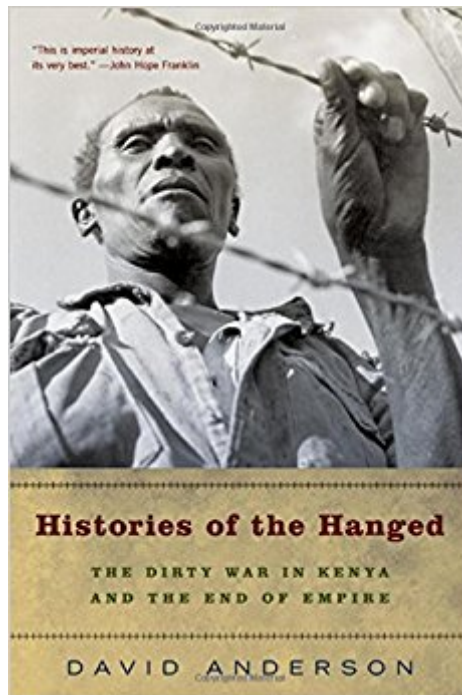


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# Histories Of The Hanged: The Dirty War In Kenya And The End Of Empire



## Synopsis

"A remarkable account of Britain's last stand in Kenya. This is imperial history at its very best."--John Hope Franklin In "a gripping narrative that is all but impossible to put down" (Joseph C. Miller), *Histories of the Hanged* exposes the long-hidden colonial crimes of the British in Kenya. This groundbreaking work tells how the brutal war between the colonial government and the insurrectionist Mau Mau between 1952 and 1960 dominated the final bloody decade of imperialism in East Africa. Using extraordinary new evidence, David Anderson puts the colonial government on trial with eyewitness testimony from over 800 court cases and previously unseen archives. His research exonerates the Kikuyu rebels; hardly the terrorists they were thought to be; and reveals the British to be brutal aggressors in a "dirty war" that involved leaders at the highest ranks of the British government. This astonishing piece of scholarship portrays a teetering colonial empire in its final phase; employing whatever military and propaganda methods it could to preserve an order that could no longer hold. 18 photographs, 2 maps

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Anderson's authoritative history of the last days of the British Empire in Kenya focuses on the colonial judicial system, which sent over 1,000 native Kenyans to the gallows between 1952 and 1959, during the state of emergency triggered by the Mau Mau insurrection. At the heart of the tale, along with blustering colonial ineptitude, is white settler ignorance of how its land grabs wreaked havoc on the Kikuyu tribe, Kenya's largest ethnic group and a people viciously targeted by the British, who were intent on rooting out Mau Mau activism at all costs. Anderson, a lecturer in African

studies at Oxford, shows how paternalistic land reallocations and relocation of the Kenyan tribes to settlements fostered deep resentment, sewing the seeds of a bloody black-on-black massacre in 1952. Brilliantly analyzing the hierarchies and nuances of Kenyan society, Anderson traces how the Mau Mau hijacked the nationalist Kenya African Union, how the British scapegoated moderate leader Jomo Kenyatta and finally how the British herded virtually the entire Kikuyu population into horrific concentration camps, where thousands perished. Anderson's information-rich history vividly depicts the complex political and social dynamics of the Kenyan nationalist movement as it was confronted by the brutal waning British Empire. This is vital reading for any student of British colonial and African history. B&w photos not seen by PW; maps. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Anderson's history of the violence in 1950s Kenya overlaps slightly with that depicted in Caroline Elkins' *Imperial Reckoning* [BKL N 15 04], which covered the detention-and-camp system established by the British colonial administration. In Anderson's effort, the entire Mau-Mau rebellion comes into view, including aspects of warfare and judicial punishment, particularly the application of the death penalty. Anderson's close analysis of capital trials supports his narrative of the origin of the anticolonial Mau-Mau movement, its perpetration of the gruesome murders of white settlers, and the state of emergency and military countermeasures that defeated the insurgency. Anderson weighs the evidence in concluding that these trials were an expedient means of retribution rather than models of legality. They also reflect the fact that it was a civil war within the Kikuyu community, exemplified in the war's "iconographic moment," a ghastly massacre and a subsequent revenge-massacre that convulsed the Kikuyu town of Lari. A dispassionate but disturbing account, Anderson's history will be vital to understanding Kenya's terrible endgame of colonialism. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Uses court records to reconstruct what actually happened during the Mau Mau uprising. Remarkable how clever the colonial government was in turning a legitimate protest against land theft into a brutal civil war which killed mostly Africans and left the whites largely unscathed. Very readable. Actually, it could be a case of emergent behavior, as there was a lot of stupidity going down. I read an earlier book about the screening concentration camps, which was very painful to read. This is more accessible, and explains how it all happened from many points of view.

I bought this book because I knew almost nothing about Mau Mau and the end of British colonialism in east Africa. I just wanted to fill in some of the blanks. I am glad I chose this book. The book is a scholarly treatment of the period. It is well-researched and amply documented with footnotes. Although I am not an expert on the area or topic, my sense is that this is a very thorough study. For scholars, students and anyone with an advanced interest in the period or region, this will be an important book and a necessary read. For the non-professional, casual reader like myself, this is also a good choice. The style is fluid and engaging. Although packed with factual information, it does not become stiff and dry like so many scholarly works. The use of footnotes segregates a lot of the details that the general reader might wish to ignore while following the thread of the narrative. I enjoyed reading it. The book revealed a shocking tale of which I was largely ignorant, but which also often sounded depressingly familiar. It relates to the brutality that often accompanies changes in power anywhere in the world. Pick up any newspaper in decades since Mau Mau and you will find references to similar struggles, oppression, and abuse of power in several countries. Reading detailed accounts of past struggles like Mau Mau helps me put perspective to much of the similar madness we continue to see today. I recommend this highly to historians interested in the region and the fall of colonialism in the last century. But I also recommend it to more general readers who might simply wish to become a little better versed in African history. For anyone interested in the broader scope of current (or past) events involving oppression, abuse of power, and human rights, this book adds depth to understanding. I find this understanding both helpful and disturbing at the same time. Sometimes choosing a book a little outside your usual areas of interest yields surprising insights. For me, this was one such book.

A great effort made to both analyze and be factual. Thanks Mr Anderson. would like to get in touch.

A very interesting book. We forget how the other part of the world struggles under the white yoke still.

Mr. Anderson documents a largely forgotten but bloody guerrilla conflict, fought by an anti-imperialist/ nationalist party against British forces. As usual the "forest fighters" were simply decimated by relentless heavy bombing, and in the end close to 20,000 Kikuyu died compared to about 200 British. A must read for anyone seeking to compare the anti-insurgent techniques of "enlightened" powers versus those of "barbaric" ones e.g.... there is none!

This book is a great read if you want to learn about what the British did to the people of Kenya. I do not want to give away the story but the British has done a lot to different people around the globe. It is amazing that when you fight for your land and your freedom they call you savages and call you a troublemaker. The Kenyans fought with the British in WWII but at home in their country they could not be free.

After more than forty years as an historian at major institutions across the United States, I rarely, if ever, use words like "brilliant" to describe a work of history, no matter what the theme might be. David Anderson's HISTORIES OF THE HANGED, however, is an exception. Others have reviewed this volume's major focus -- the so-called Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya during the 1950s -- in some detail for and, though I do not agree with everything that has been written, I think that, in the main, their critiques are perceptive and essential not only for a full understanding of the rebellion but also for anybody considering purchasing this volume. Even though all but one reviewer has appropriately praised the volume and awarded it either 4 or 5 stars out of a possible 5, I would suggest that the work deserves even more. Anderson has taken on a topic that the British government actively tried for years to bury, its horrendous treatment of millions of Kenyans and its total disregard for their basic human civil rights, and brought the story out into the light for all to see. In doing so, he reveals himself to be an exceptionally talented writer, moving the story along smoothly and, indeed, almost daring a reader, to put the book down unfinished. This is simply a "must" study if one wants to understand the Rebellion and the horrors committed by both sides more than fifty years ago. Few Americans have any idea what happened so many years ago in East Africa, relying, if they think about the events that took place there at all, on such one-sided books or films as Robert Ruark's SOMETHING OF VALUE with the brave, true-blue Rock Hudson besting the irrational and ultimately evil Sidney Poitier. Though this latter film does tone down Ruark's original book with its picture of savage beast-like Africans being bested by the white, dedicated British settlers, both book and movie present a one-sided view of the truth. Anderson seeks to remedy images such as these and, it is necessary to say it again, he does so brilliantly.

The book's condition was better than advertised. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in saving money and wanting a relatively new book. except for the library marking

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