



THE CHIEF MAU MAU IDEOLOGUE: GAKAARA WA WANJAU'S

CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF

THE AGIKUYU, 1940 – 2001

by

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Background of the Study

- Mass discontentment due to colonial interference.
- From the 1920s, Agikuyu leaders among them Jomo Kenyatta used literary skills to unify them and raise their political consciousness.
- Banning of *Ituika* (Generational handover of power) by the colonial government.
- In 1946 Kenya African Union (KAU) was formed
- In 1946 a group of radical Agikuyu, *Anake a 40* (Forty group)
- The British colonial government wanted to break this solidarity
- Gakaara wa Wanjau was arrested and detained by the colonial government as the 'Chief Mau Mau Propagandist' (Durrani, 2006).
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- All his books were banned but it became impossible to ban the freedom songs since they were already learnt by heart.

Statement of the Problem

- Most of the honoured Mau Mau heroes like Dedan Kimathi, Waruhiu Itote, Stanley Mathenge, and Bildad Kaggia among others took to the forest from where they violently engaged the British colonial authorities.
- Gakaara wa Wanjau fought through his literary works.
- Although available literature portray him as a nationalist during the colonial period (Pugliese, 1992), still much needs to be done in order to examine his political thought as a nationalist who contributed to Kenya's political independence through his revolutionary writings.
- Being one of the elites at the time, it is puzzling that the Jomo Kenyatta and Moi's regimes never rewarded him.
- This work fills this gap and demonstrates the various strands in the fight for independence by those who used their literary prowess to decolonise the mind of the Kenyans.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine Gakaara wa Wanjau's literary contribution to the politics of freedom struggle in both colonial and post-colonial Kenya.

The specific objectives were to:

- i. Trace Gakaara wa Wanjau's socio-political experiences during the colonial period that influenced his political consciousness.
- ii. Examine the influence of his political writings to the Mau Mau nationalist movement.
- iii. Explore Gakaara's socio-political activities after detention that influenced his relationship with the post-colonial governments

Justification of the Study

- The study demonstrated that Gakaara wa Wanjau's contribution to the Kenyan nationalist struggle through his literary skills in raising the political consciousness of the Agikuyu during the colonial period was very vital.
- The study therefore contributed in generating knowledge on the various strands of Kenya's freedom struggle. Gakaara used his brain and pen to decolonise the mind.
- The analysis of his vernacular literary works showed that he particularly targeted the Agikuyu as his main audience with the intention of raising their political consciousness.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Gakaara (1952) this pamphlet sought to demonstrate the need for all the Agikuyu to become actively involved in the struggle for the recovery of their land, national independence and delivery from the white man's slavery.

Berman and Lonsdale (2002) the hostile movement was intended to cause a crisis with the aim of forcing major concessions from the colonial government.

Gakaara (1983) was basically the author's prison diary in which he explained some of the factors that motivated him into political literary activism that led to his arrest and detention.

Theoretical Framework

- The study was informed by relative deprivation theory as explained by Ted Robert Gurr in *Why men rebel* (Gurr, 2015).
- According to Gurr, political protests and rebellion could be understood if the minds of those who opposed bad governments and bad policies were analysed.

Propaganda model of media control Theory.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

- The study adopted a historical research design.
- Ogunniyi (1992) explained that, "A historical research is a systematic examination of the past in order to understand the present and to look into the future wisely.
- Content analysis of his literary works was done and corroborated with oral interviews and other documents generated at the time.
- The researcher collected data and systematically arranged it to provide the required information.
- The bulk of the research material was on Gakaara's literary works.

Sample Population

- The sample population in the study comprised of approximately thirty informants who were largely family members and acquaintances of Gakaara wa Wanjau when he was still alive.
- Cohen, Kahn and Steves (2002) argued that a minimum of thirty respondents would be a reasonable starting point for qualitative research.
- The weakness in this strategy, therefore, was that some of the informants had the same information already acquired from the earlier respondents.
- The researcher used Gakaara's family members to identify his acquaintances for interviews with the aim of being led to more individuals conversant with Gakaara wa Wanjau's political activism during the colonial period.

➤ Sampling Procedures


- The study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques.
- Gakaara's five relatives, particularly those who experienced colonial rule, were purposively sampled for the researcher expected them to have more knowledge about him.
- The family members then directed the researcher to five of Gakaara's acquaintances.
- The acquaintances then led the researcher to ten respondents with more information on Gakaara who in turn led to eight more.
- The researcher then purposively identified three respondents who interpreted Mau Mau songs while one interpreted some French literature concerning Gakaara.
- This ensured a diverse number of informants for the study.
- To ensure systematic collection of data, sample questions were formulated beforehand in line with the research objectives. Open ended questions were used to accommodate the informants' literacy levels.

➤ **Research Instruments**

- The study utilized primary data, secondary data and oral interviews.
- The researcher accessed **primary** information from the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Center in Nairobi, the Gakaara Press in Karatina and Ngatia Wang'ombe's personal archives in Karatina.
- **Secondary** data was accessed from text books, journal and newspaper articles.
- **Oral information** was collected from thirty respondents from Gakaara's family and acquaintances.
- An **interview schedule** was prepared beforehand which contained the main issues to be discussed with the informants.
- Note taking was utilized as a research technique.
- While collecting data, the researcher had notebooks with different sub-topics such as Gakaara's political and social experiences, employment, political literary works and his relationship with the colonial and postcolonial governments.
- Oral interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. This eased the systematic collection and analysis of data.



❖ **Data Collection Procedures**

- ❖ The researcher proceeded with the study after getting permission from the School of Education of Karatina University and the NACOSTI (National Council for Science and Technology).
 - ❖ The study involved collection and corroboration of primary, secondary and oral sources in the context of the focus and scope of the research.
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Methods of Data Analysis

- ✓ Collected data was analysed descriptively to determine how Gakaara wa Wanjau used his literary skills to raise the political awareness of the Kenyans during and after the colonial period.
- ✓ The organisation of qualitative data was done chronologically based on Gakaara's experiences like education, employment, literary political activism, arrest and detention by the colonial authorities and finally his socio-political activities that determined his relationship with the post-colonial governments.
- ✓ The researcher then explored and interpreted the meaning of these life experiences by looking at Gakaara's social interactions, his contemporary cultural issues, ideologies and historical context.
- ✓ A classification system was adopted in order to record the inferred information systematically.
- ✓ There after content analysis of the collected data established facts on Gakaara's literary political activism.
- ✓ The facts were used to demonstrate how Gakaara wa Wanjau literary contributed to the raising of political consciousness of the Agikuyu during the colonial period.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1 : Gakaara wa Wanjau's socio-political experiences during the colonial period that influenced his political consciousness.

- ❖ The Europeans denied him a father figure
- ❖ Expulsion from High School
- ❖ Experience of European exploitation at British firm
- ❖ Literary influence from the Bible and writers
- ❖ Contemporaries, trade unionists and social revolution

Objective 2 : Influence of his political writings to the Mau Mau nationalist movement.

- ❖ *Waigua atia?* (What's up?)
- ❖ *Roho ya Kiume na Bidii Kwa Mwafrika* (Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African
- ❖ Political creed
- ❖ Collection and publishing Mau Mau freedom songs

Objective 3: Gakaara's socio-political activities after detention that influenced his relationship with the post-colonial government


- ❑ He made a collection of Mau Mau freedom songs
- ❑ Wrote and published against neo-colonialism
- ❑ He published his prison diary
- ❑ He was the chairman of UUGI

Recommendations

- A comprehensive study on the literary contribution to the achievement of the political freedom of Kenya
- A study on exposure of colonial atrocities through an analysis of the anti-colonial songs and memoirs of Kenya's freedom fighters.

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Thank you