

German Colonialism, Memory and Ebrahim Hussein's Kinjeketile

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Abstract

This paper examines how Ebrahim Hussein in *Kinjeketile* uses memory of German colonial rule in the then Tanganyika, a part of German East Africa to interrogate the encounter between the coloniser and colonised. Hussein's play largely deploys the African belief system to represent a moment of great conflict between the German colonial administration and native Tanganyikans as the locals struggle to build national consciousness under nascent nationalism. The paper uses a new historicist approach to determine the discrepancy between fact and fiction, much as the play is based on an actual event that took place in the 1905-1907 period. It argues that the reconstruction of the Maji Maji rebellion is geared towards evoking the memory of the past to teach the present and the future generations rather than present a historical fact. Thus the paper demonstrates the power of memory in invigorating the present in relation to the future.

Keywords: German, Tanganyika, Maji Maji, Ebrahim Hussein, Kinjeketile, Memory

1. Introduction

There are many documents and testimonies preserved in books and archives that recount the horror and trauma of the Maji Maji war in the then colonial Tanganyika. These documents and testimonies have become useful sources of historical facts regarding German colonialism in the East African nation. Books are read for their facts; similarly archives provide humans with a glimpse at history. Archives also have a bearing on memories of events in the past and facilitate people's understanding of history (Craig 2002: 276-289). Literary texts, on the other hand, present the historical past in the mode of imaginative variations. Lavenne, Renard and Tollet point out that "literature is...the site of sharing and communication, for a literary work is always meant to be read. The reader identifies with the narrated event, takes part in it and makes it exist in his memory" (Lavenne *et al.* 2005: 9). Whereas the concept of memory has been studied in the past twenty years or so in connection with other literary texts, there is no study undertaken to examine the use of memory in Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile*.\(^1\)

Memory as a trope has been studied by scholars and critics. Since the 1990s, studies have been undertaken on memory in what Malikin calls "the remains of the past and especially how" human beings remember what human beings "remember, and what memory means for the nation, the community, the self and the arts..." (Malikin 2010: 270-272). Memory is a recollection or remembrance of past events; a well spring of reflection and imagination. (Craig 2002: 79). The interest in memory, as explained by Foust, has been the subject of stories that human beings "share and the various iterations of the past that" human beings "personally and collectively tell become who human beings are" and as remembering communities they are "relatively accurate historical reconstructions or wholly fictional accounts of" human "lives and the past." Quoting Smith, Foust asserts: "[M]emory is ultimately a story about and thus a discourse on, original experience", that something that actually happened in the past.

In *Kinjeketile*, Hussein uses memory of a tragic and heroic event in Tanganyika's history to reconstruct the past as a tool for resistance. In the play, Hussein reconstructs the memorable experiences of Southern Tanganyikans' in an artistic work. Hussein's use of memory in the play is directly connected to contemporary views regarding memory and the performative art, particularly in connection with Tanzania's struggle with powerful forces under neo-colonialism and imperialism. Jourbert notes that memory is "the idea of bringing the *past* back into the arena of the *present*, where stories become performative-utterances-historicizing gestures

¹ This play has been studied and examined from different perspectives such as political, economic, cultural and social dimensions. See, for example, Biodun Jeyifo, 'Tragedy, History and Ideology: Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile*' in G. M. Gugelberger (ed.), *Marxism and African Literature* (Trenton, 1985),94-109, A. Lihamba, 'Politics and Theatre After Arusha Declaration, 1967-1984,'(Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1986), Jane Plastow, *African Theatre and Politics: The Evolution of Theatre in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (Rodopi, 1996), 138-140, Alain Ricard, *Ebrahim Hussein : Swahili Theatre and Individualism* (Mkuki na Nyota,2000), E. S. Mwaifuge, 'Beliefs and Human Behaviour in the Theatre of Ebrahim Hussein' (M.A Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam,2001), W. D. Kamera, 'Ebrahim Hussein and Dramaturgical Dialects' (UNISWA Research Journal, 2003), 21-29, and E. S. Mwaifuge, 'Art and History: Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile* (*Tanzania Zamani* Journal, 2009), 26-46.
² S. V. Foust 'Storied Memories: Memory as Resistance in Contemporary Women's Literature' Unpublished PhD Thesis,

² S. V. Foust 'Storied Memories: Memory as Resistance in Contemporary Women's Literature' Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Loyola, Chicago, 2010),8. (http://luc.edu/_diss/176).

³ *Ibid*.



where people live the past." (Jouberbet 2010: 48). On the other hand, the theme of memory is closely connected to theatre and drama based on the assumption that when a performative art is presented an individual can learn and to keep on remembering events presented in the play. In this regard, Arcila (2010) points out:

The performative of character of remembrance brings practices of collective memory close to theatre and drama that attempts to address historical memory...Theatre is one of those sites and drama is considered a very old special form of memory. It has always represented an archive of historical memory and a cultural practice of articulation of the past...Theatre is not only a cultural but also an historical art form. It bears representations of significant individual and collective events passed through generations reinforcing particular interpretations of the past. In this sense drama has been a sort of specialized storage of history if we understand dramatic texts as species of repositories of historical events or cultural memory. As a cultural practice, theatre embodies a legacy of collective rituals of memory that are re-actualized and transformed every time theatrical performances take place (p.11-12).

In *Kinjeketile*, Hussein re-visits more significant memories of the lives of Southern Tanganyikans. The play becomes a site where people can learn and remember what transpired between the Southern Tanganyikans and the Germans and re-think about the past, the present and the future. In the play, the stories of memory recast the violence, fear and terror experienced by Southern Tanganyikans during the German colonial rule. This is part of *Kinjeketile*'s attempt to link the past, the present and the future through memory since what transpired in the historical past informs the present and the future existence of a nation. In the play, memory of the hostile colonial encounter shapes the notions of individuality and group identity of the characters as they come to terms with the traumatic experiences, hence making the play capture the complex historical and emotional nuances of the lives of the Southern Tanganyikans under German colonial rule.

2. Theoretical Approach: Memory and Kinjeketile

In writing *Kinjeketile*, Hussein borrowed memories from Records (Bell 1950; Gwassa & Illife 1967, 1968). As a result, *Kinjeketile* is presented from remembered pasts. The play weaves a realistic presentation with a past experienced by both individuals and the collective during the German colonial rule. As such, this paper uses a new historicist approach. Under new historicism, a literary text is analysed in reference to history. New historicism considers a literary work as a product of the time, place and the historical circumstances of the composition of that particular text. The aim of new historicists is to understand a literary text through the historical context and to understand the cultural aspects of the text under study and its setting (Ross & Ray 1998). It is said that events are remembered by people by remembering specific events and places that are linked together (Kaneva 2006). Lavenne *et al.*: 5) contend that memories can be "kept intact, as faithful images of past experiences" and also can be automatically retrieved. The point here is that "memory is faithful to the past and can thus be reconstructed in its entirely as long as one holds the key to the past (*Ibid*).

Kinjeketile is a symbolic projection of the conflict between the Germans and Southern Tanganyikans. This symbolic projection is embedded in the private and collective memories of the people. In the play, the basis of the struggle is the denunciation of German colonial rule which has traumatised people, hence the urgent need to find an outlet to galvanise their struggle. In this paper, memory is used in terms of both private and collective memory. Private memories are memories experienced by an individual, memories built on elements of personal lives. In this study, private memory is the memory held by an individual in expressing his or her personal lives during the German rule. Collective memory, on the other hand, is used at the level of the collective. As an individual is a part of a community, interaction with the community is inevitable (Bartlett 1932). Citing Mayer and Roussiau, Lavenne *et al.* (2005: 3) point out that "individuals adopt the memory of the groups in which they live: an individual's personal memories will always interweave with the impersonal memories of the group, for memory is inherently shared and thus social in character. Collective memory thus functions as a framework within which individual memory is built and structured." In this paper, collective memory is imperative as it helps to understand the collective consciousness that eventually inspire Southern Tanganyikans to rise up against the powerful and better equipped adversaries.

3. Private Memory: Fact, Fiction and Kinjeketile

To understand the seeds of struggle that Hussein deploys in the play, one can use Gwassa and Illife's *Records*, which is being used in this article as the co-text:

The cultivation of cotton was done by turns. Every village was allotted days on which to cultivate at Samanga Ndumbo and at Jumbe's plantation. One person came from each homestead, unless there were many people. Thus you might be told to work for five or ten days at Samanga. So a person would go. Then after half the number of days another man came to relieve him. If the new man did not feel pity for him, the same person would stay on until he finished...Then after arriving there you all suffered vary greatly. Your back and your buttocks



were whipped, and there was no rising up once you stopped to dig. The good thing about the Germans was that all the people were the same before the whip. If a jumbe or Akida made a mistake he received a whip as well. Thus there were people whose job was to clear the land of trees and undergrowth; others tilled the land, others would smoothen the field and plant; another group would do the weeding and yet another the picking; and lastly others carried the bales of cotton to the coast beyond Kikanda for shipping...The work was astonishingly hard and full of grave suffering, but its wages were the whip on one's back and buttocks. And yet he [the German] still wanted us to pay him tax (p. 4).

This ill-treatment is a source of discontent that *Kinjeketile* tries to capture. Otherwise, the play's storyline would be dead without this memory of this humiliating experience in one's own backyard. The Tanganyikans were being forced to grow cotton for export for the benefit of the colonisers, not the natives. From a traditional point of view, "memory is an individual phenomenon." (Lavenne *et al*: 1). It is asserted that "an individual expresses what he [she] has heard, felt or thought in the past" (*Ibid*). In *Kinjeketile*, Hussein begins his play by presenting the above quoted facts reported to Gwassa and Illife by one of the respondents during their research on the 1905-1907 Maji Maji uprising. In writing a literary work, a writer can add or alter some facts presented because a literary work is bound to the world of creative imagination.

At the beginning of Kinjeketile, different kinds of memories regarding German colonialism are evoked by the characters. One is reminded of the way Germany turned Germany East Africa into its protectorate in 1885 following the infamous Berlin Conference in the struggle for territorial control under the umbrella of "The Scramble for Africa." Historically, Tanganyika was occupied by in earnest the Germans in 1890. When the Germans settled in Tanganyika they purged Tanganyikans from their fertile arable land supplanted them for colonial gains. In the play, one is reminded of how the key economic factor forced the Germans to introduce cotton plantations in the Southern Tanganyika. German textile manufacturers found that the cotton they used from America was very expensive. Thus, they wanted "to replace the most expensive cotton obtained from America with the cheapest cotton from Africa" (Sadock 2010: 63). From different characters, members of the audience are reminded of the forced labour, heavy taxation and corporal punishment imposed on the Southern Tanganyikans during German colonial. The audience is taken back to witness the brutality and harsh methods deployed to supervise the unwilling farm-hands, the harsh and brutal methods of tax collection, the establishment of the large white schemes in Southern Tanganyika and the way the Germans used the akidas and jumbes to humiliate the locals. Historically, during the 30 years of Germany colonial rule in Tanganyika, the Germans used the "akida government system based on the appointment of school-educated Swahili speaking agents rather than one based on tribal authority" (Bryceson 2018: 9). The akidas and jumbes were imposed on Southern Tanganyikans communities to collect taxes and mobilise forced labour for the Germans. For example, as noted by Koponen among the Matumbi and Kichi, the jumbes were Mkechekeche Kyuta and Ngogota Mhiwa. Koponen further adds that another known jumbe was a Ngindo, a brave man, an elephant hunter and rubber collector named Abdullah Mapanda who lived in Liwale (Koponen 2010: 16). The dialogue between Bibi Kinjeketile and Bibi Kitunda in the play relieves the vivid memories of German colonialism:

Bibi Kinjeketile: Bwana Kinoo's plantation grows bigger every day.

Bibi Kitunda: And all that work for nothing. Our men work a lot, but they get nothing. We don't even have food in the house. When my husband comes back from the plantation I have no food to give him. I have looked for roots, I couldn't get any. And anyway, some of these roots are most poisonous. Bibi Bobali's son died from eating some...

Bibi Kitunda: I know...All men are working in Bwana Kinoo's plantation and not their own...

Bibi Kinjeketile: What you say is true. All the men are spending all their time cultivating for Bwana Kinoo, and not for themselves (*Kinjeketile* p. 23).

The memories provided by the two women characters are recollections of what actually transpired in the historical past to expose the violent nature of German colonialism. These memories also foreshadow the violent events to come in the play. In the exposition of the play, Hussein does not give the audience all the historical facts, living it to the characters to engage with those memories. Indeed, the dialogue of the two women characters prompts the audience to remember and recollect the horrors of German colonialism in Tanganyika. The white man, Bwana Kinoo, who owns the contested plantation, represents the German settlers. 'Bwana Kinoo' is a nickname he goes by among the local inhabitants. In 1902, the Germans ordered Southern Tanganyikans in the villages to grow cotton as a cash crop. Each of the village was ordered to have a plot of cotton. The person who oversaw the production was a headman of the village. Under this German colonial regime, the social fabric of society changed rapidly. Men were forced to work in the colonial plantations to grow cash crops they cannot eat and the women began to assume the roles of men of feeding their men and children as the men no longer work in their traditional farm lots. The Germans also limited food crop production in favour of cotton.

Thus, Hussein uses the two women to convey evocative sentiments to remind the audience of the brutal historical reality. Bibi Kitunda tells Bibi Kinjiketile about the death of Bibi Bobali's son who dies because



of eating poisonous plants as steady food supplies disappear as the Germans force locals to prioritise a cash crop that does not bring food on the table. In historical documents, the issue of people eating poisonous plants when a natural drought occurred in 1904-05 is not documented. Sadock asserts that prior to the Maji Maji rebellion, the drought did not translate into high mortality rate because different strategies such as intercropping, food storage "and even hunting and gathering were used during famine." (Sadock 2010: 71).

It is evident that the opening of the play alludes to the famine which was exacerbated by the Maji Maji war as the locals stepped up their rebellion against the oppression of the Germans. Hussein has probably injected the issue of famine in the opening of the play to draw the audience's attention to the devastating effects of German colonial intervention and the resistance it engendered that are often taken for granted. The famine to which the two women refer came after the peak of the Maji Maji war. History records that in 1905 before the war, a drought threatened the Southern part of Tanganyika. This famine coupled with the draconian agricultural and labour policies of the Germans led to the rebellion in July 1905 (Wright 1995: 121-141). Following the rebellion, the Germans forced the soldiers to give up their weapons. Also, the leaders of the rebellion and the so-called witchdoctors were pardoned to surrender. In this case, the Germans exploited the famine as a weapon to bring the rebelling locals to yield: They destroyed villages and wells. They also removed livestock and set fields ablaze and gutted food stores. As a result, a good number of deaths were linked with the famine. In fact, in 1906 in the mid of the war, food was getting scarce and expensive everywhere, hence leading malnutrition and deaths of children. Accounts from one of the respondents reveal the following:

The children, especially babies, looked like skeletons...The older ones had blown up bellies caused by the unusual food, so the mortality rate was high. Older people had no chance to survive on such meagre diet. Even young people were no longer laughing but just sitting in front of their huts and empty pots, any talk would be of "njaa" [hunger]. Hunger turned people into beggars...there came three years of famine...This famine was called "Fugufugu" (adult). Never before or after the Maji Maji war had there been anything like it...People died in large numbers and their bodies were left to decay because nobody was able to bury them (*Ibid*).

As already pointed out, the famine to which the two women characters allude was supposed to happen later after the break out of the war. In the play, it sets the sad tone of the play. Not surprisingly, Bibi Kitunda requests for some spinach or cassava from Bibi Kinjeketile (p.2). This presentation in the opening of the play renders the dramatic expression pertaining to gnawing hunger the characters have to contend with, which as the effect of reminding the audience of the brutality of German colonialism. Eating poisonous plants is a sign of utmost desperation among a people otherwise well-versed with their environment.

The image of the brutality of the Germans is also dramatised through the whipping of Kitunda. Kitunda has been whipped because he wants to rest after an arduous task during cultivation. After the beating, he is carried back home by other characters (p. 3); he is too frail to walk by himself. The play thus provides a visual experience for the audience to recollect what actually transpired during the German colonial rule. It is against such brutality that Southern Tanganyikans in the play begin to voice their discontent. Through Mkichi, one connects what the two women utter at the beginning with the widespread discontent:

Mkichi: From the day we held our first meeting until today, nothing has been done. The Red Earth is still in our country. What's more, he [the Germans] has taken our country by force...Now he has forced us to cultivate his cotton plantation for him. We just stare at him. He has got us paying him taxes. We just stare at him. Is it for him to demand taxes from us? He should be paying us tax, but ho no!...How long are we going to remain meek and silent? Are we going to allow ourselves to be persecuted in our own country? (*Kinjeketile* p. 5).

Thus, *Kinjeketile* opens our imaginations to the deep truths of the past: German colonialism and its devastating effects on the locals. Mkichi calls on people to rebel and cease to be meek lambs. Just like the Mngindo, Mkichi is a character who represents other Kichis who were affected by the Germans. Thus, Hussein uses the character of Mkichi as a site of memory for us to understand the grievances of the Kichis against the Germans. Emotional memory in this case is represented by the characters of Bibi Kinjeketile, Bibi Kitunda and Mkichi, as they recall events that have happened in the past and, thus, trigger all physical emotions associated with it. Hussein then, uses memory as a metaphor to remember the past; to remember the moment of despair and anger among Southern Tanganyikans as they are pitied against the irrepressible Germans. The facts in the play are also used to advance the plot and build tension, not just for the sake of presenting the truth about German colonialism. The facts also serve as a sad reminder of the ugly past experiences.

In Act One (Scene 1 and 2) Hussein provides basic information on the cause and effects of German colonialism among Southern Tanganyikans. The subjective experience of each character helps to repaint a realistic picture of the relationship between the Germans and Southern Tanganyikans, on the one hand, and to create a platform for rising tension that drives the play to its fictional recreation of resistance and its aftermath.

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¹ Maji Maji-The effects of Maji Maji War (http:majimaji.tanzania-network.de/article21.htm).



To ensure that real emotion is not precluded from the play in relation to the historical events, Hussein incorporates genuine feelings among the characters—the First Man, the Second Man, Mkichi, Mngindo, Kitunda and the Old Man—who help cumulatively to show the reality: the historical truth.

4. Collective Memory: Fact, Fiction and Kinjeketile

The play is based on the traditional beliefs that allowed the local inhabitants to otherwise defy the irrepressible Germans, whose firepower alone made the locals fearful of antagonising them. As the play develops this ingredient:

He [Kinjeketile] was taken by an evil spirit one day in the morning at about nine o'clock. Everyone saw it, and his children and wives as well. They were basking outside when they saw him go on his belly, his hands stretched out before him. They tried to get hold of his legs and pull him but it was impossible, and he cried out that he did not want [to be pulled back] and that they were hurting him. Then he disappeared in a pool of water. He slept in there and his relatives slept by the pool overnight waiting for him. Those who knew how to swim dived down into the pool but they did not see anything. Then they said, "If he is dead we will see his body; if he has been taken by a beast or by a spirit of the waters we shall see him returned dead or alive." So they waited, and the following morning, at about nine o'clock again, he emerged unhurt with his clothes dry and from there he began talking of prophetic matters. He said, "All dead ancestors will come back; they are at Bokelo's in Rufiji Ruhingo. No lion or leopard will eat men. We are all the Sayyid Saidi', the Sayyid's alone."The song ran: We are the Sayyid Said's family alone. Be it an Mpogoro, Mkichi, or Mmatumbi, we are all Sayyid Said's. The lion was sheep, and the European was read earth or fish of the water. Let us beat him. And he caught two lions which he tethered with a creeper, and people danced Likida before those two lions. They remained harmless. Then word of this new man spread afar (Gwassa and Illife 1967: 9).

The passage from *Records* helps to contextualise the myth and mystery that surrounds the Maji Maji war and how the belief in the supernatural was the basis for the Maji Maji rebellion in order to overcome repression at the hands of the Germans. Historical facts show that the Southern Tanganyikans had no power of fighting against the Germans because of two major reasons. First, the southern Tanganyikans had no modern weaponry to stand up against the mighty Germans; they only had spears, bows and arrows at their disposal. Second, inter-tribal conflicts had weakened the united front among the locals. Therefore, it was very difficult to fight the Germans in disunity and with poor weapons. Current studies, especially of Becker reveal that prior to the Maji Maji rebellion the Matumbi of Kilwa and especially the Ngindo of Liwale were unwarlike and weak (Becker 2010: 4). Although these ethnic groups had common grievances against the Germans, sometimes they fought one another for power and control. The intervention of Kinjiketile was, therefore, necessary for two reasons. First, the intervention helped to show the people that powerful forces can shield them against the powerful Germans. Second, it had the capacity to unite disparate groups in the locality towards a united front against German oppression and colonisation.

Kinjeketile Ngwale, the historical figure and the medicine man, used a magical concoction as an inspiration towards fostering resistance among the locals. This aspect has been extensively studied by scholars and critics alike. Hence it is not worth repeating. Simply put, Kinjeketile Ngwale was possessed by a snake spirit, Hongo, and called himself Bokelo, a deity among the locals. He told the German East Africans that he had been called to eliminate the Germans. He gave his followers the war medicine, which would turn the European bullets into water. The medicine was mixed with castor oil and millet seeds. With this new liquid people began the war which later came to be known Maji Maji rebellion. Historically, the Matumbi believed in their high deity, Bokelo. He gave them legitimacy and validity to their existence. To them, Bokelo had power over everything. Kinjeketile's affiliation with Bokelo is what is believed to have prompted the Southern Tanganyikans to believe what he told them (Gwassa & Illife: 10-11).

However, Hussein's *Kinjeketile* does not only root the genesis of Maji Maji war in the Matumbi belief system but also in the beliefs of other lands, hence making the struggle assume a nationalistic perspective rather than simply a localised one. Unlike the historical facts presented by historians regarding the essence and the use of the water, Hussein uses the past through memory to allow the audience to reconstruct the events during the war and visualise the present and the future. Vinson states that in memory the meaning of the past is presented through "storied remembering." According to her, human beings are allowed access not only to time past but also to the present and the future (Foust 2010).

In the introductory part of the play, Hussein, the playwright explains that Kinjeketile of the play "is not an historical evocation of the real man [Kinjeketile Ngwale]" but "the creature of the imagination..." (p. v).

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¹ Maji Revolt (1905-1907) Polynational War Memorial http://www.memorial.net/majimaji-revolt-3.12).



Although this is true to a certain extent, one can see how the actions of Kinjeketile—the character—mirrors Kinjeketile Ngwale; the historical figure, in some significant ways. Kinjeketile Ngwale was a diviner who "lived at Ngarambe, below the western slopes of Matumbi and held a position of authority until 1904, when Hongo possessed him" (Iliffe 1995: 168). Kinjeketile Ngwale, the diviner, did not participate in the cultivation of cotton. In the play, the character Kinjeketile participates in cultivation of cotton (p. 4), hence he experiences what others complain about, rather than depend on hearsay. As an aggrieved party, Kinjeketile, the created character, acts on what he also experiences. Yet, like Kinjeketile Ngwale, Kinjeketile, the character, is motivated by religious beliefs. Hence, one can easily identify fictional with historical truth.

The historical facts regarding tribal conflicts among the ethnic groups, hence disunity and misunderstandings among the locals and the poor weaponry at their disposal disunity are re-enacted in the play through Kitunda, Mkichi, Mngindo and the Old Man. Kitunda reminds others how difficult it is to fight with the Germans as they have far superior weapons to theirs. He is seen as a coward. Others insist that they have to fight. Kitunda also reminds them that they cannot fight until they are united (pp.5-7). Evidently, amidst disunity, resistance is rather weak. The traditional hostilities among ethnic groups arbitrarily brought together under one nation following the Berlin Conference leave the locals splintered and vulnerable. In the play, Mkichi represents the Kichi ethnic group and Kitunda is a Matumbi.

The historical Kinjeketile Ngwale, the diviner, was new in Ngarambe. He came from Ruhingo in Rufiji River Basin. He was a well known person for his magical powers. He was believed to have an ability of raising the spirits of the dead so that people could see their own ancestors. He also cured people from the many ailments. Thus, when he invented the medicine— the *maji* (water)—people believed him for two primary reasons. First, they were witnesses to his powerful medicines. Second, they believed in Bokelo who had sent him through Hongo, the spirit, to serve his people. Under the African belief system and cosmology, the supernatural participates in the affairs of the living. Mbiti argues that in Africa the ancestral spirits through god(s) take part in earthly life (Mbiti 2004). The ancestral spirits are believed to intervene and intercede in practical aspects such as hunting, battles and ceremonies. They also believed to become sad to see human beings suffer or become disappointed when human beings disobey them because they are seen as intermediaries between human beings and God—the Supreme Being (*Ibid*). To the Matumbi, Bokelo is a Supreme Being; the Creator of the Matumbi. He is followed by Hongo, the spirit, then Kinjeketile, the diviner, and finally the dead ancestors. Thus Bokelo intercedes to save his people from suffering at the hands of the Germans by sending Hongo, the spirit, to deliver the message from the spiritual realm to galvanise the people against the otherwise indomitable Germans.

In the play, the audience witnesses the true nature of Kinjeketile and his connection with Bokelo and Hongo. When Kitunda and other characters quarrel on whether they should fight with the Germans, smoke is seen at Kinjeketile's house (p. 8). This smoke foreshadows events associated with Kinjeketile's behaviour. But this smoke had already appeared earlier when Kinjeketile was performing the ritual in his house. Thus Hussein makes the audience of the play concentrate on Kinjeketile's actions so that they believe what subsequently happens.. Kinjeketile's behaviour is further developed through the dialogue between Bibi Kitunda, her daughter Chausiku and Bibi Kinjeketile:

Chausiku: Look, mother! There's smoke. It's coming from Kinjeketile's house...

Bibi Kitunda: You know, we thought you were cooking when we saw smoke coming from your house. **Bibi Kinjeketile:** Oh, that smoke...That is Kinjeketile performing his rituals...He's locked himself for many days now...

Chausiku: A snake! I' m chased by a snake!

Bibi Kitunda: A snake? Where is it?

Chausiku: Behind me! Bibi Kitunda: Where? Chausiku: Behind me!

Bibi Kitunda: There is no snake.

Look, is there a snake?

of course not. There is no snake (Kinjeketile p. 3).

This representation recollects the occult powers associated with the historical Kinjeketile. However, these recollections of memories are of particular significance. From the dialogue above, three things are connected: Kinjeketile, Hongo and Bokelo. Kinjeketile's actions depend on Hongo; the snake (spirit), which is a link between the high deity, Bokelo, and Kinjeketile. Historical evidence shows that the snake, which used to visit Kinjeketile, disappeared to the river, some three hundred yards from Kinjeketile's house (Gwassa 1969: 116-122). Similar evidence is provided by Larson, who explains that the snake, Hongo, existed in different

¹ "Myths, Legends, Beliefs and Traditional stories from Africa"-Gallery: A Web Gallery of Contemporary East and South African Paintings" (http/www. A-gallery de/docs/mythology.htm).



places in the southern Tanganyika (Larson 2010: 80-81). She attests that in Lindi the spirit Hongo was also known as *songo*, *hongwe*, *songwe* and was a giant serpent feared by people. She further contends that the Yao, Matumbi, Pogoro and Mbunga areas had similar beliefs associated with the spirit Hongo (*Ibid*). This widespread belief in the supernatural created necessary conditions that made the historical Kinjeketile win over the Southern Tanganyikans with his message. After all, they had a shared belief system. This connection is evident in the play in the scene where Kinjekitile is in trance (Act II Scene I). Kinjeketile is in pain and begins to writhe and slithering towards the river where the snake, Hongo, has vanished to. It is also here at the river where the ritual connected with the Maji Maji rebellion takes place and whence the water ideology emerges.

It is apparent that Hussein in the play takes the recorded history to reconstruct not only the event but also to develop the plot of the play. Generally, to understand and interpret human history, information is taken from varied sources such as learned narrative structures, stories individuals have been told, read or learned and fragments of personal experiences (Fouster 2010). Under the memory theory, the writers can incorporate new information and experiences to create new plots (*Ibid*). In the play, Kinjeketile comes out of the water dry after staying submerged there for twenty four hours. Here one is reminded of Hongo who vanished into the same waters after visiting Kinjeketile. The belief is that Kinjeketile was in contact with Hongo, the spirit. Who was empowering and strengthening his power and hold on the people so that they believe and follow him. Thus when in the play he emerged from the water with his garment dry, he is able to deliver his prophetic utterances at this sacred river:

Behold, the sun has risen, and it shines forth through clouds of smoke and fog. Behold, The rays of the sun banish from your eyes clouds of smoke and fog, that hid a brother from a brother, that hid a tribe from a tribe, that hid a Mrufiji from a Mngoni, that hid a Mmatumbi from a Mrufiji. There was darkness, it was cold. We were blinded by one And contracted by the other. A small, constricted, isolated band of people. The sun has risen, It will fill us warmth and love-Love for one another, Love between tribes-And the warmth of love will free us, We will expand, yes expand We will reach out, reach out And we will unite (*Kinjeketile* p. 15).

His message is also political since it seeks to unite the divided; the ethnic groups as well. In truth, the prophetic utterances of the historical Kinjeketile Ngwale did not go this far. He only prophesised on the coming back of the dead ancestors to help the people fight against the Germans. In other words, the words of the fictional Kinjeketile towards unity are politically charged and are inspired by the need for political unity in both the present and the future. With a united front, people can resist, win and re-new "the people's collective existence" Jeyifo 1985: 103). Kinjeketile uses belief in the supernatural to unite the once divided ethnic groups:

Kinjeketile: Smoke, there was smoke. Fog, there was fog. But after the smoke will come light. After the fog will come the gentle glow of dawn. Smoke and fog were bred on our ignorance, our hatred. They sapped our unity and strength. This fog and smoke smothered our love for one another, the love between the Mmakonde, and the Mmatumbi, the Mpogoro and the Mmatumbi. Hatred is darkness. We were all our own masters, in disunity. The Mmatumbi felt superior to the Mngoni, the Mzaramo better than the Mkichi. This was darkness. We will march from darkness into light. I have been given this water. This water I have brought to you. This water will bind together the roots of love and affection. And the roots will grow, expand, and reach out and tie, tie us in the bond of brotherhood. We will be one people. Maji! (*Kinjeketile* p.14).

There are echoes of the historical facts in the pronouncements. More significantly, Kinjeketile's



testimony is the axis around which actions undertaken revolve. His declaration that the water—maji—will make people's body unassailable by German bullets—unites the people and emboldens them towards resistance. The reaction of the characters after being assured that the German bullets will be harmless make the people chant because at last the solution has been found:

Kinjeketile: ...Maji! Crowd: Maji! Kinjeketile: Maji!

Crowd: Maji! Maji! Kinjeketile! Maji! Maji! Kinjeketile!...

Crowd: Maji! Maji! Maji!...

Kinjeketile: ...It will help you destroy Red Earth! **Crowd:** Maji! Maji! Maji! (*Kinjeketile* p. 17-18).

Therefore, Hussein uses history to re-create the *maji*-water ideology and convey to the audience the emotions associated with making the impossible become possible.

Although the historical document by Illife and Gwassa (1967: 9-10) points out that Kinjeketile Ngwale was possessed by Hongo, they do not associate the spirit with evil. But the respondents in their research mention Hongo as an evil spirit (*Ibid*). An evil spirit is usually a destructive force, a force that tends to cause harm. Gwassa and Illife's respondents called it an evil spirit possibly because of the time lapse and exposure to European teachings about good and evil, whereby African belief systems were all dubbed as diabolical, always linked with evil. In fact, in Judeo-Christian belief, a serpent such as Hongo is associated with evil, hence the temptation in the Garden of Eden. In his later book, Illife notes that Hongo was to Bokelo (the chief deity) as Jesus is to God. This implies that as Jesus intended to save the people so was Hongo (Iliffe 1979: 169).

Hussein's play, *Kinjeketile*, attempts to provide insight into this evil spirit. In the recreation, Hussein recasts the spirit as presented in Gwassa and Illife historical document. In the play, Hussein actually makes recourse to an actual destructive evil spirit. The spirit is *Chunusi*. It is a demon, which lives in rivers or seas and inhabits human bodies. Through this spirit, one is able to re-call the scene in which Kinjeketile, the character, confesses to Kitunda that he has been deceived:

Kitunda: I was waiting for you.

Kinjeketile: How did you know I would pass here?

Kitunda: I know you normally go to the river at a time like this.

Kinjeketile: How do you know?

Kitunda: One night, some time ago, I could not get a sleep; so I came out. It was too hot inside, and as I came out I saw you going towards the river. The following night I saw you doing the same. The third night too, I came out, and saw go towards the river.

Kinjeketile: What is troubling you?

Kitunda: I have been waiting here because I want to talk to you. I cannot get the chance otherwise.

Kinjeketile: Go on.

Kitunda: When you came out of the river, your clothes were dry. I touched them. They were

Kinjeketile: So?

Kitunda: This thing has been troubling me in my heart.

Kinjeketile: You don't believe?...

Kitunda: You don't look like Kinjeketile anymore. You face is smooth, not dry. And even your stature-you have somehow shrunk...one more question...

Kinjeketile: Hm?

Kitunda: Who is Seyyid Said?

Kinjeketile: He is the Sultan of Zanzibar. Zanzibar is a beautiful place.

Kitunda: That is the land of the Arabs. **Kinjeketile:** There are many Arabs there...

Kitunda: You said we will be children of Seyyid said.

I said so? (He shakes Kitunda.) Tell me, please tell me. Tell me all that I said.

Kitunda: You said that we should unite. After we are united, then we can declare war. And that we will win. You said that the ancestors at Bokelo give us their support. You also said that after our victory, we will be the children of Seyyid Said.

Kinjeketile: After winning the war we will be under Seyyid Said? I said that?

Kitunda: Yes. Are you ill...Your face...where are you going?

Kinjeketile: I have been cheated! They have killed me—no, I have killed myself! It was a dream, yes, I was dreaming! No, no, no! I have been cheated! No! (*He gives a terrible cry and falls down*) (*Kinjeketile* p.19-21).



Hussein's engagement with the past is important here. He translates the past, focusing on how the past connects with the present and the future situations. Hussein's use of the destructive force Chunusi—rather than the good force associated with Bokelo—is a twisting of facts. It is a fictional act for us to remember the past, the present and imagine about the future. Hussein can also be accused of trying to rationalise what actually transpired historically since many people did lose their lives and the bullets did not turn into water. In other words, only an evil force could be behind such motivation. In doing so, the playwright allows the audience to combine memory in a fictional way and think about what actually happened.

Sevvid Said (1790-1856) mentioned in the play was a Sultan of Oman. In 1840, he transferred his capital from Arabia to Zanzibar. He initiated large-scale clove production in Zanzibar and expanded the East Africa slave trade. As an ambitious man, he established his authority in almost all coastal areas by 1841. This made him the first ruler "to control the coast from Mogadishu (Somalia) to southern Tanzania." Thus, the evil force Chunusi interprets for us the socio-political situation of African societies. Through Chunusi, Hussein redefines the African societies, interprets and makes us assess the contemporary situation of African situation. Seyyid Said becomes a symbol of neo-colonialism. In other words, by calling for a revolt against the Germans only to become subjects of Seyyid Said, Kinjeketile is only calling for one form of colonisation to end only to embrace another. This is also true of present-day Tanzania—a nation forged after the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964. While Kitunda wants the war to begin immediately, but Kinjeketile is resistant as he strongly believes he has been duped by the evil spirit-Chunusi masquerading as a messenger from Bokelo. Kinjeketile cautions Kitunda and later other characters that fighting the Germans is necessary but they must unite first and not to depend just on water. Here there is an apparent departure from the historical fact. This fictional Kinjeketile does not see a justification for waging a war while a new kind of life—neo-colonialism—is encroaching upon them. He tells Kitunda:

How do you know it was Hongo, and not another spirit? If this is Hongo, then why does he say that we will be the children of Seyvid Said after winning the war? Why does he help us? Why get rid of the white man, only to usher in an Arab? If that is the case, it would be better for us to remain just as we are (Kinjeketile p. 29).

The character Kinjeketile gains from the playwright's retrospective perspective that rationalises what could have happened in the historical event. He is not convinced that it is Hongo who has possessed him because Hongo, a good spirit, is supposed to save the people from colonial oppression, not to drive them en masse to death and destruction. This is vividly portrayed in his monologue when he is called by his wife so that he talks to Kitunda:

Don't bring in the light. Get out... They said there would be light... to get rid the darkness. Now I know better, I know the light is far more dangerous. It is better that we remain in this darkness. The darkness is far better. I prefer the enslavement of the body to that of the mind brought by light (Kinjeketile p. 26).

Here there an apparent allusion to mental colonisation under cultural imperialism and neocolonialism.² It is apparent that Hussein is using drama not just to explore the past but also to interrogate the present. The historical facts provided by Hussein compel us to reflect on the present conditions of African countries. Moreover, the imagined past presented by Hussein through Kinjeketile require us to assess the past, the present and the future of African countries. When analysing Kinjeketile's words some questions arise: What is the meaning of light and darkness? How do we experience the present through the past? How does the present look like? What is the usefulness of his words to the present? Hussein takes us far back to the history of colonialism in Africa and the genesis of neo-colonialism. On the whole, Kinjeketile's words exposes the futility of fighting the Germans only to allow a new form of colonialism which is of a worse than the previous one to emerge. The light Kinjeketile refers to envisions neo-colonialism problems since the enslavement of the body is far better that the enslavement of the mind because under neo-colonialism "the coloniser" will no longer use the physical subjugation (guns of colonial lords) but will brain-wash the "colonised" Into perpetual bondage. Today, Western countries use what is referred to as "corporate financial arrangements, or perhaps dare it be said coercions and bribes" to extract the wealth from the African countries" in addition to making many blind followers of the Western engineered neo-liberal ideology.

The image one gets through neo-colonialism is the way foreign countries use capitalism, globalisation and cultural forces to control a country. Furthermore, through Kinjeketile Hussein cautions the people against "some dubious aid from the outside" (p. 29). The problem of conditional aid is a topical one in African countries.

¹ Gale Encyclopedia of Biography: Seyyid Said http://www.answers.com/topic/seyyid-said

² Here one can benefit from insights in Ngugi wa Thiongo's Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African

Literature. Oxford: James Currey (Original work published in 1986).

³ Many cases are offered to show how neo-colonial corporate operates in African countries. Some of the case studies include Gold in the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Cocoa Trade in West Africa and the Nigeria Oil crisis. For details see "An Introduction to 'Neo-colonialism' the Recolonisation of Africa" (2009).



This problem has compelled African leaders to dance to the tune of the West particularly through the Breton Woods institutions, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Despite many years of structural adjustment programmes, many African countries are still locked in a vicious cycle of poverty.

As a scholar in his own right, Ebrahim Hussein, appears to have read Kwame Nkrumah's book *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965) before or during the writing of *Kinjeketile*. In this book, Nkrumah offers the history of neo-colonialism, its development and its impact on developing countries and how to deal with it. Nkrumah's view, which appears to be reflected in Hussein's *Kinjeketile*, is how neo-colonialism ought to be avoided as it leads to the exploitation without redress of an independent country. Like Nkrumah, Hussein through *Kinjeketile* envisions African countries being subjected to a new kind of colonialism even as they free themselves from the colonial powers. Kinjeketile underscores this danger of neo-colonialism in the play when he calls on people to organise themselves to unite before beginning the war with the Germans and "will win" (p. 29). These words resonate with Nkrumah's words. He suggested that to get out of colonialism, African countries should "act at once, with resolution and in unity." In fact, the United States of Africa that he saw as a solution to such neo-colonialism remains consigned to memory.

In *Kinjeketile*, the theme of unity is also reinforced as the driving force behind the development of the play's plot. Recent historical evidence shows that the Zaramo of the coastal area were never present in Matumbi land to fight in the Maji Maji war; rather some of Zaramos did visit Kinjeketile Ngwale to drink the water. Koponen (2010) reveals:

...a major difference is made by the historical relationship of the people concerned to the preexisting water cults. That the first outbreak of fighting happened in Nandete which is in
Matumbi land has obscured the essential role of the Ngindo...Also the Pogoro living in the
Liwale district seemed to have been early involved but their role remains less investigated and
understood. After Kibata, the next targets were Kingwhochiro, 14 miles from Liwale-Kilwa
road; Liwale, a German police post some 200km south-west of Matumbiland...These attacks
were independent of those in Matumbi Hills. With the communications of those days—and
today as well—these are geographically faraway places, at several days' walking distance from
each other...maji reached Uzaramo and Kilombelo valley through emissaries called hongo and
was taken further by other emissaries from Usagara and Uvidunda...Elsewhere maji crossed
the limits of pre-existing water cults carried by hongos (p. 22-23).

This except demonstrates that the convergence of diverse ethnic groups at Matumbi land to meet is a fictitious invention on the part of the playwright to hint at the importance of unity not only during the Maji Maji rebellion but also in the contemporary period. In the play, different ethnic groups have heard about the movement through *Nywinywila*, a secret communication which spread the news about the movement behind the rebellion (p. 24). Kinjeketile has severally told Kitunda to multiply a number of people to consolidate the war efforts as he knows that the Matumbi and Ngindo alone cannot defeat the Germans. For instance, Kinjeketile asks Kitunda: "And with three hundred people, you will defeat the white man?" (p. 26). Thus the inclusion of the Zaramo becomes important. After all, the Zaramo and the Matumbi share same spiritual beliefs as the dialogue between Representative of the Zaramo and Kinjeketile reveals:

Representative of the Zaramo: We are ready to do so [join the war] on condition that you answer one question. In fact that has been the main reason for our staying out so far.

Kinjeketile: Let me hear the question.

Representative of the Zaramo: Are Hongo and Kolelo one and the same spirit?

Kinjeketile: Why do you ask?

Representative of the Zaramo: We believe in Kolelo. We can only follow his guidance. But the more we hear of your spirit Hongo, the more we are convinced that he is Kolelo. Kolelo lives in the water. Your spirit does the same. And all the miracles he has performed prove that he is Kolelo...We came to ask you—whether this is Kolelo or Hongo, or whether these two names belong to the same spirit. If it is so, then we are ready to join you. If not, then we cannot fight together...

Representative of the Zaramo: Are Hongo and Kolelo one and the same? **Kinjeketile**: Hongo is merely another name for Kolelo (*Kinjeketile* p. 31-32).

It is evident that there is no pure fidelity to historical truth in the play. Hussein uses the memory of the Maji Maji rebellion to re-interpret retrospectively the past to make it relevant to understanding the present-day and future challenges facing Tanzania and the need for unity. It is not true that Kolelo was another name for

¹ He was a professor in the Department of Theatre Arts (now Fine and Performing Arts) at the University of Dar es Salaam-Tanzania.

² Kwame Nkrumah's Neo-colonialism, the last stage of Imperialism" http://www.marxists.org/subject/Africa/Nkrumah/neo-colonialism/conclusion.htm



Hongo; it is only that the two spirits shared the same attributes. Swantz states that Kolelo was a spirit shrine located in the Uruguru Mountains in Morogoro, which was traditionally called upon by the Lugulu, Zaramo, Zigua and other ethnic groups. It is a spirit associated with a snake (Swantz 1990: 48). Other historical documents name the spirit Kolelo as Kurero or Bokelo, a spirit which lived in a cave and was feared by people because of its terrible subterranean sound. People offered sacrifices to it because it brought rain, success and fertility. On the other hand, the cult of Bokelo's shrine was on the Upper Rufiji River. The Bokelo cult was found in the Rufiji valley "at a place called Kibesa, above the Mpanga falls on the Rufiji River. The place was sometimes known as Rufiji Rungindo" (Ranger and Kimambo 1972: 204-206). In the dialogue between the representative of the Zaramo and Kinjeketile, Hussein does not use Bokelo to unify the Matumbi and the Zaramo. Instead, he uses Hongo and Kolelo, which goes to expose his rhetorical agenda divorced from telling historical truth with fidelity. Indeed, the Bokelo of the Matumbi was not a snake rather a Creator of the Matumbi whose intention was to bring order, save the people from German colonialism and oppression (*Ibid*).

The futility of the war that Kinjeketile has been trying to caution Kitunda about comes to a head when the Matumbi of Nandete attack a German-appointed Arab colonial official and when they uproot cotton crops of a German plantation. This marks the beginning of Maji Maji uprising. As the character Kitunda sums up the unfolding events:

I don't know what happened. All at once, we wanted blood, we wanted to kill, we wanted to destroy. We did not think, but we were suddenly seized by vengeance. We wanted payment-to harm as we had been harmed, to kill as we had been killed. In this tumult of blood we started the war. I don't remember giving any orders to attack, but two young men, Ngulumbalyo Mandai and Lindimyo Machela descended on Bwana Kinoo's ² plantation and destroyed it completely. They cut down the trees with the same force the Germans had used to flog a black skin. And each blow they dealt, it wasn't the cotton tree they slashed, it was a German they slashed. The anger and hatred that flooded us! So the war began...(*Kinjeketile* p. 40).

It is evident that such spontaneous actions would not lead to lasting victory against the Germans. The historical facts attest to this and so does the present dilemma Tanzania and many African countries face under neo colonialism demonstrate.

5. Conclusion

In *Kinjeketile*, Ebrahim Hussein represents the power of memory to revise the history of the Southern Tanganyikans during German colonialism to make the historical relevant to the present and future of Tanzania. Fouster notes that memory "works not only to present new more ways of understanding the past, but also to shape and to reshape the present and the future." (Foust 2010: 309-310). In *Kinjeketile*, through the memory of individual characters and the group, we see how their actions reconstruct the past to illuminate on the challenges facing the present and even future generations. In the play, facts and fiction are shaped through the process of memory. The use of memory in the play teaches us about the past, the present, the future and the general human condition. Febres asserts that "art restores meaning in bringing us, as responsible human beings, face to face with undeniable facts and circumstances (Febres 2011: 18). The play uses realistic strategies to stage traumatic memories experienced by people during German colonial rule. Hussein's reconstruction of the Maji Maji rebellion in the play was more geared towards teaching the present and future generations than simply reproduce an historical fact, hence the divergences in the play from historical truth.

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² The settler's German plantation.



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