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The Chief Mau Mau Propagandist: Experiences that Prompted Gakaara wa Wanjau into Anti-Colonial Literary Activism

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Abstract:

This article examines the personal experiences of Gakaara wa Wanjau that influenced his political literary activism during the colonial period. The paper is informed by Relative Deprivation Theory. It demonstrates that Gakaara wa Wanjau was “The Chief Mau Mau Propagandist” as the British colonial authorities termed him. The paper opines that literary activism was crucial to the struggle for the attainment of the independence of Kenya. His literary works and collection of songs shaped the political consciousness of the Mau Mau fighters. The study concludes that he was a unique literary political activist who was able to take advantage of his contemporary issues to try to decolonize the African mind. Material for the article is derived from existing works, archival research and oral interviews. The study contributes to the enriching of the Mau Mau historiography in Kenya.

Keywords: Colonialism, colonialist, community, decolonize, freedom struggle, political consciousness, and unity.

1. Introduction

Unity is strength. Gakaara wa Wanjau experienced with bitterness the racial discrimination meted on the Africans by the Europeans. His literary political works depicts what he experienced and through them he was able to fuel the Mau Mau militancy in Kenya from 1940s. Some of his literary works were so unique that the Agikuyu people learnt and kept them in their hearts and thus could not be arrested by the colonialists for being in possession of banned literature. Thus, they were able to remain vigilant against colonial rule throughout the Emergency years (Wandai, 1990). No wonder the colonial authorities arrested and detained Gakaara by branding him the “Chief Mau Propagandist” (Durrani, 2006).

The independent Kenyan governments under Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi did not officially recognise the Mau Mau fighters’ contribution despite their active role in driving away the British colonialists (Karimi E, 2013). However, from 2003, Mwai Kibaki’s government recognised the members of the Mau Mau movement as independence heroes who sacrificed their lives in order to free Kenya from colonial rule. In 2014, the British government paid compensation to the Mau Mau war veterans and built a monument at Uhuru Park in recognition of inhuman treatment of the fighters by the colonial administration. Among the most honoured Mau Mau heroes were Dedan Kimathi and his peers who took to the forest to violently engage the British colonial authorities. The other contributors who did not go to the forest although detained do not receive heroic recognition. Although available literature portrays Gakaara as a nationalist during the colonial period (Pugliese, 1995), still much needs to be done in order to portray him as a national hero who contributed to Kenya’s political independence through his revolutionary writings. This article fills that gap by asserting that writers like Gakaara wa Wanjau also played an active role in Kenya’s freedom struggle.

This paper articulates that Gakaara wa Wanjau penned down colonial injustices, experienced by himself and his contemporaries, with the intention of raising the political consciousness of the Kenyans. He mainly appealed to the unity of the community which according to him was crucial to the struggle for independence. This article therefore contributes to the generation of knowledge on the various strands of freedom struggle. Gakaara wa Wanjau was therefore a nationalist deserving to be celebrated alongside other important freedom fighters.

2. Theoretical Considerations

This article uses the Relative Deprivation Theory as explained by Ted Robert Gurr in *Why men rebel*. According to Gurr, relative deprivation is the discrepancy between what people have and what they think they deserve. If what people think they can achieve and

what they have differ they justify themselves by putting the blame on someone else. The relatively deprived feel angry when the economic and political welfare that they think they deserve is inferior to that of others to whom they compare themselves. In such situations, there is a high likelihood of rebellion, which is manifested in collective violence. Violence is therefore a means to an end. Political violence then becomes the physical manifestation of inner feelings.

Using the Relative Deprivation Theory, the paper demonstrates that Gakaara wa Wanjau like others in the Mau Mau movement, was drawn into political activism by the colonial exploitation and discrimination. He was basically fighting for land and freedom like others in the Mau Mau movement. He produced political pamphlets and songs meant to educate the Agikuyu on their land rights and the need for political freedom.

3. Experiences that Prompted Gakaara wa Wanjau into becoming the Chief Mau Mau Propagandist

3.1. His Childhood and Schooling

Gakaara's father, Johanna Wanjau, was a Presbyterian Church minister. He hailed from Gakandu-ini village in Karatina, Nyeri County but ministered in Mihuti Mission that was several kilometres away from home. Due to the nature of his job, Wanjau was most of the time absent from home and therefore Gakaara spent most of his childhood years with his mother, Rahel warigia. Gakaara turned out to be very bitter with missionaries whom he felt denied him a father figure in the home. From his formative years, he developed a very negative attitude towards the missionaries and the whites in general.

Gakaara received his primary school education at Tumu Tumu Primary School and was ranked among the top pupils after sitting for his standard eight national examination. He was admitted in Alliance High School (A.H.S) in 1939 as "Jonah Johanah", admission no.549. He was classmate to future cabinet ministers like Paul Ngei, Jeremiah Nyaga and Ronald Ngala (validated by the researcher in January 2017). Carey Francis was transferred to A.H.S in 1940. Carey Francis was a disciplinarian who punished Gakaara severally. Gakaara's attitude towards the whites led him to perceive such punishments as persecutions for being exemplary bright. This motivated him to write a defaming story against Carey Francis. It became so famous that it motivated him to write another one against the school and the school master. The popularity of these stories motivated Gakaara to become a future political literary activist (Joseph Wang'ombe, a respondent).

In 1940, Gakaara was expelled from school for allegedly participating in a food strike (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). He however felt that the expulsion was unfair. According to him, he was expelled after making an error while marching in the morning (Wanjau, 1983), which was a lame excuse to warrant an expulsion. This increased his bitterness against the Europeans whom he considered to be unfair to the black Africans.

3.2. Gakaara's Army Experience in Ethiopia

Gakaara joined the Second World War as an army clerk in Ethiopia in December 1940. He mingled with black servicemen from other British colonies such as Nigeria, Gold Coast, Tanganyika, Uganda, Nyasaland and Southern and Northern Nigeria. His discussion with these servicemen portrayed a yearning for independence for the colonised peoples. Gakaara felt with bitterness the maltreatment and discrimination against the black servicemen as practiced by the British imperialists (Gakaara, 1971).

During their service in the Second World War, African servicemen were praised in the battle front and exposed to the pleasures of life. However, anytime the war was not on, they would be discriminated against. According to Gakaara, the Europeans employed deception on the Africans to fight a war that was not theirs (Gakaara 1971). Gakaara's distrust for the imperialists eventually grew into contempt when he perceived that the colonial government persisted in treating the black people as their slaves despite the fact that they had sacrificed their lives for the British Empire during the war. The black ex-servicemen were not compensated like the British Second World war veterans.

3.3. The Forty Group

Upon demobilization, the ex-servicemen formed the Forty Group Association, to agitate for their rights after the Second World War. The name of the association was coined from their argument that they were circumcised in the 1940's, went into the war in 1940's and whatever they did they said it was of the 40's (Gakaara, 1971). Any man circumcised in the forties was eligible for membership (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). This was the precursor for the Mau Mau movement.

After the war, the Agikuyu ex-soldiers felt they had a right to be compensated for fighting a war that was not their own. They were however left jobless and uncompensated and the only alternative was to seek employment in the settler farms where they earned peanuts. It so happened that some of these farms were compensations for the European ex-soldiers (Gakaara, 1971). The Africans felt degraded and they could not tolerate being treated as inferior in their own country, having been accepted abroad (Kaggia, 1975). To Gakaara, this was equal to exploitation. He argued that Europeans were growing richer out of the benefits accrued from African labour (Gakaara, 1948). Thus, they formed the Forty Group Association.

The Forty Group Association had popularity in Nyeri and Murang'a before the declaration of Emergency. The Forty Group participated in all forms of protest and mischiefs. They organised protests and led opposition to the terracing project which had mostly affected women (Gakaara, 1971). Women were forced into the project which made them leave their children unattended. Led by Kahiga Wacanga, the Forty Group put notices in Nairobi expressing that at a given date they would do away with terracing. They went ahead and held unlicensed meetings where they resolved that women were no longer to be involved in terracing. They then wrote to the District Commissioner to press the issue. The terracing was a communal effort to combat soil erosion in the African reserves where land had become unproductive due to overcrowding for both human and animals. Terracing was suspended which was a major

achievement to the organization. This made them feel that they could drive the British colonialists out of the country. They realised that unity brought strength to achieve their societal interests.

The Forty Group proceeded to administer oaths for the purpose of the unity of the community, *muuma wa uiguano wa muingi*, with the objective of ending colonialism. The Agikuyu loyalty to the struggle against loss of land, their traditional way of life and political freedom caused them to bond together in the process of oathing (Brandabur, 2007). Gakaara wa Wanjau contributed to this oathing, that was otherwise the Mau Mau oathing, by writing a political creed entitled *Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi* (The creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi). In the creed, he invoked the centrality of the unity and political faith of the community.

3.4. Post War Deterioration of Socio-Economic Conditions

The average economic growth of the British Kenyan colony was at 6% p.a between 1940 and 1960. As the economy of the colony improved, European wealth increased but Africans sank deeper into poverty. Deteriorating African poverty could be attributed to the advanced technology on European farms which led to laying off of workers. Those who were retained in European farms were subjected to rigid contractual conditions that limited wealth accumulation. For instance, Africans were allowed to keep a limited number of livestock in the settler farms (Keith Kale, 1999). Seeing no future on European settler farms, most of the squatters shifted to towns in search of jobs. The resultant rural to urban migration flooded towns like Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa with job seekers. Many remained jobless and those who were lucky to be employed were subjected to low pay. Thus, the living conditions moved from bad to worse (Keith Kale, 1999).

As the African poverty increased, European wealth increased. European population in Kenya also increased as more white immigrants were encouraged into Kenya. In just three years after the Second World War, 8,000 white immigrants had come to Kenya allegedly to strengthen the European population mostly in the commercial sector. The European ex-servicemen were encouraged to settle in the already permanently reserved White Highlands with extremely generous and attractive terms offered to them. They could lease land with the security of 48 years. They also had the option of buying the land after working on it for 5 years or at any time thereafter (Keith Kale, 1999).

As an employee in a British firm in 1948, Gakaara was able to interact with other African workers. He observed that Europeans treated the blacks as slaves. They were pushed to work, derogatory terms like boy (*kihii*) were used on them and were paid very little. Africans worked hard for the Europeans who never congratulated them for their good work because they were not supposed to realise that they were adding value to the Europeans. According to Gakaara, Africans were not given a chance to get rich. Europeans tactfully wanted Africans to have low self-esteem so as to remain as European slaves (Gakaara, 1948).

The growing economic desperation of squatter life and racial discrimination motivated Gakaara to write *Rohoya Kiumena Bidiikwa Mwafrika* (The Spirit of Manly Courage and Effort for the African) in 1948. In this pamphlet, he exposed how Europeans colonised the African mind by instilling inferiority complex. Europeans had exposed Africans to new tastes but denied them equal pay, land and free trade that would paradoxically have satisfied them economically and socially. Further, the colonial state had deliberately set Africans against each other so that they could not understand the extent of white deceit (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). The Europeans therefore got rich out of exploiting African labour that afforded them capital to lead a high-class lifestyle. To Gakaara, African poverty was caused by European exploitation and denial of opportunities.

Gakaara's solution to African poverty was the decolonization of the mind, political consciousness and African unity of various ethnic groups. He used the analogy of the spider to demonstrate that Africans should build their own schools, hotels and aeroplanes as splendid as the whites' (Berman and Lonsdale). Gakaara emphasized that if the Africans were politically free, they would improve their social and economic wellbeing. (Gakaara, 1948).

3.5. Other Literary Influences against Colonial Rule

Muigwithania, the predecessor of vernacular newspapers in Kenya, was first published in 1928. Its motto, *Hoyai Ngai na Murute Wira* (Prayer and Hard Work) appeared Christian but to the politically conscious Agikuyu it meant that the lazy could not expect freedom. They had to work hard towards achieving their own social economic and political freedom. In this Gikuyu newspaper, proverbial language and songs appealed to the unity of the community. It succeeded in mobilizing people behind national, political and economic demands (Durrani, 2006). Gakaara adapted the Muigwithania, s literary style of proverbial language and songs to appeal to the unity of the Agikuyu and to mobilize the Mau Mau against colonial rule.

Mumenyereri (The Guardian) by Henry Mworira was probably the most influential newspaper of the 1940s (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). Other African newspapers and magazines in the 1940s included *Inoororia Agikuyu* (The Whetstone of the Agikuyu) by Bildad Kaggia, John Chege's *Wiyathi* (Freedom), *Muthamaki* (The Statesman), *Hindi ya Agikuyu* (The times of the Agikuyu), *Mwaraniria* (Conversationalist), *Wihuge* (Stay Alert) and *Muramati* (Caretaker) (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). KAU also started its Kiswahili newspaper *Sauti ya Mwafrika* (The African Voice) which gave Africans a forum to air their grievances (Gakaara, 1971). Within this journalistic activity, Gakaara stated his own *Gikuyu na Mumbi* (Gikuyu and Mumbi) magazine as well the monthly *Waigua Atia?* (What's up?). In these he published original articles and songs.

Ibuku ria Ngai's (The Bible) Gikuyu translators and interpreters compared the struggle for independence to the Israelites' experience. Jehovah was seen as tribal interventionist God and in this the Agikuyu was a tribe favoured by God. Like in Judaism, the Agikuyu enlisted God on their side as the children of Israel and the colonialists as the Egyptians (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). The Agikuyu were in the exodus to the promised land of prosperity and wealth. Jomo Kenyatta was likened with Moses to lead the Agikuyu to freedom and wealth. He was also perceived to be the suffering messiah who gave his life to save the Agikuyu (Gakaara, n.d). The New Testament teachings were also embraced whereby good behaviour was appealed for, and the Mau Mau cautioned that a tree

without fruits was good for nothing and that the prodigal son must return home (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). The Bible influenced the composition of Mau Mau songs which were sung in Christians hymn tunes to inspire the Mau Mau fighters and the general Agikuyu population. Gakaara was actively involved in the collection and compiling these songs into hymn books.

3.6. *The Politics of KAU*

KAU (Kenya African Union) was formed with the aim of advising Eliud Mathu, the first African nominee in parliament on how to represent Africans (Gakaara, 1971). The party was a good forum through which Kenyans could air their grievances against colonial rule. In 1946, KAU's leadership came under Jomo Kenyatta who opened several branches in the country. Kenyatta was eloquent and perceived by Gakaara as a person possessing political wisdom. To Gakaara, Kenyatta was able to raise the Africans self-esteem by telling them that they were important in their own country. Kenyatta asserted that the whites were foreigners who had unjustly acquired the African land. He motivated them by telling them that freedom could only be achieved by the brave, and that they must work hard, be patriotic, avoid social evils and acquire good education in order to raise more future leaders (Gakaara, 1971).

Kenyatta's bold speeches in KAU meetings encouraged Africans who spoke and also wrote on African rights. The leaders of *Gikuyu Karing'a* (Kikuyu Orthodox) schools, independent churches and trade unions started to speak on African rights in public meetings. From this same political heat, Gakaara expounded these ideas in his pamphlet in Kiswahili in 1948, *Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika* (The spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) which was widely read in Kenya and Tanzania. This pamphlet expounded the need for the blacks to be united and to have a high self-esteem. In 1952, Gakaara made a Gikuyu translation of this pamphlet, *Mageria nomo mahota* (Success comes after repeated efforts), which became very popular among the Agikuyu. This vernacular copy became one of the reasons for Gakaara's detention on October 20th 1952 as "The Chief Mau Mau Propagandist". He was charged with inciting the Blacks to hate Europeans.

3.7. *Gakaara's Contemporary Politicians' Influence*

Gakaara's literary activism was also influenced by his political contemporaries like Jomo Kenyatta and Peter Mbiyu Koinange. Jomo Kenyatta was a charismatic leader and the editor of Kenya's first vernacular newspaper, *Muigwithania*, in the late 1920s (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). In this newspaper, Kenyatta wrote several articles whereby he appealed to the Agikuyu to work hard. Between 1931 and 1946, Kenyatta was in Europe pursuing his studies and leading the Pan-Africanist movement. The Agikuyu believed that he stayed there for the cause of his people (Gakaara, n.d). While in Europe, he wrote books and articles on Gikuyu culture, their economy and politics of independence. He also wrote letters, to the colonial office and the British press on behalf of the Agikuyu, and orally spoke about Kenyan problems in the Trafalgar square and always attracted a British audience. In one of his books, *Kenya the Land of Conflict*, Kenyatta expressed the Agikuyu's demands for changes in the political, economic and social relationships between the Europeans and Africans (Gakaara n.d). This influenced Gakaara's line of thought because he mentioned it in his literary works after the independence of Kenya where he depicted Jomo Kenyatta as an independence hero.

To the Agikuyu Kenyatta was therefore their *Muigwithania* (Reconciler), a title given to Christ in the Bible. They venerated him in Mau Mau songs and in their prayers. In 1947, they elected him as KAU's president (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). The contents of his speeches when he returned from England and particularly in KAU's meetings impressed Gakaara (Gakaara, 1971). Kenyatta emphasized on bravery, patriotism, morality and good education, the same values that Gakaara embraced. Thus, Kenyatta's literary and oral contributions towards raising the political consciousness of the Agikuyu motivated Gakaara into writing his first political pamphlet in 1948.

Peter Mbiyu Koinange was the most learned Kenyan by 1938, with a Master of Arts degree. He wrote articles petitioning for land and more representation in the Legco. He initiated a fundraiser to elevate a KISA (Kikuyu Independent Schools Association) school in Githunguri into a teachers' college for the blacks in Kenya. Gakaara's first contribution for the purpose of the unity of the Agikuyu was towards the construction of this college. By then he was a student of Alliance High School and was proud to make a contribution of 20 cents. The overwhelming Gikuyu unity enabled the fundraiser to be so successful that the college was opened in 1939 (Gakaara, 1971). From Gakaara's literary works, it is clear that he admired Peter Mbiyu Koinange, who therefore motivated him to play a nationalist role during the struggle for independence.

3.8. *Trade Unionists' Influence*

Trade unionists like Chege Kibachia of the A.W.U. (African Workers' Union) inspired Gakaara. Chege Kibachia almost united all the black workers in Kenya. He toured the country appealing to the blacks to sell their labour expensively depending on the work done and the level of education. Gakaara acknowledged Chege Kibachia's impact on the Agikuyu, citing the Uplands Bacon Factory strike in 1947. He shared Chege Kibachia's views that black labour was being exploited for the benefit of the Europeans (Gakaara 1971).

Makhan Sign formed the E.A. T. U. C. (East African Trade Union Congress) together with other trade unionists in Nairobi to enable the workers speak out in one voice. He was against colonial labour exploitation, the same value embraced by Gakaara. They were arrested and Nairobi workers responded with a strike to press for their release. Trade union is acted like political organizations that could not accept colonial rule (Kaggia, 1975). Gakaara therefore wrote to strengthen the ideas put across by the trade unionists and called on the Agikuyu to reject colonial labour exploitation in 1948.

3.9. *Gakaara's Contemporary Issues Politically Transforming the Agikuyu as a Community*

Between the end of the Second War and the declaration of the State of Emergency in Kenya, there was a new political awareness on the Africans due to the development of African press which was stimulated by a social revolution among the Agikuyu whereby the

community was no longer under the control of elders but in the hands of young men. Some urbanized Agikuyu set up their own printing establishments where they edited newspapers in their own nationality languages (Durrani, 2006). In both the urban and rural areas of Central Kenya, the Agikuyu resistance to colonial dominance became increasingly militant and gradually more committed to the employment of non-constitutional means to achieve social, economic and political changes (Rosberg and Noltingham, 1966). The Agikuyu developed an increasing distrust in colonial motives and policies and this was displayed, for example, in the Karatina Vegetable Factory dispute.

Application of discriminatory laws also played a role in transforming the Agikuyu as a community. "Discrimination provided the African nationalists with fuel to feed the smouldering fires of African resentment which burst into flames in 1952" (Kournossoff, 1959). Colonial inequalities aroused feelings of frustration and hatred among Africans such that the African patriots had excellent propaganda to unite their people. Inequalities in the dispensation of justice made many Africans prone to the Mau Mau. Majority of the Agikuyu, Aembu, and Ameru were either oath takers or sympathizers with the Mau Mau. The fact that they lived in close proximity to the White Highlands and Nairobi gave them a greater opportunity than any other tribes to realise that the Whites enjoyed different justice to that which they received (Kournossoff, 1959). The refusal by the then Kenya government to implement African socio-economic reforms, harassments and repression of African political activity directly precipitated Agikuyu militancy (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002).

Increased economic deprivations also politically transformed the Agikuyu. In the White Highlands, the Agikuyu were subjected to low wages. A good number of squatters and their families were evicted from European farms. The colonial regime unleashed untold suffering, for example, to their Olenguruone evictees whom they exiled to the dry Yatta as recorded in the Mau Mau songs. Food crops were slashed down in the fields while the foodstuffs in their stores were destroyed. As the forced eviction from Olenguruone proceeded, homes were burnt down. Little children were exposed to starvation and the elements of weather like rain and cold. Many children were alienated from their parents as they were arrested and taken to prison. In the process, children were denied their right to education. The Olenguruone victims, deprived of their own food, were left with no option but to feed on wild game and fruits (Gakaara n.d). As they viewed it, this was treacherous dispossession of wealth and freedom of labour tenancy.

In the Agikuyu reserves, population pressure led to serious soil erosion, a decline in agricultural productivity and landlessness. In the name of soil conservation, the Agikuyu in hilly areas were subjected into unpaid, communal and largely female labour of terracing their slopes. In the urban areas like Nairobi and Mombasa the African population experienced inflation, poor living conditions and unemployment. Some Agikuyu like Gakaara wa Wanjau posed radical criticism to the colonial government.

Another issue cotemporary to Gakaara was the banning of *Ituika* (Generational handover of power) by the colonial government. The popular belief was that an *Ituika* would redeem the country from Mwangi elders who had "sold" it (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). Traditionally, an *Ituika* would allow the younger generation of younger married men to be leaders or respected elders. With the colonial banning of *Ituika*, the young generation became impatient and could not wait for any *Ituikato* start guiding the community. The *kirira* (secret knowledge and folklore) was now no longer in the hands of the Agikuyu elders whose main work was to settle disputes. Gakaara wa Wanjau was among the young generation and therefore wrote his political pamphlet in 1948 to guide the Agikuyu towards unity so as to be able to get back their land and freedom.

Publishing activity in Kenya developed between 1948 and 1963 in line with other areas of production. This helped the Agikuyu to keep abreast with K.A.U. politics through the most influential newspapers of the time like Henry Mworira's *Mumenyereri* and Wokabi's *Agikuyu* (Gakaara, 1971).

Class struggle also emerged as the rich failed to adopt the poor. This brought more division among the Agikuyu (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002). This prompted Gakaara into political literary activism to make the black Africans aware that social division was a tactic used by the colonialists with the intention of colonizing them (Gakaara, 1948). In his 1948 pamphlet, Gakaara informed the Agikuyu that the Europeans were using the divide and rule strategy to be able to control the politically and economically exploit them. He therefore appealed to all blacks, rich or poor, to unite for the purpose of Kenya's political freedom.

3.10. The Olenguruone Crisis

Some Agikuyu from Kiambu were displaced by the White settlers. The then Kenya Lands Commission (KLC) allocated them land in Olenguruone which was in Maasailand. The colonial government dictated to them on how to terrace the land, what and how to plant. The Agikuyu resisted this move insisting that the land belonged to them and that no one had the right to instruct them on what to do. They demanded that if the Olenguruone land was not for replacement, then the colonial government should hand over the Kiambu land back to them. To pacify this Agikuyu group, the Olenguruone District Commissioner used elders from Nakuru law courts to oath them. They retaliated with a more potent oath and therefore could not cooperate.

In 1947, the Agikuyu in Olenguruone were given a notice to move out of Olenguruone or else they would be exiled to Yatta. They refused to move and fifty of them were consequently arrested, charged in court and sentenced to three months in prison. This was irrespective of the fact that political leaders like Jomo Kenyatta, Eliud Mathu and Ex-senior Chief Koinange had represented them in court. After the court case the colonial government decided to evict about 2,000 Africans to Yatta. Along with the eviction was a trail of destruction unleashed on the Agikuyu in Olenguruone. Food crops in the field were slashed, livestock confiscated and houses pulled down and burnt. The evictees were loaded onto lorries and transported to Yatta.

The evictees composed songs to console themselves. The songs clearly narrated their ordeals and were later on used as examples of courage, patriotism and a source of awareness during and after Emergency years (Gakaara, 1971). The same songs turned the Agikuyu who were exiled to Yatta and those imprisoned in Nakuru because of Olenguruone land into martyrs and heroes of independence. Gakaara wa Wanjau compiled and published the Olenguruone songs to appeal to the unity of the Agikuyu.

4. The Prevailing Political Faith

The Agikuyu had faith in God that he would strengthen them to defeat the colonialists. This faith made them politically charged against the colonialists. The Mau Mau treated the Christian faith as the religion of the enemy. They thus tended to drop their Christian faith and names. To Gakaara, converting Africans to Christianity was a colonial tactic to divide and rule them. Christianity was aimed at making the Agikuyu politically blind. Christian baptism was a way of oathing the Africans against their own traditional religion and to make them respect the Europeans. To be “born again” was to become a collaborator, that is, to become a new obedient person to the European rule (Gakaara, 1999).

Gikuyu Karing'a (Gikuyu Orthodox Faith), of which Gakaara was a member, believed that God gave them their land which was taken away by force and the Agikuyu subjected to white man's slavery. They prayed that God would strengthen them and bless them to be able to chase their enemy, the colonialist. As they resisted the colonial rule, the Agikuyu would invoke the name of God thus; *Tungikahotwo niwe (Ngai) ukahotwo, na tungikahotana niwe ukahotana* (if we are defeated, God, it will be your defeat, if we win, it will be your victory. (Gakaara, 1999).

Gakaara published a political creed, *Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi* (The Faith of Gikuyu and Mumbi), in 1952. It was an expression of the Agikuyu's political faith. The creed was required to be learnt by heart and recited off head by the general Gikuyu population, the Mau Mau, in meetings, in the forest and in detention camps. It expressed their faith in God, in their ancestral parents, their culture, traditional rituals, in the Mau Mau warriors as political liberators and the unity of the Agikuyu.

The political songs compiled and published by Gakaara were also an expression of the political faith of the Agikuyu. They expressed their faith in God who would liberate them from the colonialist. They also appealed for unity behind their leaders like Jomo Kenyatta whom they believed was anointed by God to lead them out of political bondage to freedom. The songs also recognised the Mau Mau leaders like Dedan Kimathi as God-sent to drive the white man out of the country. The political songs brought with them a tradition of unity and defiance against the colonial government on the oathed Agikuyu who stood firm behind the Mau Mau movement (Roseberg and Noltingham, 1966). The prevailing political faith therefore prompted Gakaara wa Wanjau to publish his political pamphlet in 1948 and later collect and publish Mau Mau songs into hymn books.

5. Conclusion

This article is an exploration of Gakaara wa Wanjau's experiences that prompted him into political literary activism during the colonial period. His life experiences turned him against colonialism and therefore his literary works were geared towards making the Agikuyu politically conscious. The colonial government arrested and detained him as the chief Mau Mau propagandist but the post-colonial authors described him as a Kenyan nationalist. There is no doubt that literary activism was crucial in the struggle for independence. Therefore, Gakaara wa Wanjau should be celebrated as a unique political literary activist who was able to take advantage of his contemporary issues to try to decolonize the African mind.

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