

In this study, an attempt is made to analyse the forces that bred conflict in the Kikuyu Lari society in Kiambu district and which finally led to an outbreak of violence, which culminated in the Lari massacre of 26th March 1953. The study perceives violence within the Marxist and neo-Marxist concept of social conflict. Issues pertinent to violence; land alienation, the squatter system, political suppression and the role of colonial functionaries are outlined here as they related to the rise of conflict. Hence the massacre is studied as an aspect of a wider historical setting that is, the generation of conflict within the political economy of colonial Kenya. The material realities of the African were riddled with denigrating experiences, which generated the widespread nature of violence in the Kenya Colony.

The study demonstrates that the African was relegated to a second-class citizenship, a factor that is well illustrated by the Lari trials, which were instituted following the raid. This ridiculed position was reinforced by the operations of the colonial jurisprudence by which the colonial legal machinery emerged adversarial to the African interests in the country. The judiciary was an instrument of legitimating unequal social and political relations in the colony. An attempt is made to discuss the social problems that followed the execution of the massacre. The local inhabitants were punished for whatever roles and support they might have played or given towards the success of the Mau Mau attack on the so-called loyal Kikuyu in the area. Thus, indiscriminate shootings by colonial officials, physical torture, loss of property to colonial officials and sexual abuse were some of the characteristic features of the period following the raid which the judicial system resolved in very superficial terms by imposing unwarranted jail terms to the Mau Mau suspects.