic system" because political power and access to resources and votes are organised along ethnic lines (Lentz 2008, p. 318).

It is surely not possible to choose one's own and assign ethnicities to others freely, as Eriksen (2002, pp. 53f) demonstrates when he states that "it would [...] have been [im]possible to persuade members of the Maasai ethnic category in Kenya that they were really Kikuyus". What is possible, however, is to use the widely held notion of objective ethnic groups and to justify political action and inequality, thus making use of the ambivalence of ethnicity: Lentz demonstrates that ethnicity has

immense power to command subjectivities and to generate very real sociopolitical effects. [...] [When] ethnic discourses argue in an essentialist manner and naturalize social relationships, [...] [their] power rests precisely on this inherent contradiction: ethnic identifications claim to be primordial and nonnegotiable, [...]; at the same time, the boundaries of the communities created and the associated traits and practices are malleable and can be adapted to specific interests and contexts (Lentz 2008, p. 314).

1.2.1 Ethnicity and hierarchy

This aspect of ethnicity becomes especially problematic when considering that the ethnic groups can be used to draw lines, to put others in their place, to deny their humanity in the extreme case and to define yourself as and make your group feel better than others, as Comaroff (1997, p. 72) contributes. Ethnicity then reflects the tensions and inequalities in the relations between groups. Roseberry (cited in Jackson and Maddox 1993, p. 264) agrees that ethnicity is no power-neutral category, in his definition of it as a "generation of meaning of contexts of unequal power." The hierarchical character of ethnicity may be the key to analysing the differences, power struggles, conflicts and discriminations that were named by the informants, which is one of the reasons why Comaroff's analysis is so convincing.

Another is that it goes beyond the primordialism/instrumentalism debate by describing ethnicity as something that is constructed while it also really exists because it (re)creates itself:

Ethnic consciousness enters a dialectical relationship with the structures that underlie it. Once ethnicity impinges upon experience as an (apparently) independent principle of social classification and organization, it provides a powerful motivation for collective activity. And this, by turn, must perforce realize an everyday world dominated by ethnic groups and relations, thereby reproducing the very social order that gave rise to it in the first place (Comaroff 1997, pp. 78f).

To explain this paradox, a helpful phrase is one often used in gender studies, where the persistence of gender roles and inequalities is explained by the fact that the world is simultaneously “gendered and gendering” (Manicom 1992, p. 465). With this in mind, Comaroff’s point could be transferred into saying that post-colonial societies are ‘ethnicised and ethnicising’ (rather than viewing ethnicity as either objective or constructed). Berman (1998, p. 312) agrees that ethnicity is not “conjured out of thin air”, because it is built on real life experience. The important question is, who has the power to impose their imaginings on others and how.

For ideologies of ethnic belonging and superiority to work, identities must be clearly distinct and easily recognisable. As Hochschild (2009, p. 641) shows for the context of ‘race’, “the structure of racial hierarchy will be different if all races are conceived as discrete and insular (i.e. one can be black or white, but not both) rather than if they are conceived as occurring along a continuum.” In the process of essentialising ethnicities as much as possible, even physical features can be called upon. This is problematic because it pushes external manipulations of identity to a point where, as ascribed characteristics matter most, the degree of agency for individual choice and negotiation becomes increasingly small.

1.2.2 Ethnicity and ‘race’

To evoke physical features as part of ethnic identity is an intriguing phenomenon, which could be noted in the informants’ argumentation. It is intriguing because it not only essentialises the notion of ethnicity and thus in a way hardens the prejudices people hold against each other, but also because it is, in fact, the sociological

criterion that distinguishes 'race': Alexander (1996, p. 13) identifies the most striking feature of the concept of 'race' which is, at the same time, the biggest difference to ethnicity, that 'race' is mainly externally ascribed and associated with inherent, biological, physical features that are overemphasised. This dynamic can sometimes also affect ethnicity, when "group membership [is] definable by characteristics that are seen as intrinsic to the member" (Comaroff 1997, p. 75). Eriksen (2002, p. 6) even goes so far as to not distinguish between 'race' and ethnicity because

the boundaries between race and ethnicity tend to be blurred, since ethnic groups have a common myth of origin, which relates ethnicity to descent, which again makes it a kindred concept to race. It could moreover be argued [...] that some ethnic groups are racialised, as when immutable traits are accorded to ethnic minorities. [...] Martin Barker's notion of new racism seems to explode the analytical usefulness of the distinction [between 'race' and ethnicity]. The new racism talks of cultural difference instead of inherited characteristics, but uses it for the same purposes.

This 'racialisation' of ethnicity in discourse is what Hannerz (cited in Alexander 1996 p. 13) calls "the burden of ethnicity" in which ethnicity is burdened with the inequalities, prejudices and discriminations that affect 'race'.

It would be a justified objection to say that these concepts about 'race' have been developed in a Western context and had a Black/white racism in mind, so that the argumentation attempts a projection of this 'racial' distinction onto a Black majority interethnic conflict situation. Surely not all aspects of Black/white racism and power systems are applicable here³. Yet the concept of new racism mentioned above or 'biological culturalism' (Stolcke, cited in Alexander 1996, p. 14), sets culture as the marker for discrimination, and thus makes phenomena like anti-Muslim racism comparable to ethnic discrimination, which could then be termed 'ethnicism', or

³ It would be difficult to argue, for example that there is truly a power system of domination of one ethnic group over the other on a structural level – in Kenya or Tanzania. Discrimination is widespread in Kenyan administration and politics, but there is no hegemonic discourse of superiority held by 'the privileged group'. Of course, whites are in a more dominant and privileged position than, say, Kikuyu, as well economically as in public discourse, so that the concept of racism would probably be more applicable to the relation between whites and Black Kenyans than to interethnic relations. Yet 'racial' features are part of the ideology around ethnic difference and 'tribalism' and must therefore be considered.

'tribalism'. As Eriksen (2002, p. 6) summarises, "ideas of 'race' may or may not form part of ethnic ideologies", and they seem to relevantly do so in Kenya, as demonstrated in chapter 4.

1.3 Debate between essentialisation and homogenisation

The argument that essentialist notions of ethnicity are in use in Eastern Africa, and that they negatively influence ethnic relations is substantially challenged by Joseph Miller's (2008, pp. 558f) statement:

Africans do not share the modern felt need to homogenize, to standardize, to normalize, thus condemning the unavoidable variations of every individual (the modern obsession) from these highly singular paradigms as deviations, if not deviant. Rather they compose their communities or collectivities to cultivate diversity among people included in them.

Yet neither do they, it seems, according to Miller, abolish the differences between them, which would be the opposite of essentialising them. If Miller's general statement about Africans applies in the Kenyan and Tanzanian contexts, it would mean, instead, that they should be able to accept and celebrate diversity without judgement. Could it be that Western concepts of conflict, discrimination and social stratification are hardly applicable after all, because 'classification' in Africa does not have this negative connotation of 'excluding the deviant', but of appreciating differences?

However against the background of the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, it seems clear that there are detrimental consequences of tribalist thinking and that a slightly stronger tendency to homogenise could have brought peace. The Tanzanian case can be seen as a prime example of ethnic equality and even homogeneity, as shall be argued later, so that the debate between two extremes, essentialisation and homogenisation of ethnic identities, will be fundamental to the comparison between post-independence Kenya and Tanzania and for finding a way to tackle ethnic tensions and divisions.

Chapter 2: The impact of colonialism

The debate between primordialism and instrumentalism is not only relevant when it comes to generally analysing already established ethnic identities, but is also useful for describing the transition from pre-colonial to colonial and post-colonial ethnic identities, a dynamic which has often been termed “the colonial invention of tradition” (Ranger 1997). At first glance, it might seem easy to argue that pre-colonial identities were more primordial and were then erased and recreated in an opportunist, instrumentalist negotiation between European and African interests. However, despite it being clear that the colonial situation had a crucial impact on African ethnicities, the case is not as simple. As we shall see, neither were pre-colonial identities unidimensional and stable, nor was the colonial influence always intentional or straightforward.

Africans were already involved in broader contexts before colonialism and there were networks and communication links between groups. The units of agency were in many cases a lot bigger and more complex than the small, isolated ‘tribes’ that colonial officers and anthropologists expected to find (Sharpe 1986), especially in East Africa where people had been using interregional trade systems for ivory and slaves and the Swahili language since the 19th century (Puritt 1974, p. 125). As Puritt (*ibid.*, p. 123) further points out, groups had well-established interactions in the form of “migration, warfare, intermarriage, adoption, fragmentation and incorporation”. Identities were not only complex and versatile at a collective level; they were also multidimensional and negotiable individually. Pre-colonial Africans often had several relevant identities between which they shifted and that were highly fluid (Iliffe 1979, p. 318). ‘Ethnic groups’ may have existed, although they were not consciously perceived as such, as ethnicity itself as a concept emerged only out of the encounter with Europeans. If at all, kinship affiliations were not the only frame of reference (Comaroff 1997).

According to Comaroff (1997, p. 74) ethnicity has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy. He argues that in pre-colonial times ethnic groups were more egalitarian than under the overriding hierarchies that emerged during the encounter with European societies. In

talking about “totemistic”, “egalitarian” (ibid.) societies, he seems to ignore state-like kingdoms and other complex pre-colonial African societies. However, this argument is valid for the East African context, where indeed such complex entities were absent. The only hint at pre-colonial hierarchies is given by Berman, who mentions that pre-colonial East African communities were already to some extent stratified between ‘big-men’ and their clientage (Berman 1998, p. 310).

From this conclusion that pre-colonial identifications in East Africa were multiple and relatively egalitarian and thus potentially very little essentialised, one could deduce that ethnic conflicts might then only have existed at a level of material resources and were not ideologically concerned with the “ethnic other”. Despite it being too early to judge the validity of such an argument and although this quote cannot prove what happened in the past, it illustrates the hypothesis and the present-day perceptions quite well:

Njenga: [In pre-colonial times] communities were [...] fighting anyway. The Kamba [were] bordering the Maasai, and they kept on stealing animals from each other. These were conflicts, but they were small-scale. [...] It wasn't about life, children, women and so on, it was about animals.

(interview no. 6. Christopher Njenga, 12:14-12:52)

It becomes clear that the colonial encounter had an impact that entailed a whole new dimension of global interaction, hierarchisation and conflict. This is due to the fact that the colonial situation included a political use and negotiation of ethnicity to a greater extent than had been possible and necessary before. Lonsdale (1996) describes this as the transition from moral economy to moral ethnicity and political tribalism. According to him, in pre-colonial societies economy was defined by communication and negotiation about how to produce and distribute food, which had a community-building and thus moral function. During colonial times, many of the values that characterised this moral economy were called into question, namely household labour and pre-colonial patronage systems. This made necessary a renegotiation of social relationships and identity markers, which often had an ethnicising effect on communities. That is, 'traditional' rules and relations were replaced by ethnicity-related ones. "It was to capture this notion that modern ethnicity

was discovered when people renegotiated moral economy in the face of modernity, that I coined the term 'moral ethnicity'" (Lonsdale 1996, pp. 96–98). This dynamic was particularly prevalent in British colonies because of their Indirect Rule policy, so that it is important to differentiate between the different phases and colonial rulers that dominated what are today Kenya and Tanzania.

Tanzania was first colonised as German East Africa (1885 – 1919). It was then taken over by the British who ranged the new colony Tanganyika in with their other colonies, amongst them Kenya, which the British created in 1895. The biggest difference between the two European powers is that the British governed their colonies under the system of Indirect Rule, whereas the Germans preferred other methods. Rather than employing local headmen as intermediary rulers, they used so-called akidas, often Swahili-speaking Muslims that were not paid and did not have much power compared to local leaders in the Indirect Rule system. The akidas had no agenda of fostering local 'tribal' interests, which kept ethnic favouritism comparatively low (Tripp 1999, p. 38). It could be argued that the German way of colonising Tanganyika was rather colour-blind as far as 'tribes' were concerned, as their administration also made use of and encouraged the colony-wide use of Swahili (Campbell 1999, p. 107) rather than local languages.

After they took over the main part of the colony from the Germans in 1919, the British, in contrast, had the declared goal to "preserve" African culture, and to "reconstruct" the 'tribes' that the Germans had destroyed (Iliffe 1979). The way they "interpreted local political configurations tended to reify certain social structures in a way that privileged ethnicity over other identities" (Tripp 1999, p. 38). This ideology tended to foster the essentialisation of ethnic groupings and a concomitant competition, as will be further elaborated on in chapter 4.

That the Germans colonised Tanganyika first meant that tribalist competition there started only under British rule and was thus somewhat delayed compared to Kenya. It is debatable whether the disparity in political ideology during the German phase in Tanzania's colonial past was severe enough to explain differences in post-colonial development. The German arbitrariness and ignorance of 'tribes', universally applied,

could have been less destructive to pre-colonial ethnic identities than the superimposition of a Eurocentric ideology in which some of the new, contorted 'tribes' were privileged. One could even go so far as to say that the British invention of 'tribes' was more deeply and structurally entrenched in Kenya simply because they colonised the territory as pioneers and 24 years earlier than Tanganyika. However, at the point of discussing the post-colonial developments (chapter 4), more crucial factors influencing ethnic identities and conflict will be taken into account. One of the main reasons for unison in Tanganyika seems to have been the nationwide use of Swahili, which was indeed initiated by the Germans, but later also intensified, standardised and institutionalised by the British (Campbell 1999, p. 107). So as to better understand how exactly British rule affected pre-colonial East African identities, we shall now analyse the British politics of control.

There were two major factors contributing to differentiation along ethnic lines in the British East African colonies: the creation of a 'tribe'-based administration system, which entailed the agentive and intended creation of ethnic categories, and a more structural, collaterally produced, uneven regional development. The actors responsible for the first factor, the colonial politics of control, were governors and colonial officers who, together with missionaries and anthropologists, attempted to make sense of the societies they encountered for the creation of administrative and legal structures (Berman 1998, p. 322). Officials were told to follow the 'tribal unit' in order to simplify colonial administration (Iliffe 1979, pp. 319–324). This entailed a perception of 'tribes' as static, clear and delimitable units that were defined by language, social system, customary law, kinship and origin stories and places (Iliffe 1979). This highlights the fact that the European perspective on African cultures was effectively a lot more primordialist than the pre-colonial reality.

It is easy to imagine that the ideas European officials had about African 'tribes' did not always coincide with reality and that such an effort could instead reify artificial, essentialist demarcations of supposedly 'traditional' groupings: Apter shows that what administrators accepted as 'customary law' were often inventions created through deficient ethnographic descriptions, based on the claims of elders that were actually inventing a 'traditional' rule to their favour because they knew the Europeans

had no means to judge its validity (Apter 1999, p. 582). This example illustrates the fact that the 'invention of tradition' was a dialectical process in which Africans seized the opportunity to make a profit out of the situation. A case in which it was the British who used their power for their own advantage is described by Jackson and Maddox: the British District Administrations manipulated the election of the Wagogo headmen so that they suited British interests and often did not choose the 'traditional' leaders but their "less drunken relatives" (1993, p. 280).

However crucial these intentional manipulations of ethnic groupings by the colonial powers were, they were not the only forces that shaped African identities. Rather, they were part of a dynamic in which larger political, and importantly, economic changes happened at a structural level. This second aspect affected and stratified society without agentive intent, but all the more crucially and pervasively:

Some people were nearer coasts and markets than others or had more rainfall; some chiefs had welcomed rather than barred missionaries; or their young men had gone out first to work on the railway. Such random disparities were converted into self-reinforcing hierarchies of advantage and decline by colonial markets in labour and produce. Political tribalism was the common result (Berman and Lonsdale 1997, p. 277).

It becomes clear here that the involvement of Africans in a capitalist world economy and infrastructure played its part in fostering tribalism, possibly even more so than the actual 'invention' of ethnicity. The increasing and increasingly unequal distribution of infrastructure and resources such as communication, wage employment and missionaries made it possible for some groups to become elites (Young 1986, pp. 445f). In Kenya and Tanganyika, this meant that the groups that lived on the fertile lands around Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro, the Kikuyu and Chagga respectively, were most involved in capitalist exchange relations, and thus profited most from new infrastructures and opportunities (Puritt 1974, pp. 126f). The missionaries played an important part in this stratification of groups because they tended to hold a monopoly on education during the colonial period (Campbell 1999, p. 115). Muslims and ethnic groups that counted a high proportion of Muslims were thus disadvantaged. Tripp (1999, p. 47) shows that "because mission schools were not found throughout the country, the majority of educated Africans [Tanzanians]

were Christians of the Haya, Nyakyusa and Chagga peoples.” Young (1986, pp. 445f) argues that this uneven development across regions and ethnic groups and the concomitant hierarchisation of society was the “rooting of ethnic conflict”. This potential for bitterness and aggression becomes especially obvious in the case of displacement from land. Some Kalenjin politicians, as Lynch (2008, p. 559) demonstrates, adopt a

narrative of colonial displacement from, and alienation of ‘ancestral lands’ in the Rift Valley. Among the Kalenjin this sense of ‘historic injustice’ is pervasive, and is strengthened by a belief that it was the Kikuyu who benefited disproportionately from settlement schemes initiated in the area in the 1960s and 1970s.

Even if it is only used as a discourse, the colonial past is thus in many cases a direct starting point for contemporary discord, especially in a situation where many different groups were constructed as different, yet obliged to live together under one administration.

Involvement in global, capitalist relations also gave Africans access to concepts that grasp the bigger picture and encourage a common struggle, such as human rights (Lynch 2006). Christianity gave Africans a pan-ethnic identification and “African culture” (Comaroff 1997 p. 77), which made movements like Pan-Africanism possible. However, this seems minor compared to the essentialisation of ‘tribal’ categories which has evidently spawned ethnic competition and conflict.

From what we can say now, this colonial construction of ethnicity seems to have had a particularly deep impact in Kenya. An often cited stereotype is that Luo are more studious and intellectual, while Kikuyu are more business-oriented. Obviously, these are identifications and ascriptions that would have had no referent in a pre-colonial world without schools and capitalism. In popular discourses recorded from people in Nairobi and the Western region, these ethnic categorisations are seen to be perfectly natural and quite line with the primordialist ideology espoused by colonial officials. In sum, the colonial experience has apparently not only produced ethnic boundaries, but also superimposed the knowledge about the pre-colonial fluidity in retrospect, a phenomenon that will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The contemporary Kenyan perception of ethnicity as natural

As follows from the conclusion of the last chapter, the colonial situation provoked a 'primordialist' ideology of ethnic groups that have always existed and been clearly defined by the same 'traditional', cultural characteristics. As we shall see in chapter 4, post-colonial politics progressed in quite opposing ways in Kenya and Tanzania. While there has been an ideological remodelling of the understanding of ethnicity in Tanzania, the colonial, 'primordial' understanding still has a lot of relevance for how Kenyans argue today.

3.1 "What makes you Kikuyu, Kamba or Luo?"

To the question what made them belong to their ethnic group, most informants reacted with incomprehension, because for them, ethnic identity is unquestionably defined by ancestry. This was the most important factor named by a majority of the informants, and in importance superseded language and other cultural factors, even if the person had not been raised by their biological parents, as this quote illustrates:

Althoff: Which ethnic group do you feel you belong to?

Acheng: I'm a Luo, because my fathers are Luos. But the parents... - let me say 'parents' - who have raised me, are mainly Kikuyu.

Alt.: So [...] for you [ethnicity] [...] comes from your biological parents? So you wouldn't identify as a Kikuyu just because the people who have raised you are Kikuyus?

Ach.: No.

(interview no. 2. Marian Acheng, 5:24-6:08)

Ms Acheng grew up in an orphanage, with Kikuyu 'parents' and 'siblings' from many different ethnic groups, yet she is aware of her biological parents' ethnicity and identifies with it. Mr Kariuki names more relevant "traits of objective culture" (Eriksen 2002), in a formulation that, in its taken-for-granted-ness, could almost serve as a 'primordialist' definition of ethnicity:

K: You are born in a certain region, you speak a certain language, you abide or you believe in certain cultural practices and beliefs, you have shared values [...], so you identify yourself as an ethnic group.

(interview no. 4. Ronald Kariuki, 5:05-5:44)

Other informants specify what these cultural practices and beliefs are:

Otieno: You'll find that a Kikuyu will prefer meat [...] and potatoes, a Luo will prefer fish and ugali. So even from the hotel [=restaurant], you can tell whether this [=someone] is a Luo.

(interview no. 1. Steve Otieno, 17:42-18:01)

Onyango: [...] The way of living, for example if you look at this home, if you look at the structure, how we build, that identifies a Luo. [...] If you look at the other side, my elder brother builds there, and I build this way. [...] And if you look at our place [...] my dad's small house, and there's this small place where [...] my children and everyone would be eating. [...]

We have a different marriage system, closely related to the Luya, because we've interacted so often in business, and in some places we only have a road separating us, so it's really related to their way of life. Through intermarriage I think our system is almost [=very] close. So [this is what defines us, and] the way of construction, the kind of food we eat.

(interview no. 5. Adam Onyango, 11:48-13:54)

Oduya: [...] In terms of stereotypes, it is said, Luos will be more honest people than Kikuyus [...], so there will be jokes like, if you want to know a Kikuyu's dead, drop a coin.

(interview no. 7. Fidel Oduya, 49:55-50:55)

What becomes clear in these quotations is that ethnic criteria relate also, but not only, to perceived cultural values and the organisation of relations within the group. Rather, when explaining their belonging to one group, Mr Onyango and Mr Oduya also make clear statements about what this means for close or problematic relationships to other groups: the animosity between Luo and Kikuyu can be explained by cultural difference in the marriage systems compared to a relative similarity to the Luya, who are seen as allies; and stereotypes exist that jokingly, yet persistently carve in stone even character-related differences. In this way, identification serves to create a feeling of belonging within one's own ethnic group, and also to 'other' and degrade the other groups. This categorisation of society has become so natural it is rarely related to colonialism.

3.2 "What has colonialism got to do with it?"

The colonial period is often perceived as being too far away from informants' realities of life to be relevant. When directly questioned about it, informants frequently reacted with misapprehension or denial. An extreme example is a Kikuyu elder who even

witnessed colonialism and the unified struggle for independence. Yet ethnic conflicts for him are a recent phenomenon:

Althoff: They were all fighting together for independence?

Translator: Yeah, they were fighting together, and they were together.

Mwangi: Lakini siku hizi vijana iwamlete hii shida.

Translator: He's saying it is the young people who have brought this problem. Not the old ones.

A: So... it didn't start at independence, but even a lot later? [...]

Translator: He's saying that, right now, the young generation are the ones who brought this problem, and people want just their own. They don't want to fight together.

(interview no. 8. John Mwangi, 13:29-14:29)

For this man, against the background of his experience, the unifying effect of the struggle against colonialism influenced ethnic relations positively. Others, who did not experience the colonial period at first hand, have a different perspective: in all the interviews conducted with younger people, there was a striking lack of interest in the colonial period and its effects. This is sometimes shown best in what informants did not say or think of.

Althoff: Do you think that the groups that we have today have always existed, and also, even if they have existed, do you think it was the same to be a Luo a hundred years ago? [...]

Onyango: [...] If you take the system of how the Luo were moving... So they left Southern Sudan. [...] And somewhere, maybe there was a disagreement, or some guys decided 'we want to settle here', and these guys were called then the Turkana. [...]

A: But that's long ago, isn't it? I mean when they were already Luo, did they then change again?

O: [...] I mean I was just trying to tell you how it might have been.

A: Oh, you mean, even after the Luo formed, there might have been changes in that [=their identity] because of the same dynamic, or...?

O: No, I'm just saying, from the aspect of the Nilotes.

A: Yeah, no, that's great, but I'm interested in more recent times. I mean, not so [=as] recent as post-colonial [times]. Kind of before [and] during colonial [times] and afterwards, because I'm also interested in how maybe the colonial times influenced the groups. [...] Have you heard anything about how they identified before, and how maybe now it's different?

O: Not really, I don't know.

(interview no. 5. Adam Onyango, 54:14-58:58)

This misunderstanding between us about which periods could be relevant for this study shows that Mr Onyango does not see the colonial period as a time of transition for ethnic identities at all. He is well aware of the Luo's story of origin, which is taught in schools, but also pictures a pre-colonial situation where a lot of negotiation was possible. The colonial period and the invention of ethnicities seem to be a blind spot.

It has to be said that this cognitive readjustment seems reasonable against the background that identities need to be convincingly objective in order to become reliable referents of belonging. It would make no sense to identify as Luo if one acknowledged that there is a high probability that what one perceives as one's innermost identity was invented by foreigners. This, together with the abstract, academic concepts and terminology used in the conversations, probably conceal the fact that the informants are indeed aware of some of these dynamics, but would not have phrased them in such a way that would have seemed an adequate answer to the question.

Indeed, far from being ignorant of the colonial impact, a young man may be well aware of it and weigh up different popular narratives:

X: [...] According to history which we were taught in school, we learnt that these boundaries that separate people were created by colonial governance. [...] I don't know what was the intention.

Althoff: Does that mean that you think that before the British came, there was actually no Kikuyu and no Luo and Luya in Kenya? [...]

X: They existed, but according to history, there is a teaching, that we, again, were taught in school, that we Luos came from [...] the original home of Luos [...] in Sudan. [...]

A: So what did the British do to make them... you said they invented the groups...? [...]

X: No, no, no. No, according to the teachings... - which I don't believe in, I don't believe to [= share] that kind of perception that the British [created the tribes], [...] [that is] according to politicians, but according to me, Luos existed, Kikuyus existed. It's not the mistake of the British to do whatever they did. [...] You can't take the blame on the British government. Because the British took his [= their] part to develop this country. They didn't favour anybody, they didn't come to favour the Kikuyus or the Luos; they had good intentions, to enlighten our society.

(interview no. 3. group of young people from
Kariobangi North settlement, 11:00-16:52)

Individuals like this man are by no means easily and naively convinced by the 'primordialist myth of origin' they are taught at school, but go through a whole process of reflection and selective negotiation. While there is a general tendency for the interviewed Kenyans to see ethnicity as natural, some indeed unmask different discourses and then strengthen their sense of identity by selecting what is most convincing. This could be because it fits with how they see the world in general, i. e. the notion that politicians are even less trustworthy than the British, or again, because a stable identity is more attractive to belong to. So this man is aware that teachers, politicians and colonial officers all tell different tales that influence identities, and chooses the story that he feels is his.

Other people may similarly assume taken-for-granted ethnic identities, but hold the British responsible for the creation of ethnic conflict. A young Luo (Z) explained to me his view of the British policies at independence. According to him, the land that ought to have been given back to Kenyans was actually sold back in a deal between the Kikuyu and the British. The latter gave Kenyans a loan so that they could afford to buy the land back from them, but this loan was actually almost only accessible for Kikuyu. This is why in his view Kikuyu are now richer than Luo:

Z: Some people see that Kikuyus are very rich. And [they say] a Luya and a Luo who is not rich is lazy. And we say that's rubbish. [...] Luos and Luyas are very hard working... [...]

Y: Kikuyu are thieves, Kikuyu are thieves. Kikuyu are thieves, my dear.

Z: So just to also mention how the colonialists actually also really messed up.

(interview no. 3. group of young people from
Kariobangi North settlement, 35:4-36:11)

In his view, the discrepancy in wealth that was shaped by the unfair policy of selling the land back only to certain people has created stereotypes about Luo, such as laziness, which is now degrading and harmful to them. This is one of the few situations where an informant did not hold the inborn character traits of Luo or Kikuyu responsible for present success or failure, naming instead colonial and post-colonial politics as a reason. However his friend (Y) is more blunt, bitter and reproachful when he claims that "Kikuyu are thieves". For him, one stereotype is true, that Kikuyu are inherently greedy and clearly exploited their connections with the British government.

In these accounts of Kenyans from various backgrounds we find different explanations and assessments of whether ethnic identities and conflict existed before or were caused by colonialism. While Mwangi, the Kikuyu elder, does not see the root of all evil in colonialism, but in the young generation, these young people, in turn, deny their own culpability and that of colonialism altogether and instead name different political motives and narratives that they selectively use for identification. Although all informants define the groups and their characteristics in a similarly essentialist way, there are different levels of understanding of how much the British influenced ethnic boundaries and conflicts. None of them seem to be aware of the structural effects of colonialism, nor of the transition from fluid to more rigid ethnic boundaries. But they are aware of the current separation and conflict, and of the British intentions in dividing them, even if they only rarely see the link to colonialism.

The crux of such deeply entrenched, internalised lines of division is that, even though individuals realise and criticise the injustices they create, the idea of challenging the concept as a whole and deconstructing the divisive identity altogether does not come to mind. This is one of the reasons why most Kenyans would argue that the stereotypes about them and others are true, even though they feel the pain of the discrimination that this supports. As we shall see in more detail in chapter 5, to 'abolish' or deconstruct ethnicity externally is not an easy option, as people would rather enhance the power of their group within the hierarchy than forget about ethnicity, because it is often the most important factor for identification. Thus essentialisation of ethnicities can empower and enchain at the same time.

Being realistic about their situation, it becomes obvious why these people are not so concerned about colonialism. Most of them were born about thirty years after independence, and it is a period that few of them can relate to or feel the direct consequences of. What most of them are indeed made to experience in their daily lives is a profound separation and discrimination on ethnic grounds. Political tribalism, rather than colonial administrative politics, is prominent nowadays. This is certainly a colonial legacy, however little it is perceived as such, and the next chapter will explore how the residues of colonialism favoured an ethnicised, tribalist political ideology in Kenya while ethnicity was almost abolished in Tanzania.

Chapter 4: Post-colonial developments

As seen in chapter 2, the main difference between the Kenyan and Tanzanian colonial periods is that Tanzania was first colonised by Germans, and that Swahili was promoted as a national language there, which Kenya lacked. Yet it is highly unlikely that the German politics should be the only reason why Tanzania experiences less ethnic separation and conflict today. So if it were only for the colonial impact, Kenya and Tanzania should have the same degree of ethnic separation. We shall therefore now turn to searching for answers in the post-colonial politics. But beforehand, it may be useful to try to find out if there could be any natural, pre-colonial conditions that impede unison in the special Kenyan case as a pluralist society.

4.1 Kenya

As elaborated in chapter 1, advocates of the primordialist 'pluralist theory' point to inherent, pre-colonial cultural differences that are bigger in some societies than in others in order to explain fragmentation and conflict. Eriksen (2002, p. 15) describes Kenya as a typical pluralist society and reasons that "ethnicity [there] tends to be articulated as group competition" because "the groups that make up the plural society [...] are regarded as (and regard themselves) as highly distinctive". Parkin (2008, p. 331) assumes this distinction and argues that the difference in social organisation between Luo in patrilineages and Kikuyu in age sets leads to Kikuyu having a higher degree of individualistic thinking and entrepreneurship, which may cause economic inequalities. It is debatable whether these cultural differences are really so natural and objective, yet the mere perception that the groups are different, as Erikson highlights, can be enough to impede unison. A Luo may thus easily be convinced that it is impossible for Luo and Kikuyu to live together:

O: These [Luo and Kikuyu] are two different nations. During colonisation, the Luos [were] a community so different, so far away from Central [=the central province]. We only meet in Nairobi. [...] [Before] colonialism [...] the Luya had their own kings, they were all different nations, the Luos had their own structures of government [...], the Kikuyus also [...]. But then, during colonisation, Africans were forced now to come under one administration. [...] But there was never recognition that these were different nations that needed to understand how they could relate as one community.

(interview no. 9. Peter Othiambo, 39:41-41:12)

This shows that primordialist arguments are valid to some extent; again, even if they are only a narrative for the justification of today's segregation. But more importantly, the political challenge of bringing societies together under one post-colonial nation was always going to be difficult, even in Tanzania, because it was a complete reversal of direction compared to the colonial objectives: the colonisers often needed to classify and segregate groups to make them governable, whereas a nationwide feeling of belonging and unity was crucial for the success of the post-colonial project (Ghai 1974, p. 107). Why this challenge was more successfully mastered in Tanzania can only be explained by post-colonial events.

4.1.1 The fight for independence and Kenyatta's formation of a 'Kikuyu-centric' state

Focusing on post-colonial events does not mean, however, that the detrimental divisive dynamics that Kenya faced were entirely isolated from colonial events. Rather, the way the British dealt with anti-colonialist forces and acted at independence laid the very foundation for the social divisions and turmoil that shook the new Kenyan nation. A striking difference in the transition from European to African leadership is that Kenya had to go through a revolt against the colonisers and its violent suppression, when Nyerere and his fellow nationalists took over Tanzania a lot more smoothly and peacefully, merely through political negotiation (Iliffe 1979, pp. 552-566).

At the heart of Kenya's modern history broods the enigma of Mau Mau. The rising and its suppression were the forcing house of the country's freedom from British rule and white settler power, yet its memory disturbs more Kenyans than it inspires; it divides them" (Berman and Lonsdale 1997, p. 265).

The Mau Mau revolt and its suppression in a 'state of emergency' from 1952 onwards led to a Kenyan war of independence that lasted until 1960 and entailed forced resettlement, detention in concentration camps, tortures and mass executions of Kenyan 'rebels'. The British justification strategy for such a violent and radical counterinsurgency was to portray the freedom-fighting Kikuyu as terrorists "who indulged in cannibalism, witchcraft, devil worship and sexual orgies and who terrorised white settlers and mutilated women and children" (Curtis 2007). This narrative ethnicised the fight for independence to the extent that Kikuyu were

depicted as the only revolters⁴, and as inherently more aggressive and deadly than other groups. According to Lonsdale “Mau Mau can seem to be the most divisive element in Kenya's past, the ugly underside of its pivotal role” because “it is the Kikuyuness of the rising that is remembered, and the street image of tribe that makes the memory a nightmare to a multicultural state” (Berman and Lonsdale 1997, pp. 266f). Lonsdale describes how the initially unified pan-ethnic anti-colonial identification was destroyed:

The conflict between settler and squatter, capital and labour, class and tribe, was the most bitterly complex border dispute in all the unfinished business in Kenya. Mau Mau blew indecision apart. It outraged tribal elders and household authorities at the base of control. Its Kikuyu militance also fractured and then seemed to dominate the pan-ethnic urban elite, the only possible basis of African cooptation” (Lonsdale 1990, p. 246).

Against the background of this trauma, it was an easy task for the British in the phase before the first Kenyan elections to ethnicise politics and sow mistrust among the different ethnic groups in order to manipulate the outcome of the last developments under their rule. Against the “Luo-Kikuyu alliance” (Gachanga 2012, p. 1) party KANU (Kenya African National Union), founded by Tom Mboya and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (both Luo) and successfully led by Jomo Kenyatta (a Kikuyu), the British gave “covert funding” to KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union), a competing union of more “moderate” politicians of other ethnic groups (Curtis 2007). But not only did the British try to set smaller ethnic groups against Luo and Kikuyu when it suited their political interests, they were also interested in tearing the Luo-Kikuyu alliance apart as soon as they realised that KANU would win the 1963 elections (Curtis 2007). This alliance indeed proved to be short-lived, when after a few years of ruling together, the ideological differences between the socialist oriented Odinga (then vice president) and the capitalist Kenyatta (president) led to their fall-out and founding of Odinga’s own party (KPU) (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) 2013b, p. 18). That this alliance was broken and that “their ideological differences took an

⁴ It is true that the Mau Mau membership was „recruited almost entirely from [...] Kikuyu-speakers” (Berman and Lonsdale 1997, p. 267), yet there was never an ethnic agenda such as making it an exclusively Kikuyu movement, and many men from other groups fought alongside the Kikuyu (Ogot 2003).

ethnic turn and became a struggle for domination between the Kikuyu and the Luo” (Gachanga 2012, p. 3) was certainly not foreseen or intentionally provoked by the British. But the situation of the cold war and the fact that different global powers were pulling on African leaders, trying to win them for their economic system, put Kenyatta and Odinga under pressure and polarised their differences, ultimately along ethnic lines: Kikuyu and Luo fell out over whether to collaborate with the British capitalists or not (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) 2013b, p. 18)⁵.

These different political dynamics were surely a dialectical process between European and Kenyan interests, so it cannot be argued that the last actions of the colonialists alone created the violent fragmentation between Kikuyu and Luo. Yet, once again, popular perception of history and a narrative about the fall-out between Kenyatta and Odinga is crucial in justifying and stoking today’s ethnic discord. The independence period is remembered as an opportunist race in which Odinga was first offered presidency by the British, but waited for Kenyatta to be released from prison so they could rule together, and was then ‘betrayed’ when the alliance fell apart. This ‘betrayal myth’ has been invoked and echoed in countless interview sequences and seems crucial to the Luo’s identification as victims of the Kenyatta government and of subsequent non-Luo governments more generally⁶. Again, the colonial period itself can seem to have lost its relevance. So this betrayal does not have to be linked to mistakes and manipulations committed by the British to instill a very radical conviction that revenge is still needed:

X: Most of why these problems do arise is that greediness which Kenyatta applied during those days. It is the greediness that Kikuyus had during this time. They are very greedy people.

Y: [...] Kikuyu are not a good people. In this country, we are planning a war. [...] Egypt style. [...] Because now we are suffering because of [the] Kikuyu.

(interview no. 3. group of young people from Kariobangi North settlement, 45:15-45:51)

⁵ For a personal Kenyan perspective, see Mr Oduya’s and Mr Othiambo’s assessments of cold war politics in the appendix (interview no. 7, part 35:20-45:27 and interview no. 9, part 41:54-43:36).

⁶ For an example of the ‘betrayal myth’ and also the subsequent frustration that even after Kenyatta died, no Luo was chosen as a successor, see Ms Acheng’s account of the historic events in the appendix (interview no. 2, part 39:00 – 42:04).

This quote shows an important aspect of where an anti-Kikuyu identification can stem from: the notion that all Kikuyu, like Kenyatta, are inherently evil and greedy. In such overarching bitterness, there is no place for a more differentiated view and for acknowledging that many Kikuyu did not profit from Kenyatta's rule. Lonsdale agrees that Kenyatta did not do all he could in order to not be seen as a tribalist:

[Kenyatta] seemed to use his power not to span the gap between tribe and future nation, but to make it unbridgeable. [...] He was and, it appeared, had chosen to be the leader of the Kikuyu rather than of black Kenyans as a whole. [...] There could be no greater abuse of personal power, nor deeper betrayal of modernizing nationalism (Berman and Lonsdale 1997, p. 281).

While his reckless Kikuyu partisanship surely needs to be denounced as destructive, it would be wrong to only hold Kenyatta to account, for individuals never act in a vacuum, but within the cultural and historical dynamics that surround them. Similarly, Odinga's KPU is to blame for searching support "almost exclusively from people of Luo ethnicity [...] [and] therefore enhanc[ing], rather than reduc[ing], the balkanization of the country along ethnic lines" (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) 2013a, p. 21). It can be argued that, given the circumstances, they had no chance but to take 'the tribal unit'. If we remember Lonsdale's concept of moral ethnicity (cf. chapter 2), it seems convincing that the colonial government technique of political tribalism by independence had become so entrenched in people's minds that it was almost impossible for them to identify nationally and for Kenyatta (or Odinga) to address and represent all Kenyans. The Kikuyu were thus withheld by the British governance from "generat[ing] an ethnic nationalism out of their moral ethnicity" (Lonsdale 1996, p. 103).

4.1.2 Essentialisation up to 'race-like' ethnicities

The ethnicisation of politics was continued throughout Kenyatta's rule and reaffirmed at the beginning of the Moi regime, which turned Kenya into a "Kalenjin-centric state" (Campbell 1999, p. 120)⁷. It became a self-evident rule that the president's ethnic

⁷ The label Kalenjin itself was and 'invention of tradition' as it represents an artificial unification of the Kipsigis, Tugen, Keiyo, Marakwet, Sabaot, Pokot and Terik (Lynch 2008, p. 542). Daniel arap Moi,

group would be favoured economically. This essentialist understanding of separate ethnic groups was never hidden behind or tainted by any hypocritical attempts to unite the country; rather, this openly acknowledged discrimination led to its official legitimisation. The consequence is a striking implicitness and an increasing internalisation of essentialist notions of ‘tribe’ as a fundamental part of contemporary Kenyans’ identities. As we have seen in the quote about ‘inherent Kikuyu greediness’, this more often than not entails racialised notions of ethnicity (that is, ones based on inherent, biological, physical features, cf. chapter 1) which can take quite extreme shape and be the immediate justification for violence. More commonly, though, these ‘race’-like features are accepted and presented as a natural, harmless way to identify others:

Onyango: Sometimes I can say this guy is a Luya, just from looking. From the face. And I can say, this guy is a Turkana, and [...] this guy is a Kalenjin. [...] Like the Sudanese, they are a bit tall and a bit skinny, so if you see Sudanese, you would [be able to] say, these are Sudanese. [...] If you have a Luo and a Kikuyu, it's so easy to say who is a Luo because the Luo could be darker and the Kikuyus would be lighter.

Althoff: Is that something that usually works? If you see people on the street, can you tell who everyone is just by how dark they are?

O: For me, yes.

(interview no. 5. Adam Onyango, 17:25-18:46)

Althoff: So if you meet someone and you try to tell their ethnic group, how do you do that?

Acheng: Their skin colour. [...] Also, you can know by their physical look, the shape, the figure, the hair. Kikuyus, Kambas and Merus, their hairs are silky. But for Luos, their hairs are kinky.

(interview no. 2. Marian Acheng, 15:55-16:58)

That this classification of Kenyans according to shades of skin colour and hair structure, which has clear parallels to racial stereotyping, is not seen as a problem or as the origin of discrimination and ethnic conflict, is shown by the fact that Mr Onyango, at another point of his interview, clearly positions himself against tribal thinking and states that he feels more Kenyan than Luo. Yet contrary to as how harmless these categorisations are perceived, racialised ethnicities are not just

himself identifying as ‘Kalenjin’, promoted the use of this catch-all term to increase his “political base” (Munene 2010, p. 44).

cliché-like perceptions of the ethnic 'other' that serve to organise one's world and to know who one is meeting on the street. As soon as 'racial' ascriptions are linked to supposedly inborn characteristics and attributed significance in social life, they cause prejudice and sweeping hostility against members of the denigrated group (Parkin 2008, p. 332). The following accounts of 'typical' character traits become dangerous and restrictive for self-identification if one keeps in mind that they are not self-attributed cultural values, but are ascribed to individuals with the aid of 'racial' markers:

Acheng: There's a stereotype that Kikuyus are mean [...] [and] economical. [...] That's just a saying. Because sometimes, if you're mean, someone asks you 'eh, are you a Kikuyu?'

(interview no. 2. Marian Acheng, 14:16-15:19)

Otieno: The Kikuyus are a bit simpler, [but] they are very enterprising. [...] Luos [...] are not very enterprising because they feel 'okay, it [=working hard to build up a business] is a process, and it is tedious'. [...] Most Luos like white collar and these high-fly professions like doctors, lawyers.

(interview no. 1. Steve Otieno, 5:45-7:11 and 18:01-18:09)

Assuming that it is possible to recognise a Kikuyu on the street and to then deduce that this person will not be very generous, it becomes obvious why such a stereotype causes immediate separation and suspicion. These preconceptions can go so far as to induce the widely held notion that Luo are not as credit-worthy because they are less business-oriented, which becomes detrimental in combination with the fact that it is (seemingly) possible to recognise a Luo at the bank by his or her accent or skin colour. The fact that even Mr Otieno, a Luo, accepts these negative stereotypes about his group, somewhat resembles the internalised racism described by Pinho in her analysis of Black Brazilian movements. The Frente Negra Brasileira (FNB) was a Black organisation that fought white suppression in Brazil in the 1930s, but also advocated for overcoming their members' own inherent difficulties:

And we shall win. Prevail over ourselves: prevail over the passions that dominate us; the bad traits, alcohol, the raging samba, the unwarranted discrediting, ... the disrespect that confirms the infamous saying by [José do] Patrocínio - the enemy of blacks are blacks themselves (FNB periodical, quoted in Pinho 2010, p. 74).

In the face of this self-dismissal, the comparison to stereotypes about Luo and Kikuyu is surely slightly exaggerated. Again, such an example from a Black/white context may not be projectable one-on-one. Yet the way Otieno talks about Luo being inherently lethargic as far as business is concerned, while having other strengths, such as aspiring towards more academic professions, compares to how the FNB tried to empower their members at the same time as accepting and reifying the stereotypes about them.

In any case, this discussion shows that essentialised notions of ethnic categories are widely held in Kenya. This mentality has its origins in the colonial introduction of tribalist thinking, which was kept up by the post-colonial governments without concerns or ambition to minimise the divisive effects and aggression potential it entails. Thus stereotypes e. g. about more academic or more entrepreneurial aptitudes are reproduced, yet not linked to colonial mechanisms, such as the introduction of formal education or capitalist trade relations, without which these stereotypes would appear contextless. What makes negative stereotypes particularly dangerous is the essentialist, 'race'-like character ethnicity tends to hold in Kenya, as a consequence of which identification is severely limited by external ascription of alleged character traits by reference to physical features. This restriction of self-identification can lead to an internalisation of the negative ascriptions. As a matter of fact, the politically induced essentialisation of ethnic categories can have other and more far-reaching effects than the internalisation of stereotypes. These will, however, be further examined after (and thus compared to) the following, contrasting analysis of the Tanzanian case, where different dynamics were and are at work.

4.2 Tanzania

As mentioned in chapter 2, Kenya and Tanzania had a similar colonial experience in which tribalism was imposed through politics and where, in both colonies, the groups living around the most fertile areas were favoured economically. From this it can be deduced that the present differences in ethnic identification must lie in post-colonial developments, as argued at the beginning of the chapter. Yet when analysing the Tanzanian case, it becomes clear that the unifying effect of Swahili as a national language, that was already implemented during colonial rule, should not be

underestimated. Furthermore, differentiation is needed as to the favoured groups: in Kenya, the Kikuyu were at the same time the most economically active, the largest and the most centrally and strategically located ethnic group. On the contrary, in Tanzania, one could argue that no dominant ethnic group emerged because the demographically largest group, the Sukuma-Nyamwezi, were not located centrally or on fertile lands, and the most economically favoured Chagga were too small to take a similar position as did the Kikuyu in Kenya (Tripp 1999, p. 42).

4.2.1 Nyerere's ujamaa, a unity-oriented ideology

These more favourable prerequisites may have been invisible and structural, but they probably supported Nyerere's unifying strategies when his party took over the country from the British in 1961. He introduced ujamaa (which means community or family and is a form of African socialism, Yeager 1989, pp. 33f), as opposed to Kenyatta's capitalist policy measures. They were both British educated, but whereas Kenyatta was a *cultural* nationalist, interested in the promotion of a "Kikuyu republican nationhood" (Lonsdale 1996, pp. 100–102), Nyerere's main goal truly was to find a way to unite the different ethnic groups in a new nation. He was well aware of the group competition and inequality imposed by colonial tribalist politics and uneven economic development of ethnic groups: "[because of colonialism] the common interest has been at least partially replaced by two interests, those of the 'haves' and those of the 'have-nots'. The unity of society has been weakened because the equality of its members has been broken" (Nyerere, cited in Yeager 1989, p. 32).

Nyerere developed the political strategy of building a "society based around a 'new man': anti-capitalist, egalitarian, a hard worker and responsive to moral rather than material incentives" who would "leav[e] behind particularistic ethnic concerns" (Campbell 1999, p. 108). This philosophy was to be implemented by a number of anti-ethnicity policies, such as the prohibition of ethnic expression in public and political realms, the elimination of ethnically bound institutions and through a unified body of law that dissolved the 'tribe'-oriented customary law created under British rule (Tripp 1999, pp. 42-46).

Nyerere's policies also actively promoted pan-ethnic communication and unification under the egalitarian spirit of socialism: quotas were introduced to strictly monitor equal admissions to academia and employment, a 'National culture' was promoted through youth culture and school dances, a focus was put on the redistribution of resources, which led to a decreasing disparity concerning the access to employment, water, public health and education, and so-called ujamaa villages with community working farms were created in which Tanzanians from different groups worked together (Puritt 1974, pp. 128f).

Probably the most successful measure was Nyerere's choice to use Swahili as a national language, which "ma[de] an important symbolic [...] statement about African culture" and unity (Khamis 1974, cited in Puritt 1974, p. 107). In fact, although Tanganyika was in pre-colonial times as linguistically diverse as Kenya and although Swahili was the mother tongue of only a small population before the colonisers' standardisation efforts, it was by the informants perceived to have always been spoken by all Tanganyikans and to be the main reason for Tanzania's unity. This shows the overwhelming success of promoting a common cultural feature to create a pan-ethnic identification.

There are many reasons why the ujamaa project can be seen be very successful, at least as far as the creation of a national feeling of belonging and the erasure of tribalism are concerned. Tripp praises Nyerere's literal abolition of ethnicity, which, according to her, "had the effect of making people think twice about publishing or making open remarks that could be interpreted as derogatory to a particular group of people. [...] Words, or lack of words, [...] can help foster a positive conceptual awareness of the significance of diversity (Tripp 1999, p. 67). Already in the 1970s Puritt adds that divisions along ethnic lines have almost vanished and that knowledge about ethnic belonging does not stop Tanzanians from identifying nationally: "the majority of Tanzanians today feel that they belong to a tribe as well as to the modern nation" (Puritt 1974, pp. 122, 128f). As Yeager concludes, ethnicity, unlike in other parts of Africa, is not a major factor for division in Tanzania (Yeager 1989, pp. 49–52). This is further confirmed by the fact that, as already mentioned in the introduction, articles like Campbell's (1999) 'Nationalism, ethnicity and religion:

fundamental conflicts and the politics of identity in Tanzania' that are concerned with the "current antipathies and escalating religious, ethnic and racial strife" (ibid., p. 105), consider none but conflicts between Muslims and Christians, and Africans, Asians and Europeans, i. e. no ethnic conflicts sensu strictu.⁸ There is a strong argument in the lack of 'tribal' conflicts in such analyses, implying that ethnic identities and struggles are just not the main point of focus in Tanzania.

It can therefore be argued that Nyerere's ideology of equality and morality successfully created a post-ethnicity⁹ atmosphere by giving Tanzanians access to a positive, national, pan-ethnic identification. However, the measures that had to be undertaken to make this happen have often been criticised for their harshness and had a number of negative effects: ujamaa failed in many important socio-economic aspects, such as its authoritarian and ruthless implementation, lack of employment, corruption (Campbell 1999, pp. 108, 122), economic stagnation and exploitation of land by rich peasants and foreign businesses (Stavrianos 1981, p. 678).

At the same time, there is relevance to the argument that not all ethnic divisions could be erased, but were merely suppressed under the forcefully egalitarian ideology. As Puritt (1974, pp. 128f) points out, although the local chiefs were abolished, ethnic hierarchies partly persisted in the new administration, due to the lack of qualified applicants from ethnic groups other than the privileged elites (i. e. the Chagga and partly also Haya, Sukuma and Nyakyusa) which had been given good education and economic advantages during colonial times. He also stresses other cases where well-meant egalitarian intentions fell short of the realities of implementation, e.g. that the inhabitants of an ujamaa village often came from the same 'tribe' and thus the goal of bringing Tanzanians together was failed (ibid.).

⁸ This links to the problem of the narrow focus on ethnicities as 'tribal', which may coin the positive conclusion of Tanzania as 'ethnic-conflict-free' (cf. introduction).

⁹ This term is derived from Suki Ali's aspiration towards a 'post-race' society, in which Black and white are dissolved and no more words are needed to ascribe individuals to categories. In such a state, every person would be seen as an individual and need to specify their unique identity at every encounter (Ali 2003).

Apart from the sobering realisation that many humanitarian and economic problems had to be unwillingly accepted, and that privileges partly continued to be distributed along ethnic lines, it is also questionable whether a forcefully created post-ethnicity situation is really desirable. While it is surely a great success that ethnic competition and conflict have been diminished to a considerable extent, Nyerere's anti-ethnicity ideology also severely limited the freedom of cultural expression and thus affected Tanzania's cultural and linguistic diversity (Tripp 1999, p. 55, Parkin 2008, p. 331) . The desire to make all groups the same and come together under one nationalist programme could mean that certain groups had to give up their 'backward' forms of production. Pastoralist groups like the Maasai were viewed as less developed compared to agriculturalists and thus unsuitable to the modernist agenda (Tripp 1999, p. 52). Young (1986, p. 446) gives an example of such a modernist, 'primordialist' argumentation:

Some groups, ran the argument, were by nature [...] aggressive in pursuit of economic opportunity, culturally predisposed to syncretizing new values: in short, receptive to change. Others - pastoral communities generally – are encapsulated within a cultural code leading to self-isolation, and rejection of the new pathways to social mobility. The Igbo [...] were the prototypical examples of 'receptivity' while the pastoral Masai were paradigmatic of resistance.

In the Tanzanian case, too, the independent national state bought into Western modernist perspectives of development and thus turned against its own people's 'tradition' and cultural values. An extreme case of this favouring development over cultural needs is the attempted erasure of Maasai culture and identity through the prohibition of their dress, restricting their cattle ownership and the imposition of a national political structure that undermined their leaders (Tripp 1999, p. 52).

Similar suppression affected the Wagogo: as Jackson and Maddox (1993, pp. 282f) assess, "in the brave new world of nationalist Tanzania there was little place for ethnic identity". When in the course of supporting the nationalist movement, the 'traditional' Wagogo dress had to be banned, "the Gogo identity [...] c[a]me into question". This shows that a system that meant well for all people in some cases had to lower its sights when it came to respecting local interests and cultural diversity.

4.2.2 Overhomogenising the new nation?

It is a difficult balancing act between on the one hand preserving culture, which can be essentialising and come close to forms of Rescue Anthropology, and creating an ethnicity-blind state that is unable to cater for diverse cultural needs and expressions on the other. In Tanzania this clearly turned out for the colour-blind side. Slightly overstating this downside of the Tanzanian case even allows a comparison to other allegedly 'post-ethnicity' or 'post-race' societies, such as 'racial democracy', Brazil's myth of 'racial' harmony (Pinho 2010) or the illusion of British multiculturalism (Twine 2010). The Tanzanian overarching goal of ridding the nation of ethnic divisions may betray itself if it does not erase ethnic hierarchies completely, but instead the declared aspiration towards an ethnicity-blind homogenisation makes addressing the persisting power structures 'politically incorrect', as in Brazil¹⁰ and Great Britain. In an extreme case (while bearing in mind that the comparison of ethnicity and 'race' is often flawed) this may create an ethnicity-blind atmosphere that resembles what Frankenberg (1993, pp. 14f) calls "color-evasive or power-evasive" racism as opposed to "essentialist racism". Rather than straightforwardly discriminating against racialised others, as in Kenya, the new Tanzanian pan-ethnic identification may produce "color-blindness", a mode of thinking organised around an effort to not 'see', or to not acknowledge 'racial', or ethnic, differences. While, if successful, it creates a liberating and unifying collective identity, it risks 'overhomogenising' the available representations, so that individuals are inhibited in their cultural expression and in the range of representations to choose from for identification, as well as inequalities being sugar-coated.

All in all, we have seen that Tanzania did not have the same violent and patronage-ridden fate as Kenya owing to its determinedly anti-capitalist, anti-tribalist leader Julius Nyerere. He built up on, to some extent, more favourable prerequisites than in Kenya, but his evident success concerning the prevention of ethnic conflicts was

¹⁰ The attentive reader will note that, in this argumentation, Brazil is used as an example both for essentialisation of 'Africanness' (comparison to Kenya) and homogenization (comparison to Tanzania). This is due to the fact that the essentialisation there happened at a small-scale level, where movements like the FNB mobilised and empowered individuals against racism, whilst the mainstream political narrative was (and still is) one of 'racial' harmony (Pinho 2010).

surely mainly due to his radically egalitarian philosophy. This radicalism provoked a lot of criticism, and the colonial legacies of modernism and reckless anti-tribalism have been destructive for cultural diversity.¹¹ But especially compared to Kenya, it needs to be stressed that Nyerere was outstandingly successful in changing people's way of thinking and talking about difference, unlike Kenya where 'racial' features are a commonly accepted means to describe others. Both political strategies were influenced by their colonial past, one leaving the colonial legacy of patronage politics relatively unchallenged, while the other attempted to purposefully overcome it, yet incorporated partly destructive Western ideals of national uniformity, modernity and development into its philosophy.

For the ongoing analysis, it will be useful to focus on this essentialist character of ethnic representations in Kenya, as opposed to the Tanzanian homogenisation. However, as we shall see, individuals in both countries find a way to negotiate these representations creatively and in sometimes opposite directions as prescribed by the mainstream narrative. The more recent developments in both countries thus hold potential for interesting debates about the different outcomes of politics of essentialisation or homogenisation for identities, and of how individuals themselves can come closer to a "celebration of mosaiclike multiplicity" (Miller 2008, p. 559) through negotiation and performativity.

¹¹ At this point it should be mentioned, however, that Kenyatta's way of implementing his capitalist goals was by no means less reckless, and that Moi's rule was an era of dictatorship, so that there are indeed similarities between the two new nations in that they were both ruled by one-party regimes for some time after independence (Campbell 1999; Gachanga 2012). Yet while Kenyatta's and Moi's regimes favoured the creation of essentialist ethnic identities, these seem to have been erased and covered under an ethnicity-blind homogeneity in Tanzania.

Chapter 5: Future and negotiation –

Kenya/Tanzania daima or celebrating multiplicity?

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the post-colonial developments brought the two countries opposing political ideologies with contrary effects on the relevance of ethnicity for identities. It becomes evident that both ultimately fall short of truly empowering individuals to be their truest selves because they tend to structurally restrict possible representations and identifications. To take account of the power of individual agency, and in order to relativise the created dichotomy between the two political strategies, this last chapter gives a perspective on recent and future possibilities for negotiating identities positively. However, beforehand, it will be useful to revisit and further elaborate on the pure and ‘ideal’ side of essentialist and ‘homogenist’ ideologies and the possible effects of such extreme collective dynamics, in order to better understand the subsequent discussion.

5.1 Debate between essentialisation and homogenisation revisited

As hinted at in chapter 1, essentialisation and homogenisation are extremes of a spectrum of various different forms of ethnic identifications and different ways of dealing with ethnic tensions. In comparing the Kenyan and Tanzanian cases to a Brazilian Black autochtonism and a colour-blind anti-ethnic myth of harmony respectively, the dichotomy between the two cases is somewhat overemphasised, yet reaches a clarity that facilitates a contrasting comparison.

As we have seen in the quotes from contemporary Kenyans, the external ascription of intrinsic values can go so far as to lead to “ethnic labeling and stereotyping” and thus “prejudice and discrimination” (Parkin 2008, p. 332). Meanwhile, the already mentioned comparison to Brazilian Black movements can go further than the internalisation of negative stereotypes about one’s own group. Indeed, the concept of empowering Blacks even today is organised around taking pride in a constructed ‘authentic Africanness’, an essentialist, yet positive depiction of what Blacks are meant to be, for which African heritage is overemphasised. This ‘myth of Africa’ works through cultural attributes invoking ‘Africanness’, such as ‘traditional’ music and food, body shapes and vivid colours (Pinho 2010, p. 88). These are

predetermined and controlled by leaders of the blocos Afro¹² in order to strengthen the Black identity. The same positive and empowering dynamic can be seen in the eagerness with which Kenyans attribute food choices, job preferences and character traits to either Luo or Kikuyu. That this practical distinction is at the same time highly authoritative and produces 'othering', segregation, exclusion and violence, in the most extreme case, is a typical consequence of essentialist same-same identifications (Fuss 1995, cf. chapter 1) and another similarity between the Kenyan and Brazilian autochtonism. The artificially emphasized focus on irreconcilably different cultural traits makes it impossible for Kenyans to come together:

Njenga: The Tanzanians [...] must have had some common value, [...] that holds them together. [...] Tanzania is not different from us; it's just a stone's throw from here. But, you know, in Kenya, we have nothing in common other than the flag, the currency, what else? The National Anthem. That's all. But these are not about culture. Currency is not about our culture. The National Anthem is not ours anyway. It is a British thing.

(interview no. 6. Christopher Njenga, 31:28-32:16)

The noticeable frustration about the cultural obstacles that divide them lets the question come to mind of whether Kenyans would have preferred to be artificially homogenised, rather than artificially separated.

Yet the Tanzanian homogenisation, too, produced unsatisfying results. Going beyond the already mentioned colour-blind concealment of persisting inequalities and threat to cultural diversity, overly eager anti-tribalist efforts tend to ignore and silence specific needs due to a forced uniformity, which requires minorities to assimilate and align in order to gain group membership (Fuss 1995). Rather than naturally "hav[ing] some common value that holds them together", as Njenga assumes, for the newly united Tanzanians this often meant having to develop defence strategies, such as the Maasai, who, contrary to the government's plans, solidified their identity in the face of the suppression in order to survive (Tripp 1999, p. 53). One could argue that Kenyatta's solution was somewhat more realistic and honest, although Nyerere was well aware of the challenge he was facing when he wrote that

¹² Blocos Afro are another current Black Brazilian empowerment movement (Pinho 2010).

there is no quick way to cancel out the present difference [...], there is no short-cut by which the Maasai and the Wagogo can become Wahaya and Wachagga and Wanyakyusa; in short, there is no magic by which we can transform this Tanganyika overnight into the Tanganyika we have to build (Nyerere 1967, p. 181).

The implementation of ujamaa seemingly paid little attention to respecting such differences. Although Nyerere's approach was evidently more successful in eliminating tribalism, ultimately, both ideologies prevented the emergence of cultural diversity and freedom of choice as far as ethnic identification is concerned. From this discussion it follows that ethnic identities can neither be taken for granted and bloated to primordialist essences without severe consequences, nor simply abolished and forgotten. Rather, the key to solving ethnic tensions lies in acknowledging culture-related differences and needs and in finding a way to catering for them and to dealing with the emerging tensions. As we shall see, whether individuals stick with a primordial understanding of ethnicity or not does not as relevantly affect a positive outcome, as whether an individual's positive attitude is spread to all classes of society.

5.2 Situational negotiation and positive ethnicity – towards a middle ground

Following Comaroff's assessment of how ethnicities reify themselves through real life experience (Comaroff 1997, pp. 78f, cf. chapter 1), it becomes clear that situationalist and constructivist arguments have relevance for sociological theorisation, yet cannot explain away the perceived manifestations of cultural difference. As can be deduced from the interviews, many Kenyans, especially intellectuals, today view ethnicity as very real, yet not as restricting and destructive, but as natural, necessary and empowering:

Kariuki: In all the instances I can think of, even in institutions of higher learning, that [=ethnicity] is something that is always at the back of your mind. You know, you can never forget your root, your ethnicity, [...] that is something that you cannot wish away, it's there. What happens is, as the more educated you are, the more socialised you are, the more appreciative you are of the diversities.

Althoff: So you think, difference is important to appreciate, as long as people don't fight over it? But [...] it's not necessarily good if it disappears, because then people lose their roots?

K: You lose your roots. There's nothing wrong with ethnicity. The problem is negative ethnicity.

(interview no. 4. Ronald Kariuki, 13:18-14:16)

What is striking here is the concept of dividing ethnicity in a negative, divisive, exclusionary aspect and a positive one that creates self-confidence and self-awareness through connectedness to one's (imagined) "roots". In this sense, the more essentialised the categories are, the more empowering they can technically be for the individuals adhering to them. Thus a primordialist understanding of ethnicity can be constructive in its own right, especially with addition of the notion of using each community's strengths and weaknesses:

Njenga: Why is it that you put two women here, a Kikuyu woman here, you give her money and you put a Luo woman here, and give her money, to do business. By the end of the day this Luo woman will have closed business. But they are given an equal amount, they are in the same setup, even if you give them the same training. This Luo woman will not survive. But the Kikuyu woman will survive. [...] What is it that makes a Kikuyu woman more business-oriented as opposed to women from other communities? This is a strength which we need to learn from. [...] Every community has skills that we need to understand. And help that community to use the skills that they have to grow. [...]

Althoff: I was thinking [...], maybe the Kikuyu woman would have better access to things because people already think that she'll do better, like, give her a loan or something, because she's a Kikuyu so she must be good? Or maybe she'll feel more confident in negotiating because she knows Kikuyu are good? You know, all these kinds of factors that could re-influence the thing, rather than it coming from her being a Kikuyu in the first place...

N: But you see, why is she good? And not the opponent who is the neighbour? [...] The other way round? I look at it differently. [...] Well, there could be some cultural underlying factors. But we rarely want to find out whether this is a Luo or a Kikuyu before you [=we] buy anything. Of course the people will know. But I'm looking at it in terms of the gifts we're looking at, or the talents. The Luo woman is talented in other things. But not necessarily in business.

(interview no. 6. Christopher Njenga, 47:27-52:07)

The concept of focusing on each community's strengths and weaknesses as a form of positive ethnicity is an interesting approach, for its essentialism creates a clarity that makes it easy for individuals to identify with 'their' group and thus become proud and empowered. It is the same method as successfully applied by the blocos Afro in Brazil (cf. positive racism), yet cannot get over the inhibiting essentialist categories that ultimately prevent Luo and Kikuyu from being anything else than what their supposed strengths and weaknesses reduce them to.

Meanwhile, a situational approach can perhaps be more liberating, because it allows blurring the essentialist categories into overlapping and fluid boundaries that can be manipulated and negotiated on an individual level. As Lynch (2006, p. 60) assesses,

it is possible to debate and contest ethnic boundaries, often assumed in everyday discourse to be primordial, or to have been imagined, invented and clarified in the colonial period. Thus, despite years of colonial categorisation and indirect rule, followed by post-colonial regimes which continue to document ethnic identity, and in which big men remain politically dominant, ethnic communities, their boundaries, allies, content and membership, are largely negotiable.

Using the example of the Sengwer, she demonstrates how certain groups in Kenya manage to redefine their affiliation with certain ethnic labels in an opportunistic way (Lynch 2006, pp. 51–53). At the same time as becoming more rigid and important through political tribalism, ethnic identities also become more open to interpretation, denial of membership or “amalgamation” of subgroups (ibid., p. 57), at least for the case of particularly small and therefore uncontrollable groups. Further, Lynch confirms that, even though ethnicised structures in politics can be unfavourable for such minority groups, they prefer manipulating their identity to their advantage and fighting for increased representation to demanding a less tribalist system (Lynch 2006, pp. 54–55).

The Kenyan case thus shows primordialist and situationalist possibilities of interpreting the given essentialist categories, both of which can be useful at the level of individual negotiation for constructing a self-confident identity and a non-judgemental attitude towards others. It becomes clear that attempts to deconstruct and abolish the categories are not always necessary in order to reduce ethnic tensions. Yet such extreme manipulation as in the case of the Sengwer is surely not possible for bigger groups that are more affected by the political instrumentalisation. The concept of positive ethnicity, too, has its weakness, in that it is still essentialist and reducing, and thus always risks turning into negative ethnicity, especially because generous statements about appreciating diversity are made predominantly by wealthy and worldly-wise academics. That way, Mr Kariuki’s and Mr Njenga’s suggestions about how Kenyans simply need to learn to appreciate their roots and each other’s strengths and weaknesses leaves a stale taste when compared to what socially deprived young people from informal settlements have to say:

X: Kikuyus, they never wanted any tribe to take that [=their] power. In Kenya, we're having a lot of problems. One day we might have some big problem. Like a tribal war.

Y: Like in Egypt.

(interview no. 3. group of young people from
Kariobangi North settlement, 40:00-40:16)

From this statement, the question clearly arises of how easy it is, and how high a priority it can be, to be appreciative of diversity in the face of want and (perceived) social disadvantage. Against this background, re-entering the Tanzanian achievements and more recent developments into the equation becomes inevitable and desirable.

Ujamaa has had ongoing positive effects after Nyerere's retirement in 1985. While many of the socialist policies have been abandoned in the context of the late 1970s economic crisis and downfall of socialism, "social equality continues to be part of the political rhetoric and to a considerable extent a political culture of egalitarianism has taken hold as part of a national ethic, [...] even when the reality falls short of the ideal" (Tripp 1999, pp. 48, 67). Yet Campbell assesses the situation slightly differently and argues that as a consequence of the necessary capitalist measures and political liberation a new ethnic struggle has emerged:

Local and national politics has become hotly contested and has increasingly polarised public attitudes and perceptions. In attempting to make sense of the conflict and to secure their own interests, individuals draw upon current ideas, images and information and participate in different types of social collectivities in pursuit of their objectives (Campbell 1999, p. 119).

It has to be noted, however, that Campbell mainly talks about religiously and 'racially' distinguished collectivities and that the increasing re-ethnicisation, while not completely deniable, may actually be more useful as it sounds in his evaluation. At the same time as capitalist policies increased in number, so did the private organisations and development NGOs that took over the welfare services that the state was unable to provide any longer. These institutions were often organised along ethnic lines so that the post-Nyerere period did see an increased salience of ethnicity in public discourse and material reality even according to Tripp (1999,

pp. 59f). Especially in combination with the persisting educational privileges of certain groups, who may also have more expertise in how to access development resources, increased privatisation and development may represent a menace to the post-ethnicity atmosphere. Yet the phenomenon of ethnicity-oriented development seems to come a lot closer to the positive ethnicity of reversion to local communities' strengths and support than to the negative side of patronage and tribalism.

While ethnicity-oriented NGOs may thus represent a danger for the successfully created post-ethnicity atmosphere in Tanzania, they may also be a way of revising it by dissolving the suppression of cultural expression. Similarly as has always been the case in Kenya, individuals and local institutions in Tanzania have started to acknowledge and negotiate their ethnic membership to make it suit development agendas and have regained a sense of the potential that lies in exploiting the local solidarity of their (perceived) original communities. As Tripp puts it, "the gain of bringing about local development far outweigh[s] the risks of kindling and politicizing ethnically based interests" (Tripp 1999, pp. 60f).

Such an attitude would in a conflict-ridden country like Kenya be a lot more likely to be criticised as tribalist, while Tanzanians are apparently so far beyond tribal thinking that they can now allow for community-oriented ambitions without fear of creating ethnic competition and tensions. This is confirmed by the fact that identifying nationally and locally at the same time does not represent a contradiction in Tanzania, as already mentioned by Puritt and confirmed by Omari, himself Tanzanian: "My being a Mpare does not contradict my being a Tanzanian. On the contrary, it cements and affirms my nationality" (Omari, cited in *ibid.*, p. 61). Contrary, this seems irreconcilable in the Kenyan context, where Mr Onyango stresses his sense of belonging to Kenya as a nation, manifest in the popular slogan 'Kenya daima' ('Kenya always'), in order to prove that he rejects tribal thinking. Thus Kenyans still struggle to combine 'Kenya daima' with the notion of ethnic strengths and weaknesses, because these still invoke essentialisation and stereotyping that divide the nation.

However, there is a promising tendency towards minimising the relevance of ethnic categories that might enable Kenyans to come closer to the Tanzanian role-model. This is shown mainly when Kenyans of different ethnicities come together, especially in school and in urban centres. Pan-ethnic friend groups and particular personal circumstances can equally lead to 'deethnicising' experiences.

Acheng: Within [=amongst] ourselves, as friends, it [=ethnicity] doesn't really matter. If I see an opportunity, I'll call all my friends. [...] If there was a Luo inside the group, it doesn't mean that I'll call the Luo only. [...] We studied in the same high school. I guess that's where we trusted each other and really knew that the stereotypes outside there don't really matter. [...] I grew up in an orphanage, and in the orphanage, [...] we were so many groups, there were Kisiis, there were Luos, Kikuyus, Giriamas. [...] If you go there [=to see someone] it doesn't matter whether that's a Luo or a Kikuyu you'll have to call her [=them] your brother or your sister because that's the person who you grew up with.

(interview no. 2. Marian Acheng, 34:15-36:03)

Going beyond this experience of overcoming structurally imposed prejudices due to individual encounters that disprove them, there are even structural forces at work that diminish the relevance of ethnicity, such as a natural loss of linguistic diversity. (This could, same as in Tanzania, obviously also be seen as a negative dynamic. Yet it is happening less forcefully than under the socialist regime.)

Njenga: Now I think we are seeing a different kind of age. [...] I took my children to the village, and they couldn't speak with my grandmother, for they don't know [the] Kamba language. They are speaking now in English and Kiswahili. So [...] when they grow up, perhaps this idea of community challenges or conflicts will not be there. Because they will not understand [any more what the divisions are that used to be there]. I mean, they're asking me, 'Daddy, which tribe are we?' [...] So I [said], 'You don't know you come from Kambani [=the Kamba people]?'. And for them it doesn't make sense any more. And maybe with that kind of age - although people are complaining that now this age is a Western age - but we are likely to see [...] ethnic conflict disappearing, slowly by slowly.

(interview no. 6. Christopher Njenga, 18:35-19:36)

As Mr Njenga admits in the course of the interview, this positive dynamic concerns mainly individuals growing up in urban contexts, while children in the countryside grow up amongst people of their own ethnic group. This restriction also applies to Nairobi's informal settlements, where people tend to settle near relatives and thus

reproduce a miniature of the regional separation we can find on a national level.¹³ But still, the tendency of dissolving language barriers is more likely than the concept of positive ethnicity to extend to rural and socially deprived areas, it being a structural force rather than an intellectual attitude.

An interesting example of how (perceived) neo-colonial interests continue to influence, and potentially diminish, ethnic identities is the current ICC (International Criminal Court) trial, in which the Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta is charged with “funding a local militia that conducted reprisal attacks during the 2007 post-election violence” (Karimi 2013). Uhuru Kenyatta allegedly used the ICC accusations as a strategy in the 2013 election campaign by portraying them as an imperialist intrusion and thus managed to be elected by uniting Kenyans against ‘the West’ (unrecorded personal communication with Peter Othiambo, one of the informants, July 2013).

To sum up, one can notice a tendency of both countries to converge towards a situation where identities are ethnicised, yet where ethnicity is less decisive for ascriptive judgement and more for cultural empowerment. The forces that drive these de-ethnicising dynamics can be colonial legacies or neo-colonial forces, such as increasing urbanisation, globalisation, nationalism, development and even international justice institutions. Both Tanzanians and Kenyans make positive use of ethnicity without abolishing ethnic categories, which is where Miller’s assessment of the African aptitude for “celebrat[ing] mosaiclike multiplicity” comes in again. Against the background of such positive negotiation, a comparison to Black/white racism and Western sociological concepts of ‘racialised ethnicities’ or performative empowerment strategies that dissolve the essentialist categories of a Black/white context¹⁴ may indeed prove inadequate for the Eastern African intra-Black context.

¹³ This evaluation is drawn from personal experience working in places like Kariobangi North, Umoja and Korogocho (Nairobi informal settlements) and from an informant’s statement that ‘half the places in the slums are called ‘Kisumu ndogo‘ (=little Kisumu, meaning a miniature version of the capital of Nyanza, a Luo-populated region).

¹⁴ An example would be Shirley Tate’s ‘Black Skins, Black masks. Hybridity, dialogism, performativity’ Tate (2005).

Conclusion

Many of the questions posed in the beginning could be answered in the course of this work, yet sometimes differently than expected. It is clear that the colonial administration practices and structural changes imposed on East African societies had a crucial impact on how clear-cut and divisive ethnic categories are today. While differences in cultural practices, territory and language existed in pre-colonial times, they were not apperceived as constituting a significant and exclusive aspect of people's identities, as they were only one form of differentiation among many. The colonial experience set a dynamic in motion that can be described as the transformation from a solidary, subconscious, implicit moral economy to a competitive, explicit moral ethnicity: in the process of the Europeans' imposition of 'tribal units', Africans likewise started to think and act ethnically.

Yet while this general tendency is evident, the relevance of the difference between the German and British colonial powers and their strategies remains somewhat debatable. On the one hand, the Germans did not use Indirect Rule and were thus less concerned with the administration of 'tribal' leaders, which may have subliminally induced a less tribalist attitude in future Tanzanians. On the other hand, the impact of the early and relatively short German colonisation seems minor against the background that the diverging post-colonial dynamics are very closely linked to the way the decolonisation process played out. Thus, while colonialism was generally responsible for ethnicising identities in Kenya and Tanganyika likewise, it was the differing British decolonisation politics more specifically that allowed for different post-colonial developments. Simply put, without the Mau Mau uprising and the essentialisation of Kikuyu 'terrorists', the new nations could have been standing on equal grounds. But of course, the fact that Kenyatta was equally focused on the Kikuyu as had been the British officers when denouncing them of terrorism, and that Tanzania turned towards a decidedly anti-ethnic philosophy brought about absolutely contrasting results for the way Kenyans and Tanzanians have been identifying since independence.

A surprising result is that people are often unaware of the colonial impact on their identities while being strikingly aligned with the colonial ideology. Thus we can find a

very primordialist, essentialist view on 'tribes' in Kenya, which stands in stark contrast to the fact that most Kenyans would argue that colonisation had nothing to do with the present tribalism. Another striking outcome is that East Africans can have interpretations of ethnic identities that differ from the political narrative, and also disagree with the mainstream (Western) sociological opinion that denounces the essentialisation of ethnic categories as discriminative. Whether ethnicities are seen as situational and thus less essentialised, or as just as primordial and determined as induced by colonialism, but used a positive way, can both lead to a peaceful and productive negotiation: there are accounts of Kenyans and Tanzanians who productively use each communities strengths and weaknesses while maintaining the tribal categories, e.g. in community-oriented development projects.

At the same time, ethnic identification is slowly going out of fashion in Kenya, where, due to the shock about the 2007 post-election violence, it is seen as politically correct and desirable to hold a 'Kenya daima attitude', and children are increasingly unaware of their 'roots', at least in an intellectual and urban setting. Yet it has to be stressed that tribalism persists in rural and socially deprived areas, and re-emerges especially in times of economic crisis and election periods, when politicians instrumentalise ethnic identities. A positive outlook on these dynamics, however, is that there was no post-election violence in the 2013 elections, because politicians advised their respective 'camps' of voters to avoid violence. As for Tanzania, ethnicities are, conversely coming more into fashion with the post-1970s-crisis emergence of ethnicity-oriented development NGOs, while making similarly productive use of community ties as in Kenya, but without passing over into patronage politics.

In all the essentialising, homogenising and performative dynamics that shape ethnicities in East Africa, colonial legacies are at play. While in Kenya, the colonial divisiveness continued plainly, Tanzania succumbed to modernist paradigms such as anti-tribalism, which crucially moulded the way the socialist government dealt with minorities. More structurally, colonial achievements such as a standardised language contributed to unison in Tanzania. Up to the present day, neo-colonialist forces such as European development NGOs continue to view and treat customers in terms of

belonging to authentic original cultures, which Kenyans and Tanzanians live up to. These universal neo-colonial forces that tend to dissolve the post-independence differences ultimately create similarities between the two countries; and so arguably does a renewed anti-Western spirit that unites them.

This could imply that Kenya and Tanzania meet somewhere in the middle, where Kenyans learn to appreciate each group's strengths without discriminating against each other, and where Tanzanians 'rediscover' their cultural values and make use of their original communities, instead of denying their 'roots'. Yet this is obviously a simplified, idealistic conclusion that may only give a tendency for positive developments to be hoped for. Especially in Kenya, a strong problem with ethnic violence persists, which needs to be kept in sight in further research.

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Interview material

These interviews were conducted in July and August 2013 in Nairobi and Western Kenya. All names are pseudonyms.

1. Steve Otieno, 7 Sep 2013.

34 years, male, Luo. Grew up in rural Nyanza, then moved to Nairobi for university.

2. Marian Acheng, 7 Oct 2013.

23 years, female, Luo. Grew up in rural Nyanza, up to 8 years, then moved to Mombasa, until she came to Nairobi for university.

3. group of young people from Kariobangi North settlement, 15 Jul 2013.

20-35 years, mostly male, one female, mostly Luo and Luya. Most grew up in informal settlements in Nairobi, one in a rural area, one at the coast. Most have only primary, some secondary education, work as matatu drivers etc.; some are unemployed and involved in informal activities.

4. Ronald Kariuki, 18 Jul 2013.

43 years, male, Kikuyu. Grew up in Nyeri (Central province), then moved to Nairobi for university. Background in civic education and peacebuilding.

5. Adam Onyango, 23 Jul 2013.

25 years, male, Luo. Grew up in rural Nyanza until he left home for secondary boarding school, then came to Nairobi for university. Background in community and voluntary work.

6. Christopher Njenga, 14 Aug 2013.

53 years, male, Kamba. Grew up in a village, then moved to Nairobi for university. Background in religious studies, development and peacebuilding.

7. Fidel Oduya, 17 Jul 2013.

45 years, male, Luo. Grew up in Mombasa and Nairobi (no rural background). Became a Human Rights activist and Marxist, had to study outside the country (Tanzania, USA, Belgium). Broad horizon and background in peacebuilding.

8. John Mwangi, 17 Jul 2013.

72 years, male, Kikuyu. Grew up in Moranga (rural area), worked in a factory directly after graduating from school, later involved in church work.

9. Peter Othiambo, 15 Aug 2013

34 years, male, Luo. Grew up in rural Nyanza, then moved to Nairobi for university. Background in peacebuilding.

Appendix

1. Full version of the interview transcripts

This overview does not represent a full transcription of the conducted interviews. Rather, it shows the full version of the transcribed interview parts that sometimes appear in an abridged version in the text, and it includes quotes that were not used in the final version of this work. Furthermore, this overview enables the reader to see the quotes in the context of the entire interview and thus in some cases to gain a better understanding of the logic behind the informants' argumentation. The numbers in the quotations refer to the time span on the recording.

Interview no.1, Steve Otieno

- 5:45-7:11 Althoff: Would you say there are any particular character traits that are associated with Luos?
Otieno: [...] Luos are very proud people, whether they have or not. [...] You cannot molest a Luo because of employment. He'll rather go home. They are not very enterprising because they feel 'okay, it is a process, and it is tedious'. [...] Most Luos like white collar and these high-fly professions like doctors, lawyers...
- 17:42-18:01 Otieno: You'll find that a Kikuyu will prefer meat [...] and potatoes, a Luo will prefer fish and ugali. So even from the hotel [=restaurant], you can tell whether this is a Luo.
- 18:01-18:09 Otieno: The way they carry themselves out also, the Kikuyus are a bit simpler, they are very enterprising.

Interview no. 2, Marian Acheng

- 5:24-6:08 Althoff: Which ethnic group do you feel you belong to?
Acheng: I'm a Luo, because my fathers are Luos. But the parents... - let me say 'parents' - who have raised me, are mainly Kikuyu.
Alt: So [...] for you [ethnicity] [...] comes from your biological parents? So you wouldn't identify as a Kikuyu just because the people who have raised you are Kikuyus?
Ach: No.
- 7:56-8:06 Acheng: Another characteristic maybe is the physical. Luos are known to have big butts. And then their skin colour is dark.

- 13:00-14:06 Althoff: How are these groups distinguished from yours and from each other? [...] How are they really different, or how can you tell that they're different?
- Acheng: For Kikuyus, you can tell by their [...] let's say, their bodies. And also their skin colour. The Kikuyus are lighter. [...] One can say the Kikuyus are the lightest. Okay, apart from Taitas, in the coast. Yes, Taitas are also very light. [...] But Taitas are also different from Kikuys because Taitas are all curved. They are curvy, they have the hips, they have the... Kikuyus are not curvy.
- 14:16-15:19 Althoff: So would you say that ethnic groups are mainly distinguished by physical features?
- Acheng: Sometimes, but also how they also think... Because... okay, there's a stereotype that Kikuyus are mean [...] [and] economical. [...] That's just a saying. Because sometimes, if you're mean, someone asks you 'eh, are you a Kikuyu?'
- 15:55-16:58 Althoff: So if you meet someone and you try to tell their ethnic group, how do you do that?
- Acheng: Their skin colour. Also their accent. Different tribes, they struggle pronouncing a certain letter. For Luos, it is 's' and 'sh', instead of 'Sharon', the person will say 'Saron'. For Kikuyus, it is 'r' and 'l', instead of 'Sharon', they might say 'Shalon'. [...]
- Also, you can know by their physical look, the shape, the figure, the hair. Kikuyus, Kambas and Merus, their hairs are silky. But for Luos, their hairs are kinky.
- 34:15-36:03 Acheng: Within ourselves, as friends, it doesn't really matter. If I see an opportunity, I'll call all my friends. [...] If there was a Luo inside the group, it doesn't mean that I'll call the Luo only. I'll call all of them still. We studied in the same high school. I guess that's where we trusted each other and really knew that the stereotypes outside there, they're not really... they don't really matter. It's about friendship and trust and how we can help each other, yes. [...]
- I grew up in an orphanage, and in the orphanage, there are twelve houses. Each house has, let's say, ten kids, being under the same 'mother'. So for us, we were so many groups, there were Kisiis, there were Luos, Kikuyus, Giriamas. [...] If you go there [to a house] it doesn't matter whether that's a Luo or a Kikuyu, you'll have to call her your brother or your sister because that's the person who you grew up with.
- 39:00-42:04 Althoff: If this [conflict between Luo and Kikuyu] is so stable, it should seem like there is a big reason [for it]. [...]
- Acheng: There is a big reason. It's because [...] during the colonial period, the Luos and the Kikuyus were friends, and they merged to fight against colonisation. We were both resisters, we didn't collaborate with the colonialists. So when Jomo Kenyatta was in prison, Jeramogi [Odinga] [...] was told that since the colonialists are [=were]

leaving, he can [=could] become the president of Kenya. But he said, 'no', he's [=was] not going to become president until Jomo Kenyatta is [=was] released. So when Jomo Kenyatta was released, Jeramogi told him, 'you can become president', because at least he [=Kenyatta] was in prison for long fighting for independence in Kenya [so he deserved to be president]. So when Jomo Kenyatta became the president, that's where the rivalry was, because he didn't appreciate that [Odinga had given him the advantage], he became tribalistic, [giving precedence to] his group, not the other groups.

So that's where the rivalry came in because he went to Kisumu, in Nyanza, mainly [where the] Luos [live], and people threw at him rotten eggs. [...] And he ordered the askaris [...] to shoot, to kill the Luos. So that's [one of] the big, big reasons why there's rivalry. He killed us, and then he betrayed us. [...]

Then [...] it was supposed to be, after he goes, someone from our tribe comes in, but when he went, he left it to a different tribe yet. [...] And now they are maintaining that. [...] Right now, his son is the president.

Interview no. 3, group of young people from Kariobangi North settlement

- 1:43-2:31 Althoff: What are the main characteristics of Luos and Luyas, how are they? [...]
X: How you can identify a Luo or a Luya, they are Black, [...] they have thick lips, they are strong, they work hard.
- 11:00-16:52 Althoff: Do you think, over time, since maybe colonial times, even before [...], do you think that these groups were always the same? [...] Do you think the groups have dispersed or mixed or were they always what they are today?
X: [...] According to history which we were taught in school, we learnt that these boundaries that separate people were created by colonial governance. [...] I don't know what was the intention. [...]
A: Does that mean that you think that before the British came, there was actually no Kikuyu and no Luo and Luya in Kenya? [...]
X: They existed, but according to history, there is a teaching that we, again, were taught in school, that we Luos came from [...] the original home of Luos [...] in Sudan. [...]
A: So what did the British do to make them... you said they invented the groups...? [...]
X: No, no, no. No, according to the teachings... - which I don't believe in, I don't believe to [=share] that kind of perception that the British [created the tribes], [...] according to politicians, but according to me, Luos existed, Kikuyus existed. It's not the mistake of the British to do whatever they did. [...] You can't take the blame on the British government. Because the British took his part to develop this country. They didn't favour anybody, they didn't come to favour the Kikuyus or the Luos, they had good intentions, to enlighten our society.

- 12:45-13:32 X: What we normally hear, even from the politicians, they want Kenya to be one, but that Kenyaism is not in people's hearts. Somebody take a Kikuyu like an enemy, a Luo like an enemy [...]. This was never brought by the youths, [...] you find an old guard will tell his child 'don't associate with that Yaluo', [...] because of cultural beliefs.
- 35:4-36:11 X: [explaining about the loan injustice] Some people see that Kikuyus are very rich. And a Luya and a Luo who is not rich is lazy. And we say that's rubbish. [...] Luos and Luyas are very hard working... [...]
Y: Kikuyu are thieves, Kikuyu are thieves. Kikuyu are thieves, my dear.
X: So just to also mention how the colonialists actually also really messed up.
- 40:00-40:16 X: Kikuyus, they never wanted any tribe to take that [their] power. In Kenya, we're having a lot of problems. One day we might have some big problem. Like a tribal war.
Y: Like in Egypt.
- 45:15-45:51 X: Most of why these problems do arise is that greediness which Kenyatta applied during those days. It is he greediness that Kikuyus had during this time. They are very greedy people.
Y: [...] Kikuyu are not a good people. In this country, we are planning a war. [...] Egypt style. [...] Because now we are suffering because of Kikuyu.

Interview no. 4, Ronald Kariuki

- 2:47- 5:44 Althoff: Which ethnic group do you feel you belong to?
Kariuki: [...] I affiliate myself with the Kikuyu ethnic group.
A: And how come? Why do you affiliate yourself with this group?
K: You know, I'm looking at it in the context of the tribe. Although, when you're looking at ethnicity or ethnic groupings, you can go beyond the tribe, and consider other groupings. Because I believe ethnicity can be looked at in different perspectives, you can look at ethnicity in regard to religion. There are people who group themselves together because of certain religious beliefs, and that can be considered as an ethnic group. But now I'm focusing on tribe. You are born in a certain region, you speak a certain language, you abide or you believe in certain cultural practices and beliefs, you have shared values [...], so you identify yourself as an ethnic group.
- 7:41-8:51 Kariuki: Ethnic identification with a specific ethnic group is deeply entrenched in Kenya. It's not something that you can wish away. And it's not bad because belonging to, attaching yourself to, there's nothing wrong with that. It's diversity. You speak different languages, you live in different regions, [...] and it's going to be there forever.
- 12:00-12:41 Kariuki: In urban areas, where you find that the common language spoken is Kiswahili, most of these [school] kids do not speak their mother tongue, they cannot speak their mother tongue. [...] So in their engagements with other children, the issue of ethnicity

does not arise. In fact, most of these kids come to learn about ethnicity from their parents.

13:18-14:16 Kariuki: In all the instances I can think of, even in institutions of higher learning, that is something that is always at the back of your mind. You know, you can never forget your root, your ethnicity, [...] that is something that you cannot wish away, it's there. What happens is, as the more educated you are, the more socialised you are, the more appreciative you are of the diversities.

Althoff: So you think, difference is important to appreciate, as long as people don't fight over it? But it sounds like you're saying, it's not necessarily good if it disappears, because then people lose their roots?

K: You lose your roots. There's nothing wrong with ethnicity. The problem is negative ethnicity.

Interview no. 5, Adam Onyango

11:48-13:54 Althoff: What are Luos actually for you? [...] Do you actually think this is a definite group and they have certain things that define them?

Onyango: [...] The way of living, for example if you look at this home, if you look at the structure, how we build, that one identifies a Luo. [...] If you look at the other side, my elder brother builds there, and I build this way. [...] And if you look at our place [...] my dad's small house, and there's this small place where [...] my children and everyone would be eating there. [...]

We have a different marriage system, closely related to the Luya, because we've interacted so often in business, and in some places we only have a road separating us, so it's really related to their way of life. Through intermarriage I think our system is almost close, so the way of construction, the kind of food we eat.

17:25-18:46 Onyango: Sometimes I can say this guy is a Luya, just from looking. From the face. And I can say, this guy is a Turkana, and I can say this guy is a Kalenjin. [...] Normally when you meet people, you see, like the Sudanese, they are a bit tall and a bit skinny, so if you see Sudanese, you would say, these are Sudanese. [For] Turkana, you have the facial [features], [...] and if you have a Luo and a Kikuyu, it's so easy to say who is a Luo because the Luo could be darker and the Kikuyus would be lighter.

Althoff: Is that something that usually works? If you see people on the street, can you tell who everyone is just by how dark they are?

O: For me, yes.

54:14-58:58 Althoff: Do you think that the groups that we have today have always existed, and also, even if they have existed, do you think it was the same to be a Luo a hundred years ago? I mean, apart from maybe losing tradition, do you think the demarcation lines between them were in the same places?

O: Could be, but I think the influence of the next tribe was a big factor. If you take the system of how the Luo were moving... So they left Southern Sudan. [...] And somewhere, maybe there was a disagreement, or some guys decided 'we want to settle here', and these guys were called then the Turkana. [...]

A: But that's long ago, isn't it? I mean when they were already Luo, did they then again change?

O: [...] I mean, I was just trying to tell you how it might have been.

A: Oh, you mean, even after the Luo formed, there might have been changes in that because of the same dynamic, or...?

O: No, I'm just saying, from the aspect of the Nilots.

A: Yeah, no, that's great, but I'm interested in more recent times. I mean, not so recent as post-colonial. Kind of before colonial, during colonial and after, because I'm also interested in how maybe the colonial times influenced the groups. [...] Have you heard anything about how they identified before, and how maybe now it's different?

O: Not really, I don't know.

1:04:12-1:07:01 Onyango: I think, in the beginning I was really sure that that [= that ethnic discrimination exists] is not true and that these guys [=Kikuyu] are not going to just not like me because of my tribe. Until, one day, in my class [...] [with] a friend of mine [...] I told him 'The politicians should not control our lives.', and he was like 'You are a good person. But the other Luos, I don't like them. And if I'm [=was] given a gun, I would just shoot them.' [...] If he was given a gun to fight the Luosm then he would shoot them. [...] So he was like, 'If we have to fight, then I will fight for my tribe.'. And that's when I realised that tribe [=tribalism] is real. [...]

And I started thinking about myself, what if I were working somewhere, and I told someone that I'm a Luo, would they just fight me? [...] I'd never think about it before, I was sure that no-one was going to do anything harmful to me because I was a Luo, until now, this guy was really real with me. [...] And that's when I realised, now I should really be careful. [...] So that's when I felt like, maybe if I'm in a group of Kikuyu [...] then I would hesitate to start saying, 'I'm a Luo'. So that's just for my security.

Interview no. 6, Christopher Njenga

12:14-12:52 Njenga: [In pre-colonial times] communities were [...] fighting anyway. The Kamba bordering the Maasai, and they kept on stealing animals from each other. These were conflicts, but they were small-scale. [...] It wasn't about life, children, women and so on, it was about animals.

16:20-16:35 Njenga: [In] Tanzania, where there is a common language [...], that has brought them together. In Kenya, and this is my argument, in Kenya people share nothing. We share nothing in terms of values.

- 17:30-13:12 Njenga: We've not realised kind of a level of nationhood. And that's why, sometimes you get a small challenge, we trickle down to our communities. [...] For me, that's not sad, because we all belong to communities, and that's how we grew up. [...] Your culture is your mother. But we need to get out of it and start interacting across borders.
- 18:35-19:36 Njenga: Although now I think we are seeing a different kind of age. [...] I took my children to the village, and they couldn't speak with my grandmother, for they don't know Kamba language. They are speaking now in English and Kiswahili. So [...] when they grow up, perhaps this idea of community challenges or conflicts will not be there. Because they will not understand [any more what the divisions are that used to be there]. I mean, they're asking me, 'Daddy, which tribe are we?' [...] So I [said], 'You don't know you come from Kambani [=the Kamba people]?' And for them it doesn't make sense any more. And maybe with that kind of age - although people are complaining that now this age is a Western age - but we are likely to see [...] ethnic conflict disappearing, slowly by slowly.
- 31:28-32:16 Njenga: The Tanzanians [...] must have had some common value, [...] that holds them together. [...] Tanzania is not different from us, it's just a stonethrow from here. But, you know, in Kenya, we have nothing in common other than the flag, the currency, what else? The National Anthem... that's all. But these are not about cultures. Currency is not about our culture. The National Anthem is not ours anyway. It is a British thing.
- 36:51-37:30 Njenga: Something also we have realised in Africa is that the more communities you have, the more national you become. [...] If you have more tribes, you are likely to be more stable. [...] When we are more, then you realise that, the nation belongs to all of us, and we are many.
- 47:27-52:07 Njenga: Why is it that you put two women here, a Kikuyu woman here, you give her money and you put a Luo woman here, and give her money, to do business. By the end of the day this Luo woman will have closed business. But they are given an equal amount, they are in the same setup, even if you give them same training. This Luo woman will not survive. But the Kikuyu woman will survive. [...] What is it that makes a Kikuyu woman more business-oriented as opposed to women from other communities? This is a strength which we need to learn from. [...] Every community has skills that we need to understand. And help that community to use the skills that they have to grow. [...]
- Althoff: I was thinking [...], maybe the Kikuyu woman would have better access to things because people already think that she'll do better, like, give her a loan or something, because she's a Kikuyu so she must be good? Or maybe she'll feel more confident in negotiating because she knows Kikuyu are good? You know, all these

kinds of factors that could re-influence the thing, rather than it coming from her being a Kikuyu in the first place...

N: But you see, why is she good? And not the opponent who is the neighbour? [...] The other way round? I look at it differently. [...] Well, there could be some cultural underlying factors. But we rarely want to find out whether this is a Luo or a Kikuyu before you buy anything. Of course the people will know. But I'm looking at it in terms of the gifts we're looking at, or the talents. The Luo woman is talented in other things. But not necessarily in business.

Interview no. 7, Fidel Oduya

35:20-45:27 Oduya: If you look at the independence campaigns, what the colonialists did was to tell smaller tribes that these big tribes [= Luo and Kikuyu] want to dominate you [=them], that's why they want power. And you notice Kikuyus and Luos being the owners of KANU and then all these other small tribes forming a party called KADU and KPA (Kamba People's Association). [...] And [they] said, okay, if we merge all small groups then we can have a political population that will vote our person.

Althoff: Does that mean it was the colonialists' idea to organise politics along ethnic lines? Or was that already happening anyway?

O: They emphasised it. What was happening is that, for example, we want to fight for our own freedom. If I'm in the rift valley, [...] Nandis will come up with their Nandi resistance initiative. Kipsigis will do their own resistance, so people are doing their own different things to fight against colonialism. [...] People would even start community newspapers so that they can do mobilisation through their community media. And those would be done in their mother tongue. [...] But that didn't mean that they were selfish in the struggle. What colonialists then did was to say, 'You see? These guys, you even don't know what they're writing in their mother tongue. So they are very bad people. Do you know what they write in their mother tongue?'. So [the colonialists] used that, and also tried to say 'Mau Mau is a terrorist group'. [...]

So when KANU came out, there were other initiatives. [...] The way it was played out, it was a sense of capitalism vs. socialism. So KANU was seen to be more capitalist in their campaign, in the way they wanted to run the country. And KADU would be socialist. [...]

A: So Jaramogi Odinga, when he was there [in KANU], was he a capitalist?

O: He was a socialist.

A: Right. I was just confused because you said the Luo and the Kikuyu were together in KANU, and they were seen as more capitalist.

O: They were seen [to be].

A: But then there was differences [among them] as well?

O: Yeah. They were played, really. Of course, it was cold war period, and if you were seen to be pushing for socio-economic rights and land and so on, you'd be seen as a

communist, socialist. So even when they [=capitalist Kenyatta and socialist Odinga] merged, [the British could still handle it]. What colonialists could not resist [=suppress immediately], they came up with a strategy to deal with that later. So, for example, they'd say, Kenyatta and Odinga, because of [=with] patriotism and pan-Africanism, they were very exposed [=they had a broad horizon], intelligent and so on. So, in divide and rule, you deal with the immediate hurdle. So they [the British] would delay independence because they'd say 'you guys are not ready, why don't you agree?' [...] In fact, their biggest interest was, how do we remain in control of these people even when they're independent. [...]

Kenyatta, with [=after] 15 years in England, his soul was gone, as far as African Socialism [was concerned]. He was capitalist to the core. So when he came back and started grabbing land and stealing money from the government and so on, it is [because of] having tasted capitalism, seeing how the queen behaved. So to him, coming to power would be to be like the queen. And so long as he took care of the British interests, that would be fine.

A: So do you think that the British took measures to make sure that the power went to Kenyatta and not to Odinga?

O: There [=it] is a coincidence, but still, they would have found a way of knocking them.

49:55-50:55 Althoff: Would you say that, for example, before colonial times, there was any kind of animosity between Luo and Kikuyu?

Oduya: [...] In terms of stereotypes, it is said, even then, Luos will be more honest people than Kikuyus [...], so there will be jokes like, if you want to know a Kikuyu's dead, drop a coin. [...] And that was before colonial times.

Interview no. 8, John Mwangi

11:40-14:29 Althoff: Have these groups always been the same, even before colonial times? [...] Were the Luo and the Kikuyu already the same as they are now?

Mwangi: (speaks Swahili)

Translator: It was not there.

A: The problem was not there. But the groups were there?

M: Groups, they were. [...] (talks about how the problem emerged at Independence)

A: They were all fighting together for independence?

T: Yes, they were fighting together, and they were together.

M: Lakini siku hizi vijana iwamlete hii shida.

T: He's saying it is the young people who have brought this problem. Not the old ones.

A: So... it didn't start at independence, but even a lot later? [...]

T: He's saying that, right now, the young generation are the ones who brought this problem and people want just their own. They don't want to fight together.

Interview no. 9, Peter Othiambo

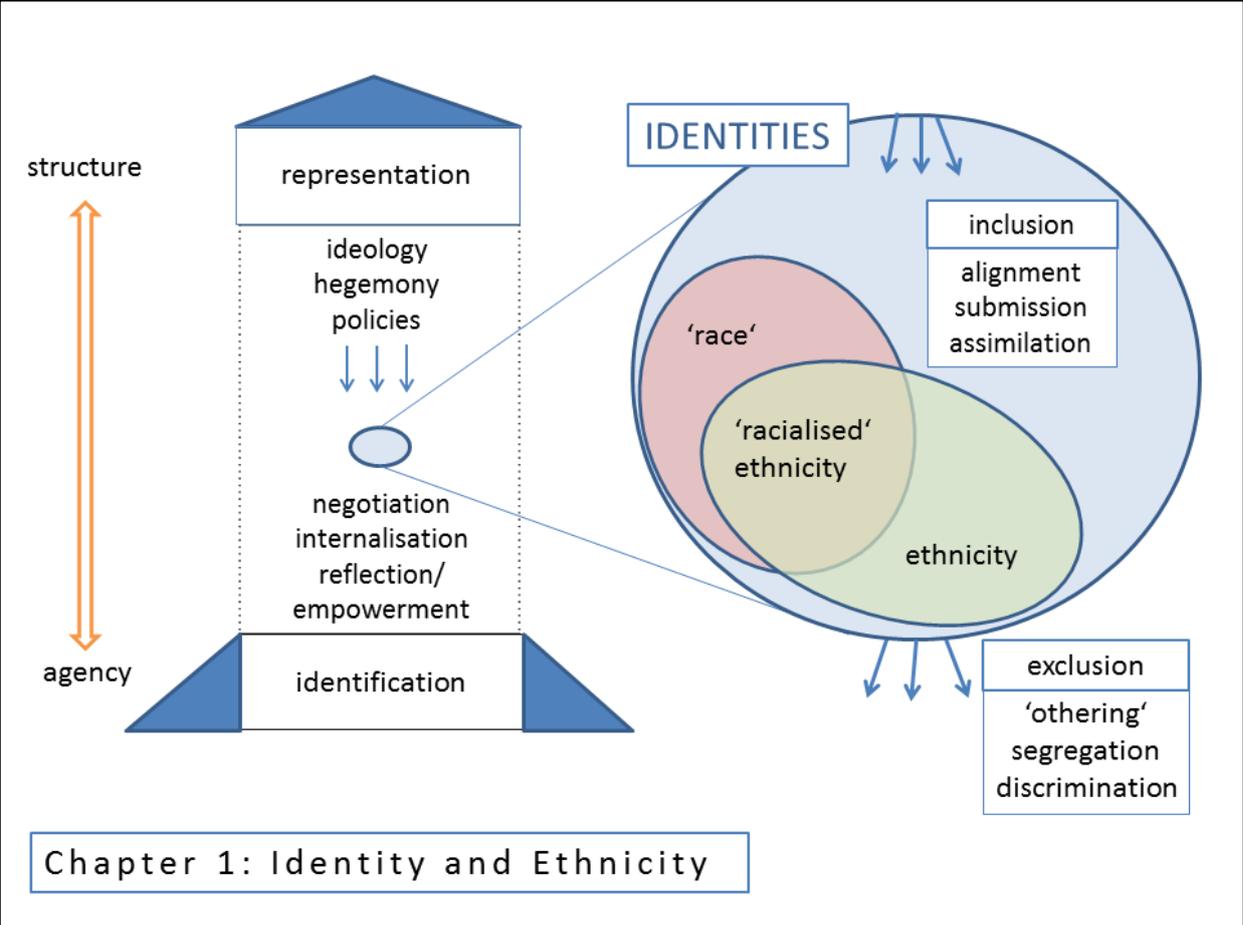
39:41-41:12 Althoff: So, you would probably assume that Luo were already Luo and Kikuyu were Kikuyu, like, separate in the same way, before colonial times?

Othiambo: Yes, yes, these are two different nations. During colonisation, the Luos [were] a community so different, so far away from Central. Yeah. We only meet in Nairobi. [...] You know, at [...] colonialism, what happened, [...] the Luya had their own kings, they were all different nations, the Luos had their own structures of government [...], the Kikuyus also [...]. But then, during colonisation, Africans were forced now to come under one administration, where in Kenya, during the Scramble for Africa, the borders were drawn. [...] But there was never a recognition that these were different nations that needed also to understand how they could relate as now one community.

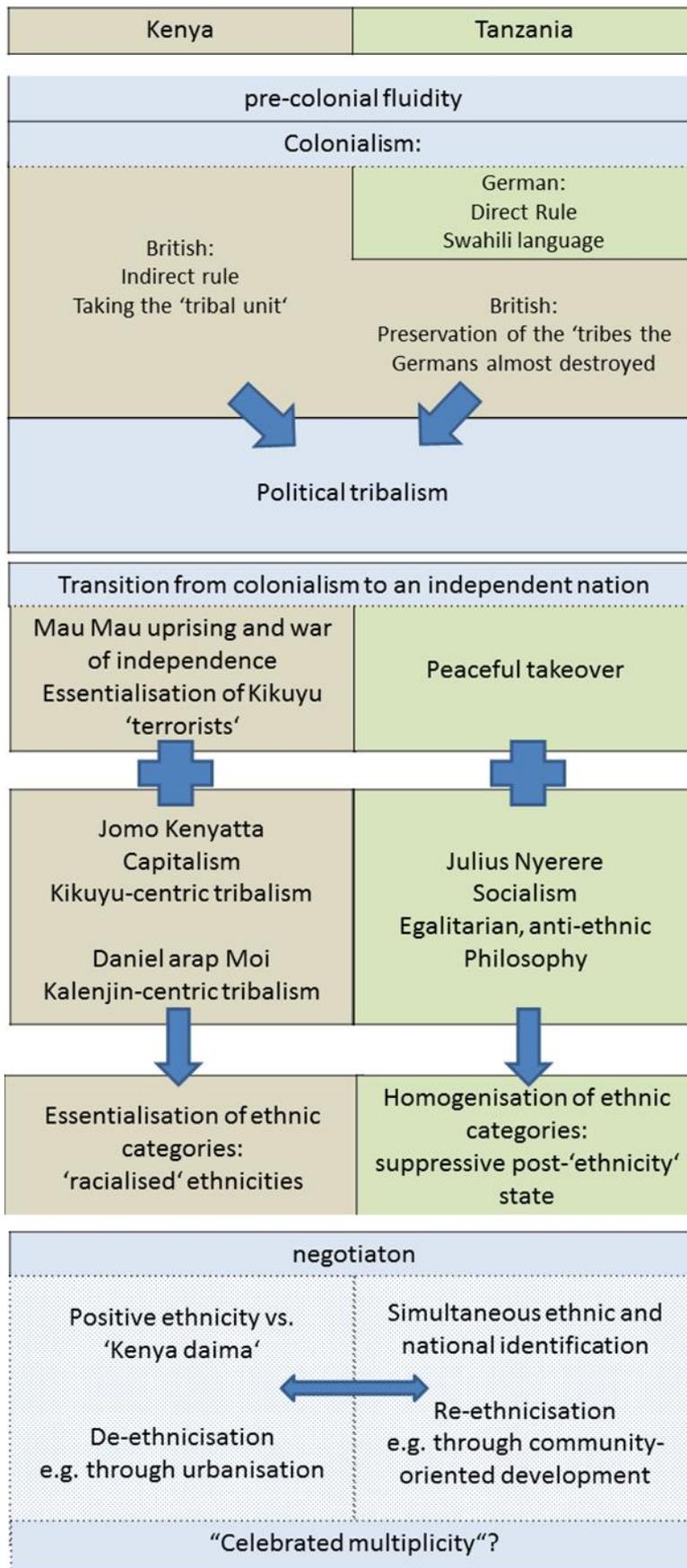
41:54-43:36 Othiambo: In the beginning [=at independence] the country was divided between socialism and capitalism. [...] But of course the [...] colonisers were capitalists. [...] The division between Jaramogi [Odinga] and Kenyatta [...] was also along these lines. [...] The Western and the Eastern blocks were pulling Kenya in different directions. [...] And of course this also brought a lot of differences between the leaders.

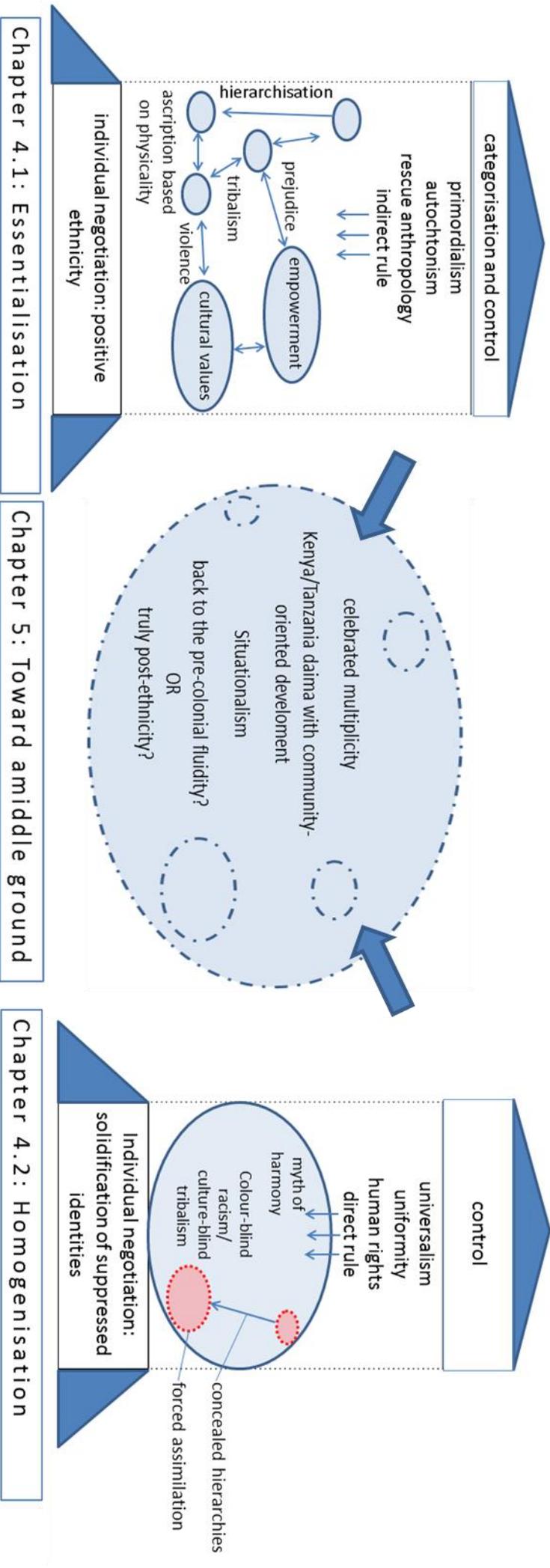
2. Diagrams

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Chapters 2-5: Overview over argumentation





Chapter 4.1: Essentialisation

Chapter 5: Toward amiddle ground

Chapter 4.2: Homogenisation