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A Review of the History of Mungiki Movement in Kenya, From 2002 to 2012

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Abstract: The militias' movement have become a key player in the perpetration of politically instigated violence in Kenya. The rise of militia groups as player in political violence has generated responses from several quarters, including law enforcement and civil society organizations. Despite the government directives, *Mungiki* movement has kept on re-surfacing. The Kenyan authorities have not succeeded in their attempts to limit the *Mungiki's* influence or abuses, despite crack downs, which reportedly included summary executions of suspected adherents. Thus, *Mungiki* poses the greatest threat of large scale political violence in Kenya. This is not only because of their relative ubiquity and seemingly complex network but also due to their manner of operation, which remained strikingly a throw-back to the Hobbesian state of nature. It is this manifestation of the movement which has made it rather difficult to analyse its social, cultural and religious origins. It is based on this background that this review attempts to locate the *Mungiki* militia group within the academic and ever widening academic and non-academic writings in Kenya.

Keywords: Kenya; Mungiki; movement; culture; economic; history.

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Introduction

Since the late 1980s, scanty though significant, literatures have emerged in Kenya about a controversial movement or sect called *Mungiki* (Wamue, 2001; Anderson, 2002; Kagwanja, 2003). The emergence of this literature is attributable to the widespread acts of criminality and intense public resentment that has characterized the movement and the tactful way into which the movement makes a quick resurgence even after the government has put up spirited fight to eradicate it. The scholarly literature and even newspaper commentaries on crime in Kenya, is acceptably incomplete without any reference to *Mungiki* (Ruteere, 2008; Aguko, 2018).

These developments have caused scholars, journalists, state bureaucrats and all those concerned with the social and economic developments in Kenya to rethink about Mungiki- particularly considering its origin, aims, objectives and where it generally stands in the history of Kenya. The above endeavors have, as expected, realized a sizeable literature about the movement analyzed from various perspectives. As a result, therefore, this paper attempts to bring to fore the various historiographical interpretations that are so far evident about Mungiki and to advance the extent to which they can complement each other.

This paper specifically argues that, Mungiki, like any other movement that characterized colonial and post-colonial periods in Kenya, evokes social, economic, political, cultural, moral and religious dimensions, whose understanding spans beyond the available academic literature (Wamue, 2001). Therefore, for a nuance comprehension of Mungiki, scholars need to continuously interrogate, corroborate and complement the available academic literature with the ever emerging popular views continuously expressed in the Kenyan Press,

by political leaders, government officials and leaders of non-governmental organizations (Aguko, 2018).

The Origins of Mungiki

Mungiki is a Gikuyu word, taken from the etymological root word Muingi, meaning masses or people. It is a term derived from the word nguki, which means irindi (crowds) and reflects a belief that people are entitled to a particular place of their own in the ontological order. The term, therefore means, "Fishing the crowds from all corners of Kenya." Mungiki also refers to a religio-political movement composed mainly of large masses of Gikuyu origin, and a few non-Gikuyu. The followers are mainly composed of youths in the 18-40 age group. However, there are exceptional cases in the 40-60-age bracket. It is estimated that the movement has about one and a half million members, including 400,000 women. These numbers are disputed since it appears that most Kenyans shun the sect (Wamue, 2001; Kagwanja, 2003; Aguko, 2018).

Most of the Mungiki members, it is argued, are victims of land clashes in the Rift-Valley region that were affected by ethnic conflicts on the eve of the 1992 multiparty general election in Kenya, the majority of whom are either standard eight or form four school dropouts composed mainly of low income earners in the Jua Kali (hot sun) sector. In October 6, 2003, the Mungiki coordinator admitted that members of the armed forces, from the regular police, the criminal investigation department and the general service unit have joined Mungiki (Murimi, 2003; Kinyungu, 2004a).

Wealthy individuals and politicians (Kinyungu, 2004a) financially support the sect. Research also indicates that there are other followers from public universities. Being largely a disadvantaged group, they resent exploitation and the accumulation of massive wealth by a small proportion of Kenyans at the expense of the poor who are left landless and jobless. The Mungiki shuns oppression, exploitation and alienation of the masses. As such, the movement has become very attractive to the unemployed and disillusioned youth, touts, hawkers, shoe shiners, disillusioned lumpens and all those that regard Christianity with contempt (Mbugua & Buke, 2003).

The Mungiki in the Academic Literature

The Mungiki movement has elicited several interpretations and each interpretation provides its own perspective on the origin of the movement. These perspectives, however, do not differ considerably but complement each other; they makes the understanding of the movement even less complex. What emerges is that Mungiki is a multi-faceted, heterogeneous and decentralized organization to which a single interpretation cannot do justice. Perhaps, the first groundbreaking academic study to have been done about this movement was accomplished by Grace Nyatugah Wamue (Wamue, 2001). Wamue described the nature of Mungiki in relation to the traditional religion and cultural practice of the Gikuyu people before, during and after British colonialism in Kenya. What perhaps comes out of her analysis seems to suggest that Mungiki is heir to a long tradition of religio-political revivalism that dates back to the early stages of anti-colonial resistance. The anti-colonial resistance was characterized by a total rejection of modernity and all its manifestations, a perspective also shared by Macharia (2009) when he observed that Mungiki favour a return to indigenous African traditions and reject Westernisation and all trappings of colonialism.

Wamue traces Mungiki's origin to an evangelical sect known as the "Tent of the Living God", founded in the Laikipia District in 1987, under the leadership of the charismatic 58-year-old Gikuyu preacher, Ngonya wa Gakonya. Gakonya, as early as 1960s, questioned the Christian faith as professed by his parents. The movement initially drew upon Gikuyu traditional values in establishing an indigenous alternative to the materialism of the many evangelical Pentecostal churches that flourished in Central Kenya since the 1980s (Wamue, 2001).

To Wamue, Mungiki is what emerged as a splinter group from the Tent of the Living God, before 1990. It however came to prominence when its members sought registration as a political party in order to contest seats during the 1992 election-an aim in which they were not successful. Like the Tent, Mungike members were distributed around Nairobi, particularly within the slums of Dandora, Korogocho, Githurai, Kariobangi, Kawangware, Kibira, Mathtare and Kangemi. Today, they are scattered in Central and Rift Valley provinces. Of particular interest within the latter provinces are places like Molo, Olenguruone, Subukia, Elbourgon, Nakuru, Nyahururu and Laikipia, all of which were centers of bloodshed during the politically instigated ethnic clashes (Wamue, 2001).

As the movement grows, it has attracted high proportions of Gikuyu displaced due to ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley and it has become highly embedded among the urban poor of Nairobi estates. The splinter group was led by Waruinge Ndura (later referred to as Ibrahim, after his conversion to Islam). Waruinge was a 1992 secondary school leaver from Nakuru District who was influenced so much by Gakonya. He was grandson of ex-Mau Mau fighter General Waruinge. He claims to have co-founded the Mungiki sect with six other young people in 1987, when he was only 15 years old and in form one at Molo Secondary School. According to Ndura Waruinge, the group consulted ex- Mau Mau generals in Laikipia and Nyandarua, who approved of their plans. As such, Mungiki followers claim to be authorities in Gikuyu ancient religious and cultural practices. The educated Mungiki followers also blend their traditional Gikuyu knowledge with reading of heroes like Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther and renowned Gikuyu scholars/leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta and Ngugi wa Thiogo. They also consult the Bible especially the Old Testament texts (Wamue, 2001).

In concurrence with other works (Jomo-Kenyatta, 1938; Mbiti, 1969; Wanjohi, 1997); Wamue (2001) argues that traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for the community to which individuals belong. To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involve participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person as such cannot detach himself from the religion of the group, for to do so is to be severed from their roots, their foundation, their context of security, their kinship and the entire group of those who make them aware of their own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements of life is to be outside of the whole picture. For an African to be without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire life of the society, and African people do not know how to exist without religion. What Christian missionaries did was to alienate the African people from their religious ways of life and leave them in a vacuum devoid of solid religious foundation. As any community in colonial Kenya, the Gikuyu were torn between the life of their ancestors, which, has historical roots and firm traditions, and the life of the present technological age, which, as yet for many Africans have no concrete form or depth (Wamue, 2001).

It was with this background that Wamue delved into the aims and the objective of Mungiki, which according to her, were to unite and mobilize the Kenyan masses to fight against the yoke of mental slavery and to achieve the Kirinyanga Kingdom. The Mungiki followers see this kingdom as the first of community based kingdoms that will be established in their country and will later be embraced by all Kenyan people. Mungiki has four aims: to unite Gikuyu people, and consequently other Kenyans; to redeem the Gikuyu from Western culture brought about by Christianity and colonialism; to liberate the Kenyan people from political oppression and economic exploitation; and to restore Africans to their indigenous values. Foreign culture and religion brought by Christianity and colonization have led Kenyans to continue suffering from religious and political oppression as well as economic exploitation. Accordingly, the liberation of the masses must come through return to indigenous ways of life, in particular culture and religion. The movement maintains that all ethnic groups in Kenya must denounce foreign faiths, especially Christianity and revert to traditional beliefs, practices and churches. In other words, Mungiki advocates for a complete return to indigenous beliefs and practices- and a return to indigenous shrines being the only way to achieve its goal. In practice, therefore, Mungiki followers denounce Christian faith with all its teachings, rituals, names, beliefs, practices and churches. They have dismissed the current political system and leaders (whom they call the old generation), who attend church on Sundays, but nevertheless continue to oppress the people by amassing wealth through seasoned corruption, grabbing public land and economic exploitation of the masses. By failing to criticize the Christians, Mungiki adherents argue the masses have continued to support the very forces that oppress them (Wamue, 2001).

To Wamue, the political intervention of the movement, though hidden, comes out very clearly when one considers the Mungiki flag and the fact that Mungiki adherents can barely manage five minute of conversation without spontaneously deviating into politics of contemporary Kenya, where, they criticize the widespread political oppression, poverty and violence experienced by Kenyans at the hands of government agents in the same breath as they condemn cultural and religious imperialism. Therefore, Mungiki, to Wamue, is a religio-political movement that has adopted the

Gikuyu religion as a weapon to challenge political and religious authorities. What is, however, missing from this interpretation is the criminal background of Mungiki and what explains the high urban prevalence of the sect (Wamue, 2001).

Other works have either expounded on Wamue's perspective or re-interpreted Wamue to shed more light about the movement. One such literature is by Anderson in 2002. In this work, Anderson particularly raises concerns with Wamue's conclusion that Mungiki's core values remain essentially rooted in a political and passive rural support base, which is difficult to reconcile with the strident, violence, criminal and increasingly intimidatory tactics employed in Nairobi's slums over the past years. Whatever Mungiki may have been on the distant farms of Laikipia, it has transformed into a radically different movement in the estates, shanties and slums of the city (Anderson, 2002). The author argues that a nuance interpretation of the movement ought to examine the relationship between Mungiki and the materialist, instrumentalist and ethnocentric character of local Kenyan politics. Taking Kariobangi North violence (in which several people were killed in cold blood by people suspecting to be Mungiki adherents), of March 2002 as a test case, Anderson articulates that elements of all three interpretations of Mungiki-materialist, ethnic and political, are clearly evident as one considers the escalation of violence in Nairobi and other urban centers closely related to Mungiki activities.

For example, Anderson asserts that, under the national leadership of Waruinge, Mungiki has become stridently ethnocentric and it aimed at fulfilling the prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro, the Kikuyu diviner and seer of the late nineteenth century. To Waruinge, Christianity, colonialism and neo-colonialism presented great challenge to Gikuyu cultural values and seek redemption as Mugo wa Kibiro had predicted they must. The revival of Gikuyu values in the "Kingdom of Kirinyaga" thus implies a political restoration of Gikuyu power through the removal of the oppressive "Nyayo regime" of president Moi. Coupled with the fact that Waruinge himself is the grandson of ex-Mau Mau fighter General Waruinge, whose name he proudly takes, the Mungiki movement speaks very loud to the politics of Central Kenya, and has taken the impression of ethnic exclusivity alarming to non-Gikuyu-and have on even greater poignancy in the wake of Kariobangi massacre. So much that even when Mungiki leaders declared their intention to become Muslim in June 2002, making public conversion some three months later, the pronouncement was seen as a blatant piece of political opportunism-the alliance with Muslims being nothing more than a short term strategy aimed at thwarting a planned crackdown on Mungiki activities by the government (Anderson, 2002; Kagwanja, 2003).

The materialist perspective on Mungiki, though not adequately covered by Anderson, was more apparent in the year 2001. This is evident as Mungiki gangs were entangled with urban vigilantism, over rent disputes and the fight for control of matatu terminals. Disputes over rents charged by property owners have been a feature of violent conflict in Nairobi since October 2001, when tenants in Kibira estate organized a rent boycott as part of the campaign for fairer rents. As a result, vigilante groups representing Luo tenants clashed with those in the pay of predominantly Muslim Nubian landlords, who some believed were supported by elements of Mungiki. As the rent protests spread from Kibira to other estates, the violence escalated, with other landlords seeking to terrorize tenants into compliance before the boycotts took hold. In the face of pending boycott, Kariobangi property owners had apparently threatened to employ hirelings to deal with tenants who refused to pay their rents. To Anderson, this is widely believed to be an important aspect of the violence of 3 March, 2002 with Mungiki and Taliban being mustered by rival interest groups. This materialist interpretation is further complicated by the Mungiki challenge to the long-standing "protection racket" operated in the Dandora matatu routes hitherto in the hands of a rival gang called Kamjesh from November 2001. This action was justified by the Mungiki leader to be in the interest of lower fares for commuters and the ending of bribery and corruption among officials of the Transport Licensing Board. In areas such as Kasarani, Mungiki adherents bragged of being able to reduce insecurity, prior a serious problem to commuters (Anderson, 2002).

To Anderson, Mungiki, like other vigilante gangs in Nairobi, have been drawn unavailingly into the labyrinthine and materialist politics of the urban estates, where any such group can all too easily become a political instrument in the hands of those with money to pay. Anderson arrives at this conclusion after a careful study of the escalating criminal activities in Nairobi and the inability of the

police to tackle it. Echoing newspaper reports, statistics provided by Kenya Police Department, the Safer Cities Survey and anecdotal evidence, Anderson asserts, "one of the principal reasons for the existence of urban vigilantes in Nairobi is to found in the public anxiety about the level of crime within the city and a perception of the incapacity of the police to tackle criminality effectively.

In the prowling urban areas with higher levels of crime, the vigilantes are evidently viewed ambivalently by many of the city dwellers as an appropriate response to the problems of urban insecurity and indeed there has been an attempt to present them as a form of community policing, a trend that is currently enjoying a resurgence of popularity across Africa in tandem with the implementation of liberalization programmes. Although in many instances, these vigilantes operate as "protection racket", they have brought to fore the very question of state failure and particularly, the failure of state security-and much fundamentally the question of the state legitimacy as far as public security is concerned.

As with other vigilante groups, which are mobilized for political interest, linked both to opposition and the then ruling party KANU and further funded by politicians to commit electoral violence, Mungiki, in contrast to "Armies of the Elders", is just a new breed of vigilante groups emerging within marginal communities, in subversion of the ruling party, in areas that are strongholds of the opposition or simply taking shape in the criminal underworld of Nairobi's protection rackets and gangsterism, and many a times choose names that either reflect political disaffection or recall images of warfare and struggle from around the world (Anderson, 2002).

Beyond Kenya, Mungiki has its contemporary and historical parallels in other parts of Africa ((Eshiet, 2010), where global images of warfare, conflict and violence shape the iconography of urban gangs. This global mélange of labeling and paradoxical imagery intends to confuse the respectable middle classes, in whom the names themselves evoke fear and dread. These "New Vigilantes" have not usually been established for expressly political purposes, although they have proliferated with the emergence of political pluralism in the 1990s. They have presented opportunities for politicians who wish to protect their supporters from intimidation, or who want to intimidate their opponents. In Nairobi's urban politics, in particular, such mobs are thought necessary for "security", especially in connection with election campaigns (Anderson, 2002).

The "failure of state security" as a motivation behind the emergence of Mungiki is shared by quite a number of human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Human Rights Watch 2008; Ruteere, 2008; Rasmussen, 2017). The human rights organizations seem to agree that at first, the Mungiki gained a following in slums, where they filled a void in services. They policed crime-ridden shantytowns and took over water delivery and transport. Initially, residents welcomed them, but the Mungiki's gradually became a law unto themselves, extracting bribes, trying "suspects" in kangaroo courts, torturing and killing (Human Rights Watch, 2002, 2008). Using the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, the human rights organization posit that "displaced people fled south from Eldoret towards the towns of Molo, Nakuru and Naivasha in the Southern Rift Valley and into Central Province, the traditional territory of the Kikuyu; they brought with them brutal stories of burning, looting, rape and murder. Their stories helped to stoke tensions among Kikuyu residents in these other towns. Local leaders and Kikuyu elite there and in Nairobi reacted by organizing to contribute money for 'self-defence' forces" (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Similarly, Ruteere argues that Mungiki was the result of the failure by the Kenyan state to meet the Weberian challenge of monopolizing violence within its borders (Ruteere, 2008). A perspective well captured by Rasmussen, when argued that the uneven and unequal distribution of state-sanctioned security and private-company-led security provision leaves a security gap in the poor areas, which is not fulfilled through development engagements. Hence, actors like Mungiki emerge to capitalize on not only the state's inability or unwillingness to provide security in these areas, but also draw attention to the state's inability to properly securitize these areas. Non-state actors like Mungiki appear more flexible than the state in terms of continually transgressing the division between a developmental discourse, with the aim of providing development through security, and the state's unequal delivery and rights negligence in the security sector. Despite their flexibility, Mungiki can't combine the two as they constantly fall into the role of being something that needs to be securitized" (Rasmussen, 2017).

In 2003, another major publication on Mungiki emerged in African Affairs. In this journal, Peter

Mwangi Kagwanja advanced his own interpretation of the movement, although relying on a robust critique of works by Wamue and Anderson. Here Kagwanja examined the Mungiki question through the prism of escalating state sponsored and state condoned informal repression, a strategy that has been used aggressively and effectively by the Moi regime to undermine the political opposition, counter multiparty democracy and regain the political initiative (Kagwanja, 2003).

In the Kenyan context, Kagwanja (2003) argues that in both the 1992 and 1997 elections, the state effectively crippled political opposition by mobilizing militias to disrupt its political meetings, and intimidate, displace and disenfranchise ethnic populations suspected of being sympathetic to the opposition. Lamenting that available literature so far is yet to provide information on the ideological, political dimension, and the heritage of Mungiki, Kagwanja, rather likens the Mungiki movement to the Mau Mau historic past agreeing with the Mungiki leaders that the Mau Mau mission is still "incomplete." He came out clearly when he posited that the Mungiki's ideological bloodline can also be traced from such revivalist movements as Dini Ya Msambwa, Legio Maria, Akorino and more recently Hema ya Ngai wi Mwoyo (the tent of the living god)." The common thread that joins these movements is that they have rallied their followers behind traditional values to challenge the orthodoxy of the mainstream churches as well as injustices by the state. This Mungiki's historical relations with Mau Mau liberation movement is also shared by Rasmussen particularly when he remarked that "probably the most central theme invoked in Mungiki narrative is the movements Mau Mau legacy" (Rasmussen, 2014).

In Kagwanja's own words "the Mungiki itself is said to have risen from the ashes of Hema Ya Ngai wi Mwoyi, a Kikuyu based religio-political movement, which was founded by Ngonya wa Gakonya in 1987" (Kagwanja, 2003). In 1987-92, the heyday of the clamor for political pluralism, the sect became the voice and protector of Nairobi's urban poor whose shanty homes and kiosks we frequently demolished by City Council askaris at the behest of the state. It is this search for moral order amidst political oppression (particularly after the Rift Valley ethnic clashes), that the youthful member that split from the Tent were convinced of accomplishing. In the Rift Valley, the Mungiki vigilantes fought and sometimes repulsed the invaders, protecting the innocent people and maintaining a sense of order in the affected areas. After the clash, they came out to assist the more that 600,000 people internally displaced (mostly Kikuyu), who after the clashes lived in makeshift camps, or as street families, hawkers, and even petty prostitutes and pickpockets in major towns in Rift Valley.

To Kagwanja, the Mungiki movement has not only defended physically the displaced, they have also revitalized the traditional values of generosity and charity to facilitate the return of rehabilitations and social support of its displaced members. They have helped each other acquire and establish farms, where, they grow maize, potatoes and keep livestock. Mungiki's moral crusade has aimed at restoring justice and rebuilding wrecked communities, especially in Nairobi suburbs and shanties where its members live. They also crusade against drunkenness, drug addiction, broken families, prostitution, VD and HIV/Aids. They have flushed out thugs and eliminated criminal activities such as theft, rape and murder. In Githurai and Kamiti matatu terminus, Mungiki youth have successfully removed extortionist cartels, stabilized fares and flushed out criminals. In Kariobangi and Kibira, the Mungiki have also supported the property owners against the politically driven rent reduction. It is only after a decade of state repression (by jailing, beating, prosecuting, killing and intimidating), that Mungiki members began taking law into their hands ((Kinyungu, 2004a; Kinyungu, 2004b; Daily Nation, 2004).

In Kagwanja's opinion, this well-intentioned movement, whose concern was the restoration of moral order, was only infiltrated and given the bad tag by the KANU regime in the run up to 2002 general election. It is the state that created the violent and criminal prone "pseudo-Mungiki" to neutralize the bona fide movement in typical security-service approach. The state instigated leadership wrangles over money and state sponsoring thugs to harass innocent citizen then blaming it on Mungiki to de-legitimize the sect in the eyes of the followers and the public. It is in this context that one can explain the 20 October 2000 mob attack and stripping naked of six women dressed in trousers at Nairobi Kayole Estate in the full glare of press cameras. It also explains the Kariobangi killings and the government ploy to demonize the Kikuyu community and destroy Mwai Kibaki leadership chances. To Kagwanja, therefore, the Mungiki scenario is a demonstration of the

extent to which the state, through the logic of informal repression, has managed to penetrate, co-opt and fragment a movement based on moral ethnicity and to transform it into a disruptive force espousing political tribalism. However, what is not coming out from this highly persuasive article is that the same political oppression was experienced among other ethnic groups in Kenya but did not result into Mongiki- like movement.

In his subsequent publications, Kagwanja further espoused on the instrumentalist value of Mungiki, arguing that the emergence of multiparty politics formalized the process of ethno-political competition and that African states facing determined opposition tend to resort to recruiting surrogates and clients to organize violence against citizen who are perceived to support the opposition (Kagwanja, 2005). In the case of 2002 general elections, he concludes that faced with the challenge of National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) multi-ethnic political coalition, president Moi shifted the axis of the 2002 electoral contest from ethnicity to politics of generational conflict positioning young Uhuru Kenyatta against Mwai Kibaki. This covered the interest of the youths in Mungiki who opted to support KANU and Moi's project Uhuru (Kagwanja, 2006).

Similar view is resonating well with Human Rights Watch when they asserted that in 2002 Mungiki continued to use violent means to secure the loyalty of their fellow Kikuyus, such as forced circumcision and oathing, in which individuals are kidnapped and forced to drink blood and swear their allegiance to Uhuru. Mungikis also disrupted Rainbow Alliance rallies in Nairobi and Mwingi, and were linked to numerous incidents of violence in places where KANU support was weakening, including Kakamega, Eldoret, Nyeri, Nyahuru and Homa Bay (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Moreover, when Mungiki suspects attacked groups of people from other ethnic communities who had attended a successful rally organised by the Rainbow Alliance in Nairobi, many people were puzzled because Mungiki sect had been outlawed and yet it could operate with impunity with no charges being preferred against the perpetrators of violence despite documented evidence (Asingo, 2003).

Contrary to the assertions by Wamue, Anderson and Kagwanja, another perplexing interpretation about Mungiki was brought to fore by Terisa Turner and Leigh Brownhil. They analyze the Mungiki movement in relation to the resurgence of protracted struggle over land in Kenya, reminiscent of the Mau Mau movement that characterized the history of colonial Kenya seventy years ago. To them, this new period of upheaval, beginning around 1986 and intensifying into the year 2002, is ultimately tied up with the introduction of World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs in Africa. The struggle for land during the period set against those who promote capitalist enterprises and those who reassert a subsistence political economy in concert with others engaged in popular globalization from below (Turner & Browhill, 2001).

Their interpretation emphasizes Mungiki radicalism, placing the movement in the Kenyan vanguard of the international campaigns for globalization from below to rebuild the civil common alternative to corporate rule. Mungiki is thus linked to Muungano wa Wanavijiji (the organization of villagers), established among the slum dwellers of the city to fight eviction and protect tenants from exploitation. These organizations embody the resurgence of Mau Mau. In the face of land privatization programs sponsored by the World Bank, which tend to increase instead of alleviate landlessness, the urban based Muungano wa Wanavijiji and the massive Mungiki have arisen to address, among many other realities, the immediate needs of the impoverished for land. Therefore, Mungiki movement should not surprise us, as it forms part of the international resistance to the corporate rule and the urge to restore subsistence political economy (Turner & Browhill, 2001).

The above perspective seem to support Kagwanja's exposition, albeit differently. Mungiki is seen to have assisted the displaced farmers in Rift Valley and have always protested against oppressive property owners and corrupt urban land grabbers. Generally. The Mungiki have been involved in an increasing diverse set of actions aimed at regaining access to and control over land and resources for subsistence. The sale of rural produce in urban areas lends credence to Turner and Brownhill's assertions. They argue that this kind of trade is facilitated by the involvement of Mungiki in the transport industry countrywide and by Mungiki's control over several Matatu (public transport) routes in Nairobi. The transport and marketing subsistence crops in locally controlled markets and hawking networks connect the diverse types of land occupations in urban and rural Kenya. Those involved in strengthening autonomous workers controlled transport and

marketing subsistence goods and strengthening subsistence production. Mungiki and Organization of Villagers are but two of the well-organized networks, which support the elaboration of the re-emerging subsistence political economy. They are handy in building up of social and material infrastructure essential for the survival of new subsistence capacities (Turner & Browhill, 2001; Kagwanja, 2006; Henningsen & Jones, 2013). .

Kilonzo (2012) and Henningsen and Jones (2013) have articulated the social injustice and marginalization thesis. Hennigsen and Jones (2013) particularly asserted that Mungiki youth movement has been seeking different strategies and use of identities to negotiate a space in Kenyan society. They conclude that the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framings of Mungiki are clearly expressive of a voice from 'below' and resonant with the vernacular languages of the masses of alienated youth who have been abandoned by the Kenyan authorities. Kilonzo (2012) noted that Mungiki are just an indicator of the hardships facing the youth in the country, and therefore, they manifest one way in which the disfranchised youths have tried to show the government that there is need to deal with the problems facing the youth; otherwise, crime will be inevitable.

The Mungiki in Popular Literature

The above academic interpretations hardly bring out a complete picture of the complex and secretive Mungiki movement as it manifests itself in Kenya today. The scholarly interpretations have pointed out existing gaps and posed intelligible questions about Mungiki movement.

Some of the questions that already confront us today perhaps include - where exactly is the origin of Mungiki? Why is the Mungiki movement highly concentrated in Central and Rift Valley provinces in Kenya? What is the place of land in Mungiki debate? Why is the movement highly unpredictable and contradictory? What explains the movement's urge to control the Matatu industry in Kenya? What is the rural urban linkage in the Mungiki movement? Why is the state always ambivalent towards eradicating the Mungiki sect? Is Mungiki one of the phenomenon Kenyans must just learn to live with? Is Mungiki signifying one of the symptoms of a failing (if not) collapsing state? The answer to some of these questions may be evident in the popular perspective of Mungiki movement. The popular perspective is espoused by many Kenyans. It is common in the language of every Kenyan, in the Kenyan press, with police department, church leaders, government officials and with officials of key non-governmental organizations (Atieno, 2007). The strength of this interpretation is that it complements the academic perspective to give deeper and objective view about the Mungiki movement.

In April 2003, the government of Kenya, through the National Security Minister Chris Murungaru confidently declared that "Mungiki no longer exist… and its adherents have been given amnesty to reform and become ordinary members of the society." However, in October 6, 2003, The East African Standard in its headline wrote "Return of Mungiki Gangs of Terror" and in June 19, 2004 "Murder: Sect Members who said no to Mungiki." This signified that the secretive movement was taking too long to disband as was anticipated by the government. In the same News Paper, National Security Minister Chris Murungaru was quoted to have said, "I want to reiterate my earlier call to Mungiki that they should reform and become ordinary members of the society and join other Kenyans in nation building. The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) administration found itself on the spotlight once again when it was alleged by a Lugari NARC member of parliament Enock Kibunguchy that "even though the sect was outlawed (despite it not being registered), it was operating as if it had the blessing of powerful people in the government. If people like Mheshimiwa Koigi Wamwere can take photographs with the sect members, then it means that the sect has really spread roots (Murimi, 2003).

In spite of all these setbacks, the government seems to have won the war against Mungiki on one front-that was the amnesty it extended to Mungiki adherents that resulted into a sizeable number of defectors. These defectors have provided useful information not only to the police but also to newspaper analysts that are critical to the understanding of the movement. These pieces of information have however become agony and nightmare to families of Mungiki defectors as Mungiki adherents have continued to harass, intimidate and eliminate them in a series of revenge killings (Saturday Nation, 2004).

The Mungiki in the popular perspective is not any different from the story of other quasi-traditional religious groups and movements that characterized central Kenya during the colonial period. These

groups had several grievances against the colonial administration with land alienation ranking the highest. It is unfortunate that the postcolonial governments, especially in Kenya did not address the land question but instead exacerbated it. Given the importance of land, how this resource is held and particularly how access to land is regulated, have important relationship to the organization of economic and politics of a given social formation. Any change in the structure of land ownership, as experienced during the colonial period, resulted into adverse socio-political and economic consequences (Okuro, 2011).

In Kenya, the process witnessed mass displacement in alienated areas, and especially among the Kikuyu of Central Kenya, giving rise to a mass of people without land (squatters). The squatter problem latter became the basis for the organization of a peasant rebellion known as Mau Mau against the colonial state. The Mau Mau was supposed to address the question of "stolen land" (Kanogo, 1987). This process of land alienation was however not exclusive in Central Kenya, the same occurred in Kalenjin areas and along the Coastal regions and created many people without land.

The land alienation also contributed to the ethnicisation of the land question in Kenya: the squatters moved into Rift Valley where they sold their labor to colonial settlers. Consequently, ethnic tensions over the control of land deepened considering other groups such as Kalenjin and Maasai. These groups feared that the squatter would accede to land rights in the former settler areas and deny them control of what they considered their "tribal" spheres (Kanyinga, 1998). These seems to explain the endemic ethnic tension in Rift Valley, at times taking the form of tribal or ethnic clashes that characterized the period between 1991 and 2001, killing about 4,000 people and displacing about 600,000 others (Ruteere, 2008).

This seems to explain the ever-increasing numbers of Kikuyu without land, the most critical means of production for both rural and urban poor. The global restructuring currently under the banner of globalization has aggravated this unfortunate situation. In Kenya, these forces crystallized under the Structural Adjustment Programs. These TINA (there is no alternative) policies wiped out welfarism and social services, created mass unemployment, escalated poverty, amplified intra and inter-ethnic exploitation and competition and reinforced the narrow and often recidivistic forces of ethnicity (Kagwanja, 2003).

It was perhaps with the above in mind that Karanja Mbugua and Wafula Buke argued, "an organization like Mungiki cannot be discussed independent of the economic and socio-political context of their resurgence today. Thus, any analysis or commentary that does not take into consideration the fundamental relations of production in its perception of the groups like Mungiki in Kenya should not be taken seriously" (Mbugau & Buke, 2003). Though not clearly conceptualized, this study attempted to provide a Marxist interpretation of Mungiki hitherto latent in academic analysis. What Mbugua and Buke particularly question is why groups such as Mungiki sprout in the sprawling slums, shantytowns and down market estates. They also question why Mungiki is so attractive to the unemployed and the disillusioned youth, touts, hawkers, shoe shiners, Jua Kali artisans, the disillusioned lumpens and regards Christianity with contempt. In addition, why are Mungiki followers so antagonistic and violent towards aspects of the middle class culture?

The answer to these questions find resonance as one confronts two hostile camps, camps that signal a radical conflict of interest between privileged individuals and the community as a whole, as we celebrate the triumph of capitalism. The first camp comprises the middle class, the ruling and privileged groups enjoying ascendance of capitalism and the prevailing distortions in the market economy. The second camp entails recruits from small traders, peasants and artisans whose livelihoods have been ruined by the unfortunate consequences of capitalism. They are characterized by disposed people's culture more prevalent in shanties, lower suburbs and rural areas. These two cultural positions manifest themselves differently and emphasize different sets of attitudes and values. They similarly corresponds to existing relations of production, which has condemned millions of Kenyans to despair, hopelessness, hunger, poverty and oppression. They thus concluded "in away, insolent mannerism like stripping women naked in low market Kayole suburb is symbolic in that it reveals deep-seated frustrations directed at the immediate symbols of middle class culture. The shanty-dwellers and those that Samora Machel once referred to as aspirants to the bourgeoisie are too poor to make a choice on clothing. Beneath these frustrations, however, is a deep-rooted anger

generated by years of crushing poverty. The incident, perhaps, reveals impatience with the affluent sections of our society that treats the poor patronizingly and has precedence" (Mbugua & Buke, 2004).

In April 5 and 6, 2004, The Daily Nation carried a story entitled "Mungiki's Revenge: New Insights into a Secretive Cult." Here, The Daily Nation shed more light into Mungiki's origin (Saturday Nation, 2004, their association with Islamic faith and the interest they have in the Matatu industry in Kenya. In this paper, Cyrus Kinyungu argues that the genesis of Mungiki can be traced to 1980s, when a female secondary school teacher in Rift Valley conceptualized the idea and passed it on to a friend who later transformed it into the rag tag militia group. This idea was born in the teacher's mind after reading Odinga's book Not Yet Uhuru in 1984. In Kinyungu's own words, "it was sweet-coated with the philosophy of the African traditional beliefs and culture to attract youths. The groups claimed to spread the word of Agikuyu God (Mwene Nyaga) and urged the community to go back to its roots. It encouraged them to end the influence of western culture by returning to their traditions (Daily Nation, 2004).

By 1987, Kinyungu asserted that this idea had been sold to several people especially in Rift Valley. In fact this was the year that the central government of Mungiki referred to as J5 started its work in Laikipia District. The J5 was composed of a father, son and three cousins who have been the true owners of the sect. By 1991, the sect moved its operations from Laikipia to Nairobi, Kamae area in Kahawa West, under the spiritual leadership of Maina Njenga (who some sources say got the Mungiki message from a dove while having lessons at Jomo-Kenyatta High School in Nakuru). Here they joined hands with the Ngonya wa Gakonya sect, which prior used Kamae as its headquarters. The Mungiki leaders convinced Gakonya that both sects share same ideology and thus needs to unite. Despite having a large following, Gakonya lost leadership to Mungiki, who even oathed him to change his ideologies. This is what seems to explain the fallout between Mungiki and Gakonya coalition, giving rise to Mungiki proper. It was thus at Kamae, that Mungiki appointed 21 leaders to write its constitution and to suggest ways of fundraising. These are the leaders who advised Mungiki to control Matatu terminuses and use crime related activities to raise funds (Daily Nation, 2004). Mungiki has also been seeking for financial support from members of parliament and wealthy businesspersons. They have also been offering security at a fee usually Kshs. 50 to slum dwellers.

What then explains the Islamization of Mungiki? Kagwanja contends that by converting to Islam, Mungiki movement only wanted to realize its objectives of fighting against corruption, bad governance, poverty, immorality and diseases such as AIDS among Kenyans. The conversion to Islam was also aimed at shedding off the "tribal" stigma by joining a more universalized non-communitarian faith. Moreover, to Kagwanja, the Islamization of Mungiki has several historical parallels in the history of Kenya, which reveals that resistance movements have always resorted to Islam as a strategy to self-camouflage in the face of state repression. No wonder, many ordinary Kikuyu's and Mau Mau leaders were converted to Islam during the blistering repression that characterized the emergency period in Kenya (Kagwanja, 2003). This is what the popular perspective about Mungiki negates. In fact by September 3, 2003, while converting to Islam, Mungiki leaders appealed for financial and moral support from Muslim leaders to create a nation guided by the Sheria (Daily Nation, 2003).

In 2004, Cyrus Kinyungu asserted, "in the boldest attempt yet at soliciting money beyond Kenya's shores, the Mungiki leaders at one time went out of their way to endear the sect to Muslims to attract their finances, support and goodwill. Some of Mungiki members adopted Islamic names to signify their conversion to Islam. However, when top Muslim leaders realized the real motive behind the Mungiki joining the faith was to try get funding from the Middle East, they cut links with the group instantly (Daily Nation, 2004). These instances highlight the desperation the sect members had to endure to secure funds. From the above interpretations, we are at least able to understand the origin of Mungiki, its social, economic, political and cultural underpinnings and the resurge of the sect despite the NARC government's attempts to eradicate it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Whether moralistic, criminalistic or ethnic, the Mungiki movement has elicited widespread public condemnation. To many Kenyans, Mungiki remains atavistic, primitive and backward movement. To church leaders, the movement is retrogressive and

advocates a return to unprogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, is anti-Christian, engages in anti-social activities and preaches obsolete cultural beliefs. As the secretive sect wanes, and as many Mungiki defectors become willing to talk about the sect, social science researcher must now confront the emerging new frontiers to re-evaluate the existing knowledge about Mungiki and put it in its rightful context.

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