

A BIOGRAPHY OF SENIOR CHIEF WARUHTU WA KUNG'U  
OF GITHUNGURI, KIAMBU DISTRICT, 1890-1952

BY

EVANSON N. WAMAGATTA

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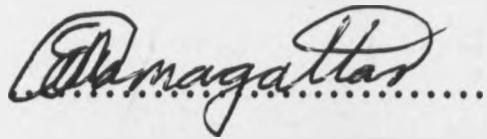


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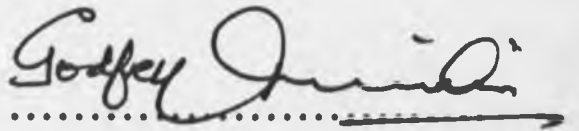
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PROFESSOR GODFREY MURIUKI



DR. MWANGI WA-GITHUMO

TO MY MOTHER  
AND IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER

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I alone, however, take full responsibility for this work.

December, 1988.

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

ADC	-	Assistant District Commissioner
AIM	-	African Inland Mission
CID	-	Criminal Investigation Department
CMS	-	Church Missionary Society
CNC	-	Chief Native Commissioner
CNT	-	Central Native Tribunal
CSM	-	Church of Scotland Mission
DC	-	District Commissioner
DO	-	District Officer
GMS	-	Gospel Missionary Society
IBEAC	-	Imperial British East Africa Company
KA	-	Kikuyu Association
KAU	-	Kenya African Union
KCA	-	Kikuyu Central Association
KCCA	-	Kiambu County Council Archives
KISA	-	Kikuyu Independent Schools Association
KKEA	-	Kikuyu Karing'a Educational Association
KLC	-	Kenya Land Commission
KMV	-	Kikuyu Missions Volunteers
KNA	-	Kenya National Archives
KPA	-	Kikuyu Provincial Association
LNC	-	Local Native Council

O.I. - Oral Interview

PC - Provincial Commissioner

PCEA - Presbyterian Church of East Africa

USA - United States of America



GLOSSARY OF KIKUYU AND SWAHILI TERMS USED IN THIS THESIS

<u>askari</u> .....	policeman/soldier
<u>baraza</u> .....	public meeting
<u>bwana</u> .....	mister/master/Lord
<u>debe/debbe/debbie</u> .....	tin container
<u>githaka</u> (pl. <u>ithaka</u> )...	system under which land was acquired/ land acquired under such a system
<u>kiama</u> (pl. <u>ciama</u> ).....	council of elders
<u>kipande</u> .....	identification pass
<u>kiriqu</u> (pl. <u>iriqu</u> )....	uncircumcised girl
<u>mbari</u> .....	a sub-clan, lineage
<u>mbari mwene</u> .....	the leader of a mbari
<u>mbu</u> .....	danger+signal
<u>muhoi</u> (pl. <u>ahoi</u> ).....	a land tenant
<u>muramati</u> .....	trustee of the land
<u>muthamaki</u> (pl. <u>athamaki</u> )	a prominent individual
<u>muthomi</u> .....	convert
<u>njama</u> .....	hangers-on
<u>panga</u> .....	machete
<u>riika</u> (pl. <u>mariika</u> )....	age-group
<u>shamba</u> .....	plot(s) of land

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to write the biography of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u of Githunguri, Kiambu District. Chief Waruhiu, who served the colonial government for thirty years, lived from 1890 to 1952.

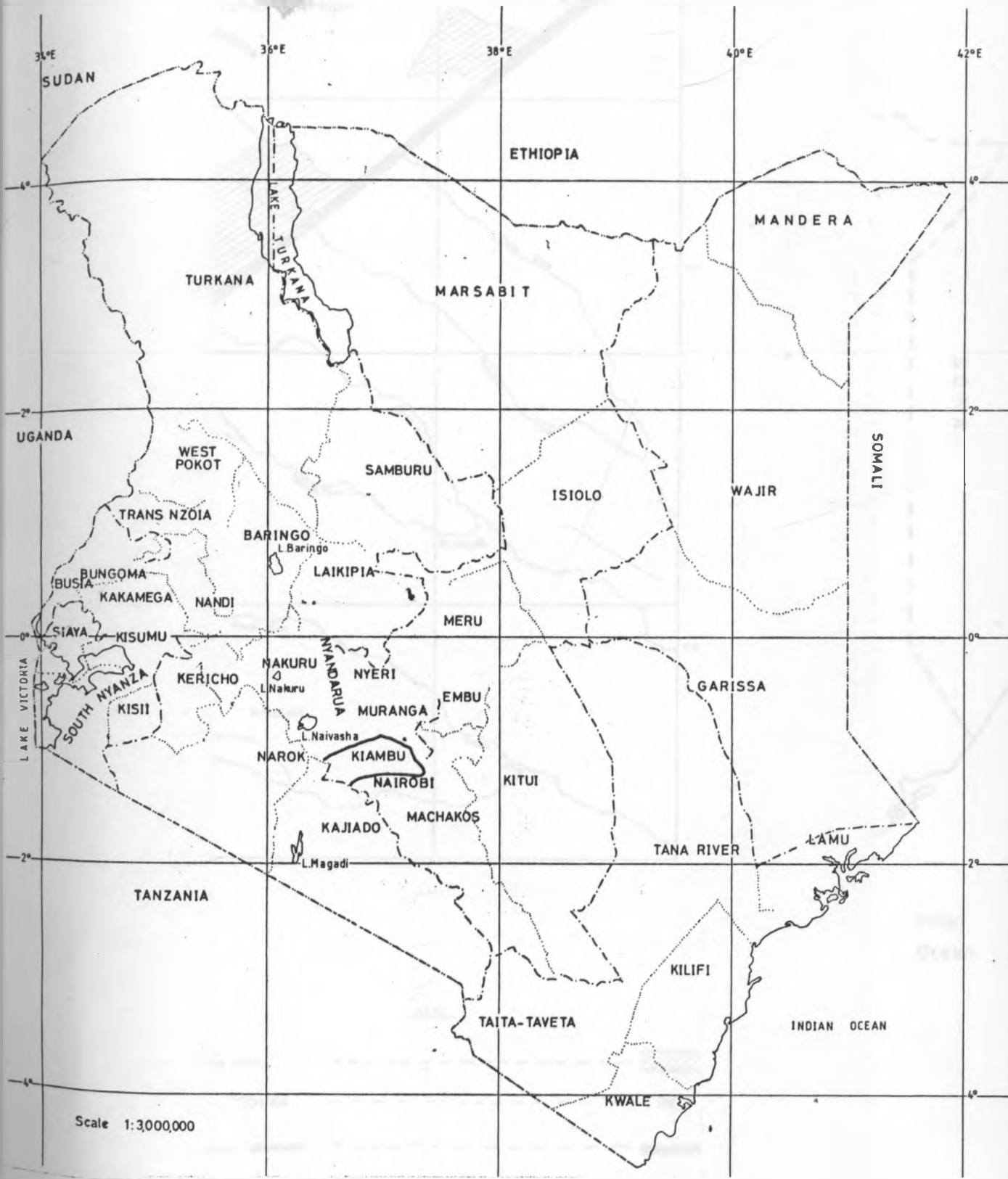
As shown in this thesis, Waruhiu was not an ordinary chief. He was not only an extremely rare and prototype chief that was hard to come by in the colonial days, but also one of the most loyal and distinguished participants in the colonial administration. He never spared himself in his efforts to serve the government. He was always wholly and totally committed and dedicated to his duties as a chief. As a result, his location and division were always consistently far ahead of the others in the district in many respects and aspects. That is why he acquired and maintained a reputation of being second to none administratively. Waruhiu was able to succeed where other chiefs failed because he was, above all, endowed with leadership attributes that were rarely found in other chiefs of the time.

The thesis also demonstrates that Chief Waruhiu was not as unpopular as many people tend to believe. His reputation and popularity very often suffered when he was discharging his chiefly duties, since he acted as the cutting edge of the colonial sword. In spite of this, Waruhiu played a significant and crucial role in the protection and advancement of his people's interests and well-being. He did this through his dual role of the mediator and representative of his people.

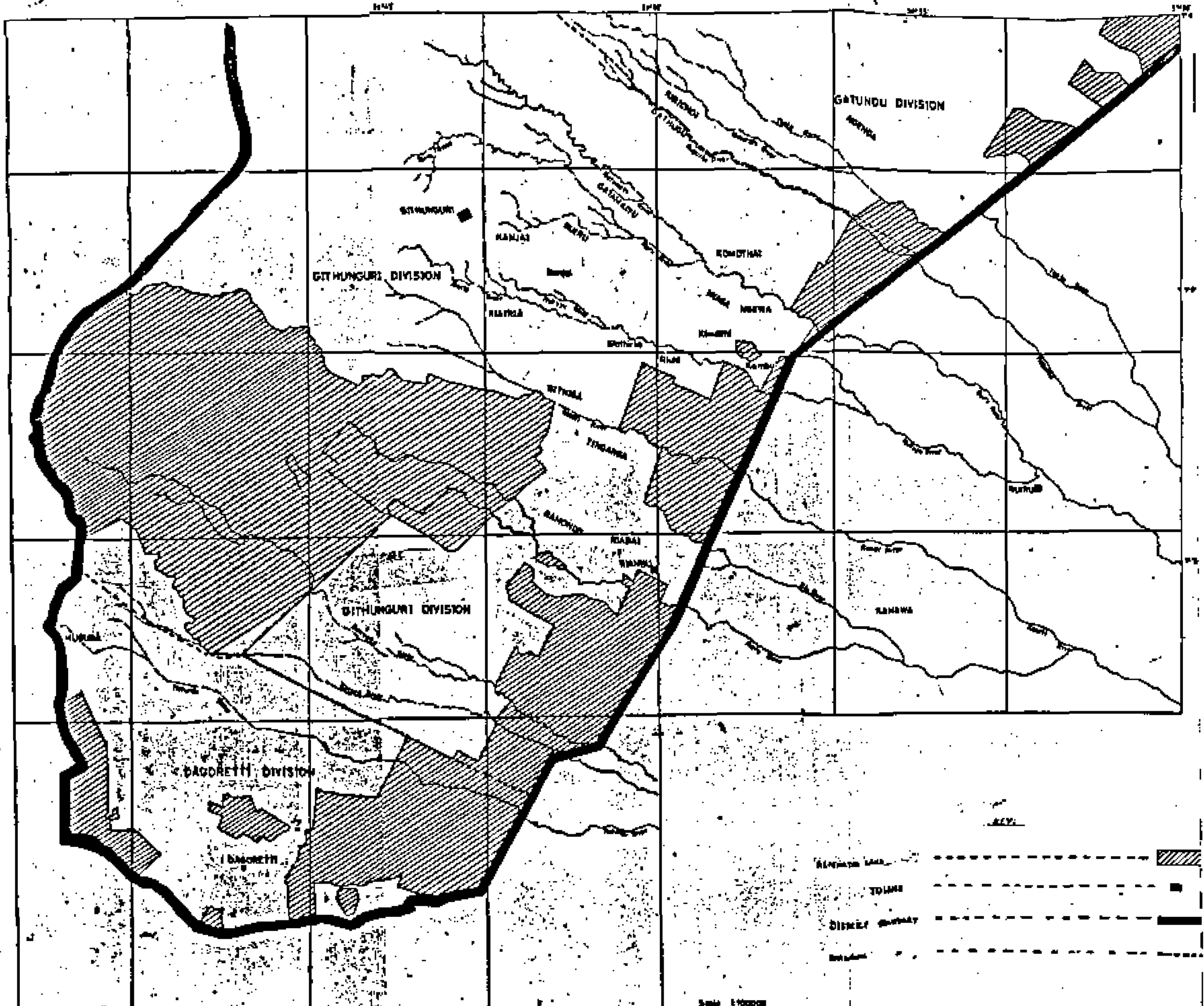
The thesis concludes by showing that Chief Waruhiu's assassination on 7th October, 1952 was the catalyst that precipitated the declaration of the State of Emergency on 20th October, 1952. Waruhiu's sudden and violent death shocked and shook the colonial administration to the core and awakened it to the gravity of the Mau Mau phenomenon. Waruhiu's murder thereupon prompted and compelled the government to declare the State of Emergency. This was in spite of the fact that the government had been reluctant to impose a state of emergency even when pressurised to do so by the leaders of the minority European community. This in itself not only demonstrated that Waruhiu had been an outstanding and a distinguished chief but also the high esteem in which he had been held by the colonial government.

MAP OF KENYA SHOWING LOCATION OF KIAMBU DISTRICT

MAP 1



# KIAMBU NATIVE RESERVE

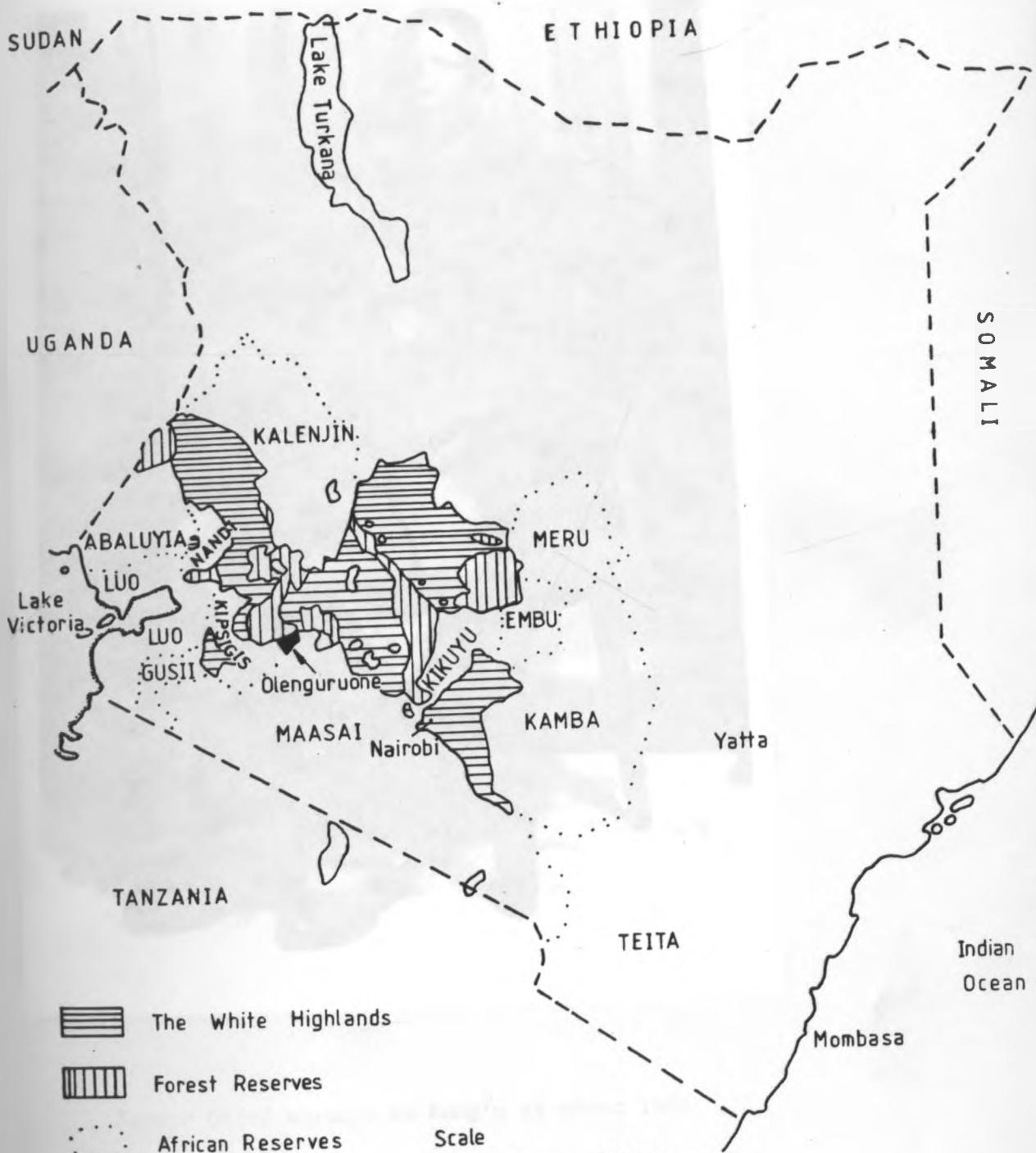





KEY

RESERVE BOUNDARY	
RIVER	
ROAD	
BORDER	

Scale 1:50,000

# THE WHITE HIGHLANDS



-  The White Highlands
-  Forest Reserves
-  African Reserves

Scale  
 0 50 100 Miles  
 0 50 100 Kilometres



Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u at about 1951

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### (i) STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The underlying purpose of this investigation is to examine and analyse the career of Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u of Githunguri, Kiambu District, from 1890 to 1952. In so doing, the study will try to determine and establish whether by collaborating with the colonial government, Waruhiu explicitly and implicitly compromised the economic and political rights of his people in return for personal political power and material gain. A further complementary objective of this undertaking is to assess Waruhiu's role as the mediator and representative of his people. This will determine the extent of his commitment and contribution to the protection and advancement of his people's interests and well-being.

#### (ii) BASIC HYPOTHESIS

Although Chief Waruhiu spent much of his life serving the interests of the colonial authorities, he, however, made some positive and discernible contributions towards the protection and advancement of his own people's interests and welfare.



(iii) LITERATURE REVIEW

Although Senior Chief Waruhiu was one of the staunchest supporters of the colonial administration, he has, however, not received sufficient attention in the extant literature. This has been demonstrated by an extensive and exhaustive literature review of the related extant literature.

Rosberg and Nottingham<sup>1</sup> portray Waruhiu as a leading Christian leader in Kiambu, a stalwart supporter of the missionaries, a leading government spokesman in Kikuyuland, one of the four pillars of Kikuyu Association and a tenacious defender of Kikuyu land rights. They add that Waruhiu, and a few other chiefs, dominated affairs in Kiambu for a generation. The District Commissioners invariably sought their advice for few projects could succeed without their sanction. The two authors also mention that Waruhiu's murder in 1952 touched off the declaration of the State of Emergency.

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<sup>1</sup>C.G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966.

On his part, Robert Tignor<sup>2</sup> has portrayed Waruhiu as a leading Christian of the Gospel Missionary Society who had turned down high paying clerical jobs in order to stay with the mission. As a reward for his faith, the missionaries made him one of their trusted teachers and church elders and later supported his political aspirations. The author concludes that after the Second World War and until his death in 1952, Waruhiu was the most powerful chief in the Kiambu District.

After he had visited Chief Waruhiu in 1948, Negley Farson<sup>3</sup> concluded that Chief Waruhiu was about the only man he met in Africa in whom the teaching of Christianity had completely fulfilled its mission. He felt that Waruhiu was an outstanding example of what mission education could produce when it had the right material to begin with. Farson was also impressed by Waruhiu's dignity and statesmanship which made him absolutely invulnerable to any African "agitator". It was, therefore, not surprising that Europeans referred to Waruhiu as an "African Churchill".

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<sup>2</sup>R.L. Tignor, The Colonial Transformation of Kenya. New Jersey: Princetown University Press, 1976.

<sup>3</sup>N. Farson, Last Chance in Africa. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1949.

M.S. Clough's<sup>4</sup> Ph.D. thesis is primarily a study of the relationship between the Kiambu chiefs and the politicians represented by the Kikuyu Association and the Kikuyu Central Association. Clough mentions the gazetting of the second generation of chiefs who were the leaders of the Kikuyu Association which included Waruhiu. Clough gives some brief biographical data on Chief Waruhiu as a leader of the Kikuyu Association. Nevertheless, Clough's thesis is limited by its time scope, 1918-1936.

In addition to the above thesis, Clough has written a brief biography of Ex-Senior Chief Koinange wa Mbiyu, stressing his role in Kiambu politics.<sup>5</sup> This work has provided more information about Senior Chief Waruhiu who was a contemporary of Koinange. Clough also discusses the struggle for power between Waruhiu and Koinange, a struggle that only ended with Waruhiu's death in 1952. Throughout this biographical essay, Waruhiu does not receive the attention he deserves since he is over-shadowed by Koinange who was the central interest of the author.

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<sup>4</sup>M.S. Clough, "Chiefs and Politicians: Local Politics and Social Change in Kiambu, Kenya, 1918-1936". Ph.D., Stanford, 1977.

<sup>5</sup>M.S. Clough, "Koinange wa Mbiyu: Mediator and Patriot", in Biographical Essays in Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya. Ed., B.E. Kipkorir, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980.

D.W. Throup's recently published book is indispensable to the understanding of the events leading to the outbreak of the Mau Mau revolt in 1952.<sup>6</sup> Besides mentioning Waruhiu's death, Throup provides a little more information about him. Waruhiu is painted as a devout Christian and a noted opponent of the Independent Schools and Church Movement. The agricultural terracing campaign of the 1940's is shown to have almost disrupted Waruhiu's Githunguri Division owing to protests by the peasants who were opposed to the whole scheme. Throup also mentions Waruhiu being taken to court twice by his opponents. He was first sued for destroying a plantation of wattle trees, while imposing compulsory terracing, and later for wrongful confinement.

Kenya Historical Biographies discusses nine biographies of people involved in colonial politics in Kenya, most of whom were born and spent their lives in East Africa.<sup>7</sup> Included in this list is Harry Thuku, who hailed from the same locality as Waruhiu. The biographer mentions the struggle

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<sup>6</sup>D.W. Throup, The Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau.  
Nairobi: Heinemann (K) Ltd., 1987.

<sup>7</sup>K. King, "Harry Thuku", in Kenya Historical Biographies.  
Eds., K. King and A. Salim, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971.

for power between Waruhiu and Mbari ya Gathirimu led by Thuku. He also touches the reconciliation between the two opponents in the 1940's. There is no further reference to Waruhiu, apart from his assassination in 1952.

Harry Thuku's autobiography contains more information about Waruhiu.<sup>8</sup> Besides the struggle and reconciliation of Waruhiu and Thuku, the autobiography also adds some aspects of Waruhiu's early life at Kambui and the circumstances under which he met his death at Mbari ya Kihara's.

In his B.A. dissertation, A.R. Kinyanjui<sup>9</sup> portrays Waruhiu and the other chiefs of the second generation in Kiambu as being the proteges of Paramount Chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu. Waruhiu is also shown to have been among the contenders for the post of paramount chief after the death of Kinyanjui in 1929. Kinyanjui's work is also handicapped by its time scope because it does not touch post-1930 period.

Tabitha Kanogo<sup>10</sup> has revealed that Chief Waruhiu had

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<sup>8</sup>H. Thuku, An Autobiography, with assistance from K. King. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970.

<sup>9</sup>A.R. Kinyanjui, "A Biography of Paramount Chief Kinyanjui Gathirimu". B.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1975.

<sup>10</sup>T. Kanogo, Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905-1963. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd., 1987.

spent the two weeks preceding his death persuading loyal Kikuyu to join the government in stamping out the Mau Mau Movement. She also argues that Waruhiu's murder convinced the colonial government that drastic measures would have to be taken to contain the Mau Mau.

Several other works add very little or no new information to what has already been revealed by the above-reviewed authors. E. N. Wanyoike adds the circumstances under which Waruhiu joined the Gospel Missionary Society's Kambui Station and who was his contemporary there.<sup>11</sup> Besides mentioning Waruhiu's murder, Berman adds that Waruhiu was one of the staunchest supporters of the colonial government in Kiambu District.<sup>12</sup> In the same vein, R. Macpherson reveals that Chief Waruhiu was baptised in 1909 at Ng'enda.<sup>13</sup> Most of the other authors only mention Waruhiu's death. Included in

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<sup>11</sup>E. N. Wanyoike, An African Pastor: The Life and work of the Rev. Wanyoike Kamawe, 1888-1970. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974.

<sup>12</sup>B.J. Berman, "Administration and Politics in Colonial Kenya". Ph.D. Thesis, Yale University, 1974.

<sup>13</sup>R. Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya. Nairobi: Presbyterian Church of East Africa, 1970.

this list are Abuor,<sup>14</sup> Bennett<sup>15</sup> and Ndambiri.<sup>16</sup>

(iv) JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

It is evident that there is no single historical work in existence which primarily devotes itself to the study of Senior Chief Waruhiu. Much of the extant literature is of a general nature and has spared a negligible time and space to the life of Waruhiu. Not only that, the available information on Waruhiu, apart from being scanty and scattered in various works, has also left many important gaps which require to be filled up. This justifies a systematic, coherent and objective account of Chief Waruhiu.

Senior Chief Waruhiu deserves a detailed study because he was closely associated, among other things, with colonial administration in Kenya. He was also associated with those events leading to the Declaration of

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<sup>14</sup>C. O. Abuor, White Highlands No More. Nairobi: Pan African Researchers, 1970.

<sup>15</sup>G. Bennett, Kenya: A Political History. East African Publishing House, 1963.

<sup>16</sup>M. Ndambiri, "A Biographical Essay on Ex-Senior Chief Njiri wa Karanja". B.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1977.

the State of Emergency in Kenya on 20th October, 1952. In spite of this, many people do not seem to know who he was beyond the fact that he was a colonial chief who was assassinated in 1952. This has been the case because no scholar has ever undertaken a systematic and a detailed study of Waruhiu's life. This justifies a comprehensive biography of Chief Waruhiu so as to demystify and expose who he really was and how and why he had become what he was. This undertaking is, therefore, an attempt to fill the gap in the historical literature by collecting all the available and accessible materials on Senior Chief Waruhiu.

(v) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study falls in the realm of the phenomenon of colonialism. Colonialism was a product of European imperialism which was motivated by both economic<sup>17</sup> and political<sup>18</sup> considerations.

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<sup>17</sup>J. A. Hobson, Imperialism, a study. London: Allen and Unwin, 1938; V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism: a popular outline, 2nd. ed. London: Martin Lawrence, 1934.

<sup>18</sup>D. K. Fieldhouse, The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967.



Collaboration was the basis of colonialism. The theory of collaboration states that the working of colonialism was determined by the indigenous collaborative systems which connected its coloniser and colonised components. As a result, the choice of collaborators largely determined the organisation and character of colonial rule.<sup>19</sup>

The allure of what colonialism had to offer elicited indigenous collaborators. The collaborators - who were either active or passive, modern or traditional elites - collaborated at the central or local levels. Some co-operated commercially, others administratively, educationally or ecclesiastically. Colonialism offered an alternative source of wealth and power which had to be exploited in order to preserve or improve the standing of indigenous elites in the traditional order. The collaborators, therefore, exploited the wealth, prestige and influence derived from the colonisers to increase their traditional followings or to improve their modern opportunities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>R. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: A Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration", in Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, pp. 117-142, edited by R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe, London: Longmans, 1972.

<sup>20</sup>ibid.

Prominent among the collaborators were the chiefs. The colonising powers had to administer their territories through the chiefs and indigenous political processes. In other words, collaboration was simply a system of ruling cheaply given the badly strained resources and a handful of European administrators. The colonising powers rarely had enough qualified men on the spot and hence the indispensability of the collaborators. The chiefs made colonial rule far cheaper because they were a poorly remunerated local bureaucrats. Their incentives and rewards were partly commercial but mainly governmental - the perquisites of office, honours, contracts, social services and all the favours that could be given or taken away through its administrative, land, fiscal and education policies.<sup>21</sup>

The chiefs acted as a channel through which government policies could be put across to their people. Both the chiefs and the colonisers needed and reinforced each other. The colonial power guaranteed the positions of the chiefs while the co-operation of the latter enhanced the moral presence of the colonisers. Being mere functionaries,

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ibid.

the chiefs did their best to please their colonial masters. They could be far harsher towards their fellow Africans than the colonisers themselves. In this way, they acted as the shock absorbers since the immediate repercussions of their harshness were not rubbed against the colonisers but against the chiefs. <sup>22</sup>

The chiefs were subject to a double pressure and a double pull from the rulers above and the ruled below. As a consequence, chiefs very often found themselves caught between governmental pressure and popular criticism. The State asked for his undivided loyalty, while his people expected services and favours which he could not provide without being accused of corruption and inefficiency. <sup>23</sup> The dilemma of the colonial chiefs was that they could not afford to outrightly alienate either their employers or their own people since they depended on both for their survival. It is in this context and framework that the career of Senior Chief Waruhiu is examined and analysed.

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S. Kiwanuka, From Colonialism to Independence: A Reappraisal of Colonial Policies and African Reactions, 1870 - 1960. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973, p. 78.

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L.H. Gann and P. Duignan, Burden of Empire. London: Pall Mall Press, 1968, p. 226.

(vi) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A combination of different methodologies was used to obtain essential data for this study. Accordingly, the research was based on the available literature, archival materials and oral interviews.

Consulted archival materials included both the available official and non-official documents. Most of these documents are found at the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, Kiambu County Council Archives and at the headquarters of the Ministry of Lands and Housing in Nairobi.

Field research was conducted in the Githunguri area of Kiambu District. The respondents for this research were limited mainly to those born before 1930. These respondents had observed what they talked about in their own lifetime. They were, therefore, knowledgeable and resourceful enough.

Several criteria were used in the selection of the informants. Some were selected because their names appeared in the official and non-official materials in the various

archives. These included former colonial chiefs and Kiambu Local Native councillors who are still alive. Secondly, a son of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu provided me with a list of names and addresses of family members and other individuals within and outside Githunguri, whom he considered to be useful for this study. Thirdly, the interviewed informants, at my request, directed me to other people whom they thought could assist me in my research. I made sure that these were as representative as possible of all parts of Githunguri Division.

The oral interviews were not based on a structured questionnaire so as not to appear to be official. Questions were formulated on the spot. This gave me a wide margin for formulating additional questions as new issues arose. Almost all the interviews were conducted on an individual basis. This enabled as many variants of the same oral evidence to be collected and compared. Only two group interviews, involving two and four informants respectively, were conducted. Most of the interviews took place in the informants' homes. There was no language barrier because we spoke the same language. Most of the interviews were recorded on cassettes. The interviews were later transcribed from the tapes. This gave me sufficient time to listen and fully participate in the interviews.

A number of problems were encountered during the field and archival research. A lot of time was spent in the archives because the available materials on Senior Chief Waruhiu were scanty and scattered in various documents which took time to locate. Moreover, some of the relevant materials to the biography of Waruhiu, which are in the custody of the various archives and private individuals, were either not available for consultation or they had been destroyed. My research in the Judicial Archives, for example, produced practically nothing because the materials I needed were not available.

The field research also had its share of problems. The area is a big one and this involved a lot of travelling about. Tracing some informants was a major problem owing to the large size of the area. There was a scarcity of public transport in some areas which resulted in exorbitant fares. Other areas lacked any means of public transport thereby forcing me to walk long distances. Some informants were rarely in when I paid them a visit. A few people were suspicious and refused to have their voices recorded on the cassette recorder. Several people refused to be interviewed while others demanded payment before they parted with any information. Lastly, but far from being the least, several people failed or forgot to keep previously made

appointments. A few could not be interviewed because they were either very senile or sick. Nevertheless, most of the informants, besides being kind and hospitable, were very co-operative and resourceful. As a result, I managed to interview at least thirty-eight people.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING

This Chapter sets the stage for a study of Waruhiu in the right historical perspective by briefly describing the relevant geographical and historical features.

#### A. THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The colonial Githunguri Division was much larger than the present-day Githunguri Division and <sup>1</sup>contiguency. It embraced most of the present Githunguri, Kiambaa, <sup>constituency</sup>Limuru and Lari constituencies. Githunguri was one of the three main administrative units in Kiambu which came into being in 1923 as shown in Chapter Five. The other two were Chura and Mukinyi, also known as Dagoretti and Gatundu respectively. The Divisions were initially established as jurisdiction entities for each of the three ciama, native tribunals, in the district. These were Kiambu (Githunguri), Mukinyi and Chura. But in 1930, they were, in addition to their judicial status, acknowledged as administrative units and divisional chiefs appointed accordingly.

Githunguri Division lay in between the Dagoretti and Gatundu Divisions and was bigger than either of them. Gatundu lay to the north of Githunguri while Dagoretti was to the south. Nevertheless, Githunguri

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<sup>1</sup> See Map No. 2.



Division, and Kiambu District for that matter, only included areas inhabited by the Kikuyu and excluded those settled by the Europeans. As a result, the so-called Kiambu Native Reserve was much smaller than with an area of 390 square miles which was about a third of the Kiambu District created on the eve of independence.<sup>2</sup>

Githunguri Division was roughly situated between Mugutha River to the north and Thigirii River to the south.<sup>3</sup> It bordered on the European settled areas to the east and the Kerita Forest Reserve to the west. It was roughly twenty miles in length from north to south and ten miles in width from east to west with an approximate area of 200 square miles. The altitude of this region lies between 4,000 and 7,000 feet above sea-level. The temperatures are generally moderate and they range from 45°F to 85°F. Annual mean rainfall ranges between 30 inches in the low-lying areas to 70 inches in the high areas.

Githunguri Division, like the rest of the Kikuyu plateau, is characterized by deep, narrow valleys gullied by the numerous streams and rivers flowing in a south-easterly

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<sup>2</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/12, "Kiambu District and Ukamba Province Annual Reports, 1918-1919"; G. Muriuki, A History of the Kikuyu, 1500-1900, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Most of the data in this section is derived from the Kenya Government's National Atlas of Kenya, Nairobi, 1970.

direction. All of them are tributaries of the Athi River into which they drain. Prominent among these are the Ruiru, Komothai, Mukuyu and Kamiti Rivers. These rivers and streams have created a topography of alternating high and narrow ridges running in an easterly direction. These ridges, to a large extent, dictated the Kikuyu mode of land acquisition and settlement, and to a lesser extent, their political organisation. The high ridges with steep sides were very prone to devastating soil erosion. They were the scene of the compulsory anti-erosion terracing campaign in the 1940's and 1950's. It was a campaign which created a lot of misunderstanding and bad feelings between the administration and the local inhabitants as will be shown later on.

Githunguri Division was also subject to the three ecological zones found throughout Kikuyuland. There was the forest zone characterised by forests, bushlands and grasslands. It lies between 5,000 and 7,000 feet above sea-level. Much of Githunguri lies under this zone which has a humid equatorial type of climate. The second ecological zone is mainly found to the east of Kiambu town and embraces a good part of Githunguri Division. Its elevation is between 4,000 and 6,000 feet above sea-level. It is a dry sub-humid to semi-arid region with an average annual rainfall of 30 to 60 inches. East of this zone lies an arid region which is mainly

below 4,000 feet above sea-level. It is a zone of low, unreliable rainfall of between 20 and 30 inches a year. This zone of marginal productivity is almost negligible in Githunguri Division.

In the pre-colonial period, Githunguri and the rest of Kiambu supported a variety of wildlife. This included elephants, lions, rhinoceroses, buffaloes, giraffes, monkeys, wildebeestes, leopards, gazelles, hyenas and other smaller animals. This varied wildlife provided food and items of trade to the Dorobo who preceded the Kikuyu in the region.

The soils of Githunguri and Kiambu were fertile because they were made up of deep red volcanic soils derived from volcanic tuffs and humus from the thick forests which covered the area in pre-colonial times. The area, owing mainly to its altitude, is relatively free of malaria and tsetse flies, carriers of human and animal trypanosomiasis vectors. This partly explains why the region attracted first, the Kikuyu and later on, the Europeans.

Githunguri, like the rest of Kikuyuland, is blessed with two rainy seasons a year. The long rains fall during the months of March to May and this season is known as Kimera Kia njahi (Dolichos lablab season). On the other hand, the short

rains fall during the Kimera kia mwere (millet season) which is between the months of October and December. These two major seasons are separated by the gathano and themithu seasons. The gathano season comes during the months of July to September and it is characterised by cold and damp weather. In contrast, the themithu is a period of dry and sunny weather during the months of January, February and March.

All these factors might have induced the Kikuyu pioneers, and later on the white farmers, to encroach and settle in the region. It was an area endowed with favourable climatic conditions which enabled them to practise a mixed economy. The Kikuyu grew a variety of crops such as maize, bananas, sorghum, sweet-potatoes, arrow roots, sugar-canes, millet, yams, beans, njahi (Dolichos lablab) and njugu (cowpeas). They grew surplus foodcrops to enable them to trade with their neighbours and with passing caravans. The climate also allowed the Kikuyu to rear cattle, goats and sheep. Cattle were scarce but goats and sheep were plentiful and were used as currency. They were used in paying bride-price and in compensation for any crime committed. They were also used for sacrificial and ritual purposes, besides providing skins for clothing and bedding. Much more important, they were used as a yard-stick for wealth in the society.

On the other hand, when most of this area was alienated for white settlement, it proved to be suitable for cash crops like coffee and tea. These plantation crops required a regular supply of labour and the Kiambu Native Reserve was, therefore, their reservoir for labour.

## B. THE HISTORICAL SETTING

### (i) Migration and Settlement

The Kikuyu had not always lived either at Kiambu or on the Kikuyu plateau. Their ancestors had originated from the Tigania/Igembe area in Meru, some forty miles north-east of Mount Kenya.<sup>4</sup> Their immigration was well underway by the middle of the fifteenth century and by the late sixteenth century, they had settled at Ithanga at the confluence of the Thagana and Thika Rivers.<sup>5</sup>

The ancestors of the Kikuyu encountered and mingled with the Gumba in the Tharaka, Mbeere and Ithanga regions. The Gumba were a pygmy race who lived in caves and in hollows in the ground. Their height ranged from two to four and a half feet but they were stocky, clever and rather retiring. They

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<sup>4</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., pp. 51-56.

subsisted on hunting and gathering. The Proto-Kikuyu borrowed from the Gumba the art of iron-working, circumcision, clitoridectomy and some features of the marika (age) system.<sup>6</sup> It is not clear what became of the Gumba but it appears that most of them were<sup>7</sup> assimilated by the ancestors of the Kikuyu.

Ithanga became a major centre for the dispersal of the early Kikuyu and their closest cousins, the Embu,<sup>8</sup> Mbeere, Ndia and Gicugu. It was from Ithanga that the Kikuyu migrated to what is historically regarded as their ancestral and spiritual home, Murang'a. It was at this secondary nuclear area of dispersal that the Kikuyu consolidated themselves and emerged as a distinct group from their closest cousins with a<sup>9</sup> culture of their own. It was from here that the Kikuyu later on migrated and populated the Kiambu and Nyeri Districts. This expansion gained momentum during the time of the Ndemo and Mathathi generations in the late<sup>10</sup> eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Several factors might have compelled the

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<sup>6</sup>  
ibid., p. 39.

<sup>7</sup>  
ibid., pp. 41-42.

<sup>8</sup>  
ibid., pp. 51-58.

<sup>9</sup>  
ibid., p. 63.

<sup>10</sup>  
ibid., pp. 64-65.

Kikuyu and their ancestors to immigrate into the new areas. The Igembe/Tharaka area was an arid one and the unreliability of rainfall frequently led to droughts and famines. Apart from being a malarial region, it was also infested with tsetse flies, the carriers of human and animal trypanosomiasis. Moreover, the frequent Galla invasions on the eastern border from the sixteenth century onwards might have persuaded them to move away from the region.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the above, a host of other factors might have prompted their movement. Population and livestock pressures on the already meagre resources could have been another cause. Others could have been internal conflicts and fear of witchcraft and natural calamities, like epidemics. Other individuals could have moved in the spirit of adventure and in search for better homes. Yet, the availability, in close proximity, of fertile arable land and sparsely populated by hunter-gatherers could also have given impetus to the Kikuyu migration.<sup>12</sup> This immigration into the Kikuyu plateau continued well into the nineteenth century and was only brought to an end by the arrival of the British on the scene.

The expansion of the Kikuyu into Nyeri and Kiambu was a long and slow process. Those who moved into Nyeri had to fight

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<sup>11</sup>ibid., p. 48.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., pp. 48-49.

against the Gumba, the Athi, the Barabiu, the Galla, the Somali and the Maasai.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, those who immigrated into Kiambu had to contend with the Maasai menace only. Land acquisition also differed to a great extent in the northern and southern frontiers. In Nyeri and Murang'a, land was largely acquired by conquest or by merely clearing or laying traps. The methods of land acquisition by merely clearing or laying traps extended as far as some parts of Gatundu Division.<sup>14</sup> On crossing into Githunguri Division, the Kikuyu encountered a large concentration of the Athi whom they did not wish to antagonize. This was probably because they were afraid of an Athi and Maasai alliance which would have made pioneering difficult, if not impossible.<sup>15</sup>

The Athi (sing. Mwathi), also known as the Dorobo, were, like the Gumba, nomadic and hunter-gatherers. They hunted and trapped the wild animals which thrived in the area. They also supplemented their diet with fruits, vegetables and other collections in the wild. Unlike the Gumba, they were tall, sometimes taller than the Kikuyu themselves.<sup>16</sup> Each Athi family owned a ridge or a series of ridges in which it hunted,

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 63-69.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 70-77; G. Muriuki, "Kikuyu Historical Texts", 1969, unpublished, pp. 134-137, (hereafter "KHT").

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Waruhiu, "Kikuyu+Dorobo Relations in Githunguri Around 1870", (Nairobi: B.A. dissertation, 1972), p. 17.



trapped and hung its hives.<sup>17</sup> Besides their hunting and gathering activities, they also engaged themselves in trading activities. They traded with the Kikuyu, the Maasai and the Kamba. A lucrative trade, therefore, existed between them and the Kikuyu. The articles of this trade included elephant meat, ivory, buffalo hides for making shields, ready-made shields, horns and monkey skins for making ceremonial garments. All these were bartered for goats, sheep and foodstuffs.<sup>18</sup>

It was, therefore, from the Athi that most of the Kiambu Kikuyu bought their land. The Athi could only sell their land after they had established close and firm ties with the prospective buyers. This arrangement took a long time to finalise. It made land transactions to be compared to marriage contracts because it was customary for bride-price to take a long time before it was fully paid. The arrangement ensured that lasting friendly ties were maintained between the sellers and the buyers.<sup>19</sup> The Kikuyu paid for the land mainly with goats and sheep. Some of the Athi reputed to have sold land to the Kikuyu included Turuthi, Bera, Tomaiyu, Baricho, Gikomono wa Ngoinoki, Wamutitu Thananga, Kiburiri, Marimbi and Muinami.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

<sup>19</sup> ibid., p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> Muriuki, "KHT", op. cit., pp. 167 and 176; Kenya Land Commission, Evidence, Vol. 6.

Other methods, besides purchase, were also relied upon in the acquisition of land. Some Athi used their land to pay compensation for a variety of crimes they had committed or were alleged to have committed such as murder, the trapping of livestock by their traps or theft.<sup>21</sup> The Athi also "seemed to have used their land as the Kikuyu used his goats - as an article of exchange".<sup>22</sup> They exchanged their land for foodstuffs such as arrow roots and sweet potatoes. They also sold their land so as to procure livestock for paying bride-price while marrying Kikuyu girls.<sup>23</sup> Yet, other Kikuyu acquired their land simply through intermarriages with the Athi or merely by adopting them. The mbari which acquired large tracts of land through these methods included that of Waiyaki wa Hinga who had married a Mwathi woman (Tiebo), Mbari ya Gathagu, Mbari ya Marigu and Mbari ya Kihara.<sup>24</sup> A few other mbari acquired most of their land from the Athi by using underhand methods. Mbari ya Gathirimu wa Mathenge and Mbari ya Gatonye wa Munene are good examples of this.<sup>25</sup> Notwithstanding all these modes of land acquisition, other

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<sup>21</sup>Muriuki, op. cit.; "KHT", pp. 142-144 and 169-170.

<sup>22</sup>Waruhiu, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>ibid., p. 23.

<sup>24</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 77-78; and "KHT", op. cit., pp. 180-190.

<sup>25</sup>ibid., pp. 71-72; and "KHT", pp. 142-143, 167-168, 170 and 178.

strong mbari forcibly drove away weaker mbari and occupied their land. An example is Mbari ya Munyori (Thumbi) who dispersed Mbari ya Mbuu from their land around Kiambu town.<sup>26</sup>

At the turn of the century, the British largely disregarded the fact that most of the Kiambu Kikuyu had bought their land. Although compensation for actual standing crops was in most instances paid, no payment was, however, ever made for actual ground values.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the Kiambu Kikuyu were more vocal and pronounced in calling for the return of the "stolen land". Not only because they had bought most of their land, but also because they had lost more land compared to those who inhabited both Nyeri and Murang'a Districts put together. Chapter Nine, therefore, discusses why the land question became and remained one of the most sensitive issues in Kenya's colonial history. Viewed retrospectively, there is no doubt that the land question greatly contributed to the outbreak of the Mau Mau armed struggle in the 1950's.

Having acquired land at the frontier, the buyer normally invited his relatives and friends to join him in exploiting the new land. He could also encourage a clientele of warriors and

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 71; and "KHT", pp. 153-154 and 176.

<sup>27</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/3/14, "Political Record Book Part I: Settlement of Native Rights, 1911".

other needy or landless individuals and families to settle on his land. Such individuals assumed the status of ahoi and this helps to explain the origins and development of the ahoi, tenants, system. The services of the ahoi, which were in great demand, were utilized in a number of ways. In the foremost, they had to assist with the defence of the land and the property thereon against possible attacks by either the Maasai or the other mbari. Owing to the constant danger at the frontier, the frontiersmen lived in large ihingo (sing. kihingo) which were fortified homesteads capable of accommodating a very large number of people. Secondly, their labour was essential in the arduous task of clearing the newly-acquired virgin land. In exchange, the ahoi were given a right to dwell and cultivate the land.<sup>28</sup>

However, most of the ahoi considered their status as being temporary as they expected to accumulate enough wealth to enable them to venture out on their own.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the situation at the frontier was flexible enough to allow individuals with initiative, like Waiyaki wa Hinga and Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, to acquire status and prominency.

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<sup>28</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>29</sup>ibid.

(ii) Political Organization

The pre-colonial Kikuyu society was patriarchal, acephalous and highly egalitarian. The Kikuyu were politically fragmented and there were no discernible administrative units. Nevertheless, the family was the basic social and political unit. Each family (Nyumba) was designated a mucii (pl. micii), the homestead. Several scattered homesteads made up an itura (pl. matura), a village, which was the centre of everyday social and political life. The matura in turn formed a unit known as mwaki (pl. miaki) which was occupied by those who assisted each other with hot embers to light their fires. Several miaki linked up to form a rugonqo (pl. ng'onqo), a ridge. The whole of the Kikuyu country was designated bururi which comprised all the ridges put together.<sup>30</sup>

The basic administrative unit was the family under its head who presided over all family affairs. A number of families formed a mbari, sub-clan, which may have numbered anything from a few hundred to several thousands. Mbari affairs were conducted by a mbari council made up of all elders. The council was under the chairmanship of a titular head known as muramati, guardian. He was normally the eldest

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<sup>30</sup>J. Middleton and G. Kershaw, The Kikuyu and Kamba, Ethnographic Survey of Africa. London: 1965, pp. 23-32.

son from the senior githaku (pl. ithaku), house line, although a capable male from the other ithaku could also be appointed a muramati. The muramati regulated everyday affairs of the mbari such as mediating and being its spokesman in intra-mbari affairs.<sup>31</sup>

Each mbari traced its origin to one of the ten Kikuyu clans. These are Anjiru, Aceera, Agaciku, Ambui, Ambura/Akiuru/Ethaga, Angeci/Aitherandu, Angui/Aithiegeni, Angari/Aithekahuno, Airimu/Agathigia and Aicakamuyu.<sup>32</sup>

A sense of cohesion was created among the Kikuyu by the all-embracing and institutionalized mariika, age systems, that cut across lineage and territorial loyalties. The mariika system was the basis of the Kikuyu political organisation. There was always a ruling generation in power which was charged with political, judicial and religious functions. A ruling generation's term of office began and ended with the handing-over ceremony, the ituika, which was enacted every thirty to forty years. The two moieties were Mwangi and Maina (Irungu) and members were recruited according to birth.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, a male joined his grandfather's

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<sup>31</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

<sup>32</sup>ibid., p. 113.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., pp. 117-118.

moiety which was opposite to his father's moiety. Administration was, however, conducted through the ciama.

Ciama (sing. kiama), councils of elders, were the only pre-colonial Kikuyu institutions which assumed and played a governmental role in the running of the country. Each territorial unit had its own kiama. Membership to these ciama was restricted to the elders of the ruling generation in power. The ciama administered justice and also dealt with the general welfare of the society. The warriors ensured that the decisions and the wishes of the ciama were obeyed and implemented. In addition, elders could also resort to religious sanctions to ensure that their judgements were carried out. This normally involved cursing and ostracizing of offenders.<sup>34</sup>

The ciama were dominated and also controlled by the athanaki (sing. muthamaki), spokesmen, who were specialists in various fields. Some were experts in judicial matters (athanaki a cira or aciri), others excelled in ceremonial rites (athanaki a kirira) while others were general or political leaders (athanaki a bururi) with no special responsibility. In traditional Kikuyu society, this kind of leadership was not

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<sup>34</sup> ibid., pp. 126-129.

hereditary because leaders were made and not born and they emerged after a long process. This process started in childhood and continued throughout the development of an individual into maturity and adulthood. This process is summed up by G. Muriuki, when he writes:

The emergence and recognition as a muthamaki was hence a slow process and no single qualification was decisive - it was the general consensus of opinion that mattered. Self-assertion, courage, self-confidence and diligence were important assets for a warrior, while wisdom, tact, self-control and wide experience were some of the qualities looked for in an elder who aspired to be a muthamaki.<sup>35</sup>

The athamaki were essentially leaders rather than rulers as they did not possess any executive, judicial, coercive or religious powers. All these were vested in the ciama of which the athamaki were simply the first or leading personalities among peers. Moreover, a muthamaki was an arbitrator and peace-maker rather than a law administrator. A muthamaki, therefore, had no power or authority to negotiate or make treaties on his own initiative as he could only "act in accordance with the wishes of his peers who delegated power to him".<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>36</sup>ibid., p. 131.



The failure and ignorance of the British to understand how the Kikuyu political machinery functioned, when appointing chiefs at the turn of the century, was the genesis of numerous administrative problems in Kikuyuland.<sup>37</sup>

(iii) The First Generation of Chiefs in Kiambu

Although the British had established themselves in Kikuyuland in 1890, effective occupation and administration, however, became a reality only after the arrival of the railway line in 1901. The railway line opened up the interior of the country and consequently precipitated an influx of white settlers from 1902 onwards. This in turn led to the establishment of administrative centres all over Kikuyuland to facilitate and ease the administration of both the Europeans and the Africans. These centres included Mbiri (Murang'a) which was founded in 1900, Nyeri and Dagoretti in 1902 and Kiambu in 1905.

The first generation of chiefs in Kiambu was appointed from this period onwards to assist with the administration of their own people. Although the British might have realized that the institution of chiefs was alien to the Kikuyu,

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<sup>37</sup>ibid., p. 132.

they nevertheless went ahead and appointed chiefs for their administrative convenience. This was partly because the European administrative officials were too few and widely scattered for effective administration at the local level. It was also partly because the protectorate was financially strapped and could not be able to employ and maintain an administration fully staffed by white administrators from top to bottom.<sup>38</sup> Thirdly, most of the early government officers lacked administrative experience and knowledge of the local inhabitants and their culture because they had no preliminary training prior to their appointment.<sup>39</sup>

The manner in which most of the first generation of chiefs were chosen left a lot to be desired. This is because the British largely overlooked and ignored the traditional Kikuyu political set up. Some of those designated chiefs lacked the necessary qualifications to be even members of the councils of the elders. Others did not belong to the ruling generation in power then. Moreover, some of them were not even athamaki, traditional leaders, while a few of them were social outcasts, rejects and misfits. The appointment of such individuals to such high positions of power and responsibility

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<sup>38</sup>G.H. Mungeam, British Rule in Kenya, 1895-1912. London: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 50-54.

<sup>39</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

naturally culminated in hostility to the new institution of chiefs.

Most of those made chiefs were "a motley crowd of mercenaries who had served them as porters, guides or askari".<sup>40</sup> Those chosen in this way included Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, Kioi wa Nagi, Mukoma wa Njiriri, Karanja wa Marite, Muchendu wa Kihungi and Mukui wa Kimata.<sup>41</sup> They were nonentities who had no social status. Notable among these was Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu.

Kinyanjui had fled from Murang'a after being disowned by his family for waywardness. He had attached himself to Waiyaki wa Hinga who was a distant relation of his.<sup>42</sup> He first came into prominence in 1892 after the death of Waiyaki. He was appointed to replace Waiyaki as the head of the Aceera clan in the vicinity of Fort Smith after he had excelled as an Imperial British East Africa Company (hereafter IBEAC) foreman and guide in punitive expeditions.<sup>43</sup> Upon the establishment of effective administration, he was promoted to the post of Kiambu paramount chief, a position he held until his death in 1929.

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<sup>40</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>41</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, "Political Record Book Part II: Chiefs and Headmen (Names, record and personal character), 1908-1927"; The Kenya Land Commission, Evidence, Vol. 6.

<sup>42</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>43</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.

Other nonentities were appointed chiefs on Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu's influence and recommendations. Included in this list are Mimi wa Richu of Ting'ang'a, Mararo wa Ngururu of Kiambu, Mbogo wa Igamba of Gaturiamaru, Ndekee wa Mukanda of Makwa, Kimangika wa Kihara of Ruaraka (Karura) and Moru wa Ndungi of Karura.<sup>44</sup>

The British went to the extent of appointing Kamiri wa Itherero, a social misfit and renowned witchdoctor, chief of Riuki Location. Besides Waiyaki wa Hinga, Kamiri was the only other person in Kiambu to have made a Treaty with the British on 11th August, 1889, whereby he surrendered all his sovereign rights as the "chief" of his locality.<sup>45</sup> The people of his location constantly complained that he practised witchcraft against them. Consequently, Kamiri was tried and imprisoned in 1921. In the same year, three of his sons were deported to Kapsabet for "being dangerous to the peace of the district".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>ibid.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/3, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1911-1912"; KNA-DC/KBU/1/4, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1912-1913"; KNA-DC/KBU/3/4, "Dagoretti Political Record Book, Vol. I, 1908-1912".

<sup>45</sup>Kenya Land Commission, Evidence, Vol. 3, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/15, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1922".

Subsequent to his release in September 1922, Kamiri (and six of his sons) was re-arrested in June 1923 as a result of complaints concerning the resumption of his malign activities and the consequent "fear and unrest prevailing amongst the natives of the locality". Affidavits were forwarded with a request for his deportation but all in vain.<sup>47</sup> Kamiri and his sons were immediately released unconditionally. Thereafter, several European farmers in the neighbourhood vigorously complained that some of the local people contemplated removing themselves from the vicinity in dread of Kamiri and this would adversely affect their labour supply.<sup>48</sup> But nothing was done and Kamiri remained a free man until his death.

The British at times made half-hearted attempts to select men of influence, the athamaki, traditional leaders, chiefs within their localities. The chiefs appointed on this basis were Gachii wa Kihara, Gatheca wa Ngekenya, Waweru wa Mahui, Waweru wa Kanja and Gichuhi wa Waitito among others.<sup>49</sup> In very rare and exceptional circumstances, the local people were allowed to choose their own chief. Thus, Munene wa Marema of Mang'u was unanimously elected in 1908 by the elders of his

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<sup>47</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/16, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1923".

<sup>48</sup>ibid.

<sup>49</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.

location.<sup>50</sup> However, this category of chiefs did not fare any better because the functions of the indigenous leaders differed substantially from those of colonial chiefs who had to enforce some very unpopular measures at times.

The chiefs had numerous official duties to perform and many of them "were only vaguely aware of what they were supposed to do".<sup>51</sup> They had to report crime, apprehend offenders, build roads and public utilities, recruit labour for settler farms and for communal projects, control the warriors, collect taxes and keep law and order in their locations.<sup>52</sup> They employed headmen and spearmen known as tribal retainers, whom they paid out of their own pockets, to assist them in carrying out their duties.<sup>53</sup> Besides these employees, they had a following of dependents who comprised of their clan and mbari relatives and riika (age) mates who assisted them in their administration. They were his njama, hangers-on, who had nothing better to do. With such an assorted collection of dependents, "the chief became like powerful mbari mwene or

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<sup>50</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/2, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1911".

<sup>51</sup>W.R. Ochieng', "Colonial African Chiefs - were they primarily self-seeking scoundrels?" in Hadith 4, B.A. Ogot, ed., Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972, p. 62.

<sup>52</sup>KNA-PC/CP.1/4/2, "Kikuyu District Political Record Book, 1912-1914".

<sup>53</sup>ibid.

muthamaki of earlier times".<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, almost all the chiefs of the first generation failed to impress either their people or the Europeans. These chiefs were "often vilified by missionaries, treated with contempt by their official superiors and scorned by their own people".<sup>55</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that many complaints and protests were voiced against most of these chiefs. These came from their own people, the missionaries, the settlers and their official superiors. The chiefs were, therefore, sandwiched between two opposing forces, their people on one side and the Europeans on the other. Their dilemma was noticed in 1912 by C. Dundas, the Assistant District Commissioner (hereafter ADC) Kiambu, who had the following to say about their positions:

For chiefs, there were only two courses open. Either they had to work in our interests and risk unpopularity which in their un-natural positions was fatal to them, or they had to side with their people against us and thus become the instruments of their subjects while they pretended to help us. Most of them tried to do both and failed all around.<sup>56</sup>

The behaviour of most of the chiefs and their njama, hangers-on, alienated most of their people and led to an

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<sup>54</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>55</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>56</sup>KNA-PC/CP.1/4/1, "Kikuyu District Political Record Book Part I, 1908-1912".

outright opposition and hostility to the institution. The sufferings of the Kikuyu at the hands of their chiefs is summarised by G. Muriuki when he writes:

...the hammering that the Kikuyu had experienced at the hands of the punitive expeditions was nothing compared to the constant harrassment inflicted upon them by the mercenaries now christened 'chiefs'.<sup>57</sup>

As there was no effective official control exercised over them, the chiefs consequently became "a law unto themselves".<sup>58</sup> To maintain his position, a chief often resorted to brutal force and fear which he was tempted "to use on his own behalf as well as on behalf of the government".<sup>59</sup> Indiscriminate force was more often relied on to induce the young men to work for the white settlers. The majority of the chiefs heavily relied on this mode of labour recruitment but the notable among them were Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, Kioi wa Nagi, Mukoma wa Njiriri, Kimangika wa Kihara, Karanja wa Marite, Thuku wa Gatonye, Muiruri wa Njema and Mukui wa Kimata.<sup>60</sup> Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, for example, used to press-gang the people and send them to work for the Europeans in the district. Those who refused to go were "fined a goat...and in certain cases were flogged for disobedience to

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<sup>57</sup>Muriuki, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>58</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>Clough, 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>60</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/4, *op. cit.*; KNA-DC/KBU/1/4, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1912-1913".



Kinyanjui's orders".<sup>61</sup>

Many of the chiefs also used their positions to even old scores and to enrich themselves at the expense of their own people. Many of them "overreached themselves and took other people's wives and property by force to teach them kutii sheria, obey the law".<sup>62</sup> Paramount Chief Kinyanjui amassed a large fortune chiefly from sales of land which did not belong to him.<sup>63</sup> Confiscation of livestock for tax defaulting and fines for petty offences were prevalent.<sup>64</sup> Most of the property so collected went into the private coffers of the chiefs. Moreover, some of the chiefs kept part of or all the proceeds from the taxes they collected.<sup>65</sup> Yet, other chiefs, like Kimangika wa Kihara and Karanja wa Marite, enriched themselves with the fines they collected from the private court sessions they held.<sup>66</sup> Besides, the courts of most of the chiefs were corrupt and were "used as a way to obtain goats as much as a means to dispense justice".<sup>67</sup> The practices of these chiefs did not escape their

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<sup>61</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/4, op. cit.

<sup>62</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 168-69; and "KHT", p. 304.

<sup>63</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup>East African Standard, 4th March, 1929, "Obituary of Kinyanjui"; KNA-DC/KBU/1/4, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/5, "Kiambu District Annual and Handing over Report, 1913-1914".

<sup>65</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/14, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1920-1921".

<sup>66</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/4, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/5, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 77.

superiors. In his Annual Report for 1911+1912, the ADC had the following to say about them:

... the chiefs are generally anything but examples to their people; in fact I regret to say that they are often more criminally inclined than the average native and many offences in the Reserve are keenly abetted by the chiefs whom we look to for the good order of the locations.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the chiefs' deeds and misdeeds, their njama, hangers-on, lived on the people since they were not on the colonial administration's payroll. They commandeered whatever they fancied wherever they went and "even went to the extent of killing people and if anyone protested their village would suffer".<sup>69</sup> As a result, the chiefs were viewed as being traitors and self-seeking rogues who were driven by personal and selfish motives in serving the British. They, therefore, became the focus of anti-colonial resistance because they were "not only a symbol of the colonial oppression but also a constant reminder that the traditional political structure had either been ignored or rudely dismantled".<sup>70</sup> Consequently, the oppression by the chiefs partly contributed to large numbers of the Kiambu Kikuyu migrating to the Rift Valley and other areas as labourers and squatters.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/3, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1911-1912".

<sup>69</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 168; and "KHT", p. 303.

<sup>70</sup>ibid., p. 169.

<sup>71</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/9, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1915-1916".

Some of the chiefs went to the extent of undermining and threatening their already precarious and perilous positions by engaging in power struggle against each other. The power struggles emanated from the traditional jealousies and rivalries inherent in the Kikuyu society of the time. Prominent among these conflicts was that between Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu and Mukoma wa Njiriri in 1912. In that year, Kinyanjui was rebuffed by Mukoma when he tried to acquire land in his location. Mukoma went ahead and reported Kinyanjui to his official superiors, the Provincial Commissioner (hereafter PC) and the ADC. Kinyanjui retaliated by trying to have Mukoma deposed on the grounds that he was no longer popular in his location.<sup>72</sup>

Misunderstandings also arose among the chiefs over the boundaries of their locations. Other chiefs also tried to meddle with the affairs of other locations while others tried to extend their influence and authority in the neighbouring locations.<sup>73</sup>

The chiefs also collided with the missionaries who were "highly critical of the actions of the chiefs, condemning them to the DC at every available opportunity".<sup>74</sup> The conflict

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<sup>72</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/4, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.; KNA-PC/CP.1/4/2, op. cit.

<sup>74</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 107.

mainly originated from the chief's tendency to side with and to support the forces opposed to change and modernity since missionary work was a direct challenge to their beliefs and cherished customs. Most of the chiefs were also hostile to the missionaries because they **approached** their people directly, rather than through them, while the education and conversion of the young people appeared to be an attempt to alienate their loyalties.<sup>75</sup> The chiefs, therefore, tried to obstruct the missionaries by mainly being indifferent to missionary activities. In February 1910, for instance, the District Commissioner (hereafter DC) was forced to investigate various charges of speculation against Chief Macharia wa Karuoya brought to his attention by the African Inland Missionaries (hereafter the AIM).<sup>76</sup> Likewise, in 1914, Chief Muiruri wa Njema was reprimanded for an indiscretion at a mission out-school in his area.<sup>77</sup>

The Kiambu Native Reserve, being a reservoir for labour, had to keep the neighbouring European farmers at Ruiru, Kiambu, Limuru and Mbagathi supplied with ample manpower. The chiefs, as part of their duties, had to assist these farmers to procure labour. But in this connection, most of the chiefs became victims of their own doing or undoing. Most of the European

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<sup>75</sup> ibid., p. 104.

<sup>76</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/2, op. cit.

<sup>77</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/7, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1914-1915".

settlers frequently complained and pressurised the administration to sack the chiefs concerned and replace them with individuals of their own choice or at least with men who would respond favourably to their labour demands. They went to the extent of airing their complaints and grievances in the local press in a bid to pressurise the government to succumb to their demands.<sup>78</sup> A few examples will suffice to illustrate this.

In 1908, the Mbagathi settlers demanded the removal of Chief Kioi wa Nagi on the grounds that he was boycotting them and as a result, they were unable to obtain labour.<sup>79</sup> In the same year, Chief Gichuhi wa Itito of Mang'u was demoted as a result of a spate of thefts of cattle and sheep from settlers and missionaries near Mang'u. He could neither find the thieves nor throw any light on the thefts.<sup>80</sup> In July 1911, Mr. Dunman and others demanded that Chief Mimi wa Richu be deposed on account that he was preventing labour from reaching them. They suggested that he be replaced by Muiruri, their foreman.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, persistent complaints were forwarded against Chief Moru wa Ndungi by the Limuru farmers led by Messrs Knight, McDonell, Lushington and Barbrook. They accused

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<sup>78</sup>KNA-PC/CP.1/4/2, op. cit.

<sup>79</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/2, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup>ibid.

<sup>81</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.

him of harrassing their workers. On one occasion, Chief Moru was reported to have frightened Mrs. McDonell.<sup>82</sup>

The greatest criticism and pressure against the chiefs emanated from their official superiors. The chiefs were always under constant pressure to fully and promptly discharge their duties which they rarely did. Administratively, most of the chiefs proved to be totally hopeless failures. The cause for their dismal performance was found in their lack of initiative, their addiction to drink and their reactionary nature.

Practically all the chiefs were heavy drinkers.<sup>83</sup> In his Annual Report for 1919-1920, A. de V. Wade, the DC Kiambu, had the following to say about them:

Most of the Headmen may ..... be described as "passive resisters" content to draw an inadequate salary trusting to the kindly nature and the gentle disposition of the various District Officers to leave them in beer and sleep - sometimes it happened that they receive an awakening and are even stimulated for short periods to a hazy glimmering of the meaning of the Native Authority Ordinance and other acts designed to uphold their prestige. The effort - frequently through the exhaustion

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<sup>82</sup>KNA-PC/CP.1/4/2, op. cit.

<sup>83</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/4, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/9, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/5, op. cit.

of the District Officers → dies down and the condition of coma again supervenes.<sup>84</sup>

Apart from their intoxication tendencies, the chiefs were also generally opposed to change and modernity. This affected their performance because, by being retrospective and reactionary, they were by and large either opposed or indifferent to development projects such as education, road building and better methods of farming. They were, therefore considered to be stumbling blocks to change and progress. Their records were spotted with remarks such as "...extremely unprogressive...much averse to modern conditions...most reactionary...totally unprogressive ...".<sup>85</sup> One DC considered that if Paramount Chief Kinyanjui Gathirimu was retired, the Kikuyu would probably give up their reactionary attitude to a certain extent.<sup>86</sup>

The government employed several methods in an endeavour to either discipline the chiefs or get rid of them. These were taking the chiefs to court where they were either fined or imprisoned if convicted, withholding of salaries, deportations, depositions and educating their sons to eventually take over from them. The imposition of fines and the withholding of their salaries were meant to force them to either mend their ways or resign owing to the embarrassment and

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<sup>84</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/13, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1919+1920".

<sup>85</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/4, op. cit.; KNA+DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/11, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1917+1918".

frustrations this brought. Those imprisoned or deported automatically lost their posts as chiefs.

In the period preceding 1922, no less than six chiefs were fined for various offences. Chief Kioi wa Nagi was taken to court twice, in 1908 and in 1916 and fined 600 and 50 rupees respectively.<sup>87</sup> In 1908, he was found guilty of being the cause of the damage done to a white farmer's crops by baboons. He had chased away the boys who were guarding the farm because he had previously disagreed with the owner. The second fine was for causing grievous bodily harm with a dangerous weapon. In 1915, Chiefs Mukui wa Kimata and Ndekee wa Mukanda were fined 1,500 and 200 rupees respectively, the former for a breach of the Diseases of Animals Ordinance and the latter for concealing a murder in his location.<sup>88</sup> In 1921, a chief was fined for embezzling tax money while two others were fined for failing to report an outbreak of plague in their locations.<sup>89</sup>

Likewise, several chiefs had their salaries forfeited. In 1914, Chief Kamiri wa Itherero was fined one month's pay for giving the government surveyor unnecessary trouble. A boundary

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<sup>87</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/4, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/10, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1916-1917".

<sup>88</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/7, op. cit.

<sup>89</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.



stone had been removed and Kamiri "insisted that none such had ever existed".<sup>90</sup> In 1916, Chief Thuku wa Gatonye was fined three months' salary for general slackness while Chief Nderebu wa Gichuhi was fined 40 rupees "for continual slackness in the provision of Carrier Corps porters".<sup>91</sup> This mode of punishment was particularly hurting and humiliating considering that the chiefs only received meagre salaries. By 1921 their salaries ranged from 13 to 33 rupees per month with Kinyanjui receiving 100 rupees per month by virtue of his being the Paramount Chief.<sup>92</sup>

In the same period, four chiefs were convicted of various offences and imprisoned. In 1917, Chief Thuku wa Gatonye of Muguga was imprisoned while three chiefs were imprisoned in 1921. One of these was Kamiri wa Itherero who was jailed for practising witchcraft. The other two chiefs were jailed because of extortion and embezzling the hut and poll+tax money.<sup>93</sup>

Deportation of chiefs was rare and it was only one chief who was deported in Kiambu. This was Gatheca wa Ngekenya who

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<sup>90</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/7, op. cit.

<sup>91</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/9, op. cit.; KNA+DC/KBU/3/5, "Dagoretti Political Record Book, 1913+1919".

<sup>92</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/10, op. cit.; KNA+DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.

was deported for five years to the Nyanza Province in 1914. He had burned alive two of his men for allegedly practising witchcraft. He was deported despite the fact that he and the whole of his kiama, council of elders, consisting of 52 men, had been tried by the High Court and each fined 50 rupees.<sup>94</sup>

The fines, imprisonments and the withholding of salaries did not always produce the desired effects. Purges were, therefore, frequent so as to get rid of the inefficient and incompetent chiefs. Within a space of ten years, for example, four chiefs of Karura Location namely Gachii wa Kihara, Icharia wa Munga, Kimangika wa Kihara and Moru wa Ndungi were dismissed.<sup>95</sup> In the period between 1920 and 1922, eleven of the twenty+three chiefs in Kiambu left office mainly through deposition.<sup>96</sup> But all these purges, however, did not produce any discernible improvement in the general performance of the chiefs.

The government tried to encourage and promote the education of the chiefs' sons. This was because the son, as a

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<sup>94</sup>KNA+PC/CP.1/4/2, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup>ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 68.

rule, was appointed to succeed his father and like his father knew "nothing or little of what is expected of him".<sup>97</sup> Although the campaign to educate the chiefs' sons had started in the first decade of this century, the government did not seem to be making any headway in this direction. As a result, there was a call for the establishment of a school primarily devoted to the education of chiefs' sons who were likely to succeed them.<sup>98</sup> But this never materialised.

Several obstacles obstructed the education of the chiefs' sons. The first was that most of their sons were either grown-ups or too young to go to school. Secondly, either their sons were very young and still at school or they had deserted. Thirdly, and most important, most of the chiefs, being averse to change and modernity, refused to send their sons to school.<sup>99</sup>

The colonial authorities, therefore, seemed to be moving around in a vicious circle. This was because the deposed chiefs were replaced with similar chiefs who were no better. The colonial government finally realized that discernible and

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<sup>97</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.

<sup>98</sup>ibid.

<sup>99</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/3/ 31, "Political Record Book Part II, 1912".

meaningful change for the better could only be attained if educated chiefs were appointed to replace the old guard. The mission-educated young men had already embraced western education and culture. By so doing, they had attacked and disassociated themselves from the religious practices and customs of their people which were considered "unchristian" and "primitive". Moreover, unlike the old chiefs, they could read and write and this would lighten the work of administration. They would also act as firebrands for their people since they would set the pace and be good examples for their people to follow towards change and modernity.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, from the early 1920's onwards, the educated second generation of chiefs began to gradually but systematically replace the largely incompetent and reactionary first generation of chiefs.

The first four chiefs of the second generation in Kiambu were appointed in the 1921+1922 period. These were Koinange wa Mbiyu, Josiah Njonjo, Philip Karanja and Waruhiu wa Kung'u. The first three were made chiefs towards the end of 1921.<sup>101</sup> They were followed by Waruhiu wa Kung'u who was appointed chief with effect from 1st April, 1922.<sup>102</sup> Waruhiu was to remain a

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<sup>100</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.; KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, "Chiefs' Character Book, 1922+1952".

<sup>101</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup>ibid.

chief for the next 30 years until 1952 when an assassin's bullet abruptly killed him and brought his life and career to a rude end.

CHAPTER THREE

WARUHIU'S EARLY LIFE

(i) Birth and Childhood

The late Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u was born and brought up in Kimathi Village, about fifteen miles north of Nairobi. Kimathi was in the present Kimathi Sub+Location of Githunguri Location, Githunguri Division, Kiambu District. He was born into the Aceera clan for his father, Kung'u wa Kimani, was a Muceera of Mbari ya Njuku while his mother, Njoki, was a Munjiru of Mbari ya Gathirimu. Although Waruhiu's date of birth cannot be fixed with any degree of certainty, he himself estimated it to have been 1890.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a plausible and vindicable approximation of his date of birth since the average initiation age for boys was then roughly sixteen years and he was initiated in 1906.<sup>2</sup> Waruhiu's whole life, therefore, span the colonial period and Pax Britannica as 1890 was when F.D. Lugard built the first British fort in Kikuyuland at Dagoretti.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>KNA-MAA 7/772, "Visit of Africans to the United Kingdom, 1948".

<sup>2</sup>KNA-PC/CP. 1/1/2, "A Short History of the Kikuyu Province, 1911-1927"; Kiambu County Council Archives (hereafter KCCA) + Kiambu Local Native Council (hereafter LNC) Minutes, 1941-1945.

<sup>3</sup>F.J.D. Lugard, The Rise of our East African Empire, Vol. I, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968, pp. 322-334.

Although Waruhiu died in 1952 a very wealthy and powerful chief, he nevertheless had a humble beginning as he was born into a poor and landless family. His father, Kung'u, was a muhoi, tenant, on the land of Mbari ya Gathirimu at Ruiru.

Kung'u's background is rather obscure and enigmatic and little is known about his life prior to his settlement in Kiambu since he rarely talked about himself or his past.<sup>4</sup> His mbari had originated from Muruka, Murang'a, before acquiring land and settling at Kigio in Gatanga, Murang'a.<sup>5</sup> That Kung'u's had been a landed mbari was verified during the land consolidation and demarcation exercise in the late 1950's when Kung'u's relatives in Murang'a allocated Waruhiu's family fifteen acres of land at Gatanga.<sup>6</sup> At Murang'a, Kung'u had two wives but the number of children he had there is unknown, though one of the wives, Wanjiru, had a son called Njonge.<sup>7</sup> Kung'u was, however, an old man when he settled in Kiambu from Murang'a as he belonged to the Kang'ethe riika of the 1820's. He appears to have immigrated to Kiambu in the mid-1880's. This is because his only known son at Murang'a, Njonge, and his eldest son at Kiambu, Toro, were born around 1886 and

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<sup>4</sup>Oral Interview (hereafter O.I.), Samuel N. Waruhiu, 21st May and 16th July, 1988, Nairobi.

<sup>5</sup>O.I., Simon K. Waruhiu, 24th March, 1987, Riuki.

<sup>6</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>O.I., Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

1888 respectively. These are very likely their dates of birth since they were initiated in 1902 and in 1904 when they were roughly sixteen years old as was customary then.

Kung'u left his family at Murang'a and ventured alone into Kiambu as it was customary for a man to confront the hazards of the frontier alone before his family could eventually join him. However, Kung'u never went back for his family and neither did they visit each other until his death.<sup>8</sup> Kung'u might have completely forsaken his family either because he was running away from misfortune or in fear of witchcraft after being away for a considerable length of time. It was then widely and commonly believed that such a returning person would become a victim of witchcraft.<sup>9</sup>

Kung'u's immigration and settlement on Mbari ya Gathirimu's land at Ruiru was neither accidental nor coincidental. Mbari ya Gathirumu was, apart from being among the most powerful mbari in the region with land stretching from Ruiru to Githunguri, widespread with members and relatives scattered all over Gatanga, Mang'u, Muguga and Maasailand.<sup>10</sup> Much more

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<sup>8</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, 8th and 10th April, 1987, Giathieko; Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup>O.I., Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Thuku, op. cit., pp. 95+96; Wanyoike, op. cit. pp. 1+7.



significant, Mbari ya Gathirimu were Kung'u's in-laws. His sister, Nyakibithe, was married to one of them at Ruiru and it was when on a visit to her that he adopted the status of a muhoi.<sup>11</sup> He became a muhoi on the land of Kiburucha, also known as Waruhiu, who later became his father-in-law.

As a muhoi, Kung'u was given rights of occupation and cultivation in return for his services and the occasional calabash of beer. His services were required and utilised in clearing the forest and in defence of Mbari ya Gathirimu's land and property against possible Maasai or other mbari attacks which were prevalent at the frontier. By opting for a muhoi status, Kung'u probably hoped to one day own land at the frontier. This was because the frontier was a land of opportunity for any ambitious and hard-working individual.<sup>12</sup>

Kung'u soon distinguished himself as an industrious and sedulous toiler. This greatly impressed his landlord, Kiburucha, to such an extent that he acquiesced in Kung'u's marriage to his daughter, Njoki.<sup>13</sup> Kiburucha might have foreseen Kung'u becoming a prosperous and affluent man and he naturally would have liked him to be his son-in-law.

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<sup>11</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>13</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

Five children were born to Kung'u and Njoki. But three of them (whose birth order is unknown) never survived into adult+hood. Nonetheless, one was called Njoroge, another Muthoni but the name and sex of the third one is unknown.<sup>14</sup> One of the two who survived was Kimani, their first born. He was nicknamed and widely known as Toro because of his habit of oversleeping during his childhood. He was followed by Waruhiu who was named after his grandfather on the maternal side.<sup>15</sup>

Waruhiu's earliest occupation was herding sheep near his home as was then customary for small boys. As a big boy, Waruhiu accompanied the other boys and the young men to herd his father's livestock out in the plains.<sup>16</sup> Livestock from the same locality was mingled and grazed together in turns by mixed teams of boys and young warriors for specified periods of time. Such an arrangement was advantageous in three ways. First, it was easier to protect and defend the livestock against Maasai raiders and wild beasts. Second, it afforded those off-duty with an opportunity of being engaged in other equally useful activities like cultivation. Third, it was a mode of interaction and co+operation for the herders.

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<sup>14</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>ibid.; Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Kenya Land Commission, 1932-1934, Original Evidence, Vol. 5, Waruhiu's Memorandum, (hereafter KLC); O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, 12th February, 1987, Kiratina.

While out in the weru, plains, the herders lived in ithunu, which were temporarily constructed shelters, and food had to be delivered by their respective families. The warriors kept themselves busy by practising battle drills and dancing. The herdsboys in their turn occupied themselves with a variety of games such as archery, jumping, racing, throwing and hide-and-seek.<sup>17</sup> However, this seemingly tranquil and orderly lifestyle was temporarily disrupted by a severe drought and famine at the close of the century.

Waruhiu lost his father during the famine variously known as the Ng'aragu ya Ruraya, the Great Famine or The Famine of Europe, as it was associated with the coming of Europeans. He was about nine or ten years old then. The famine devastated Kikuyuland and the adjacent areas in the 1898+1899 period. The famine, which was preceded by a locust invasion in 1898 and compounded by an outbreak of smallpox, was caused by three consecutive rainless seasons.<sup>18</sup> The Kiambu people were the hardest hit and the worst victims of the famine. Their trading activities with passing caravans had greatly depleted their food stocks "at a time when cultivation had significantly decreased due to the disturbed situation in the country at the

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<sup>17</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., pp. 12+13.

<sup>18</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

time.<sup>19</sup> The situation was exacerbated by the government having commandeered the last crop prior to the drought for the Uganda trip.<sup>20</sup>

The famine reduced the survivors to mere scavengers and skeletons who just stopped short of cannibalism. They ate anything palatable, including hides and cienja cia mariqu, banana tree stumps, in a desperate attempt to stay alive. The famine demonstrated that only the fittest and strongest could survive. The social and political fabric appeared to snap and collapse. Bands of marauding Kikuyu warrior brigands, known as thabari, sprang up. They were akin to the Yao and Ngoni ruga ruga bands who terrorised southern Tanzania in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The thabari, the most notorious and daring of which came from Kiganjo Location of Gatundu Division, raided far and wide and terrorised all and sundry.<sup>22</sup> Muriuki describes their unbecoming activities thus:

They burnt homes, locked people in their houses and then set them on fire, murdered others and confiscated livestock and food at a time when famine was taking its toll ...<sup>23</sup>

John Patterson, of the Church of Scotland Mission

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<sup>19</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

<sup>21</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 94+95.

<sup>22</sup>ibid.

<sup>23</sup>ibid.

(hereafter CSM) at Kikuyu, had the following to say about the apparent break down of law and order:

During the famine it was a question of the survival of the fittest. The poor people simply died and the rich survived. I remember one case where a man had about 15 goats and the Chief, Munyua, killed him in order to get the goats. Indeed, the chiefs at that time killed quite a number of their own poor people. There were many deeds done in those days which would not be tolerated now...<sup>24</sup>

Such unprincipled and extortionate misdeeds were only checked and terminated by an almost annihilating rebuff of the robbers while on a raid in Ithiru, Murang'a, and the restoration of traditional authority at the end of the famine.<sup>25</sup>

The famine, the smallpox epidemic and the callous and malevolent activities of the thabari greatly decimated the population. Although the available estimated figures are at variance, they nevertheless indicate that the mortality rate was very high. It was estimated at one-third by Rev. W.P. Knapp; two-thirds by John Patterson; 70 per cent by Dr. H.A. Boedeker; 75 per cent by Father Bernhard of the Catholic Mission, Kiambu; and 95 per cent by John Boyes.<sup>26</sup> According

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<sup>24</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of John Patterson.

<sup>25</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p.95.

<sup>26</sup>KLC, Vol. 4.

to John Boyes, who was a trader, the whole country was almost bare and "only a few scraggy natives were left".<sup>27</sup> Dr. H. A. Boedeker, a white settler at Fort Smith, had the following to say about the famine:

...they literally died in thousands all over the country; consequently both the districts of Kiambu and Limuru were depleted in population and the remaining few hundreds had a hard mouth struggle to keep their souls alive, and many parts under previous cultivation lapsed into bush.<sup>28</sup>

John Patterson described the spectre he witnessed as follows:

People were dying of smallpox and drought. The banks of the streams were strewn with dead bodies, so much so that the hyenas could not dispose of them. We tried to bury some of them, but the task was impossible so we had to give up.<sup>29</sup>

One of the informants interviewed expressed the 1898+1899 catastrophe in these words:

All the livestock died and even banana stems dried up. That is why people ate banana tree stumps. They ate the banana tree stumps and their bedding hides until they were finished. They even went to the extent of eating soil but to no avail. Water alone could not sustain life. When someone died in a house, the survivors moved elsewhere. At the end of it all, few people remained.<sup>30</sup>

The famine consumed almost everything that

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<sup>27</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of John Boyes.

<sup>28</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Dr. H.A. Boedeker.

<sup>29</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of John Patterson.

<sup>30</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

Kung'u had acquired and accumulated, including the death of three of his five children.<sup>31</sup> Kung'u himself died on his way to his Murang'a ancestral home with two aims. Firstly, to procure food to stave off the starvation threatening to exterminate his entire family and secondly, to assess whether his family could take refuge there.<sup>32</sup> He was accompanied by his son, Waruhiu, and they could only manage to carry with them a small gourd of watery millet porridge.<sup>33</sup> Kung'u did not accomplish his mission as he collapsed and died of starvation after crossing the Karimnu River in Gatundu Division.<sup>34</sup> Waruhiu retraced his steps and trekked back to Ruiru, a distance of more than ten miles, and took the bad tidings to his mother and her relatives. Njoki sought refuge with her brother, Mbocha, in the vicinity, and she used to accompany him and others in food+scouring parties. This ensured the survival of her two remaining children, Toro and Waruhiu. Njoki continued to reside at Ruiru and together with her sons cultivated the shamba, gardens, previously tilled by Kung'u.<sup>35</sup>

Waruhiu, therefore, inherited almost nothing from his father, apart from poverty and misery which became a handicap

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<sup>31</sup> ibid.

<sup>32</sup> ibid.

<sup>33</sup> O.I., Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> ibid.

and an encumbrance to his subsequent life. Toro assumed the headship and the responsibility of the family and steered it henceforth. That is why Waruhiu was referred to as Waruhiu wa Toro in the early days for Toro was then his guardian and custodian.<sup>36</sup>

It is perhaps fairly safe to argue and infer that Waruhiu would probably never have made history if the Kambui Mission Station had not been established in his locality when it did and had he not joined it at the time he did. This is because it was at Kambui that Waruhiu first associated himself with the white man and his association with Europeans only ended with his death in 1952.

(ii) The Establishment of Kambui Mission Station

The Kambui Mission Station was founded in 1902 by Gospel Missionary Society (hereafter the GMS) missionaries from America. The GMS, which was an undenominational organisation, was formed in 1901 in New Britain, Connecticut, to support and promote evangelical work (based on free will offerings) started in 1896 in Africa and elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> The GMS was the

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<sup>36</sup>O.I., Rev. John Gatu, 18th June, 1987, Nairobi.

<sup>37</sup>The Messenger (official organ of the GMS), New Britain, Connecticut, October 1926.



missionary arm of the People's Church of Christ of New Britain, Connecticut, which had been set up in 1888.<sup>38</sup> It was a Baptist congregation of about 500 souls.<sup>39</sup> In later years, the GMS was also supported by several Baptist congregations and revival movements which were mainly located in the northern states of the United States of America (hereafter USA).<sup>40</sup>

Prominent among these was "The Life and Advent Union" of New Haven Connecticut, which published the Herald of Life, a publication partially devoted to missionary work in foreign lands.

The People's Church of Christ was influenced and inspired by the late nineteenth century revival and crusade movements to send missionaries overseas. This ardent religious renaissance, whose main features were evangelistic preaching and gospel hymn+singing, was led by Moody and Sankey.<sup>41</sup> Evangelical colleges and Bible schools, like the Moody Bible Institute, were founded to educate and train evangelists to ensure that the revival spirit was kept alive and burning.<sup>42</sup> It was in this spirit and implication that the

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<sup>38</sup>R.L. Tignor, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>39</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>40</sup>ibid.

<sup>41</sup>ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p.16.

People's Church of Christ founded their own Bible school.

In the early 1890's, the People's Church of Christ inaugurated a fund, by public prescription, for sending missionaries to overseas countries. The fund was launched by a Negro woman congregation member who donated the only five cents she had with her "to demonstrate her burning desire to have the gospel preached in Africa".<sup>43</sup> Others followed her example and the fund swelled to an initial sum of 4,000 dollars which enabled the first missionaries to be sent out.<sup>44</sup> The missionaries, who were expected to set up self-supporting missions owing to financial constraints, went to Japan, the West Indies, Brazil and Kenya. However, all these undertakings, with the exception of the Kenya one, floundered and were abandoned.<sup>45</sup>

The first GMS missionaries established themselves in Kikuyuland in 1898. These were Rev. and Mrs. T.N. Krieger, who were Americans of German origin. On their arrival, the Kriegers spent a few months at Machakos with Peter Cameron Scott, an American missionary of the African Inland Mission, who was working among the Akamba in Nzawi and Kangundo.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>MacPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup>Wanyoike, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Krieger's sharp shooting skill amazed the Akamba who nicknamed him Mulasa Bolosya, a shooter of hawks.<sup>47</sup> Krieger rarely missed his target, the hawks in particular, "which had learnt to dodge the European bullets intended to scare them away from the white man's chicks".<sup>48</sup>

In 1897, the Kriegers temporarily established themselves at Marambu, the future site of Ruiru town, on the southern bank of the Ruiru River. In 1898, they settled at Thimbigua, along the Riara Stream, about eight miles to the north-west of Nairobi. They purchased the land from an elder called Gicinga for 70 goats.<sup>49</sup> Although he was a missionary, Rev. Krieger, however, appeared to excel in hunting above everything else. His shooting prowess prompted and compelled the Kikuyu to nickname him muratha, a shooter, besides naming some of their baby boys born then "Kirika" after him.<sup>50</sup> It was at Thimbigua that the founders of Kambui Mission Station, the Knapps, first established themselves with the Kriegers in 1899 before they moved to Kambui in 1902.

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<sup>47</sup> ibid.

<sup>48</sup> ibid.

<sup>49</sup> ibid.; KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

<sup>50</sup> Macpherson, op. cit., p. 85.

Rev. William Porter Knapp and his wife, Myrtle Ingersoll Knapp, were American-born citizens and their family roots went back to the early European settlement in America.<sup>51</sup> Rev. Knapp was an ordained church minister who had gone through the People's Church of Christ Bible School while his wife was a trained school teacher. Rev. Knapp was born in New Britain in 1868 while his wife was a year younger than him. They had been married for about a year before they embarked on their missionary undertaking. Their characters and general outlook in life are summarised by Macpherson in these words:

Both were deeply evangelical in religious outlook, undergirded by an innate Yankee conservatism. Both were resolute in character, supremely confident of their ability to master any odds that might be arrayed against them.<sup>52</sup>

The Knapps arrived in the country, then known as the British East African Protectorate, on 2nd April, 1899. They joined the Kriegers at Thimbigua Estate after sojourning in Nairobi for about three weeks. They arrived there when the Great Famine and the smallpox pestilence were at their height.

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<sup>51</sup>ibid.

<sup>52</sup>ibid.

They found the smell of death everywhere and the streams which still flowed choked with the decaying corpses of smallpox victims taken there by their relatives to be near water while dying.<sup>53</sup> The major preoccupation of the Knapps on their arrival was to tend and care for the sick, the hungry and the dying. These horrifying and pathetic conditions proved to be too much for Miss Margaret Wheeler who had arrived together with the Knapps. She thereupon left for America but by an ironic turn of fate, she died of smallpox near Naples and she was buried at sea.<sup>54</sup>

Early in 1902, the Knapps began to look for an alternative mission site in the neighbourhood. This followed the Kriegers' resignation from the GMS whereupon the Thimbigua Estate became their personal possession.<sup>55</sup> It was when the search and exploration of possible mission sites was in progress that Dr. John E. Henderson, a medical doctor, joined the Knapps at Thimbigua.

Dr. J.E. Henderson was a Jamaican born British subject and a naturalised American citizen.<sup>56</sup> He had previously

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<sup>53</sup>Christian Unity, (a GMS Magazine of 1890's), New Britain, Connecticut, as quoted by Macpherson, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>54</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>55</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

<sup>56</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 86.

worked with the AIM in the Congo. But he had become disillusioned with the work there and had decided to return to America via the East Coast of Africa.<sup>57</sup> An AIM missionary he had met at Mombasa had directed him to Thimbigua where there was a "great need of a doctor because of the serious health conditions that existed in the area".<sup>58</sup> Dr. Henderson was warmly received at Thimbigua and he teamed up with Rev. Knapp in search of a new mission site. The three subsequently became the founders of Kambui in 1902. The intimate relationship established between Dr. Henderson and the Knapps lasted until the late 1920's when, according to Macpherson:

...their relationships became shadowed by a breakdown in confidence and the issue between them grew so deep that they had to part company. Dr. and Mrs Henderson retired to the United States and the Knapps were left to face the complexities of missionary work in Kenya of the 1930's with waning physical powers and sharply dwindling overseas support.<sup>59</sup>

When Mbari ya Gathirimu, who lived about ten miles to the north-east of Thimbigua, realised that the Knapps were in dire need of a new mission site, they dispatched a delegation of four elders to Thimbigua. The four - Kamau wa Kanja, Munenge wa Murira, Ngatho wa Kibuthui and Ngwaro wa Mathu - implored

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<sup>57</sup>Wanyoike, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>Macpherson, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

and persuaded the missionaries to establish their mission in their midst at Ruiru.<sup>60</sup> Their over-riding motive for this action was not enthusiasm for the new religion. Incredible and often exaggerated stories about the prowess of the white men at Thimbigua with the awesome firearms had spread far and wide. Mbari ya Gathirimu, therefore, considered that having Europeans living in their midst would be an asset and a safeguard against their Maasai enemies.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the European's unequalled skill in combating deadly diseases would be invaluable, in addition to their being generally useful to the local community.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, in May 1902, Rev. Knapp and Dr. Henderson inspected various potential mission sites on Mbari ya Gathirimu's land at Ruiru. They were accompanied by six Mbari ya Gathirimu elders, who were Kiingati wa Karanga, Wamihang'o and the four elders who had been sent to Thimbigua.<sup>63</sup> They scrutinized possible sites at Ngewa, Ngenia, Mugumo wa Thumbi, Gicungo and Ndithiati.<sup>64</sup> It was while at Ndithiati that Rev. Knapp espied the Kambui hill and enquired about the purchase

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<sup>60</sup>Presbyterian Church of East Africa, (hereafter the PCEA), Pamphlet, North Kiambu Presbytery, 1986, p.2; Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>61</sup>ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., pp. 20+21.

<sup>63</sup>ibid., p. 22.

<sup>64</sup>ibid., p. 21.

price for it.<sup>65</sup> Wanyoike captures the reaction of the elders in the following words:

The elders were taken aback by this request because that hill was a place of the dead! It was where corpses were laid to be devoured by scavengers and it would have been abomination of the highest order for anybody in Kikuyu to dream of living in such a place.<sup>66</sup>

Although the elders were unanimous in their obdurate rejection of his offer, Rev. Knapp was, however, adamant and continued to press for the hill. He was motivated by several factors to do so. One, Kambui hill was uninhabited. His occupation of the hill would, therefore, not interfere with grazing or cultivation rights of the people. Two, the hill, which was about 150 feet high and 6,300 feet above sea-level, was situated on an almost island ridge of about 100 acres. The ridge was separated from the neighbouring ridges by two rivers which almost circled it by flowing along the valleys on each side and then joined together to form one river at the southern end of the hill. The rivers were separated at the northern end of the hill by a 60 feet narrow spit of rock. Three, the dreaded place would afford the missionaries with an ample opportunity to demonstrate to the inhabitants "the power of the Christian God over evil and to

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<sup>65</sup>ibid., p. 22.

<sup>66</sup>ibid.



teach them His loving ways".<sup>67</sup>

The stalemate between the elders and Rev. Knapp was finally broken up by Chief Gitango wa Wambura of Ng'enda, who persuaded the elders to hand over the hill to the missionaries.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the Kambui hill was given free of charge to the missionaries. The elders could not demand payment for such a place in fear of evoking the wrath of their ancestors.<sup>69</sup>

However, the missionaries encountered some problems when registering the land with the government. John Ainsworth, the P.C., Ukamba Province which included Kikuyuland, considered the land to be excessively large for a mission station. He could only have it registered if they could put in an industrial plant, which was impossible owing to financial constraints.<sup>70</sup> A solution was finally found to the relief and satisfaction of the missionaries. Accordingly, three separate title deeds were issued for the Kambui ridge. One-third of the land was registered in the name of the mission while Rev. Knapp and Dr. Henderson had a third each for the

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

<sup>69</sup> Wanyoike, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>70</sup> KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

remainder.<sup>71</sup> But from the very beginning, the Kambui ridge was used as a whole unit for missionary work.

Although the Kikuyu never buried their dead, unless they were wealthy or distinguished elders, the Kambui hill had not always been a shunned dumping ground for the dead and the dying. It had been a flourishing settlement prior to the advent of the Ruraya Famine and Ngwaro wa Mathu was among those who had occupied it.<sup>72</sup> The almost isolated position afforded to the ridge by its natural barriers had made it an ideal fortification against the frequent Maasai raids. Furthermore, the hilltop had been ringed with a hedge of tangled branches and trees covered with thorny creepers which made the place almost impregnable.<sup>73</sup> These had been reinforced by rows of V-shaped man-pits with sharpened sticks at the bottom which had been dug around the hilltop.<sup>74</sup> Cattle from the neighbourhood had spent the nights there as a precaution against surprise Maasai night raids.<sup>75</sup> During Maasai raids, the people, with their livestock, would seek sanctuary in this bastion while the warriors challenged the

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<sup>71</sup>ibid.; Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>72</sup>KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

<sup>73</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, 8th May, 1987, Gathiruini.

<sup>74</sup>Herald of Life, Published by the Life and Advent Union, New Haven, Connecticut, 7th November, 1912, p. 138; KLC, Vol. 4, Evidence of Rev. Knapp.

<sup>75</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

invaders. It was from there that the traditional mbu, danger+signal, would be raised whenever the Maasai were espied approaching. It was, therefore, by no coincidence that Kambui hill was previously known as ka+mbu or a hill of the danger+signal.<sup>76</sup>

The Kambui ridge had been abandoned during the Great Famine. A few years earlier, a devastating Maasai raid had left the hill littered with dead bodies.<sup>77</sup> The Great Famine and the smallpox epidemic claimed many more lives and the corpses swelled the number of those lying about. An atrocious crime, committed on the hilltop during the famine by an elder called Mutwe, finally contributed to the survivors scampering away in dread of the place.

One of Mutwe's wives, in company of equally famished women, slaughtered one of his goats and ate it. When Mutwe learnt this on his return, he so severely punished her that she was confined to her hut for several days "on account of the injuries she received".<sup>78</sup> But as the pangs of hunger became unbearable, she once again committed the offence for which she

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<sup>76</sup> ibid.; Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, 18th, 24th, and 25th February, 1987, Komothai; Tirus Muuti Kimani, 12th March, 1987, Ruiru.

<sup>77</sup> Herald of Life, op. cit., 7th November, 1912, p. 138; Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>78</sup> Herald of Life, op. cit., 7th November, 1912, p. 139.

had so cruelly suffered. On finding out about the second offence, Mutwe summarily executed her by hanging her to a nearby tree in the presence of his other wives and their families. He justified his vicious act by declaring that "she would eat up more goats than she had cost him in the first place".<sup>79</sup> The presence of her dangling corpse and the many others which were rapidly accumulating all over the little hill top "caused those who had strength enough left for a journey, to abandon the place".<sup>80</sup>

The quick growth of the tropical vegetation soon hid the gruesome evidence of the sufferings and the tragedies which had occurred on the hill. The surrounding inhabitants began to dump their dead and the dying on the hill. Those who wanted to commit suicide also did it there.<sup>81</sup> The hill, which always appeared to be in full blossom since it was never disturbed by people or livestock, consequently acquired a new name, Ka+mbui or a place of blossoms.<sup>82</sup> By 1902 when the missionaries arrived on the scene, Ka+mbui was in common and everyday usage, while ka-mbu had been relegated to the background.

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<sup>79</sup> ibid.

<sup>80</sup> ibid.

<sup>81</sup> O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup> ibid.; Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 22.

Tangible evidence of what had transpired on Kambui hill was stumbled upon by the missionaries as they cleared the thick growth of underbrush. As Rev. Knapp wrote:

...we came upon portions of tumbledown huts, parts of villages which had been abandoned by the living who had life enough to get away during the famine. Some of them contained the bones of those who had succumbed to a hopeless death, and every little way we came upon portions of skeletons, etc., which told us in language more forceful than words the awful story.<sup>83</sup>

The missionaries levelled off the ground, buried the human bones and skeletons and by August 1902, they had established themselves at Kambui. The first grass-thatched and mud-walled chapel was dedicated on 14th November, 1902. It was constructed with a sum of money donated by the West-Side Mission in New York, through a Mrs. E.M. Whitmore.<sup>84</sup> The chapel was named "The Door of Hope" as it was intended to provide spiritual food for the "poor people who have so long been living under deprivation and famine for the word of God".<sup>85</sup>

When the Kambui missionaries commenced with their evangelical work of proselytizing, they encountered some

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<sup>83</sup>W.P. Knapp, "The story of the Chapel in Kambui", Herald of Life, Vol. 50, No. 9, 7th November, 1912, pp. 138+140.

<sup>84</sup>ibid.

<sup>85</sup>ibid.

difficulties. These not only hindered them but also hindered them but also made their pioneering work arduous and problematic. The major one was the reluctance of the local people to harken the appeals to attend sermons and to send their children to the mission. Their almost total lack of interest stemmed from several sources. In the foremost was their superstitious fear of Kambui hill. They were largely afraid to venture out there for fear of incurring the wrath of their ancestors as the place had been accursed. The Kikuyu's fear and dread of death and the dead is summed up by Wanyoike in these words:

The Kikuyu dreaded death and nobody would come near a corpse unless he had to dispose of the body of a relative and even then a series of cleansing rites had to be performed by the participant whilst living in strict isolation ...if someone died inside a dwelling house, such a house would usually be burned down, after removing the corpse and the permanent equipment from it. To avoid death inside a house, a hopelessly sick person was removed from and carried away to a shed which was built temporarily for him in the bush. Here some of his relatives would feed him and make a fire.<sup>86</sup>

Others among those who initially went to Kambui perhaps hoped to receive gifts but when this did not materialise, they lost interest. Yet the majority could have shunned the missionaries for lack of interest in the new

religion and the accompanying educational skills.

Eventually but gradually, the Kambui missionaries won over adherents through sheer devotion supplemented and combined with tact and diplomacy. One of their methods was to enlist the assistance of the leading personalities in the locality. Home visitations were also frequent. Bribery in the form of feasts, where people would be persuaded to be more involved in mission functions, were also given at times.<sup>87</sup> But these approaches appear to have achieved only a limited and temporary success.

A few other techniques, however, appeared to be more successful. One was the giving of incentives in form of things like foodstuffs, clothes and utensils, to parents and their children alike.<sup>88</sup> This practice was practised by the majority of the missions immediately they established themselves in the country.<sup>89</sup> Incentives were a means of bribing the parents either to attend sermons or to allow their children to attend school; and for inducing pupils

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O.I., Mrs. Wanjau wa Wanyoike, 27th February, 1987, Komothai.

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Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 27.

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B.G. McIntosh, "The Scottish Mission in Kenya, 1891-1923", Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh, 1969, p. 241.

to attend school regularly. The medication services offered at the Kambui Mission Hospital was another fruitful source of ministry "for when we help people physically we open the way for the Word of God".<sup>90</sup> But perhaps the most successful initial mode of procuring adherents was by the offer of employment. Such employees would gradually be introduced to Christianity and education. It was, therefore, by no coincidence that the first Kambui converts + like Toro wa Kung'u, Kimani wa Mugekenyi, Bubi wa Githuku, Gicuhi wa Kamau and Kanugu wa Munenge + were all mission workers.<sup>91</sup> And it was as a mission employee that Waruhiu first associated himself with Kambui.<sup>92</sup>

### (iii) Waruhiu at the GMS Kambui and Ng'enda Mission Stations

Waruhiu could not have become a mission boy before 1903. Not earlier because immediately the missionaries stationed themselves at Kambui, only adults were mainly employed and enrolled in their classes.<sup>93</sup> This was designed to equip the adults with the necessary skills and tools as soon as would have been practicable to enable them to assist with Gospel propagation among their own people.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>W. P. Knapp to Babcock, Herald of Life, 6th March, 1913, p. 411.

<sup>91</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit. p. 24.

<sup>92</sup>ibid., p. 25.

<sup>93</sup>ibid., p. 24.

<sup>94</sup>ibid.



Boys were subsequently admitted when the plan did not achieve the anticipated results. Although boys could not easily be released owing mainly to their herding duties, a few boys were nevertheless enrolled at Kambui. Most of those surrendered to the missionaries were normally those deemed inexpedient to their parents or relatives. Wanyoike wa Kamawe, for example, was a very disobedient and wayward lad and his being delivered to the mission was tantamount to being discarded away.<sup>95</sup> Others like Waruhiu, Harry Thuku and Wanjau wa Wanyoike were by and large improverished and destitute individuals. This phenomenon was, however, prevalent countrywide as most of the pioneer mission adherents were largely displaced and misplaced persons for one reason or another.<sup>96</sup>

Waruhiu was preceded by Toro at Kambui. Toro had been engaged by the Knapps in 1902 as their house servant before being introduced to Christianity and education.<sup>97</sup> It was Toro who convinced his mother, Njoki, to affiliate herself to Kambui so as to reap the accruing benefits from such an attachment.<sup>98</sup> As a result, Njoki became a muthomi, a convert, though she never acquired literacy skills. She was

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<sup>95</sup>O. I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p.156.

<sup>97</sup>O. I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>98</sup>ibid.; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

shortly thereafter invited to settle on the mission land at a place known as Ngingo+Ya+Thi so that "she could be near enough for the missionaries to be assisting her as she was a widow".<sup>99</sup> Njoki readily accepted the offer because firstly, her son, Toro, was already working and residing on the mission land. Secondly, it was an avenue of escape from the constant exertions of her relatives to go to Murang'a in pursuit of her dead husband's relatives.<sup>100</sup> Njoki subsequently became the recipient of many gifts from the Knapps in the form of foodstuffs, clothes and money in return for her assistance to procure pupils.<sup>101</sup> Rev. Knapp frequently reminded Njoki that she would in future be grateful and appreciative of him for educating her two sons.<sup>102</sup> His was an accurate prediction with regard to Waruhiu as was proved by later events.

It was shortly after his mother had settled on mission land that Waruhiu, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, became a mission employee. Toro must certainly have influenced him to seek for employment with the missionaries. Workers were required at Kambui for a multiplicity of jobs. They included clearing the grounds, cultivation, herding mission livestock,

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<sup>99</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op cit.

<sup>100</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>101</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup>ibid.

housework, drawing water, fetching firewood and undertaking errands. Waruhiu, like the other employees, was introduced to Christianity and the literacy class. This must have been in 1903 because in 1905, when he moved to the Ng'enda out-station, he used to preach to the proselytes there.<sup>103</sup> This implies that he must have been at Kambui for at least a year or so for him to have grasped the basic rudiments of Christianity.

Education was then largely religious as there was neither a government nor a mission policy on education. Since the initiatory class at Kambui was a mixture of both young and old, group tuition was practised "to cater for learners at their different levels of attainment and ability".<sup>104</sup> The lessons were conducted at night from seven to nine o'clock as the learners were occupied with their mission duties during the day. But morning lessons were introduced between six-thirty and ten o'clock when the number of learners increased. Reading skills were based on the phonic drills of the Latin alphabet, based on the Krapf-Rebmann transcriptions of the Bantu languages.<sup>105</sup> Vowel sounds were taught and learnt first followed by the consonants. Each consonant was in turn matched with each vowel to form syllables which in their turn were

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<sup>103</sup>CEA Pamphlet, op. cit., p.4.

<sup>104</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>105</sup>ibid., p. 27.

"married" resulting in word formation. With time, Dr. Henderson compiled the first Kikuyu primer in the region entitled Bubi.<sup>106</sup> Besides reading, the learners were taught arithmetic, English, music and writing, among other subjects.

Since the major preoccupation of the missionaries was evangelization, Religious Education was granted a prominent slot in the time+table. Various interesting and inspiring bible stories, in conjunction with scripture pictures, were frequently narrated to the neophytes to ensure that they grasped and retained their essence.<sup>107</sup> On top of this, they were taught the harmonies of the Moody and Sankey hymns which they seemed to enjoy tremendously "despite often poor translation and rhythms and tonal values which were outlandish to a Kikuyu ear".<sup>108</sup>

On Sundays and on some other evenings, the proselytes would recite the bible stories and sing the gospel hymns in the neighbourhood. But these often fell on deaf ears and they were at times chased away because they were despised and unpopular.<sup>109</sup> They were in particular held in contempt

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<sup>106</sup>ibid., p. 28.

<sup>107</sup>ibid., p. 29.

<sup>108</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>109</sup>O.I. Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

because they never cleansed themselves after coming into contact with the dead at Kambui.<sup>110</sup> Secondly, they were accused of drinking from human skulls, bowls being mistaken for skulls.<sup>111</sup> Even worse, it was rumoured that the converts secretly slaughtered others and sold their blood to the Europeans at Kambui.<sup>112</sup> Wanyoike highlights this allegation with the following incident:

One evening a woman saw Wanyoike walking with his torch and she fled screaming into the valley, calling neighbours to come and witness the instrument that the "readers" used to draw blood even from afar!<sup>113</sup>

Details of Waruhiu's life become more distinct from 1905 onwards. In that year, Waruhiu, Kanyi wa Nyakanai and Nguui accompanied a newly arrived couple from New England, USA, the Rev. and Mrs. Charles (Chaari) Attwood, to Ng'enda to open a mission station there.<sup>114</sup> They went to Ng'enda, which was ten miles to the north of Kambui, as mission workers.<sup>115</sup> Dr. Henderson had earlier in the year failed to

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<sup>110</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>111</sup>ibid.; O.I., Kiguongo wa Thungu, 3rd March, 1987, Kibichoi; Cege wa Gathogo, 4th March, 1987, Kibichoi.

<sup>112</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>113</sup>ibid., p. 30.

<sup>114</sup>PCEA Pamphlet, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>115</sup>ibid.; O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Macpherson, op. cit., p. 87.

found a station there owing to his profession which demanded a lot of travelling about.<sup>116</sup> The site for the mission was donated by Kamau wa Githuku, who later became Waruhiu's in-law. Waruhiu had distinguished himself as a conscientious worker to be accorded the honour of being a co-founder of the Ng'enda Mission Station.

In 1906, the Attwoods went back to America owing to the wife's failing health. They were replaced by Rev. Richard Starr who found six mission adherents at Ng'enda. They were Waruhiu wa Kung'u, Kanyi wa Nyakanai, Mutaru wa Njoga, Ngumba wa Gakibe, Kabui wa Magu and Mukundi wa Kamuyu.<sup>117</sup> In 1907, Waruhiu became a party to the building of the first brick buildings at Ng'enda which included a church and a pastor's house.<sup>118</sup> The converts did all the work pertaining to those buildings, including brick-making under the supervision and direction of Rev. Starr. It was, therefore, at Ng'enda that Waruhiu acquired the art and style of building with bricks which he later in life applied to the building of his own houses.

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<sup>116</sup>PCEA Pamphlet, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>117</sup>ibid.

<sup>118</sup>ibid.

In addition to their mission duties, Waruhiu and the other converts at Ng'enda had to attend classes and proselytize.<sup>119</sup> By 1910, the school at Ng'enda was, in contrast to Kambui, held in the mornings and in the afternoons. The morning session was attended by children of between two and six years. The highest number enrolled at any one time was 56, while daily attendance ranged from 17 to 30.<sup>120</sup> Their teachers were the bright pupils from the afternoon school, like Waruhiu. The afternoon school was for the big boys and the number registered ranged from 15 to 20, while daily attendance varied from 11 to 16.<sup>121</sup> Among the subjects taught this class were reading Kikuyu and Kiswahili, arithmetic, geography, writing and drawing by measurements and free hand.<sup>122</sup>

Waruhiu was initiated, baptised and married while at Ng'enda. In 1906, Waruhiu joined his age-mates at Ruiru and they were together circumcised in the Mukuyu River. According to Kikuyu customs, those initiated in the same year were designated riika or age-group. They were given an all embracing riika name derived from the most important happening

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<sup>119</sup> ibid.

<sup>120</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/2, "Kiambu District Annual and Handing Over Report, 1911".

<sup>121</sup> ibid.

<sup>122</sup> ibid.

during the period. Accordingly, Waruhiu's riika was named Nyarigi after a song known as Nyarigia which was sang during the initiation ceremony. Other contemporaries of Waruhiu initiated into the Nyarigi riika were his future wife, Wagathenge, Mutaru wa Njoga and Wanjau wa Wanyoike.

The initiation rite marked the transition of an individual from childhood and immaturity to adulthood, maturity and into the full membership of the society. The neophytes were instructed in tribal lore such as traditions, taboos, religion, folklore and sex. In the pre-colonial times, the male riika mates had formed an army contingent which, among other functions, had to defend the country and act as the police force until they had graduated into elderhood. The spirit of comradeship among riika mates was, therefore, much more overwhelming and even stronger than that existing between real brothers as "it occasionally even led to a sharing of their wives!"<sup>123</sup> It was in this spirit that Waruhiu, though a convert, always treated and accorded his riika mates the respect they duly deserved, no matter what their physical or social status were.<sup>124</sup>

Waruhiu was the second person to be baptised at Ng'enda

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<sup>123</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>124</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.



in 1909, after Kanyi wa Nyakanai, by Rev. Starr in the River Theta.<sup>125</sup> The first GMS conversions had, however, been formalised in 1906 at Kambui when the first six converts were baptised. The six were Wanyoike wa Kamawe, Gicuhi wa Kamau, and two couples who were Ndaguri and Wanjiku and Mutwanjeru and Nyambura.<sup>126</sup> Baptisms were preceded by a thorough catechism instruction which lasted for at least two years. This was followed by a test which the candidate had to pass as a prerequisite for baptism.<sup>127</sup>

The GMS baptisms were by total immersion in Rivers Mukuyu at Kambui and Theta at Ng'enda. This was in big contrast to those of other missions who, in most cases, just sprinkled water droplets on the candidate's forehead. Those to be baptised waded through the river from the opposite bank to the mission. They were baptized in the mid-river by being fully submerged in the water to symbolise death and resurrection in Christ.<sup>128</sup> They emerged from the river on the mission-land bank where they were welcomed by the missionaries and other converts.

Although Waruhiu unofficially used to refer to himself as

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<sup>125</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>126</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>127</sup>ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 86.

John Waruhiu Kung'u, he was never christened so at baptism. In sharp contrast, once again to the other missions, the GMS did not confer European names at baptism. This doctrine was based on two main grounds. First, total immersion in water was equivalent to the granting of European names since both signified the end of the old life and the beginning of a new one.<sup>129</sup> Secondly, the GMS missionaries taught and predicted that their traditional names were more valuable and that a time would come when foreign names would be discarded away.<sup>130</sup> In spite of these warnings, many GMS converts, like Waruhiu, christened themselves with European names. They were certainly influenced by their counterparts from other missions who might have sounded more Europeanized and westernized by the use of such names. However, a good number of the pioneer GMS adherents like Wanyoike, Toro, Ngumba and Wagathenge never adopted European names throughout their lives.

Waruhiu also met and married his first wife, Wanjiru, while he was still at Ng'enda. He bestowed on her the pet name, Wagathenge, by which she was widely known while she alone in turn addressed him as Waruaro. Wagathenge was the daughter of Wainaina and Nyamweru of Ng'enda. Her mother was a sister

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<sup>129</sup> ibid., p. 90.

<sup>130</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

to Kamau wa Githuku, who had set aside the mission land at Ng'enda. Nyamweru, who performed odd jobs at the mission, occasionally invited the converts to her home where Waruhiu met Wagathenge.<sup>131</sup>

By an extraordinary coincidence, Waruhiu's and Wagathenge's families had almost identical and parallel backgrounds. Njoki and Nyamweru were not the first wives of their husbands and both had been widowed when they were relatively young. In comparison, each was inherited by her husband's son by a previous marriage, Njoki by Njonge and Nyamweru by Githambu.<sup>132</sup> It was an accepted Kikuyu custom for a son to inherit his father's young widow if he left no brothers to do so. However, the marriages broke up and each went their way. Similarly, Njoki and Nyamweru had lived with their brother at one time or another. Njoki had stayed with Mbocha while Nyamweru lived with Mwanja wa Githuku after her disengagement from Githambu, who subsequently married other wives.<sup>133</sup> It was when Nyamweru was dwelling with her brother that Waruhiu became acquainted with her and her daughter, Wagathenge. Unfortunately, Nyamweru had no son. She had five daughters who were Wairimu, Wanjiru (Wagathenge), Wambui,

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<sup>131</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>132</sup>ibid.

<sup>133</sup>ibid.

Mugure and Wamaita.<sup>134</sup>

Njoki on her part had been inherited by Njonge sometimes after the establishment of Kambui. Njonge and his mother, Wanjiru, had arrived at Ruiru soon after the famine was over. On finding Kung'u dead, they settled there, Wanjiru dying soon afterwards. Unlike Nyamweru and Githambu, Njoki and Njoge had four children. They were Kang'ethe, Wanjiru, Ndung'u and Njau.

Njoki and Njonge parted company as they appeared the least suited as life partners due perhaps to the big age difference between them. Njoki's riika was Boro of 1880 while Njonge's was Kamande of 1902. The trend then was for women to be married to older men and not vice versa. Secondly, when Toro and Waruhiu grew up, Njoki no longer needed Njonge, who appeared to be a burden rather than an asset, as she could rely on them for her own maintenance.<sup>135</sup> Thirdly, Njonge was poor and mean. He deprecated the possibility of the little property they had accumulated being used to pay dowry for Njoki's sons. He had in fact waylaid Waruhiu at Ruiru intending, but in vain, to seize the goats he was driving to Ng'enda to pay for his bride-price.<sup>136</sup> Njonge's despicable

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ibid

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O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Simon. K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

behaviour eventually partly paved the way for their divorce. Their divorce, however, took place after Toro's death in 1913. This was because Njoki was convinced that Njonge had poisoned her son, Toro.<sup>137</sup>

Njonge subsequently married two wives, one of whom died and the other left him.<sup>138</sup> Later in life, he was assisted by Waruhiu to marry another wife called Wangechi and they had a son called Kang'ethe.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, Njonge never acquired any land or property and he died a poor man and a muhoi on the land of Mbari ya Gathirimu at Mitahato.

Nevertheless, regardless of Njonge's feeling and attitude, Waruhiu did ultimately get married to Wagathenge. The wedding ceremony was conducted by Rev. Starr at Kambui church.<sup>140</sup> Rev. Knapp was then on his furlough. The wedding appears to have taken place in the later half of 1910 when Waruhiu was about twenty years old. It could not have been earlier because Wanjau, who assisted in the wedding arrangements, had been married on 10th June, 1910.<sup>141</sup> It could not have been later than 1910 because by February 1911, Waruhiu

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<sup>137</sup> ibid.

<sup>138</sup> ibid.

<sup>139</sup> ibid.

<sup>140</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>141</sup> Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 56.

had already left Ng'enda with his wife after briefly staying there with her.<sup>142</sup>

Other weddings had preceded Waruhiu's at Kambui. The first, African Christian wedding had been that of Kimani wa Mugekenyi and Mukami on Christmas eve of 1907.<sup>143</sup> Others like those of Wanyoike and Toro had followed. Those early Christian weddings were in big contrast to modern ones in many ways. The bride and her bridesmaid wore white calico frocks while the bridegroom and his best man wore khaki suit + trousers and jackets.<sup>144</sup> There were no bridal nets and all were normally bare-footed. But according to the standards of the time, they were sophisticated and modern enough considering that the majority of the people went about half-naked and clad in skins.<sup>145</sup>

Wagathenge was not a convert when married as it was almost impossible to get a "mission girl" then. But converts had been advised by their mentors not to mind marrying unbelievers as they could later be converted.<sup>146</sup> Wagathenge removed her traditional attire and make-up, like red ochre, on

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<sup>142</sup>CEA Pamphlet, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>143</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>144</sup>ibid.

<sup>145</sup>ibid., p. 64.

<sup>146</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

the eve of her wedding.<sup>147</sup> She was assisted by Wanjau and Mukami, who washed and clothed her in a dress, in readiness for the wedding. This transformation symbolised her consent and willingness to be converted into a muthomi or Christian. Wagathenge consequently attended bible lessons and was baptized on 23rd November, 1913 by Rev. Knapp and Dr. Henderson in the Mukuyu River.<sup>148</sup> Wagathenge was certainly a solicitous learner considering that it took her about three years to be baptised. This was in contrast to others, like Wanjau, who had been at Kambui much longer. Wanjau, who had been with the Knapps ever since they were at Thimbigua, was only baptised at the same ceremony with Wagathenge. The others baptised with Wagathenge were Miss Alta Knapp, the only child of the Knapps, and five young men.

Waruhiu was shortly after his marriage transferred back to Kambui as a teacher-evangelist possibly because there was not enough room for a married couple at Ng'enda. But early in 1913, tragedy struck and Toro suddenly died of fever on 9th February, 1913. Though the Knapps thrice sent for Dr. Henderson at Ng'enda, he could not immediately avail himself. He too had the fever and by the time he arrived, it was too

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<sup>147</sup>ibid.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>148</sup>Mrs. Myrtle I. Knapp to Babcock, Herald of Life, 22nd January, 1914, pp. 315-316.

late.<sup>149</sup> Toro's death was a shocking blow of great magnitude not only to the Waruhiu's family but also to the entire community and to the missionaries alike.<sup>150</sup>

Toro had been trained by Dr. Henderson as his medical assistant and had manned the Kambui Mission Hospital from 1911 when the doctor moved to Ng'enda.<sup>151</sup> The doctor was only summoned when there was a serious or complicated case. Toro had taken temperatures, dressed ulcers and wounds, performed midwifery duties and had gone wherever the sick needed him, whether by day or night.<sup>152</sup> Besides, Toro had been a devout and committed christian. He never missed any church function and had consistently given a tenth of his income to the church.<sup>153</sup> He had taken the daily service with the sick and had also been in charge of one of the Sunday outstation services.<sup>154</sup> Toro's untimely and unexpected death drew many unbelievers to the church and strengthened the commitment of the Christians in an effort to emulate him.<sup>155</sup> The missionaries, who had greatly loved and relied on Toro, terribly

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<sup>149</sup>ibid., 27th March, 1913, pp. 459-460.

<sup>150</sup>ibid.; W. P. Knapp to Rogers, 15th May, 1913, p. 555.

<sup>151</sup>Mrs. Myrtle I. Knapp to Babcock, Herald of Life, 6th March, 1913, p. 411.

<sup>152</sup>ibid., 27th March, 1913, p. 459.

<sup>153</sup>ibid.

<sup>154</sup>ibid.

<sup>155</sup>ibid.; W. P. Knapp to Rogers, Herald of Life, 15th May, 1913, p. 555.



felt his loss. Mrs. Myrtle Knapp mourned him as follows:

Yesterday we went into the Church... but this time sorrow was written on every face. Tears found their way down every cheek; every voice was choked with sobs. We were gathered to do last service for our beloved medical assistant, good, faithful Toro...His death came to us as a great stroke. We never thought but that he would recover, when suddenly we were face to face with the fact - Toro is dead. Over and over we ask ourselves, How can we do without him? We could have spared any in the Church better than him....We never knew any slipping back, or turning aside in his life...And yet we miss him so!...We feel our loss keenly. The Church will miss his example, his help.<sup>156</sup>

Rev. Knapp on his part lamented the death of Toro in these words:

We have just sustained what to the human, seems a terrible loss in the work. Toro, our medical evangelist, died suddenly, and we not only miss him from the very efficient work which he did in connection with the sick, but the loss of that steady, strong, prayerful life is felt throughout the whole community...There has been real sorrow over his death...<sup>157</sup>

Toro left a young widow of the 1907 Kang'ei riika and three little children of whom only Kang'ethe survived. After

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<sup>156</sup>Mrs. Myrtle I. Knapp to Babcock, Herald of Life, 27th March, 1913, p. 459.

<sup>157</sup>W. P. Knapp to Rogers, Herald of Life, 15th May, 1913, p. 555.

Toro's death, his widow, Ngombeni, ran away to Nairobi and she only returned home when an old woman. The conflicting and demanding pressures of the traditional and western lifestyles were too much for her to bear or to contend with. Neither could Waruhiu inherit her according to the customs as he was already a married Christian nor could she get re-married to a young man who wanted to do so as it was taboo.<sup>158</sup> Her escapade to the capital might have appeared to be the only solution to her dilemma. In so doing, she abandoned her son, Kang'ethe, who became an added burden and responsibility to Waruhiu, who not only had his own family to look after, but also his mother and her children.

As if to compensate for his added family responsibilities, Waruhiu was made the head teacher at Kambui in July 1913.<sup>159</sup> Wanyoike wa Kamawe had been the incumbent of that office from 1910 until July 1913 when he left to open an out-school at Komothai.<sup>160</sup>

As the head teacher, Waruhiu not only had to teach but

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<sup>158</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, 10th April, 1987, Giathieko; Myrtle I. Knapp to Babcock, Herald of Life, 30th November, 1913, pp. 315-316.

<sup>159</sup>Herald of Life, op. cit., 22nd January, 1914, p. 316.

<sup>160</sup>ibid., 5th June, 1913, p. 605; Wanyoike, op. cit., pp. 32+37.

also to supervise and oversee the African teachers and pupils at Kambui. Furthermore, he had to assess their capabilities and suitability as evangelists when they went out to preach in the villages.<sup>161</sup> He had also, as a church elder, to occasionally preach in the church and assist with seating arrangements on Sundays and during other religious functions.<sup>162</sup>

School was still held in the mornings and in the evenings. The morning session commenced at six+thirty with a thirty+minute morning service of scripture reading, hymns and prayers. English, Kiswahili, Kikuyu, Arithmetic and Religious Education were among the subjects taught. The basic text books were, for Kiswahili, Masomo Mepesi, obtained from the coast; Junior Arithmetic for number work; and American and West African Primers and Readers for English.<sup>163</sup> The extra-curricula activities included sewing for women, football, hygienic matters and agriculture. By 1917/1918, there were seven African teachers and 150 pupils at Kambui.<sup>164</sup> The lower classes were normally assigned to the African teachers while the missionaries largely concentrated on the upper ones.

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<sup>161</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>162</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

<sup>163</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>164</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/11, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1917-1918".

The classes were still a mixture of both young and old. In 1913, Rev. Knapp described their manner of dressing as follows:

...such a curiously arrayed company of students, some in old cast off white men's clothes, and some in blankets, some again in just a straight piece of cotton cloth; all with earnest, eager faces, bent on one object, to learn to read.<sup>165</sup>

Most of those taught by Waruhiu at Kambui ended up being teachers, clerks or church ministers. Among them were Ruhui wa Ngumba, Njoroge wa Kimemia, Ngaii wa Kimama, Thangichu Wamutitu, Wathua wa Ngotho, Ngamau wa Kaigua and Mwaura wa Gikaru.<sup>166</sup>

Apart from his mission duties, Waruhiu, accompanied by Thangichu Wamutitu and others, occasionally undertook business trips to Ukambani where they bought goats and later sold them at a profit in Kikuyuland.<sup>167</sup> But before the end of 1915, Waruhiu was nearly grounded by elephantiasis. A serious and severe elephantoid condition on his left leg almost made it unbearable and impossible for him to walk.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>"Letter from Brother Knapp", Herald of Life, 6th March, 1913, p. 411.

<sup>166</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>167</sup>Personal Communication, Ng'ang'a wa Thangichu, 10th April, 1987, Ikinu.

<sup>168</sup>Mrs. Myrtle I. Knapp to the Herald of Life Friends, Herald of Life, 27th April, 1916, pp. 523+524.

Waruhiu had contracted elephantiasis in his childhood and by 1915, his leg "had become so large it was painful to get about with it".<sup>169</sup> The leg was not only a burden to him but it also threatened to cripple and incapacitate him. The leg greatly curbed and restricted his mobility so much so that he was often forced to ride the Knapp's mule to enable him move about.<sup>170</sup> Waruhiu was finally advised by a CSM woman convert from Thogoto to seek for medical assistance from the CSM Kikuyu Hospital.<sup>171</sup> He was as a result admitted there in December 1915 and his leg was operated on by Dr. John Arthur. Waruhiu took "quite as much interest in the gradual diminution of his leg as did the doctor".<sup>172</sup>

Waruhiu returned to a jubilant and rousing welcome at Kambui on 23rd February, 1916, after three months' hospitalisation.<sup>173</sup> He was much improved and the improvement proved to be permanent though he was advised to always wear shoes.<sup>174</sup> Waruhiu never forgot the wonders and advantages of western medicine. This partly explains why he earnestly supported the provision of medical facilities throughout the

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<sup>169</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>170</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, *op. cit.*

<sup>171</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, *op. cit.*

<sup>172</sup>Kikuyu News, a CSM Publication, 1916, p. 7.

<sup>173</sup>Herald of Life, *op. cit.*, 27th April, 1916, p. 524.

<sup>174</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, *op. cit.*; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, 5th and 13th March, 1987, Komothai.

district. Of much more significance, Waruhiu's life was never the same again. His restored health provided him with an impetus which propelled him on the road to power. From 1916 onwards, he began to confidently and firmly march on this road until he attained power, six years later, in 1922.

CHAPTER FOUR

FATEFUL LANDMARKS TO CHIEFTAINSHIP

The period between 1916 and 1922 was a fundamental and momentous one in the life of Waruhiu. His star began to rise and to shine with a brilliance that would not wane until his death. It was also during this time that Waruhiu began to participate and to be involved in the affairs and the welfare of the district. Much more crucial, the period marked Waruhiu's transition from a humble mission worker to a high-profile civil servant. Waruhiu gradually began to associate and collaborate with the District and Provincial Administrations during this period and this eventually culminated in his being made chief.

Such tremendous leaps and bounds would have been impossible had his health and mobility not been restored. Firstly, Waruhiu's cure, which seemed miraculous, attracted many people to the church.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Waruhiu became an accomplished and outstanding teacher-evangelist because people were no longer scared of him.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, he regained his self-confidence and self-esteem which enhanced his

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<sup>1</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

image and credibility as a leader.

As if to demonstrate that he had completely recuperated, Waruhiu joined the Kikuyu Missions Volunteers (hereafter KMV) Corps in 1917 and actively assisted in the prosecution of the War against the Germans in the then German East Africa (Tanzania).

(i) The Kikuyu Missions Volunteers

The KMV, which was formed in June 1917, was the brainchild of Dr. John Arthur of the CSM, Kikuyu. The KMV, which was attached to the Carrier Corps supportive military arm, was formed in a bid to forestall and counteract compulsory and forcible recruitment of African Christians into the Carrier Corps. This followed a government Compulsory Service Order early in 1917 to recruit 40,000 men for the Carrier Corps for military service in German East Africa.<sup>3</sup> The call for the Carrier Corps had so depopulated Kiambu District of male population that by April 1917, it was estimated that only 300 more men could be obtained.<sup>4</sup> Such a situation had arisen not only because of the recruitment but also owing to adverse, but true, rumours about the high mortality rate at the war

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<sup>3</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/10, op. cit.



front.<sup>5</sup> As a result, many able-bodied men had migrated to the Rift Valley and elsewhere in an attempt to circumvent and elude recruitment.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, from April to July 1917, "every effort was made to secure every available man for military service".<sup>7</sup> It appeared that not even the African Christians could have escaped the conscription. The missionaries were particularly disturbed and perturbed by the mode of recruitment and the effect it would have on their converts. The brutal, ruthless and dehumanizing procedure of recruitment is described in the following words by Macpherson:

The normal method...was...to enclose with a strong barbed wire a space capable of containing about 5,000 men...Look-outs were posted around the perimeter which was patrolled by armed askari...the exit roads from the location were blocked and chiefs instructed to bring in all the males over the age of 18 for medical inspection...those fit for the Carrier Corps (were) marched under escort to the assembly camp in Nairobi ...for dispatch to Mombasa and thence by sea to Dar-es-Salaam.<sup>8</sup>

Recruitment into the KMV was voluntary as conscientious objectors were exempted. The idea of a KMV battalion was so popular that within ten days of it being conceived, about 1,800 African Christians from all over the country had converged and assembled at Kikuyu.<sup>9</sup> The Christian Corps were, as a result,

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<sup>5</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/11, op. cit.; Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>6</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/11, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>9</sup>ibid.

designated the Kikuyu Missions Volunteers because their initial base was at Kikuyu. The KMV consisted of Africans from many tribes like the Kikuyu, the Luo, the Meru, the Akamba and the Abaluyia. The KMV was commanded by Dr. Arthur, who was also its chief physician, and officered by other missionaries. The majority of the volunteers served in German East Africa where they performed diverse and essential supportive military duties. They had to carry the luggage for the troops, keep the camps clean, carry out chaplaincy duties, care for the sick, dispose of the dead, cook, wash and perform general military duties.

Waruhiu's duties were those of a dresser as he had been trained as a hospital assistant following his brother's death in 1913.<sup>10</sup> He was stationed at a military camp at Mazaras, along the Kenyan coast, where he participated in the caring for the sick and the wounded soldiers.<sup>11</sup>

By January 1918 when the KMV was disbanded, the casualty rate was only about three per cent "despite heavy attacks of malaria and dysentery".<sup>12</sup> The low mortality rate, which was in contrast to the other military units where the death toll

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<sup>10</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 68.

was very high, was mainly due to good medical care from the missionaries.<sup>13</sup>

Waruhiu was soon after his return from the War suspended from the church and his job because of having an affair with a mission girl.<sup>14</sup> This happened when the Knapps were on their furlough, having left in August 1917 to return in May 1919. The incident was rather an unfortunate and a pitiable one. Waruhiu was not only one of the two leading GMS converts but also the most stalwart Christian in the GMS Church.<sup>14</sup> He had made a reputation for himself by espousing the GMS fundamentalist view of Christianity. On one occasion, he went into a village where a witch-doctor was prophesying, called on him to stop, and then preached to the assembled people.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Waruhiu had turned down high paying clerical jobs elsewhere in order to stay with the mission.<sup>17</sup> His devotion to the new Faith is highlighted and manifested in his own words when he wrote:

Will you please remember to buy for me  
a good Holy Bible...please keep your  
prayer for me that God bless me to visit  
among our people in their villages, and  
help me that I may have wisdom to lead

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ibid., p. 69.

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O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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Tignor, op. cit., p. 228.

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Richard Starr to Anderson, November 1, 1913, Gospel Message, Vol. 12, September, 1910, pp. 5-6, as quoted by Tignor, op. cit., p. 228.

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Tignor, op. cit., p. 228.

them to know Jesus' name, our Saviour.  
And may the Lord keep me a good warrior  
for him.<sup>18</sup>

Waruhiu was thereafter employed for a short spell as a farm clerk by Mrs. Gailey Roberts of Ruiru, locally known as Nyagicira.<sup>19</sup> But he subsequently never returned to teach at Kambui. By the time he was rehabilitated and re-admitted to full Church membership and fellowship, other developments had already taken place in 1919.

The year 1919 was in essence the beginning of Waruhiu's ascendancy to power and prestige. First, Waruhiu was appointed to the Kiambu kiama or local native court, which exercised its jurisdiction in what came to be known as Githunguri Division. Secondly, Waruhiu became a founder member of the Kikuyu Association, (hereafter the KA), which was the first African political organisation in the Protectorate. Thirdly, Waruhiu became a full-time clerk to Chief Waweru wa Kanja of Ruiru after he had acted as a voluntary part-time clerk for a number of years.

(ii) Appointment of Waruhiu to the Kiambu Kiama

Waruhiu was among the first four Christian converts in

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<sup>18</sup>Waruhiu to W.P. Knapp, March 25, 1918, Herald of Life, 11th July, 1918, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

the district to be made a kiama elder in March 1919. This followed a protracted tussle between the converts, the chiefs and their hangers-on who had hitherto dominated the ciama. The strife had started immediately the ciama were revived in 1912. They had been proscribed at the turn of the century to prevent them from becoming rival and competing centres of power against the new regime.

The ciama were revived on several grounds. First, as the DC , G.A. Northcote, put it:

...to give the people the right to settle their own differences in their own way, to disturb their own methods as little as possible, but at the same time to improve and modify the existing ways and above all to endeavour to ensure justice.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, the European magistrates were either ignorant of or they lacked knowledge of the Kikuyu customary law. They were, therefore, the least suited to judge cases in the realms of land, marriage, divorce, inheritance and other related issues.<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, the magistrates had neither the time nor patience for the often long+drawn out customary law cases.<sup>22</sup>

The reconstituted ciama, however, differed remarkably

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<sup>20</sup>KNA+PC/CP. 15/1/2, "Provincial Political Record Book, 1927+1929".

<sup>21</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup>ibid.

from their pre-colonial counterparts. Whereas the pre-colonial ciama were principally courts of arbitration, the colonial ciama were made courts of judgement and their powers and jurisdiction were increased and extended. Unlike their predecessors, the new ciama were confined to specified geographical areas. Moreover, unlike in the past when the litigants had chosen their respective arbitration elders, this was done by the government in the reconstituted ciama. Finally, a system of appeals, which was non-existent in the former ciama, was instituted in the latter ones. This was first to the DO, the DC and finally to the PC.

No sooner had the ciama been revived than a wrangle erupted between them and the converts. The Christians claimed that they were being discriminated against and thus denied justice by the ciama because of their beliefs.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, the government convened a meeting at Kiambu on 25th and 26th April, 1912 in an endeavour to resolve the issue, among other issues, involving the converts and the ciama. The spokesman of the Christians was Philip Karanja. Although the converts expressed a willingness to be subject to the jurisdiction of the ciama, they, however, objected to their being obliged to partake the traditional oaths and

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<sup>23</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/3/4, op. cit.

sacrifices. This was solved by exempting them from such practices and rituals.<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding this superficial settlement, the underlying issues, however, continued to simmer for a number of years. In 1916+17, for example, 25 cases involving the converts were heard in appeal by the administration but it was proved that the alleged unfair treatment was in the main baseless.<sup>25</sup> It was, however, not until 1919 when a settlement was made to the delight and satisfaction of the converts. This was at a meeting held at Kabete in March 1919 and presided over by John Ainsworth, the Chief Native Commissioner, (hereafter the CNC). Those in attendance included Waruhiu and the representatives of the two warring sides. Koinange wa Mbiyu was the spokesman of the Christians on that occasion. The anti-Christian bias of the ciama was finally resolved by the appointment of four converts to the ciama to represent and safeguard the interests of the Christians. Waruhiu became the GMS representative; Philip Karanja for the CSM converts; while Koinange wa Mbiyu and Josiah Njonjo represented the interests of the Church Missionary Society (hereafter the

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<sup>24</sup>ibid.

<sup>25</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/10, op. cit.

CMS) converts.<sup>26</sup> Thus began Waruhiu's involvement in the ciama and it was while returning from the business of a kiama that he was killed in 1952.

Of the four converts, Koinange was the oldest and the only illiterate one, albeit he could sign his name. Though Koinange was of the Kienjeku riika of 1898, he fixed his date of birth at around 1870.<sup>27</sup> The 1870 date is doubtful since it was extremely rare for someone in Kiambu to be initiated when over twenty years old. In 1895, Koinange, as a porter, had ferried the IBEAC goods to Chimoni (Eldama Ravine) while in 1902 he was Mrs. Watson's cook at the CSM, Kikuyu.<sup>28</sup> In 1905 Koinange was made an overseer on T.N. Krieger's farm at Thimbigua and also an unofficial government headman with orders to assist the settlers who were flocking into the area.<sup>29</sup> In 1908, Koinange replaced his aged father as ungazetted chief of his locality.<sup>30</sup> He was converted by Canon Leakey, who was a great friend of his, sometimes before 1910 and he had, as a consequence, donated land for an out-station. His Mbari ya Njunu had previously owned extensive lands stretching from Kiambu to Limuru, most of which was alienated for white

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<sup>26</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/12, "Kiambu District and Ukamba Province Annual Reports, 1918-1919".

<sup>27</sup>KNA+PC/CP.2/1/13, "Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1944+1950".

<sup>28</sup>KLC, Vol.7, Koinange's Memorandum; KLC, Vol.4, James Macqueen's Evidence.

<sup>29</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>30</sup>ibid.



settlement.<sup>31</sup> Koinange himself was forcibly evicted from his land in 1914 and he settled on a land he had bought nearby.<sup>32</sup> This partly explains why Koinange was, throughout his life, obsessed with fighting for and championing Kikuyu land rights. In 1914, the DC, G.A. Northcote, had predicted the emergence of Koinange as a power to reckon with when he wrote in his 1914+1915 Annual Report:

A remarkable character is coming to the fore in the person of Koinange wa Mbio. He has been foremost in the suppressing of drinking by warriors: has bought a plough... recently he bought some barbed wire for a night paddock for his cattle. Alone among the Kikuyu of this district he subscribed to the local War Fund... he recently offered 30 loads of potatoes... More will be heard of him in the future. He appears to have the confidence of the Kikuyu.<sup>33</sup>

Philip Karanja was next to Koinange in seniority as he was of the Kamande riika of 1902. His father was Muriu wa Wambaa of Mbari ya Mutego who had been an elephant hunter and a trader in tusks in the pre-colonial times.<sup>34</sup> Karanja was baptized in 1907 by Clement Scott of the CSM Kikuyu and by the time he graduated from the mission, he spoke and wrote fluent English. He was, therefore, an ideal Secretary for the KA when it was formed. After 1912, Karanja became Kinyanjui wa

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<sup>31</sup> KLC, Vol.7, Koinange's Memorandum.

<sup>32</sup> Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/1/7, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 34.

Gathirimu's part-time clerk and by 1914, he was already a senior teacher in the CSM out-schools. During the first few years of the War, Karanja worked for a white settler at Thika before he joined KMV in June 1917 where he was made a commander of 300 men.<sup>35</sup> This explains why Karanja often complained that they had been denied rewards, unlike the white soldiers, for the services they had rendered during the war.<sup>36</sup> Karanja, a CSM elder, continued to live on mission land for many years even after he was made the chief of the area.

Josiah Njonjo was the youngest among the four. His riika was Matiba or Kabao of 1908. His father and relatives had worked as porters for the British between Fort Smith and Eldama Ravine.<sup>37</sup> He had joined CMS, Kabete, in 1904 and was baptized in 1908 by Canon Leakey. From 1911 to 1914, Njonjo was an employee of The Leader of British East Africa, a Nairobi-based settler newspaper, where Harry Thuku found him when he, too, was employed by the newspaper. In 1914, Njonjo became a clerk in the DC's office, Ngong, but he joined the army's Supply and Intelligence Department when the War broke out.<sup>38</sup> Njonjo was an ambitious man who thereafter rose to be

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<sup>35</sup>KLC, Vol. 7, Philip Karanja's Memorandum.

<sup>36</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/2, "Chiefs and Headmen: Establishment and Terms of Service, 1920-1941".

<sup>37</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>38</sup>ibid.

a divisional chief.

(iii) The Formation of the Kikuyu Association

Waruhiu, Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo were subsequently amongst the founding members of the KA in 1919. The KA was formed mainly through the efforts and initiative of Koinange. He was advised by Canon Leakey that the government would be more receptive and responsive to an association rather than to an individual.<sup>39</sup>

The KA, as its founders put it, was specifically formed "for the watching of our (land) interests".<sup>40</sup> Its formation followed the publication of the Land Settlement Report in early 1919. The Report had recommended definite expropriation of all the land lying alongside the railway line between Nairobi and Limuru.<sup>41</sup> The KA was launched at a meeting held at Paramount Chief Kinyanjui's home at Riruta and attended by all Kiambu chiefs, ciama elders, missionaries and other leading personalities from the district. Koinange and Karanja were appointed the association's President and Secretary

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<sup>39</sup>O.I., James Njoroge Koinange, 16th June, 1987, Karuri.

<sup>40</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/3/19, "Political Record Book Part I: East African Commission, 1924".

<sup>41</sup>ibid.; KNA+DC/KBU/1/12, op. cit.

respectively, positions that they held throughout the existence of the organisation. At its peak, the KA had a membership of about 200.<sup>42</sup>

The first KA meeting with the government was held on 3rd June, 1920 at Kiambu. The government representatives led by the CNC, John Ainsworth, put forward the view that "all the land belonged to God, and after him to the Government and that there was no individual ownership among the Kikuyu".<sup>43</sup> Paramount Chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu supported this proposal which caused a general uproar among the Kikuyu present.<sup>44</sup> In later years, the KA embraced and voiced other Kikuyu grievances which are fully discussed in Chapter Six. Although the KA continued to exist for many years, its prime movers were, however, Koinange, Waruhiu, Karanja and Njonjo who "remained the nucleus of the association throughout its existence".<sup>45</sup>

Waruhiu, and his three fellow converts, later used the KA as a forum and a spring board to power. This is highlighted by a letter to the CNC dated 9th August, 1920. The letter

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<sup>42</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>43</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/3/19, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup>ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 149.

requested that Waruhiu, Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo be gazetted as chiefs on three grounds. The first one was that they had been chosen by the Kikuyu people to be their chiefs. This, of course, meant the Kikuyu converts rather than all the Kikuyu. Secondly, that they had been advised by Canon Leakey that it was a government requirement that all chiefs should be gazetted. Thirdly, they wanted to be gazetted immediately because they were afraid that government officials, who knew the four converts, might be replaced by others who knew nothing about them. They next demanded badges or any other emblem to display as a sign of their status as chiefs. Finally, the letter, signed by Philip Karanja in his capacity as the association's Secretary, also demanded medals and gratuity, like the white soldiers, for the services they had rendered during the First World War.<sup>46</sup>

As it was the PC's prerogative to appoint chiefs, the CNC duly forwarded their letter to him. The PC in turn forwarded it to the Kiambu DC, J.G. Campbell, as the KA had not followed the administrative hierarchy. The PC wondered, in a covering letter, what official recognition the four converts sought as he understood it to mean that they had merely been chosen by certain missionary converts as persons whom they thought could

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<sup>46</sup>Kikuyu Association to the CNC, 9th August, 1920,  
KNA-DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

represent their views effectively.<sup>47</sup> The DC replied that:

Obviously these four, being considerably more enlightened and progressive than many so called chiefs are frequently consulted by me in matters of general interest, more especially concerning Christian interests.<sup>48</sup>

Thereafter, the PC in his reply to the KA regretted that the names of the four converts could not be published in the official gazette as it was only those appointed chiefs of locations who could thus be gazetted.<sup>49</sup> He also informed them that the government was not in a position to issue medals and gratuities to everybody who helped during the war. He, however, gave them a ray of hope when he wrote that he and the DC would recognize them "as the individuals who could be trusted to represent the views of the converts".<sup>50</sup>

The PC's reply made two points very clear to Waruhiu. To be appointed chief, he had to have a location of his own and that the administration was neither ready nor prepared to create one for him. Waruhiu also realised that if he was ever to become chief, then Ruiru would be his location. But the Ruiru post was not vacant because it was occupied by Chief Waweru wa Kanja. Waruhiu, therefore, set about to clandestinely

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<sup>47</sup>PC to DC, 11th August, 1920, DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup>DC to PC, 14th August, 1920, DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup>PC to Kikuyu Association, 18th August, 1920, DC/KBU/11/2,

op. cit.

<sup>50</sup>ibid.

work for Waweru's downfall so that he could step into his shoes.

(iv) The Quest for Power

Waruhiu used his position as Waweru's clerk to discreetly undermine him. As Waweru's clerk, Waruhiu had to deal with correspondence between the Chief and the administration and also act as his interpreter in the presence of his official superiors. Thirdly, Waruhiu also assisted Waweru in the administrative functions expected of chiefs then which, by and large, involved the keeping of law and order within the location. In other words, Waruhiu was Chief Waweru's personal assistant and he acted accordingly. Waruhiu, being a perspicacious and an astute person, easily exploited the opportunities that came his way in his bid to capture the Ruiru chieftainship. Unknowingly and unsuspectingly, Chief Waweru played into Waruhiu's hands, since he never suspected foul play or double-dealing. Waweru undoubtedly trusted Waruhiu because he was his nephew. Waruhiu's grandfather on his maternal side was a brother to Waweru's father. Thus, Waweru never realized what was happening until it was too late. Waruhiu, who knew Waweru's weaknesses and shortcomings, greatly capitalized and exploited them to the full.

Chief Waweru wa Kanja of Ruiru, who belonged to the Mburu riika of 1887, had been appointed chief in 1903 by J.W.T. McClellan. His elder brother, Kamau wa Kanja, who was the most influential muthamaki, leader, in the locality, was not made chief as he was very old then.<sup>51</sup> Waweru had originally been opposed to the settlers in the region but he had thereafter resignedly and reluctantly accepted that they were there to stay.<sup>52</sup> From 1913 onwards, Waweru's record began to have adverse and ruinous remarks about his inefficiency and incompetency as a chief. In 1916, for example, Waweru was forced to deposit 50 rupees with the DC as security for better work in the recruitment of Carrier Corps.<sup>53</sup> By 1918, Waweru was not only regarded as the weakest chief in the district but also as a heavy drinker.<sup>54</sup>

Waruhiu greatly capitalized on Waweru's addiction to liquor. When the DC wrote that he would be visiting Waweru, Waruhiu would very often withhold the information and when the DC arrived, he would find Waweru away on his drinking sprees.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, when Waweru was summoned to appear before the DC, Waruhiu would instead go to Kiambu and report that Waweru had sent him since he was very drunk. Chief Waweru

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51  
KNA-DC/KBU/3/25, op. cit.

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ibid.

53  
KNA-DC/KBU/1/9/. op. cit.

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KNA-DC/KBU/3/25 op. cit.

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O.I., Kiguongo wa Thungu, 3rd March, 1987, Kibichoii.



would never exonerate himself in the presence of the white man. Waruhiu, being his interpreter, would twist the information to his own advantage and to the furtherance of his political ambitions.<sup>56</sup> Such a conduct of the interpreters is corroborated by Muriuki who described them thus:

The interpreter...could instigate the sacking of a chief quite easily. Even if there was a serious problem that needed the attention of the DC; he never came to know about it as the Chief dared not approach him directly. Whether or not the matter was brought to his attention depended on the whims of his interpreter.<sup>57</sup>

Another opportunity to discredit and undermine Waweru arose when plague struck the district in 1921. There was a big rat-killing campaign and chiefs had to take the tails to the DC for statistical purposes. Waruhiu ingratiated and endeared himself to the authorities by cycling to and from Kiambu with the tails. He claimed and took full credit for them by alleging that it was mainly through his own stamina that the rats had been killed.<sup>58</sup> This partly explains why the DC was infuriated by the apparent slackness and

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I., Kiambuthi wa Kibiru, 10th March, 1987, Kigumo; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

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Muriuki, "KHT", op. cit., pp. 304-305.

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O.I., Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, 12th March, 1987, Ruiru; Thuku, op. cit., p. 28.

indifference on the chiefs' part during the campaign when he wrote:

There was a very large number of deaths and the Headmen did practically nothing to assist Government... Two of the chiefs were fined... for failing to report the outbreaks in their Reserves.<sup>59</sup>

Chief Waweru's reactionary nature also augmented Waruhiu's image as a worthwhile successor of his. Waweru had refused to send his sons to school though he had been asked to do so since 1909. His reactionary attitude was illustrated by the death of his first born son, Manjai, when he was about ten years old, of plague. His life could have been saved if his father had not spent two precious weeks with the medicinemen. Manjai was finally taken to hospital when the Knapps promised not to bury him in case he died.<sup>60</sup> Despite concerted efforts to save his life, he died two weeks later. His father's lack of faith in European medicine is expressed in the following words by Mrs. Myrtle I. Knapp:

His people came twice to take him out into the bush to die. They thought he was dying. He had such a fear of the bush and the hyenas. He would say when he saw his people and knew for what they had come: "Bwana, put them out. Send them away. Don't let me be torn in pieces by the hyenas."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.

<sup>60</sup>Mrs. Myrtle I. Knapp to Babcock, Herald of Life, 31st July, 1913, pp. 731+732.

<sup>61</sup>ibid.

Before the end of 1921, Waruhiu had convinced the administration, partly through his machinations and partly through his inborn leadership attributes, that he was the most suitable person to occupy the Ruiru chieftaincy. The fortunes of his three colleagues were also on the upward swing and before the end of 1921, the three had been made chiefs. Philip Karanja was the first to be appointed chief of Dagoretti Location on 1st September, 1921. He replaced Kioi wa Nagi who resigned in protest after losing a land case in the Supreme Court. He was followed by Koinange on 1st November, 1921. Koinange's Upper Kiambu (Kiambaa) Location was hived off from Chief Mararo wa Ngururu's Kiambu Location. Similarly, Njonjo's Kabete Location, which he took over on 1st December, 1921, was formerly a part of Kinyanjui's Riruta Location.<sup>62</sup> Waruhiu would have definitely taken over Ruiru Location from Waweru wa Kanja before the end of 1921 if an unexpected and a disarming controversy against him being made chief had not erupted.

(v) The Struggle for Power Against Mbari ya Gathirimu

The originators of this controversy that festered for several months was the Mbari ya Gathirimu sub-clan. The wrangle had its beginning at a baraza, meeting, held at Nyaga

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<sup>62</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, "Chiefs' Character Book, 1922+1952".

in Ruiru which was attended by the DC and the leading elders from the location. No sooner had it been announced that Waruhiu would be replacing Waweru as chief of the location than there was a general uproar from the Mbari ya Gathirimu elders.<sup>63</sup> The meeting ended prematurely and in chaos. Mbari ya Gathirimu vehemently objected to Waruhiu being made their chief on several grounds. First, they considered it an insult and a ridicule for them to be ruled by the son of their daughter, as they referred to Waruhiu.<sup>64</sup> Secondly, they thought it disgraceful and odd to be placed under such a poor and landless person like Waruhiu was then.<sup>65</sup> Thirdly, they argued that they had their own more deserving and capable sons to rule over them.

Surprisingly, the DC, J.G. Campbell, was taken aback by the pandemonium because he did nothing to contain it. The vacillation to depose Waweru and install Waruhiu provided Mbari ya Gathirimu with an opportunity to try to reverse the situation to their own advantage. They first enlisted the support and the assistance of Paramount Chief

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<sup>63</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup>O.I., Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>65</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.

Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, who had been adopted into the sub-clan during the pre-colonial times.<sup>66</sup> Although Kinyanjui thereupon supported and recommended Makimei wa Mugwe's claim to the chieftaincy, this was not to be. Many people in Ruiru, the converts and other mbari in particular, objected to Makimei on the grounds that he was greedy and a self-seeker.<sup>67</sup> Moreover and in contrast to Waruhiu, Makimei was illiterate and a traditionalist and this was against the government's policy and determination to stop the appointment of such chiefs if it could help it. Mbari ya Gathirimu, who realized that Makimei was turned down because he was illiterate, then saw no reason why one of their educated sons, Harry Thuku in particular, should not be made their chief.<sup>68</sup>

Mbari ya Gathirimu spent and devoted much time, money and energy in an endeavour to fulfill their desire. The feud threatened to become a national issue when Harry Thuku, in an attempt to secure Ruiru Location for himself, aired Mbari ya Gathirimu's grievances against the government and Waruhiu in the Tangazo, an East African Association's (hereafter the EAA) publication.<sup>69</sup> Some members of Mbari ya Gathirimu went to

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<sup>66</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup>O.I., Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.; King, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>69</sup>King, op. cit., p. 167.

the extent of threatening Waruhiu's supporters with the gitugi, a forked stake, for supporting banana trees.<sup>70</sup> It was believed that if a gitugi was broken and deposited outside somebody's house, it amounted to a curse which could culminate in barrenness, illness or death. In conjunction with these acts, George Mugekenyi and others wrote to the PC, Nyeri, on behalf of Mbari ya Gathirimu, on 14th December, 1921, outlining Mbari ya Gathirimu's case against Waruhiu.<sup>71</sup> As the letter was not heeded, Mbari ya Gathirimu consequently contributed 2,000 rupees for engaging a lawyer to sue the government.<sup>72</sup> But this never took place because Waweru had neither been deposed nor had Waruhiu been imposed on them. And neither could they have emerged victorious if they had gone to court because the government had the final say in the appointment of chiefs.

Harry Thuku, too, could not be made chief because of his then ongoing fiery campaigns against the government. Thuku had been radicalised in mid-1921 when he was about 26 years old. He was born in 1895 and was initiated in 1908 into the Matiba riika. He had joined and left Kambui Mission in 1907 and in

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<sup>70</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup>King, op. cit., p. 167; Thuku, op. cit., pp. 28+29.

<sup>72</sup>ibid.

1911 respectively. He was employed by the Standard Bank of South Africa in 1911 as a messenger /cleaner but he had soon afterwards ended up in jail for two years for forging a cheque. After leaving prison in 1913, he worked for a while as a hut-counter in Turkana and West Pokot Districts. Between 1914 and 1917, Thuku worked for the Leader of British East Africa newspaper in Nairobi as a compositor and a printer. In 1918, he was engaged as a telephone operator in the Treasury Department after he had resigned from the newspaper. It was when he was working with the Treasury that Thuku became involved in militant politics which culminated in his being sacked by the government in 1921.<sup>73</sup>

In June 1921, Thuku formed the Young Kikuyu Association, modelled after the Young Baganda Association. But in July, the name was changed to the East African Association in an effort to make it a national party. The association was formed in a response to the settlers' threat to slash African wages by one-third.<sup>74</sup>

Thuku's problems started in July 1921 when he judiciously hijacked and dispatched by telegram a KA memorandum direct to the Colonial Office, London. Thuku had been asked by

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<sup>73</sup>Thuku, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

<sup>74</sup>ibid., p. 20.

Kinyanjui to read the petition on behalf of the KA at a meeting held with government officials at Dagoretti on 24th June, 1921.<sup>75</sup>

The leaders of the KA were furious with Thuku because "he had stolen their thunder and compromised their position with the government in Nairobi as well".<sup>76</sup> The government, on its part, was incensed by Thuku's audacity to send the telegram attacking the government through the Treasury's post office box number 65. The Europeans in general were angry with the clause in the telegram which said that "next to missionaries Indians were our best friends".<sup>77</sup> This declaration came at an unfortunate time, when there was a fierce struggle for the supremacy of Kenya going on between the two immigrant races. The Europeans wanted further Indian immigrations restricted, while their rivals wanted the White Highlands opened to Indian settlement. The product of this struggle was the Devonshire White Paper of 1923 which was in essence a European victory over the Indians.<sup>78</sup>

On 25th July, 1921, Paramount Chief Kinyanjui convened a

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<sup>75</sup>*ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup>Clough, 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>77</sup>Thuku, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>78</sup>V. Harlow, E. M. Chilver and A. Smith, eds., History of East Africa, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 291-299.



meeting of all Kikuyu chiefs at Thika to condemn Thuku's telegram. Thuku, who was present, was not repentant but he instead went on the offensive against the chiefs.<sup>79</sup> Thereafter, Thuku, with George Mugekenyi and Waiganjo wa Ndotono among others, embarked on his fiery campaigns throughout Kikuyuland. Thuku not only made vituperous attacks on the chiefs but also sweeping condemnation statements against the government in various fields such as those of taxation, forced labour and the kipande (registration) system.<sup>80</sup>

While the crisis between Waruhiu and Mbari ya Gathirimu was still simmering, Waruhiu attended a meeting at Ng'enda on 13th February, 1922. It was convened in an attempt to reconcile Thuku and the KA but nothing was achieved as "bitter argument broke out immediately and the meeting broke up in mutual enmity".<sup>81</sup> Following this meeting, most of the KA members, Waruhiu included, plus some Murang'a chiefs submitted depositions to the government asking for Thuku to be deported.<sup>82</sup> The depositions were supplemented and strengthened by affidavits from Canon Leakey, Rev. W.P. Knapp, Rev. A.W. McGregor of CMS, Weithaga, and other Europeans who all

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<sup>79</sup>Thuku, op. cit., pp. 26+27.

<sup>80</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., pp. 166+69.

<sup>81</sup>ibid., pp. 152+53.

<sup>82</sup>ibid., p. 171.

asked for Thuku's removal.<sup>83</sup>

Their request was granted on 14th March, 1922 when Thuku was arrested. A strike, involving about 2,000 workers, erupted on the following day in front of the Nairobi Central Police Station, where Thuku was being held. When the unruly crowd refused to disperse, the police opened fire killing about 50 people and wounding many more.<sup>84</sup> This unprecedented outcome finally forced the government to act. Thuku, Mugekenyi and Waiganjo were accordingly detained under the Removal of Natives Ordinance of 1909 and deported to the Coast.<sup>85</sup>

It was only after Thuku and his lieutenants had been deported that the government stirred and reasserted its authority and prestige in Ruiru Location. Consequently, Waweru wa Kanja was deposed and Waruhiu was appointed chief of Ruiru Location with effect from 1st April, 1922.<sup>86</sup> As if the DC, Campbell, had accomplished a tremendous feat that had burdened and bogged him down for many months, he embarked on his leave on 15th April, 1922, never to return to the district again.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> ibid.

<sup>84</sup> KNA-PC/CP.15/1/2, op. cit.

<sup>85</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/15, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, "Chiefs' Character Book, 1922+1952".

<sup>87</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/15, op. cit.

CHAPTER FIVE

WARUHIU'S CAREER AS A CHIEF

Waruhiu was appointed Chief at the age of thirty-two and he served the colonial government for thirty years. From 1930, he was both a Locational and a Divisional Chief which he combined with the rank of a Senior Chief during the last two years of his life and career. Although Waruhiu was made chief on 1st April, 1922, he was, however, not gazetted until 1st May, 1924. The two years between appointment and confirmation appear to have been a probationary period which also applied to Chiefs Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo, who were also gazetted on the same date. The government never regretted having appointed Waruhiu chief. It could not have made a better choice as Waruhiu proved to be an extremely ideal and a prototype chief.

Waruhiu's Ruiru Location, which was also referred to as Location Four, roughly bordered the Ruiru River and Komothai and Gatamaiyu Locations to the east; European farms to the south; Riuki Location to the west; and Githiga Location to the north. Out of the 23 locations in the district, Ruiru was the second smallest both in size and population with an area of 3,840 acres and a population of 1,663.<sup>1</sup> When Riuki Location

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<sup>1</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/14, op. cit.

was merged with Ruiru in 1926, its size increased to approximately fourteen square miles with a population of about 5,530 persons.<sup>2</sup> Fifteen locations had more than double the area of Ruiru while ten had over twice her population. Chief Muturi wa Thika's Mang'u Location led in both size and population with an area of 31,360 acres populated by 10,152 people.<sup>3</sup>

(i) Waruhiu's Administration

Waruhiu began his career with a lot of opposition and hostility from a cross-section of the Ruiru people led by Mbari ya Gathirimu. The sub-clan was extremely furious and bitter with Waruhiu's audacity to usurp leadership from their mbari. Waruhiu, who was very poor and not of their mbari, was forcibly imposed on them contrary to their belief that a leader was born and not made and that leadership and poverty did not go hand in hand. Given time, Waruhiu would certainly have emerged as a muthamaki, leader, as he possessed most of the natural and recognized attributes of the holder of such an office. But colonialism had radically altered that trend and Waruhiu consequently escaped that long and laborious process.

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<sup>2</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, "Chiefs' Character Book, 1922+1952".

<sup>3</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/13, op. cit.

When Waweru wa Kanja was dethroned and Waruhiu appointed in his place, Mbari ya Gathirimu swiftly retaliated against Waruhiu. They forcibly evicted him from their land at Ngenia (Mukeu) where he had been their muhoi, tenant, ever since his return from Ng'enda. They, in fact, gave him ten days in which to vacate their land.<sup>4</sup>

This humiliating and embarrassing situation emphasised and impressed on Waruhiu that he would always be looked down upon so long as he remained poor and landless. He was given wako, a place to build, first, by Zakayo wa Mwicigi of Mbari ya Marigu at Ndathini and thereafter by Mbira wa Githua near Kwa+Maiko Trading Centre.<sup>5</sup> It was from there that in 1927 Waruhiu shifted to his own land, which he bought at Giathieko, near Githunguri Town.<sup>6</sup>

With time and the acquisition of property and social status, Waruhiu gradually won, though grudgingly, the acceptance and support of most of those who had previously been his adversaries. He achieved this remarkable and impressive feat not so much by force and authority, but by "a combination of tact and genius".<sup>7</sup> Waruhiu was endowed with leadership

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<sup>4</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>This is fully discussed in Chapter Eight.

<sup>7</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

qualities that were rarely found in other chiefs of the time. He was certainly a born leader who had previously lacked outlets to display and exercise his leadership talents owing to his abject condition. Chief Waruhiu was, therefore, definitely a muthamaki in the true sense of the word and he was not only a muthamaki wa bururi, a political leader, but also a muthamaki wa cira, an expert in judicial matters.<sup>8</sup> Waruhiu also possessed the rare gift of never losing his temper even when he was provoked.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he had "a marked gift for smoothing over difficulties and ensuring co-operation".<sup>10</sup> It was only Chief Koinange who rivalled Waruhiu in these qualities, otherwise, other prominent chiefs in the district, like Magugu wa Waweru, lacked "the personality of Waruhiu".<sup>11</sup> These indispensable attributes of Waruhiu enabled him to succeed against heavy odds and obstacles throughout his career as a chief. They also captivated and endeared him to the authorities, who gradually and increasingly came to rely on him in the district.

Although Waruhiu worked under more than twenty DCs and

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<sup>8</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, 10th March, 1987, Komothai; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>KNA+PC/CP.4/3/2, "Central Province Annual Reports, 1935, 1939, 1945+1948".

<sup>11</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

many more Departmental Heads, he nevertheless received very favourable and commendable reports from all of them throughout his career. They praised and glorified him for being "loyal ... intelligent ... hard-working... progressive... obedient...thoroughly reliable ... responsible ... executively outstandingly efficient...dependable and a tower of strength..."<sup>12</sup> By 1935, Waruhiu had been recognized by the administration as their best chief and their staunchest supporter in the district.<sup>13</sup> Four years later, in 1939, Waruhiu was formally acknowledged by the Provincial Administration as their major ally by being "the best and most likeable chief of the Province".<sup>14</sup> A few years later in 1944, Waruhiu's reputation, as a thoroughly dependable chief, assumed a national outlook when he was considered to be among the best chiefs in the Colony.<sup>15</sup> In 1948, the CNC endorsed Waruhiu as being "the mainstay of our administration in the Kiambu District".<sup>16</sup> At the time of his death in 1952, Waruhiu was officially credited with being one of the best chiefs in East Africa as his death was not only "a loss of great magnitude to his family and Government, but also to the Kikuyu and indeed East Africa".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>ibid.

<sup>13</sup>ibid.

<sup>14</sup>KNA+PC/CP.4/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1/, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>KNA+MAA 8/68, "Chief Waruhiu, 1948+1952".

<sup>17</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

Waruhiu could not have been heaped with such glowing compliments for merely being loyal, intelligent, progressive or pro-European. He acquired them because he was second to none in his administrative statesmanship. Other chiefs, though loyal and pro-British, failed to garner such endearing compliments simply because they were not comparable and equal to Waruhiu administratively. Koinange, the best chief in the district in the 1920's and early 1930's was, for example, considered not of "a great deal of use as a Headman being too inclined to leave things to his understrabbers".<sup>18</sup> Waruhiu was, therefore, wholly and explicitly committed to his duties as a chief. Unlike most of his contemporary chiefs, Waruhiu never waited to be prodded and reminded of his duties because he was aware and conversant with them.

As a chief, Waruhiu was the direct representative and agent of the government in his location. A location was then the smallest complete administrative unit of administration in the African Reserves. Waruhiu was ultimately responsible and answerable to the DC for the conduct of his location. His duties entailed the maintenance of law and order, the collection of central and local government taxes and the

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<sup>18</sup>ibid.



implementation of government policy and directives.<sup>19</sup> He had also to liaise and co-ordinate the activities of all Departmental officers to ensure that a common policy was followed in his location. Moreover, Waruhiu had to attend the meetings of both the Locational and Divisional Councils, of which he was normally the Chairman, to ensure that the councillors did not abuse their positions or misrepresent government policy to the people.<sup>20</sup>

Chief Waruhiu, like the other chiefs, was assisted by a staff of government + appointed and remunerated clerks and administration police then known as tribal retainers or tribal police. Besides, he had a team of unofficial and unpaid sub-chiefs, who owed their position to him, and they assisted him with the administration of their villages or localities.<sup>21</sup> The clerks were responsible for the collection of taxes and for prosecuting the tax defaulters before the Githunguri Tribunal Court. Each chief had at least three administration policemen. They enforced the chief's orders and assisted him to maintain law and order. They also arrested offenders of cognisable offences such as tax defaulters,

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<sup>19</sup>KNA+PC/RVP.6A/2/3/1, "Chiefs and Headmen, 1949+1951";  
KNA+Police 5/630, "Chiefs and Headman, 1922+1950".

<sup>20</sup>KNA+PC/RVP.6A/2/3/1, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup>The sub-chiefs became government employees with effect from 1st July, 1949.

accompanied the chief on his tours, acted as his messengers and maintained orderliness at baraza, meetings.

Waruhiu's Location and Division were always a shining example for others to follow. They were consistently far ahead of the other locations and divisions in many aspects. Taxes were promptly collected and forwarded. It was Waruhiu who in August 1925, suggested, and it was agreed, that chiefs be issuing receipts for the tax money that they collected.<sup>22</sup> When other chiefs complained of the excessive beer drinking problem in their locations, Waruhiu confidently asserted that the prevention of excessive beer drinking largely depended on the chief and his tribal retainers.<sup>23</sup> Roads and bridges were always well maintained in his location. He also achieved remarkable results in the fields of labour recruitment for European farms and in the soil conservation campaign, among others.<sup>24</sup>

Another secret to Waruhiu's successful performance was that he acted immediately he was issued with an order. He could never rest until an order was fully and satisfactorily carried out.<sup>25</sup> Although Waruhiu was an outspoken and a fearless

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<sup>22</sup>KNA+PC/CP.2/1/4, "Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1925+1934".

<sup>23</sup>ibid.

<sup>24</sup>For details, see Chapter Six.  
<sup>25</sup>O.I., Karanú wa Gathogo, op. cit.

chief, he rarely questioned the directives or wishes of his superiors. His motto was to obey first and complain later if he had any complaint, which was rare.<sup>26</sup> This partly explains why the DC in 1927 considered Waruhiu to be "probably the most reliable official Headman I have as regards carrying out his duties".<sup>27</sup> This view was endorsed by his successor in 1929 who was sure that Waruhiu "knows his duties and carries them out. Orders promptly enforced and his location is kept in better order than any other location in the Reserve".<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the DC commended Waruhiu in 1935 for being "very conscious about his work and does his utmost to better the condition of his people".<sup>29</sup> Waruhiu's maintained outstanding performance compelled the DC in 1943 to praise him for being "an excellent Divisional Chief, serious + minded and sound in his ideas . . . executively outstandingly efficient".<sup>30</sup> Four years later in 1947, the DC was "amazed at the amount of work a man of his age does and I am sure he spends more time on safari than any other Government officer".<sup>31</sup> The DC in 1948 agreed with his predecessor's views when he observed that Waruhiu's "efforts never relax and he never spares himself".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup>ibid.

<sup>29</sup>ibid.

<sup>30</sup>ibid.

<sup>31</sup>ibid.

Waruhiu must have realised early in his career that his power and authority emanated from the colonial authorities through the Native Authority Ordinance of 1912 which was superseded by the 1937 Native Authority Ordinance. Waruhiu, therefore, handled his superiors with courtesy, tact and diplomacy. In addition, unlike Koinange who tried "to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds",<sup>33</sup> Waruhiu tended to avoid issues that would antagonize the government and thereby jeopardize and compromise his position. This is illustrated by a meeting held at Dagoretti on 10th November, 1924 between the KA and the East African Commission. Waruhiu maintained a low profile while other chiefs, notably Koinange and Njonjo, attacked the government on its apparent indifference to settler encroachment on Kikuyu lands.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, in August 1939, Waruhiu refused to sign an unsigned telegram purported to have been sent by him and others to the Governor seeking for an interview with him. Neither did he attend the interview when it was granted to discuss the settlement of right-holders on European farms as he "disagreed with the procedure adopted".<sup>35</sup> Throughout his life, Waruhiu never affiliated, supported or sympathised with

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<sup>33</sup> ibid.

<sup>34</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/3/19, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/3/16 I, "Central Province Intelligence Reports, 1939".

those bodies considered to be dissident by the government, like the KCA, the Kenya African Union (hereafter KAU), the Independent Movement and the Mau Mau Movement. This partly explains why he was considered to be pro-British and to be against the aspirations of his people. This eventually culminated in his death in 1952.

On the other hand, Waruhiu's excellent administration did not impress some of his people who considered him as a tool and a stooge of the white man. Although most of the measures enforced and implemented by Waruhiu were supposed and designed to benefit them, the people did not seem to appreciate them much, simply because they had emanated and originated from the government. They, therefore, thought him a bother for urging and compelling them to uplift their hygienic standards by burying their dead, digging pit latrines and building almost rat-proof houses. They also detested him for interfering with their cherished customs, like when he sided with the missionaries during the 1929-1930 female circumcision crisis.<sup>36</sup> They also loathed Waruhiu for prosecuting them for various offences, such as illicit beer-brewing and tax defaulting. Waruhiu also collided with them when he recruited them for communal labour such as soil conservation measures.<sup>37</sup> Finally,

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<sup>36</sup>See Chapter Six.

<sup>37</sup>ibid.

Waruhiu's determined efforts to contain the Mau Mau Movement convinced the people that they could not easily liberate themselves from the colonial yoke while he was alive. And this eventually is what led to his death.

Waruhiu, therefore, acted as the cutting edge of the colonial sword as he was directly in touch with his people. Most of those he prosecuted or he collided with, for one reason or another, would very often spread malicious rumours against him out of bitterness. Thereafter, many ignorant people would spread the rumours even farther. This is illustrated by a rumour which alleged that Waruhiu could order schools to be closed to enable the school children to pick coffee.<sup>38</sup> This was impossible because such an order could only come from the DC.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as a Divisional Chief, most of his subordinate chiefs would take refuge under him when enforcing harsh and unpopular demands thereby projecting Waruhiu as their originator.<sup>40</sup> All these put together might have made Waruhiu appear "not only a symbol of colonial oppression but also a constant reminder that the traditional political structure had either been ignored or rudely dismantled".<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>39</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., p. 169.

Nevertheless, Chief Waruhiu also had his own inherent weaknesses and shortcomings. Prominent among them were his tendency to associate and identify himself too much with the Europeans thereby alienating his own people;<sup>42</sup> his thirst for power which led to the undermining and engineering the downfall of other chiefs so that he could take over their locations;<sup>43</sup> exceeding and misusing his power and authority at times like in 1947 and 1948 when he was taken to court by the aggrieved parties;<sup>44</sup> corruption;<sup>45</sup> malpractices such as offering his support and assistance to unscrupulous individuals during dubious land cases so that they could sell a piece of the land to him if they won;<sup>46</sup> compelling reluctant landowners at Giathieko to either sell their land to him or exchange it for other pieces of his land elsewhere;<sup>47</sup> practice of nepotism and favouritism;<sup>48</sup> not keen at paying his debts;<sup>49</sup> and his failure to forgive those who wronged him as he would avenge himself when he got a chance to do so.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Waruhiu's weaknesses and

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42 See Chapter Six for details.

43 This is discussed in this chapter.

44 See Chapter Six.

45 O.I., Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.; Kiambuthi wa Kabiru, op. cit.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.

46 O.I., Karanja wa Kiondo, op. cit.

47 O.I., Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit.; Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

48 O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

49 O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.

50 O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

shortcomings were partly responsible for the several abortive attempts against his life and finally to that fatal attempt which succeeded in 1952.<sup>51</sup>

Despite such adverse weaknesses coupled with his shortcomings, Waruhiu very often achieved his administrative objectives. His greatest and indispensable assets were his powers of eloquence, persuasion and diplomacy which he heavily depended on to implement and enforce sometimes unpopular and unjust government directives. Waruhiu was one of the outstanding public orators in Kiambu and recognized by many as such.<sup>52</sup> Waruhiu effectively combined these attributes with his intelligence and tact and the results were splendid. Waruhiu could appeal and convince the people to do almost anything no matter how unpopular, detestable or abhorrent it might be. He was so cunning that he at times agreed with the people that what was demanded of them was harsh or unjust but they had no choice but to act accordingly.<sup>53</sup> In May 1946, for example, Waruhiu considerably impressed the Labour Commissioner by the very excellent way he

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See Chapter Ten.

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O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

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O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.



successfully reasoned with the Rift Valley squatters who were determined to return to Kiambu in protest against efforts to erode their status as squatters.<sup>54</sup> Waruhiu also used to tactfully delegate most of his responsibilities to his informal sub-chiefs who were answerable to him. These administrative skills and techniques of Waruhiu's achieved remarkable results thereby earning him the rank of being second to none administratively.

Chief Waruhiu was handsomely and generously rewarded for his unswerving co-operation and collaboration. More power, authority and responsibilities were gradually accorded to and heaped on him. His location was gradually enlarged and it eventually ended up being the largest in the district. Moreover, several promotions and awards were bestowed on him. He was also promoted to higher grades with better salary scales. Waruhiu was also honoured and rewarded with visits of distinguished visitors to his home at Giathieko and, above all, by his own visit to England in 1948.

(ii) Enlargement of Waruhiu's Location

Additions to Waruhiu's location were made in 1926, 1942

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<sup>54</sup> KNA+ARC(MAA)+2/3/16IV, "Central Province Monthly Intelligence Reports, 1944+1948".

and 1949.

Before the end of his first four years in office, Waruhiu had impressed his superiors to the extent of considering him "quite capable of taking over an additional area".<sup>55</sup> This was put into effect on 4th May, 1926 when the adjoining Riuki Location was merged with Ruiru Location. Although Waruhiu was not responsible for Chief Njoroge wa Muchai's deposition, he nonetheless experienced strenuous opposition from the Riuki residents. They thought that he had engineered the sacking of Njoroge so that he could take over his location. Njoroge's dismissal had, however, resulted from his own administrative failure. Ever since his appointment on 20th December, 1920, he had constantly proved, according to the DCs, to be:

...lacking in force of character... perfectly useless. Will not do anything unless continually stimulated... totally unsuited to hold the appointment of Government Headman... he shows no sign of having any desire to carry out his duties.<sup>56</sup>

By 1927, Waruhiu had, however, succeeded beyond the expectations of the administration in incorporating Riuki into Ruiru Location.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> ibid.

<sup>57</sup> ibid.

In 1942, Waruhiu emerged as the greatest beneficiary of a considerable amalgamation of locations in Kiambu District. The amalgamations were designed to streamline the administration by eliminating the unnecessarily small locations and unproductive "passengers amongst the existing chiefs".<sup>58</sup> The money so saved, the argument went, would be utilized to raise the salaries of the remaining outstanding chiefs with added responsibilities. Consequently, the number of locations was reduced from 21 to 13 and the number of chiefs to 14. Senior Chief Koinange relinquished his location thereby becoming Senior Chief without Location and an "adviser and general assistant to DC".<sup>59</sup> The amalgamations resulted in eight chiefs being dismissed. Among these were Chiefs Kahehu wa Mimi of Ting'ang'a and Gathingwa wa Karuru of Githiga whose locations were merged with Waruhiu's. Waruhiu's enlarged location, with an area of about 50 square miles and an approximate population of 22, 000 persons, was consequently renamed Mukuyu on 17th July, 1943.<sup>60</sup> As if to sanction their added responsibilities, the remaining chiefs were given new badges with the word "CHIEF" inscribed on them and they

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<sup>58</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/1/32, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1941"; KCCA + Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941+1945.

<sup>59</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit; KNA+DC/KBU/1/33, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1942".

<sup>60</sup> KNA+ARC(MAA)+2/5/158III, "Establishment: Chiefs and Headmen, Pay and Allowances, 1943+1951".

relinquished the more ornate "Headman" badge. The extension of Waruhiu's location also extended his influence and prestige which were essential to the acquisition of more property, especially land.

Nevertheless, Divisional Chief Waruhiu and the administration encountered some opposition from the deposed chiefs, particularly Kahehu wa Mimi. Whereas Githiga was merged with Ruiru on 1st June, 1942, this was not accomplished for Ting'ang'a until 22nd September, 1942. This followed a spirited objection by Kahehu whose campaign took the form of altruistic championship of the rights of chiefly families like his.<sup>61</sup> Although Kahehu was finally sacked, he was, however, convinced and emphatic that Waruhiu had engineered his downfall because he was sympathetic towards the Independent Movement.<sup>62</sup>

There appears to be some evidence to support Kahehu's allegation. First, Kahehu was not a failure administratively. He had received some commendable reports for being "keen and hardworking...has worked quite satisfactorily ...is far more efficient than his appearance would indicate ...satisfactory+loyal...".<sup>63</sup> Secondly, Waruhiu was then the most powerful and influential chief in the district. His word

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<sup>61</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/33, op. cit.

<sup>62</sup>Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>63</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

could not, therefore, be doubted or disputed by his superiors who considered him "a very dependable adviser... and his advice is always sound and valuable"<sup>64</sup>.

On 1st July, 1949, Gatamaiyu became the last addition to Waruhiu's location. It had been a part of Chief Luka Wakahangara's location prior to his retirement in June of that year. The inclusion of Gatamaiyu in Waruhiu's location sparked off a deplorable row and misunderstanding between Waruhiu and Chief Magugu. The row, which was blamed on Magugu, erupted when he claimed that Waruhiu had used underhand methods to grab Gatamaiyu from under his nose<sup>65</sup>. The Gatamaiyu people, who had to decide whether to be incorporated either in Waruhiu's or Magugu's location, had settled for Magugu's location amongst themselves. However, at a baraza convened for the purpose, an ally of Waruhiu's quickly informed the DC that they had opted to be incorporated into Waruhiu's location and hence the origins of the row.<sup>66</sup>

Waruhiu's Githunguri Division was also enlarged on several occasions. The first one was in 1931 when Karura

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<sup>64</sup> ibid.

<sup>65</sup> O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup> ibid.

Location, which had been in Dagoretti Division, was transferred to Githunguri after being merged with Kiambaa Location. Karura eventually became the scene of Waruhiu's murder in 1952. Other additions came from excisions into the Kerita and Nyamweru forests in the late 1930's. The excisions were compensations to landholders who had been displaced by Europeans in their ancestral lands.

(iii) Promotions

Chief Waruhiu was also rewarded with three vital promotions. In 1929, he was appointed President of the Githunguri Tribunal Court of which he had been a member since 1919. A year later, he was promoted to the newly created post of Githunguri Divisional Chief. He was awarded the final promotion in 1951 when he was made Kiambu Senior Chief.

Chiefs Waruhiu, Njonjo and Muhoho wa Gatheca were made presidents of their respective Tribunals when they were reorganised in 1929. Only the most influential and responsible chief in each Division was made president as the government hoped that in due course, they would become primus inter pares and perhaps develop into divisional chiefs.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> KNA=DC/KBU/1/22, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1929".

Waruhiu, however, took over the presidency of the Githunguri Tribunal Court from Koinange who was promoted, towards the end of 1929, to head the newly constituted Central Native Tribunal (hereafter CNT). The CNT was an appeal court for the Divisional Tribunal Courts.

The post of president, though a powerful and influential one, was largely honorary as the work chiefly fell on the vice-president. Although rumours were rife that Waruhiu was corrupt and solicited bribes from the litigants, no formal complaint was, however, ever made against him.<sup>68</sup> Only Harry Thuku's Kikuyu Provincial Association (hereafter KPA) generally complained that the chiefs very often forced the litigants to sue before them rather than before the Tribunals.<sup>69</sup> The chiefs, however, disagreed with the KPA and argued that they only settled disputes when both parties voluntarily agreed to sue before them, otherwise, "there was nothing to prevent them from suing before a Tribunal in the first instance".<sup>70</sup> This explains why Waruhiu had constructed a big structure in his compound which was

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<sup>68</sup> O.I., Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.; Kiambuthi wa Kabiru, op. cit.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>69</sup> KCCA+ Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941+1945.

<sup>70</sup> ibid.

referred to as Thingira wa Kiama, council house, where he had held informal court sessions:<sup>71</sup> Waruhiu's sense of justice does not seem to have been eroded as the following case involving an antagonist of his, called Munjogu, illustrates.

As the Kiama seemed to take too long before it reached an agreement, Munjogu naturally thought that the delay was due to Chief Waruhiu who wanted a stiff sentence to be meted out to him. Munjogu walked over to where the deliberations were being conducted and maliciously accused Waruhiu for the undue delay. The delay had, however, emanated from the Court's desire to impose a fine of 100 goats on Munjogu, a fine Waruhiu found excessive. He was, in fact, advocating for a fine of 80 goats:<sup>72</sup>

With effect from 1st January, 1943, the chiefs ceased to be members or presidents of the Tribunals. This followed the separation of the executive from the judiciary. Notwithstanding this directive, the chiefs continued not only to hold informal court sessions, but also to dabble and meddle with Tribunal affairs, especially when they had vested interests in

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<sup>71</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.



particular cases. These champertous activities of the chiefs exasperated their superiors who were indignant that "even the most trivial of cases must pass through their hands before it gets to a recognised court".<sup>73</sup> Waruhiu's continued involvement in Tribunal Courts' affairs eventually became the occasion of his death in 1952.

After the death of Paramount Chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu in 1929, the Divisions, which had existed since 1923, were formally recognized as administrative units. Accordingly, Waruhiu, Njonjo and Muhoho became Divisional Chiefs from 1930 while Koinange became the Senior Chief. The positions of divisional and senior chiefs existed only in Kiambu and they continued to "cause heart burnings in certain quarters" throughout their existence.<sup>74</sup> This was because there was no specific provision for them in the Native Authority Ordinance. Nevertheless, the divisional chiefs, who worked closely together with the senior chief, were given wide powers and responsibilities. The divisional chiefs had general powers of supervision over the locational chiefs within their Divisions albeit the subordinate chiefs were responsible to the DC "for the proper administration of

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<sup>73</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/1/35, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1944".

<sup>74</sup> ibid.

their respective locations".<sup>75</sup> Any dispute between a subordinate chief and his divisional chief, in respect to the administration of the former's location, was referred to and resolved by the DC.

Waruhiu's Githunguri Division was very big then as it included the present Githunguri Constituency and parts of Kiambaa, Limuru and Lari Constituencies. It had a population of about 45,000 and more than a third of the Kiambu Reserve area.<sup>76</sup> Githunguri Division then comprised of eight locations. These were Ruiru+Riuki, Ting'ang'a, Kiambaa, Riabai (Kiambu), Komothai, Githiga, Mugutha (Gatamaiyu) and Lari. Waruhiu was reputed to have been the only successful divisional chief in the district.<sup>77</sup>

On 19th February, 1951, Waruhiu was promoted to the prestigious post of senior chief to replace Koinange who had retired in February 1949. As a Senior Chief, Waruhiu was even more powerful and influential than Koinange had been. In contrast to Koinange, who from 1942 had been a Senior+Chief+Without+location, Waruhiu not only had the biggest location and division in the district, but he was

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<sup>75</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>76</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/1/25, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1932".

<sup>77</sup>KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

also a Locational and a Divisional Chief at the same time. All the chiefs in the district, including the two divisional chiefs, were subordinate to him. Waruhiu was thus killed when he was at the apex of his power and career since nobody rivalled him for the leadership of the district.

(iv) Terms of Service

Chief Waruhiu's administrative competency also bore dividends. He was rewarded with promotions to higher grades with better salary scales. He finally ended up as one of the highly paid chiefs in the colony.

Waruhiu, however, started his career in 1922 with a monthly salary of Shs. 50. It was subsequently increased to Shs. 65 in 1926 when Riuki was merged with his Ruiru Location. This salary was quite low by the standards of the time. Other government employees, like Harry Thuku, had been earning Shs. 140 a month in 1921.<sup>78</sup> It appears that an individual's education, experience and former salary were not taken into account when appointed chief. A rather pitiable example is Chief Magugu wa Waweru who replaced his father as chief of Komothai Location in 1935. Magugu started his

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<sup>78</sup>Thuku, op. cit., p. 20.

career at a basic monthly salary of Shs. 60 although he had been earning Shs. 110 per month as a teacher at Kambui.<sup>79</sup> He was stuck at the same salary for six years and ten years later, in 1945, he was earning only Shs. 105 per month. Although by the mid-1930's the potential chiefs were aware of what their terms would be, they nevertheless took on the jobs "as the holders of chiefly office had prestige and influence".<sup>80</sup> This is vividly highlighted by the case of a son of one of the chiefs. The son offered to resign from the government job where he was earning Shs. 115 per month and take on his aged father's job at a monthly salary of Shs. 44.<sup>81</sup>

The foregoing indicates that prior to the 1940's, chiefs were a poorly paid lot as there was no unified scheme of service in the colony. Their salaries depended on the whims and discretion of the DCs and PCs who were also restricted by government grants. From 1925, the pay for chiefs was supposed to be based on five per cent of the Hut Tax collected within the district, but this seems to have been in theory rather than in practice. In 1930, for instance, out of

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<sup>79</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> Clough, 1977, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>81</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

Shs. 480,000 collected in Kiambu, only Shs. 17,200 was voted for chiefs' salaries and this amounted to only 3.6 per cent.<sup>82</sup> This system was also unfair because districts with low populations or poor tax returns could never be expected to remunerate their chiefs adequately. Nyeri District, for example, was able to spend two and a half times as much as Kiambu on chiefs' salaries.<sup>83</sup> The system was also unfair to individual chiefs as their salaries were not based on the tax collected in their locations. This is portrayed by Chief Kioi wa Nagi of Ndeiya who was drawing a monthly salary of Shs. 12 whereas his tax returns were over Shs. 20,000 annually.<sup>84</sup> The low and inadequate salaries partly explain why most of the chiefs engaged in malpractice activities and were not as committed to their duties as they should have been.

The first complaint against the poor terms of service for chiefs in Kiambu was voiced in 1924 to the East African Commission. It was raised by the KA leaders + Waruhiu, Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo + who were the recognised spokesmen for all Kiambu chiefs.<sup>85</sup> The next complaint was

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<sup>82</sup> ibid.  
<sup>83</sup> ibid.  
<sup>84</sup> ibid.  
<sup>85</sup> ibid.

contained in the memorandum presented to the Hilton Young Commission in 1928 by the KA. They lamented that other African government employees earned a monthly salary of between Shs. 100 and Shs. 300, while the chiefs earned a meagre salary, ranging from Shs. 30 to Shs. 70 per month.<sup>86</sup> They also grieved that, unlike the other civil servants, they were not graded and this hindered their advancement. Their salaries were subsequently increased and the increment ranged from Shs. 5 to Shs. 15. Waruhiu's salary, therefore, rose to Shs. 75 per month.<sup>87</sup> This raise did not seem to have satisfied Waruhiu and his colleagues for a year later, they sent a petition to the Governor, Sir Edward Grigg.

The petition mainly demanded the payment of travelling allowance as it was unfair to expect the chiefs to use their own cars or to hire some out of their meagre salaries.<sup>88</sup> The DC, F.H. Fazan, endorsed their petition and called on the government to raise the pay of the chiefs and particularly that of the senior and divisional chiefs as they were often summoned to the headquarters for consultations. He proposed a scheme which would have raised the chiefs' salaries to

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<sup>86</sup> KNA+PC/CP.8/5/1, "Kikuyu Association, 1925-1931".

<sup>87</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>88</sup> ibid.

between Shs. 50 and Shs. 250 with Divisional Chief Waruhiu drawing Shs. 150.<sup>89</sup> The PC endorsed the DC's recommendations but they were rejected by the Secretariat on the grounds that the economic crisis facing the colony and the world at the time could not allow for such increments. The DC, however, made some readjustments of the finances available to him and awarded the senior and divisional chiefs an increment, though a small one. Accordingly, Koinange's salary jumped to Shs. 125 per month while that of the divisional chiefs rose to Shs. 80 each.<sup>90</sup>

The small raise did not appease the chiefs for long as they dispatched another memorandum to the CNC in 1933. Although the DC, J.G. Hopkins, sanctioned their petition, the PC flatly refused to forward it by giving the stereotype excuse of the poor state of government finances owing to the Great Depression.<sup>91</sup> Two years later, in 1935, Kiambu chiefs, who never seemed to tire fighting for their rights, sent yet another petition to the PC, very similar in content to the previous one. As a result, some adjustments were made within the district and they got a token increment to quieten them. Waruhiu received an increment of Shs. 5 which

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<sup>89</sup> ibid.

<sup>90</sup> ibid.

<sup>91</sup> ibid.

brought his monthly salary to Shs. 85.<sup>92</sup>

In 1936, an extra 50 sterling pounds was allotted to Kiambu and this increased the chiefs' salaries to between Shs. 40 and Shs. 150 per month, with Waruhiu earning Shs. 110. Waruhiu and the other chiefs were also reimbursed their travelling expenses for the first time. Accordingly, Waruhiu received a travelling allowance of Shs. 60 at the rate of Shs. 5 per day which he had expended while on the Kenya Land Commission's business.<sup>93</sup>

In 1939, a number of recommendations of a sub-committee of PCs appointed in 1938 to enquire into the position and remuneration of chiefs, were implemented. The sub-committee first justified an increase of chiefs' salaries. They argued that chiefs had become full-time government servants unlike in the past when they were assumed to be part-time employees of the government. Secondly, chiefs were to be graded according to their locational populations although other factors would be taken into consideration where population was sparse. Thirdly, chiefs who had attained fifteen years of service and over

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<sup>92</sup> ibid.

<sup>93</sup> ibid.



automatically be entitled to gratuity either on retirement or on dismissal. Lastly, mileage allowance would be paid to chiefs who used their cars in the public service.<sup>94</sup>

According to these recommendations, only Chief Koinange was placed in Grade One while no chief was placed in Grade Two. Waruhiu and Njonjo were placed in Grade Three with a salary scale of 50 x 21/2 to 100 sterling pounds, while the remaining seventeen chiefs were accorded Grades Three and Four. But the DC, Colonel Anderson, strongly pressed for Waruhiu and Njonjo to be promoted to Grade Two, arguing in the case of Waruhiu that he was "a particularly outstanding man and is well worth this promotion from every point of view".<sup>95</sup> Thereafter, Waruhiu and Njonjo were elevated to Grade Two with a monthly emolument of Shs. 127/50 and an annual increment of Shs. 4/16 each.<sup>96</sup>

After the amalgamation of the locations in 1942, chiefs' salaries rose and they ranged from Shs. 50 to Shs. 333/33 with Waruhiu earning Shs. 250 per month. But from January 1943, the chiefs stopped receiving any perquisites from the Kiambu LNC and the Tribunal Courts. They had been receiving

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<sup>94</sup> KNA+ARC(MAA)+2/5/158III, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup> ibid.

Shs. 20 each from the LNC while Koinange had received Shs. 140, the divisional chiefs Shs. 70 each and the other chiefs Shs. 20 each from the Tribunal Courts. Thus, with the stroke of a pen, Waruhiu ceased to earn Shs. 90 per month from these two bodies. By May 1945, Waruhiu was chief Grade Two with an income of Shs. 270 per month while Koinange was in Grade One and earning Shs. 345 per month. The other two divisional chiefs and Philip Karanja were chiefs Grade Two while six others were in Grade Three and one in Grade Four.

With effect from 1st November, 1948 the chiefs' terms of service were brought in line with those prevailing in the African Civil Service. This followed the implementation of the recommendations of the Holmes Salary Commission. A Special Grade was also created and a chief would be promoted to it "according to his merit, responsibility and leadership".<sup>97</sup> In addition, the Special Grade and Grades One to Three chiefs were accorded free pension status while the Provident Fund continued to apply to Grade Four and ungraded chiefs. Waruhiu, who met the above requirements, was thereafter promoted to the Special Grade with a Salary Scale of Sterling Pounds 276 + 12+ 348. By 1952, he was earning a monthly salary of Shs. 520.

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<sup>97</sup> KNA+PC/NZA/3/27/114, "Chiefs and Headmen: Scales of Salary, 1946+1949".

From 1st July, 1952, the chiefs' salary scale was modified and a Special Grade "A" the ceiling of which coincided with that of the Makerere Special Grade, was introduced. This permitted the up+grading of all chiefs by one grade. Waruhiu and Njonjo were promoted to Special Grade "A", with a scale of 348+12+420+15+450 Sterling pounds, with a starting salary of Shs. 640 and Shs. 580 per month respectively. Chief James Gichuru of Dagoretti Location was placed in Special Grade "B" with a monthly salary of Shs. 500 while the lowest paid chief in the district earned Shs. 80 per month. There were other four Grade One and Seven Grade Two chiefs in the district. Thus, at the time of his death, Waruhiu was not only among the best paid chiefs but also among the highest paid Africans in the colony.<sup>98</sup>

(v) Distinguished Visitors to Waruhiu's Home

Chief Waruhiu was also honoured with visits of prominent guests to his home at Giathieko. The most memorable of these were Rees Williams, the Governor and James Griffiths.

Rees Williams, the British Under+Secretary of State for

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<sup>98</sup> KNA+MAA 9/925, "Salaries of Chiefs and Headmen, 1947+1953".

the Colonies, visited Waruhiu on the morning of 7th April, 1948. In his entourage were Mr. Proctor, Parliamentary Private Secretary; Mr. J. A. Wallace, the Head of the East and Central African Department in the Colonial Office; Mr. D. M. Smith, the Private Secretary to Rees Williams; and high-ranking Kenya Government Officials. The Under-Secretary had first toured and inspected various projects in the district. These included the Kiambu Hospital, the Kiambu LNC Bakery and the Kenya Teachers College, Githunguri. He was thereafter the guest of honour at a tea-party at Waruhiu's home. Seventeen leading Africans from the district + who included Jomo Kenyatta, Eliud Mathu, Harry Thuku, James Gichuru, Peter Gatabaki and Koinange + had been invited to meet the Guest of Honour informally over cups of tea. Kenyatta, the President of KAU, took the opportunity to present the visitor with a memorandum on behalf of KAU.<sup>99</sup>

Divisional Chief Waruhiu made a brief speech thanking Rees Williams for his visit and assured him of the loyalty of the Kikuyu to the government.<sup>100</sup> Before the Under-Secretary could respond, Senior Chief Koinange leapt to his feet but no sooner had he stood up than Waruhiu interposed and admonished

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<sup>99</sup> KNA+MAA 8/48, "Copies of Miscellaneous Correspondence for information of CNC, 1947+1949".

<sup>100</sup> KNA+MAA 8/106, "Intelligence and Security: Newspaper Reports, "Mumenyereri", 1947+1950".

him to sit down. But the Guest of Honour intimated that Koinange be allowed to speak to the applause of the impromptu crowd which had gathered.<sup>101</sup> Koinange called for the provision of more land to the Kikuyu; Africans be allowed to directly export and import their goods to avoid exploitation by the European and Asian middlemen; Rift Valley squatters be permitted to keep as much livestock as they could manage; and the provision of more educational opportunities for the Africans.<sup>102</sup>

In his brief speech, Rees Williams thanked the people for their hospitality and warm welcome and also commended them for their collective efforts in the building and maintenance of the Githunguri Teachers College. He asked them to co-operate with the government and to take the soil conservation measures seriously. He finally promised to report their grievances upon his return to England.<sup>103</sup>

Rees Williams and his party, accompanied by Waruhiu, Gichuru, Mathu and Magugu, later visited a small holding in Magugu's location. The four Africans were thereafter invited to a picnic lunch after which Rees Williams and his party

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<sup>100</sup> ibid.

<sup>102</sup> ibid.

<sup>103</sup> ibid.

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left for Thika District on a similar visit.

About three months later on 28th June, the Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, accompanied by top government officers, visited Kiambu and Waruhiu's home. The Governor attended a formal baraza at Githunguri which was attended by about 10,000 people.<sup>105</sup> Senior Chief Koinange addressed him on behalf of Kiambu residents. The issues he raised had been chosen and agreed upon by an unofficial committee consisting of Mathu, Koinange, Kenyatta, John Mbiyu Koinange, George Kariuki and Chief Luka Wakahangara. Prominent among the issues raised were the land question, the squatter problem, African education, medical facilities and commerce.<sup>106</sup>

The Governor, after being introduced by Divisional Chief Waruhiu, diplomatically avoided to accede to any of their demands. On the land question, he reiterated that the issue had been dealt with and settled by the Kenya Land Commission of 1932+1934. He, therefore, considered it

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<sup>104</sup> ibid.

<sup>105</sup> KNA+PC/CP.4/4/3, "Central Province District Annual Reports, 1946+1948".

<sup>106</sup> KNA+MAA 8/108, "Intelligence and Security: Newspaper Reports, "Daily Chronicle", 1947+1949"; KNA+D.A.O./KBU/1/1/36, "Safari Diaries and Itinararies, 1934+1957".

"neither wise nor indeed sensible to keep on harping on matters which have been settled"<sup>107</sup>. On the subject of the squatters, whom Koinange termed as "wandering like sheep without a shepherd", the Governor insinuated that the squatters were to blame for what had befallen them.<sup>108</sup> With regard to African education, the Governor skilfully evaded the subject by claiming that African education was probably higher than that of the Europeans and the Asians. He, however, had no objections to increased medical facilities provided the people financed such undertakings themselves. He finally explained that their failure to adopt and comply with modern farming methods was the main cause of their inferior produce which fetched low prices.<sup>109</sup>

After the baraza, the Governor toured the district and had a picnic lunch at the Nairobi Municipal Dam at Gikumbo (Ruiru Dam). Later at 4.30 pm, the Governor was the guest of honour at a tea+party hosted by Waruhiu at Giathieko. The visit boosted and elevated Waruhiu's image and prestige among his own people. It was extremely rare for a governor to visit African homes, leave alone having a meal with them. The visit demonstrated that Waruhiu was indeed a very strong

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<sup>107</sup>KNA-MAA 8/108, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup>ibid.

<sup>109</sup>ibid.

pillar in the administration of the colony.

When the British Secretary of State for the Colonies visited Kenya in 1951, he also paid Waruhiu a visit. The 24th May, 1951 visit by James Griffiths crowned Waruhiu's glory and prestige. The morning tea-party at Waruhiu's home was attended by Kenyatta (who submitted a memorandum to the visitor), Mathu, Gichuru, Magugu, Mbiyu wa Koinange and David Wainaina Waruhiu. The tea-party followed a short tour of the Kiambu area by Griffiths and his party. He had also inspected Waruhiu's farm where advanced farming methods were practised under the control and direction of the Agricultural Department. The distinguished visitor had also planted a tree in Waruhiu's garden to mark the occasion, it being Arbor<sup>110</sup> Day.

Senior Chief Waruhiu read an address of welcome to the Chief Guest and his retinue. Waruhiu first spoke of overcrowding in the Kiambu District and called for the neighbouring Forest Reserves to be made available for their occupation. Waruhiu next called for agricultural credits to be granted to African farmers and credit facilities to African traders to enable them to effectively

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<sup>110</sup> KNA+D.A.O./KBU/1/1/192, "Visits, 1951+1960".



compete with the other races. Thirdly, he demanded the removal of the coffee and tea restrictions to enable the Africans to grow the crops. He also advocated the improvement of agricultural labourers' wages as he considered them to be very low.<sup>111</sup> On political affairs, Waruhiu pressed for the direct election of councillors by secret ballot and that the LNCS be accorded more powers and responsibilities. This was followed by a request that higher ranks in the government be thrown open to Africans. Speaking on the Legislative and the Executive Councils, Waruhiu called for twelve African members in the former and two in the latter.<sup>112</sup> He closed his address by presenting the Griffiths with gifts. The Colonial Secretary was first presented with a staff and a bunch of mataathi leaves which were the traditional symbols of office of the Kikuyu elder. He was next presented with a symbolic gift of a spear, a sword and a bow and arrows by Waruhiu who said, "We hope you will be able to use these symbolically in your fight for freedom and justice for all peoples of the world".<sup>113</sup> Mrs Griffiths was on her part presented with a lion+skin handbag and a plaited raffia handbag. The Colonial Secretary's visit in effect

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<sup>111</sup> KNA+CS/2/1/290, "Visits and Visitors, 1951".

<sup>112</sup> ibid.

<sup>113</sup> ibid.

marked the apex of Waruhiu's long career which was brought to an abrupt end about a year later by his sudden and unexpected death.

(vi) Waruhiu's Visit to England

Perhaps the greatest honour bestowed on Waruhiu in recognition of his valuable services was the six weeks' visit that he made to England from 7th August to 17th September, 1948. The visit, which was under the auspices of the British Council, cost 1,834 Sterling pounds of which 734 pounds was contributed by the Kenya Government.<sup>114</sup> The money enabled five Africans who were drawn from each of the provinces, to visit England. The other four were Chiefs Jonathan Okwiri of Nyanza, Micah Arap Bomet of Nandi, Malim Mohamed Stambul of Garissa and Councillor James Ngatia of the Kajiado LNC. Central Province was originally not to be represented because two men from the province were already in Britain under the auspices of the British Council. But the Central Province PC, A.C.M. Mullins, strongly pleaded with the CNC to include Waruhiu in the party because:

We could not do better than send Divisional Chief Waruhiu. He not only has an outstanding personality and record of public service, but I can think of no one who would be better at absorbing things in England and conveying them to his people.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> KNA+MAA 7/772, "Visit of Africans to the United Kingdom, 1948".

<sup>115</sup> ibid.

The 1948 trip, though modelled after a similar one of 1946, differed slightly in its objectives. The 1946 visitors had gone to Britain to represent Kenya civilians on Victory Parade Day on June 8th, present loyal messages to the King, and see the post-war Britain and the conditions under which the people were living.<sup>116</sup> The 1948 visit was, however, specifically geared towards the study of the British way of life with a view to imparting the knowledge so gained to their people upon their return.<sup>117</sup>

Meticulous care was taken in the selection of members of the party to ensure that those chosen "must be of high moral character who will benefit from such visit".<sup>118</sup> This was because one member of the 1946 trip, Sidney Grant Ralph, had caused Wyn Harris, the then Central Province PC and the leader of the trip, considerable anxiety. Wyn Harris bitterly complained that Ralph was devoid of even elementary manners as he had throughout assumed "a general air of supercilious dislike, disinterest and loutishness".<sup>119</sup> Ralph had stayed out late at night until the small hours of

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<sup>116</sup> KNA+ARC(MAA)+2/5/75, "Visit of Africans to the United Kingdom, 1946+1947".

<sup>117</sup> ibid.; KNA+PC/NZA/3/27/173, "Educational courses for Chiefs, 1946+1951".

<sup>118</sup> ibid.

<sup>119</sup> KNA+ARC(MAA)+2/5/144, "Visit of Africans to the United Kingdom, 1946".

the morning. Moreover, he had failed to turn up to many of the items on the programme and when he did, he was often rude to Wyn Harris and to the British Council and Colonial Office representatives. To crown it all, Ralph had taken every opportunity to discredit and abuse the Kenya Administration to the Europeans he came into contact with.<sup>120</sup>

Each member of the party was provided with Sterling Pounds 25 and their respective DCs had to ascertain that they bought at least one good suit, two shirts, a pair of shoes, a raincoat, a hat and a tie. They were also given Sterling Pounds 100 each for their expenses in England. Although the visit was originally scheduled to take place in April by sea, it did not materialise until August 1948. The cause of the delay was lack of sea passages as the available ones were fully booked by those embarking on their summer holidays. It was consequently decided that, if the visit was not to be postponed to another year, then they had to fly to and fro Britain. Accordingly, the party left Kisumu aboard a "Skymaster" aeroplane on 7th August, 1948. They were accompanied on the flight by P.E.W. Williams, who was the Director of Demobilization and Training. Waruhiu was met in London by his son, David Wainaina, who had earlier in

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<sup>120</sup> ibid.

the year been sponsored by the British Council to study local government in England.

Particular care was taken to keep the visitors away from the West Africans and thus prevent them from "being infected with strange ideas".<sup>121</sup> This was somehow difficult because England was then full of various coloured people and the Olympic Games crowd from all over the world. The dread of the West Africans resulted in the trip ending three days prematurely as those in charge did not want them to hang about in London any longer than was necessary.<sup>122</sup> Every effort was also made "to resist their being treated as Rajahs" by avoiding being cluttered up with too many formal tea parties or luncheons.<sup>123</sup> They, therefore, slept in comfortable but not luxurious hotels. They also had to travel third class so as to acquire the experience of crowded English trains "with the possibility of sitting on a suitcase or standing in the corridor".<sup>124</sup> This was done so as to emphasize that the ordinary life in Britain was neither always comfortable nor always "beer and skittles".<sup>125</sup> Secondly and as the CNC, Wyn Harris, put it:

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<sup>121</sup> KNA-MAA 8/88, "Entertainment of Africans, Trip to  
<sup>122</sup> England, 1948"; KNA-MAA 7/772, op. cit.  
<sup>123</sup> KNA-MAA 8/88, op. cit.  
<sup>124</sup> KNA-MAA 7/772, op. cit.  
<sup>124</sup> ibid.  
<sup>125</sup> ibid.

Here in Kenya they are not used to seeing Europeans doing manual work and they see them always travelling in cars or in first class railway compartments. Kenya society gives a very false idea of Britain and African visitors should have to "live British" when in the United Kingdom and not merely to see other people doing it.<sup>126</sup>

The visitors spent about two weeks, from 8th to 22nd August, in the south of England mostly on agricultural trips but with odd visits to places of interest and a bit of local government lectures thrown in. The third week, from 22nd to 29th August and the last few days between 12th and 17th September, were spent in London, mostly sight+seeing but also seeing poor living conditions, housing and courts. They spent the fourth week from 29th August to September 5th in Yorkshire seeing more farming and local government. The fifth week which fell between 5th and 12th September was spent in Manchester touring the industrial side of the British economy.

Besides the British Council staff, the party was also accompanied and taken around by three Kenya Government officers. A.C.M. Mullins was in charge of the party from 8th to 17th August when he handed over to A.C.C. Swann, who was the DC for Kericho. Swann, who took over the party at Chichester, Sussex, handed it over to L.E. Whitehouse at

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<sup>126</sup>ibid.

Leeds, Yorkshire. Whitehouse was in charge from 5th to 17th September when the visitors finally left for Kenya.

The tour was specifically designed to impress on the visitors a general picture of British life with special concentration on agriculture. This was done with an objective of showing the various types of farming in Britain and to demonstrate the amount of hard work, technical skill and scientific knowledge that was put in to raise the standards of the farms. Industrial area visits were designed to be of general interest and where possible, the visitors were shown the processing of East African raw materials. The working of local government in both rural and urban areas, the work of the police and the functioning of social services were also studied. In short, they were shown almost everything considered to be of interest and useful to them. This included agriculture, heavy industry, tanning, coal, steel, cotton, small holdings, forestry, mixed farming, local government, probation, education and matters of historic interest.<sup>127</sup> The party was quite indefatigable and the guides were hard put to answer all their questions.

When they visited the Manchester Calico Printers

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KNA-MAA 8/88, op. cit.

Association, Waruhiu wondered why the association could not sell its products directly to the Africans to prevent the Indian traders from skimming off the profit. He was informed by their guide, who was rather sceptical of their ability to do so, that the Africans could trade directly with the association if they raised an initial capital of at least Sterling Pounds 20,000. "Twenty thousand pounds? That is nothing!" echoed Waruhiu.<sup>128</sup> At that everybody smiled because business after all is business.

Throughout the visit, a number of points and teachings were emphasized. Firstly, that what the African in Kenya was trying to achieve had taken the British civilization over 2,000 years to evolve. Secondly, political advancement could only be achieved if there was sound economic foundations. Thirdly, political and economic advance were only achieved by hard work and not automatically as a right. Fourthly, care of land coupled with 'intensive agriculture and restoration of fertility were of paramount importance. Fifthly, misuse of land was not tolerated and people could and were usually evicted for bad farming. Sixthly, livestock were only valuable as producers of such products as meat, milk and manure and not as currency. Seventhly, that a high rate of

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<sup>128</sup> KNA-MAA 7/772, op. cit.



taxation was essential in order to provide a good infrastructure and social services. Lastly, that everybody was polite, friendly, cheerful and worked hard.<sup>129</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was impressed by almost everything that he saw. In each of the five letters he wrote to the CNC, he always said it was impossible to put everything down in writing as it "could only be explained much more effectively verbally".<sup>130</sup> He likened himself to a student who had been thoroughly and sufficiently educated by everything he saw. He was particularly impressed by the people's positive attitude towards work and he could not understand why his people could not do likewise upon his return.<sup>131</sup> He was, however, surprised that in their own homelands, Europeans did the manual labour which they shunned in Kenya and left to the Africans.<sup>132</sup> Waruhiu was also moved by the hospitality, manners and the orderliness of the queues at bus stops. When he was asked by a reporter how people had responded and acted towards them, Waruhiu answered:

Many of the people have not seen Africans in their streets before. But although they have been interested they have not stood and stared as I thought they might. When a little child has started to raise his hand to point,

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129 ibid.

130 ibid.

131 ibid.

132 O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, 8th April, 1987, Giathieko.

ibid.

his mother has straight-away stopped  
him.<sup>133</sup>

Waruhiu's party was also given several important social engagements. Among them was the one given at Chichester on Friday, 20th August, by the British Council area officer. It was attended by about 30 guests who included the Mayor of Chichester and several Departmental Heads. On Tuesday, the 24th of August, the visitors had lunch with students of the Colonial Summer School at King's College, Cambridge. The Secretary of State for the Colonies honoured the visitors with a tea-party on September 14th before they were given a farewell party on 16th September by the British Council officials.<sup>134</sup>

The 1948 visit was generally considered to have been more successful than the 1946 trip. All those who dealt with Waruhiu's party had nothing but compliments for their good behaviour. According to A.C.C. Swann, they had "behaved beautifully and everyone has commented on their excellent manners".<sup>135</sup> He also had a special word of

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<sup>133</sup>KNA-MAA 7/772, op. cit.

<sup>134</sup>ibid.

<sup>135</sup>ibid.

praise for Waruhiu when he said:

The old men are in great fun + Waruhiu in particular is in great form and totally taking in more than anyone else. He is also a tower of strength in keeping an eye on and improving the manners of his fellows.<sup>136</sup>

On the other hand, A.C.M. Mullins had the following to say about them:

They have created a really first rate impression over here and have been immensely popular without having their heads turned. Their manners and appearance have impressed people very much and they have been anxious to do the right thing and always asking us to point out any mistakes they make... they have been so delightfully unselfconscious that they are never embarrassed and so have not embarrassed anybody. They have been first class ambassadors and a pleasure to be with.<sup>137</sup>

The party was given a great deal of publicity in Britain and in Kenya. Their photographs and articles about them had appeared in various British newspapers like the London Evening News, the Yorkshire Post and the Daily Mirror. The CNC himself had organised publicity in Kenya. The letters he had received every now and then from them were given wide publicity over the radio and in the press.

Upon their return to Kenya, Waruhiu and his four colleagues were used by the government for propaganda

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<sup>136</sup>KNA-MAA 8/88, op. cit.

<sup>137</sup>ibid.

purposes. Waruhiu not only narrated his experiences over the radio but he also toured Central Province and other areas giving talks which tried to impress on his audience the lessons they had learnt in Britain.<sup>138</sup>

(vii) Awards and Decorations

Waruhiu was the recipient of five awards before his death which were a tribute for his conspicuous execution of his duties. The first was the Certificate of Honour in 1930. Certificates of Honour, which were approved by the King of England in 1927, were regarded as being exceptional and were only awarded to persons of outstanding ability like Waruhiu.<sup>139</sup> The Honours were a means of recognizing services which, although excellent in themselves, did not warrant an order of knighthood or the King's Medal for African Chiefs. The Certificates were signed and awarded by the Governor. All awards of the Certificate were reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the names of the recipients were published in the official gazette. The Certificate bore the portrait of the King plus the name of the recipient and a brief account of the services which it

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<sup>138</sup> KNA-MAA 7/634, "Intelligence Reports, Central Province, 1948"; KNA-MAA 7/772, op. cit.; KNA-PC/NZA/3/27/173, op. cit.

<sup>139</sup> KNA-CS 2/1/29, "Decorations and Medals, 1939-1951".

commemorated. The recipient also received a bronze badge which bore on the obverse the King's effigy and on the reverse the badge of the colony. It was worn around the neck pendent from a yellow watered silk ribbon.<sup>140</sup>

In 1935, Waruhiu was awarded the Jubilee Medal in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Edward VII's ascension to power.<sup>141</sup> Waruhiu's great moment, however, came in 1936 when he was awarded the prestigious King's Medal for African Chiefs which had been instituted in 1920.<sup>142</sup> Waruhiu was awarded the King's Medal in recognition of his efficient control of his chiefdom. The Medal was also awarded for enlightened acts of services undertaken for the benefit of the community or for special services and those of a long and faithful nature.<sup>143</sup> In the following year, 1937, Waruhiu was honoured with the Coronation Medal to mark the ascension of King George VI.<sup>144</sup> Lastly, on 1st January, 1951, Waruhiu was bestowed with the Member of British Empire Medal (M.B.E.).<sup>145</sup> The Medal which was only awarded to African

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<sup>140</sup> KNA+PC/RVP.6A/3/4/2, "King's Medals and Certificates of Honour, 1932+1944".

<sup>141</sup> KNA+CS 2/1/29, op. cit.

ibid.

<sup>142</sup> KNA+PC/RVP.6A/3/4/2, op. cit.

<sup>143</sup> KNA+CS 2/1/29, op. cit.

<sup>144</sup> KNA+DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

chiefs of exceptional merit, was a means of recognizing and rewarding Waruhiu's exceptional administrative skills and efficiency.<sup>146</sup> Waruhiu was, therefore, the first chief in Kiambu District, and among a handful in the colony, to be awarded the M.B.E.

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<sup>146</sup> KNA+CS 2/1/79, "Honours and Awards, 1942+1954".

CHAPTER SIX

SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF WARUHIU'S CAREER AS A CHIEF

Throughout his long career, Chief Waruhiu encountered many administrative problems and challenges. A few examples will, however, suffice to illustrate his performance as a chief.

(i) The Kikuyu Association

The Kikuyu Association was the first and the last political organization that Waruhiu ever belonged to. Waruhiu, Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo dominated and almost monopolised the KA, which increasingly came to be identified and associated with the chiefs. The KA was a moderate and reformist movement whose methods of operation were by memoranda, petitions and negotiations. The KA welcomed the presence and advice of administrative officers and missionaries at its meetings. These ensured that the KA adopted a conciliatory approach and that its proposals and deliberations were "couched in moderate and sensible language".<sup>1</sup> The missionaries, who at times assisted in the

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<sup>1</sup>KNA-PC/CP.15/1/2, op. cit.

drafting of memoranda, were trusted and believed they had the welfare of the Kikuyu at heart. This assessment was fairly accurate to a certain extent as exemplified by Rev. W. P. Knapp and Canon Harry Leakey.

Rev. Knapp, in an attempt to prevent the land at Ruiru from being alienated by Europeans, had urged the local people to raise some money to enable him to register it on their behalf. Unfortunately, two influential elders, Mioru and Kinuu, who were suspicious of Rev. Knapp's intentions, opposed and convinced the people against the idea and the land was subsequently alienated.<sup>2</sup> Waruhiu often recalled this incident with a lot of bitterness and misgivings.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, a few missionaries, like Canon Harry Leakey, did not always have the interests of the Africans at heart. He had at one time written to the government strongly advocating compulsory labour for Kikuyu men on state projects and on European farms as it would be "greatly to the advantage of the Kikuyu".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/12, op. cit.



Regardless of its inherent weaknesses and shortcomings, the KA did consistently and persistently harrass the government in a bid to reform the colonial situation to the advantage of the Kikuyu. Nevertheless, some of the KA grievances and demands in the social, economic and political spheres involved the well-being all Africans in the colony. The government does not appear to have taken the KA seriously because the same demands and complaints kept recurring in succeeding memoranda and petitions. This, however, did not discourage the KA which took every opportunity to air its grievances.

In 1923, the KA sent a memorandum to the government lamenting that the European farmers bordering on their Reserve had transgressed and encroached on their land. As a result, they claimed that they had lost valuable land, especially along the rivers. They requested that the boundary between their Reserve and the European farms be re-surveyed and clearly marked out "according to the way they were originally delineated by J.O.W. Hope together with the Akikuyu Elders".<sup>5</sup>

A year later, in 1924, the KA presented another memorandum to the East African Commission, also known as the

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<sup>5</sup>KNA-PC/CP.6/4/2, "Native Affairs: General Policy, 1920-1923".

Ormsby-Gore Commission. The KA requested for title deeds, delimitation of their Reserve, recognition of the Githaka (land) tenure system, an end to compulsory exchange of holdings between the Kikuyu and the settlers, better educational and medical services and a voice in legislation.<sup>6</sup> The memorandum was followed by a meeting with the Commission at Dagoretti on 10th November, 1924. The meeting was also attended by prominent government officers who included the Chief Secretary and the CNC. The KA, led by Chiefs Koinange and Njonjo, was very vocal and critical of the government on the land question, poor educational facilities, the registration (Kipande) system, poor terms of service for the chiefs and alienated salt-licks and adjoining forests.<sup>7</sup> Waruhiu, unlike his two colleagues, was silent as he perhaps did not want to antagonize the government or because his colleagues had said all there was to be expressed. The only positive outcome from the East African Commission was the recommendation and the subsequent gazetting of Reserve boundaries in 1926.<sup>8</sup>

But this was not accomplished before the KA had

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<sup>6</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/19, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>ibid.

<sup>8</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/8, "Political Record Book: Administrative history of Kiambu District, 1890-1916".

dispatched another memorandum to the Governor in November 1925. The memorandum, signed by eighteen KA members, was prompted by a High Court judgement in a land case. The court had ruled that "no Mkikuyu owned any land as it all belonged to the Crown and they could be removed if the Crown so desired".<sup>9</sup> The memoir requested that the 1915 Crown lands Ordinance be amended; they be issued with title deeds; the restoration of Tribunal Courts' jurisdiction over land cases; and the creation of a Land Trust Board as a trustee for African lands.<sup>10</sup>

A similar and almost identical petition was submitted to the Hilton Young Commission in 1928. The Commission had been appointed to look into the feasibility of creating a federation of East Africa. The KA rejected the proposed federation; demanded for twelve African representatives in the Legislative Council; called for the abolition of the kipande system; improvement of chiefs' terms of service; and the expansion of African education under government control.<sup>11</sup> Apart from a slight hike in the pay of chiefs in Kiambu, the 1928 Commission does not appear to have brought any other

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<sup>9</sup>KNA-P/C/C.8/5/1, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.

<sup>11</sup>ibid.

immediate benefits to the KA and its members.<sup>12</sup>

When the KA was threatened with proscription, it changed its name in 1931 to the Loyal Kikuyu Patriots. This was done in an endeavour to emphasize the loyalty of its members to the government and to distinguish it from the radical KCA. The move followed an order from the DC, S.H. Fazan, that chiefs resign from the KA because he "would not permit any whole time employees of Government to belong to any Association, loyal or otherwise".<sup>13</sup> The tactical manoeuvre ensured the survival of the association for several more years, though its days were already numbered.

The association disappeared into oblivion after it had sent a joint Kikuyu telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1934. This was because Chief Koinange, who was the real driving force behind the association, abandoned it and secretly joined the KCA after the publication of the Kenya Land Commission Report in 1934.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>See Chapter Five.

<sup>13</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/23, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1930".

<sup>14</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 84.

(ii) The 1929-1930 Female Circumcision Crisis

Waruhiu, as a devout Christian and a chief, was entangled in the 1929-30 female circumcision crisis. The imbroglio was between the Kikuyu traditionalists and the missionaries with their converts. The missionaries wanted female circumcision - which they strongly deprecated as being libidinous, brutalizing and sexual mutilation of women - stamped out among the Kikuyu.<sup>15</sup>

The missionaries argued that female circumcision affected a woman's natural functions of micturition, menstruation and parturition with grave and disastrous consequences. This was because the operation involved the cutting away of the inner and outer parts lying round the birth canal. In its severest form, the cutting extended in front up on to the pubis and into the birth canal itself. The operation caused great pain and agony since the parts are highly sensitive. There was also a likelihood of infection of the bladder which could also spread up to the kidneys. Sterility was also likely to occur owing to impossibility of sexual intercourse as much of the normal elastic tissues of

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<sup>15</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, "Memorandum Prepared by the Kikuyu Mission Council on Female Circumcision, 1929-1930"; KNA-DC/KBU/1/12, op. cit.

those parts were replaced by a ring of hard unyielding fibrous tissue when healed. During childbirth, the hard fibrous ring hindered the stretching of the muscles resulting in delayed delivery which often led to either the death of the child or to an incision being made by the attending traditional midwives. The incisions, which were often deep and unnecessary, often cut into the bowel passage making it impossible for the patient to control her bowel movements thereafter. Very often, the wounds became septic and increased the danger of infection inside which could either be fatal or lead to prolonged suffering and sterility.<sup>16</sup>

The missionaries could not discern any credibility to the Kikuyu assertion that the practice decreased sexual passion in the female thereby preserving virginity in girls and extra-marital chastity in married women. They also found the Kikuyu claim that **clitoridectomy** was necessary for child-bearing absurd.<sup>17</sup> The missionaries, citing the Zulu and the Thonga of Southern Africa as tribes who had abandoned even male circumcision, could not understand why the Kikuyu could not do likewise with regard to clitoridectomy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>ibid.

<sup>18</sup>ibid.

Clitoridectomy was, however, far from being valueless as the missionaries tended to imply. It was the most important landmark in a girl's development into womanhood and adulthood. Initiation marked the transition of a female from childhood into adulthood and into full membership of her society. Much more crucial, initiation was followed by thorough instruction in tribal lore.<sup>19</sup> Not to be initiated was, therefore, equivalent to being "debarred from developing the personality and attributes of womanhood and to be condemned to remain psychologically a little girl forever".<sup>20</sup> Thus, the unconditional demand by the missionaries that the Kikuyu renounce clitoridectomy amounted to asking them to reject "the tribe's cultural tradition, or charter of life, which had been handed down from the ancestors through the generations".<sup>21</sup>

Systematic teaching against clitoridectomy had been started in 1906 by the CSM which forbid its adherents to circumcise their daughters in 1916.<sup>22</sup> Four years later, in 1920, an African Christian Conference held at Tumutumu passed a resolution calling for absolute prohibition of the custom

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<sup>19</sup>Muriuki, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

<sup>20</sup>C.G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>21</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup>ibid.

within the African Church.<sup>23</sup> In the same year, an Inter-Mission United Native Conference held at Kambui, of which Waruhiu was a participant, resulted in the GMS, the AIM and the CMS forbidding female circumcision among their members.<sup>24</sup> This was followed in September 1922 by a resolution, which was passed by the Representative Council of the Alliance of Protestant Missions in Kenya, emphasizing the need for the missionaries to use their influence to get female circumcision abolished.<sup>25</sup> Four years later, in 1926, all the LNCs in Central Province, with the exception of Nyeri, passed a legislation against clitoridectomy. Waruhiu, as a councillor of the Kiambu LNC, supported the Council's bye-law whose main feature was to forbid the major operation during circumcision. Until 1929, the legislation, however, "practically remained a dead letter".<sup>26</sup>

The first prosecution under the Kiambu bye-law, which sparked off the 1929-1930 female circumcision crisis, took place in 1929. Ng'endo, a fifteen-year old girl who was a Kambui adherent from Mitahato in Waruhiu's Location, was forcibly seized and circumcised. Two women, the circumciser and the attendant, were consequently prosecuted in a Kiambu

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<sup>23</sup>ibid.

<sup>24</sup>ibid.

<sup>25</sup>ibid.

<sup>26</sup>ibid.



court. They were each fined Shs. 30 for performing the major operation rather than for forcibly circumcising the girl.<sup>27</sup>

Dr. John Arthur, who was infuriated and disgusted at the lightness of the sentence, wrote to the East African Standard on 10th August, 1929 "explaining the circumstances of the occurrence and showing the implications of the judgement".<sup>28</sup>

A week later, on 17th August, the KCA circularised all the chiefs in Kikuyuland, and whether deliberately or otherwise, misrepresented Dr. Arthur's article. The KCA lamented that Dr. Arthur and Rev. Knapp had been responsible for the enactment of a legislation which abolished female circumcision among the Kikuyu. The circular asked the chiefs to state the action they intended to take to counteract the legislation.<sup>29</sup>

In response, Waruhiu, Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo wrote to the East African Standard on 17th December, 1929. They defended Dr. Arthur and repudiated the actions and aspersions of the KCA, terming them as mere fabrications and incitements.<sup>30</sup> The belated response was, however, not

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<sup>27</sup> ibid.

<sup>28</sup> ibid.

<sup>29</sup> ibid.

<sup>30</sup> ibid.

published at the desire of the administration, possibly because it had been overtaken by other important developments.

Early in September, 1929, a small meeting representative of the churches in Kiambu District, which had been attended by Chiefs Waruhiu, Koinange, Karanja and Njonjo, had been held. A draft petition to the government, seeking legislation against female circumcision, was discussed and it received general approval.<sup>31</sup> On 19th September, an approved draft was circulated to the churches with guidelines as to how the signatures were to be obtained. But it is doubtful whether the government would have enacted a legislation against female circumcision. This was because the government's policy had been stated in 1924 in the following words:

It is a custom which will only disappear through the spread of education and with the gradual passing away of the present generation of conservative and unteachable Elders, who still adhere to various barbarous ordeals and superstitious customs in spite of all efforts of the Administrative officers to check them.<sup>32</sup>

The attempt to secure signatures for the petition was hampered by adverse rumours which were attributed to the KCA.<sup>33</sup> The KCA became the champion of Kikuyu cultural

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<sup>31</sup>ibid.

<sup>32</sup>ibid.

<sup>33</sup>ibid.

nationalism because "it indeed seemed to them that it was not Christianity which was in danger but Kikuyu culture".<sup>34</sup> One rumour said that the signatures were being sought to petition the government because the missionaries and the Europeans generally wished Kikuyu girls to remain uncircumcised so that they might marry them and in that way seize Kikuyu lands.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, the quest for signatures was severely impaired by the scurrilous and lewd Muthirigu dance-song.

(iii) The Muthirigu Dance-Song

The Muthirigu dance-song was adapted from the innocuous Swahili Mselego song sung at the close of the holy month of Ramadhan. But the Kikuyu supplied their own words which were mainly vulgar, vituperative and unprintable. The body movements of the dance-song were largely an imitation of those made by the Muslims though certain of its characteristics were derived from the people of western Kenya and European dances. The words of the stanzas were improvised according to locality and circumstance though a few were widely sung.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>C.G. Rosberg and J. Nottingham, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>35</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup>ibid.

The Muthirigu dance-song erupted in July 1929 at the Government Native Industrial Training Depot at Kabete. Thereupon, Chiefs Waruhiu and Koinange visited the Depot and ordered the trainees to desist from any further participation in the dance-song.<sup>37</sup> But this only added fuel to an already volatile and inflammable situation. The dance-song thereafter swiftly spread throughout Central Province, Nairobi and the White Highlands like bushfire. Consequently, comparatively few signatures were obtained for the petition owing to the hostility it aroused.<sup>38</sup>

Specific people and organizations were vilified by the Muthirigu dance-song. They included the church, the missionaries, converts, administrative officers, those who had refused to circumcise their daughters, big uncircumcised girls (irigu, sing. kirigu) and those who had married such girls. Among the reputed and celebrated leaders of the Muthirigu dance-song were Cutha wa Gatherere and Gachogu wa Irungu. Below are a few stanzas of the Muthirigu dance-song. They illustrate its nature.

Little knives  
in their sheaths,  
That they may fight with the church,  
the time has come.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>O.I., Josiah Waboyo, 4th March, 1987, Kibicho.

<sup>38</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup>ibid.

Knapp is a European  
But what nationality will Wanyoike be?  
What will the toothless donkey baptize?  
Now he will baptize apes of the forest.<sup>40</sup>

When Johnstone shall return  
with the King of the Kikuyu,<sup>41</sup>  
Philip (Karanja) and Koinange  
will don women's robes.<sup>42</sup>

They urge me to marry a Kirigu  
But father is circumcised and mother too.  
How can a goat without initiation scars  
Be used for a ceremony?<sup>43</sup>

Wagathenge has given birth  
But Waruhiu has no milk  
So he says to wife  
I will milk you.<sup>44</sup>

Waruhiu has given birth,  
Wagathenge has given birth,  
his daughter has also given birth,  
Who gives the other post-natal care?<sup>45</sup>

If the natives wished  
Waruhiu and Koinange  
Would be buried alive,  
because of fighting for irigu.<sup>46</sup>

Waruhiu, and the other leading Kiambu chiefs, worked tirelessly and unselfishly to restore tranquility in the district. They were instrumental to the banning of the Muthirigu dance-song in January 1930 on account of its bad

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<sup>40</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>41</sup>Johnstone Kenyatta was then in England. Harry Thuku, the King of the Kikuyu, was still in detention.

<sup>42</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup>Wanyoike, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>44</sup>O.I., Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup>ibid.

<sup>46</sup>O.I., Karanja wa Kiondo, 4th March, 1987, Kibichoi; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.

moral effect.<sup>47</sup> Drastic measures were taken against those dancing the forbidden dance-song and those attending the unauthorised meetings which it occasioned. The severe penalties imposed eventually led to the demise of the Muthirigu dance song.<sup>48</sup>

When the Governor, Edward Grigg, held a baraza at Kiambu on 26th February, 1930, he congratulated the chiefs on the firmness and courage with which they had dealt with the crisis. He also warned the KCA against a campaign which "tended to seduce the ignorant masses from loyalty and obedience".<sup>49</sup> But before the Muthirigu dance-song had been banned, a break with the missions had already taken place.

(iv) The Independent Schools and Church Movement

The CSM, incensed and furious with the KCA which was believed to be "insidiously and deliberately working against the church and the mission", took certain drastic retaliatory measures. In October 1929, the Mission demanded that all its teachers, the Kirk Session and all Church members sign a declaration stating their loyalty to the Mission's attitude

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<sup>47</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/23, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup>ibid.

<sup>49</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/23, op. cit.

regarding female circumcision and affirming their non-membership of the KCA. Those who failed to comply with the conditions of the Mission would be excommunicated and their children would be expelled from the Mission's schools.<sup>50</sup> The unilateral demand by the CSM precipitated the break with the missions and the formation of the Kikuyu Independent Schools and Church Movement.

The Independent Movement was, therefore, born on the death throes of the female circumcision crisis. Before the end of 1929, there were already signs of a movement towards separation both in churches and in schools. During the first few months of the crisis the CSM lost about ninety per cent of its communicants and about 53 per cent of its school children; the GMS about 20 per cent of its adherents and a quarter of its pupils; while the AIM lost about half of its pupils.<sup>51</sup>

The Independent Movement was geared towards a Kikuyu religious and educational system free from missionary control or interference. The Independent Movement thereafter split into the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (hereafter KISA) and the Kikuyu Karing'a Educational Association (hereafter KKEA). The former was widespread in northern

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<sup>50</sup>KNA-DC/FH 1/3/2, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup>ibid.

Kiambu, Murang'a and in the Rift Valley while the latter was predominant in southern Kiambu. KISA established the African Independent Pentecostal Church while the KKEA associated itself with the Greek Orthodox Church. Whereas KISA was primarily concerned with educational and religious matters, the KKEA was politically orientated in a bid to solve its problems. The Independent Movement was, however, handicapped by a number of problems. In the forefront was financial constraints coupled with mismanagement owing to lack of training and organizational skills. Secondly, the failure to co-operate with the relevant authorities denied it expertise advice and financial assistance from the government. Thirdly, the Movement was weakened by the rivalry between KISA and KKEA.<sup>52</sup>

Throughout his life, Waruhiu never came to terms or understanding with the Independent Movement, which was firmly and well established in his Githunguri Division. This was because the movement was an arm of the KCA which was a successor of Harry Thuku's EAA. Waruhiu, therefore, regarded them as mere rebels and agitators who were not only disputing European leadership and authority but his too. Accordingly,

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<sup>52</sup>J.B. Ndungu, "Gituamba and Kikuyu Independency in Church and School", in B.G. McIntosh, ed., Ngano, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969, p. 147.



Waruhiu never supported any application for financial assistance by the Independent Movement from the Kiambu Council. In June 1930, Waruhiu and other chiefs urged the government to compel the dissenters to return to their missions.<sup>53</sup> In September 1936, he called on the LNC to register and licence only four Independent schools in each Division, a move which the Council rejected.<sup>54</sup> In later years, the Independent Movement was closely associated and allied first, with KAU and secondly, with the formidable Mau Mau Movement. Chief Waruhiu's suspicion and distrust of the Independent Movement was as if he had a premonition of his death emanating from them.

(v) Waruhiu and the Kiambu White Settlers

Chief Waruhiu heavily collaborated and interacted with the settler community in Kiambu. The settlers in their turn greatly depended on him for their labour requirements, particularly during the coffee-picking seasons.

Coffee-growing in the district had been introduced just before the First World War and by 1938, 45,000 acres were

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<sup>53</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1925-1931.

<sup>54</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940 .

under the crop.<sup>55</sup> The coffee growers had formed local Production Sub-Committees which dealt with coffee-picking rates and labour supply in their respective areas. Waruhiu was often invited to the meetings of the Ruiru-Thika Production Sub-Committee which bordered on his location.<sup>56</sup> The Kiambu and Murang'a Production Sub-Committees were co-ordinated and liaised with the Thika-Ruiru District Labour Liaison Committee under the chairmanship of the Kiambu DC. Waruhiu and the neighbouring chiefs were ex-officio members of this committee which was a forum for finding out "the best way of working together for the mutual benefit of Europeans, Africans and the colony as a whole".<sup>57</sup> The committee also ensured that uniform picking rates were fixed and that the available labour was fairly distributed amongst the coffee estates.

Chief Waruhiu was an excellent labour recruiter for the settlers and he never spared himself in his endeavour to ensure that their manpower needs were met. Although many people were unwilling and reluctant to pick coffee for the settlers, Waruhiu would somehow convince them to do it.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>KNA-ARC (MAA)-2/3/16 III, "Central Province Monthly Intelligence Reports, 1941-1943".

<sup>56</sup>O.I., Peter Gichuhi Thuita, 28th June, 1987, Githiga; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup>KNA-DC/FH/2/1, "Production Sub-Committee Meetings, 1931-1952".

<sup>58</sup>O.I., Rev. John Gatu, op. cit.

Waruhiu must have realized that jobs being hard to come by, coffee picking, which by 1941 brought about Sterling Pounds 30,000 to Kiambu, was a major part-time preoccupation for the people to earn some much needed extra cash.<sup>59</sup> As a result, Waruhiu would lament that it would indeed be "a bad day when labour was imported from elsewhere to pick it".<sup>60</sup> For this and other reasons, Waruhiu could never rest until the idle people were usefully engaged. His favourite rallying call proverb was Kamuingi koyaga ndiri (unity is strength).<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Waruhiu hated to see loafers when there was work to be done. He largely blamed the coffee shops which, he argued, tended to encourage people to idle about.<sup>62</sup> He also added that such idle young men were the originators of malicious and false rumours in the district.<sup>63</sup> Waruhiu could, therefore, not understand why they should not work like people in Europe and elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> As a result, coffee farms neighbouring to Waruhiu's location were always well supplied with coffee pickers compared to other areas.<sup>65</sup> Waruhiu would normally go round visiting farms to sort out their labour problems.<sup>66</sup> His stamina in this direction was captured by

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<sup>59</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/32, op. cit.

<sup>60</sup>KNA-DC/FH/2/1, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup>KNA-CS 8/12/27, "Information and Propaganda, 1952-1953".

<sup>62</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/13, "Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1944-1950".

<sup>63</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1949-1954.

<sup>64</sup>ibid.

<sup>65</sup>KNA-ARC (MAA) -2/3/16 IV, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

the DC in 1944 in the following words:

Chief Waruhiu worked in a most systematic way, not only visiting the farms himself but taking with him natives who had influence in the neighbourhood of the farms concerned to encourage the pickers to do a good job.<sup>67</sup>

It was mainly because of the zeal that Waruhiu exhibited when recruiting labour for the settlers that sinister rumours in this respect were circulated against him. The rumours accused Waruhiu of colluding with the settlers thereby deflating the picking rates.<sup>68</sup> Maybe it was partly because of these rumours and partly because of the low coffee-picking prices that the Kiambu LNC demanded to be represented in the Labour Liaison Committee where "the price per debbe (tin) was fixed".<sup>69</sup> As a consequence, Councillors Peter Gatabaki and Solomon Memia attended their first and last meeting of the Labour Liaison Committee in July 1947.<sup>70</sup> They were never invited again to the committee's meetings because, as the DC put it:

...their attention was directed entirely to the price of picking per Debbe and their views were strikingly innocent of Economics. Figures were produced to illustrate the relation of picking costs to the price of coffee. The LNC representatives seemed to

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<sup>67</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA) - 2/3/16 IV, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup>O.I., Peter Gichuhi Thuita, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

<sup>69</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>70</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

think that Shs. 3 per Debbe should be the fair price.<sup>71</sup>

Contrary to what many people believed, Chief Waruhiu had no role in fixing coffee-picking rates. This was done by the coffee planters themselves as illustrated by the Labour Liaison Committee's meeting held on 1st August, 1952, the last Liaison Committee meeting that Waruhiu would ever attend. The invited chiefs were informed that the farmers had agreed to pay 55 cents per debe for 1952 rather than the 50 cents they had paid for 1951.<sup>72</sup> Most of the chiefs present pressed for 60 cents per debe with the exception of Magugu who advocated for 50 cents.<sup>73</sup> The deadlock was broken by Waruhiu. He reminded his fellow chiefs that coffee, besides offering the Kikuyu employment and income, also brought in money to help run the country. He agreed with the previous year's compromise that had decided upon a sliding scale and he thought it would be shameful "if an agreement was broken the first year".<sup>74</sup> He appealed to all present to agree to the 55 cents as laid down in the sliding scale. When this was put to the vote, twenty-nine were in favour of 55 cents per debe, six against with one dissenting member.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA) - 2/3/16 IV, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup>KNA-DC/FH 2/1, op. cit.

<sup>73</sup>ibid.

<sup>74</sup>ibid.

<sup>75</sup>ibid.

The allegation that Waruhiu would at times close down schools, so as to force the pupils to pick coffee, is refuted by the following incident. In April 1946, the PC put forward a proposal that Christmas holidays be adjusted to commence on 22nd November to 3rd January each year "in order to assist the coffee picking".<sup>76</sup> The LNCs rejected the proposal, with the Kiambu Council arguing that if the planters paid attractive picking money, they would attract ample adult labour.<sup>77</sup> The PC thereafter attempted to circumscribe the decision of the LNCs by asking the District Education Boards to sanction the alteration to the school holidays. Chief Waruhiu, on behalf of the representatives in the District Education Boards from the Province, supported any changes suggested by the administration "provided that the new holidays did not coincide with the coffee picking periods".<sup>78</sup> He strongly felt that pupils engaged in coffee picking "came under undesirable influences and received money to which they were unaccustomed and which they spent unwisely".<sup>79</sup> This dealt the proposal a death blow and it was never revived in subsequent years.

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<sup>76</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>77</sup>ibid.

<sup>78</sup>KNA-PC/CP.20/4, "Labour Supply, 1945-1956".

<sup>79</sup>ibid.

Nevertheless, Chief Waruhiu was rewarded by the settlers in a number of ways in appreciation of his valuable services. The settlers never forgot to invite him to their social gatherings and functions. In 1948, for example, Waruhiu was a member of the large parties of leading Africans who were twice entertained by the Ruiru-Thika farmers.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, on 14th April, 1950, Waruhiu was invited to the opening ceremony of the Cannery Factory at Thika.<sup>81</sup> The neighbouring farmers also lent Waruhiu their cooks when he had important and distinguished European guests.<sup>82</sup> They also wrote to his superiors commending him for his excellent services.<sup>83</sup> Much more important, they bought him his first car in 1948 as a token of their gratitude to him.<sup>84</sup> Lastly, they erected his statue outside Kiambu Hospital as a last tribute for all he had done for them when he was alive.<sup>85</sup>

(vi) The Second World War

When the Second World War started in 1939, the Kenya Government expected an Italian invasion from Ethiopia. Italy

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<sup>80</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/38, op. cit.

<sup>81</sup>KNA-MAA 8/68, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>83</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/32, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

<sup>85</sup>O.I., Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, 10th April, 1987, Giathieko.

was then in a favourable and advantageous position owing to the initial victories of the Axis Powers in Europe and Asia. It was also during the early phases of the War that there were pernicious rumours to the effect that the Kikuyu were enemies of the British Government and wished the Axis Powers to win.<sup>86</sup> Waruhiu dispelled and quashed the rumours by stating that:

We know there have been associations hostile to Government but we dislike subversive talk; some think the Kikuyu are hypocrites but in fact we want to assist Government in every way we can. There may be disloyal individuals but disloyalty is not the keynote of Kikuyu feeling at the present time. The people of Kenya must be one people without any doubt.<sup>87</sup>

In spite of this, Waruhiu was very worried and anxious when the War broke out.<sup>88</sup> It appeared to him that disaster and destruction were imminent and unavoidable and he was just about to lose all he had so painstakingly accumulated. But when the initial shock was over, Waruhiu totally committed himself to the prosecution of the War in a bid to ensure that the British emerged victorious. Consequently, Waruhiu became the most travelled chief in Kiambu, not only within his location but also his division. He never seemed to

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<sup>86</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940; O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>87</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>88</sup>O.I., Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.



rest.<sup>89</sup> He must have reasoned that a British victory or defeat would be his too since the King of England was his King too. This stand is fairly comparable to those of the other prominent individuals during the War. For example, Harry Thuku felt that he was not only helping the government defend the colony but he was also defending his own country, people and property.<sup>90</sup>

During the early years of the War, Chief Waruhiu went around urging the people to dig bomb shelters; to cover their corrugated roofs to prevent them from being mistaken for European homes in case of an Italian air raid; and to put out fires at night.<sup>91</sup> These precautionary measures, however, turned out to be unwarranted as the long-awaited Italian invasion never materialised.

Chief Waruhiu also played an important role in the recruitment of many young men from Githunguri into the various military units.<sup>92</sup> Most of the men fought in Ethiopia, the Middle East and Burma. Such soldiers wrote numerous letters complaining about one thing or another. As a result, Waruhiu

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<sup>89</sup>KNA-P/C/O.4/4/3, op. cit.

<sup>90</sup>Thuku, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>91</sup>O.I., Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>92</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

and the other chiefs were continually called upon to investigate the family affairs of military men at the front. Even though the investigations turned out to be frivolous on numerous occasions, the chiefs never complained.<sup>93</sup>

Divisional Chief Waruhiu and the other chiefs in the district also assisted the government to recruit men for the East African Military Essential Services. Chiefs recruited the men according to their age-groups and in quotas. To fill his quota, Waruhiu would rely on his inherent and in-born powers of dealing with people. On one occasion at Marigi Market in Komothai Location, Waruhiu asked the young men to report to the DC, Kiambu, on a certain day as he wanted to see them. He also pleaded with them not to be ashamed or let him down because if they failed to turn up, it would be construed that he had not informed them.<sup>94</sup> When they reported on the appointed day, they were conscripted into the East African Military Labour Service and deployed on various projects and on European farms. As a result, complaints were rife that the Essential Services Scheme was "a subterfuge intended to swell the profit of private employers rather than to promote the prosecution of the War".<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/36, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1945".

<sup>94</sup>O.I., Nelson Macharia Muhia, 8th May, 1987, Gathiruiini.

<sup>95</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/33, op. cit.

Divisional Chief Waruhiu was also used by the colonial authorities as an instrument of war propaganda. The propaganda was specifically directed towards the Kikuyu as some of them were against the idea of being involved in the War.<sup>96</sup> Waruhiu, therefore, held numerous baraza all over his Division to propagate war propaganda in favour of the British and their allies. He would inform the people of how the British armies, supported by their own young men, were marching from victory to victory.<sup>97</sup> In addition to the baraza, Waruhiu would also broadcast to the Kikuyu over the radio.<sup>98</sup> Broadcasting in Kikuyu had been started in 1938 on a weekly and experimental basis. The broadcasts were also used as a mode of combating and dispelling undesirable war rumours. Prominent Kikuyu from all walks of life - who included chiefs like Waruhiu and Njonjo, teachers, farmers and Tribunal Courts Elders - broadcast over the radio at one time or another. Their well known voices were believed to give a lot of credence to the broadcasts.<sup>99</sup> Waruhiu, for example, warned the people over the radio to cease associating themselves with the KCA when it was outlawed in May 1940.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>97</sup>O.I., Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>98</sup>O.I., Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup>KNA - Information 1/6, "Wireless Broadcasts to Africans, 1941-1955".

<sup>100</sup>O.I., Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.

During the 1943 Ng'aragu ya Mianga, or Famine of Cassava, when cassava flour was widely eaten, Waruhiu and the other chiefs became agents of food distribution in the district. Several conditions had combined to bring about the famine. First, the heavily and badly distributed long rains of 1942 had ruined plant formation in the early stages resulting in extremely poor harvests. Secondly, the failure of the short rains in 1942 meant a crop failure throughout the district. Thirdly, there was a further setback due to the loss of the expected potato crop from blight. Fourthly, the low maize control prices made the whole of the available crop to disappear from the market and led to a brisk illicit trade between European farmers and African growers. Lastly, the war conditions had made almost all the available foodstuffs to be directed to the war efforts.<sup>101</sup>

The food that Waruhiu and the other chiefs helped to distribute was purchased by the Kiambu LNC and sold to the residents at subsidized rates. Nevertheless, there were some grumblings against Waruhiu who was said to have practised nepotism and favouritism in food distribution.<sup>102</sup> He was also accused by some of his people of adding a chemical to

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<sup>101</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU/1/1/63, "Famine Relief, 1939-1953".

<sup>102</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

some maize given to them by the government with an ill-motive.<sup>103</sup> But the preservative chemical had been added by the government to deter them from eating the maize seeds meant for planting.<sup>104</sup>

(vii) Waruhiu and the Soil Conservation Measures

The end of the Second World War in 1945 coincided with an intensification of the compulsory anti-erosion terracing campaign. Soil conservation had been recommended by the Kenya Land Commission of 1932-1934 as a means of alleviating land shortage by maximising the use of the available land.<sup>105</sup> Soil erosion was the greatest and the most formidable monster of soil degradation. Soil degradation was a resultant of human and livestock pressures on insufficient land. This was because shifting cultivation and the traditional migratory patterns could no longer be practised.

Kiambu and Central Province were very susceptible and prone to soil erosion owing to the topography of alternating ridges with steep slopes. During the rainy seasons, torrential waters cascaded down the steep gradients sweeping

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<sup>103</sup>ibid.

<sup>104</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>105</sup>Kenya Land Commission Report, London, 1934, p. 259.

away the denuded top soil. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, the government introduced certain measures designed to arrest and reverse soil erosion and degradation in the colony. In the semi-arid areas, like Machakos and Baringo, compulsory destocking was introduced while compulsory anti-erosion terraces were introduced in the mainly agricultural Central Province.

From the onset of the soil conservation measures, Waruhiu proved to be indispensable to the administration. In 1935, Waruhiu was among the few who heeded the DC's call to plant nappier fodder along the contours of hill side shamba as a practical way to arrest erosion.<sup>106</sup> In September 1936, Waruhiu was once again among the twelve people in Githunguri Division who wished to have the Agricultural Instructor mark out terrace lines on their holdings.<sup>107</sup> In 1938, Waruhiu induced some thirty families at Riuki to commence planting stop wash lines. He also inspired two of his subordinate chiefs, Magugu and Kahehu, to take an active interest in soil conservation measures. Thus, by the end of 1938, the locations of Waruhiu, Magugu and Kahehu had begun a "slow but definite progress" on the question of soil erosion and

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<sup>106</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>107</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/100, "Minutes of the Kiambu LNC Agricultural Sub-Committee, 1931-1946."

fertility.<sup>108</sup> In 1939, Waruhiu was said to have been the only chief who had "really put any energy into anti-erosion work".<sup>109</sup>

In 1937, Waruhiu called on the Kiambu LNC to legislate for soil conservation. He stated that a definite order was necessary because unless rules could be enforced, nobody would bother with soil conservation measures.<sup>110</sup> It was, however, not until on 2nd April, 1940 that such a legislation was enacted by the LNC. Speaking during the debate, Waruhiu asked his fellow councillors whom or what they were afraid of. He reminded them that they had always regarded rain as a friend "but now they must regard it as an enemy unless controlled".<sup>111</sup> He pleaded for a more realistic attitude towards soil erosion because "immediate action was needed, not mere words".<sup>112</sup> He also urged them not to regard soil conservation as the monopoly of the Agricultural Department. Waruhiu subsequently seconded the bye-law which was carried by ten votes to four with one abstention. The bye-law stipulated that everybody in Kiambu had to undertake necessary soil

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<sup>108</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/135, "Kiambu District Agricultural Annual Reports, 1934-1949".

<sup>109</sup>ibid.

<sup>110</sup>KCCA- Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>111</sup>ibid.

<sup>112</sup>ibid.

conservation measures on their holdings as may be directed by a chief "acting under the orders of the DC or Agricultural Officer".<sup>113</sup>

It was, however, not until in August 1941 that the Kiambu LNC passed a bye-law which made soil conservation a compulsory communal service. Contributing to the debate, Waruhiu once again concurred that measures to protect soil were an urgent necessity as people were then aware of the dangers of erosion and of the menace it posed to the wealth of the Reserve. He accordingly seconded the legislation whose main feature was to enforce the construction, maintenance and repair of anti-erosion terraces on a compulsory communal basis.<sup>114</sup> This in effect marked the beginning of the plight and nightmare of Kiambu peasants in this direction.

Waruhiu's location and division were throughout in the forefront of soil conservation work. The best response to grass planting along river banks was in Waruhiu's Githunguri Division.<sup>115</sup> His location and division also achieved staggering and stupendous results in the construction of anti-erosion terraces. His achievements were not solely due to the large sizes of his location and division. They were largely due to his distinguished leadership qualities and to his

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ibid.

114 KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

115 KNA D. A. O. /KRU 1/1/135 on cit



commitment to duty. Waruhiu tactfully placed the responsibility of terracing on the group elders who were responsible to him.<sup>116</sup> In this way, he was able to achieve better results than the other chiefs. The two tables below illustrate Waruhiu's terracing results. The first table shows the terracing results in yards within a six-month's

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<sup>116</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/38, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1947".

CHIEF'S NAME	TERRACED YARDS 1947						TERRACE MILES
	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	
1. WARUHIU	115,308	192,047	198,245	197,920	95,663	88,684	374.4
2. MAGUGU	77,121	65,595	88,181	89,026	87,907	36,359	160.0
3. LUKA	14,407	19,331	14,659	17,618	16,311	14,390	60.5
4. MAKIMEI	4,753	17,643	15,250	5,745	5,645	6,625	25.6
5. WARUINGI	9,808	18,878	18,495	30,437	24,888	19,847	104.3
6. MUHOHO	43,459	63,038	56,300	65,599	58,084	38,761	101.9
7. KIBATHI	27,167	30,500	22,766	17,460	16,251	450	58.2
8. WARUIRU	13,078	23,647	16,362	17,271	11,194	29,556	82.1
9. MUNYAMBU	17,845	28,179	22,420	21,932	28,893	22,763	84.4
10. NJONJO	8,623	13,148	21,233	30,274	26,963	39,254	75.0
11. KARANJA	4,830	17,532	18,296	20,581	17,685	18,624	34.6
12. NJIRIRI	9,565	14,572	13,093	12,647	16,857	20,510	37.8
13. KANG'ETHE	4,523	7,986	7,892	7,982	4,193	11,213	75.1

period in 1947 and terracing in miles for 1948 for each Kiambu chief. The second table indicates the miles terraced in each division within three years.<sup>117</sup>

DIVISION	MILES TERRACED		
	1947	1948	1949
GITHUNGURI	1,552.0	1,452	1,443
GATUNDU	666.2	943	875
DAGORETTI	384.6	625	721

Although Waruhiu's location and division were consistently far ahead of the others, Waruhiu at first did not realize that the district lagged behind most of the others in the province in soil conservation work. This is demonstrated by his complaints that what the newspapers highlighted about Murang'a "did not always demonstrate the true state of affairs".<sup>118</sup> In his opinion, Kiambu was far in advance of

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<sup>117</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU/1/1/135, *op. cit.*; D.A.O./KBU 1/1/156, "Soil Conservation, 1947-1949".

<sup>118</sup>KCCA - Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

Murang'a in soil conservation efforts.

The newspaper reports were, however, not exaggerated. In 1946, for example, 7,068 miles were terraced in Murang'a compared to a mere 1,831 miles in Kiambu.<sup>119</sup> As a result of these poor terracing figures, a party of chiefs (who included Waruhiu), councillors and elders were taken to Murang'a in early 1947 to find out the secret behind their success. The secret, according to Waruhiu, was that the Murang'a people had been provided with plenty of shovels while Kiambu people were using their own hands. He, therefore, called on the Kiambu LNC Agricultural Sub-Committee, of which he was the chairman, to buy shovels for soil control work.<sup>120</sup>

Shovels or no shovels, the peasants loathed and despised terracing work because of a number of reasons. First, terraces were not made in the White Highlands, most of which had a topography very similar to the Central Province one. Secondly, they could not understand how water could carry away the soil.<sup>121</sup> This is not strange considering that even a man of Harry Thuku's calibre could also not understand it until

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<sup>119</sup>KNA - D.A.O./KBU 1/1/156, op. cit.

<sup>120</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>121</sup>O.I. Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

he went down to the coast to confirm it for himself.<sup>122</sup> Thirdly, compulsion reduced them to almost the level of slaves. Those who failed to turn up were prosecuted and fined Shs. 30 to Shs. 150 on conviction. Fourthly, the narrow base terraces were temporary wash-stops to be repaired seasonally and this was a tedious and arduous work. Each person was required to dig one peg a day which was twenty-five feet long. The terrace had a channel of four feet wide, eighteen inches deep and a cross-section of at best two feet. To dig twenty-five feet of this terrace was equivalent to shifting more than fifty cubic feet of soil.<sup>123</sup> Fifthly, the terraces, which were dug at an interval of twenty-five feet, were considered as a waste of valuable land which was already inadequate.<sup>124</sup> Sixthly, the peasants with small holdings and the landless ahoi considered it unfair to them to work for those with large holdings without pay.<sup>125</sup> Lastly, underlaying all the grievances was a strong suspicion that they were being forced to improve their land in readiness for it to be alienated for white settlement.<sup>126</sup>

For these and other political motives, KAU became the

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<sup>122</sup>Thuku, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>123</sup>KNA- D.A.O./KBU 1/1/156, op. cit.

<sup>124</sup>Mrs. Serah Wanja Gachuri, 28th June, 1987, Githiga.

<sup>125</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

defender and fighter for the oppressed and suppressed peasants. The politicians demanded that either the government pay people for the terracing work or it introduce mechanical terracing.<sup>127</sup> The government could not concede to any of these demands since it considered that the people were entitled to do the work since it was for their own benefit. Secondly, the authorities argued that they had no funds to finance the scheme and that mechanical terracing would be impossible because of the extremely steep gradients, haphazard cultivation and the innumerable wattle plantations.<sup>128</sup> Not to be outdone, the politicians called for the communal terracing to be abandoned in favour of individual terracing. It took several hectic years to persuade the government to reluctantly agree to the change-over.

The first repercussion of the influence of the politicians became evident in Murang'a in 1947. There was a peasant revolt and boycott against communal terracing which was subsequently replaced with individual terracing.<sup>129</sup> This concession adversely affected communal terracing in Kiambu from then onwards. Although there were many more levellers in 1948 than before, the average terracing per

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<sup>127</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>128</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>129</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/5/234, "Central Province, 1947-1949".

leveller fell by almost fifty per cent and the quality of the work deteriorated.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, owing to the apathy of the people, most of the terraces were not in an effective condition as they were not properly maintained. By 1949, political agitation against terracing had made the exercise "become a burden to all officers concerned with this work".<sup>131</sup> In the same year, it appeared that nearly all chiefs had either lost interest in terracing or they had been intimidated by the politicians. Neither was Waruhiu spared. The administrative officers regretfully noted that:

Divisional Chief Waruhiu, so long a tower of strength has faded away and seems entirely disinterested. From being way ahead of the field he has taken his place amongst the also rans (sic). The reason is hard to find.<sup>132</sup>

By March 1950, Waruhiu's performance had not recovered. This prompted the Kiambu Agricultural Officer, G.J. Gollop, to write to the DC saying:

I have to bring to your notice that terracing in Divisional Chief Waruhiu's Location is far from satisfactory. Neither the chief nor his sub-headmen appear anxious to bring about any improvement in the position.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/39, *op. cit.*

<sup>131</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/135, *op. cit.*

<sup>132</sup>*ibid.*; KNA-DC/KBU/1/40, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1949".

<sup>133</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU/1/1/153, "Soil Samples and General, 1949-1961".

The Table below portrays Waruhiu's dismal performance from November 1949 to April 1950.<sup>134</sup>

CHIEF'S NAME	YARDS TERRACED					
	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
1. WARUHIU <sup>135</sup>	57,877	63,797	74,635	47,555	52,475	40,914
2. MAGUGU	40,160	31,059	20,417	25,664	27,655	25,094
3. MAKIMEI	5,998	7,501	15,422	15,899	15,431	15,412
4. WARUINGI	85,115	53,235	57,671	69,212	45,342	40,742
5. MUHOHO	26,972	23,776	32,550	32,269	31,471	20,127
6. KIBATHI	57,996	33,056	48,215	63,552	55,447	42,218
7. WARUIRU	8,437	14,436	16,256	18,550	16,170	13,663
8. MUNYAMBU	16,263	12,519	17,480	18,771	17,795	12,308
9. NJONJO	41,719	26,910	43,701	47,632	30,387	14,726
10. KARANJA	15,689	13,486	16,599	13,270	6,429	5,035
11. NJIRIRI	57,026	81,480	68,055	67,660	55,261	34,827
12. KANG'ETHE	12,526	12,779	12,794	12,604	11,147	8,015

<sup>134</sup>KNA+D.A.O./KBU/1/1/159, "Terracing figures, 1949-1954".

<sup>135</sup>Waruhiu's figures exclude those of Gatamaiyu which was added to his location on 1st July, 1949.



Several factors contributed to Waruhiu's lapse and miserable performance in the late 1949 and early 1950. Political intimidation was one of the causes because Waruhiu faced two court cases in 1947 and 1948 which had political overtones.<sup>136</sup> Secondly, and according to the administration, the distressing quarrel between Waruhiu and Magugu over the division of Chief Luka Wakahangara's location<sup>137</sup> coupled with the fact that there was a departmental officer whom Waruhiu "did not see eye to eye",<sup>138</sup> were the major causes of his relapse. Thirdly, Wagathenge's long illness and her subsequent death in February 1950 was a great blow to Waruhiu as she had remained his closest confidante despite his having married other wives.<sup>139</sup> Fourthly, Waruhiu must also have become disillusioned with the government's apparent failure to promote him to the position left vacant by Senior Chief Koinange's retirement in February 1949. The relapse was, nevertheless, temporary for before the end of 1950, Waruhiu had regained his old form.

But before then the government had already abandoned

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<sup>136</sup>These court cases are discussed towards the end of this Chapter.

<sup>137</sup>See Chapter 5.

<sup>138</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>139</sup>See Chapter 8.

communal terracing in May 1950 in favour of individual terracing. In addition, bench terraces, which were of a more permanent nature, were introduced in the district in 1951.<sup>140</sup> These innovations, however, arrived too late because irreparable damage had already been done. First, terracing had thoroughly alienated the peasants from the government and driven them into the arms of the radical militants. Second, the whole terracing exercise had made the chiefs extremely unpopular with their own people. This unpopularity subsequently became a contributory factor to Waruhiu's death a few years later. Individual terracing did not, however, ease the pressure on the peasants since compulsion was still employed. When the State of Emergency was declared in October 1952, the government reverted to communal terracing which was rigorously and vigorously enforced than ever before.

(viii) Waruhiu in Court

During his career, Waruhiu was twice taken to court in 1947 and in 1948, the former being a civil case and the latter a criminal charge. Indeed, not less than half a dozen chiefs from the Province were taken to court in the same period on charges of either assault or false confinement. In Kiambu,

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<sup>140</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/42, op. cit.

Chiefs Kibathi, Njiriri and Makimei were sued. The first two were acquitted while the third was convicted on a charge of assault. All the cases were by private prosecution which was conducted by Indian advocates and were defended by a government appointed and paid counsel.

The first attempt to get Chief Waruhiu into trouble and discomfiture was in 1945. A group of twenty men from Riuki wrote to the PC and bitterly complained that their 85 acres of wattle trees had maliciously been destroyed by Waruhiu's son, Agricultural Instructor Simon Kimani. They demanded Shs. 21,250 in compensation from the government.<sup>141</sup> This was followed by another letter to the PC which alleged that on February 24th, Waruhiu had induced ten men, who were neither the owners nor knew anything about the destroyed trees, to lie to the DC in order to cover up and protect his son from the accusations.<sup>142</sup>

The PC in his reply, however, flatly refused to entertain any of their claims. The PC exonerated Waruhiu and his son by stating that Waruhiu had held two baraza in September and October 1944 where the consent of the owners had been obtained before the trees were cut down in November 1944.

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<sup>141</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/156, op. cit.

<sup>142</sup>ibid.

Secondly, he justified the uprooting of wattle trees on steep slopes as being in accordance with the 1940 LNC bye-law concerning soil conservation. He finally dismissed their petition on the grounds that the land in question was not theirs according to Kikuyu customs.<sup>143</sup>

Maybe it was the outcome of this petition which compelled Githire wa Njoroge, also from Riuki, to take legal proceedings against Chief Waruhiu when he was faced with a similar situation in 1947. The trial magistrate was R.A. Campbell who was the Resident Magistrate, Nairobi. The prosecutor was S.M. Akram while the defence counsel was H.E. Stacey of Messrs Shapley Schwartz and Barret Advocates.

The plaintiff complained that Chief Waruhiu had maliciously ordered the destruction of his 384 two-year old sixteen feet high wattle trees, in mid-June 1947. He added that he had been forced to file the suit because neither the chief nor the DC had given him a satisfactory explanation when he complained to them. Githire felt that there was ill-motive behind the cutting down of his trees because, first, nobody else's had been cut down and secondly, most of the uprooted trees were not on the two terrace lines which were

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<sup>143</sup>ibid.

subsequently dug on his shamba on June 21st.<sup>144</sup> The complainant demanded Shs. 384 in compensation plus costs of the suit.<sup>145</sup> Seven of the eight witnesses that Githire called supported his claims.

In his defence, Chief Waruhiu stated that the plaintiff had refused to terrace his land after he had passed the orders of the Agricultural Officer to him. He had consequently charged Thiong'o wa Mburu, the leader of the terracing group in the area, to get the work carried out. Waruhiu, who was present when this was done, insisted and maintained that only about ten trees on the terracing lines had been cut down. He ended by appealing to the court to dismiss the case because it was "false as the plaintiff does not like to terrace".<sup>146</sup>

Three defence witnesses testified on behalf of Waruhiu. Two of them, who were agricultural instructors, generally agreed with what Waruhiu had said in his own defence.<sup>147</sup> The third witness, G.J. Gollop, the Agricultural Officer, Kiambu, added that although there may have been about 384 self-sown wattle saplings "as thick as a finger and five feet high", the owner was not entitled to any compensation. This

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144KNA-MAA 8/68, op. cit.

145ibid.

146ibid.

147ibid.

was because such a work was done at "the cost of the owner of the land".<sup>148</sup>

Judgement in the case, which had commenced on 24th November, 1947 was delivered on April 24th, 1948 after the Court had visited the locus in quo on 25th November, 1947. The judgement was given against Waruhiu because he was found to have ordered trees not on the terracing lines to be uprooted. The plaintiff was awarded a compensation of Shs. 4/44 and costs which were subsequently taxed at Shs. 187/44. These, together with the defence bill, amounted to Shs. 467/44 and were all paid for by the government.<sup>149</sup>

Although the government had considered appealing to the Supreme Court on the grounds that the Native Lands Trust Board were the legal owners of the Native Land Unit, this did not, however, materialise.<sup>150</sup> It could have been because the government might have realized the chances of acquittal were slim or it did not wish to expend any more money on the case than was necessary.

Hardly had the dust settled down than Chief Waruhiu was

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<sup>148</sup> ibid.

<sup>149</sup> ibid.

<sup>150</sup> ibid.

once again sued on a criminal charge in July 1948 in the Resident Magistrate's Court, Nairobi. The trial magistrate was C.P. Connell while the prosecution and defence Counsels were as in the previous case. Leonard Kamau Kigume, a Nairobi lawyer's clerk, complained that he was arrested for non-payment of Poll Tax; that he offered payment to Chief Waruhiu who said: "I don't care about your money", and wrongfully confined him for seventeen hours in the cells at Githunguri.<sup>151</sup>

The case created a lot of anxiety and misgivings to the administration, Wyn Harris, the CNC, in particular. He went out of his way to prevent the case being taken to court by writing to the Attorney General that:

From the administrative point of view it is essential that Waruhiu's authority should be upheld....it would be most unfortunate if any proceedings in court went by way of criminal action against Chief Waruhiu.<sup>152</sup>

The CNC asked the Attorney General to enter a nolle prosequi based on two points. One, Waruhiu's Clerk, Joseph Kimani, was the culprit because it was him, who not having a receipt book, had put the complainant in the cells. Two, since the detention of the plaintiff by the clerk was illegal, the CNC was prepared to make a Shs. 40 amend to Kigume under the Public

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<sup>151</sup>ibid.

<sup>152</sup>ibid., CNC to Attorney General, 30th July, 1948.

Officer Protection Ordinance.<sup>153</sup>

The Attorney General, however, refused to enter a nolle prosequi because not only had the plaintiff got a witness but also "the Chief himself has gone a long way towards admitting his guilt in the matter".<sup>154</sup> The only solution the Attorney General could offer was a handsome out of court settlement, rather than the Shs. 40 offered by the CNC, which, coupled with the Chief's apology, would perhaps influence the complainant to drop the charge facing Waruhiu.<sup>155</sup>

The CNC, who did not accept the Attorney General's advice, subsequently appealed to the Governor. He informed the Governor that he found it extremely difficult for the government to stand idly by while "one of its most devoted servants is prosecuted on a criminal charge for doing what he conceived to be his duty".<sup>156</sup> He very strongly called for a legislation to protect the African government servants because:

...we live among a primitive people, and the niceties of the law are not, and cannot always be, observed in a native area and if we insist that if a man, in ignorance and good faith, contravenes the law we will hand him over to the mercies of the criminal law then I submit that we

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<sup>153</sup>ibid.

<sup>154</sup>ibid., Attorney General to CNC, 12th August, 1948.

<sup>155</sup>ibid.

<sup>156</sup>ibid., CNC to Governor, undated but written in August 1948.



will soon cease to administer in the native areas.<sup>157</sup>

The CNC was also emphatic that the Resident Magistrates' jurisdiction should be confined to the boundaries of the Nairobi Municipality. He also emphasized that a Shs. 40 compensation was adequate and an offer of more money would only make the position worse for the defence as it might be mistaken for a bribe.<sup>158</sup>

The CNC was prevailed upon by the Governor to follow the advice of the Attorney General. But the compensation offered was rejected by the advocate of the plaintiff.<sup>159</sup> The case, therefore, ended up in court contrary to the wishes of the CNC. Wyn Harris, in his bid to have Waruhiu acquitted, gave evidence in favour of Waruhiu's character. The gist of the evidence was that:

I have formed the opinion that chief Waruhiu is a man of integrity and I would have no hesitation in accepting his word, just as much as I would a member of my own service. Among the Kikuyu that I know of character, I would put chief Waruhiu among the foremost. He is well known to every District Officer who has served in the Kiambu District, and I believe that my estimate of his character is shared by them all.<sup>160</sup>

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ibid.

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ibid.

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ibid.

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ibid.

Chief Waruhiu defended himself by intimating that the prosecution case was a frame-up because of ill-will borne to him by Kigume.<sup>161</sup> This was lent credence by Kigume's attempt to bribe a tribal policeman so as to be a prosecution witness of his.<sup>162</sup> Waruhiu did not deny that there had been unlawful custody but he contended that he had nothing to do with it since he was having lunch at his home when the plaintiff was arrested.<sup>163</sup>

The magistrate acquitted Waruhiu by rationalizing that he was by no means satisfied that the Chief had given an order to confine the complainant to the cells.<sup>164</sup>

Immediately the verdict was pronounced, the defence counsel applied for costs and compensation on behalf of his client. He argued that the prosecution had been a vexatious and frivolous one brought on fabricated evidence with the object of subverting administrative authority and making the chief suffer the indignity of criminal proceedings.<sup>165</sup> The magistrate, however, dismissed the application on the grounds that further independent evidence would be essential before deciding whether the case had been a frivolous and vexatious

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<sup>161</sup> ibid.

<sup>162</sup> ibid.

<sup>163</sup> ibid.

<sup>164</sup> ibid.

<sup>165</sup> ibid.

one.<sup>166</sup> As a result, the government thereafter paid the defence counsel a Shs. 315 fee. Nonetheless, an administration officer strongly expressed the administration's disgust with the court proceedings in the following words:

It was, however, deplorable that this loyal and efficient chief should have to suffer the indignity of appearing in the dock to answer a scurrilous and unfounded charge.<sup>167</sup>

The political pressure and siege on Chief Waruhiu, however, rapidly mounted and eventually culminated with his death, four years later.

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<sup>166</sup>ibid.

<sup>167</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/39, op. cit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WARUHIU'S WORK AS A COUNCILLOR  
OF THE KIAMBU LOCAL NATIVE COUNCIL, 1925-1952

Chief Waruhiu served for nine three-year consecutive terms as a councillor of the Kiambu LNC from its inception in 1925 until his death in 1952. From 1925 to 1940, he was one of the elected councillors for Githunguri Division, while he was a nominated councillor thereafter. The LNCs were intended to give the Africans a voice in the management of their own affairs in several ways. First, they had to assist in the formulation of legislation for their respective geographical areas. Secondly, they had to advise the district administration in matters pertaining to their own people. Thirdly, the councils were supposed to bring matters of importance, which affected their people, before those in authority. Fourthly, they had to show how the locations could be better administered.<sup>1</sup> The Kiambu LNC, like all the other LNCs in the colony, was presided over and rigidly controlled by the DC.

Waruhiu, being a powerful and an influential chief, was

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<sup>1</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, "Minutes of Kiambu LNC, 1925-1934".

among the very few councillors who dominated the Kiambu Council in his lifetime. This is attested by a number of factors. One, Waruhiu very often proposed or seconded the Council bye-laws or resolutions as they were then referred to. Two, he often participated and contributed to most of the Council debates. Three, he was every year chosen to be the chairman of at least one of the permanent LNC sub-committees - especially the Public Works, the Agriculture and Veterinary, and the Agricultural Show Sub-Committees. Four, he was for many years the Council's representative in the Local Land Board and in the District Education Board. Five, Waruhiu was always a member of the delegation which represented the Council at the joint Central Province LNCs' meetings at Nyeri. Lastly, Waruhiu was frequently appointed to important temporary LNC sub-committees which were occasionally set up to investigate specified issues and report to the Council.

It is, therefore, evident from the above that Waruhiu, as a councillor, was a representative of the whole district because the LNC was primarily concerned with the welfare of the entire district. As a consequence, Waruhiu strongly backed diverse causes which he believed would benefit him and the people of the district. Such measures embraced many aspects of life such as education, health, agriculture,

commerce, religion and hygiene, among others.

(i) Educational Matters

Waruhiu could never compromise with Europeans on educational and land matters, if the outcome would be detrimental to his people.<sup>2</sup> This was because, by being a pioneer of Kambui and a beneficiary of western education, he understood and appreciated the value of education. He, therefore, wholeheartedly supported the promotion and expansion of educational facilities within the district. He was always very sure and confident that "the people would do everything in their power to provide money for improved educational facilities which was what they wanted more than anything else".<sup>3</sup> His opinion tallied with that of the administration which considered that "if there is one thing that interests the Akikuyu as a whole, second only to land, it is education".<sup>4</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that from 1925 to 1934, Waruhiu was an ardent campaigner and supporter for the establishment of a Kiambu Central High School at Githunguri.

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<sup>2</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/13, "Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1944-1950".

<sup>4</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/29, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1938".

The idea of the high school was conceived in 1925 when the Council passed a resolution to set aside Sterling Pounds 10,000 for its construction. The school was supposed to be a boarding one capable of accommodating 50 boarders and a certain number of day scholars. The government was to provide an European headmaster and the other necessary staff.<sup>5</sup>

The site for the school at Githunguri (in Chief Gathingo's Githiga Location) was chosen by a sub-committee of which Waruhiu was a member.<sup>6</sup> The proposed site for the school was subsequently inspected and endorsed by the government on two main grounds. Firstly, Githunguri, which was fifteen miles to the north of Kiambu Town, was the most central position in the whole of Kiambu District. Secondly, besides being served by a good road system, Githunguri had a potentiality of developing into an important centre for education, crafts, trade and administration.<sup>7</sup>

In 1927, when the government approved, in principle, the building of the school, about Sterling Pounds 3,000 had been raised towards the construction of the school.<sup>8</sup> But by 1934, the building of the school had not yet started! The

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<sup>5</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>ibid.

<sup>7</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/20, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1927".

<sup>8</sup>ibid.

delay was caused by the government which did all it could to sabotage and thwart the building of the school. This was done in all probability to restrict and control the pace of the expansion of African education.

Government opposition to the proposed Githunguri High School started in 1926. In that year, the Director of Education, H.S. Scott, refused to sanction the idea of the school by stating that the government lacked enough staff to run the proposed school. He instead proposed that the funds for the proposed school be devoted to the improvement of the existing school buildings in the district.<sup>9</sup> But the Council unanimously resolved that the money would remain intact "until such a time as the Director of Education can approve of a Central School".<sup>10</sup>

In 1927, the DC, R.R. Vidal, informed the Council about the Director of Education's decision. He had advised that they concentrate their efforts in elementary education since they already had several high schools such as the Alliance High School and Jeanes School.<sup>11</sup> Strong expressions of dismay at such a possibility were voiced by all councillors who

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<sup>9</sup>KNA-PC/C.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.

<sup>11</sup>ibid.



emphatically disapproved of the money being expended "on any other form of school or schools".<sup>12</sup> Their stubborn stand prompted the DC to sceptically wonder whether they really knew "the difference between a High School and an elementary "C" school".<sup>13</sup>

In February 1929, the Director of Education could not understand why the Council still wanted a high school. He stressed that there were more educational facilities and opportunities in the province than elsewhere in the colony. He cited the Alliance High School as an example, to which the Council replied that "an even higher standard of Education than that supplied at the Alliance High School was desired".<sup>14</sup> Dr. Arthur, who was present, argued that it was preferable to aid the already established mission schools rather than starting new ones.<sup>15</sup> The Council, led by Chief Koinange, was, however, emphatic that they could only assist the missions "after their own school at Githunguri had been started".<sup>16</sup> To which the Director of Education responded by storming out of the meeting after stating that he could never support the scheme advocated by the Council.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>ibid.

<sup>13</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/22, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>ibid.

<sup>16</sup>ibid.

<sup>17</sup>ibid.

In August 1931, the Council was given four options by the government with regard to their proposed school. These were to keep on waiting and petitioning in the hope of getting leave to proceed with the building of the school at some indefinite date; to give up the idea of building the school and divide the money among the existing needy educational institutions in the district; to hand over all the funds to the Director of Education who would expend it in the way he thought best for the benefit of the district; or to build the school and retain its administration in their own hands.<sup>18</sup> The DC recommended the second option while Koinange was in favour of the first one. On the other hand, Waruhiu, who was supported by the majority of the councillors, opted for the fourth alternative. Waruhiu vehemently argued that they were already tired of waiting and there was no point for them to continue waiting indefinitely. He strongly urged the Council to build the school themselves. He finally proposed a resolution, which was unanimously carried, stating:

That we wish to build a school at an approximate cost of Shs. 165,000 for the buildings, or if they cost a little more, we are willing to pay; further we agree to pay Shs. 77,600 annually for the running expenses of the school, and also, if the cost is a little more, we agree to pay; further we agree to a compulsory rate to the extent necessary for carrying on this work; further we agree that the school will be in the hands of the Director of Education as regards the building of it, and the establishment of

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<sup>18</sup>ibid.

it, and the conducting of it. If Government agrees to contribute a share, we shall be very glad, but if Government does not desire this, we agree to undertake the whole of the cost.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the Council's resoluteness, the proposed school, however, never materialised. The Kiambu Council was thereafter reluctantly forced into building a combined Central School with Nyeri and Murang'a, which had also demanded high schools of their own. The product of the joint efforts of the three councils was the Kagumo School in Nyeri, the construction of which Kiambu contributed Shs. 57,000.<sup>20</sup>

But the Kiambu Council felt betrayed and deceived when they realized in 1934 that Kagumo would be a primary school rather than a high school. They instantaneously appointed a sub-committee of eight, which included Waruhiu, to discuss the subject with the Director of Education. But the Director of Education flatly refused to entertain the idea of a high school and maintained that the object of Kagumo was to prepare boys for the high schools and vocational institutes. He, however, conceded that a time would probably come when Kagumo would be elevated to the status of a High School.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>ibid.

<sup>20</sup>ibid.

<sup>21</sup>ibid.

As a result, the Kiambu Council voted a grant of Shs. 3,000 to the Kagumo School under protest as they were unanimous that they did not wish to send any pupils to the school in 1935.<sup>22</sup> In subsequent years, however, many Kiambu boys were educated at the Kagumo Government School in Nyeri.

The failure and refusal of the government to sanction the building of a high school at Githunguri eventually culminated in the establishment of the famous Githunguri Teachers College in 1939. The college was built on Harambee or self-help basis under the umbrella of the Independent Schools Movement. It was founded by Mbiyu wa Koinange when he returned from America in 1938. Mbiyu, who had a Master of Arts degree, was the first African in the colony to attain such a high academic qualification. Mbiyu was frustrated by the administration which could not offer him a suitable job commensurate with his qualifications. The DC had even contemplated appointing him an assistant chief to his father upon his return!<sup>23</sup> When the authorities finally found out that he intended to work for the Independent Schools Movement, they tried to bribe him with a Sterling Pounds 30 a month job.<sup>24</sup> But he turned it down in favour of that of the

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<sup>22</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1932-1935.

<sup>23</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup>KNA-MAA 8/53, "Handing over Report of CNC, 1934-1953".

Principal of the Kenya Teachers College, Githunguri.

Thereupon, as the DC reported in his annual report about the putting up of the college:

An amazing rapprochement then took place between Christians of all denominations, all sorts and colour of political associations and the ordinary pagan. Very few Government Headmen were strong enough to stand aloof and Koinange very certainly lent his influence.<sup>25</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was also a party to the building of the college although he would not have liked the authorities to know about it.<sup>26</sup>

The college was independent of Government in both finance and administration. It was built and subsequently expanded by public subscription based on the mariika system. The government only realized the institution was a primary, high school and teacher training complex on the day it was officially opened.<sup>27</sup> The authorities had no alternative but to disapprovingly recognize the college as such.<sup>28</sup> From then henceforth, the college became a symbol of self-achievement and a centre of Kikuyu educational aspirations. The college was, however, brought to an abrupt

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<sup>25</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/30, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1939".

<sup>26</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup>O.I., ibid.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/30, op. cit.

and rude end in November 1952 when it was closed down after the imposition of the State of Emergency in Kenya.

Waruhiu was also a forceful supporter of the Kiambu Missions being granted financial assistance by the Council. He must have reasoned that the money awarded to the missions catered for African education under missionary control. In August 1929, for example, Waruhiu was in a sub-committee authorised to examine applications from the missions and to sanction their payment from Shs. 10,000 set aside for the purpose.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the missions would receive the lion's share of the available funds, while the schools of the Independent Movement would receive almost nothing. This is portrayed by the apportionment of Shs. 10,000 in 1935 by the District Education Board, of which Waruhiu was a member. Only one Independent School was aided with Shs. 300 while the remainder went to the missions.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, Waruhiu also maintained close links with mission schools which he often visited to assess their needs and the pupils' work.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, he would at times invite the small school children to his home for picnics.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1932-1935.

<sup>31</sup>O.I., Rev. John Gatu, *op. cit.*, *Kikuyu News*, 1924, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup>O.I., Rev. John Gatu, *op. cit.*

Waruhiu could never turn away needy and deserving pupils, if he could be of any assistance to them.<sup>33</sup> He, therefore, helped many pupils to get financial assistance from the Council. He was in common agreement with the other councillors that such pupils would be of great value to the district when they finished their studies.<sup>34</sup> In July, 1929, for example, Waruhiu proposed and it was carried nem con that three Alliance High School pupils be assisted "in view of their very restricted means".<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, Isaiah Kinyanjui, Jonathan Gathoga and Wallace Kariuki were each provided with Shs. 100 for their school fees. Other prominent individuals who benefited from Waruhiu's support in the council included Eliud Mathu and James Gichuru in the early 1930's. Gichuru was assisted when he was a student at Makerere College in Uganda while Mathu was in Fort Hare University in South Africa. In the case of Mathu, although the administration was against his application, the Council was, however, strongly in favour of it and it voted Shs. 600 each year for the duration of his course.<sup>36</sup> Eliud Mathu subsequently became the first African member of the Legislative Council in 1944. On the other hand, James Gichuru became the first African Deputy Vice-President of the Kiambu

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<sup>33</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.; Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup>ibid.

<sup>36</sup>ibid.

LNC in 1951 and also a renown politician.

Similarly, Waruhiu also took the education of women in his stride. In August 1931, Waruhiu, supported by Njonjo, made a futile appeal to the government to admit girls to the Alliance High School.<sup>37</sup> In August 1934, Waruhiu called upon the Council to consider how they could assist in the education of women. He felt that it was important that they should not lag behind in this respect.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, Waruhiu advocated for equal job opportunities for both sexes. In February 1951, he recalled that when he visited England in 1948, he had found that women did more or less the same work as men. He, therefore, considered that a woman could do as much work as a man "with the exception of digging and hard work".<sup>39</sup>

(ii) Land Affairs

Waruhiu was very conscious about the plight of the Kiambu people in regard to their land. He, therefore, took every available opportunity to defend their land

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<sup>37</sup>ibid.

<sup>38</sup>ibid.

<sup>39</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1949-1954.



interests against further encroachment. In August 1925, he fiery objected to an application from a Kikuyu woman married to an Indian for a mill site in the Reserve. He argued that if such a precedent was created, Indians would very likely marry Kikuyu women in order to obtain a footing in the Reserve.<sup>40</sup> The Council, which was in accordance with his opinion, thereby rejected the application and it never entertained such applications in subsequent years. Likewise, Waruhiu was concerned with the possibility of the neighbouring European settlers encroaching into the Reserve. He accordingly proposed in 1929 that chiefs should inspect and renew, if necessary, the trench or other methods of demarcation of the Kiambu Reserve boundaries in their areas once each year.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in 1930, Waruhiu voiced the feelings of the people when he opposed and deplored the eviction of Kikuyu at Fort Smith to make room for Swahili settlers.<sup>42</sup>

Such unilateral mass evictions compelled Waruhiu in September 1936, to join Koinange in calling for the survey and registration of all githaka (land) in the district.<sup>43</sup> A

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<sup>40</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup>ibid.

<sup>42</sup>ibid.

<sup>43</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

month later, Waruhiu asked the CNC and the PC, who were present, whether there was any objection to anybody having his land surveyed. Their answer was that although there was no legal objection, it would be a waste of money since surveying would not give them a title to the land.<sup>44</sup> In the following year, Waruhiu pressed and urged that the Kikuyu be issued with title deeds to their lands. He stated that he had read in some books and in newspapers that some Europeans believed that the Kikuyu did not have any inherent land rights. The Kikuyu, therefore, wished to be assured about their land rights in writing.<sup>45</sup> He was, however, calmed and reassured by the DC that a law was about to be passed which would reserve their land for them for all time. This was the Native Lands Trust Ordinance which was passed in 1938.

In addition to the above, Chief Waruhiu also endeavoured to have more land added to the Kiambu Reserve. In April 1939, he affirmed that the Kiambu people wanted the whole of the forest area known as Kamukomboini, to the north of the district, to be added to the Reserve.<sup>46</sup> In the following year, he called on the Forest Department to straighten the forest line in Gatundu Division and handover

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<sup>44</sup>ibid.

<sup>45</sup>ibid.

<sup>46</sup>ibid.

the jutting forest land to the Reserve.<sup>47</sup> But the Conservator of Forests disagreed that the forest line was crooked. Similarly, in July 1947, Waruhiu and Njonjo appealed to the government to grant grazing concessions to the Kikuyu in the adjacent Ngubi area so as to alleviate some of their grazing problems.<sup>48</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was also involved in the implementation of the recommendations of the Kenya Land Commission from 1935 to 1941. In 1935, he was appointed to a sub-committee of seven councillors which assisted the DC to settle the dispossessed Tigoni people on the land set aside for their future use in the Lari area.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, in June 1939, Waruhiu accompanied Wyn Harris, the Settlement Officer, to the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest Reserve with a view to getting land for the displaced former landowners on European farms. When the Settlement Officer suggested the Lari forest area above Limuru Station, Waruhiu objected to it on the grounds that it was waterless. He instead strongly pressed for the well-watered Nyamweru area in the Kerita Forest. Although the Settlement Officer

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<sup>47</sup>ibid.

<sup>48</sup>KNA-P/C/P.2/1/13, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

objected to the Nyamweru area as it was a water catchment region, Waruhiu, however, stuck to his guns.<sup>50</sup> The Nyamweru area was eventually excised from the forest and added to Kiambu District.<sup>51</sup>

Three years earlier, Waruhiu and the other councillors had rejected a government proposal to allocate Kiambu 4,000 acres of land in the Nyeri, Embu and Murang'a Districts. They argued that apart from the areas being far way from Kiambu, they were also claimed by other Kikuyu in the vicinity. They accordingly demanded land adjacent to Kiambu.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Waruhiu agreed with Koinange and Njonjo that the LNC would not agree to a piecemeal solution as "the whole question of landless Kikuyu must be settled as one".<sup>53</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was on several occasions a member of the Ndeiya Sub-Committees charged with various duties at different times. Ndeiya, which comprised of 46,750 acres, was added to the Kiambu Kikuyu in 1915 by Governor Sir Henry Belfield. It was strictly a grazing area in compensation for the grazing lands they had lost to Europeans.<sup>54</sup> But as a result of

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<sup>50</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/4/8, "Land Disputes - General, 1934-1941".

<sup>51</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/3/16 I, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>53</sup>ibid.

<sup>54</sup>KLC, Vol. 6, Evidence of Koinange.

increased illegal cultivation, conflicts and disputes in connection with shamba boundaries also increased. In 1930, the Council was unable to decide whether permission to cultivate at Ndeiya should be granted. On that occasion, Waruhiu had favoured strict limitation of cultivation. There was a heated debate over the same issue in the following year. No decision was reached albeit Waruhiu was against permitting cultivation.<sup>55</sup> Although the matter was thereafter shelved for several years, cultivation, however, flourished unabated at Ndeiya and this finally led to the appointment of a sub-committee in 1938.

The sub-committee divided Ndeiya into grazing and cultivation zones. In 1941 when the whole of Ndeiya was surveyed and individual shambas marked in, Waruhiu was in the sub-committee that allocated the shamba. Every owner was registered and was liable to forfeit his shamba if he refused to obey the rules. This was because they were considered to be the ahoi of the Council and in effect, the tenants of the whole Kikuyu tribe.<sup>56</sup>

Land demarcation, however, did not diminish the Ndeiya problems. In April 1947, the LNC was forced to appoint a

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<sup>55</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/7/2, "History and Customs: Early Settlement in Kiambu, 1955"; KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

sub-committee to study ways of rehabilitating the Ndeiya grazing area. Ndeiya was then in an appalling situation mainly due to gross overstocking. Waruhiu, who was appointed to the sub-committee, thereby seconded Magugu's proposal which was aimed at fulfilling two objectives. Firstly, to expel Ndeiya cultivators who owned land elsewhere and secondly, to enforce LNC resolutions in connection with Ndeiya. The proposal was, however, defeated by nine votes to seven.<sup>57</sup>

(iii) Agricultural Issues

Waruhiu, being himself agriculturally minded, supported measures which were designed to uplift and accelerate agricultural development within Kiambu.

For many years, beginning in 1938, Waruhiu relentlessly exhorted the Council to initiate a dipping programme in the district. In December 1944, he stated that there was a very great need for dips as buying grade cattle was a very expensive pastime. He cited the case of a Crispus Mwaniki who had lost some 40 head of grade stock. He appealed for at least one dip to be constructed in each Division to begin with.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>58</sup>KNA → C/CP .2/1/13, op. cit.

Shortly thereafter, Waruhiu was in an LNC deputation that visited Nyeri in July 1945 to appraise the dips that had been installed there. Waruhiu and the other members of the deputation reported that they had been very impressed with the Nyeri dipping scheme and they favoured a similar scheme being introduced in Kiambu.<sup>59</sup>

In February 1946, the DC informed the Council the conditions under which the LNC would construct dips. One, a dipping fee of Sh. 1 per head of cattle per annum would be imposed so as to meet the recurrent operating costs of the dips. Two, it would be obligatory for every stockowner within a three miles' radius of a dip or within the location boundaries, where this was possible, to present his cattle for dipping once each week. Three, cattle culling would be introduced to get rid of "a number of uneconomical and useless beasts in the district".<sup>60</sup> Although the Council was generally in favour of dipping, they, however, refused to accept the three conditions.

Before a final decision could be made, another delegation of councillors and elders visited Nyeri in July

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<sup>59</sup> ibid.

<sup>60</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/36, op. cit.

1946 to assess the dipping scheme there once again. Even after the delegation had presented its recommendations, most of the councillors were still very adamant in their objection to compulsory dipping, culling and dipping fee.<sup>61</sup>

In April 1946, Waruhiu had asked the DC whether the LNC could construct dips for locations which agreed to abide by the dipping regulations. This was conceded to in July 1946 when the Council refused to institute a dipping scheme in the district. Magugu's location, however, applied first for dips which were built in 1948 at Marigi, Gathugu and Gathiruini though they became operational only in January 1951.<sup>62</sup>

In April 1949, the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee agreed that the dipping scheme should be expanded to Waruhiu's location, which had also applied for them, as soon as would be practicable. In early 1951, Waruhiu pleaded with the Council to accord his location priority as they had been unanimous in their desire for dips for a long time.<sup>63</sup> The dips were, however, never constructed because from July 1951, the government deemed them to be a matter for local efforts rather than a burden for the LNC.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>KNA→C/P.2/1/13, op. cit.; O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>62</sup>O.I., Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.

<sup>63</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1949-1954.

<sup>64</sup>ibid.



Councillor Waruhiu was among those in the front line in an uphill battle to ensure that peasant farmers were given credit facilities. In 1931, the Agricultural Sub-Committee, which he belonged to, formulated a resolution which was adopted by the Council. The resolution called on the government to set aside a sum of money to be loaned to the people of the district for the development of their holdings. But the proposal was rejected by the government. Waruhiu then demanded to know how money could be borrowed.<sup>65</sup> The DC informed him that the banks could only lend money on sufficient security, which none of them had since they had no title deeds to their lands.

The loan issue was revived by Eliud Mathu in February 1944 but the DC reiterated that they could not be loaned money as they had no adequate security. Considerable discussion followed during which Waruhiu enquired whether the policy of not loaning money to Africans was "a permanent and irrevocable Government edict".<sup>66</sup> But the DC stuck to his guns. Waruhiu then considered that the matter should be taken up in the Legislative Council by Rev. Beecher, who was the African representative there.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>KNA-PC/QP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

<sup>67</sup>ibid.

In December of the same year, Eliud Mathu asked the DC to assist them to obtain loans from the Land and Agricultural Bank which was open to people of all races. The DC accordingly circulated the councillors with the conditions pertaining to obtaining loans from the Bank. By March 1945, the Council had before them a large number of applications for loans from the bank. A sub-committee, consisting of Waruhiu and six others was formed to investigate the applications and submit their recommendations. From August of the same year, the Land and Agricultural Bank began to loan money to the Africans of Kiambu District. The first one was Crispus Mwaniki who was loaned Shs. 10,000. His guarantor was the government although a number of people in the district were willing to sign a guarantee to indemnify the government, if necessary.<sup>68</sup>

From 1932, Waruhiu supported a call for the introduction of a bye-law, which was finally enacted in 1935, prohibiting the sale of manure to European farmers. He argued that the agricultural officers had been advising them to manure their land and "if we allow it to become exhausted, we shall have no crops for export".<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> ibid.

<sup>69</sup> KNA-P/C/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

In 1944, Waruhiu welcomed a scheme proposed by the Assistant Agricultural Officer, Kiambu, to improve soil fertility. The scheme, which he thought was a good idea to prevent the loss of soil fertility, involved the purchase of manure for sale throughout the district.<sup>70</sup> By August, the manuring scheme had proved to be a great success to such an extent that Waruhiu felt that the Nyeri and Murang'a people were most envious of the scheme.<sup>71</sup> Although the LNC was not making any profits from the sale of the manure, Waruhiu, however, asked the Agricultural Officer to sustain the scheme. Furthermore, Waruhiu always did his best to get the people in his Division to pay for the manure sold to them by the LNC on credit.<sup>72</sup>

(iv) The Commercial Sector

Councillor Chief Waruhiu was in a 1932 sub-committee which was appointed to assess the possibility of concentrating trading activities at specific trading centres. The sub-committee recommended a few properly constituted trading centres. But in December 1935, Waruhiu objected to the draft regulations intended to effect the recommendations. He considered the draft regulations to be harsh and oppressive

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<sup>70</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

<sup>71</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>72</sup>ibid.

because they did not permit shops within three miles from the centre of a marked market. He emphasized that in a thickly populated district like Kiambu where the country was moreover so broken, it would be illogical to forbid shops within a three miles' radius. He thereby proposed, and the regulations were amended accordingly, that the area in which shops were forbidden be reduced to a radius of one mile from the centre of markets.<sup>73</sup> The LNC was thereupon forced to rescind the amendment because the three miles' radius was a government policy for the whole colony.

A 1949 proposal that was passed by the LNC was not well received by some councillors. It gave a two months' notice for all temporary buildings in established markets to be replaced by permanent buildings. Their objections were not against permanent buildings but the short notice.<sup>74</sup>

Speaking in favour of the proposal, Chief Waruhiu insisted that poorly constructed buildings were the source of most of the diseases. He reminded the Council that the construction of better

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KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

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KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1949-1954.

shelters had resulted in a great improvement in the public health in the district since 1930. He subsequently proposed that all temporary buildings in the markets at Githunguri, Kangangi, Dagoretti, Marige, Wangige, Rungai, Kirenga, Karuri, Kahuhu, Kiganjo, Kairi and Kanyori should be replaced by permanent buildings by 1st September, 1949. This was another government directive which applied throughout the colony.<sup>75</sup>

(v) Health and Hygienic Concerns

Waruhiu never forgot the wonders of western medicine since he was cured of his elephantiasis in 1916. He was, therefore, in the forefront in exhorting the LNC and the government to provide and extend medical facilities within the district. That is why his statue was erected outside Kiambu Hospital to partly commemorate his disposition and earnestness in this field.

In 1925, Chief Waruhiu endorsed a Council's resolution to build three dispensaries, one for each of the Divisions at Githunguri, Wangige and Mukinyi.<sup>76</sup> In October 1946, he backed Councillor Tharau's request for a dispensary

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<sup>75</sup>ibid.

<sup>76</sup>KNA → C/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

at Kirenga as the Kijabe Hospital was too far away. The proposal was unanimously endorsed by the Council.<sup>77</sup> In 1950, Waruhiu influenced the government to build the first Health Centre of its kind in design in the country, at Githunguri. This was despite the fact that Kiambu was not in the programme of the Health Centres to be financed by the government. Waruhiu had strongly convinced the authorities the need for a Health Centre in Kiambu on the basis of its proximity to Nairobi and its dense population.<sup>78</sup> The Health Centre, which was supposed to serve as a model for other future centres, was opened on 21st June, 1951 by the Director of Medical Services.

Additionally, Waruhiu also supported and acclaimed financial grants to the mission hospitals. He must have reasoned that they also catered for the health of the Kiambu residents. In August 1937, he appealed to the Council to assist the Kijabe Mission Hospital as it served the Kiambu Kikuyu in its vicinity.<sup>79</sup> The Council thereby made an annual grant of Sterling Pounds 25 to the hospital. When the Council grants to the Kijabe and Ng'enda Hospitals were threatened with being withdrawn in 1940, it was Waruhiu who

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<sup>77</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/13, op. cit.

<sup>78</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>79</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

came to the defence of the two hospitals. He advised that the matter "be more fully investigated before any action was taken". He also pointed out that Ng'enda Hospital was the only place in Gatundu Division where medical facilities existed.<sup>80</sup>

Waruhiu also played his part to ensure that the Kiambu Hospital and the Pumwani Maternity Home in Nairobi were also assisted by the LNC. In November 1928, Waruhiu was in a delegation that visited the maternity to determine whether it needed any financial support from the Council. The deputation's reply was in the affirmative because the hospital catered for maternity cases from the district.<sup>81</sup> The maternity was thereafter given grants each year, the grant for 1932 being Shs. 1,000. Similarly, in August 1934, the Council presented the Medical Department with Shs. 8,000 for the expansion of the Kiambu Hospital.<sup>82</sup>

In the field of hygiene, Waruhiu likewise supported measures designed to uplift the hygienic standards of the people. In 1941, he seconded a resolution which forbade the

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<sup>80</sup>ibid.

<sup>81</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup>ibid.

construction of dwellings with brushwood (ruthwago) sides. Waruhiu agreed that such dwellings were a health risk since they were dark, poorly ventilated and a haven for rats and other pests which often caused diseases.<sup>83</sup> The same resolution also decreed that all villages would be kept clear of refuse and manure. Further, all bush and grass would be kept short within a radius of ten yards from all dwelling houses.<sup>84</sup>

Councillor Chief Waruhiu was also very outspoken in his attempt to make the construction of latrines mandatory. In March 1930, he seconded a motion which called on every householder to dig pit latrines.<sup>85</sup> The DC was, however, in favour of persuasion rather than compulsion. On 9th March, 1931, Waruhiu supported a similar proposal. But the DC intimated that councillors, chiefs, and other leaders should set good examples for others to follow by being the first to dig pit latrines.<sup>86</sup>

Waruhiu's wish was finally fulfilled in August 1941 when it was made mandatory for every village to provide itself with two well-maintained latrines.<sup>87</sup> This was modified and

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<sup>83</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

<sup>84</sup>ibid.

<sup>85</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup>ibid.

<sup>87</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.



made more effective by a May 1951 resolution which Waruhiu spearheaded. The bye-law made it mandatory for each householder in Kiambu to dig and maintain a latrine.<sup>88</sup>

(vi) The Social Scene

Spiritually, Waruhiu was fervently against any further proliferation of Christianity. He thought that they already had enough different religions, missions and sects in the country.<sup>89</sup> He was in particular hostile and against a sect known as Watu Wa Mungu or God's people. Its members, who were few in number and anti-European, lived the lives of ascetics, played on hill tops and trembled violently under the stress of their fanatical emotions.<sup>90</sup> In 1939, Waruhiu demanded that the sect be suppressed because, as he argued, it was a wicked one.<sup>91</sup> Although many councillors sided with him, the DC, however, vetoed the move on the understanding that public opinion would kill the sect in time. Waruhiu repeated his call for the sect to be banned in September 1943. He stressed that the activities of the sect were aimed at the subversion of law and order and that it was time the fanatics "were dispersed and

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<sup>88</sup>ibid.

<sup>89</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>90</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/2, "Confidential Papers: Watu Wa Mungu, 1927".

<sup>91</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-40.

scattered to the four winds".<sup>92</sup> Once again, the DC prevailed upon the Council to exercise tolerance rather than persecution.

Waruhiu's fears and suspicions about the Watu Wa Mungu sect were confirmed on 20th December, 1947. Early on that day, they caused grievous bodily harm to a tailor who had allegedly refused to make them a banner.<sup>93</sup> Later in the day, they attacked a police party which was sent to rescue the tailor whom they were still holding and threatening to kill. In the process, three policemen were killed and many others wounded. Those dead were an Assistant Inspector of Police, T.D. Mortimer, and two African constables.<sup>94</sup>

The government went to great lengths to isolate the incident and to ensure that it did not besmirch the Kikuyu as a tribe. On 22nd December, the PC and the DC, accompanied by Waruhiu and Koinange, held a baraza at Gatundu which was attended by about 500 people. All those who spoke condemned and denounced the murders, their expressions varying only in their degree of horror and disgust.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

<sup>93</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/5/234, "Central Province, 1947-1949";  
KNA-DC/KBU/1/38, op. cit.

<sup>94</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/5/234, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup>ibid.

Divisional Chief Waruhiu, after condemning the murders in the most strongest terms, exhorted the gathering to fully co-operate with the government in dealing with "these madmen who they refused to recognize as Kikuyu".<sup>96</sup> He also reiterated that their co-operation, which must be real and not mere lip-service, must continue when they left the meeting.

The meeting then in unison asked the PC to forward a resolution, condemning the murders, to the Governor. The resolution was subsequently ratified and endorsed by an extraordinary meeting of the LNC held on 9th January, 1948 and attended by all prominent leaders from the district. The resolution, which was given wide publicity within and outside the country, read:

We Kikuyu people of the Gatundu Division in Kiambu District having come here today to meet you our Provincial Commissioner ask you to tell His Excellency the Governor of this meeting today and our horror at the action of those who committed these foul murders in our midst on the 20th of December. They are not true Kikuyu, they are mad and behave like animals, and we all promise that we will do everything we can to bring them to justice and that both now and in the future we will stamp out these filthy practices in our country.<sup>97</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was also mindful and concerned about the welfare of the less fortunate members of the society. He did

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<sup>96</sup>ibid.

<sup>97</sup>ibid.; KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

his best to assist the Thika School for the Blind, of which he was a member of its school committee from when it was started in 1946 until his death. In April 1946, he informed the Council that he had visited the school which had greatly impressed him. He earnestly asked all the councillors to get the blind people in their locations sent there as they were well looked after and they learnt many useful trades. He also appealed to them to attend an auction that would shortly be held in the school to raise money for the institution. He ended by requesting his fellow chiefs to visit the school and arrange trips to the Reserve for the blind people with the officer-in-charge.<sup>98</sup>

In the same vein, Waruhiu in the same year visited the rehabilitation centre for the ex-askari where the disabled former askari were being rehabilitated. He was so impressed with the work of the centre that he thereafter appealed to his fellow councillors to subscribe to a fund set up to assist such men.<sup>99</sup>

Being a progressive and an enlightened chief, Waruhiu wanted the registration of births, marriages and deaths to be

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<sup>98</sup>ibid.

<sup>99</sup>ibid.

made compulsory within the district. His first attempt to have this passed by the LNC was on 6th December, 1927. The motion was, however, lost by thirteen votes to nine with two abstentions. The majority of the councillors were suspicious of the innovation as they thought the underlying government motive was to assess whether they had too much land.<sup>100</sup> They instead preferred to wait and see the effects of such registration in districts where it was already in force.

A year later, Waruhiu proposed a scheme of registration of deaths for which chiefs would be responsible to the DC. But the proposal was thrown out by eleven votes to nine.<sup>101</sup> Waruhiu's victory finally came in March 1937 when the Council agreed to proceed with the registration of marriages, births and deaths.<sup>102</sup>

Waruhiu was also among those councillors who endorsed legislation against obsolete or incompatible cultural traits. In 1926, he seconded the legislation which ~~prohibited~~ <sup>prohibited</sup> Nguru, Mugoyo, Ndarama and Muthunguchi dances on account of their bad moral effects.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>KNA-PC/P.15/1/2, op. cit.

<sup>101</sup>KNA-PC/P.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>103</sup>KNA-PC/P.2/1/4, op. cit.

In the same year, Waruhiu brought up the question of young Kikuyu men and women unnecessarily exposing themselves while bathing at rivers. He argued that it was contrary to Kikuyu custom and tribal modesty for them to bathe together as immodest exposure of their bodies might lead to an increase of serious offences such as indecent assault.<sup>104</sup> The Council authorised the DC to issue orders to chiefs to warn the people that the behaviour would not be condoned and offenders would be charged before the Tribunal Courts.

Still on the question of young men, Waruhiu in August 1941 supported Philip Karanja's call to return to the old Kikuyu sixteen-years' circumcision age for boys. They argued that boys were being circumcised when they were very young and they consequently indulged in undesirable behaviour as they thought that they were men.<sup>105</sup> The proposal was rejected by the authorities who concluded that it would be impossible to enforce such a legislation which would lead to a general evasion followed by internal discord.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>ibid.

<sup>105</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

<sup>106</sup>ibid.

(vii) General Matters of Interest

From 1st to 10th August, 1939, Waruhiu was in a Kiambu deputation of seven councillors that visited Nyanza Province on an educational tour. They were accompanied by delegations from the Machakos and Murang'a LNCs. Their host was the Assistant Agricultural Officer, Nyanza. An effort was made to show them as many things of interest as possible with special reference to the workings of the Tribunal Courts, medical and agricultural activities. The projects they inspected included flour, oil and rice mills, cotton ginneries, schools, hospitals, water-supply, fishing, and the Rosterman's Gold Mines at Kakamega.<sup>107</sup>

Environmental conservation and, in particular, reafforestation also received ardent support from Waruhiu. In December 1944, he felt that not enough encouragement was being given to the planting of indigenous trees in the district. He advocated that the Council set aside funds for the purchase of trees which could be resold to the people of the district. He was particularly anxious that planting should be done near water catchment areas to protect them from drying up. Waruhiu's proposal was approved by the

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<sup>107</sup>KNA-PC/NZA/3/27/171, "Visits of Chiefs, 1935-1942".

<sup>108</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

government in the following year and the Council was authorised to spend Sterling Pounds 75 on tree planting. Waruhiu thereby appealed to the Council to follow the recommendations he had suggested in the previous year.<sup>109</sup>

The poor state of roads in the Reserve caused Waruhiu a lot of misgivings and he did his best to see that they were improved. In 1932, he was for the Council buying a tractor and a road grader for the upkeep of the roads so as to do away with communal labour as much as possible.<sup>110</sup> But the Council turned down his request by pointing out that it would be cheaper to employ paid labour on road work rather than buy a tractor and a grader for Shs.4,000. Five years later, Waruhiu threw his weight behind a motion which wanted the LNC to levy an extra shillings to be used entirely for road work so as to facilitate the abolition of communal labour on the roads.<sup>111</sup> But the DC blocked the move on the grounds that communal labour would still be necessary with or without a road vote.

It was perhaps because of his concern about roads that

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ibid.

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KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

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KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.



Waruhiu was in December 1944 appointed the chairman of a sub-committee empowered to formulate a road policy for the district. Three years later, the Public Works Sub-Committee, which was under his chairmanship, lamented that the roads were "in a chaotic condition and were a hindrance to the progress of the entire district".<sup>112</sup> It recommended that the main roads in the district should be given priority and be hard-surfaced.

In the same vein, Waruhiu, owing to his business-mindedness and foresight, had for many years called on the authorities to construct a road from Ruiru to Tala Market in Machakos. Such a road, according to him, would have facilitated and enhanced trade between the two districts.<sup>113</sup> He started calling for the road to be built in 1927. This was repeated in 1929, 1934 and 1946. Although the authorities were in favour of the road being made, it, however, never materialised. This was perhaps partly because the road would have been an expensive undertaking and partly because maybe the European farmers (through whose land the road would have passed) objected to it. It could not also have been built because a road already existed from Thika to Tala.

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<sup>112</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.

<sup>113</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

Chief Waruhiu also fought for the terms of service of the subordinate staff of the Council to be improved. In April 1936, he called for the salaries of the Tribunal Courts' clerks to be increased to Shs. 60 each per month because their work and responsibilities had increased, particularly in connection with tax monies.<sup>114</sup> This was agreed to and implemented. In the following year, Waruhiu pleaded for the salaries of the njama or tribal retainers to be raised. He stated that they were not only good and extremely hard-working, but also compared favourably with the tribal police.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, in December 1944, Waruhiu brought up the question of wages for the tribal police which he considered to be too low.<sup>116</sup> He was assured that this would be discussed at the next DC's meeting.

The Council, which Waruhiu had served faithfully for so long, honoured him in several ways after his death. First, the Council on 12th November, 1952 placed it on record their disgust and horror at the cowardly murder of Waruhiu. Secondly, the Council sent messages of condolences to the family of the murdered chief. Thirdly, the meeting stood in silent prayer for the memory of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu.<sup>117</sup>

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KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

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ibid.

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KNA-PC/CP.2/1/13, op. cit.

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KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1949-1954.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CHIEF WARUHIU'S PRIVATE AND FAMILY LIFE

There was no definite discernible distinction between Waruhiu's official and informal life to a certain extent. As a chief and a councillor, he was expected to be an exemplary vanguard for his people to emulate towards change and modernity. That was a role Waruhiu had performed since 1903 when he joined the GMS Kambui Mission Station. He had, therefore, been in the forefront in the acquisition of western material culture and in the adoption of new technological innovations in many aspects of life. In so doing, Waruhiu, whether consciously or unconsciously, acted as a pace-setter for his people to follow towards change and modernity.

#### (i) Land Acquisition

The most pressing need for Waruhiu, who had been the only landless Kiambu chief, was to own his own land. This dream materialised in 1927 when he bought his first personal estate at Giathieko<sup>1</sup> in his own Ruiru Location. Giathieko was about five miles to the west of

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<sup>1</sup>Giathieko was named after a Mwathi (Dorobo) called Thieko.

Kambui and about three miles from Githunguri Town, which was to the north-east. The land was sold to him by a Mwathi known as Kibiro, one of the few remaining Athi in the area then.<sup>2</sup>

The predominant Angari clan people at Giathieko had, however, made some concerted and determined efforts to prevent Waruhiu from buying the land in their midst. They tried to do this by strongly backing up, to the hilt, one of their members known as Njau Njiru, who was also interested in the land. But Waruhiu's influence as a chief enabled him to outwit them all.<sup>3</sup>

In subsequent years, Waruhiu gradually expanded his holding at Giathieko by buying cheaply those of his neighbours who were willing to sell to him for one reason or another. He mainly bought the land of those who emigrated from the area; those who could not raise their tax monies; and those who had urgent and pressing money problems.<sup>4</sup> Yet a few others sold their land to him out of gratitude and appreciation for his unqualified support or assistance in one way or another.<sup>5</sup> Chief Waruhiu also acquired large tracts of land all over his

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<sup>2</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>O.I., Kiambuthi wa Kabiru, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Willie Kamau Kiyuna, 24th June, 1987, Gachii.

Githunguri Division at places such as Ikinu, Kiairia, Githiga and Gathugu. He believed that land acquisition was the best form of investment.<sup>6</sup> At his death in 1952, Waruhiu was already a big landowner with about 500 acres of land.<sup>7</sup> This was demonstrated in 1957 when his sons very comfortably set aside 55 acres at Giathieko for the Waruhiu Memorial Farm Institute.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, Chief Waruhiu always fully paid for the land he bought. The boundaries were marked with itoka lilies or matoka (sing. gitoka), (crinum lilies), as an indication that the seller would not be returning to reclaim the land. Such land transactions were clinched and sealed by the ceremonial slaughter of a goat or sheep to certify the transfer of the land to Waruhiu.<sup>9</sup> Waruhiu always ensured that this was done because he did not want what had befallen on Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu's family after his death to ever happen to his own family. Paramount Chief Kinyanjui had forcibly abrogated other mbari's land and after his death in 1929, his family was left almost landless when the former landowners reasserted their land rights.<sup>10</sup> Such a thing never happened to Waruhiu's family after his death.

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O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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See Chapter ten.

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O.I., William Gatoto, 13th February, 1987, Kwa-Maiko.

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ibid.; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.

Thus, by 14th November, 1932 when Chief Waruhiu testified before the Kenya Land Commission, he was already a big landowner. He must, therefore, have hoped that if the Commission provided security for the Kikuyu lands it would have benefited him in two ways. First, security for his own land and secondly security for his chiefdom since chiefs were nonexistent in areas alienated and occupied by European settlers. Waruhiu accordingly called upon the British Government to protect Kikuyu lands from any further encroachments and alienations and to return some of their alienated land.<sup>11</sup> He further prophesied that if his call was not heeded, then the land would eventually be returned after bloodshed.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, Waruhiu's blood was shed some twenty years later during the struggle to partly redeem the "stolen lands".

Chief Waruhiu must certainly have derived an immense sense of self-fulfilment and contentment from owning a land of his own. The land enabled him to wipe out the shame and the humiliation he had experienced and suffered, when he was forcibly and rudely evicted in 1922 from Mbari ya Gathirimu's land. Above all, the land elevated him socially

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<sup>11</sup>KLC, Vol. 6, Evidence of Waruhiu.

<sup>12</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

and economically and placed him at par with other leaders in the district. This was because land ownership was deemed to be a symbol of achievement, prestige and status. Lastly, the land provided Waruhiu with an opportunity to utilize and develop it in the way he thought best without any hindrance or interference from anyone.

(ii) Agricultural Developments

As the administration noticed:

Divisional Chief Waruhiu is a great asset to the district and being himself so agriculturally minded has been of great service in the promotion of agricultural development.<sup>13</sup>

Agriculturally, Waruhiu had two major advantages. One, his eagerness and willingness to adopt modern farming methods such as the use of fertilizers and soil conservation measures to prevent the loss of soil fertility. Two, valuable advice from agricultural officers who also used his farm for various agricultural demonstrations and experiments such as the use of fertilizer to obtain high yields.<sup>14</sup> As a result, Waruhiu was among the few accomplished farmers in the district and his was indeed "a very advanced shamba".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/27, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1934";

KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/135, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/192, "Visits, 1951-1960"; KNA-CS/2/1/290, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/192, op. cit.

Waruhiu, who practised mixed farming on his land, employed a good number of farm-hands to assist in the management of his holding. Most of them were from Murang'a and they, therefore, resided on his land. Their wages were "generally inclined to be higher than those paid on European farms".<sup>16</sup> Some herded Waruhiu's cattle and large flocks of sheep and goats, although he had some paddocks for his cattle. In 1948, Waruhiu installed a spraying yard to control ticks on his cattle. The great improvement in the appearance of his cattle inspired his people who clamoured for dips to be built for them in the location.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, Waruhiu grew surplus foodcrops such as maize, beans and potatoes which he sold to individuals and to the government.<sup>18</sup> Waruhiu also cultivated the wattle tree on a large scale as it was the only available "cash" crop for the Kikuyu then. The importance of wattle trees was highlighted by the Kiambu Agricultural Officer in the following words:

Wattle is probably the most useful crop which can be grown by the Kikuyu. It provides poles and sticks for building purposes, firewood and native made bark rope. Charcoal is extensively made from the wood and of course the bark is sold for tannin extract.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/38, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/39, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/135, op. cit.



Waruhiu no doubt used a part of the profits he reaped from the application of advanced farming methods to purchase more land. Such a tendency, by people like Waruhiu, was noticed by a DC who wrote that:

There is a growing tendency for the richer Kikuyu to increase their land holdings by purchasing land from poorer Kikuyu...as a result of profits made from farming their land better with manuring, and they apply their better farming methods with good results to the land they buy.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps it was in recognition of his farming prowess that Waruhiu was for many years the chairman of the Kiambu LNC Agricultural and Veterinary, and the Kiambu Agricultural Show Sub-Committees. In addition, Waruhiu was always an exhibitor at the Kiambu Show which was started in 1923 with three basic aims. These were, to persuade the peasants to adopt sounder farming methods; to inculcate a friendly rivalry in agricultural prowess; and to provide temporary excitement because life in the Reserve was "incredibly dull for the African".<sup>21</sup> During the first 1923 show, Waruhiu won prizes for sheep, corn, potatoes, honey and eggs.<sup>22</sup> By 1950, Waruhiu's farming skills had greatly improved. In that year, he won the third prize in the small holders' competition for

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<sup>20</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/38, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/7, "Agricultural Show: Native, 1934-1949".

<sup>22</sup>Herald of Life, op. cit., 20th December, 1923, p. 12.

the best small holding.<sup>23</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was also among the first Kiambu people to be permitted to grow coffee in 1952. Kiambu was the last of the three Kikuyu districts to be gazetted as a coffee-growing area in 1952. But the first African-grown coffee in the colony had been planted in 1937 in the Kisii, Embu and Meru Districts, following the introduction of the Native Grown Coffee Rules in 1934. The Kikuyu, who were contiguous to the European coffee plantations, had been prohibited to grow coffee on three premises: that their coffee plants, not properly treated, might infect European coffee with diseases; that coffee thefts from European farms would increase; and that Kikuyu-grown coffee would adversely affect labour supply to European farms.<sup>24</sup> These arguments were, however, proved to be far-fetched and baseless when the Kikuyu were eventually permitted to grow coffee.

Notwithstanding all this, Senior Chief Koinange had been the first African in the colony to grow coffee in 1916. He had planted three acres of coffee which he had kept going for three years until 1919 when his coffee was uprooted and he

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<sup>23</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/11, "Agricultural Shows, 1949-1956".

<sup>24</sup>KNA-MAA 8/44, "Correspondence: Native, 1947-1956".

was compensated for "the labour which he had undergone".<sup>25</sup> He had been licensed to grow coffee by the then Kiambu DC, G.A. Northcote "under a misapprehension...when control was relaxed owing to the emergence of the German War".<sup>26</sup>

Koinange, who "was a better farmer than most Europeans",<sup>27</sup> was obsessed with a desire to grow coffee. On 3rd July, 1951, the Kiambu District Agricultural officer found a nursery of some 10,000 coffee seedlings on Koinange's land.<sup>28</sup> Koinange, who had planted the coffee contrary to the Crop Production and Livestock Ordinance, was fined Shs. 100 by the First Class Kiambu Magistrate who also ordered the confiscation of the coffee in question.<sup>29</sup> Following an appeal by Koinange, the Supreme Court, which found the African Grown Coffee Rules to be ultra vires quashed the sentence which had been imposed on him by the lower court.<sup>30</sup> But before the rules could be re-drafted and re-introduced, Githunguri Division was in the same month of July gazetted as a coffee growing area.

Waruhiu's Githunguri Division thus became the first in

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<sup>25</sup>KNA-Lands 1/51, "Ex-Senior Chief Koinange, 1950".

<sup>26</sup>ibid.

<sup>27</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup>KNA-Lands 1/51, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup>KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/40, "African Coffee, 1937-1959".

<sup>30</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/42, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1951".

the district to grow coffee. In Githunguri Division itself, only the locations of Waruhiu, Magugu and Karuga were initially permitted to grow coffee. And only those who had constructed bench terraces were allowed to grow the coveted cash crop on such terraces.<sup>31</sup> In addition, each applicant was initially permitted to plant 100 coffee trees or less. Accordingly, Waruhiu's 100 coffee trees were planted during the long rains of 1952.<sup>32</sup> But Waruhiu never reaped any monetary benefits from the cash crop as he died before the end of that year.

(iii) Other Developments on Waruhiu's Land

Waruhiu had built a sun-dried brick house with a corrugated roof at Giathieko, similar to those he had built at Ngenia and Ndathini.<sup>33</sup> The house was advanced enough by the standards of the time considering that the majority of the people lived in dwellings made of brushwood (ruthwago) walls. Stone extensions to this house were, however, made in later years. In 1934, for example, Waruhiu erected a stone-built kitchen, a store and a stone structure which replaced a dilapidated grass structure referred to as thingira wa kiama

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<sup>31</sup> ibid.

<sup>32</sup> O.I., Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.; KNA-D.A.O./KBU 1/1/40,

op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

or council house, which was used for meeting purposes by elders.<sup>34</sup>

When he later in life married other wives, he built corrugated and mud-walled houses for them. His workers' quarters were also of a relatively high standard. Waruhiu also had well-maintained latrines when many people in the district either had none or were unwilling to have them. Moreover, his compound was always kept neat and tidy. As a result, "the entire premises show a model native residence".<sup>35</sup> Negley Farson, a Negro writer who visited Waruhiu in 1948, wrote the following about his compound:

He has a home built in European style, with a decorative monkey-tree in its well-swept drive, a hyacinth-blue border of jacaranda trees...climbing yellow roses on its walls, and a beech-like manunga tree on its lawn under whose cool shade we had tea, looking out over that same spacious vista to where the misty blue outline of mountains rose out of Tanganyika to the south.<sup>36</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was also in the forefront in the acquisition of western material culture in the form of utensils, tools and implements. He had been among the first people in the district to own a bicycle and a motor vehicle. He purchased the vehicle in the early 1940's which was a one -

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<sup>34</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/27, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1934".

<sup>35</sup>ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Farson, op. cit., p. 207.

and-a-half-ton former military truck.<sup>37</sup> He used the truck for his official duties and for commercial purposes. Waruhiu was also among the few people in the district who owned a saloon motor-car. The car was presented to him in 1948 by the European coffee growers around Kiambu in appreciation of his outstanding assistance with regard to labour recruitment for their farms.<sup>38</sup>

(iv) Business Ventures

Waruhiu was not left behind in the field of business as chiefs were generally at the vanguard of many commercial enterprises such as retail, wholesale and transportation. Although he owned several commercial plots all over his Githunguri Division he, however, never utilised them directly as they were undeveloped.<sup>39</sup> In 1934, he became a founder shareholder of a co-operative shop which was started at Marige Market in Komothai Location.<sup>40</sup> In 1940, he had the water mill, which he had built in 1924 on the Mukuyu River, moved away some 400 yards along the river owing to the presence of another mill nearby.<sup>41</sup> At about 1948, Waruhiu

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<sup>37</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup>ibid.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940.

<sup>41</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/27, op. cit.

became the proud owner of a commuter bus, nicknamed Nyang'endo which was plying between Nairobi and Githunguri.<sup>42</sup> He, in addition owned the one-and-a-half-ton truck which was principally used for commercial purposes.

Although Waruhiu's annual income cannot be calculated since no figures (except those for his salary) are available, he was, however, a wealthy man at the time of his death according to the standards of those days.

(v) Other Engagements

Although these were many, the Boy Scout Movement, however, merits a special mention. This is because Chief Waruhiu strongly endorsed the ideals and practice of the Boy Scout Association. He not only took keen interest in scouting developments but was also convinced that the ideals of scouting were ideal for Kikuyu boys. These ideals included duty to God, loyalty to the King and the Colony, and to help others at all times.<sup>43</sup>

In 1951, Waruhiu became the first of the chiefs in the district to give support to the reformation of the Kiambu

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<sup>42</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup>East African Standard, 24th October, 1952.

Local Boy Scout Association. As a result, he not only became one of the first members of the Association but on the occasion of the association's first rally, he put his kitchen utensils at the disposals of the attendants. From then on, he attended the meetings of the association regularly, encouraged and supported Boy Scout Troops in the district and put in an appearance at Scout functions. For example, when the first Scout Camp, which was attended by 400 scouts, was held at Githunguri in March 1952, Waruhiu contributed two bullocks towards a feast for the participants.<sup>44</sup>

When Waruhiu died in October 1952, the scouts paid tribute to him in two ways. Firstly, they attended his funeral. Secondly, they postponed a rally which they would have held on the following week under his patronage.<sup>45</sup>

(vi) Waruhiu's Family Life

Chief Waruhiu, who neither smoked nor drank any liquor, was a remarkably pious individual. He never failed to attend church services and functions even after he was suspended from the Holy Communion when he married other

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<sup>44</sup>ibid.

<sup>45</sup>ibid.



wives.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, he raised his family in the Christian faith and he was partly responsible for the conversion of his four other wives, who had been non-Christians when he married them.<sup>47</sup> His devotion to religion impressed Negley Farson who wrote:

Chief Waruhiu of the Kikuyu was about the only man I met in Africa in whom I felt that the teaching of Christianity had completely fulfilled its mission...he not infrequently takes the teachings of Christ literally. And his composure coming from the fact that he feels in his heart that he is living a Christian life, is the most rock-like thing about him.<sup>48</sup>

Chief Waruhiu was always very grateful to the Knapps for introducing him to Christianity and for having given him the most encouraging book that he had ever read apart from the Bible. This was Up From Slavery, which was about the life of the American Negro, Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee College. What had so impressed him about the book was to know that Booker T. Washington, who had dined in the White House with President Theodore Roosevelt, "had been born a slave".<sup>49</sup> The book had also greatly influenced his attitude and relationship with the white men in the country.

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O.I., Rev. John Gatu, op. cit.; Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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Farson, op. cit., p. 204.

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ibid,. p. 207.

Although he was "an ardent apostle of cordial race relations and balanced development",<sup>50</sup> he nevertheless felt that "the colour bar is a despicable thing, but that it was useless to discuss it".<sup>51</sup>

A close relationship had existed between Chief Waruhiu and the Knapps. He always recaptured their memories with a radiant light of loving remembrance after their deaths in the early 1940's.<sup>52</sup> Rev. W.P. Knapp was the first to die on February 14, 1940, followed by his wife, Myrtle I. Knapp, in the following year on 25th August, 1941. They were followed by their only daughter and child, Alta Knapp, who had been married on 14th August, 1930 to Robert Macpherson of the CSM Chogoria, Meru. She died in 1942. Rev. Knapp died from a lingering Parkinson's disease which had been complicated by pneumonia and a fractured hip; his wife died within seconds from a massive stroke resultant from delayed shock of her husband's death; and their daughter, who had a poor heart condition from her childhood, died from endocarditis.<sup>53</sup> All three were buried in the precincts of the Knapp Memorial Church at Kambui.

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<sup>50</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup>Farson, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>52</sup>ibid., p. 207.

<sup>53</sup>Macpherson, op. cit., p. 87.

In spite of Waruhiu being such a devoted Christian, he nonetheless married other wives contrary to the teachings and regulations of the Church. The four wives, who all hailed from his location, were married between 1938 and 1944. All four were illiterate and non-Christians and they were married under the Kikuyu customary law.

The second and third wives, Ruguru wa Kamau and Wachuru, were married within one week in 1938.<sup>54</sup> Ruguru was the daughter of Kamau wa Kang'oe and Wanjeri of Kiairia village, next to Waruhiu's farm. She belonged to the Marobo riika of 1932, which was also incidentally the riika of Waruhiu's eldest son, David Wainaina.<sup>55</sup>

On her part, Wachuru's riika was Njane Kanini of 1933 and she was the daughter of Mungai wa Thiong'o and Nungari of Gakoe, also next to Waruhiu's land. Wachuru would have become the second wife had she not been afraid of Wagathenge.<sup>56</sup> Ruguru had also been scared until Waruhiu assured her that she would not live in the same compound with his first wife.<sup>57</sup>

Waruhiu, therefore, built their houses where the

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<sup>54</sup>O.I., Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>55</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup>O.I., Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

present Waruhiu Memorial Farm Institute stands. This was on a different ridge of his farm which was about a mile from Wagathenge's house and they were separated by a big valley. His mother's house, his thingira (man's house), his workers' quarters and night paddocks for his cattle were also located there. But hell broke loose when Wagathenge learnt that Ruguru had secretly been married.

That night, Wagathenge went across and raved angrily against Ruguru while she at the same time furiously banged on the door.<sup>58</sup> A heated and bitter quarrel ensued between Wagathenge and Waruhiu. She vehemently pointed out that it was Waruhiu himself who had introduced her to the new faith. She, therefore, wondered how she would manage alone if he forsook the Church.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, she hysterically recalled how poor and diseased he had been and yet, she had married him in spite of all.<sup>60</sup> The bitter exchange culminated in a scuffle in which Wagathenge, besides being at the receiving end, was badly manhandled by Waruhiu.<sup>61</sup>

That same night, Wagathenge took her three youngest

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<sup>58</sup>ibid.

<sup>59</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>60</sup>O.I., Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

children - Njoki, Njeri and Ng'ang'a - and fled to the GMS Kambui Mission Station. She opted for Kambui rather than Ng'enda among her relatives because hers was a protest against religious persecution by Waruhiu. She also hoped that the Knapps would intervene on her behalf.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Wagathenge was a deeply religious woman who was very devout and dedicated to her faith. Interestingly, though she was totally illiterate, she could accurately and confidently quote verses from the Bible.<sup>63</sup> At Kambui, she lived in the icai, or girls' dormitories, for six months until her son, David Wainaina, finally took her back home at Giathieko.<sup>64</sup> A few years later, Wagathenge reconciled with her co-wives beginning with Njeri, the fourth wife.

Njeri had been married at around 1940 and her initiation riika was Ndururu of 1934. Her parents were Njoroge wa Wamihang'o and Nyakarura of Mbari ya Gathirimu from Ruiru.<sup>65</sup> Her marriage had been followed by that of the fifth and last wife, Ruguru wa Njogu, in about 1944. Her riika was King'ora, or Hitler, of 1940 while her parents were Njogu wa Muthiga and Gachoki of Kiairia.<sup>66</sup> Njeri's marriage

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<sup>62</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>63</sup>ibid.

<sup>64</sup>ibid.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>65</sup>O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

appears to have been an attempt, on Waruhiu's part to reconcile with Mbari ya Gathirimu.

Wagathenge approached Njeri about a year after her marriage and intimated that she should cease being scared of her and that she be paying her visits.<sup>67</sup> Such a friendship and co-operation was subsequently extended to the other wives. As a result, all five became one big family which was, by and large, happy and contented. Wagathenge was also partly instrumental in the subsequent conversion of her four co-wives.<sup>68</sup>

Several factors combined to motivate and compel Waruhiu to marry other wives. One reason was his desire to be accepted back into the mainstream of the Kikuyu traditional society. His mother, Njoki, was also instrumental as she constantly urged him to marry other wives to keep her company.<sup>69</sup> Another cause were the naggings of Wagathenge who found it difficult to believe that he spent so many nights out owing to his official duties.<sup>70</sup> But the underlying motive behind the marriages was his desire to be on an equal

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<sup>67</sup>O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup>ibid.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>69</sup>ibid.; Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup>O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

footing with his wealthy and polygamous colleagues, like Koinange, Muhoho and Kibathi. Waruhiu wanted to have a large family and as Wagathenge was past child-bearing age, then he had no alternative but to marry other wives. This is because many wives and children were also considered as symbols of success, wealth and status.<sup>71</sup>

Chief Waruhiu left a total of twenty-two children at his death. Only seven children of Wagathenge had survived. They were, in their chronological order, Esther Nyamweru, David Wainaina, Simon Kimani, Samuel Njoroge, Hannah Njoki, Mary Njeri and Solomon Ng'ang'a. The second wife had four children who were Paul Kang'ethe, George Kamau, Njoki and Wanjeri. Wachuru had an only son, George Kang'ethe. Njeri on her part bore for him Hiram Kang'ethe, Jeremiah Boro (Njoroge), Ruth Njoki, Ben Kimani and Njeri (Gaceria). Similarly, Waruhiu left his fifth wife with five children but it was only Stanley Kang'ethe, Peter Mburu and Stephen Njoroge who survived.<sup>72</sup>

Waruhiu, who greatly valued education, naturally encouraged his children to strive for the highest possible educational attainments. He not only wanted them to be good

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<sup>71</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

examples to other people's children, but also to be abreast the children of other chiefs. Most of his children attended Kambui and Kanjai (near Giathieko) schools for their primary education.

Esther Nyamweru was born in 1914 and she spent at least ten years at Kambui School. Besides acquiring reading and writing skills, she also learnt other useful skills such as sewing and knitting. But she never went to high school since there was none for girls then. She was married in 1933 by Munene (Wamachati) of Komothai. Her husband, who was a teacher at Kambui and Komothai Schools, was a pioneer student of the Alliance High School.<sup>73</sup>

David Wainaina was two years younger than Nyamweru. He obtained his primary education at Kambui and at the CSM Kikuyu before he spent three years at the Alliance High School. He then joined the King's College at Budo in Uganda for two years. The college was specifically for training the sons of chiefs who would eventually succeed their fathers as chiefs. Wainaina met the heir to the Buganda throne (later Kabaka Mutesa II) at the college and they became good friends. So great was their friendship that Mutesa visited Wainaina at his

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<sup>73</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.



father's home at Giathieko in 1939 when he was on a Kenya tour.<sup>74</sup>

From Uganda, Wainaina proceeded to the Adam's College in Natal, South Africa, where he appears to have excelled in business ventures rather than in education.<sup>75</sup> He was later employed as a commercial traveller by a Moslem Indian called A.I. Kajee, who was the leader of the Natal Indian Congress. In 1945, he joined the Natal University, which was an Indian institution, and he spent a year studying Political Economy, History and English.<sup>76</sup> He, however, never obtained any certificate for his South African education. He returned to Kenya in 1946 and was appointed as the first African Executive Officer to the Kiambu LNC.

In 1948, Wainaina spent the months of March to August in England. He was sponsored by the British Council to study local government and improved methods of agriculture. As a result, he was in London to meet his father when he arrived there for his 1948 visit.

Wainaina spent two months at Paignton in Devonshire

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<sup>74</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>75</sup>Farson, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>76</sup>ibid.

where he observed the work of all departments of the Paignton Town Council. He was allowed to attend the Council meetings and acted as Returning Officer at Urban District Council elections. He spent another two months at Dartington Hall near Totnes and saw scientific farming in other parts of Devonshire. He was impressed by the care the English farmer took of his soil and livestock. After visits to Edinburgh and Glasgow, he took a course in Social History at the Leicester University.<sup>77</sup> Commenting on the English way of life, Wainaina observed that:

No one sits down doing nothing. Every minute seems to count, and people realize that time does not come back...The sense of responsibility by which the British people work wholeheartedly at their jobs must be cultivated by the Native African in Kenya.<sup>78</sup>

When he returned to Kenya, he was appointed an African Assistant Administrative Officer with effect from 1st December, 1948 and posted to Embu District. He was among the second lot to be appointed to such posts, the first lot having been appointed in 1946. This appointment once again demonstrated the high esteem his father was held in by many top government officials, most of whom, like Wyn Harris, the

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<sup>77</sup>KNA-MAA 7/772, op. cit.

<sup>78</sup>ibid.

CNC, were his personal friends.<sup>79</sup> His son had been promised the job by the CNC when he was still in England even before he had applied for it! The promise was contained in a personal letter from Wyn Harris which informed him that:

...your name has been noted down and...with your record you stand an extremely good chance of obtaining a post of African Assistant Administrative Officer. I am looking to you, together with a few others, to be the foundation stones of a contented and hardworking African Civil Service.<sup>80</sup>

Surprisingly, Wainaina's political and agricultural convictions were strikingly fairly comparable to those of his father. He was of the opinion that self-government, which the politicians were clamouring for, should not be granted before there was widespread education. He further considered that if it was granted, it would be abused because "the Africans would not know what to do with such freedom".<sup>81</sup> In the field of agriculture, he confided to the Kiambu DC, E.H. Windley, that:

Land is the source of Kenya's wealth and this untouched wealth will be realized when soil is protected from being washed away...those men<sup>82</sup> have not realized this and because of

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KNA-MAA 7/330, "Administration: African Assistant Administrative Officers, 1948-1949"; KNA-MAA 8/68, op. cit.

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Wyn Harris to David W. Waruhiu, 2nd July, 1948, KNA-MAA 7/330, op. cit.

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Farson, op. cit., p. 212.

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This refers to the politicians.

their short sightedness they agitate against any measures that are put forward to combat this evil that faces us in Kenya.<sup>83</sup>

He expressed similar sentiments to Wyn Harris when he wrote:

I look at Kenya with a very high regard for the huge agricultural productivity it can provide to humanity if only we young men did less talking and exerted all our possible energy to working hard in co-operating with authority to improving the old method of agriculture and inculcating to our fellow men the importance of hygienic ways of living.<sup>84</sup>

When open hostilities broke out in Kenya after the death of his father, Wainaina was seconded to the Community Development Department as a Rehabilitation Officer. He worked in Kiambu and at the Athi River Rehabilitation Camp in Machakos. He was also instrumental in the organisation of the Githunguri Home Guard paramilitary corps.<sup>85</sup>

Simon Kimani did not achieve such high academic qualifications. He was born on 21st December, 1918 and initiated into the Ndururu riika in 1934. After his primary

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<sup>83</sup>David W. Waruhiu to Windley, 24th May, 1948, KNA-MAA 7/330, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup>David W. Waruhiu to Wyn Harris, 12th December, 1948, KNA-ARC(MAA)- 2/5/234, "Central Province, 1947-1949".

<sup>85</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, "Emergency Handouts, 1952".

education at Kambui, he spent a year at Riara Roman Catholic Mission and another year at the Kabaa High School. In 1938, he joined the Scott's Agricultural Laboratories at Kabete, where he left two years later as a qualified agricultural instructor. He worked first, at Kerita and later in his father's location.

In December 1943, he was threatened with death if he was not immediately removed from the Kerita area. Kimani had been frustrating the efforts of those who wished to engage in illicit trade owing to the 1943 famine known as Ng'aragu ya Mianga. The anonymous typed threatening letter was eventually traced to Mbiru by Dr. Leakey (Wakaruigi) of the Criminal Investigation Department.<sup>86</sup> Mbiru, who hailed from Waruhiu's location, was an employee of the Ruiru Bag and Cordage Company and a member of the Kikuyu Farmers and Traders Association. The association hired D. N. Nene, an Indian advocate, to defend him. The trial caused a lot of interest and the public galleries were crammed with people

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O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op cit.; William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.; KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/3/16 III, "Monthly Intelligence Reports: Central Province, 1941-1943"; KNA-DC/KBU/1/35, op. cit.

people throughout the trial.<sup>87</sup>

Judgement was finally delivered against Mbiru in April 1944. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment with hard labour which was subsequently reduced to two and a half years on appeal.<sup>88</sup> The court proceedings greatly influenced Kimani's younger brother, Samuel Njoroge, to such an extent that he decided that he would like to be a lawyer one day.<sup>89</sup> The dream was fulfilled about twelve years later.

Kimani also acted as an overseer of his father's businesses and property. In May 1951, he was appointed as an assistant chief to his father. In the following year, he was promoted into a full chief to replace his murdered father.<sup>90</sup>

Of all Waruhiu's children, Samuel Njoroge was the only one who attained very high educational qualifications before his father's death. Having been born on 8th September, 1927, he attended Komothai, Kanjai and Kambui Primary Schools up to 1943. He thereafter spent four years at the Mang'u Catholic High School at Thika. In 1947, his father managed to get him

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KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/3/16 IV, op. cit.

88KNA-DC/KBU/1/36, op. cit.

89O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

90KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

a place at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. The struggle to raise a government loan to finance the education of his son at the University eventually culminated in a reconciliation between Waruhiu and his long-time avowed adversary, Harry Thuku.<sup>91</sup>

Harry Thuku had been released from detention in December 1930. Ever since, Waruhiu had held him with a lot of suspicion and mistrust as he was afraid that he might try to work for his downfall. This was compounded by the presence of Waiganjo wa Ndotono in Thuku's home since the return of the latter. Waruhiu was, therefore, delighted when the two were separated on 19th January, 1931. The separation came in the wake of a meeting held on that date in Waruhiu's Camp at Ruiru which was attended by the PC, E.B. Horne, and the DC, S.H. Fazan. Waiganjo, who declared that he was acting as a bodyguard to Harry Thuku so as to keep undesirable people away from him, got a rude rebuff from the chief. Waruhiu retorted that he was in charge of law and order in the location and that he could effectively deal with any trouble that might arise.<sup>92</sup> The PC warned Thuku and Waiganjo that the question

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<sup>91</sup>Thuku, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>92</sup>KNA-PC/CP.18/3/2, "Political and other Deportees, 1929-1946".

of their remaining at liberty depended on their good behaviour and that their liaison would not be tolerated.<sup>93</sup>

In August 1941, Waruhiu led the Kiambu LNC in condemning a memorandum from Thuku's KPA which was addressed to the Chief Secretary through the PC. The KPA memorandum had mainly attacked the chiefs and the council.<sup>94</sup> Responding to the memorandum, Waruhiu quoted a Kikuyu proverb, ni iria ii hia iguturuma mirungu, meaning it is the horned beast which butts the unhorned beast. The implication was that the LNC was the unhorned beast which was committed to constitutional methods and was being attacked by a horned beast, the KPA, which was not bound to such methods.<sup>95</sup> Waruhiu further denounced the KPA for attacking the Council solely in order to claim credit for the work done by the Council.<sup>96</sup>

The relationship between Waruhiu and Thuku began to thaw in 1941 when the former attended the opening ceremony of the latter's KPA headquarters in Nairobi.<sup>97</sup> Their relationship, however, remained sour and strained until 1947.

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ibid.

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KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1941-1945.

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ibid.

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ibid.

97

King, op. cit., p. 181.



when Thuku agreed to guarantee a government loan for his son to go to Edinburgh University. Later in the year, Waruhiu was in a delegation which was sent by Thuku to beg Rev. Williamson to conduct a full church wedding for Thuku.<sup>98</sup> Thuku had fallen out with the church after he had got married under the Kikuyu customary law. The request was granted and Thuku and his wife, Tabitha, were married at Kambui Church in February 1948. Their best man was David Wainaina, Waruhiu's son. Chief Waruhiu presented Thuku with a wedding gift of Shs. 6,000, a lot of money then, which he had personally collected from his friends.<sup>99</sup> From then onwards, the two became great and firm friends as they had finally realized that they both had common interests unlike in the past when they were in different camps.

The plan to send Njoroge overseas, however, faded and fizzled out shortly thereafter. This was because Wyn Harris prevailed upon Waruhiu to drop the plan by arguing that:

I feel that it would be much better for him if he were to go to Makerere first, and if he makes good progress at Makerere I shall be only too pleased to support an application for a bursary for home. I understand that until he has been to Makerere he is not likely to benefit from a course at home to any marked extent.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Thuku, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>99</sup>ibid., p. 67.

<sup>100</sup>Wyn Harris to Waruhiu, 13th December, 1947, KNA-ARC(MAA)

-2/5/234, op. cit.

Njoroge consequently ended up at the Makerere College in 1948 from where he graduated three years later with a Diploma in Education. He was subsequently posted as a teacher to the Alliance Girls High School, which had been started in 1948.<sup>101</sup>

In 1951, Waruhiu approached the Kiambu district administration for their assistance to secure an overseas bursary for his son. Waruhiu and his son were given an introduction letter addressed to Rev. Gillet, who was in charge of overseas bursaries. But Njoroge was unable to secure a bursary as Rev. Gillet informed them that all British Universities were full to capacity with ex-servicemen whose education had been interrupted by the War.<sup>102</sup>

On the same day, they met Eliud Mathu who took them to the Indian High Commissioner to Kenya. Njoroge was there and

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<sup>101</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup>ibid.

then given a full scholarship to study law at the University of Banares in India.<sup>103</sup>

But this was not to be. When the district authorities later on the same day learnt what had happened, Waruhiu and his son were given another letter to take to Rev. Gillet on the following morning. This time, Njoroge was awarded a scholarship to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth under a scheme known as Higher Education Loan.<sup>104</sup>

Njoroge left for Britain in September 1951 and after one year, he was given a full bursary. It was when he was in his second year that his father was killed. He heard the shocking and unbelievable news on the same day over the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It was him who telephoned his brother, David Wainaina, and informed him of the tragedy that had befallen them. Wainaina and his wife, Margaret Nduta, were then in Geneva, Switzerland, where they were attending a Camp of a revival movement known as the Moral Rearmament. They met in London on the following day, 8th. October, with other Kenyans, like Eliud Mathu and Mbiyu wa

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<sup>103</sup>ibid.

<sup>104</sup>ibid.

Koinange, who were in London then. Although Njoroge had wished to go back home to participate in the burial of his father, he was, however, dissuaded from doing so. It was pointed out to him that Wainaina and the other members of his family would adequately perform the last burial rites for their departed beloved father.<sup>105</sup> And that is exactly what happened.

Njoroge graduated two years later with a Bachelor of Arts degree but he immediately registered for a law degree at the same University. No sooner had he done this than his bursary was discontinued by the Kenya Government. The authorities were not in favour of Africans studying law as it was considered to be a career for agitators.<sup>106</sup> His two brothers, Wainaina and Kimani, however, struggled to raise fees for him and after two years, he was awarded a Bachelor of Laws Degree. Thereafter, he joined the Middle Temple Inn of Court which he left in 1958 after being admitted to the Bar.<sup>107</sup> Had his father lived to witness such remarkable educational achievements, he would certainly have been very proud of his son for honouring his efforts in such a big way.

On the other hand, the other three children of

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<sup>105</sup> ibid.

<sup>106</sup> ibid.

<sup>107</sup> ibid.

Wagathenge, Hannah Njoki, Solomon Ng'ang'a and Mary Njeri had attained some basic education. The majority of the other children of Waruhiu were, however, still very young and few of them had attained school-going age at the time of his death.

Waruhiu was also responsible for bringing up and educating his three younger brothers, his sister and his nephew. All had some basic education. In addition, Ndung'u and Njau went through the Alliance High School. Ndung'u eventually ended up as a clerk to a wattle bark company at Ruiru until his retirement. Njau and the nephew (Kang'ethe) later joined the Scott's Agricultural Laboratories at Kabete and were trained as agricultural instructors. Waruhiu's other brother, Kang'ethe, worked as a road supervisor for many years. Their sister, Wanjiru, was married by a Kambui teacher called Njoroge wa Kimemia but when he died in the mid-1920's, she was inherited by his brother. Waruhiu also paid bride-price for his brothers and nephew, besides assisting them to relocate and buy land cheaply in various parts of Githunguri. No wonder they used to refer to themselves as the sons of Waruhiu considering that he had all along acted and behaved like a father to them.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>O.I. Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

Just before his death, Waruhiu rejoined the Church he had abandoned fourteen years earlier when he married other wives. He did this after the death of Wagathenge in February 1950. She died from what was possibly cancer after a long illness and two operations at the Mathari Hospital in Nyeri.<sup>109</sup> Her long illness and subsequent death terribly shook Waruhiu to such an extent that his performance as a chief was affected.<sup>110</sup> This was because, of all his wives, Wagathenge had been his ngatha, or favourite wife. Her house had been his headquarters where he had entertained his guests. Moreover, she had accompanied him on most of his social engagements.

In order to be re-admitted to the church, Waruhiu renounced three of his wives, although he did not neglect them. He then married Njeri, whom he loved best, at a colourful ceremony at Kambui on 14th June, 1952. His best man and maid were his old schoolmates, Rev. and Mrs. Wanyoike wa Kamawe. The cost of printing and distributing the wedding invitation cards was borne by Harry Thuku.<sup>111</sup> A wedding reception was held in the afternoon at his Giathieko

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<sup>109</sup>O.I. Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>110</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>111</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/5/229 II, "CNC: Personal, 1952-1953".

Estate and it was attended by a large gathering. There were African, Indian and European guests who included E.R. St A. Davies, the CNC.

The wedding could be termed as the wedding of the year among the Africans of the district and it was in a big contrast to the 1910 wedding. It was the last big social gathering that Waruhiu was ever to attend. It was as if all those present had gone to bid him farewell for the last time because he was dead hardly four months after this marriage.

The shock of Waruhiu's death was severely felt by his family and above all, by his aged mother, Njoki, who was then a very old woman of well over eighty years. Njoki had been a strong-willed woman who had performed most of her daily chores herself inspite of her advanced age. Above all, she had been an expert at narrating the traditions of her own mbari and other related Kikuyu folklore.<sup>112</sup> Njoki was greatly affected by her son's death so much that she neglected almost everything that she was used to. She never left her house again and she spent her last few days mourning and brooding over her departed son.<sup>113</sup> Life without Waruhiu

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O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op cit.; Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit. Simon K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

113  
O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

appeared to be empty and meaningless to her. The shock of her son's death, which was too much for her to bear, eventually killed her shortly thereafter.



CHAPTER NINE

PRELUDE TO WARUHIU'S DEATH

The eve of Senior Chief Waruhiu's assassination was a turbulent one with many upheavals. These emanated from the proscribed underground and formidable Mau Mau Movement which was then gaining in ascendancy and prominence. Unprecedented violence and general lawlessness were, therefore, the order of the day. These manifested themselves in murders, mass oathing ceremonies, terrorism, arson, burglary and thefts, cattle maiming and crop destruction. The Mau Mau militants were also frantically preparing for the impending onslaught against the might of the British Empire. They were acquiring, by all means, an assorted collection of weapons, firearms in particular. Others were secretly disappearing into the forests to acclimatize themselves with the harsh and hostile conditions that would confront them when they embarked on their gruelling guerrilla campaign.<sup>1</sup>

All these activities had given rise to a widespread atmosphere of general uneasiness and restlessness characterised by mounting tension. The most affected areas

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<sup>1</sup>O.I., James Mwago Njuguna, 11th March, 1987, Kigumo.

were the Central Province, the White Highlands and Nairobi. Consequently, there was an expectation of a foreboding but unavoidable catastrophe. This was sparked off by the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu on 7th October, 1952 by the Mau Mau.<sup>2</sup>

There were many contributory factors to the emergence of the Mau Mau Movement. But the three major ones were the land question, the plight of the Rift Valley squatters and the Olenguruone crisis.

(i) The Land Question

Land politics was one of the most sensitive and central issues (particularly among the Kikuyu) throughout Kenya's colonial history. The Africans, especially the Kikuyu, were hard hit by land shortage and landlessness. This, in turn, had led to gross overcrowding and overstocking in their Reserves. This situation had arisen because some of their fertile and productive lands had been alienated for white settlement at the turn of the century. The Kikuyu could not afford to part with such large tracts of land owing to their rapidly rising population. On the eve of Waruhiu's death, 2,000,000 Africans in overcrowded Central Province occupied just under 2,000 square miles. In a big contrast, 2,000

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Throup, op. cit., p. 232.

settlers occupied 16,700 square miles in the White Highlands, much of which was lying idle.<sup>3</sup>

The first land alienations in Kikuyuland took place in Kiambu District in 1896. This was when the first three white settlers - Boedeker, Wallace and McQueen - arrived in the protectorate.<sup>4</sup> They settled around Fort Smith which was about ten miles to the west of what became Nairobi. Their arrival prompted and compelled the Protectorate Government to promulgate the 1897 Protectorate Land Regulations. These empowered the settlers to be issued with twenty-one years' renewable land leases on unoccupied land provided it did not affect the Africans.<sup>5</sup> These Regulations were thereafter repealed by the 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance.

The 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance was specifically geared towards encouraging and promoting white settlement in the protectorate. This was initially done in an attempt to offset the Uganda Railway from running at a loss. It was argued that the railway would be assured of adequate traffic resulting from the increased agricultural productivity in the Kenya highlands.<sup>6</sup> The Ordinance had adverse effects on Africans in

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<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Muriuki, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>5</sup>KLC, Vol. 3, p.4.

<sup>6</sup>Muriuki, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

that it completely refused to recognize their land ownership. It only recognized their occupation rights. This implied that if they were removed, they could only be compensated for the disturbance and not for the land itself. On the other hand, the Ordinance offered the prospective European settlers 99 - year leases.<sup>7</sup> This sparked off a scramble for land in what came to be known as the White Highlands.

Many white settlers flocked into the country from all over the world, and in particular from South Africa and Britain. Although the 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance had stipulated that land occupied by Africans could neither be alienated nor leased, this was largely ignored or disregarded. Land occupied by Africans was alienated and leased to the settlers, largely owing to the haphazard and confused manner in which land was parcelled out.<sup>8</sup>

Land in the vicinity of Nairobi was in great demand from the onset. Besides being near Nairobi, the land also appeared to be empty and sparsely populated. This was the land that had been laid desolate by the 1898-1899 Great Famine from which the local people had not fully recovered. Moreover, most of the survivors were still in the other Kikuyu districts where they had taken refuge. Nevertheless, by 1903, some 40,000 acres in the Limuru, Ngong, Kiambu, Kabete, Karura and Ruiri

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<sup>7</sup>KLC, Vol. 3, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Mungam on cit. p. 49.

areas had been granted to European settlers on leasehold terms.<sup>9</sup> Although compensation was paid by the lessee for actual standing crops and buildings, no compensation was ever made, either by the State or the lessees, for actual ground values.<sup>10</sup> This was a big blow to the Kiambu Kikuyu in particular, since most of them had bought their land from either the Athi or other Kikuyu mbari.

The plight of the Africans in regard to their land was exacerbated by the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance. The Ordinance, in theory, appropriated all the land in the protectorate on behalf of the Crown. Africans were thereby reduced to the status of tenants-at-will on Crown lands. This meant that they could be evicted at any time if the need arose to do so. The settlers' land leases were extended to an amazing and unbelievable 999 years! This was to convince them beyond any reasonable doubts that the country was theirs forever as "Africans had no inherent or legal rights to land".<sup>11</sup>

The 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance ushered in an era of insecurity and uncertainty for the Africans. Above all, the Ordinance produced "widespread discontent and lack of faith in the Administration".<sup>12</sup> Its effects and implications were

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<sup>9</sup>KLC, Vol. 3, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/14, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Rosberg and Nottingham, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p. 154.

severely experienced after the end of the First World War in 1918. Many Africans were dispossessed of their lands which were given to ex-white soldiers in appreciation of their war services. The soldier-settlement scheme threatened to virtually displace the Kikuyu living along the railway line between Nairobi and Limuru. Those affected marched to Nairobi to protest to John Ainsworth, the CNC. They were so resolute that they adamantly refused to take shelter in an ensuing heavy downpour until the CNC reassured them that their land would not be touched.<sup>13</sup> In the final analysis, the soldier-settlement scheme was responsible for the alienation of some 4,560 square miles in all parts of the White Highlands.<sup>14</sup>

The ever present danger and threat of land alienation compelled the Kiambu Kikuyu to form in 1919 the first ever protest political party in the protectorate. This was the Kikuyu Association of which Waruhiu was a founder member. Thereafter, many similar protest movements sprang up all over the country. The notable ones were based in Western Kenya, Ukambani and Kikuyuland. The persistent and constant agitation by some of those organisations, notably the KA, for the abolition of the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance and the issue of title deeds for their remaining lands should, therefore, be

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<sup>13</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>KLC, Vol. 3, p. 30.

understood in the context of the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance.

These protest movements did little to alleviate or eliminate the danger of land alienation. If anything, the land question became increasingly sensitive with time. This is highlighted by a 1925 High Court judgement involving two land cases. In both cases the plaintiffs wished to evict the defendants from their land. The Court ruled that they had no right to do so because no Kikuyu owned any land as it all belonged to the Crown and they could be removed if the Crown so desired.<sup>15</sup> These judgements left the Kikuyu seething with intense dissatisfaction which in Kiambu was voiced by the KA.<sup>16</sup>

Thereafter, the agitation for the abolition of the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance and the issue of title deeds picked up momentum. The gazetting in 1926 and the surveying and demarcation of the Reserves' boundaries in 1928 did not stem this tide. Neither did the 1930 Native Lands Trust Ordinance, which set aside the Reserves for their occupation forever, quell and dispel their fears and plight. This was because they were still regarded as tenants-at-will on Crown lands. Above all, the Europeans continued to encroach on their

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<sup>15</sup>KLC, Vol. 3, p. 3; KNA-DC/KBU/3/19, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>See Chapter 6.

land. Consequently, they continued to persistently and consistently petition both the Kenya and British governments to balance the land equation in their favour. These frequent petitions and memoranda finally persuaded the British Government to appoint the Kenya Land Commission (hereafter the KLC) to settle the colony's land problem once and for all.

(ii) The Kenya Land Commission, 1932-1934

The KLC was appointed in April 1932 with Sir Morris Carter as its chairman. The other Commissioners were R.W. Hemsted and F.O.B. Wilson, while S.H. Fazan was the Secretary to the Commission.

The KLC was charged with an enormous and difficult task which was outlined in its seven terms of reference. These were firstly, to consider present and prospective needs of the Africans with respect to land and whether they should own land individually or communally. Secondly, to consider the desirability and practicability of setting aside further areas for their present or future occupancy. Thirdly, to determine the nature and extent of claims asserted by the Africans over alienated land and to make recommendations for the adequate settlement of such claims. Fourthly, to examine claims asserted by Africans over land not yet alienated and to make recommendations for the adequate settlement of such claims.



Fifthly, to consider the nature and extent of the rights held by Africans under the Crown Lands Ordinance and whether better means could be adopted for dealing with such rights in respect of land already alienated and land to be alienated in the future. Sixthly, to define the White Highlands where Europeans were to have a privileged position. Lastly, to review the workings of the 1930 Native Lands Trust Ordinance.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, these contradictory and ambiguous terms of reference were "to circumscribe critically the concerns and recommendations of the Commission".<sup>18</sup>

The KLC visited the provinces in turn from August 1932 to April 1933 to gather evidence. It was in the Central Province in November 1932, where it was fervidly received by the Kikuyu. Practically every Kikuyu mbari that had been affected by land alienation, presented a memorandum to the KLC outlining its land claims. Moreover, the KCA formed the Kikuyu Land Board which organised and co-ordinated claims of the various mbari.<sup>19</sup> In addition, many more Kikuyu testified before the KLC. Chief Waruhiu was among those who testified before the Commission on 14th November, 1932. This was at a baraza held at Kiambu. His evidence was generally in agreement with that of all those who testified at Kiambu and elsewhere.

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<sup>17</sup>KLC Report, London, 1934, pp. 1-2.

<sup>18</sup>Rosberg and Nottingham, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>19</sup>ibid.

Divisional Chief Waruhiu earnestly begged the Commissioners to first tour the Reserve and witness the appalling conditions before he testified. But the Commissioners were unable to do so owing to lack of time. Waruhiu outlined the evils of overcrowding to the Commission. These were overstocking, shortage of cultivation and grazing lands, continual bickering and strife, many land cases and even death over land disputes. He observed that such a situation had developed within about thirty years. He wondered what the "position will be like in the next thirty years if we are not helped". He also spoke against the appalling living conditions of squatters on European farms, who were forced to live on slopes next to the rivers and mosquitoes.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, Waruhiu submitted a memorandum to the Commission in early 1933 following a request from the Secretary to the Commission. The KLC needed further information that would help to establish the extent of the forest around Ruiru at the time John Ainsworth settled the Ngwaro wa Mathu's case in 1895.<sup>21</sup> Ngwaro's cattle had been seized by Francis Hall, who was in charge at Fort Smith, for allegedly destroying the forest and refusing to move from the forest zone. Ngwaro had

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<sup>20</sup>KLC, Vol. 6, Evidence of Waruhiu.

<sup>21</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/4/4, "Kenya Land Commission: General Correspondence, 1932".

thereafter appealed to Ainsworth, the Sub-Commissioner at Machakos. Ainsworth had directed that Ngwaro be allowed to remain where he was and that his cattle be returned to him.<sup>22</sup> Waruhiu interviewed several elders, including Ngwaro's son, who were present when the incident took place. He thereupon compiled a report which he submitted to the Commission through the Kiambu DC.<sup>23</sup>

On 17th November, 1932, Chief Waruhiu also took part in the cross-examination of L.E. Caine, a Ruiru farmer. He did so in a bid to refute some allegations made by the farmer and establish the truth. In his evidence, Caine had denied that the Kikuyu had either grazed or cultivated in the Ruiru area at the turn of the century.<sup>24</sup>

The Loyal Kikuyu Patriots (KA), of which Chief Waruhiu was one of its four pillars, submitted two memoranda to the KLC. The first memorandum informed the Commission that on 13th and 20th November, 1932, all the churches in Kiambu would offer earnest prayers on behalf of the Commissioners.<sup>25</sup>

The second memorandum estimated that about 100,000 acres

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<sup>22</sup>KLC Report, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>23</sup>KLC, Vol. 5, Waruhiu's memorandum.

<sup>24</sup>KLC, Vol. 3, Evidence of L.E. Caine.

<sup>25</sup>KLC, Vol. 6, Memoranda of the Loyal Kikuyu Patriots.

had been alienated from the Kiambu Kikuyu. Besides, it called for the removal of the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance; provision of more land; provision of land for squatters; issue of title deeds; return of alienated forests; and that compensation be in land rather than money "because money vanishes like fire in a short time". Issues raised and not related to land were, the abolition of the kipande system, African representation in the Legislative Council, more educational opportunities for Africans, and better terms of service for the chiefs.<sup>26</sup>

Altogether, the KLC was presented with 372 memoranda, 212 statements recorded by magistrates and some 400 letters and other documents from Kikuyu claimants. In addition, 685 witnesses testified before the Commission. They included 443 Africans and 242 Europeans.<sup>27</sup> The oral and written evidence presented by the Africans was in agreement with regard to several important issues. They all demanded that the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance be repealed; provision of more land; compensation for their alienated lands; and the request for their lands to be placed under the control of their INCs.<sup>28</sup>

The KLC published its report in May 1934. The first part of the three-part report was devoted to the Kikuyu Province.

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<sup>26</sup> ibid.

<sup>27</sup> KLC Report, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Rosberg and Nottingham, op. cit., p. 156.

The KLC concluded that much of the Kikuyu evidence had either been fabricated or exaggerated. It also outrightly rejected the githaka concept or land tenure system by arguing that it was extremely ephemeral. The Commission accordingly recommended that the Kikuyu be allocated an additional 21,000 acres to compensate for their estimated 60,000 acres alienated for white settlement. Some 383 square miles of semi-arid and inhospitable land in the Yatta area in Kambaland was set aside for their future needs. Moreover, the Commission did not award compensation to individuals. It scrupulously recommended that a sum of Sterling pounds 2,000 be paid to the three Kikuyu LNCs in proportions deemed just by the authorities. Another recommendation was that African lands be not styled Crown lands but Native lands. Lastly, the KLC upheld European supremacy in the White Highlands, an exclusive area consisting of 16,700 square miles.<sup>29</sup>

It is evident from these recommendations that the KLC miserably failed to resolve the land problem for all time. Firstly, it did not provide the African population with a sense of security for their lands. Secondly, it failed to settle their historic land claims. Thirdly, it similarly failed to provide sufficient land for their future needs. The KLC instead "sacrificed and compromised on the altars of settlers'

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<sup>29</sup>KLC Report, op. cit., pp. 165-261.

politics Africans' fundamental rights to land".<sup>30</sup> As a result, the KLC only managed to centralize and magnify the land problem in the colony's politics for many years thereafter.

While the government regarded the Land Commission report as final, the Africans rejected it soon after its publication. This rejection was contained in a joint Kikuyu memorandum sent in October 1934 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.<sup>31</sup> Many such memoranda and petitions followed in subsequent years. By 1941, the land issue had become so sensitive that land to the Kikuyu was considered to be equivalent to what a red rag was to a Spanish ring bull.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, the Administration had concluded that the political aspirations of the Kikuyu "have been, are, and always will be centred on land".<sup>33</sup> By 1945, land was considered to be the beginning and the end of everything for the Kikuyu.<sup>34</sup> On the eve of Senior Chief Waruhiu's death, the Kikuyu demands and grievances in connection with land "remained the chief breeding ground for discontent in all its forms".<sup>35</sup>

In the final analysis, the failure of the KLC to solve

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<sup>30</sup>Mwangi wa-Githumo, Land and Nationalism, 1885-1939.

Washington: University Press of America Inc., 1981, p. 373.

<sup>31</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/27, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/32, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/34, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/36, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/42. op. cit.

the land problem partly precipitated the outbreak of the Mau Mau revolt less than two decades later. Another major contributory ingredient to the Mau Mau rebellion, and which was also closely tied to the land question, was the squatter problem. The squatters, who were faced with mass evictions, were landless and had nowhere else to go if they were evicted.

(iii) The Plight of the Rift Valley Squatters

The Kikuyu squatters were a motley collection of those who had been dispossessed and displaced by Europeans, those who fled from the reserves for one reason or another and those who moved to the White Highlands in search of both farming and grazing lands. Their European landlords had offered them attractive and favourable squatter terms. Land was put at their disposal and they could keep as much livestock as they liked and cultivate as much land as they could. All this was in exchange for a few months' labour each year on the farmers' land. Their lives, therefore, compared favourably to what they had been used to before the advent of the white man.

This arrangement was acceptable to the settlers because they needed cheap African labour to develop their farms. In addition, squatter cattle provided meat, manure and "helped to prevent bush regeneration and to keep pastures sweet for

European stock".<sup>36</sup> In later years, the Kikuyu came to dominate the squatter communities in the Nakuru, Naivasha and the Aberdare (Nyandarua) Districts. By 1946, out of a total squatter population of 250,000 in the Rift Valley, 200,000 were Kikuyu.<sup>37</sup>

The squatter and settler interests began to clash in the late 1920's. This was because squatter life was directly related to the political and economic interests of the settler community. As such, "changes in these settler interests led to changes in the basic conditions of the squatters".<sup>38</sup>

High commodity prices enabled the settlers to diversify into cattle and sheep rearing, an area hitherto dominated by the squatters.<sup>39</sup> As a result, certain measures designed to uphold the supremacy of settler interests to those of the squatters were introduced. They involved a drastic reduction of squatter livestock and cultivation rights. The crisis came to a head in 1928 when many squatters refused to attest to new contracts and instead threatened to return to their Reserves.

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<sup>36</sup>Throup, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 7 and 52.

<sup>38</sup>R.M. Wambaa and K. King, "The Political Economy of the Rift Valley: A squatter Perspective", in B.A. Ogot, ed., Jadith 5: Economic and Social Change in East Africa. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975, p. 183.

<sup>39</sup>Throup, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.



Chiefs Waruhiu, Koinange and others were sent by the government to the Naivasha-Nakuru area to try and defuse the situation.<sup>40</sup> Although they somehow managed to convince most of the squatters to remain in the Rift Valley, their success proved to be just a lull before a major storm.

Unilateral elimination of squatter stock reached a new high in 1929 during the kifagio (broom) episode. There was a drastic reduction of the squatter stock during the kifagio period which literally meant the sweeping away of squatter livestock. Some of their stock was butchered while the rest was either shot or confiscated. To make the matters worse, no compensation was paid for the eliminated stock.<sup>41</sup> The squatters retaliated by maiming settler cattle and burning settler crops.<sup>42</sup> But a final show-down did not materialise. This was due to the Great Depression which hit the whole world at that particular time.

The economic recession, which continued into the mid-1930's, greatly affected European farming in the colony. The collapse of international commodity prices undercut settler prosperity. Most of them abandoned their farms and left the

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<sup>40</sup> KNA-PC/CP.2/13, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Kanogo, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> Throup, op. cit., p. 93.

country. By 1931, only 2,828,000 acres of land in the White Highlands out of a total of 6,847,000 acres were actually under crops or being grazed while another 1,850, 000 acres were occupied by squatters.<sup>43</sup> But by the late 1930's when the depression had receded and agricultural prices had improved, the settlers once again moved to reassert their supremacy over the squatters. This time, they were armed with the 1937 Resident Native Labour Ordinance which had transferred responsibility for controlling the squatters to the settler District Councils. But just when things were getting hot for the squatters, the Second World War erupted and gave them a respite for a few more years.

Both settlers and squatters profited from the war-time prosperity from the high prices fetched by their products, which were in a great demand. But the prosperity came to an end with the end of the war. The end of the war also marked the beginning of the end of the Rift Valley squatters as an institution.

In 1945, drastic steps were taken to replace the squatters by "properly paid labour which should not be bribed

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<sup>43</sup>ibid.

by allowing it to cultivate and keep stock for gain".<sup>44</sup> Besides, the settlers were afraid that the resident labourers might secure squatter rights to the land they occupied on European farms under the English law. In addition, they wanted to end the threat of disease posed to their grade cattle by squatter-owned stock.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, total destocking of squatter cattle was enforced while the number of sheep and goats that they were permitted to keep was drastically reduced. Cultivation was restricted to two and half acres per wife. Moreover, males over sixteen years old were required to work for 270 days per annum.<sup>46</sup> To add insult to injury, these measures were introduced without a corresponding increase in the salaries of the labourers to compensate them for their lost earnings from their cultivation and stock. These economic sanctions rudely reminded the squatters that they were not only landless but they also had nowhere else to go if they were ever evicted. Consequently, these new, harsh and oppressive measures provoked widespread discontent and opposition from the squatters.

The plight of the squatters became a major concern for the Central Province Kikuyu, those in Kiambu in particular.

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<sup>44</sup>ibid., p. 96.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., p. 95.

<sup>46</sup>ibid., p. 94.

This was because if the squatters were evicted, most of them would end up in Kiambu and thereby aggravate the congestion in the district.

In April 1946, the Kiambu LNC asked the government to provide land for the squatters threatened with eviction. On that occasion, Chief Waruhiu was extremely indignant at what he considered to be unjustified squatter evictions. He bitterly recalled that European farmers had initially spared no efforts to procure labour. He also recalled that he and other Kiambu chiefs were responsible for dissuading the squatters from abandoning European farms in 1928. He, therefore, deplored the short quit notices given to the squatters by the settlers after the latter had developed the former's farms. He appealed to the government to step in and rescue the squatters.<sup>47</sup> His sentiments were echoed by all those who spoke during the debate.

In May 1946, the government became concerned when large numbers of squatters threatened to return to Kiambu. The Labour Commissioner, accompanied by Senior Chief Koinange and Divisional Chief Waruhiu, paid a visit to Naivasha. After discussions lasting for several days, they managed to temporarily defuse the tension. They were able to persuade the squatters to remain in the White Highlands for the time

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<sup>47</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/13, op. cit.

being. The Labour Commissioner was most impressed "by the very excellent way in which Divisional Chief Waruhiu reasoned with the people".<sup>48</sup>

In October 1946, Waruhiu once again decried the settlers' methods of evicting the squatters. He requested the PC, who was present in the Council Chambers, to plead with the Governor to provide land for the squatters. But the PC reiterated that the recommendations of the KLC were final and there was no chance "whatsoever of any further grants of land being made".<sup>49</sup>

By November 1946, more than 3,000 Kikuyu squatters in the Naivasha+Nakuru+Aberdare region had refused to reattest and had been evicted from the White Highlands. Many of them congregated at Limuru in Kiambu. On 21st and 22nd November, 1946, some of them demonstrated outside the Secretariat in Nairobi.<sup>50</sup> At a meeting they held at Kiambu on 30th December, 1946, with the Central Province PC, they demanded that their alienated lands be returned to them.<sup>51</sup> On February 1, 1947 a group of the evicted squatters + men, women and children + marched to Government House in Nairobi where they

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<sup>48</sup>KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/3/16 IV, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup>KNA-PC/CP.2/1/13, op. cit.

<sup>50</sup>Throup, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>51</sup>ibid., pp. 110-111.

had an interview with the Governor, Philip Mitchell. The Governor, however, rejected their demands for land in Kiambu and advised them to reattest.<sup>52</sup> In the same period, the squatters sent a number of petitions to the British Government through their Kikuyu Highlands Association based at Limuru, but to no avail.

By the end of 1947, the Kikuyu squatters had been forced to admit defeat. Some began to move into the Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia districts where the squatter option was still possible. Others returned to Central Province in frustration and became a focus of discontent.<sup>53</sup> The majority, however, remained on the settler farms embittered to the end. These turned to violence which was manifested in strikes, arson and maiming of European cattle.<sup>54</sup> Those who had reattested were also molested.<sup>55</sup> By the end of that decade, the situation in the White Highlands was already very tense. When the secret Mau Mau Movement emerged at around this time, it found a very well prepared seed-bed of discontent in which it quickly took roots. Thereafter, physical intimidation increased among the squatters as oathing spread all over the province. Interestingly, Mau Mau support was strongest exactly

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<sup>52</sup>ibid., p. 111.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., p. 112.

<sup>54</sup>ibid., pp. 111-112.

<sup>55</sup>ibid.

where the reductions in squatters' rights had been most severe. This was in the Aberdares, Naivasha and Nakuru Districts.

But oathing had originated from the Olenguruone residents who were also faced with evictions. The Olenguruone people had revived and modified the traditional Kikuyu oath as a tool of achieving communal solidarity in order to present a united front to the colonial government.

(iv) The Olenguruone Settlement Crisis, 1941+1950

The Olenguruone Settlement was situated high on the western slopes of the Mau escarpment at an altitude of 9,000 feet above sea-level. It was 38 miles to the west of Molo, 54 miles via Elburgon from Nakuru, and 27 miles from Elburgon. The Olenguruone Settlement was a rough triangle with its north-east corner pointing at Molo. It was bordered by the Maasai Native Land Unit to the south-west, the Amala River to the south-east, and the South-West Mau Forest Reserve to the north-east.<sup>56</sup>

About twenty per cent of the whole area was fairly flat

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<sup>56</sup>KNA+PC/RVP.6A/1/17/2, "Olenguruone Settlement, 1948+1950".

land along the ridge tops. The remaining land along the sides of the valleys was very steep. Mostly twelve to thirty per cent slope and hence unsuitable for extensive cultivation. The area was heavily forested with a combination of both bamboo thickets and poor cedar forest with very little natural grass. Olenguruone was, however, well watered. Its four main rivers were the Amala, Koyagi, Nairotia and Olgeree. Moreover, the annual average rainfall was 80 inches which was well distributed. The night temperatures were around 40°F while day temperatures rarely exceeded 80°F, except in February.<sup>57</sup>

The Olenguruone Settlement was, however, unsuitable for peasant option. The very hilly nature of the country, the very steep slopes, the absence of reasonable grazing lands, the impossibility of communications, and the effect of the seasonal flow of the rivers rendered the area unsuitable for agricultural settlement. In addition, the whole area was in a hail belt and hailstorms did considerable damage to cereal crops which could only be grown once in a year. Frosts, which were also experienced in the region, also did serious damage to the crops. Above all, the soil had serious mineral deficiencies and it also became deficient in humus after two years' cultivation. The soil's moisture holding ability was

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<sup>57</sup>ibid.



also poor owing to the rapid breaking up of soil particles. Most of the cultivated land resembled a coarse grade sand in texture.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these shortcomings, the Olenguruone Settlement was set up in 1941. It was meant to accommodate the Rift Valley squatters who, by reason of the greater control exercised under the 1937 Native Resident Labour Ordinance, might leave the European farms.<sup>59</sup> The settlement consisted of 34,700 acres. 30,000 acres were bought in 1939 from the Narok Maasai for Sterling pounds 6,000 which was paid to the Narok LNC. The rest were also obtained from them by exchange of certain grazing areas in the Forest Reserve.<sup>60</sup>

During its ten years of existence, only the north-east corner of the settlement was ever utilized by the 11,800 Kikuyu settlers. This amounted to about 3,500 acres or one tenth of the whole settlement. The rest remained under its original cover of bamboo and forest.<sup>61</sup>

Although the settlement was intended for the Rift Valley squatters, it ended up in accommodating the Kikuyu who

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<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> KNA-DC/NKU/6/2, "Olenguruone Settlement, 1947-1950".

<sup>60</sup> KNA-DC/NRK.1/1/3, "Narok District Annual Reports, 1939-1956".

<sup>61</sup> KNA+DC/NKU/7/1, "Olenguruone Settlement, 1950-1960".

had been squatting in Narok district since the 1920's. Many Kikuyu squatter families, particularly from the Naivasha area, had infiltrated into north Narok District and were concentrated at Il Melili and Nairage Ngare. They had done so with the consent of the local Maasai who allowed them access to as much land as they could cultivate in return for food and labour.<sup>62</sup> The authorities had repeatedly attempted to keep the ubiquitous Kikuyu settlers to an irreducible minimum but all in vain.<sup>63</sup> The opportunity to get rid of the undesirable Kikuyu settlers arose when the Olenguruone Settlement was set up. Although plans had been finalised to move them in early 1940, it was not until 1941 that they were forcibly removed and dumped on the bleak Olenguruone Settlement.

Land was made available to the Kikuyu settlers under very strict and harsh conditions, which subsequently became a major ground for contention between them and the authorities. Each family was allocated eight acres of land regardless of its size. Each settler was to have five acres of potential arable land on slopes of under twenty per cent. The remaining three acres were to be under permanent grass or trees. Land would not be cultivated continuously for more than four years initially and thereafter three years at a time. Moreover, not

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<sup>62</sup>Throup, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>63</sup>KNA+DC/NRK.1/1/2, "Narok District Annual Reports, 1925+1934".

more than two and half acres would be under cultivation at one time. The two and half acres would be utilized for the cultivation of cash and food crops for the family. The balance of five and half acres, together with four acres of common grazing, was to be used for eight or nine high grade cattle or the equivalent number of sheep. All grassland, temporary and permanent, private or common, had to be divided into paddocks by fencing and grazed in rotation. In addition, they were not only required to dig anti-erosion terraces, but they were also forbidden to grow crops such as maize, potatoes and peas.<sup>64</sup>

The crisis between the Kikuyu settlers and the government flared up in 1942. This followed the latter's attempt to introduce the above belatedly promulgated Olenguruone Settlement Rules. The Olenguruone residents stubbornly refused to sign a declaration to abide by the Settlement Rules. Land ownership at Olenguruone remained the issue at stake throughout the 1940's. The settlers argued that the government had no right whatsoever to interfere with their farming methods since they had been awarded land at Olenguruone on freehold basis. They claimed that A. N. Bailward, the Officer-in-Charge Maasai, had promised them in 1940 that

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<sup>64</sup>KNA-PC/RVP.6A/1/17/1, "Olenguruone Settlement, 1946-1948".

Olunguruone would be held on freehold terms. They added that he had done so in the presence of Chiefs Koinange and Njonjo, who supported their allegation. The settlers also recalled that they had been thoroughly scrutinized by a Kiambu LNC sub-committee to verify whether their lands at Kiambu had been alienated. They moreover argued that the sub-committee had rejected the claims of former ahoi because these were not being compensated with land at Olunguruone. They had, therefore, concluded that they had been compensated with land at Olunguruone just like those Kikuyu who had been compensated with land at the Kerita and Lari areas in Kiambu.<sup>65</sup>

In spite of these arguments, the government insisted and maintained throughout the decade that the Olunguruone residents were tenants of the Crown. They were, therefore, repeatedly warned that they were liable to eviction unless they obeyed the settlement rules. Despite these warnings, the settlers actively refused to co-operate with the authorities in any way.

They completely ignored all the settlement rules plus orders from the Settlement Officer and the Agricultural Department staff. When they were prosecuted under the

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<sup>65</sup>ibid.

Olunguruone Settlement Rules of 1942 and fined, the fines were not met in any one case. When their property was attached and sold by public auction, they never attended the sales. In cases where sale exceeded the fine imposed, they refused to accept the surplus money. When their leaders were summoned by the Nakuru DC, none turned up on each occasion. On another occasion, they walked out en masse from a baraza held at Olunguruone by the Rift Valley PC. The PC had demanded that each settler signify individually whether they would remain there under the settlement terms. They also refused to accept cancellation notices of their occupation rights which were sent to them by registered post. When they were summoned to appear before the court, not a single person turned up at the Olunguruone court on the day fixed for hearing.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout this period, the Olunguruone people sent numerous petitions to the Kenya and the British Governments. They even went to the extent of sending a memorandum of their grievances to the United Nations Organisation (UNO) in 1948.<sup>67</sup> Neither did they forget their district of origin where they sent many letters, petitions and deputations.<sup>68</sup> These finally compelled the Kiambu LNC to send a sub-committee

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<sup>66</sup> ibid.

<sup>67</sup> KNA-Lands 1/56, "Olunguruone Settlement: Complaints, 1948-1950".

<sup>68</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/36, op. cit.

to Olenguruone to assess the situation there.

The sub-committee, which consisted of seven councillors, visited the settlement in February 1946. The members of the sub-committee were Chiefs Waruhiu, Koinange, Muhoho, Njonjo, Luka and Councillors Eliud Mathu and Mbira. The sub-committee thereafter submitted a report of its findings to the Rift Valley Provincial authorities.

A meeting was subsequently held on 10th December, 1946 at the office of the Rift Valley PC to discuss the report. In attendance were the seven Kiambu councillors and the Nakuru DC, among others. The points raised by the sub-committee were dealt with point by point. The sub-committee had considered all the Olenguruone rules and regulations, with the exception of the soil conservation one, to be bad and oppressive and had recommended that they be amended at once. It had also suggested that each settler be allocated with 16 acres of land and that the young men who lived with their parents be given their own plots. The committee had also called on the government to provide the settlement with a school, a hospital and an LNC. Much more important, the sub-committee had recommended that the Olenguruone settlers should be regarded as githaka owners rather than ahoi.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>KNA-PC/RVP.6A/1/17/1, op. cit.

After considerable discussions, it finally emerged that the bone of contention was the status of the Olenguruone residents. The Kiambu councillors wished the Olenguruone people to be regarded as compensated with land in Olenguruone for the land taken away from them at Kiambu. But the government representatives could not agree to this arrangement. They were afraid that "with such a precedent large claims by Kikuyu generally would again be pressed".<sup>70</sup>

On the following day, the councillors made a second visit to Olenguruone. At Olenguruone, they put forward the government plan and "damned it with faint praise at the same time". They also advised the settlers to obey the government and also made it clear that any arrivals in Kiambu would not get a very hearty welcome.<sup>71</sup>

The sub-committee returned to Nakuru on 12th December. They reported that the Olenguruone settlers were still insisting that they be accorded freehold status. The councillors also requested that anybody who was turned out of Olenguruone should be given land at Kiambu. But their demands were rejected by the Nakuru DC. He stressed that the settlers had either to obey the government terms or leave the

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<sup>70</sup>ibid.

<sup>71</sup>ibid.

settlement.<sup>72</sup>

From 1947 onwards, the government made determined efforts to evict the recalcitrant Olenguruone residents. But this was hampered by a three-year legal battle that started in 1947. Fifty Kikuyu non-cooperators were convicted by a Nakuru court for being illegal residents at Olenguruone and fined Shs. 120 each. But before the government could expel them from the settlement, four of the convicted men appealed to the Supreme Court. When their appeals were dismissed in July 1948, they finally appealed to the East African Court of Appeal. But once again, judgement was given against them in February 1949.<sup>73</sup> Thereupon, the colonial authorities moved against the defiant Olenguruone rebels.

When the Olenguruone residents still defied orders to remove themselves from the settlement, the government embarked on a starvation campaign in an attempt to force them out. The operation was started on 1st November and completed on 10th December, 1949. The defiant residents' dwellings were razed to the ground and then burned. Their livestock and foodstuffs were impounded while their standing crops were destroyed. On 1st November, for example, 760 head of cattle, 3,197 sheep and

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<sup>72</sup>ibid.

<sup>73</sup>KNA-DC/NKU/6/2, op. cit.



a few donkeys and goats were confiscated and later sold by public auction. Interestingly, there were no ugly incidents during the whole exercise. But the settlers still refused to move out. They instead began to live in holes with rough covers over them, waiting for a chance to rebuild their houses.<sup>74</sup>

But the Olenguruone residents could never hope to emerge the winners in the long run and they never did. Between 16th January and 3rd March, 1950, the authorities rounded up all those they could lay their hands on. These were charged in the third class magistrate's court at Olenguruone under the 1937 Native Authority Ordinance. When they were fined Shs. 100 each, they all refused to pay their fines. As a result, the 168 men and 139 women were sentenced for one to two months' detention. Together with their 158 children, they were deported to the dry and inhospitable Yatta between the Embu and Kitui Districts. Only 14 Kikuyu family co-operators and 39 Dorobo families were left at Olenguruone. Nevertheless, the majority of the embittered 11,800 inhabitants of Olenguruone had already left the settlement for the Forest Reserve, the neighbouring European farms and Central Province.<sup>75</sup> Wherever they were, they continued to spread

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<sup>74</sup>ibid.

<sup>75</sup>ibid.

seeds of discontentment. Above all, they patiently waited for an opportunity to retaliate against the colonial government and even the score.

The Olenguruone crisis was significant in the historiography of the Mau Mau revolt in a number of ways. Firstly, the first Mau Mau oaths were taken and administered at Olenguruone in the 1946-47 period.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, it was at Olenguruone that the ideology that questioned the legitimacy of colonial rule in the colony as a whole was first born. Thirdly, Olenguruone was a rallying point for Kikuyu solidarity against the colonial government. Fourthly, the crisis strengthened the people's determination to overthrow the colonial system. Fifthly, it injected militancy into the squatter and Central Province politics. Lastly, the crisis brought together most of those who were discontented with the colonial system for one reason or another.<sup>77</sup> And this was a very significant development on the eve of the Mau Mau revolt.

The Olenguruone crisis, the squatter problem and the land question were, therefore, very central to the outbreak of the Mau Mau rebellion. These three were supplemented and complemented by several other contemporaneous Kikuyu demands and grievances. These

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Kanogo, op. cit., p. 117.

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ibid., pp. 119-120.

included rampant unemployment, poor living conditions and terms of service for urban workers, and the compulsory anti-erosion terracing campaign. In conjunction with these, the government's failure to institute meaningful social, economic and political reforms had also contributed to the rise of the Mau Mau Movement.

(v) The Mau Mau Movement

The Mau Mau Movement was a complex and complicated multi-faceted phenomenon that was geared and committed to violence. It was an alliance and a conglomeration of the Rift Valley squatters, Kikuyu peasants, ex-squatters and urban proletariat. Mau Mau, therefore, embraced those who were dispossessed, displaced, embittered, discontented and disillusioned. As a consequence, the movement appeared at times to be atavistic, terrorist, anti-European, anti-Christianity, a Kikuyu civil war, a peasant uprising and a liberation movement. All these, together or separately, have made the Mau Mau Movement to be "praised and damned, a source of pride as well as shame; glorified and repudiated".<sup>78</sup>

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D.M. Ng'ang'a, "Mau Mau Militancy and the De-radicalisation of the Peasantry". Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, 1978, p. 53.

The secret Mau Mau Movement started in the Olenguruone Settlement in the 1946-47 period when the inhabitants took the first Mau Mau oaths.<sup>79</sup> This was the time that the recalcitrant settlers were faced with imminent eviction. The radicalised oath was a means of eliciting communal solidarity against colonial oppression. The oath also psychologically decolonised the minds of the thousands of men, women, and children who took it. Above all, the oath raised the level of political commitment of those who took it and who, in addition, accepted "any sacrifice in the pursuit of their just ends".<sup>80</sup> By August 1948, the Olenguruone settlers were already committed to the violent overthrow of the colonial government. A note which was found by the demolition squad pinned to a door of a house on the settlement warned that:

If you (British) just think since you came to Kenya you have never seen an African with a gun, I am the one to inform you that the Wakikuyu have more power than you have with guns. Just wait until the year 1949 you will have to be sorry for the rules which you are giving us now, and when it will be my turn to order you in the same way.<sup>81</sup>

Thereafter, the Olenguruone oath rapidly spread to the surrounding European farms in the Rift Valley, Central Province

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Kanogo, op. cit., p. 117.

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Rosberg and Nottingham, op. cit., p. 248.

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KNA-DC/NKU/6/2, op. cit.

and Nairobi. The Olenguruone residents' unprecedented defiance of the Colonial government impressed their compatriots who took the oath and became members of the secret Mau Mau Movement. Whenever they went, the Olenguruone people were "received as heroes and lauded for having bravely withstood government incarceration".<sup>82</sup> In addition, they inspired their counterparts with their Olenguruone resistance songs which had raised the Olenguruone name "into a national symbol of sacrifice and martyrdom".<sup>83</sup> Much more important, the Olenguruone militants introduced the batuni oath which, in both content and form, "proclaimed the need for commitment to violence".<sup>84</sup>

By 1950, the secret Mau Mau Movement was firmly established in the Central Province, Nairobi and the White Highlands. The Movement had also become a big menace and concern to the authorities who tried to suppress it legally.

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<sup>82</sup>Kanogo, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>83</sup>Rosberg and Nottingham, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>84</sup>ibid.

First the underground Mau Mau Society was officially banned in August of that year. Secondly, many Mau Mau adherents were prosecuted and imprisoned.

The first Mau Mau prosecutions in Kiambu took place in 1950 when ninety-one people were charged with either administering the Mau Mau oath or for taking it. Thirty-one of them were discharged, fifteen acquitted and the rest were sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to three years.<sup>85</sup>

In 1951, severe penalties ranging from three to seven years' imprisonment were introduced. They were imposed on those convicted of Mau Mau oathing activities.<sup>86</sup> But these did not stem the Mau Mau tide which continued to rise dangerously and unabated.

On the eve of Senior Chief Waruhiu's death, there were four types of Mau Mau oaths. The status of an individual in the movement depended on the number of oaths taken. The first type of Mau Mau oath was modelled after the traditional Kikuyu muma oath but it differed to a marked extent. It was a general oath which merely pledged support for the movement. Like the

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<sup>85</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/41, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1949-1954.

traditional oath, it involved the eating of bits of meat dipped in blood. Unlike the Mau Mau one, the traditional muma oath was more in the nature of a commination service rather than an oath as the latter word is understood in the English language. It was administered by the ciama, councils of elders, during trial by ordeal to determine the guilty party.<sup>87</sup>

Those who wished to play a bigger role in the Mau Mau Movement took a second oath known as the batuni oath. This was administered to the fighting men or recruits who were not permitted to carry firearms. To be allowed to carry firearms, the recruits swore a third oath known as the killing oath. The oath obliged the partaker to initially kill at least three people. The senior most members took the fourth oath known as the kata, cut, oath. Human flesh was often used in this oath. After this oath, men were committed to the forest service or for whole time Mau Mau activities in their areas.<sup>88</sup>

By 1952, Mau Mau violence and general lawlessness had reached serious proportions. The 1952 Kiambu District Annual Report reported that:

The year has been one of mounting tension, turbulence and terrorism with the sinister

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<sup>87</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/13, "Political Record Book Part I: Notes on the Customs and Laws of the Kikuyu Tribe, 1915".

<sup>88</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/45, "Kiambu District Annual Reports, 1954-1957".

shadow of Mau Mau becoming blacker and blacker and more and more substantial. The mounting tide of turbulence manifested itself in a continued increase in Mau Mau ceremonies and forceable administration of oaths.<sup>89</sup>

The volatile situation was aggravated by the activities of KAU which increasingly and rapidly became more and more extreme. KAU leaders made provocative speeches at the KAU rallies held during the year. Their main theme was the return of the "stolen lands", which had the effect of increasing tension.<sup>90</sup> KAU also laid great stress on the activities of Mbiyu wa Koinange in Europe. A belief was fostered that Mbiyu would soon be returning with self-government in his pocket and this would result in the expulsion of Europeans from the country.<sup>91</sup> In addition, militant nationalist songs were openly taught in KISA and KKEA schools.<sup>92</sup>

The activities of KAU and Mau Mau greatly increased insubordination against the established authority. People no longer attended the chiefs' baraza enthusiastically. And when they did, they openly disagreed with and defied their chiefs' orders. Chief Waruhiu was on one occasion booed down in a baraza at Githiga when he warned his audience that they would

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KNA-DC/KBU/1/43, "Kiambu District Annual Report, 1952".

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ibid.

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ibid.

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ibid.



be prosecuted for failure to dig anti-erosion terraces.<sup>93</sup> In conjunction with insubordination, people no longer showed respect and obedience to their chiefs and the European administrators. Many people no longer bothered to stand up or remove their hats while in their presence as was hitherto the practice.<sup>94</sup>

But what greatly worried the general populace and the government was the escalation of violence and lawlessness. This was generally directed towards the irreconcilable collaborators and betrayers of the Mau Mau activists. Many people mysteriously disappeared during this period, never to be seen again. Most of them were murdered in the most brutal and horrific manner. A time came when people were openly scared to walk alone even in broad daylight for fear of becoming victims of the dreaded and invincible Mau Mau Activists.<sup>95</sup>

Many people were compelled by intimidation, and in many cases actual violence, to undergo the Mau Mau oath-taking ceremony. The following incident of a Roman Catholic Kikuyu woman, who was lured to the house of a Mau Mau adherent, is a

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O.I., David Ng'ang'a Cauri, 28th June, 1987, Githiga.

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Personal Communication, Kimani wa Macharia, 18th March, 1987, Githunguri.

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O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

shining example of this. When the woman persisted in her refusal to take the oath, a rope was thrown over a rafter and the noose placed around her neck. She was then hoisted off the floor by the end of the rope until she lost consciousness. When she partially regained her senses, she was compelled to take the oath and to perform the other rites constituting the Mau Mau oath-taking ceremony. One of the least savoury aspects of the whole incident was that the woman's husband was present during the whole episode!<sup>96</sup>

Others were not so lucky to escape with their lives. In the Rumuruti area, a certain Joseph Kibunja refused to take the Mau Mau oath. While the ceremony was taking place, he attempted to preach Christianity. He was throttled to death and buried at the place where the ceremony was performed.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, two shepherds, who were looking after their sheep, were set upon with pangas when they refused to take the Mau Mau oath. Both died from their injuries.<sup>98</sup> The body of another victim, who was killed whilst being forced to take the Mau Mau oath, was fished from the Nairobi River in the month of August 1952.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, "Emergency Handouts, 1952".

<sup>97</sup>ibid.

<sup>98</sup>ibid.

<sup>99</sup>ibid.

Many other people had their houses burned down for opposing the Mau Mau militants in one way or another. During a short period of about six days in the later part of January 1952 at Nyeri, the homes of eleven African families were fired. In two cases, the houses had been secured on the outside with the family in the house. In each of these cases, the victim was normally a headman, a person who had given evidence for the Crown, a person who had given information to the police about Mau Mau, or a strong supporter of the government.<sup>100</sup>

Neither did the Europeans escape from the fury of Mau Mau militancy. Burglaries and robberies with violence became the order of the day against them for monetary gain and for obtaining firearms.<sup>101</sup> On 5th October, 1952, a European couple was attacked on a coffee estate in Kiambu. The husband received stab wounds and a gunshot wound in the shoulder.<sup>102</sup> Two days earlier, a European woman had been found stabbed to death on a farm off the Thika Road.<sup>103</sup>

Europeans were perhaps hard-hit by cattle maiming and arson, particularly in the Nanyuki District. A total of 121

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<sup>100</sup> ibid.

<sup>101</sup> KNA-DC/KBU/1/43, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup> KNA-Information 6/258, op. cit.

<sup>103</sup> ibid.

head of cattle and 230 sheep were maimed on one occasion at Nanyuki.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, within a space of five weeks in February 1952, 58 fires were started in the same area and thousands of acres of grazing land were destroyed.<sup>105</sup> These acts of lawlessness forced the authorities to impose a curfew in the area in August 1952, long before it was imposed in other parts of the colony.<sup>106</sup>

Mau Mau violence was more pronounced in its retaliatory reprisals against betrayers, and especially those who had given information about the movement to the authorities. In May 1952, a bullet-riddled body was found in a river in the capital. The man had assisted the police to track down wanted Mau Mau activists.<sup>107</sup> Likewise, the decapitated body of a man who had previously given evidence for the prosecution in a Mau Mau case, was found in the Ol Joro Orok area.<sup>108</sup> Another such victim was a certain Njoroge wa Ruheni. Njoroge was a Mau Mau police witness who was being given police protection. He was, therefore, living in the Police Lines at Thomson's Falls (Nyahururu). On 9th September, 1952, he walked alone into the township. The deceased's body was later found on a river bank

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<sup>104</sup>KNA-MAA 2/194, "Native Affairs Report, 1949-1955".

<sup>105</sup>Throup, op. cit., p. 224.

<sup>106</sup>ibid., p. 231.

<sup>107</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup>ibid.

near the township. His head, which had been severed from the body, was recovered from the river.<sup>109</sup>

Most of these Mau Mau victims were normally trapped or ambushed. Others were seduced and lured to their deaths by women and girls. Some women once seduced a Kiambu policeman who was retrieved two months later from a dam.<sup>110</sup>

As the Mau Mau tension mounted, attacks on the loyalists also correspondingly increased. Loyalist attacks were principally directed against the chiefs and their agents in reprisal for their loyal attitude. A few chiefs, like Ignatio Ndung'u of Murang'a and Muhoya of Nyeri, had attempts made against their lives.<sup>111</sup>

But the government suffered heavy casualties among the sub-chiefs or headmen. In August, 1952, a loyal headman in Murang'a was attacked and was most seriously wounded. He received some eighty panga wounds all over his body.<sup>112</sup> In the following month, another headman from the same district was hacked to death.<sup>113</sup> Likewise, Headman Nderu of Limuru in Kiambu, disappeared in the night of 22nd September, 1952 never

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<sup>109</sup> ibid.

<sup>110</sup> O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>111</sup> KNA-MAA 2/194, op. cit.

<sup>112</sup> KNA-Information 6/258, op. cit.

<sup>113</sup> ibid.

to be seen again.<sup>114</sup>

But the most brutal murders occurred in Nyeri in September 1952. First, the headman of the Aguthi Location was shot dead.<sup>115</sup> Three nights later, the headman of the Thigingi Location was dragged from his bed and decapitated. A post mortem examination revealed that not one part of the headman's body was free from panga wounds.<sup>116</sup> In the same night, another headman was murdered in the same area when returning home from a chief's meeting. Numerous panga wounds were inflicted on him and his head was practically severed from his body.<sup>117</sup>

Then came the phase of assassinations. For some obscure reason, Kiambu had suffered fewer incidents than the other Kikuyu districts. But the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu was "probably the worst blow struck by the Mau Mau since he was almost a symbol of moderation".<sup>118</sup> Waruhiu's death emanated from his determined struggle to contain and stamp out the Mau Mau menace.

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<sup>114</sup>O.I., Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.; KNA-MAA 2/194, op. cit.

<sup>115</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, op. cit.

<sup>116</sup>ibid.

<sup>117</sup>ibid.

<sup>118</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/43, op. cit.

(vi) Chief Waruhiu's Struggle Against the Mau Mau Movement

Senior Chief Waruhiu was one of the staunchest and most vocal opponents of the formidable Mau Mau Movement. He, therefore, spent his last few years, 1952 in particular, locked in a deadly death struggle against the dreaded Mau Mau phenomenon. As the Senior Chief of the district, he appears to have taken the Mau Mau threat as a personal challenge. Accordingly, he never spared himself in his endeavour to stamp it out. Many were the nights he went home very late from consultations with his superiors on means and ways of eradicating Mau Mau.<sup>119</sup> Besides prosecuting those Mau Mau adherents he could lay his hands on, he also held numerous baraza to urge the people not to associate themselves with the outlawed organisation. In addition, the DCs in the province held many baraza in their respective districts.<sup>120</sup> It was, however, realized in mid-1952 that these were not achieving their objectives and that sterner methods of suppressing Mau Mau were essential.

After considerable preliminary investigation and discussions, between the government and the leading Kikuyu leaders, like Waruhiu, it appeared that a method of combating

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<sup>119</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

<sup>120</sup>KNA-MAA 2/194, op. cit.

Mau Mau had been found. The solution was to fight Mau Mau with its own tools - that is, the traditional Kikuyu githathi oath.

The githathi oath was the most potent, the most dreaded and the most horrifying and it was resorted to as a last measure. Its potency was so much believed in that the guilty party normally freely confessed rather than go through with the ceremony. It was such a dreaded symbol of occult power that "even the boldest and least stupid Kikuyu is afraid of it".<sup>121</sup> It was very well understood that the potent githathi medicine would definitely react against the guilty party and no one wanted this to happen to them.

The oath was administered on the githathi stone which was normally a dark brown or blackish ironstone which had seven holes in it. The commination service was conducted at a barren spot, otherwise, the evil of the oath-symbol could affect an inhabited or cultivated area.<sup>122</sup> The spectators placed stones before them or round them in order to form a magic barrier against the influence of the githathi curses when called down.<sup>123</sup> They also suspended mikenqeria sprigs (commeline species) over their ears so that they may not draw

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<sup>121</sup>C. Cagnolo, The Akikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore, Nyeri, 1933, p. 152.

<sup>122</sup>J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1971, p. 122.

<sup>123</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/3/13, op. cit.



the curses to themselves. The implication was that the mikengeria may hear the curses and not their ears.<sup>124</sup>

The operator passed several mugere or mikengeria sticks through each hole and worked each stick in and out in quick succession. As he did so, he invoked the vengeance of the githathi on the offender whoever he may be (this time the Mau Mau activists). The words used were repeated seven times after which the stick then working the githathi was thrown away. The cursing phrases for the Mau Mau were: marorio ni muma uyu wa githathi, may they be eaten by this githathi curse; marokua uguo, may they die thus; and maroharagana uguo, may they be scattered thus.<sup>125</sup> It was believed that the subject of the commination exercise died within nine seasons unless he owned up to the crime and paid compensation.<sup>126</sup>

In the month of July 1952, such githathi ceremonies were conducted in all three Kikuyu districts. The objectives of the githathi ceremonies were threefold. First, to prohibit people from participating in any further violent Mau Mau activities. Secondly, to stop Mau Mau oathing ceremonies. Thirdly, to nullify the effects of the Mau Mau oaths that had

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<sup>124</sup>ibid.

<sup>125</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup>Cagnolo, op. cit., p. 153.

already been taken.<sup>127</sup> In addition, a cleansing ceremony was introduced for those who wished to be released from the obligations of the Mau Mau oaths.

Senior Chief Waruhiu took a leading part in organising these ceremonies in the Kiambu district. He also participated in such ceremonies in the other Kikuyu districts.<sup>128</sup> In Kiambu district, he organized githathi ceremonies in every location. These started at Marige in Komothai Location before spreading to the rest of the district. But these githathi and cleansing ceremonies proved to be a palliative rather than a thorough purge, which wore off within a short time.

This is because the Mau Mau in their turn resorted to other traditional Kikuyu retaliatory and protective measures. Many decapitated or strangled cats and dogs plus other paraphernalia were put up on stakes and placed at strategic and prominent points. Such dead animals were believed to be a very potent protective medicine which neutralized the githathi curses and thus rendered them quite harmless and ineffectual.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>KNA-MAA 2/194, op. cit.

<sup>128</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, 14th November, 1987, Miguta.

<sup>129</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, op. cit.; KNA-DC/KBU/1/43, op. cit.; Bernard Gatu Ngunju, 16th June, 1987, Ruaka; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

Meanwhile, the Mau Mau violence continued to escalate unabated. The situation worsened after a big KAU rally which was held at Nyeri on 26th July, 1952. By mid-August 1952, the shadow of Mau Mau was looming larger than ever before. It was also at about this time that Chief Waruhiu unearthed plans to exterminate all the whites in the colony.<sup>130</sup> A night known as utuku wa mabanga, the night of the long knives, would have been fixed for the specific purpose of slaying all the Europeans in the colony. This bloody act would have been undertaken by their servants.<sup>131</sup> This compelled Waruhiu to convene the last public rally that he would ever address.

The rally was held on Sunday, the 24th of August, 1952 at the Kirigiti Stadium in Kiambu. The specific object of the rally was to publicly denounce and condemn Mau Mau militancy and nationalist violence and also find means and ways of restoring law and order.<sup>132</sup> The rally was attended by an estimated record crowd of 30,000.<sup>133</sup> The importance and seriousness of the meeting was demonstrated by the presence of a unit from the African Information Service with microphones, cine cameras and recording apparatus to make a sound film of

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<sup>130</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Thuku, op. cit. p. 68.

<sup>131</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>132</sup>East African Standard, 25th August, 1952.

<sup>133</sup>ibid.

the meeting.<sup>134</sup> The anxiety and tension in the air was highlighted by the presence of a riot police unit in full riot gear which had been brought from Nairobi to reinforce the local police.<sup>135</sup> The local police were considered insufficient and inadequately equipped to deal with an emergency, should one arise.

The meeting was presided by Senior Chief Waruhiu. All Kiambu leaders - chiefs, elders, councillors and politicians - were in attendance and most of them addressed the huge gathering. They included Jomo Kenyatta, Eliud Mathu, Harry Thuku, Josiah Njonjo and ex-Senior Chief Koinange.

Waruhiu opened the meeting after prayers were said. He held up a tuft of nappier grass he had brought along to drive his point home. He reminded the gathering how nappier fodder that grows in the water is pushed this and that way by the current. He proceeded to say:

The Kikuyu country is like this grass, blowing one way and another in the breeze of Mau Mau. We have come here to denounce this Movement; it has spoiled our country and we do not want it.<sup>136</sup>

He then held up a long straight wattle pole and expressed his

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<sup>134</sup>ibid.  
<sup>135</sup>ibid.  
<sup>136</sup>ibid.

wish by saying: " We want our country to be as steady as this pole by having nothing to do with Mau Mau".<sup>137</sup>

All those who spoke after him endorsed his views. It was during this meeting that Kenyatta uttered the famous words that were to prominently feature during his Kapenguria trial when he was accused of masterminding Mau Mau. Kenyatta asked the crowd to shout after him: "Mau Mau irora na miri ya mikongoe". This literally meant: May Mau Mau disappear with the mikongoe tree roots. This was later interpreted to mean that he had urged the proscribed Mau Mau to go even farther underground.<sup>138</sup> Kenyatta also disassociated KAU from Mau Mau activities. He reiterated that the main objective of KAU was to win equal opportunities for all races in the country in a government controlled by KAU and the Africans.<sup>139</sup>

The rally almost ended prematurely when Divisional Chief Njonjo provoked the multitude with his speech. He aroused their anger by telling them that they were not yet ready for self-government as they did not know how to manage

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<sup>137</sup>O.I., Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.; Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>138</sup>O.I., Karanja wa Kiondo, op. cit.

<sup>139</sup>East African Standard, 25th August, 1952.

their own affairs.<sup>140</sup> He was angrily booed and heckled by the crowd which began to walk away from the baraza. The situation was saved by Kenyatta. He appealed to the people to exercise restraint and tolerance as the riot squad was eagerly waiting for trouble to break out.<sup>141</sup>

Senior Chief Waruhiu appears to have grossly underestimated the Mau Mau. This was because the Kiambu mass rally did not stem the Mau Mau tide in any way. If anything, the situation thereafter seemed to be rapidly getting out of control and heading for a climax. But Chief Waruhiu, who had never suffered an administrative defeat in his thirty years as a chief, was not ready to accept one this time. He, therefore, could never rest assured until he had finally succeeded in helping the authorities to drive Mau Mau into oblivion.

The authorities concluded in September 1952 that only violence could eventually counteract and eliminate the Mau Mau shadow. It was, therefore, decided to set up local resistance groups of loyalists to assist the government in stamping out Mau Mau and restoring law and order. The loyalist resistance

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<sup>140</sup>O.I., Karanja wa Kiondo, op. cit.; Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.

<sup>141</sup>East African Standard, 25th August, 1952.

groups were later to be known as home guards when the State of Emergency was declared. Senior Chief Waruhiu set about this new campaign of rallying the loyalists with vigour and enthusiasm. But this finally proved to be his undoing. Hardly had two weeks passed, after he had embarked on this mission, than he was squelched by the Mau Mau.<sup>142</sup> Waruhiu's violent and untimely death is fully discussed in the next chapter.

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O.I., Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.; Kanogo, op. cit., p. 137

CHAPTER TEN

THE DEATH OF SENIOR CHIEF WARUHIU

"KIKUYU LEADER SLAIN".<sup>1</sup> That was a front-page headline in the colony's only daily newspaper announcing the death of Senior Chief Waruhiu. Underneath the bold print was written:

Senior Chief of the Kiambu District, Waruhiu wa Kung'u was murdered in an ambush at the mouth of a small murram track leading from Limuru "D" Route yesterday afternoon...<sup>2</sup>

This had not been the first attempt to kill Waruhiu. Several abortive attempts had previously been made against his life before that fateful day he finally met his violent death.

(i) Previous Attempts Against Waruhiu's Life

The first attempt to kill Waruhiu took place in 1939 after the Second World War had broken out. The houses of his two newly-wed wives, Ruguru and Wachuru, were set on fire. His mother's house also caught fire in the process. There was no doubt that the arsonist(s) was/were after Waruhiu as he/they thought that he might be in either of the houses of

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<sup>1</sup>East African Standard, 8th October, 1952.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.



his wives. Fortunately, Waruhiu was at Wagathenge's, on the other side of his farm. His labourers' houses, which were in the same compound with the burned houses, had been fastened from the outside to prevent them from going to the assistance of the intended victims.<sup>3</sup> To the amazement of Waruhiu, most of the neighbours, who could be seen standing outside their houses, did not go near the inferno for fear of being implicated with the incident.<sup>4</sup> Although the houses were completely burned to the ground, nobody was, however, injured. This was a relief to Waruhiu who stated that "if it is only the wood that has been burned, then that is nothing".<sup>5</sup> If anything, the incident prompted Waruhiu to build better houses with corrugated roofs, unlike the ones destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

Although Waruhiu could not understand why somebody might be after his life, several suspects were, nonetheless, arrested in connection with the arson. But they were later released for lack of concrete evidence against them.<sup>7</sup>

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3O.I., Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

<sup>5</sup>ibid.

<sup>6</sup>ibid.

<sup>7</sup>ibid.

Hardly had the burned down houses been reconstructed than the second attempt on Waruhiu's life was made. An ambush was laid for Waruhiu at night outside Wagathenge's house. But owing to a case of mistaken identity, Waruhiu's third son, William Githambu, was slashed on the head when he came out to draw water from a storage tank.<sup>8</sup> Githambu, who was tall and well-built, almost like his father, was then on his school holidays from the Alliance High School, where he was a student. On this occasion, his father was on the other side of his farm with his other wives.

Although Githambu was seriously injured, he was, however, taken to the Kiambu Hospital where he was treated and later discharged. He even went back to school when the new term started as he appeared to have fully recovered from the injury. But the injury inflicted by the attacker had been more serious than had been suspected. Githambu died three months later at school during a football game. He headed the ball and collapsed dead there and then.<sup>9</sup>

But before his death, a suspect, Kinothe wa Gituro, had been arrested and charged with attempted murder. He had been arrested on the basis that Githambu had recognized him.

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<sup>8</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.  
<sup>9</sup>O.I., Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

Kinothe was subsequently convicted and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.<sup>10</sup>

Kinothe indeed appeared to have a motive for wishing Waruhiu dead. He was from Kiambaa Location and a member of Senior Chief Koinange's Mbari ya Njuno. He had worked as a tribal retainer at Githunguri until he was sacked owing to a misunderstanding between him and Waruhiu.<sup>11</sup> He could have, therefore, been trying to avenge himself on Waruhiu who was responsible for his dismissal. But whether Kinothe was responsible for the attack or not, it is notable that no further attempts were made against Waruhiu's life for at least a decade.

It was not until in December 1950 that the next abortive bid on Waruhiu's life took place. A man tried to spear Waruhiu, with a spear fastened to a long pole, through the window as he lay in bed fast asleep. But the wire mesh gave the would-be murderer a hard time in trying to manoeuvre the spear to a suitable angle so as to come into contact with the sleeping chief. The noise that the man made aroused Njeri, Waruhiu's wife, who was sleeping in the same room with

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<sup>10</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>O.I., Bernard Gatu Ngunju, op. cit.

her sick child in a separate bed. On turning on the dimmed lamp, she was met by the horrifying spectre, which made her to instinctively shriek in terror in a desperate attempt to warn her fast asleep husband.

Waruhiu woke up in a state of confusion and instinctively thought that the child had died.<sup>12</sup> But he quickly came to his senses and frightened his attackers away by shouting, "let me shoot them!".<sup>13</sup>

A local man was subsequently arrested on circumstantial but strong evidence and charged with the attempted murder. But the incident appeared to have had no political significance so far as investigations could ascertain. Waruhiu had had the man prosecuted and fined for illegal possession of liquor.<sup>14</sup> The suspect was, however, acquitted for lack of conclusive evidence against him.<sup>15</sup>

Another unsuccessful bid to liquidate Chief Waruhiu was made after the August 24, 1952 Kiambu rally. The house of his fifth wife, Ruguru, was set on fire. Unlike in 1939, people rushed out and quickly extinguished the fire. As a result, only the roof of the living room was burned down. Whoever did it might have had the notion that Waruhiu was in the house and

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O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

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ibid

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KNA-DC/KBU/1/41, op. cit.

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O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

probably hoped to get him as he fled from the burning house.<sup>16</sup> Once again, Waruhiu was on the other side of his farm. Nevertheless, he did not venture out into the night as he was aware that it was him that they were after.<sup>17</sup>

In 1952, Senior Chief Waruhiu was also fought at the psychological level by the Mau Mau. As Waruhiu got deeper and deeper into the Mau Mau quagmire of turmoil and insecurity, so did the psychological warfare against him rise in magnitude. This warfare involved anonymous threatening letters and other documents. Some of them were deposited in his compound at night.<sup>18</sup> Others, which were addressed to him, were found beside decapitated or strangled animals such as cats and dogs.<sup>19</sup> The threats were designed to either scare him off into capitulation to the machinations of the Mau Mau or to instil in him a sense of permanent fear and insecurity. Apart from threatening him with a violent death, the anonymous documents also "advised" him to set his house in order as they would get him sooner rather than later.<sup>20</sup>

Waruhiu's wives and friends became concerned with his

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<sup>16</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>ibid.

<sup>18</sup>O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

safety as the Mau Mau claimed more and more victims. His wives constantly urged him to be extra careful and to avoid spending nights out or arriving home late in the night.<sup>21</sup> His friends also advised him to be careful as he was treading on dangerous ground which might collapse at any time and thus render his children fatherless at an early age.<sup>22</sup>

Chief Waruhiu did not take the threats on his life and the advice of his wives and friends lightly or for granted. He kept his superiors well informed about everything. For example, in mid-August 1952, Waruhiu reported to N.F. Kennaway, the DC, that his life was in grave danger from the Mau Mau.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, the authorities adopted some precautionary measures in an endeavour to safeguard Chief Waruhiu's life.

First, Waruhiu turned down a proposal to provide him with a bodyguard as such a measure would have given the impression that the Mau Mau had got into his nerves.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, the DC directed superintendent Alistair John Allen, who was in charge of the Kiambu Police Division, to issue Chief Waruhiu with a .38 Smith and Wesson revolver and ammuni-

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<sup>21</sup>O.I., Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup>O.I., Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup>East African Standard, 27th January, 1953.

<sup>24</sup>ibid., 8th October, 1952.

tion. The superintendent also gave Waruhiu some instructions in the use of the firearm for his self-protection.<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, Waruhiu would secretly seek for night refuge and protection in the house of H.T. Wells (Ngorongo) at Cianda near Githiga.<sup>26</sup> H.T. Wells was the leader of the local European farming community in the area. Lastly, Waruhiu could never use the same road twice in a day if he could help it and neither could he share meals with strangers.<sup>27</sup>

In spite of the threats and the danger the Mau Mau posed to his life, Waruhiu never faltered or quivered. He nonchalantly continued with his fight against the Mau Mau as if the sword of Damocles was not dangerously hanging over his head. His determination to help the government stamp out the Mau Mau was expressed in the following words by the CNC:

He was at his best in difficult times and during recent months, undaunted by the threats of thugs and outlaws, boldly took the lead in the work of restoring law and order and decrying the proscribed Mau Mau Society. Although he knew his life to be in danger he was undeterred in his condemnation of the deliberate terrorism and cowardly crimes which have shocked the colony and the outside world.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, Chief Waruhiu at times voiced his doubts

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<sup>25</sup>ibid., 27th January, 1953.

<sup>26</sup>O.I., Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit. ; Peter Gichuhi Thuita, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup>East African Standard, 9th October, 1952.

as to whether he would survive the Mau Mau menace if the movement was not routed out in the foreseeable future.<sup>29</sup> But he philosophically consoled himself by reasoning out that death was ultimately inevitable as no one would live forever.<sup>30</sup> He was, therefore, not afraid of dying and as he put it:

It is good for a man to die when he does not know the hour of his death, for he will get up in the morning, wash his face and go out to his death without fearing. But it is very bad for a man who has killed another to go to court, and be convicted. He knows that one day he will be killed, when all appeals have failed, what do you think he feels then?<sup>31</sup>

Having accepted death as being inevitable and unavoidable at any rate, Waruhiu began to distribute his property among his family as if in response to the "advice" in the anonymous threatening letters. Some of the measures, however, were in conformity to the religious promise he had made in order to be re-admitted to the Church. He had already given the piece of land at Kiairia to his second son, Kimani. He built for his second wife, Ruguru, on another piece of his land at Giathieko. She in fact shifted there three days before his death.<sup>32</sup> He had also pointed out to his third wife,

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<sup>29</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Mary N. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup>Thuku, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

<sup>32</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.



Wachuru, her piece of land at Giathieko. Work for constructing her house was already in progress when he died.<sup>33</sup> He had also deposited Shs. 500 with the Kiambu DC "for the milk" of the child of his daughter, Njeri.<sup>34</sup> It was also at this time that Waruhiu was planning to set aside some of his land for an agricultural demonstration farm.<sup>35</sup> But he was never given time to make the rest of his will known as he was murdered just before doing so.

The occasion rather than the cause of Waruhiu's death was a land case at Mbari ya Kihara's at Gachii. Gachii, which is in Kiambaa Location, is about seven miles from the capital.

(ii) The Land Case at Mbari ya Kihara's

The case involved the immigrant Mbari ya Kihara and Mbari ya Tukui who were the Athi who had originally owned the land in question. It was an appeal to the Central Native Tribunal Court (CNT) against a 1930's judgement delivered by the Githunguri Tribunal Court presided by Divisional Chief Waruhiu.<sup>36</sup> The court had allocated Mbari ya Tukui 320 acres of land at Mahindi near Karura. Mbari ya Tukui appealed

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<sup>33</sup>O.I., Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup>O.I., Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Mrs. Hannah W. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup>O.I., Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit.

against this ruling in 1952 as they wished to be allocated at least 600 acres because Mbari ya Kihara's land was over 3,000 acres.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, the CNT served Waruhiu with summons and also secured authorisation from the DC for him to attend the proceedings as a witness of the court.<sup>38</sup> The DC's permission was essential because the regulations stated that:

No chief may act as advocate, muthamaki, or village elder in any civil suit whatsoever, nor may he appear as a witness therein unless specifically so authorised for the particular case by a District Officer.<sup>39</sup>

As if they could foresee him not returning alive, his wives pleaded with him not to attend the hearing of the case.<sup>40</sup> But Waruhiu would not change his mind as doing so would have amounted to a gross disobedience of the DC's order which had bade him attend.<sup>41</sup> Waruhiu also appeared to have a premonition of his impending fate. His last words to his wives were: "let me go and if I come back, well and good, but if I don't, then that is it".<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>ibid.

<sup>38</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup>KNA-Police 5/630, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup>ibid.

<sup>42</sup>ibid.

He left for the land case on Monday morning, the 6th of October, 1952. Besides Waruhiu, there were five other people in his Hudson saloon car. They were his driver, Gichiri wa Mbatia, two women and two age-mates of Waruhiu who were Kiricho wa Murimi and Karunguru. Kiricho was a great friend of Waruhiu's while Karunguru was from Mbari ya Kihara's. He had gone to collect Waruhiu and had remained at Waruhiu's since Friday, the 3rd of October, 1952.<sup>43</sup> After stopping for a while at Kiambu and then at Nairobi where they dropped the two women, they arrived at Mbari ya Kihara's at around ten o'clock.

But it was discovered that the file containing the previous proceedings and judgement of the case in the lower court had been forgotten by the CNT at Kiambu. The proceedings could, therefore, not commence unless and until the file had been retrieved from Kiambu. Accordingly, Gichiri, Waithaka (the CNT's clerk) and Gachichio wa Mimi (a member of the CNT) were despatched to Kiambu to fetch the file.<sup>44</sup> The three arrived in Kiambu when the offices had been closed down during the lunch hour and it was not until after two o'clock that they got hold of the file. By around three o'clock when they returned, the case had already been

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<sup>43</sup>O.I., Mrs. Ruguru N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Mrs. Ruguru K. Waruhiu, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

postponed to be heard on the following day.<sup>45</sup> Waruhiu was thus forced to spend the night at Gachii in Karunguru's house.

The proceedings of the case commenced at around nine o'clock on the following day, the 7th of October, 1952. By the time Waruhiu finished giving his testimony, their lunch was ready. After he had lunched, he addressed those present. Ironically, he began by reminding them that a muthamaki, leader, does not die before he says his last word. He went on to talk about the Mau Mau terrorism and lawlessness. He asked the elders to advise their children to desist from lawlessness and evil deeds. He compared the Kikuyu and the Europeans in the country to nappier grass (growing in water) and water in a river respectively. He told them that as the shaking nappier grass does not stop the water flowing, so they too could not hope to violently dislodge the Europeans from Kenya. He concluded by warning them that if they did not heed his words, then they would recall him when calamity befell them sooner than they realised.<sup>46</sup>

It was a few minutes past one o'clock when Waruhiu got in his car and left. But less than five minutes later, he was dead.

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<sup>45</sup> ibid.; Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> O.I., Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit.

(iii) The Assassination of Waruhiu

There were four people in his car. Kiburi wa Thumbi, the President of the Githunguri Tribunal Court, was sitting in the front seat next to the driver. Waruhiu and Kiricho were reclining in the back seat. Waruhiu was sitting to the left with his car window lowered.

The chief's car had to cover about two miles before it came to the main Nairobi-Limuru "D" route. After they had covered about a mile, the driver informed the chief that there was a car following theirs at a great speed. He also added that he did not know where it had come from since he had not seen any other car on that day.<sup>47</sup> What he did not know then was that the car had emerged from a thick wattle plantation in the area, where it had lain in ambush covered with branches.<sup>48</sup> Waruhiu turned round, then assured those with him that the car was "one of those that roamed about in the reserve".<sup>49</sup> All the same, Kiburi enquired from Waruhiu whether he had his gun with him.<sup>50</sup> Waruhiu reassured him, though he never withdrew it in readiness. Interestingly, the

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<sup>47</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup>ibid.; Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>50</sup>Thuku, op. cit., p. 69; O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

gun, which was wrapped up in a paper bag, was in the front pocket of the car while the ammunition was in Waruhiu's pocket!<sup>51</sup>

Just then, they came to a wider stretch of the track and the car behind tried to overtake them. When the two cars were almost level with each other, the overtaking car hooted so as to be allowed to pass. But Chief Waruhiu instructed his driver not to give way!<sup>52</sup> If the car had overtaken them, then that spot would have been the scene of Waruhiu's death.

About half a mile from the main road, there was a fork in the track. The track to the right was a temporary one that had been made by vehicles to avoid potholes in the main track. Both tracks joined the main road at a distance of about half a mile from each other. The chief's car took the right track while the other car sped down the other track at such a high speed that Kiburi was audibly amazed. Waruhiu's rejoinder was that, that was precisely why he could not trust Gichiri alone with his car as he would be driving in a similar manner.<sup>53</sup> But if they thought that was the last they had seen of the car, then they were mistaken.

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<sup>51</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup>ibid.

<sup>53</sup>ibid.

Just before the chief's car joined the main road, they saw the other car, a fawn coloured Ford Consul taxi, stop at the mouth of their track. It was then reversed into the mouth of the track at such a high speed that it appeared as if it was moving forward.<sup>54</sup> The car then came to an abrupt stop with its rear bumper almost touching the front bumper of the Hudson. Waruhiu's driver thought that the taxi was reversing so as to turn round and head for the way it had come.<sup>55</sup> But he was proved wrong.

Even at this critical moment, Waruhiu never reacted in the way a person in constant danger ought to have done. He neither withdrew nor loaded his gun in readiness for any eventuality. Waruhiu's hesitation and lack of alertness cost him his life because by the time he realised what was happening, it was too late for him to do anything to save it. What happened next after his car was brought to a standstill was accomplished within about fifteen seconds.

Barely had the Hudson come to a halt than a light-skinned man, who was in a jovial mood, emerged from the front left-hand side of the taxi. He was wearing a dark brown

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<sup>54</sup>ibid.

<sup>55</sup>East African Standard, 23rd January, 1953.

tarpaulin jacket with a zip fastener, a red and white spotted scarf around his neck, khaki trousers and brown shoes. Immediately he got out of the car, he unzipped the jacket. He then put his right hand in the inner left-hand breast pocket of the jacket. This action gave those in the Hudson a false notion that he was probably removing a letter for the chief.<sup>56</sup> Once the man had passed Kiburi, he stopped next to Waruhiu, peeped at him and saluted, "Yes Senior Chief Waruhiu!"<sup>57</sup> Even before the words were out of his mouth, he had withdrawn a .38 Smith and Wesson gun and fired at the chief at point-blank range, thereby killing him instantly. The assailant next fired at and punctured the front left-hand tyre of the Hudson to avoid any possibility of pursuit. He then laughed as he casually walked back to the revving taxi. The Ford Consul car, which took off as if from a motor rally check-point, headed for the capital.<sup>58</sup> No wonder the assassination was described by the police as "a murder in the best Chicago style."<sup>59</sup>

The assassin shot Senior Chief Waruhiu five times. The first bullet went into his mouth while the other four

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<sup>56</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup>ibid.; East African Standard, 23rd January, 1953.

<sup>58</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>59</sup>I. Henderson and P. Goodhart, The Hunt for Kimathi. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958, p. 11.



penetrated into his chest.<sup>60</sup> All five bullets formed no exit wounds. A post mortem examination by Dr. Gerald Dockeray, the State Pathologist, revealed that Waruhiu had died from shock and haemorrhage from gunshot wounds in the lungs and vertebrae.<sup>61</sup>

None of the other three occupants of the Hudson was hurt. But they were terribly shaken and flabbergasted by the ghastly and bloody deed. Before the assassin had finished firing at the chief, they were all out of the car rolling on the ground with fright. Kiricho was so stunned that he ran and walked all the way to Githunguri, about fifteen miles away.<sup>62</sup> It was the driver who ran back to those they had parted from a few minutes earlier and informed them of the assassination. Some of the elders plus the driver immediately boarded a nearby truck and reported the crime at the Muthaiga Police Station in Nairobi.<sup>63</sup>

The police quickly swung into action and cordoned off the area. John Timmerman, an Assistant Commissioner of Police and also the boss of the Criminal Investigation Department

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<sup>60</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, "Emergency Handouts, 1952".

<sup>61</sup>East African Standard, 24th Jan., 1953.

<sup>62</sup>East African Standard, 31st March, 1953; O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>63</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

(hereafter CID) took charge of the investigations. All police stations in the Nairobi area were given a description of the vehicle alleged to have been used by the gang. Road blocks were thrown across many of the main thoroughfares. Traffic along the Limuru "D" route was brought to a standstill as CID experts took photographs and examined the chief's car for clues. Many police officers worked non-stop throughout that night. Police patrols combed many parts of Kiambu and recorded and checked statements from the suspects. By the end of that day, 150 people had been interrogated on the spot though no arrests had been made.<sup>64</sup> Many members of Mbari ya Kihara - men, women and children - were arrested and detained at Kiambu for questioning. They were so many that a temporary barbed-wire enclosure was constructed for them when the cells could hold no more.<sup>65</sup>

The police even offered a reward of Shs. 2,000 "for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators of this murder".<sup>66</sup> This reward was increased to Shs. 10,000 on the following day by a number of anonymous Europeans.<sup>67</sup> These were presumably Waruhiu's settler friends

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<sup>64</sup>East African Standard, 8th October, 1952.

<sup>65</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.; William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup>East African Standard, 8th October, 1952.

<sup>67</sup>East African Standard, 9th October, 1952.

in Kiambu. But this huge and tempting reward was never claimed. Nobody came forward to volunteer any information for fear of being victims of the invincible Mau Mau executioners.

The assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu also forced senior government officials to hold emergency consultations on 8th October, 1952.<sup>68</sup> The discussions were for mapping out their next strategy against the formidable Mau Mau.

Meanwhile, messages of condolences and of condemnation of the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu poured in from various individuals and organisations. The messages in themselves clearly indicated that Senior Chief Waruhiu had not been just an ordinary chief in the colony.

(iv) Messages of Condolences

The highest authority to convey his condolences on behalf of his government was Oliver Lyttelton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He sent the following message to the governor:

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<sup>68</sup>ibid.

I have learned with very great regret of the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu. Please convey my deepest sympathy to the relatives. Those guilty of such a crime must be accounted enemies of the whole law-abiding community of Kenya, not least its African members. The government of Kenya with the full support of Her Majesty's Government, will not rest until they have been brought to justice.<sup>69</sup>

The Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, who had been in the colony for only nine days, paid the following tribute to Waruhiu whom he had met on his first day in Kenya:

I was horrified at the news of his death. I have heard on all sides of his great strength of character, the admirable work he has done for his own people and his good relations with people of all races in Kenya.<sup>70</sup>

E.R. St A. Davies, the CNC, who was a good friend of Waruhiu's, paid tribute to the memory of the chief in the Legislative Council.<sup>71</sup> In addition, he sent a long appreciation which read in part:

Today the colony mourns the death of one of its leading citizens...Grief for the passing of one of the ablest and most respected men the colony has produced is mingled with horror at the manner of his cold-blooded and dastardly murder...He has set an example of shining courage, of devotion to duty and of service to the people of the colony which will serve as an inspiration to all who try to follow in his path.<sup>72</sup>

The Central Province PC, E.H. Windley, who had been a DC at Kiambu, sent an almost similar appreciation to the one

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<sup>69</sup>ibid., 10th October, 1952.

<sup>70</sup>ibid., 9th October, 1952.

<sup>71</sup>KNA-MAA 8/68, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup>East African Standard, 9th October, 1952.

above. An extract from it reads:

The disgust and horror of this brutal murder of our friend is shared by a large circle of his Kikuyu friends and admirers...He was up+right, tolerant, just, kindly and courageous and held in great respect by all who knew him. The loss we feel can only be compensated by the hope that his ideals will be remembered by Kikuyu in future generations who aspire to achieve his standards.<sup>73</sup>

The Executive Committee of KAU likewise sent their "heartfelt condolences" to the family of the late chief. KAU denounced in the strongest terms the "cowardly and dastardly act committed against such a leader and a friend of the people". The condolence message added that Waruhiu's death was an "irreparable loss they and the country had sustained". The message concluded by urging the public to assist the government in bringing the assassins to justice.<sup>74</sup>

Michael Blundell, the leader of the European Elected Members of the Legislative Council, described the death of Waruhiu as a "loss of a wise and well-beloved chief and counsellor". He added that Waruhiu was admired by all people of good will "for his forthright presentation of the African viewpoint without rancour or hatred".<sup>75</sup>

Eliud Mathu also sent a telegram to Simon Kimani, son of Waruhiu, on behalf of the African Members of the

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<sup>73</sup>ibid., 10th October, 1952.

<sup>74</sup>ibid., 11th October, 1952.

<sup>75</sup>ibid., 9th October, 1952.

Legislative Council. It read:

The tragedy of the murder of your father has reached us....I send you and your family our condolences in this time of great sorrow to many....Kenya has lost a faithful public servant who had devoted almost all his life to the welfare of all people in the colony. He was an outstanding chief....he will be missed....and he will be hard to replace.<sup>76</sup>

Such was Waruhiu's fame that a memorial service was held for him at the Moral Rearmament Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. Waruhiu's son, David Wainaina and his wife, Margaret Nduta, had been attending the camp when their father was killed. Both the Europeans and the Africans who knew Chief Waruhiu spoke at the memorial service. The gist of their speeches was that:

Long years of bitterness have created this. Hatred will not bring freedom to the world ....The only way out is to live the spirit of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, so that unity and peace can be achieved for Africa....From the blood of martyrs like Chief Waruhiu, the tree of unity and liberty is watered.<sup>77</sup>

Another prominent individual who also condemned the murder of Waruhiu was Chanan Singh, an Indian Member of the Legislative Council.<sup>78</sup> The United Kenya Club was also not left behind in paying tribute to Chief Waruhiu who had been an active member of the club.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>ibid.

<sup>77</sup>ibid., 14th October, 1952.

<sup>78</sup>ibid., 9th October, 1952.

<sup>79</sup>ibid., 10th October, 1952.

By the time Waruhiu's funeral took place, his murderers had not yet been apprehended.

(v) The Funeral

The funeral was held on Thursday, the 9th of October, 1952 at three o'clock on his farm at Giathieko. The funeral was attended by about 1,000 mourners who included about 100 Europeans and Asians. Among the mourners were the Governor, the CNC, the PC, DC, DO's and other administrative staff. Other prominent Europeans present included Sir Charles Mortimer, Member for Land, Education and Local Government, Alderman Dr. J.R. Gregory, the Mayor of Nairobi, and two members of the Legislative Council. Many African leaders from all over the district were also in attendance. Among them were Kenyatta, Mathu, chiefs, councillors and other dignitaries.<sup>80</sup>

Senior Chief Waruhiu was accorded the full honours deserved by a fallen British hero. His body had left the Nairobi Mortuary (City Mortuary) at nine o'clock under police escort. The cortege had made a brief stop-over at the DC's

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<sup>80</sup>ibid.

Office in Kiambu en route to Githunguri.<sup>81</sup> In the afternoon, the coffin, draped with the Union Jack, was brought from Waruhiu's house. It was carried by six African bearers. In the procession were clergy from all churches in the country, followed by the dead chief's family, including his aged mother, Njoki, who was over 80 years old. Next came the Governor with his party, followed by Kenyatta and other African leaders. Also in the procession were Boy Scout and Girl Guide officials and many other Europeans.<sup>82</sup>

The graveside service was conducted by Rev. G.M. Calderwood, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (hereafter PCEA). He was assisted by Rev. Charles Muhoro Kareri (a clerk of the PCEA Synod) and Rev. Wanyoike wa Kamawe, who was the local PCEA Moderator. Prayers and hymns were said and sang in Kikuyu before Rev. Calderwood read the twenty third Psalm. The benediction was given by Rev. David Steel, the Minister of the St. Andrew's PCEA Church in Nairobi.<sup>83</sup>

The Governor then paid a final tribute to the departed civil servant. He lamented that:

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<sup>81</sup>ibid., 9th October, 1952.

<sup>82</sup>ibid., 10th October, 1952.

<sup>83</sup>ibid.



This is a sad day. We are here - men, women and children of different races - to say goodbye to a great man....Chief Waruhiu was a great Kikuyu. But in addition he was more - he was a great African and a great citizen of Kenya. He had spent his life - and he had met his death - in the service of God, his people and his Government. His was a faithful service. All his life he had worked for justice and a better understanding between the peoples of Kenya. May we all follow his splendid example.<sup>84</sup>

An old Kiambu European farmer, H.T. Wells, paid tribute to Waruhiu on behalf of the European farmers in the region. His was brief and to the point:

He tried to show us all how dependent we are on others. He saw the storm gathering around him trying to destroy his ideals, but did not falter. He did his duty and gave up his life for that cause.<sup>85</sup>

At a graveside tribute, Eliud Mathu once again expressed his horror and sorrow at the murder. He also stressed the great qualities of Chief Waruhiu. These were devotion to duty, his inherent loyalty and his efforts in trying to get co-operation among all races in Kenya.<sup>86</sup>

Waruhiu was laid to rest beside his first wife, Wagathenge, who had passed away in February 1950. Their graves were in the shade of a towering Mununga tree. After the

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<sup>84</sup>ibid.

<sup>85</sup>ibid.

<sup>86</sup>ibid.

coffin was lowered into the grave, a party of six askari of the Kenya Police, led by a sergeant - major, fired a volley. A bugler of the police band then sounded the "last post" and "Reveille". The ceremony was concluded by the laying of wreaths on the grave. The Governor and the European mourners were the first to do so. They were followed by the Kikuyu mourners, who placed their bunches of flowers among the more ornate European wreaths.<sup>87</sup>

The repercussions of Waruhiu's untimely death began to be felt on the day he was buried. On that day, the government imposed a curfew throughout Kiambu District. The curfew affected only the Africans and was operative between the hours of 7.00 p m and 5.30 a m.<sup>88</sup> A curfew was later imposed on all troubled areas in the colony when the State of Emergency was proclaimed on the 20th of October, 1952.

(vi) The State of Emergency

Senior Chief Waruhiu's assassination was the catalyst that precipitated the declaration of the Emergency. The government had been reluctant to impose such a measure in spite of a lot of pressure from the leaders of the minority European

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<sup>87</sup>ibid.

<sup>88</sup>ibid.

community. For example, during the four months interregnum (June to September 1952), when Henry Potter was Acting Governor, they had put intense pressure on him to declare a state of emergency.<sup>89</sup> When the new Governor arrived in the country towards the end of September 1952, he was confronted by Potter and the Secretariat with carefully prepared plans for the declaration of an emergency.<sup>90</sup> But Governor Baring still hesitated to declare an emergency until Chief Waruhiu was violently murdered.

Waruhiu's death was an enormous and painful blow to the colonial administration. The death stunned and shook the government to the core. It awakened the authorities to the gravity and unpredictability of the Mau Mau phenomenon. The assassination confirmed how determined and daring the Mau Mau militants were to dispose of the detractors and collaborators. Waruhiu's death finally convinced Governor Baring that an emergency should be proclaimed as soon as authority to do so could be obtained from London.

After attending Waruhiu's funeral, Baring informed the Colonial Office in London that a state of emergency would have to be declared. He claimed that the Kenya Government was

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<sup>89</sup>Throup, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>90</sup>ibid., pp. 11-12.

facing a planned revolutionary movement controlled from Nairobi.<sup>91</sup> The Secretary of State for the Colonies gave his consent on 14th October, 1952 that an emergency be declared in the colony.<sup>92</sup> The assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu was used by the Colonial Secretary to justify the imposition of such a drastic measure. He stated that the assassination had shown the length to which the Mau Mau were "prepared to carry out their campaign of terrorism".<sup>93</sup> During the next six days, the Kenya Government made careful preparations before it proclaimed the State of Emergency on 20th October, 1952.

The declaration of the State of Emergency was equivalent to a declaration of war against the proscribed Mau Mau Movement. It was a formal recognition and acceptance that there was a grave situation which required urgent measures to contain and stamp it out. Such a situation had been brought about by the Mau Mau.

Many African leaders such as Kenyatta, Fred Kubai, Peter Gatabaki, Achieng' Oneko and Bildad Kaggia were rounded up in the night of 20th October, 1952 during the so-called operation Jock Scott. KISA and KKEA were banned and

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<sup>91</sup>ibid., p. 232.

<sup>92</sup>ibid., p. 233.

<sup>93</sup>East African Standard, 21st October, 1952.

their schools (including the Githunguri Teachers College) and churches, which were considered to be the breeding grounds of Mau Mau, were closed down.<sup>94</sup> The peasants were moved into emergency villages in a bid to isolate the Mau Mau activists. This went hand in hand with mass screening exercises to identify, cleanse and rehabilitate those who had taken Mau Mau oaths. Moreover, thousands of the Rift Valley squatters were repatriated to Central Province. On the other hand, thousands of the Kikuyu were arrested and detained. As a result, many young men fled into the forests in a bid to escape the detention camps.<sup>95</sup> All in all, the declaration of the State of Emergency marked the beginning of the protracted and bitter struggle between the government and the Mau Mau militants.

Meanwhile, the manhunt for Waruhiu's killers had continued at top gear even after the State of Emergency was proclaimed. The pressure put on the police was so tremendous that some police officers were only able to visit their homes to wash, shave and change their clothes.<sup>96</sup> So intense was the pressure that a number of experienced CID officers from Uganda and Tanzania (Tanganyika) were temporarily seconded to

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<sup>94</sup>KNA-Information 6/258, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup>Throup, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>96</sup>East African Standard, 15th October, 1952.

Kenya to reinforce the Kenya CID Department.<sup>97</sup>

The search for the assassins of Waruhiu left many suspects badly beaten. Some of them were almost crippled as a result of the injuries suffered while being interrogated. This is exemplified by the case of Gichiri, Waruhiu's driver. Having narrowly escaped death, he thereafter spent several months behaving like a zombie on account of the severe beatings he sustained while being interrogated.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, before the end of that year, 14 suspects had been arrested in connection with Waruhiu's murder. These were Gathuku wa Migwe, Waweru wa Kamundia, John Wesley Mbiyu wa Koinange (son of ex-Senior Chief Koinange but not the Mbiyu who was Principal of Githunguri Teachers College), ex-Senior Chief Koinange, Mwangi wa Macharia, Joshua Gichuhi Kuria, Gitau wa Karanu, Kung'u wa Kimani, Kinyanjui wa Karanja, Ibrahim Maina, Chege wa Mutege, Kiarie wa Karumba, Daniel Kung'u and Waira wa Kamau.<sup>99</sup> All 14 hailed from Kiambu. Of the 14 accused, the charge against the ex-Senior Chief Koinange was somehow interesting.

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<sup>97</sup>ibid.

<sup>98</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup>East African Standard, 23rd January, 1953.

Up to the time of Waruhiu's death, the two had on the surface appeared to be good friends. Their friendship had started even before they were made chiefs. In the late 1920's and early 1930's, Waruhiu had fought a losing battle in the LNC to ensure that Koinange was financially assisted to pay for his son's education in America.<sup>100</sup> Besides, there had been plans to cement the friendship between the two chiefs with an inter-marriage between their two families. The aborted marriage was supposed to be between Waruhiu's daughter, Nyamweru, and Koinange's son, John Wesley Mbiyu.<sup>101</sup>

Relations between the two chiefs took a nose+dive in the late 1930's. But the cause was not Koinange's elevation to senior chief in 1938 (instead of Waruhiu) as Clough alleges.<sup>102</sup> Koinange was only confirmed to the post he had held unofficially since 1930.<sup>103</sup> The cause was Waruhiu's disapproval of Koinange's involvement in the politics of the KCA and the Independent Schools Movement.<sup>104</sup> As a result, Waruhiu tried to undermine Koinange's position in the eyes of their superiors with an aim of wresting power from him. This had in turn led to an intense power struggle between the two

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<sup>100</sup>KNA+PC/CP.2/1/4, op. cit.

<sup>101</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>103</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/2, op. cit.

<sup>104</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., p. 84.

giants of the district. This was highlighted in 1939 when Waruhiu's son, Githambu, was mistaken for his father and slashed on the head. Waruhiu was convinced that it was Koinange who was behind the attack.<sup>105</sup> The struggle for power between the two chiefs was acknowledged by the DC in 1943 when he stated that there was a "hidden enmity" between the two.<sup>106</sup> The rivalry between the two appears to have continued even after Koinange's retirement in 1949. Otherwise, he would not have been one of the fourteen people charged with Waruhiu's murder. But it was left to the courts to decide whether he, and the others, were guilty or not.

(vii) The Trial

The preliminary inquiry into the death of Senior Chief Waruhiu opened on 22nd January, 1953 before G.R. Crawley, a Nairobi District Magistrate. The defence was led by a British lawyer, Dingle Foot, who was representing the Koinanges. Gathuku wa Migwe was represented by A.R. Kapila, while the other eleven were represented by a Jamaican lawyer, Dudley Thompson and Y.P. Vohra. The Solicitor-General, E.N. Griffith-Jones, appeared for the Crown assisted by F. Pearson, the Crown Counsel.

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<sup>105</sup>O.I., Mrs. Esther N. Munene, op. cit.; Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.

<sup>106</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1171, op. cit.



The prosecution endeavoured to prove that the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu was a political one by calling 70 witnesses. But the press was cautioned by the court to exercise restraint in the use of witnesses' names to avoid Mau Mau reprisals against them.<sup>107</sup>

The magistrate gave his verdict on 2nd February, 1953. He discharged five of the accused - Kung'u wa Kimani, Kinyanjui wa Karanja, Ibrahim Maina, Chege wa Mutege and Kiarie wa Karumba - for lack of evidence against them. The magistrate, however, found sufficient grounds in the evidence submitted to him to put each of the nine accused on their defence in the Supreme Court. Three of the nine were charged with the murder of Waruhiu, while the other six were charged with conspiracy to murder Waruhiu.<sup>108</sup>

The six charged with conspiracy to murder Waruhiu appeared before Justice de Lestang on 12th April, 1953. They were ex-Senior Chief Koinange, Mwangi wa Macharia, Joshua Gichuhi Kuria, Gitau wa Karanu, Daniel Kung'u and Waira wa Kamau. Their lawyers were Dingle Foot and Dudley Thompson. The prosecutor was still the Solicitor-General. The case against the six solely depended on the evidence of

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<sup>107</sup>East African Standard, 23rd January, 1953.

<sup>108</sup>ibid., 3rd February, 1953.

one witness. She was Waithira whose shamba bordered on that of Kenyatta in Gatundu Division.<sup>109</sup>

The prosecution's case was that the six accused were present at a meeting held in the house of Joshua Gichuhi Kuria at Ng'enda on Saturday, the 4th of October, 1952. The conspiracy to murder Waruhiu before the East African Royal Commission arrived in Kenya (to review the land problem) was planned during this meeting. The Crown contended that the motive of the conspiracy was political in the sense that Chief Waruhiu was not only opposed to their political aims but he was also an obstruction to the attainment of them.<sup>110</sup> All the accused pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Judgement was delivered on 15th April, 1953 after a five-day trial. After a thirty minute summing up of the evidence, the Judge rejected the uncorroborated evidence of the only witness who narrated the alleged happenings. He further noted that there had been discrepancies in the evidence she had given in the lower court and her testimony in the Supreme Court.<sup>111</sup> Although the six accused were acquitted, they were, however, re-arrested after they had left

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<sup>109</sup>ibid., 27th January, 1953.

<sup>110</sup>ibid., 13th April, 1953.

<sup>111</sup>ibid., 16th April, 1953.

the courtroom and detained under the Emergency Regulations.

The case against Gathuku wa Migwe, Waweru wa Kamundia and John Wesley Mbiyu, who had been indicted with Waruhiu's murder, had commenced on 31st March, 1953. The trial Judge was Justice Rudd, while the Solicitor-General still appeared for the Crown. Their defence was led by Dingle Foot, who also appeared for Mbiyu. Jaswant Singh represented Gathuku and Waweru while Dudley Thompson appeared for Waweru and Mbiyu. The courtroom was guarded by armed policemen and each African entering the Law Courts was searched.<sup>112</sup>

The Crown case was that the three accused had met together on the weekend before the murder of Waruhiu. During that meeting, Mbiyu (accused No. 3) had issued instructions that Senior Chief Waruhiu be killed. He had also provided Gathuku (accused No. 1) with the gun which was used to commit the murder. The case against Mbiyu, who had been implicated by Gathuku, was that he planned and procured the murder by instructing the others to commit it.<sup>113</sup>

The second accused, Waweru, who was a taxi-driver, was accused of being the driver of the fawn coloured Ford Consul

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<sup>112</sup>ibid., 31st March, 1953.

<sup>113</sup>ibid.

taxi that had been used by the assassins. He had been the first to be arrested after his taxi, with the registration No. KBM 902, was traced to a garage in Nairobi on the day following the murder.<sup>114</sup>

Gathuku was a shopkeeper from Dagoretti Location. He was arrested on the Saturday following the murder. He was implicated by Waweru in his statement to the police. He was alleged to be the man who actually fired the shots that had killed Senior Chief Waruhiu.<sup>115</sup>

The three accused denied the charges facing them. Mbiyu gave evidence on oath, Gathuku made an unsworn statement while Waweru elected to say nothing.

Mbiyu maintained that he had met Gathuku for the first time on the Saturday before the murder. He could, therefore, not understand why Gathuku had implicated him in his confession that he shot the chief on Mbiyu's instructions.<sup>116</sup>

Gathuku on his part insisted that he neither knew anything about the murder nor could he understand why he had been arrested and charged. He also added that he had given his

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<sup>114</sup>ibid., 23rd January, 1953.

<sup>115</sup>ibid.

<sup>116</sup>ibid., 10th April, 1953.

two statements "only after severe beatings by the police". When questioned further, he replied that the two statements were "mostly lies" as they contained what a senior police officer "had told him to say".<sup>117</sup> These allegations were, of course, denied by the police.

Similarly, Waweru had also retracted his two statements in the lower court. He, too, alleged that he had been beaten to force him to sign the statements.<sup>118</sup> His allegations were also denied by the police officers concerned.

Justice Rudd gave his ruling on 10th April, 1953. He concluded that it was not sufficiently cogent to convict Mbiyu on "the confession of someone else". For the case against Gathuku, Justice Rudd found "ample and overwhelming corroboration" of evidence in his confession with that given by the eye-witnesses. The Judge was also satisfied that Waweru knew the day before of the intention to kill Chief Waruhiu and he did all that was required of him to enable that purpose to be effected. Accordingly, Mbiyu was acquitted while Gathuku and Waweru were found guilty of the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu and sentenced to death.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>ibid., 4th April, 1953.

<sup>118</sup>ibid., 30th January, 1953.

<sup>119</sup>ibid., 11th April, 1953.

Thereupon, Gathuku and Waweru appealed to the Court of Appeal for Eastern Africa. But their appeals were dismissed on Saturday, the 9th of May, 1953. Judgement was given by Sir Barclays Nihill, the President of the Court, who echoed the words of Justice Rudd.<sup>120</sup> Gathuku and Waweru were subsequently hanged.

Public opinion is, however, in overwhelming agreement that Gathuku was not the man who had shot Waruhiu albeit nobody would say who had done it.<sup>121</sup> This view is supported by several factors. First, the three African assessors doubted the evidence against Gathuku.<sup>122</sup> Secondly, Gichiri, Waruhiu's driver, had been emphatic during the trial that Gathuku was not the man he had witnessed shoot Waruhiu. In addition, he had insisted that the assailant had worn a dark brown tarpaulin jacket and not the green lumber+jacket that was exhibited in court.<sup>123</sup> Thirdly, it is puzzling as to how Kiburi and Kiricho could have identified Gathuku when they could not even agree how the assassin was dressed! One of them testified that the murderer had worn a jacket while the

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<sup>120</sup>ibid., 11th May, 1953.

<sup>121</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.

<sup>122</sup>East African Standard, 11th April, 1953.

<sup>123</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.; East African Standard, 23rd January, 1953.

other insisted that he had worn a suit!<sup>124</sup> In all probability, Gathuku appears to have been used by the authorities as a scape+goat.

There is, however, no doubt that Waruhiu's murder had been thoroughly planned and organised. It also appears that one or more of the CNT members were involved. The CNT had no sound justification in summoning Waruhiu since it had the case file of the proceedings in the lower court. The same file was conveniently "forgotten" at Kiambu to ensure that Waruhiu spent that night at Gachii. Moreover, those who went to fetch the file passed through Nairobi on their way back where the CNT clerk entered a carpenter's shop in River Road.<sup>125</sup> This was possibly to pass a message to his contact about the whereabouts of Waruhiu. Interestingly, several cars were seen that night in the neighbourhood of Mbari ya Kihara's.<sup>126</sup> As a result, Waruhiu had secretly disappeared and spent the night at Karura+Ka+Nyungu, about five miles to the west, in the house of a Githunguri Tribunal Court elder called Mucunu.<sup>127</sup>

There is also no doubt that the individual who killed Waruhiu was merely acting as the executioner of the Mau Mau.

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<sup>124</sup>East African Standard, 10th April, 1953.

<sup>125</sup>O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup>O.I., Mariga wa Karunguru, 19th June, 1987, Gachii.

<sup>127</sup>O.I., Willie Kamau Kiyuna, op. cit.

The available evidence strongly suggests that the Mau Mau Central Committee, the Muhimu, was responsible for Waruhiu's death because it was only the Mau Mau which had a very strong motive to kill him then. One account has it that the committee had offered the assassins a reward of Shs.30,000.<sup>128</sup> But whether this is true or not, the committee and the Mau Mau had not only a lot to lose from Waruhiu's anti-Mau Mau activities but also much to gain from his death. The same committee had threatened to assassinate Kenyatta if he condemned Mau Mau.<sup>129</sup> It could also not hesitate to do likewise to Senior Chief Waruhiu who was actively assisting the authorities to stamp out the movement.

Although Senior Chief Waruhiu had forever departed from the scene, the government, however, kept his memory alive by erecting two memorials to commemorate him. The first memorial involved the extension of the Kiambu Hospital. The Waruhiu Memorial Wing was formally opened by the Director of Medical Services in December 1955.<sup>130</sup> A statue of the slain chief was also erected outside this extension.

The Waruhiu Farm Memorial Institute is the second commemoration of Waruhiu. The institute, which

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ibid.

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D. Throup, "Moderate Militants and Mau Mau: African Politics in Kenya, 1944-1952", in the Historical Association of Kenya, University of Nairobi, 1986, p. 43.

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KNA - DC/KBU/1/45, op. cit.



was set up with funds raised by public subscription, started operating in 1957 on 183.5 acres leased from the PCEA at Thogoto.<sup>131</sup> But when farming conditions proved to be harsh and unsuitable, the memorial farm was transferred in 1961 to a 55 acre piece of land which was leased from Waruhiu's family at Giathieko.<sup>132</sup> The primary purpose of the institute is to practically train farmers living in the Kiambu District.<sup>133</sup>

These two commemorations have partly helped to keep alive the memory of Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u.

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<sup>131</sup>KNA-Labour 9/884 "Waruhiu Memorial Farm Institute, 1961";  
KNA-D.A.O./KBUI/I/266, "Waruhiu Memorial Farm  
Institute, 1961-1962".

<sup>132</sup>ibid.

<sup>133</sup>ibid.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

The reputation of Kenya's colonial chiefs has never been good and that of Senior Chief Waruhiu has not been an exception. During the colonial times, chiefs were often scorned by their own people. In the post-independence Kenya, they have been labelled stooges and worse.<sup>1</sup> Chief Waruhiu's name appears to have been tainted and marred more than that of any other chief in Kenya. Some people believe that he was not only an autocrat and a tyrant but also a victim of circumstances of his own making.<sup>2</sup> Others portray him as a chief who had spent his life promoting and safeguarding European interests at the expense of those of his own people.<sup>3</sup> Yet others add that Chief Waruhiu compromised his own people's interests and well-being for his personal gain.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, some people feel that Waruhiu deserved the violent death that he received because he was not only a

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<sup>1</sup>Clough, 1980, op. cit., pp. 57-58; Thuku, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>O.I., Cege wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.; Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.; Karanja wa Kiondo, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Kiambuthi wa Kabiru, op. cit.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.

quisling but also a treacherous scoundrel.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt whatsoever that Waruhiu was an extremely ideal and a prototype colonial chief. The government could not have made a better choice and it never regretted having made him one. Waruhiu in his turn never gave the government cause to regret since he was one of its most loyal and distinguished participants in the colonial administration. Waruhiu had realised that most of what he owned had been acquired directly or indirectly from the Europeans. These included his education, his health and, above all, his power and authority. As such, he always handled the Europeans, and more so his superiors, with courtesy, respect, tact and diplomacy. He also tended to evade issues that would antagonize the authorities and thereby jeopardize and compromise his position. He, therefore, never affiliated, supported or sympathised with those bodies - such as the KCA, KAU and Mau Mau - which were considered to be dissident by the administration. This is one reason why Waruhiu is thought to have compromised his own people's economic and political rights.<sup>6</sup>

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O.I., Mrs. Keziah Njeri Muigai, 28th June, 1987, Githiga; Gichuhi Thuita, op. cit.; Mrs Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.

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O.I., Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

It is also true that Waruhiu never spared himself in his efforts to serve the colonial government. He was always totally committed to his duties as a chief. Unlike most of his contemporary chiefs, he never waited to be prodded and reminded of his duties because he was aware and conversant with them. Moreover, he acted immediately he was issued with an order. He could never rest until an order was fully and satisfactorily carried out.<sup>7</sup> His motto was to obey first and complain later if he had any complaint, which was rare.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, Waruhiu's location and division were consistently far ahead of the other locations and divisions in many aspects. It was the zeal with which Chief Waruhiu discharged his duties that prompted many people to conclude that he was primarily concerned with the promotion and protection of the interests of the Europeans.<sup>9</sup>

It was particularly owing to Waruhiu's efficient control of his chiefdom that put him in the good books of his overlords. He acquired and maintained an unequalled reputation of being an outstandingly efficient and thoroughly

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O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.

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O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

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O.I., Nelson Macharia Muhia, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.; Kiambuthi wa Kabiru, op. cit.

reliable and dependable man throughout his career as a chief.<sup>10</sup> Waruhiu could not have been heaped with such glowing compliments for merely being a loyal and pro-government chief. The yardstick for measuring a chief's loyalty and support for the government was his performance as an administrator. That is why other chiefs failed to garner such endearing compliments simply because they were not comparable and equal to Waruhiu, who was second to none administratively. Such glowing compliments could certainly not endear Waruhiu to his critics.

Chief waruhiu never used his power and authority tyrannically and oppressively so as to crave for such favourable and commendable reports from his superiors. There were a number of underlying secrets that account for his outstanding performance as a chief. Perhaps the innermost of these secrets was that Waruhiu was endowed with leadership qualities that were rarely found in other chiefs of the time. He was certainly a born and "an inspired leader of men".<sup>11</sup> To see him "take his seat at a baraza, with all automatically standing at his approach was an experience not to be forgotten".<sup>12</sup> Waruhiu was indeed a muthamaki in the true

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<sup>10</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>KNA-MAA 8/68, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>ibid.

sense of the word as he possessed most of the attributes that went with the holder of that office. He never lost his temper even when he was provoked;<sup>13</sup> he was an expert in judicial matters;<sup>14</sup> he had a marked gift of smoothing over difficulties and ensuring co-operation;<sup>15</sup> he was an eloquent public orator;<sup>16</sup> he possessed powers of persuasion;<sup>17</sup> and he had a personality to match with his chiefly office.<sup>18</sup> Waruhiu effectively combined these attributes of his with his intelligence, tact and diplomacy and the results were splendid. He was, therefore, able to succeed against heavy odds and obstacles. That is why he had earned the rank of being second to none in his administrative duties.

On the other hand, it is a fact that Chief Waruhiu did, indeed, promote and safeguard the interests of the Europeans to a marked extent. As a government employee, his services were theoretically supposed to be principally in the pursuit of good government. It was a government that was by and large concerned with the welfare of the Europeans in the colony.

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13O.I., Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.; William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.; Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

14O.I., Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.

15KNA-PC/CP.4/3/2, op. cit.

16O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.; Ngaii wa Kimama, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

17O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; KNA-ARC(MAA)-2/3/16IV, op. cit.

18KNA-DC/KBU/11/1, op. cit.

In the process of discharging his duties, Chief Waruhiu proved to be also of great service to his own people. As a chief and a councillor, Waruhiu was both the mediator and representative of his people respectively. He effectively combined both roles and as a result, he was able to reap the maximum possible benefits that he could for his own people. The taxes he collected, especially the local rates, were meant for the welfare of the people of the district. The money provided many facilities such as those in the fields of health and education. Waruhiu's urging and encouragement of the people to work for the settlers was partially aimed at alleviating unemployment and poverty which were rampant in those days among his own people. The importance of the soil conservation measures that he so vigorously and enthusiastically enforced was realised and appreciated by his critics many years after his death.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Waruhiu's fight against excessive beer drinking and dancing at odd hours was meant to encourage and enable the people to spend their time in productive projects which would help uplift their living standards. His wish to have the government construct cattle dips in the district was motivated by a genuine desire to enable his people to keep grade cattle free from tick-borne diseases. Likewise, the roads and the bridges that he helped

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<sup>19</sup>O.I., Karanu wa Gathogo, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.

to construct and the hygienic measures that he so rigorously enforced were clearly to the advantage of his own people. His struggle to have the government provide the African farmers with credit facilities is another example of his many concerns for the welfare of his people.

Much more significant, Waruhiu was neither responsible nor did he advocate land alienations in the district. If anything, Waruhiu was a staunch protector of the Kikuyu land rights and interests. He had assumed that role in 1919 when he became a founder member of the Kikuyu Association. The KA was mainly concerned with the protection of the Kiambu Kikuyu land rights and interests. Above all, Waruhiu's testimony before the Kenya Land Commission in 1932 was in total agreement with that of other African leaders. Like them, he urged the Commission to balance the land equation in favour of the Africans.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Waruhiu endeavoured to have the government add more land to the Kiambu District.<sup>21</sup> In the same context, Waruhiu was also concerned with the plight of the Rift Valley squatters and the Olenguruone residents. In the case of the squatters, he made futile calls on the government to provide land for them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>KLC, Vol. 6, Evidence of Waruhiu.

<sup>21</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1935-1940; KNA+CS 2/1/290, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup>KCCA-Kiambu LNC Minutes, 1945-1948.



It is, therefore, evident that Chief Waruhiu did not wholly compromise the interests and well-being of his people. But he did acquire appreciable benefits from his stalwart collaboration with the authorities. Most of the benefits that he derived from the Europeans were mainly honours and awards in recognition of his distinguished services. These included the enlargement of his location, promotions, medals, visits of prominent guests to his home and his visit to England. All the same, Waruhiu received some material gain from the Europeans. The most notable gain was the saloon Hudson car which he was given in 1948 by the Kiambu settlers.<sup>23</sup> It was a token gesture of their appreciation of his many years' service in the procurement of labour for them.

Although Waruhiu heavily relied on his chiefly influence to acquire most of his wealth, it was, however, not ill-gotten. He never confiscated other people's property for his own use.<sup>24</sup> Nor <sup>did</sup> ~~hid~~ he snatch other people's wives or daughters. He paid full bride price for his wives as custom demanded. Above all, he never grabbed anybody's land by force. He fully paid for his land, not so much with his

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<sup>23</sup>O.I., Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.; Samuel N. Waruhiu, op. cit.; Samuel Kang'ethe Karanu, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup>O.I., Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Mrs. Waithira wa Kimundui, op. cit.

meagre salary, but with the profits he made from his better and advanced farming methods.<sup>25</sup> Waruhiu was, therefore, a largely self-made man economically.

There are several other factors that account for Waruhiu's disrepute. To begin with, his image had somehow been marred and blemished even before he became a chief. First, he was a member of an almost unknown mbari. Second, he had been a creature of ridicule for many years as he had been a victim of elephantiasis since his childhood. Third, he was an early convert and converts were alleged to drink from human skulls.<sup>26</sup> Fourth, Waruhiu's abject poverty in the early days had made him the laughing stock of his contemporaries.

Waruhiu's reputation worsened in 1922 when he supplanted Chief Waweru wa Kanja amidst a bitter and rigorous objection by Mbari ya Gathirimu. In subsequent years, Waruhiu's reputation, as an usurper, gained credence. This took place in 1926 when Riuki Location was merged with Ruiru Location. It also happened in 1942 when Githiga and Ting'ang'a Locations were amalgamated with his location. This was repeated in 1949 when Gatamaiyu was incorporated into

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<sup>25</sup>KNA-DC/KBU/1/38, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.; Cege wa Gathogo, op. cit.

Waruhiu's location. As a result, many people tended to believe that Waruhiu was responsible for the sacking of the incumbent chiefs. As such, they considered him to be a thoroughly bad and self-seeking chief.<sup>27</sup>

Waruhiu's reputation and popularity perhaps suffered the greatest blow when he was discharging his chiefly duties. It was on such occasions that he collided with those who failed to abide by the law and those who broke it. It was Waruhiu who had such people arrested and prosecuted before the courts for various offences, such as tax defaulting and illicit liquor brewing. As a consequence, his victims could not appreciate what he and the government were doing for them. They would normally associate Waruhiu with most of the unpopular and unjust colonial measures that he enforced and implemented on behalf of the government. Indeed, they could discern little difference between him and their colonial masters. This was because he was directly in contact with them and he, therefore, acted as the cutting edge of the colonial sword. No wonder many wild and malicious rumours, which portrayed Waruhiu as a blatant collaborator, were widely spread against him.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup>ibid.

Many people also tended to confuse and misunderstand Waruhiu's duties and responsibilities as a Locational, Divisional and Senior Chief. It was in this context that some of them thought, and indeed believed, that he meddled in the affairs of other chief's locations.<sup>29</sup> This indicates how ignorant and misinformed some of the people were. They could, therefore, believe almost anything they heard concerning Waruhiu. Moreover, some of Waruhiu's subordinate chiefs would take refuge under him while enforcing unpopular colonial demands. This had the effect of projecting Waruhiu as the originator of the harsh and unpopular demands.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, the violent death that Waruhiu received at the hands of Mau Mau dealt his reputation the death blow. The assassination provided his opponents and critics with a basis to paint and portray him as a bad and unpopular chief, who compromised the economic and political rights of his people in return for power and material gain.<sup>31</sup> It is an open secret that Waruhiu believed that his people were not

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<sup>29</sup>O.I., Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.; Cege wa Gathogo, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup>O.I., William Ng'ang'a Kiguta, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup>O.I., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op. cit.; Kiambuthi wa Kabiru, op. cit.; Kiguongo wa Thungu, op. cit.

yet ready for self-government.<sup>32</sup> Nor did he believe that they could attain it through nationalist violence. This partly explains why the militants considered him to be a very pro-government and pro-European chief. It also partially explains why he was thought to be opposed to the aspirations of his own people. Chief Waruhiu's uncompromising stance finally convinced the militant Mau Mau activists that they could not easily liberate themselves from the colonial yoke while he was alive. Consequently, Senior Chief Waruhiu became the first senior most government official to be assassinated by the Mau Mau.

Ironically, what Senior Chief Waruhiu failed to achieve in life, he attained it in death. His violent and untimely death triggered off and set in motion a series of events which eventually culminated in Kenya's independence a decade later. That is why the late Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u is an important historical figure in Kenya's colonial history.

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O.I., Gichiri wa Mbatia, op. cit.; Tirus Muuti Kimani, op. cit.; Peter Mahinyara Waweru, op. cit.

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A. PRIMARY SOURCES

(i) THE INFORMANTS (with short biographical notes on each)

1. KARANU WA GATHOGO

Interviewed on 12th February, 1987 at Kiratina, Githunguri. He is 85 years old and belongs to the 1923 Ciringi riika. He has been a Church Elder for many years. He was a teacher for 24 years before he retired in 1954.

2. WILLIAM GATOTO

He was interviewed on 13th February, 1987 at Ngewa, Githunguri. He was born in 1908 and belongs to the Thigu riika of 1924. He was Waruhiu's chauffeur. He was a sub-chief of his locality during the Emergency.

3. MRS. ESTHER NYAMWERU MUNENE (WAMACHATI)

A daughter of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu. She was interviewed on 18th, 24th and 25th February, 1987 at Komothai, Githunguri.

4. MRS. WAITHIRA WA KIMUNDUI

She was a key prosecution witness during Kenyatta's Kpenguria trial in 1952+1953. Her riika is Kinyotoku or Kimiri of 1919. She was interviewed on 19th February, 1987 at Gatina, Githunguri.

5. MRS. WANJAU WA WANYOIKE

She is the oldest informant interviewed. Her riika is Nyarigi of 1906 and she is the wife of the late Wanyoike wa Kamawe. She was adopted by the Knapps in 1899 at Thimbigua after she was orphaned by the Great Famine. She was interviewed on 27th February, 1987 at Komothai, Githunguri.

6. WARIUKO WA MURAHA

He was born in 1928 and his riika is Gicina Bangi of 1945. He worked and lived in Nairobi for many years. He was interviewed on 2nd March, 1987 at Gatina, Githunguri.

7. KIGUONGO WA THUNGU

He belongs to the Munanda riika of 1921. He lived in the Rift Valley between 1923 and 1928. He has been a peasant

ever since his return to Kiambu. He was interviewed at Kibichoi, Githunguri, on 3rd March, 1987.

8. CEGE WA GATHOGO

9. JOSIAH WABOYO (deceased)

They were interviewed together on 4th March, 1987 at Kibichoi, Githunguri. Cege's riika is Karara of 1930 and he has been a peasant farmer throughout his life.

Waboyo was a professional carpenter. He was trained at the Native Industrial Training Depot at Kabete. He was there when the Muthirigu dance+song erupted. He worked in the Rift Valley before the Emergency and at Lenana School (Duke of York) during the Emergency. His riika was Munanda and he passed away in mid-1987.

10. EX-CHIEF KARANJA WA KIONDO

He was interviewed on 4th March, 1987 at Kibichoi, Githunguri. He is of the Korenji (College) riika of 1939. He was a teacher between 1940 and 1953 and between 1958 and 1964. He was detained between 1953 and 1958. He became a Councillor of the Kiambu County Council in 1964 and a Chief of Komothai Location thereafter until early 1980's.



11. PETER MAHINYARA WAWERU

A son of the late ex-Chief Waweru wa Mahui of Komothai Location. His riika is Ciringi of 1923. As a Kambui pupil, he used to reside at Waruhiu's home. He was an Agricultural Instructor from 1929 to 1940, a teacher from 1940 to 1945, and a sub-chief thereafter until 1955. He was interviewed on 5th and 13th March, 1987 at Komothai, Githunguri.

12. KIAMBUTHI WA KABIRU (deceased)

He passed away in February 1988 but was interviewed on 10th March, 1987 at Gatina, Githunguri. He belonged to the 1935 Ndururu age-group and he was a carpenter by occupation. He was a Second World War Veteran. During the Emergency, he was detained on Manda Island for seven years.

13. WILLIAM NG'ANG'A KIGUTA

He was interviewed on 10th March, 1987 at Gwa-Kario, Githunguri. His riika is Githingithia of 1928. He was in the army during the Second World War and was later employed as a driver by the Kiambu LNC.

14. JAMES MWAGO NJUGUNA

Interviewed on 11th March, 1987 at Kigumo, Githunguri. His riika is Korenji and he is a trained cook who worked in Nairobi hotels. He was a Mau Mau activist in Nairobi who was arrested when the State of Emergency was proclaimed.

15. SAMUEL KANG'ETHE KARANU

He belongs to the Ciringi or Tuthu riika of 1923. He has been a teacher, a preacher, a member of KCA, a homeguard and a farmer. He was interviewed at Nyaga, Githunguri, on 12th March, 1987.

16. TIRUS MUUTI KIMANI

A son of Kimani wa Mugekenyi, who was a pioneer Kambui adherent. He was interviewed on 12th March, 1987 at Nyaga, Githunguri. He was born in 1911 and initiated into the Ciringi riika. He graduated from the Alliance High School in 1931. He thereafter worked as a clerk at Njoro from 1931 to 1932, as a teacher at Kambui from 1933 to 1947, at Kiamwangi Secondary School from 1947 to 1952, and at Nyaga Primary School up to 1957 when he retired. He was the Manager of

Gatitu Coffee Factory from 1957 to 1962 when he became the Chairman of the Gatitu Coffee Society until 1965. From 1968 to 1984, he was the Chairman of the Kiambu branch of the Kenya National Farmers Union (KNFU). He has also been the National Vice-Chairman of the KNFU from 1968 to the present.

17. SIMON KIMANI WARUHIU (deceased)

A son of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu. He was interviewed on 24th March, 1987 at Riuki, Githunguri. He was a Chief of Githunguri from 1952 to 1963 and a District Officer from 1964 to 1973. He was the Chairman of the Riuki Coffee Estate and of the Kiambu Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union. He has also been the Vice-Chairman of the Kenya Planters Coffee Union (KPCU) from 1965 until his death on 18th October, 1988.

18. PETER GATABAKI MUNDATI

He was interviewed on 25th March, 1987 at Githunguri. His riika is Ndege of 1926. He was a teacher from 1932 to 1942, a Councillor of the Kiambu LNC from 1943 to 1952, and the Chairman of KISA from 1951 to 1952. He was detained in 1952 for nine years and he became a Member of the Central

Province Regional Assembly upon his release. He was appointed Githunguri Location Chief in 1965 until 1979 when he retired.

19. MRS. MARY NJERI WARUHIU

She is the fourth wife of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu. She was interviewed on 8th April, 1987 at Giathieko, Githunguri.

20. MRS. RUGURU NJOGU WARUHIU

The late Senior Chief Waruhiu's fifth wife. She was interviewed on 8th and 10th April, 1987 at Giathieko, Githunguri.

21. MRS. RUGURU KAMAU WARUHIU

She was interviewed on 10th April, 1987 at Giathieko, Githunguri. She is the second wife of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu.

22. MRS. HANNAH WACHURU WARUHIU

Interviewed on 10th April, 1987 at Giathieko, Githunguri. She is the third wife of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu.

23. NGAII WA KIMAMA

He was initiated in 1910 into the Makio riika. He was a pupil of Waruhiu's at Kambui. He was the founder of the Kanjai Primary School which he headed until his retirement. He has also been a leading Church Elder. He was interviewed on 8th May, 1987 at Gathiruini, Githunguri.

24. NELSON MACHARIA MUHIA

He was interviewed on 8th May, 1987 at Gathiruini, Githunguri. His riika is Mukuogo of 1941. He was trained as a cobbler at the Native Industrial Training Depot at Kabete in 1942 before he became a soldier. He served in Burma from 1943 to 1945 during the Second World War. He was thereafter a shoemaker, a shopkeeper and a farmer.

25. KARUGA WA KOINANGE

A son of the late ex-Senior Chief Koinange. He was interviewed on 16th June, 1987 at Kiambaa. He had initially been charged with Waruhiu's murder but was released before the preliminary inquiry started.

26. JAMES NJOROGE KOINANGE (deceased)

Another son of the late ex-Senior Chief Koinange. He belonged to the Munai riika of 1925. He was interviewed on 16th June, 1987 at Karuri, Banana Hill, before he passed away early in 1988.

27. BERNARD GATU NGUNJU

He had also been charged with Waruhiu's murder but was released before the preliminary inquiry opened. He is a brother-in-law of the late ex-Senior Chief Koinange and he belongs to the 1936 Kenyabathi (Kenya bus) riika. He was the Secretary of the Kiama kia Mbari Group (Council of the sub-clans) which was under Koinange's Chairmanship. The Kiama was concerned with Kikuyu mbari land claims and grievances. He was interviewed on 16th June, 1987 at Ruaka, Kiambaa.

28. LIVINGSTONE WAROBI KAMAU

He was interviewed on 17th June, 1987 at Gicungo, Dagoretti. He was initiated in 1923 and he was a pioneer student of the Alliance High School. He was a teacher for 43 years before his retirement in 1973.

29. REV. JOHN GATU

He was interviewed on 18th June 1987 at St. Andrew's Church, Nairobi. He has been a distinguished PCEA clergy from before the advent of the Emergency up to the present.

30. MRS. MARGARET WANJIKU KARUNGURU

She belongs to the Kihiumwiri riika of 1914 and was interviewed on 19th June, 1987 at Gachii. She is the wife of Karunguru in whose house Waruhiu is alleged to have spent his last night on the eve of his death.

31. MARIGA WA KARUNGURU

He is a son of Karunguru and was interviewed at Gachii on 19th June, 1987.

32. WILLIE KAMAU KIYUNA

He is of Athi origin and his riika is Nderece of 1929. He was a participant at the fateful land case at Mbari ya Kihara's in 1952. He was interviewed on 24th June, 1987 at Gachii.

33. MRS. KEZIAH NJERI MUIGAI

34. PETER GICHUHI THUITA

35. DAVID NG'ANG'A CAURI

36. MRS. SERAH WANJA GACHUIRI

The four were interviewed as a group on 28th June, 1987 at Githiga, Githunguri. Mrs. Muigai has been a businesswoman while Gichuhi has been a driver by occupation. Ng'ang'a has been a blacksmith for many years while Mrs. Gachuiiri has been a housewife.

37. GICHIRI WA MBATIA

He was interviewed on 14th November, 1987 at Miguta, Githunguri. He was initiated in 1949 and had been Waruhiu's chauffeur since March 1952. He was detained between 1953 and 1957 at Mwea in Kirinyaga District.

38. SAMUEL NJOROGE WARUHIU

A son of the late Senior Chief Waruhiu. He was interviewed on 21st May and 16th July, 1988 in Nairobi. He was a Law Lecturer at the then University College, Nairobi,



from 1958-1966. He was the Head of the Department of Law from 1963 to 1966; the Dean, Faculty of Commerce, 1964-1966; and the Vice-Principal 1965-1966. He has been in the legal practice from 1967 to date. He is also the Chairman and Director of several companies.

(ii) THE KENYA NATIONAL ARCHIVES, NAIROBI

The collection of colonial documents was used extensively. This included:

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Departmental Annual Reports  
Ministry of African Affairs Reports  
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Miscellaneous Administrative Records

(iii) THE MINUTES OF THE KIAMBU LNC

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(iv) THE KENYA LAND COMMISSION: ORIGINAL EVIDENCE,  
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(v) NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

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APPENDICES

(i) KIAMBU DCs DURING WARUHIU'S CHIEFTAINSHIP

	<u>DC'S NAME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
1.	J.G. Campbell	29th February, 1920	15th April, 1922
2.	W.A.F. Platts	15th April, 1922	4th June, 1924
3.	C.M. Dobbs	5th June, 1924	19th March, 1925
4.	H.W. Gray	19th March, 1925	15th Nov., 1927
5.	R.R. Vidal	16th Nov., 1927	21st Sept., 1929
6.	S.H. Fazan	21st Sept., 1929	8th Oct., 1930
7.	A.W. Cutcliffe	8th Oct., 1930	28th Nov., 1930
8.	S.H. La Fontaine	28th Nov., 1930	14th April, 1931
9.	K.G. Lindsay	15th April, 1931	16th July, 1931
10.	S.H. Fazan	17th July, 1931	15th April, 1932
11.	J.D. McKean	15th April, 1932	9th May, 1933
12.	J.G. Hopkins	8th May, 1933	10th Feb., 1934
13.	A.A. Seldon	5th Feb., 1934	12th March, 1935
14.	J.G. Hopkins	12th March, 1935	26th Oct., 1937
15.	Col. Anderson	27th Oct., 1937	26th June, 1939
16.	C.H. Williams	26th June, 1939	?Feb., 1940
17.	Col. Anderson	?Feb., 1940	?Sept., 1940
18.	V.M. Mckeag	?Sept., 1940	4th Feb., 1942

19.	H.E. Lambert	5th Feb., 1942	20th Oct., 1943
20.	W.A. Perreain	21st Oct., 1943	11th May, 1944
21.	A.C.M. Mullins	11th May, 1944	22nd Aug., 1946
22.	J.D. Stringer	22nd Aug., 1946	4th Nov., 1946
23.	A.C.M. Mullins	4th Nov., 1946	12th Jan., 1947
24.	D.C. Kennedy	13th Jan., 1947	21st April, 1947
25.	E.H. Windley	21st April, 1947	28th Feb., 1948
26.	N.F. Kennaway	1st March, 1948	30th Nov., 1950
27.	M.E.W. North	30th Nov., 1950	11th July, 1951
28.	N.F. Kennaway	11th July, 1951	2nd Feb., 1953

(ii) KIKUYU MARIKA DURING THE PERIOD UNDER STUDY

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>RIIKA</u>	
1890.....	Ngigi	
1891.....	Gicere	
1892.....	Nyongo	
1893.....	Mutung'u	
1894.....	Ruharo	} Girls' Initiation sects only
1895.....	Kibiri/Nduriri	
1896.....	Kagica	
1897.....	Ndutu/Nuthi	)

1898 .....	Kienjeku
1899 .....	No initiation owing to ramine
1900.....	Muthura
1901.....	Gatego (Girls only)
1902.....	Kamande
1903.....	Gatiti
1904.....	Njege
1905.....	Kanyutu
1906.....	Nyarigi
1907.....	Kang'ei (Girls only)
1908.....	Matiba/Kabao
1909.....	Thigingi
1910.....	Makio
1911.....	Mugembe (Girls only)
1912.....	Mwande (Girls only)
1913.....	Murututa
1914.....	Kihiumwiri/Rumemo
1915.....	Ngombera
1916.....	Nguika Ngoige
1917.....	Ndarama
1918.....	No initiation owing to famine
1919.....	Kimiri/Kinyotoku
1920.....	Kipande
1921.....	Munanda
1922.....	Munoti



1923.....	Ciringi
1924.....	Gichange/Munai
1925.....	Mukwanju
1926.....	Ndege
1927.....	Kianduma
1928.....	Githingithia
1929.....	Nderece
1930.....	Mamboleo
1931.....	Marobo
1932.....	Njane Kanini
1933.....	Njenduru
1934.....	Ndururu
1935.....	Tauru
1936.....	Kenyabathi
1937.....	Japan/Kibaba
1938.....	Thukia Itaha
1939.....	Korenji
1940.....	Micuthi+ya+Mbia
1941.....	Muthuu
1942.....	Njau ya Kiyo
1943.....	Mwanga
1944.....	Mwomboko
1945.....	Gicina Bangi
1946.....	Njata
1947.....	Ngoma Kibiriti

1948.....	Haraka
1949.....	Kanyoi
1950.....	Muhehenjeko
1951.....	Thuthu
1952.....	Warurungana