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## The Mau Mau Songs and Reconstruction of the History of Kenya's Struggle for Independence up to 1963

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### **Abstract:**

*Mau Mau war of liberation contributed greatly to the attainment of Kenyan independence in 1963. Fifty-seven years later, the memories of Mau Mau movement generate mixed feelings amongst Kenyans. Even at the time of the war, there were divergent views from the colonialists and the colonised. This article explores the Mau Mau freedom songs published by the Chief Mau Mau Ideologue, Gakaarawa Wanjau, as Kenya was celebrating her 25 years of independence. The objective of the article is to demonstrate the value of songs as a source for reconstructing the history of the Mau Mau movement. The article adopted historical research design which employs document analysis and validated with oral interviews from respondents. It is informed by the Relative Deprivation Theory which argues that people take action for social change in order to gain their rights. Purposive technique was used to sample the songs and respondents drawn from Gakaarawa Wanjau's acquaintances in the struggle for independence. Open-ended questionnaires research instrument was used to generate qualitative data. The songs bring to the fore the Mau Mau line of thought, their feelings, successes, disappointments and realities in the forests and detention camps. From the songs, one is able to discern that the Mau Mau embraced both violence and diplomacy in the search for independence. They praised military leaders like Dedan Kimathi and educated diplomats like Jomo Kenyatta. Although there has been divergent interpretation on the role of Jomo Kenyatta in the struggle, there is no doubt that the freedom fighters held him in great esteem at the period of the struggle. Additionally, the songs praise some Mau Mau heroes who rarely feature in conventional history books. More importantly, the Mau Mau songs were accessible to all the Agĩkũyũ and acted as an important tool for spreading information about the struggle. The Mau Mau freedom songs were a great source of inspiration for the freedom fighters and their followers and instilled courage and patriotism. This article utilizes songs as a primary source for enriching the Mau Mau historiography.*

**Keywords:** Colonialist, community, enemy, fighter, independence, songs

### **1. Introduction**

Songs are an important tool for reconstruction of the past for they present to the audience memories of past events. They store memories of the past and contribute in the understanding of the circumstances that influenced the composers of the songs (Gilbert, 2005). Thus, a close scrutiny of the Mau Mau freedom songs demonstrates their effectiveness in spreading political philosophy and consciousness among the Agĩkũyũ during the colonial period. In Africa, songs were as effective as the newspapers in the Western world in spreading the ideology of the struggle (Kenyatta, 1948). They taught the theme of perseverance and kept reminding the Agĩkũyũ that land was their God-given right (Kanogo, 1993). The songs instilled hatred on the colonialists and advised the loyalists to join the Mau Mau movement before it was too late. They equally comforted the political detainees, popularized military and diplomatic leaders and called for the much-needed unity of the community. The songs incidentally also encouraged young people to acquire education as a tool to fight colonialists after mastering their way of doing things. They invoked faith in God who the Agĩkũyũ believed was supporting the Mau Mau movement to defeat their oppressors.

The songs were meant to influence and convince as many people as possible to join the movement (Madelung, 1995). Thus, the Mau Mau songs were a source of information for they were available to the community and encouraged the Agĩkũyũ to fight the colonialist in an organised manner and as a united force. New songs would always be composed to record new Mau Mau activities and experiences. They indeed became a good record of history of the struggle for independence to the later generations (Durrani, 2006). The colonial government officers seemed to realize the power in the Mau Mau songs in spreading their revolutionary message. The government banned the hymn books collected and published by Gakaarawa Wanjau, whom they termed as 'The Chief Mau Mau Propagandist' during the colonial period (Durrani, 2006).

Gakaarawa Wanjau, the author of the songs, was arrested alongside other key Kenya African Union (KAU) leaders on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1952, like the famous Kapenguria Six. According to Wandai (1990), the colonial prosecution relied on the Mau Mau songs and Gakaara's other literary materials to prosecute him. Thereafter, his literary works and Mau Mau hymn

books were banned. However, banning the circulation of written songs was futile and did not deter the spread of the messages in the songs since they were memorized and therefore imprinted or hidden in people's hearts (Wandai, 1990). The Mau Mau songs, *Nyimbocia Mau Mauiriaciarehithiriewiyathi* (Mau Mau freedom songs that facilitated independence), republished by Gakaara after independence, are used in this article to reconstruct the Mau Mau historiography which would otherwise be obscure.

Gakaara recorded the songs in a chronological manner, dating from 1948 to 1964. He also categorised the songs into various themes. The songs sung between 1948 and 1951 were meant to create awareness on the need to fight for land and freedom, popularize Mau Mau leaders and KAU as a political party. Those sung between 1952 and 1960 were meant to comfort those in detention camps, the political prisoners and the forest fighters. The songs sung from 1961 to 1964 were meant to record events after the Mau Mau war was over and to celebrate the attainment of political freedom and Kenya African National Union's victory as the Kenya's major political party that ushered in the nation's independence (Wanjau, n.d). One of the major drawbacks in this work is that the composers of the songs are not known and therefore the publisher tends to get all the credit.

This article is therefore a contribution to the generation of knowledge on the aspirations of Mau Mau participants and what they hoped to achieve. The Mau Mau songs illuminate an understanding of Mau Mau historiography and offer an insight into how individuals and the community at large responded and interpreted what was happening to them. They also expose the many atrocities committed by the British colonial regime. Some places of Mau Mau military action mentioned in the songs have been gazetted and conserved as Mau Mau heritage sites.

## 2. Heroes in Mau Mau songs

### 2.1. Jomo Kenyatta

In the post-colonial Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta's role in the Mau Mau war of independence has been questioned in some quarters because he failed to adequately reward Mau Mau and used castigating words on leaders like Bildad Kaggia who demanded land rights for the ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters after independence. According to Kaggia, (2012), Jomo Kenyatta's government even developed a slogan against such leaders: *the Kenya government is not a government of rogues who will take over other people's property.*

One of his leading critics was the late Joseph Karimi in his book, *Dedan Kimathi The Whole Story*. Karimi alleged that Jomo Kenyatta was not a Mau Mau leader and was not even accepted by his fellow political detainees. According to Karimi, Bildad Kaggia said that Jomo Kenyatta knew very little about the Mau Mau movement. He also recorded Fred Kubai as having said that Kenyatta was not active in the movement and did not even know who its leaders were. Karimi alleged that Jomo Kenyatta did not believe that the Mau Mau should be rewarded for their struggle and the few concessions he gave them after independence was because he feared their dissenting voices. He referred to them as hooligans and a disease. When asked about them Kenyatta allegedly retorted, 'We shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya, Mau Mau was a disease which has been eradicated and must never be remembered again' (Karimi, 2013).

There has been debate on who contributed more to the struggle for independence: the forest fighters or those who were detained like Jomo Kenyatta. Many more unsung freedom fighters were among the rural populations of Mount Kenya and Aberdare regions. Individual members from other ethnic groups also played crucial roles in the struggle for independence, especially in towns and places of employment. What is not in doubt from the songs is that Jomo Kenyatta's contribution is highly recognised during the struggle.

Jomo Kenyatta, who later became the first president of Kenya after the attainment of independence, is mentioned in many Mau Mau songs. He stood out as the most outstanding hero, accepted by the Agikūyū not only as their hero but also as a national leader. Song no. 1, 2 and 3 were composed by the Agikūyū exiled by the colonial government from the fertile Maasai land of Olenguruone to the dry and agriculturally unproductive Yatta plateau in Ukambani. The songs vividly bring out the suffering of the victims. The colonial regime unleashed untold suffering to the Olenguruone evictees who also became exiles in the dry Yatta. Food crops were slashed in the fields while the foodstuffs in their stores were destroyed. As the forceful eviction from Olenguruone proceeded, homes were burnt down. Little children were exposed to starvation and the vagaries of weather like rain and cold. Many children were alienated from their parents as they were arrested and taken to Nakuru law courts and later imprisoned in various places. Parents and teachers were also arrested and others evicted to Yatta. 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 which was detrimental to their health.

Tabitha Kanogo opines that evacuation of the Agikūyū from Olenguruone marked the starting point of Mau Mau opposition against the colonialists (Kanogo, 1993). The colonial administrators used brutal and inhuman methods to force migrant squatters out of the land they had settled for many years. They lost their livestock through the British policy of destocking. Songs no. 1, 2 and 3 are very crucial because they give distinguishing insight into the experience by those involved in the brutal forced migration. The songs actually capture the mood and suffering at the time of exile. Among those exiled, Jomo Kenyatta was a very popular leader of the freedom fighters in the 1940s. As migrants were transported in lorries they sang about their tribulations and desire for freedom. The songs drew the attention of other Agikūyū on the suffering of the members of their community in the diaspora. The migrants were made to pass through Central Province predominantly occupied by the Agikūyū as an attempt to scare off elements in the community with the intentions of resisting the colonial system. This however helped them to broadcast their tribulations along the roads they passed through.

Song no 1 depicted Jomo Kenyatta as a savior *mutangiriwaruriri* and a leader concerned about the welfare of his people and ready to fight for freedom. The song demonstrates that even Jomo Kenyatta made an effort to communicate from his home village in Githunguri Kiambu to enquire whether those exiled arrived well in Yatta. The song summarizes the suffering of the Agĩkũyũ in Yatta. Their grim situation was depicted by the death of a young woman named *Josibaini* (Josephine) after consuming buffalo meat which indicates that they depended on uninspected wild game meat for their survival. The Yatta area is depicted as rocky with poor dry soil unlike Olenguruone where the soils were fertile and with high rainfall.

In song no. 4, Jomo Kenyatta was likened with important Biblical figures like Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus in his effort to liberate the Agĩkũyũ from colonial yoke (Nguthuru PEFA Church, 1972). In their effort to disguise their intention, they imitated popular Christian lyrics to deceive the colonialists that they were Christians. This was a great innovation by the fighters to show that the Agĩkũyũ were suffering like the Jews in Egypt but through perseverance they would *reach Canaan* (attain independence) after the defeat of the colonialists, through the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta.

Like Abraham who was promised by God to be the father of a great nation, the song predicted that Jomo Kenyatta would become a father of very many people, beyond the Agĩkũyũ community. *Niukaiingiha tanjataciamatuini, nduririniikarathimwoniunduwaku* (You will increase like the stars of sky and nations will be blessed through you). Jomo Kenyatta was not only an Agĩkũyũ hero but also a national leader and that God would bless all the Kenyan communities through his efforts. The Agĩkũyũ envisioned him as the first 'President' of independent Kenya if the Mau Mau movement succeeded. The greatest contribution of this stanza is to capture Jomo Kenyatta in their imagination as the father of the nation as Abraham is to the Israelites. After independence, Jomo Kenyatta took the title *Baba waTaifa* literally meaning father of the Kenyan nation.

The next stanza likened Jomo Kenyatta to Biblical David and was referred to as *gitinagiathamaki* (the foundation of a kingdom). To Mau Mau adherents they predicted that after the struggle for independence Jomo Kenyatta would be the *muthamaki* (king) of Kenya. Additionally, like David, his lineage would also produce great leaders. In retrospect, one would argue that their prophecy has come to pass. Jomo Kenyatta's lineage has produced the fourth president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, from 2013 who won his second term in office from August 2017. Furthermore, Jomo Kenyatta's daughter Margaret Kenyatta became the first female mayor of Nairobi while his son Peter Kenyatta inherited his seat as Gatundu Member of Parliament after his death in 1978. Thus, the Mau Mau fighters' prediction has come to pass.

Like Jesus, Kenyatta is portrayed as one who sacrificed his own comfort and life to deliver his people from political slavery. Additionally, the song depicts Jomo Kenyatta as the savior of Kenya who suffered in detention to liberate Kenya like the way Jesus sacrificed his life to liberate human race from Satan's bondage. It is noted that before his detention Jomo Kenyatta had sacrificed his comfort in Kenya by going to England to fight for land and freedom in the colonialists' home, *arikaniirena Gikuyuakiuganie kwirutamuoyo wake, athii Urayaagacarieuthamaki* (Kenyatta promised the Agĩkũyũ that he would sacrifice his life for the sake of independence). This depicted Jomo Kenyatta as the Kenya's selfless black political Messiah. It would seem that the song was composed after Jomo Kenyatta returned from England where he had suffered for eighteen years agitating for Kenyan freedom. Jomo Kenyatta went to London in 1928 and returned in 1946.

In song no. 14, Jomo Kenyatta is further compared with the Biblical Moses. The song reincarnates Jomo Kenyatta as Moses to lead the Agĩkũyũ from colonialism just like Moses liberated Israelites from the Egyptian bondage. *Nake Jomonianeirworuthanjurwautongoria, ta uriarwaneirwo Musa e Misiri* (Jomo was given the shepherd's rod like Moses in Egypt). In other words, Jomo Kenyatta was chosen by God to liberate the Agĩkũyũ from colonial bondage. He was also likened with Jesus who was rejected by religious leaders but became the cornerstone of salvation, *Ihigaririaaakimaregirenoriomacokiregwakanario* (The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone). This pointed to the fact that Jomo Kenyatta was unpopular with both colonial administrators and missionaries in Kenya because he argued that *gutirimuthungunamubea* (there was no difference between the colonizer and the priest). The Mau Mau adherents predicted that the colonizers would later realize that their rejection was futile (Wanjau, n.d).

In song no. 11, Kenyatta was beseeched to be like a fountain to quench the thirst of black people, *Jomowitwaguthaitha, nigeethautuikegithima, giakunyuagwonianduairo* (Jomo we plead that you become a fountain for the blacks). In the Bible, Jesus likened himself with a well of living water (John 4:10, The New African Bible). In other words, Kenyatta should use his wisdom and knowledge acquired in Europe for the welfare of the Kenyan people.

Song no. 8 depicted Jomo Kenyatta as the undisputed KAU leader. The song reports that Kenyatta addressed a mammoth rally in Kaloleni in Nairobi and unveiled the KAU flag which was fixed to his walking stick. The crowd was so appreciative that it ululated and clapped thunderously, *Ngemina hi Kalole-iniciariraga ta igutha* (Ululations and clappings were like thunder). The song also records that it was in the mammoth rally in Kaloleni that KAU diplomats were sent abroad to deal with the land question in colonial Kenya. Kenyans appreciated them so much that they braved heavy rain at the airport as they bid Mbiyu Koinange goodbye. KAU members were to contribute more money to ensure that Mbiyu was closely followed by Achieng Onekoto Britain. This song shows that various Kenyan communities were involved in the struggle. KAU leaders were later arrested and among them was their *muthamaki* (king), Jomo Kenyatta.

Jomo Kenyatta was a *muthamaki* (king) as far as the Mau Mau were concerned as portrayed in song no. 19, *O utukuuciomuthamakinianyitirwo* (That same night our king was arrested). The colonial government sent a convoy of heavily armed soldiers to arrest Kenyatta and other African leaders on the night of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1952. His clothes were carried in boxes and he was not even allowed to bid goodbye to his family members. The song covers the pathetic arrest of Jomo Kenyatta and other KAU leaders. According to song no. 16, KAU would be the political party to usher in Kenyan political independence. The party's main objective was to win back the lost African land and freedom. Its motto was *Kihootonakwihoka Ngai* (Justice and faith in God) and its vision was peace. The party stressed that the pain of land loss

should turn everyone into a politician. The blacks should fight for political freedom to cease being slaves in their own country. Song no. 19 described how KAU leaders were arrested on the night of 20th October 1952. This arrest did not deter the Agikūyū from the freedom struggle. Song no. 20 advised them to emulate their leaders and never be silent until they attained their land and freedom *tutigakiraorioritutarigwakurimanawiyathiwitukiumbe* (we shall never be silent until we get back our land and freedom).

In song no. 27, Jomo Kenyatta was quoted to have said *matukumakwamarianiindeetenimarikitiekunjigana, nituguitathakame* (I have wasted enough of my years, it is necessary that we shed blood). The Mau Mau took this to mean military violence against the colonialists. They took him as the Kenyan Messiah ready to sacrifice his life for the country in song no. 33. They urged him to speed up the Kenyan political salvation process; *hiuhaturuteukomboini, Kenya yotheiyuirwonimaithori* (hurry and save us, the whole of Kenya is in tears). All these songs go a long way to show the position of Jomo Kenyatta in the struggle for independence. He might not have fought in the forest but his detention for seven years and restriction in Lodwar thereafter shows that he suffered greatly in the eyes of the freedom fighters.

After Kenyatta was detained for seven years, he was released. He joined Kenya African National Union which ushered Kenya to independence. Thus, the concluding song, *Kenyatta haiciabendera* (Kenyatta raise the flag) the whole nation is depicted to be in a celebration mood with Jomo Kenyatta as the national leader of the independent Kenya, proudly flying its own flag. The independent Kenyan flag had the same colours as the KAU flag of black, red and green, symbolizing the fact that Kenya belonged to the black people who had shed their blood (red) as a sacrifice for their beautiful country (green). Up to that far Jomo Kenyatta was a hero but what he did thereafter casts doubts among the Mau Mau fighters on his commitment to the cause. This is because Kenyatta took a reconciliation posture where he even concluded that we all fought for independence. This meant that there were many strands of the struggle like the Labour Movement, elected members of the Legislative Council, the elites and the Independent Church Movement. The Mau Mau movement was marked out by its struggle in the forest.

## 2.2. Dedan Kimathi

In the historiography of the Mau Mau movement in post-independent Kenya, Dedan Kimathi is depicted as the most outstanding leader of the Mau Mau and thus honored as a Field Marshall. The title is the highest military rank in the British Army, equivalent of Admiral of the fleet in the Royal Navy and to Marshall of the Royal Air Force (Karimi, 2013). He was arrested on Sunday October 21<sup>st</sup> 1956 and hanged on Monday February 18<sup>th</sup> 1957 at Kamiti prison (Karimi, 2013). He was buried in an unmarked grave and therefore he was never given a dignified burial.

What confounds observers is that Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi features in very few of the Mau Mau songs collected by Gakaarawa Wanjau. However, in song no. 27 he is likened with the Biblical Jesus. In the Bible, Jesus is said to have gone up Mount Olives to pray on the eve of his betrayal and arrest. Likewise, Kimathi is depicted to have gone up the Aberdares to ask God for strength and courage to be able to defeat the *Nyakeru* (Whites). In the Bible, Jesus told his disciples that they must drink from his cup which was full of sorrows. Kimathi on the other hand told the Agikūyū that they must drink from cups of suffering, sadness and tears. This meant that land and freedom were expected to be attained through suffering just like the Biblical salvation was attained through the suffering of Jesus.

Kimathi led the Aberdare battalion that was dreaded by the colonialists. He was believed by his followers to have mystical powers which enabled him to win major battles against the colonial forces. His 'mystical powers' were so dreaded by the colonialists that they were ready to give some 500 pounds or Sh. 10,000 monetary reward to any person who would lead to his arrest (Karimi, 2013). This might seem to be a modest amount today but in 1950s it was a lot of money. Apparently, Dedan Kimathi was honored by having a short street (Kimathi Street) named after him by Jomo Kenyatta's regime in Nairobi. Kimathi remains as a distinguished Mau Mau fighter among Kenyans and he is today remembered through a life-size bronze statue unveiled by the former president of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007 at the junction of Kimathi and Mama Ngina streets in Nairobi (Karimi, 2013). Various streets in towns across the country and a university in Nyeri are named in memory of Dedan Kimathi. His wife was settled on a fifty-acre farm in Nyandarua by President Jomo Kenyatta. She was given state security and a car by President Mwai Kibaki and the Nyandarua Governor named her the County Peace Ambassador.

## 2.3. The Unsung Mau Mau Heroes

A critical examination of the Mau Mau songs introduces freedom fighters that are rarely mentioned in history books and folklore. They include Munyui, Baranja, Gakuru, Kariba and some named and unnamed women. These characters can be subject of further research.

## 2.4. Munyui

Song no. 27 stanza 6 and 7, informs us that Jomo Kenyatta as a leader of freedom fighters made an appeal to bloodshed for the sake of independence by *ihii* (young men/Mau Mau warriors). One courageous young man named Munyui responded and entered the Aberdare forest. Although not much is known of Munyui and what became of him, the song shows how many other young men volunteered to join the fighters to heed a call from their leaders to fight to liberate their country.

## 2.5. Baranja, Gakuru and Kariba

Song no. 28 records an episode where the Mau Mau had a direct military confrontation with the colonial government at Tumutumu hill. Baranja, one of the fighters, dressed himself like a woman and successfully spied on the

movement of colonial soldiers. He is praised for saving the Mau Mau from being ambushed in the Tumutumu hill battle. The song demonstrates how Mau Mau intelligence gatherers disguised themselves to penetrate the colonial intelligence. During the same episode, Gakuru risked his life and lit fire in the forest prompting a ceasefire from the colonialists. The Tumutumu hill war was a demonstration of how the colonial forces were sometimes easily outwitted by the Mau Mau warriors. Tumutumu in Mathira, in Nyeri county, was the regional headquarters of the Presbyterian Church whose leadership fought against Mau Mau and the Agĩkũyũ culture of female circumcision. Thus, it was the target of the Mau Mau.

Song no. 29 records the Ruiruiru direct military confrontation between the colonial soldiers and the Mau Mau fighters that left the colonial forces devastated. Kariba successfully used trickery whereby he said, *cagurainyakerumutigembariyanyakairuniurimumarinaguo* (Pick out the Whites and spare the foolish blacks). This made the blacks to unite against a common enemy in this particular episode such that the whites were overwhelmed. This prompted the white soldiers to flee to the nearby Kiamachimbi police post, totally defeated. The site of the battle is now gazetted as a Mau Mau heritage site by the National Museum of Kenya as the General Kariba Caves.

## 2.6. Women Heroes

Women were not left behind in the struggle for independence and are remembered in various songs. Evidently, they played the role of spreading messages on the struggle undeterred by the colonialists. Feminism was a tactic meant to arouse men into fighting. The mention of the death of a young woman named *Josibaini* (Josephine) in song no. 1 must have triggered some Agĩkũyũ men to join Mau Mau to protect their women from colonial brutality.

Interestingly in song no. 1, women popularized Jomo Kenyatta as a good leader; *Kenyatta niagathirwoniciananaatumia* (Kenyatta was praised by both women and children). In song no. 13, some women in Murang'a participated in passive resistance when they defied the government order to have domestic animals vaccinated. They were arrested and subjected to a lot of suffering. Children suffered from hunger and their mothers persevered humiliation by being made to drink porridge from broken pieces of calabash (Wanjau, n.d). Women in Murang'a played an active role in opposing the terracing policy in the 1940s which forced the colonial government to abandon it.

In song no. 29, an unnamed woman spied on the behaviour of the colonial agents, assessed the situation and reported accordingly for the freedom fighters to take the necessary precautions; *Mutumiaumweniokireguturehereuhoro, agitwiracianaciakwagukuniguthukire* (One woman reported that the situation was very bad). This showed that women served as the intelligence wing of the Mau Mau. Song no. 30 reported of a war in Ndakaini village in Mathira, Nyeri, where the Mau Mau had an upper hand led by Kimathi and Mbaria. It is noted that two women, NjeriwaKariara and Njokiwaligo participated in that battle demonstrating that women were involved in direct combat. In song no. 28, a girl called Kanguniu, though her role is not clearly recorded, saved several lives in the Tumutumu battle. Unfortunately, the songs being poetic in nature tends to limit the details in these battles. Nonetheless, the fact that names are mentioned in the songs forms the basis for further research.

Admittedly, women gave moral support to the freedom movement through ululating whenever news of the Mau Mau victory was reported. In song no. 29, women expressed their joy when General Kariba's battalion won the battle; *Ngemina hi Ruiruiruciariraga to igutha* (There were loud ululations and clapping at Ruiruiru). In song no. 31, women reportedly ensured that the Mau Mau warriors were well fed and even carried provisions of food to the forest; *githerikiarokotenikiarugitwonandiraamunanyunguigiriciaGikuyuitungatiigitumariigu* (Food in location 10 was prepared in drums and two large Gikuyu pots such that the warriors had food to carry away to the forest). This demonstrates that women in Murang'a were very active in supplying provisions to the warriors. Song no. 10 reported of an incident in Ruring'u stadium in Nyeri, where Jomo Kenyatta addressed a KAU rally in 1952. Before Kenyatta's arrival women who had thronged the place very early were worried when Jomo Kenyatta took long to arrive in that meeting. This shows that women were committed to the freedom struggle and were eager to receive messages from the Mau Mau leadership.

## 2.7. The Mau Mau Faith in God That Kept Them Vigilant

Apart from the Mau Mau songs advancing the activities of the participants in the struggle, they were used to instill faith in the Agĩkũyũ religion, created awareness on the movement, black consciousness and education. According to song no. 2, 11 and 46, the name of the Agĩkũyũ God was taken to be holy and powerful such that the Agĩkũyũ were not supposed to mention it in vain. The songs warned the colonialists that the Agĩkũyũ God would come to their aid and that the colonialists would have to leave through the back door, *Muthi Ngai agatuteithia, mukagerakirutiro* (When God will come to our aid, you will have to pass through the back door). These songs instilled faith in the fighters that their God would enable them to liberate the country.

According to song no. 17, the Mau Mau God did not rest and was merciful; *Ngai waanduirundakomaga... Ngaiwaanduirutuigiretha* (God of the blacks does not slumber... God of the blacks have mercy on us). The Agĩkũyũ believed that their God helped them escape in some incidences where the loyalists had betrayed them. Even in the grim circumstances when their land was taken from them, such that their children suffered from hunger pangs, they still drew strength from the fact that their God would assure their victory as recorded in song no. 20, *No Ngai niatumiriirienginyatukahootana* (God is our comfort until we realize our victory).

The fighters would pray to God before undertaking any mission and gave thanks thereafter. For instance, in song no. 26, the Mau Mau prayed to God before their mission and were not detected by the enemy. *Mirani igiukira, ikiuriramahooya-ini Ngai nimunenetutionirwo* (The young fighters arose, prayed and God is great we were not sighted). After the end of the Emergency period, it is reported that they thanked God for protecting them and sustaining their unity in song no.33; *Na tucokerie Ngai ngathoniamuniatuhotithitietugakorwoturiamwe* (Let us thank God for sustaining our

unity). They thanked God for supposedly accepting the sacrifices made by the blacks and asserted that an army led by God could never be defeated.

### 3. The Mau Mau Songs Spread of Awareness That Kept Their Movement Vigilant

#### 3.1. Mau Mau songs on Western Education

One of the ironies of the Mau struggle which was against the colonial system and Christian doctrine is the call for Africans to embrace western education. Some characters in the Mau Mau songs like Jomo Kenyatta and Mbiyu Koinange had acquired higher education abroad. With a Master's Degree, Mbiyu Koinange was even more educated than most whites in Kenya. The Mau Mau praised western education but were opposed to the Christian religion which embodied the British culture (Berman and Lonsdale, 2002).

The songs popularized western education which would be a useful weapon for fighting against colonialism. Song no. 6 advises that the most important warrior is the educated one *njambayabatahindiino, kaari kayo no githomo* (an important modern warrior is the educated one). Educated leaders like Jomo Kenyatta emphasized that education for the African child would be very effective in the fight for the lost lands. Song no. 9 advised that the only way in which the future of the African child would be assured was through western education *batawaitimunimuthiru, riuutigairewaturamu* (the spear is no longer relevant, the best weapon is the pen). The modern enemy needed to be fought with the power of the pen and therefore the Agĩkũyũ had the responsibility of constructing good schools for their children. They established independent schools after their children were expelled from Christian sponsored schools like Alliance. Githunguri School and college played an important role in instilling patriotism among the Kenyan youth. Song no. 15 asserted that, though brought by the white man, education was positive. *Kindugiatukeniriegithomogitiokirekwihia* (We appreciate education, it does no harm). The Agĩkũyũ children were advised to emulate Mbiyuwa Koinange who was the most educated black Kenyan during the colonial period.

#### 3.2. Black Consciousness

Song no. 5 called for the black consciousness by asserting that the Agĩkũyũ should be proud of belonging to the black race: *ungiuroatia? inaweatia? Kana urimundumuiru, ndoyamokomerinaiguru, njugeniindimundumuiru* (if my race is doubted, I would raise both of my hands and ascertain I am of the black race). It also called for the unity of the blacks for the purpose of defeating the whites. Young people were called to give service to their country. In the circumstances, service meant fighting for political freedom. They should work hard, to ensure that their heritage was not lost to the whites. They called for the revival of the African culture and religion.

#### 3.3. The Loyalists

One of the challenges faced by the Mau Mau was one of the enemies within. These were the colonial chiefs and staunch Christians who sided with the colonialists and the church. They were declared the enemies of the community by the fighters. In song no. 20, they were referred to as traitors *inyuiacuukaniaya* and enemies of the community *thuciaruriri*. This meant that they were to be fought alongside the colonialists. Anybody who betrayed the Mau Mau movement was to be dealt with ruthlessly. Song no. 31 highlighted an old man who threatened to scream to alert the colonial authorities when he sighted the Mau Mau warriors. It was clear, that if he dared do so, his fate was death; *Njeneruakiugakarekwokoigeikoigwithanionanjirungi* (The General gave the order that he should be shot dead if he attempted to scream). This means that the Mau Mau expected total compliance from the general public. Song no. 12 described the loyalists as cursed; *Mwendiawaruririagicariaunene, niwegaaririkanekirumiarinakio* (the mean traitors should know that they are cursed). Song no. 27 referred to them as a barren tree; *Mutiutarinamaciaronduhandagwomugunda* (A barren tree should not be allowed to grow). To the Mau Mau, the loyalists were good for nothing as they were not of any good to the society. They only deserved to die as they were a stumbling block to the country's political freedom.

#### 3.4. The End of the Emergency

The end of the Emergency period signalled a new era in Kenya whereby political freedom was inevitable. The spread of political awareness centered on preaching unity, popularizing Kenyatta as the country's savior and KANU as the major political party that would usher in political independence as evidenced in song no. 33.

### 4. Conclusion

This article is basically an analysis of Gakaarawa Wanjau's booklet, *Nyimbocia Mau Mauiriaciarehithirie Wiyathi* (The Mau Mau songs that facilitated independence), published to celebrate the 25 years of Kenya's independence. The booklet unearths colonial brutality against the Mau Mau fighters who did not give up but clung to the hope that the whites would one day leave their country. There is no doubt that the songs fueled the Mau Mau movement because, like newspapers, they kept the community well informed on the unfolding events in the country. They stressed faith in God, the importance of western education, comforted those who suffered under the colonial regime and popularized the political parties and leaders. This kept the Mau Mau movement vigilant from 1948 to 1964. This article is therefore a contribution to Mau Mau historiography, gathered from the Mau Mau songs, which would otherwise remain obscure.

The article has demonstrated the significance of using songs in the reconstruction of history on the Mau Mau contribution to the emancipation of Kenya from the colonial yoke. Although Jomo Kenyatta, who became the first Kenyan president in 1963, has been accused in some quarters that he did not do much to reward the fighters, the songs provide

enough evidence that he was a great inspiration during the period of the struggle. The innovative nature of the songs to imitate the Christian lyrics was a great weapon against the colonialists and the established churches. Abraham, Moses and Jesus, the heroes of the Christian faith, were replicated in the Kenyan situation by Jomo Kenyatta and Dedan Kimathi. Equally important is the religious conviction of the fighters that God was on their side and would liberate them like he liberated the Jews from the Egyptian bondage. The article demonstrates the significance of songs in passing the ideals of the movement and their roles in instilling patriotism.

The Mau Mau songs mention some freedom fighters that are not found in history books. These unsung freedom heroes include Munyui, Baranja, Gakuru and some women like Njeriwa Kariara, Njokiwaligo and a girl named as Kanguniu. These characters form a strong base for further research into the Mau Mau historiography. Thus, there is need to diversify the sources in the reconstruction of history.

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