

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

RURAL MILITIA GROUPS IN KENYA: THE CASE OF *MUNGIKI* IN KIGUMO
DISTRICT, 1987-2008

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DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented for the award of degree in any other University.

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DATE

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the university supervisors.



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DATE

DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Patricia Amase, for your love and understanding during the compilation of this project.

To my loving parents, Eliud Maribie and Winfred Wairimu, for educating me to this level.

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First and foremost I thank the Almighty God for the gift of life and resources. It was through God's mercy that I was able to raise money to pay for my school fees.

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I cannot forget to thank all the academic staff members of the Department of History who endeavored to see me through my studies. I particularly wish to thank Prof. Vincent Simiyu, Prof. Godfrey Muriuki, Dr. George Gona, Dr. Herbert Misigo, Mr. George Odeny, Ms. Margaret Gachihi and other members of academic and non-academic staff for the knowledge they shared with me.

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I want to thank all my classmates in particular David Masika, Mark Leleruk, Peter Kinyua, Justus Ondigi and Evans Kimani for their encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the activities of rural militias and their impact to the society. The study concentrated on *Mungiki* in Kigumo District. The research begins with a historical analysis of militia groups in Kenya, narrowing down to *Mungiki*. This history provides a background to the understanding of the factors that led to the emergence and development of *Mungiki*.

The study employed both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was obtained from books, articles in journals and internet sources. The gaps found in secondary data were hoped to be filled by archival data from Kenya National Archives. Gaps noted from archival material were filled through oral interviews which were conducted by use of unstructured questionnaire. Data was captured by use of note taking, analysed qualitatively and presented through narratives and discussions.

Most of the existing studies on militia activities have focused on militia groups' operations in urban centres, especially in Nairobi. In urban areas, *Mungiki* operations are based on urban lifestyle. On the other hand, *Mungiki* activities in rural areas are based on rural environment. Therefore, this study aimed at understanding rural militia activities in Kenya in general and Kigumo District in particular.

The study examined the activities of *Mungiki* and their impact on Kigumo District residents from 1987 to 2008. With the guidance of Gani Yoroms' Fluid Theory of Militias which argues that militias emerge as a result of social and economic problem[^]

within a state, this study argued that the emergence and development of *Mungiki* was as a result of unattended socio-economic problems that faced the youth. Membership to the *Mungiki* group was therefore a means of making a living and socialising. This study also noted that the nature of *Mungiki* in Kigumo was guided by the social and economic activities in the area.

The activities of *Mungiki* had profound social, political and economic impact on Kigumo residents. There have been deaths of innocent people murdered by the *Mungiki* adherents. At the same time, *Mungiki* members have been shot dead by the police. This has led to loss of human resources in the society thus diminishing the economic potential of the area. The fear of *Mungiki* has disintegrated family ties, disrupted economic activities and day to day running of some educational institutions. *Mungiki* activities have also destabilised the normal working of the provincial administration. On the flipside, there are some individuals who have made wealth out of the *Mungiki* activities in Kigumo.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KANU -	Kenya African National Union
KAU -	Kenya African Union
KADU-	Kenya African Democratic Union
NARC -	National Alliance Rainbow Coalition
ODM -	Orange Democratic Movement
PICK -	Party of Independent Candidates of Kenya
NGO -	Non Governmental Organization
ANC -	African National Congress
UDF -	United Democratic Front
PNU -	Party of National Unity
SLDF -	Sabaot Land Defence Force
OPC -	O'odua Peoples Congress
M.P. -	Member of Parliament
GEMA -	Kikuyu Embu Meru Association
DP -	Democratic Party of Kenya

WORKING DEFINITIONS

Mungiki

In Kikuyu language the term *Mungiki* is a coinage of the term *muingi* which means a crowd. *Mungiki*, therefore, means a crowd. For the purposes of this study, the term *Mungiki* will refer to the organised militia group.

Muuma

This is a Kikuyu term meaning cultural oath. *Mungiki* take *muuma* as a process of recruitment and bonding.

Thaai

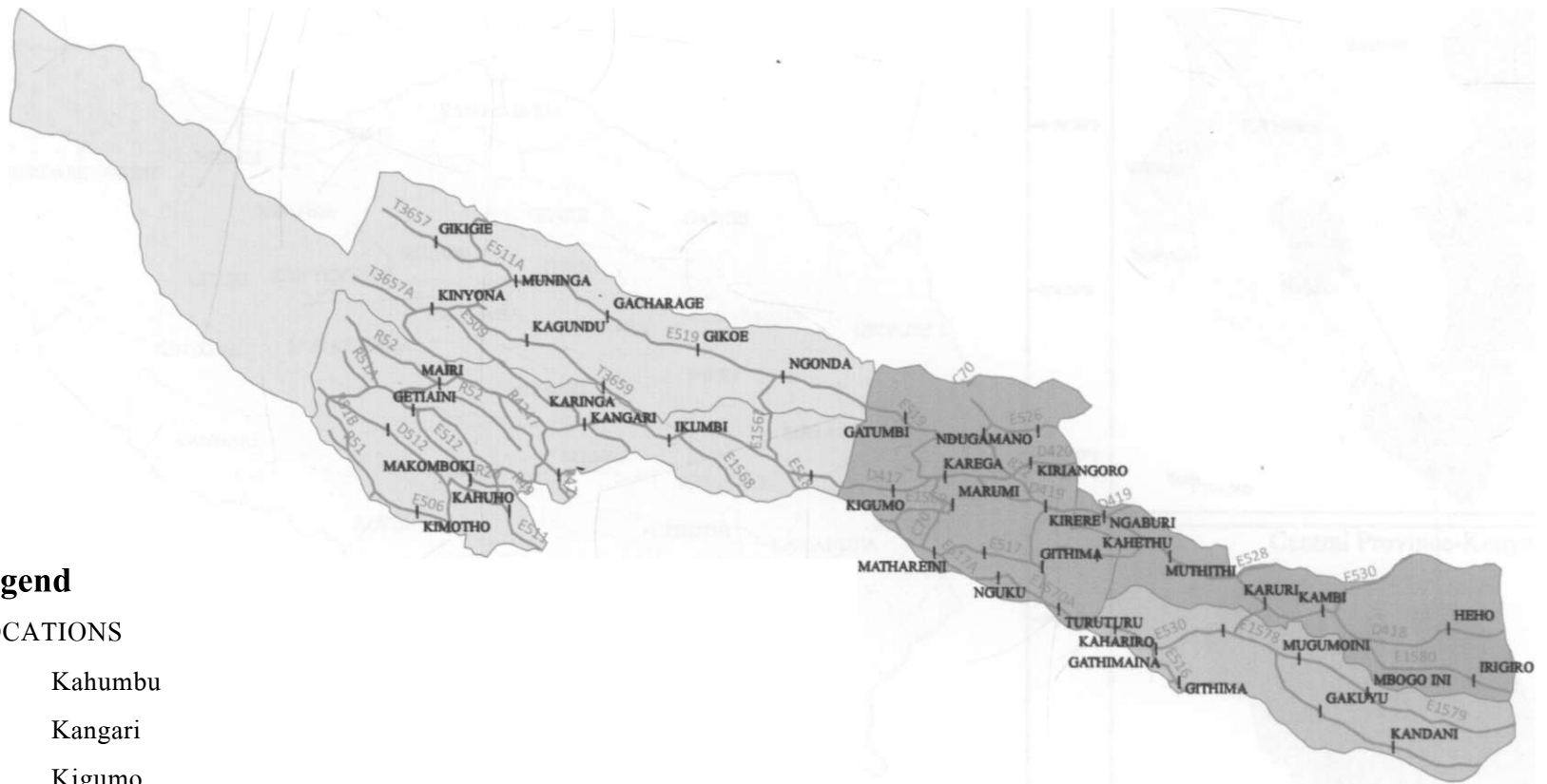
Thaai is a Kikuyu traditional religion that shared cultural characteristics with the *Mungiki* group. *Thaai* is also a chant of praise to God used by *Mungiki* followers.

Militia

The term militia comes from Latin word *miles* which means a soldier.¹ In the African context, militias are non-state or ethnic groups who are either untrained or trained inform of small arms and light weapons. For the purposes of this study, the term militias refers to non-state armed groups either in sophisticated or crude weapons who include armed ethnic and youth vigilantes.

¹ David Francis, *Civil Militia: Africa's Intractable Security Menace?* Burlington, V.T. Ashgate, 2005, p. 2.

KIGUMO DISTRICT



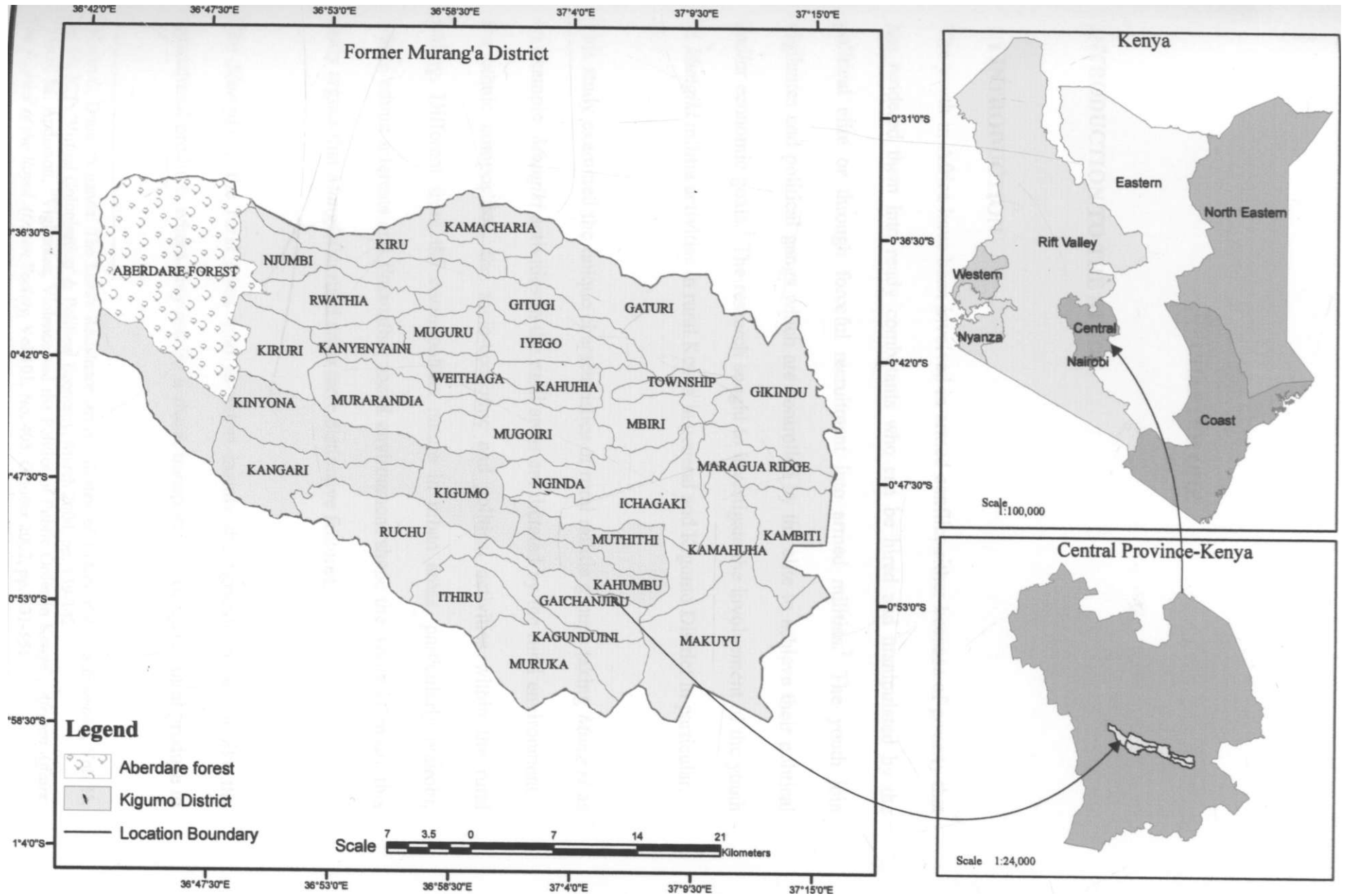
Legend

LOCATIONS

- Kahumbu
- Kangari
- Kigumo
- Kinyona
- Muthithi
- Town Centres
- Roads

T11 map a rilufum of the Kiguao DiMnet Oaognfaical nw oaly .In mcliaua torn art mdorae fe bouKbnc*
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STUDY AREA



This map indicates the geographical boundaries of Murang'a District before 1996
 Soursr: King'ori Karanja, NDT 2010

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The youth in Africa have been involved in armed conflict either because of poverty that has rendered them into ready combatants who can be hired and manipulated by the political elite or through forceful recruitment into armed militias.³ The youth join vigilantes and political gangs which are controlled by the elite to achieve their political and/or economic goals.³ The research sought to investigate the involvement of the youth in *Mungiki* militia activities in rural Kenya in general and Kigumo District in particular.

This study examined the unique characteristics of rural militia groups taking *Mungiki* as an example. *Mungiki* activities in the rural areas are dictated by the rural environment - the ethnic composition, the socio-economic and political activities within the rural setting. Different from the cosmopolitan nature in urban areas, particularly Nairobi, where ethnic interests and fluctuating social environment shape the *Mungiki* group, this study argues that *Mungiki* in rural areas have distinctive features.

The *Mungiki* in the rural areas tend to extort mainly the agricultural sector like the agricultural products where they ask for a share, transportation of agricultural produce to

³ Kevin C. Dunn, "Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 31? No. 99, ICTs 'Virtual Colonisation' & Political Economy, March 2004, pp. 139-142.

David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555.

the market, loading and offloading of agricultural produce and a share of the profit made after selling agricultural produce in the market. On the other hand, the *Mungiki* group in urban areas primarily bases its extortion in the *matatu* industry and protection rackets. The political involvement of the *Mungiki* in urban areas is quite different from rural areas. For instance, in cosmopolitan towns especially Nairobi, the political competition and conflicts take an ethnic perspective, pitting the Kikuyu who make the largest percentage of the *Mungiki* against perceived enemies mostly the Luo community. In mono-ethnic rural areas like Kigumo, political competition does not take an ethnic dimension since almost all the residents are Kikuyu. These differences between the rural and urban *Mungiki* demanded separate scholarly assessment.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The involvement of the youth in militias in Kenya predates independence. For instance, in the late 1940's and early 1950s, during the colonial era, there were militias who operated in Nairobi. One of the most significant militia groups was the *Anake a Forti* (the Forty Group) which was formed because Kenya African Union (KAU) was slow in fighting the colonial government. So, the Forty Group decided to use armed violence in order to achieve independence and recapture the alienated African land. Their composition was made up of the unemployed youth, World War II ex-servicemen and petty traders.⁴ The group gathered resources for its political activities from protection rackets and illegal trading in alcohol.⁵ *Anake a Forti* was able to build up a formidable

⁴ Dave Hyde, "The Nairobi General Strike (1950): From Protest to Insurgency", in Andrew Burton, *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa c. 1750-2000*, London: The British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2002, p. 237.

⁵ *Ibid.*

organisation which extended into all parts of Central Province and into some areas of the Rift Valley.⁶

After independence, the two main political parties, KANU and KADU had militia groups each, which created problems for the new government.⁷ These militia groups were made up of idle youth who were used by the political elite to achieve their political goals.⁸ In the 1960s, the Kenyatta's government had a youth wing called KANU Youth Wing which was used to harass and intimidate political opponents of Kenyatta's government.⁹ In the late 1960's and 1970's, due to the inadequacy of the police force, vigilante groups kept order and even co-operated with Kenya police. They even arrested the police who caused trouble.¹⁰

In the 1980's and 1990s, militia groups such as *Mungiki* in the Rift Valley, Central and Nairobi Provinces, *Sri Lanka* and *Kuzasha Boys* in Mombasa, Baghdad Boys in Luo Nyanza, *Chinkororo* and *Amachuma* in Kisii, and *Kaya Bombo Youth* in Kwale, emerged." Others were, *Jeshi la Mzee* which was formed in April 1997 by senior members of KANU to disrupt opposition political rallies,¹¹ *Jeshi la Embakasi* supported by David Mwenje and *Jeshi la King'ole* who supported the Party of Independent

⁶ Ibid, p. 238.

⁷ A. Hake, *African Metropolis Nairobi self-help City*, London: Sussex University Press 1977 p. 152.

⁸ Ibid, p. 153.

⁹ David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555, p. 551.

¹⁰ A. Hake, *African Metropolis Nairobi self-help City*, London: Sussex University Press 1977 p. 153

¹¹ David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555, p. 548.

¹² Ibid p 549.

Candidates of Kenya (PICK) leader, Harun Mwau.¹³ Towards the end of 2001, *Taliban* group was formed under the leadership of David Ochieng as a response to growing criminality in the Kariobangi area.¹⁴ In 2005, the *Sabaot Land Defense Force (SDLF)* was formed in Mount Elgon region to resist government's attempts to evict population in the Chebyuk area as part of a resettlement programme.¹⁵ The existence and operation of these vigilantes show how easily youths are used by the political elite as tools of furthering their political ambitions and sustenance of their political authority.

One of the youth militia groups that has widely been used by the political elite to further their political ambitions is *Mungiki*. Political and economic tensions played a major role in the emergence and development of *Mungiki*. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Kenya's political scene was unstable with the agitation for multiparty democracy. The youthful politicians and students were the ones at the fore front in calling for democracy and economic equality. This period also saw the state failing to offer employment to the youth especially after the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).¹⁶ With political and economic problems targeting the majority of the youth, this group of young people was easily lured into violence for a pay. This is the environment in which *Mungiki* came into being.

" Ibid pp 549,550.

* Ibid p 541.

World Organisation Against Torture, "Kenya: Military Action Against Sabaot Land Defense Force in Mount Elgon Involves Serious Human Rights Violations Against Civilians", Retrieved on 9th January, 2008 from http://www.nmct.org/pdf/ESCR/2008/ken0606Q8_escr_en.pdf

Joseph Rono, "The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Kenyan Society", *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, January 2002, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp 81-98.

Mungiki emerged in 1987. Ndura Waruinge who is a grandson of the ex-Mau Mau fighter General Waruinge and six others claimed to have consulted ex-Mau Mau generals in Laikipia and Nyandarua districts who approved their plans of coming up with *Mungiki* group.¹⁷ They believed that they had to complete 'Mau Mau mission' which they regarded as 'incomplete'.¹⁸ The issue of distribution of land that has been consistent in Kenya was the basing of the *Mungiki* leaders' argument 'completing Mau Mau mission'. The lack of the state ability to solve long-term land issues saw the emergence and development of *Mungiki*. The 'incomplete Mau Mau mission' as presented by *Mungiki* was the failure of the state to offer land to Mau Mau fighters who had fought courageously for it. In stead, those who acquired land after independence were loyalists to the colonial government with the help of early post-independent government.¹⁹

The feeling of youth neglect by the state and the society in general amongst *Mungiki* adherents made them to direct their resistance to the government and their own societies. The *Mungiki* group allegedly found solace in groups which were opposing the Moi government, for instance *Mwakenya*.²⁰ *Mwakenya* which was a left-wing civic movement was founded in 1979 to challenge one-party orthodoxy.²¹ It was a multi-ethnic movement made up of university lecturers, students, journalists, teachers, and workers.²² Members

¹⁷ Grace Wamue, "Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines through *Mungiki*," *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.100, No. 400,2000, pp. 453-467, p 456.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49, p. 30.

²⁰ Oral Interview with Wathugi, Mau Mau veteran, Makomboki, 20th February, 2010.

²¹ Oral interview with one Central Kenya ex-M.P., Nairobi, 20th August, 2009.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49, p 31.

Ibid.

of the movement were detained, jailed or forced into exile after Moi regime became hard on dissenters after the attempted coup of August 1982.²³

With time, *Mungiki* was able to attract very many followers from groups of youth that felt neglected by the state and the society in one way or another. These groups were lower classes youth in Nairobi slums, landless squatters and IDP's in areas of Rift Valley such as Londiani, Eldoret, Molo, Olenguruoni, Elburgon, Subukia, Narok, Nakuru, Laikipia and Nyahururu.²⁴ The displacement of 1991 and 1997 of the Kikuyu and other non-Kalenjin from the Rift Valley which was allegedly a state sponsored ethno-political conflict saw the rise of *Mungiki*. The Kikuyu population affected by the clashes in Molo, Elburgon, Rongai, Narok and Eldoret in 1991-93 and Njoro and Laikipia in 1998 felt that the state had failed to offer security thus opting to join *Mungiki* in rural and urban Rift Valley.²⁵

It is therefore informative to note that the alleged state sponsored ethno-political clashes of 1991-1992 and 1997-1998 played an important role in the development of *Mungiki*. The clashes aimed at securing KANU domination of the whole of the Rift Valley. Their occurrence coincided with the call for Majimboism thus intensifying ethnic enmity. Kikuyu, Abaluhya, Abagusii, and Luo communities in or bordering the Rift Valley were attacked by the Kalenjin and Maasai warriors.

²³ **Ibid.**

^{*} **Ibid, p 30.**

²⁵ **Ibid.**

The chief driving force of these ethnic clashes was to ensure that no opposition candidate would attain the 25% of votes in the affected provinces. The clashes though did not hit as they had been planned because of the unexpected Kikuyu retaliation,²⁶ mostly because of the value they attach to land. Because most of the Kikuyu had been pushed to the edge, they became a healthy ground for political mobilisation against the attackers.²⁷ This is when the radicalised *Mungiki* group came into being. Faced with economic hardships and exclusion generated by ethnic clashes, most of the Kikuyu young people joined *Mungiki*.²⁸

Misuse of power and machinery also played a role in the creation of different violent subgroups of *Mungiki*. The political elite began using militias for their political gains. In the early 1990s, there emerged various *Mungiki* groupings created by the political elite. In 1992, the Democratic Party of Kenya (D.P.) allegedly created a militant *Mungiki* group with an aim of challenging KANU youth wingers. The then president Daniel Moi purportedly retaliated by asking Kihika Kimani then an M.P. for Molo, to create another *Mungiki* group to counter the D.P.'s one. By December 1992, there were three groups of *Mungiki*: the purely religious, the D.P.'s *Mungiki* creation and the counter D.P.'s *Mungiki* group created by Kihika Kimani.²⁹

Margaret Gechaga, "Religious Movements and Democratisation in Kenya: Between the Sacred and the Profane", in Godwin Murunga and Shadrack Nasong'o, *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*, London: Zed Books Ltd., 2007 p. 70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Oral interview with one Central Kenya ex-M.P., Nairobi, 20th August, 2009.

After the 1992 general elections which KANU won, the political elite no longer found their militant groups useful. KANU youth wingers and *Jeshi la Mzee* allegedly led by Fred Gumo the then M.P. for Westlands, were chased from the streets by the government where they had purportedly been allowed to collect 'taxes' from *matatus* and also acted like hired thugs to cause political mayhem. When these militant groups were economically orphaned, they formed notorious militias who engaged in crime to survive. In this process, a notorious group of *Mungiki* was formed. This group was later adopted and used by the political elite both in the government and the opposition in the political campaigns in 1997 general elections.³⁰

In preparation for the 2002 general elections, KANU and the opposition allegedly started to fund *Mungiki*. The touts, rebel university students, the unemployed university graduates, the unfairly dismissed workers and specifically policemen from Kikuyu community, joined different *Mungiki* groupings to earn a living.³¹ *Mungiki* got involved in politics by supporting politicians whom they perceived as youthful to solve the problems of the youth. For example, in 2002, they supported Uhuru Kenyatta for presidency but Uhuru did not show openly any connection to *Mungiki*?

The group has also been used by the political elite to further their political ambitions through violence. *Mungiki* members were involved in political ethnic clashes in 2002 in Nairobi. On the night of 3rd March, 2002 just before December general elections, a group

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75, p. 63.

of *Mungiki* members between 200 and 300 men and youths terrorized the residents in a quarter of Nairobi's Kariobangi North estate. They were armed with crude weapons such as *pangas*, swords, iron bars and knives. By the morning, 20 residents of Kariobangi were confirmed dead and a further 31 had been admitted to hospital with serious wounds.³³

In 2003 when NARC got into power, the *Mungiki* groupings were abandoned by the political elite. The NARC government took a hard line against militias like *Mungiki*. To enhance their survival, the *Mungiki* group turned to their only source of livelihood - extortion.³⁴ When the government started measures to curb the spread of *Mungiki* activities, the group leaders and members accused the government of harassment. Many of its members were allegedly tortured by both Moi and Kibaki governments. They were arrested and locked up in police cells without charge. In what was termed as 'Operation Kosovo' police purportedly killed 30 people in Mathare in June 2007.³⁵

The Kwekwe squad that was allegedly instituted to eliminate *Mungiki* was implicated by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights in extra-judicial killings of up to 500 *Mungiki* members, in 2007. To be able to cope with the changing times, the *Mungiki* group reorganised itself into different subgroups playing different roles. The cultural/religious subgroup that became in charge of rituals and cultural ceremonies, the economic subgroup in charge of the finances and the political subgroup in charge of

David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555, pp. 531, 532.

³⁵

Amnesty International, "Kenya: Police Operations Against *Mungiki* Must Comply with Kenya's Obligations under International Human Rights Law, Public Statement", AI Index: AFR 32/008/2007 (Public), News Service No: 106 11 June 2007, Retrieved on 31st July 2008, from [BBP://asiapar.fic.amnestv.nrg/library/print/ENGAFR320082007](http://asiapar.fic.amnestv.nrg/library/print/ENGAFR320082007)

Mungiki's political affairs. In the organisational structure of *Mungiki*, each section has a leader. There is a leader for *muuma*, political operations and for economic affairs.³⁶

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most of the existing studies on militia activities have focused on militia groups' operations in urban centres, especially in Nairobi.³⁷ In such kind of an urban environment, militias, such as *Mungiki*, over time, assumed a political and ethnic angle as a result of the cosmopolitan nature of urban areas in Kenya.³⁸

In its operation in the last several decades, the *Mungiki* group has also thrived in rural areas which are different from urban settings. Urban areas are characterised by competitive inter-ethnic politics, urban social disorder and a general breakdown of culture and norms of behaviour.³⁹ However, in rural areas, *Mungiki* lacks the close police surveillance that is present in towns; it thrives on agricultural based economies and its mode of operation is guided by rural socio-economic and political activities.⁴⁰

The study of urban *Mungiki* does not explain the nature of rural *Mungiki* and vice versa. Therefore, this research is a modest attempt to understand rural militia activities in Kenya in general and Kigumo District in particular. It attempted to answer the following

³⁶ The East African Standard, Kenya: *Mungiki* Members Speak Out, Retrieved on 31st July, 2008, from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804171279.html>

David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555., *Ibid*, p. 539.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

Amos Kareithi and Boniface Gikandi, "In Kigumo, the Proscribed Sect Rules by the Fist", *East African Standard*, 10th June, 2007, p. 5; Kage Njoroge and Nicholas Waitathu, "*Mungiki* Killings; How It Happened", *The People Daily*, 3rd June, 2007; p. 1.

questions: Why and how does the *Mungiki* group carry out its activities in rural setting where the ethnic composition, socio-economic and political activities are different from the urban environment? How is the rural *Mungiki* different from the urban one? How have the group's activities impacted on the rural residents?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research was to examine the rural perspective of *Mungiki* in Kenya.

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the history of *Mungiki* in Kigumo District
2. To explore the rural activities of *Mungiki* in Kigumo District
3. To evaluate the impact of *Mungiki's* activities on Kigumo District residents

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The *Mungiki* group is one of the militias that have posed a security threat in Kenya. Despite the attempts by the government to eliminate the group, *Mungiki* is still thriving in rural and urban areas. Regardless of their high publicised image in the Kenyan Media, little is known about *Mungiki*. This is mostly because of the group's metamorphosis. This called for a scholarly research to unravel the dynamics of the *Mungiki* group.

The *Mungiki* group has attracted a number of scholarly examinations in the attempt to unravel its history and objectives. Although several studies have been undertaken within the urban setting, *Mungiki* in rural areas needed a separate examination due to the differences in the ethnic composition, socio-economic and political activities. There was

no systematic study that had been undertaken on the activities of *Mungiki* in rural areas and their impact on the rural population. This study was a modest attempt to fill this academic lacuna.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The period of research covered the years 1987 to 2008. The *Mungiki* group started sometime in 1987.⁴¹ The year 2008 was chosen as the end of the study period because it was the time when Kenya experienced countrywide militia activities both in urban and rural areas. During the post-election violence between January and March 2008, most of the ethnic communities mobilised their militias to defend their community territories and interests.⁴²

Kigumo District⁴³ (formerly Kigumo Division) was chosen as the area of study because it is one of the most insecure areas in the larger former Murang'a District because of *Mungiki* threats. People of Kigumo live in fear to an extent that they have given up and let *Mungiki* extort them⁴⁴

The researcher encountered limitations in the field because the respondents were reluctant to give information due to fear of *Mungiki* reprisals. Nevertheless, I created rapport with my respondents before going deeper to my questions and explained my

⁴¹ Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49, p. 30.

Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, *On the Brink of the Precipice: A Human Rights Account of Kenya's Post-2007 Election Violence*, Nairobi: KNCHR, August 2008.

⁴² Kigumo District was created on 6th February 2009 through a presidential executive order.

⁴³ Njoroge and Nicholas Waitathu, "Mungiki Killings; How It Happened", *The People Daily*, 3rd June, 2008.
⁴⁴ The *East African Standard* Reporter, "Life in the Hands of Lords of Illegal Government", *East African Standard*, March, 2009, p. 25.

research as strictly scholarly. I also firmly observed confidentiality and complete anonymity where I was requested by the respondents.

1.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:-

1. The development of *Mungiki* in Kigumo is as a result of idleness and greed
2. *Mungiki's* extortion activities in Kigumo are pegged on agrarian economy
3. *Mungiki* activities in Kigumo have destabilised the lives of the area residents

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have examined youth militias in rural and urban Africa. These studies have dwelt on the history, characteristics, activities and the actors involved, and the impact of these militias on the societies they thrive in. In this review, experiences of militias in South Africa and Nigeria form a basis of discussion of *Mungiki* in Kenya. The literature on *Mungiki* in Kenya provides a history of the group, its characteristics and activities specifically in the urban areas. This literature acted as a guide in the understanding of *Mungiki* in Kenya in general and Kigumo District in Particular.

Mzala in his book examines how the apartheid government of South Africa from early 1980s used vigilante groups to weaken opposition.⁴⁵ He argues that vigilantes in South Africa were politically initiated and motivated. Drawing upon activities of vigilante groups such as *A Team* which operated in Natal, *Witdoeke* in Cape Town, *Ama-Africa Poqo* in Uitenhage townships and *Inkatha* vigilantes, Mzala observes that vigilantes who

⁴⁵ Mzala, Gatsha Buthelezi, *Chief with a Double Agenda*, London, Zed Books Ltd, 1988.

recruited unemployed youths and ex-prisoners worked with the police to attack, kill or maim political opponents. Mzala's book provided a good insight into the involvement of the youth vigilantes in politics.

Craig Charney's article examines the involvement of vigilantes in South Africa's political violence during apartheid regime.⁴⁶ He argues that vigilantism in South Africa during apartheid was a continuation of clientelist politics. The apartheid state used *Inkatha* vigilantes who were collaborators, to counter United Democratic Front (UDF) and African National Congress (ANC) opposition. Vigilantism in this case was, therefore, an attempt by a class of African collaborators with the apartheid regime to re-mobilize older types of authority and divide the opposition. Charney's important work concentrates on vigilantes in South African politics and largely within townships and cities where the elites operated. However, his article helped to understand the role of militant vigilantes in political strife.

Martin Murray's article examines the conflicts between white farmers and African labourers in South Africa's Orange Free State.⁴⁷ He argues that since the bourgeois law was not sufficient to ensure by itself the habituation of African farm labourers to the norms of diligence and docility, the white farmers formed vigilantes to fill that void. White vigilantes therefore shot African labourers at will to instill fear in them so that they could work diligently and cease from deserting the farms. This white vigilante violence

⁴⁶ Craig Charney, *Vigilantes, Clientelism and the South African State*, Retrieved on December 9, 2008-
<http://www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/archive/tranO16/tranO16Q02.pdf>

Martin Murray, "The Natives are always Stealing: White Vigilantes and the Reign of Terror in the Orange Free State", 1918-24, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1989, pp. 107-123.

continued because white farmers had little fear with respect to prosecution as a result of ignorance by state authorities. Murray's work is a great contribution to the field of rural vigilantism. Although the circumstances that were present in the Orange Free State between 1918 and 1924 are different from the present state of rural vigilantism in Kenya, Murray's article will help to understand militant groups' activities in rural areas where the main economic activity is agriculture.

Laurent Fourchard's article examines the historical practices of vigilantes in south-western Nigeria.⁴⁸ He argues that, vigilantism in south-western Nigeria was not only a response to the Nigerians "politics of plunder" endemic since the beginning of the oil boom, but also an extension of old practices in a new name. Giving the example of the hunter guard system like *Sode Sode* in Bere town of Ibadan which emerged between 1930s and 1950s, Fourchard observes that the contemporary vigilante system referred to older policing practices besides involvement in politics. His work concentrated on vigilantes in urban areas.

In his article, David Pratten examines the different perspectives used by scholars to understand vigilantism in Nigeria.⁴⁹ He argues that vigilante groups in Nigeria organised themselves at a variety of levels, from lineage to ethnic group, in a variety of locations from village ward to city Street, and for a variety of reasons from crime fighting to political lobbying. He sites O'odua Peoples Congress (OPC) in Yoruba-speaking south

⁴⁸ Laurent Fourchard, "A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilantes in South-Western Nigeria", *Journal of International African Institute*, Vol. 78, No. 1, 2008, pp. 535-558.

⁴⁹ David Pratten, "Introduction the Politics of Protection: Perspectives on Vigilantism in Nigeria", *Journal the International African Institute*, Vol. 78, No. 1, 2008, pp. 1-15.

west and the Bakassi Boys in the eastern states as vigilante groups which have spearheaded contemporary political contests between the politics of identity and citizenship. *Hisba* who operated in the north implemented *Sharia* law. Pratten explains the mentioned vigilantes within the perspectives of politics of identity and citizenship as well as social organisation and cultural interpretation. Pratten's work is a great contribution in understanding militant vigilantes that operate in both cosmopolitan and mono-ethnic settings. It therefore informed my study.

Wale Adebani's article explores the cultural repertoires of the youthful and militant faction of the O'odua People's Congress (OPC) vigilante in Nigeria. He argues that violence and ritual can be used both as a strategy of power struggle and as a form of symbolic action with cultural meanings.⁵⁰ The OPC led by Gani Adams-a carpenter, used both Yoruba traditions and modern religions to fight the domination of the Hausa-Fulani of the north in Nigerian politics as well as negotiating their Yoruba identity. Although Adebani's work is a great contribution in explaining groups with a self determination agenda. It concentrated on politics of ethnic domination in an area inhabited by different ethnic groups.

Peter Kagwanja's article examines the political violence that marred Kenya after the return to pluralist politics in the early 1990s.⁵¹ He argues that African states, facing

⁵⁰ Wale Adebani, "The Carpenter's Revolt: Youth Violence and the Reinvention of Culture in Nigeria", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2005, 339-365, Retrieved on 12th January, 2009 from journals.cambridge.org

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49.

determined opposition, resorted to recruiting surrogates and clients to organize violence against citizens. In Kenya, the non-Kalenjin who were perceived to support the opposition were allegedly attacked by government sponsored vigilantes in the Rift Valley province. *Mungiki* which was by then a morally ethnic group became radicalised as a result of these clashes; many of those who joined *Mungiki* to fight the government were the youths affected by the Rift Valley ethnic clashes. Although the government tried to curb *Mungiki* group through harassment, arrests and torture, it was accused of using the same group as a means of attempting to win the 2002 general elections. Kagwanja acknowledges *Mungiki* presence in the rural Rift Valley. How did the group operate in those rural areas? How similar or different were its operation in those rural areas compared to urban ones?

In his later article, Kagwanja investigates the manipulation of generational and ethnic identities in patrimonial politics prior to 2002 general elections in Kenya.³² He argues that, faced with the challenge of NARC multi-ethnic political coalition, the then president Moi shifted the axis of the 2002 electoral contest from ethnicity to politics of generational conflict. KANU therefore chose to use generational politics positioning young Uhuru against elderly Kibaki. This captured the interest of the youths in *Mungiki* who opted to support KANU and Moi's "Project Uhuru". Although Kagwanja's work is largely concentrated in urban areas, it was a great contribution in understanding the role of the youth militia activities in politics, which informed my study.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75.

Grace Wamue's article examines the conflicts between traditional and modern religions in Africa.³³ She argues that religion can be used as a tool of oppression, exploitation and discrimination on one hand and liberation and restoration of people's life and dignity on the other. Taking the example of *Mungiki* in Kenya, Wamue observes that the group used Kikuyu traditional beliefs to fight modern religions which it perceived as oppressive and exploitative. The *Mungiki* group, therefore, advocated for a complete return to indigenous beliefs and practices. Wamue's work perceives the *Mungiki* group as having a religious motive. Are these religious motives similar between rural and urban *Mungiki*? Does the *Mungiki* group have other motives apart from the religious ones?

David Anderson examines the operations of vigilante groups in Nairobi as the country moved towards the 2002 general elections.³⁴ Drawing upon the activities of *Mungiki* and *Talibans*, the two vigilante groups in Nairobi's eastlands, he argues that vigilantes were a product of insecurity and ethnocentric politics in the city. The vigilantes exploited the insecure social environment in the low income areas to make a living by extortion. They also played a significant role in the struggle for dominance and control of the city's politics. Anderson's work primarily explores soured economy and ethnic based politics but within an urban setting.

Grace Wamue, "Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines through *Mungiki*", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.100, No. 400, 2001, pp. 453-467.

David M Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555.

In his paper, Mutuma Ruteere explores the dilemmas that human rights activists face while addressing both the rights of the criminals and those of the victims.⁴⁵ Drawing upon the criminal activities of the *Mungiki* group, Ruteere argues that Kenyan human rights groups found themselves calling on the police to crack down on the *Mungiki* group while at the same time denouncing the police for excessive use of force. Ruteere sees *Mungiki's* criminal activities as having political linkages. Besides politics, are there other intents of the *Mungiki* group? Does *Mungiki* engage in crime both in urban and rural areas?

The reviewed literature gave a good understanding of militia activities in Africa and particularly in Kenya. The literature on militant vigilantes in apartheid South Africa and Nigeria offered background knowledge on militias in Africa and a comparing foundation on which this study was based. These studies are mainly concentrated in urban areas. The literature on *Mungiki* in Kenya generally gives a history and characteristics and activities of the group. Whereas the literature on *Mungiki* concentrates on the group's activities and impact on the urban setting, this study will examine the characteristics, activities and the impact of *Mungiki* activities on a rural setting, in particular Kigumo District.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on Fluid theory of Militias as proposed by Gani Joses Yoroms. Yoroms argues that militias emerge as a result of social and economic problems within a state.⁵⁶ In such a state, militias that emerge are not organised and articulate. They are not formally recognised by the society but sometimes they keep vigil against criminals in the society. Nevertheless, most of the time, they turn into criminals and become unruly. They take law into their own hands. They are more reactive than proactive, often with the aim of provoking or intimidating particular individuals and social groups in the society.⁵⁷

Some militias within the Fluid theory may be state-created or sponsored against political opponents of the state. They may not have clear objectives, but they are significant or potential recruits for destabilising the state.⁵⁸ Fluid militias use the crudest means of terror to express their demands. They don't have tangible objectives but create self-fulfillment scenarios by inflicting injuries on the innocent populace.⁵⁹

The Fluid theory of Militias was relevant to this study because it gives the environment in which militias emerge and develop. The situations that are discussed by the theory, for instance, the emergence of militias as a result of social and economic problems in a state are the same situations that led to the emergence of the *Mungiki* group. This theory is used to understand the fluid status of the *Mungiki* group. It also helps in understanding

Gani Yoroms, "Militias as a Social Phenomenon: Towards a Theoretical Construction", in David J. Francis et al, *Civil Militia: Africa's Intractable Security Menace?* Burlington, V.T. Ashgate, 2005, pp. 38-

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the socio-economic forces behind the emergence and the development of the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo District.

1.10 METHODOLOGY

This study used both primary and secondary data. I used the following secondary materials: books, journals, and periodicals. These were accessed from libraries and resource centres like Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library at the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University Main Library, Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHCR) Library in CVS Building Nairobi, Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) Library at Gitanga Road and British Institute in East Africa Library at Kileleshwa. The gaps found in secondary sources were filled by use of primary sources.

Primary data was obtained from Kenya National Archives. I consulted government annual reports and minutes of various security meetings in Muranga District. These annual reports and minutes of various security meetings in Muranga District helped in understanding the historical background of the larger Murang'a District in which Kigumo was a division. Other primary data was retrieved from media houses resource centers, such as the Nation Media and Standard Media and libraries. Here, the newspapers were analysed. In Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library at the University of Nairobi and Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) Library at Gitanga Road, primary data obtained was in form of theses and reports.

Oral interviews were used in this study. Before going to the field, I obtained a research permit from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. In the field, I interviewed nineteen respondents among them the provincial administration officers, village elders, drivers and conductors in *matatu* industry, shopkeepers and religious leaders heading different churches in the area. I also interviewed *Mungiki* and *ex-Mungiki* members whom I identified with the help of my research assistants who were Kigumo residents. The provincial administration officers gave the information on the security concerns and youth involvement in militia activities in the area. I interviewed one driver and his conductor as well as the shopkeepers who gave me information about extortion practices by *Mungiki*. *Mungiki* and *ex-Mungiki* members gave firsthand information on the group.

Oral interviews were performed by use of un-structured questionnaire. This was the best tool for this research study because of the sensitivity of the issue; it also gave a chance for the respondent to give the information without restrictions. I also took notes to document the answers given by the respondents which were later used in the compilation of this study.

Since I was not familiar with most of the areas in Kigumo District, I employed the services of two research assistants. My research assistants were initially my respondents who knew Kigumo well. They guided me to the areas I wanted to visit. Sampling was done through snowballing method. This is where initial respondent are identified and

later give names of other possible respondents who would offer the desired information.⁶⁰ My research assistants led me to other respondents. Other respondents too helped to identify more respondents. Because of the sensitivity of this study, the real names of the respondents were concealed to protect them from possible attacks by the *Mungiki*. In total, I interviewed nineteen respondents.

Once data collection exercise was complete, I used a qualitative data analysis method known as thematic analytic technique. Thematic analytic technique is a process where related topics or major subjects that come up during the interviews are categorised in one group.⁶¹ I placed the data on the history of *Mungiki* in one group, data on activities of *Mungiki* in another group and data on the impact of *Mungiki* on the area residents in a third group.

⁶⁰ O- Mugenda and Mugenda, A., *Research Methods*. Nairobi: Acts Press 1999, p. 51.
⁶¹ Donald Kisilu Kombo and Delno L. A. Tromp, *Proposal and Thesis Writing: An Introduction*, Nairobi: ... Publications Africa, 2006, p 119.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGINS OF *MUNGIKI* IN KIGUMO DISTRICT, 1990s - 2008

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Mungiki is a militia group that has been dominated by the youthful Kikuyu. However, with time in urban areas, it has grown to include other ethnic groupings such as the Aembu, Ambeere, Ameru and to some extent Abagusii.⁶² In Kigumo, the *Mungiki* members are predominantly Kikuyu. The group started as a religious group and developed into a militia whose interest mainly seemed to be economically oriented. *Mungiki* members in Kigumo are not interested in politics. However, they indulge in political campaigns to make money. Their main interest in the area has been to gain wealth through extortion and protection rackets. This extortion is directed to the agrarian economy which is the main source of wealth in the area.

Mungiki's development in Kigumo was as a result of social and economic problems that affected the youth in the area. While the state failed in offering security and employment, the society on the other hand failed to offer guidance to the youth. This led to the idleness of the youth making a ready made pool of recruits to *Mungiki*. The argument in this chapter is that the history of *Mungiki* in Kigumo was influenced by the failure of both the state and the society in general to meet the socio-economic needs of the youth. *Mungiki* provided a better channel to the youth to socialise and get employment; services which the state and the society had failed to provide.

Oral Interview with Okindo and Muthamia, Matatu Touts, Ongata Rongai, 11th August, 2009.

2.2 MUNGIKI IN KIGUMO, 1990s - 2008

The emergence and growth of the *Mungiki* group in the large Murang'a District in which Kigumo was a division until February 2009, was as a result of unattended socio-economic problems facing the youth.⁶³ There was a high number of the youth who had never attended school and school drop-outs who made a pool of idle youths. There was also a desperate situation of unemployment from the late 1980s.⁶⁴ The idle youth in Murang'a District became prone to joining gangs and militias for economic survival. This led to increased insecurity and in turn warranting community policing in form of militant youth vigilantes.

The community in several divisions of Murang'a District came up with their own vigilantes who had militia characteristics popularly known as *Yuthi* (Gikuyu coinage of the English term-youth). For instance, from 1987 in Turuturu area in Kigumo, every family had to produce a young man (in Kikuyu traditions, young men were considered the protectors of the community) to join the *Yuthi* vigilante group. The group patrolled the village during the night to ensure security was restored. It was paid in form of food and money donations from individual families. This group though collapsed as some members of the community alleged that the *Yuthi* group was cooperating with criminals in the area and refused to remit their payment. With no community support, the youths in this group who were mostly the jobless lot became ready recruits for the *Mungiki* group.⁶⁵

⁶³ Kenya National Archives, ADM. 15/2/XII/32, Murang'a District Annual Report, 1988, p. 90.

⁶⁴ Oral Interview with, Wanja a local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

Mungiki emerged in Kigumo District in the middle 1990s. The group started as a religious movement in what many people understood as *Thaai*. The people of Kigumo understood *Mungiki* as *Thaai* mostly because of their customary chanting of the phrase *thaai thathaiya Ngai thaai*, meaning we beseech you, our God.⁶⁶ It was later noted that there were two groups which resembled each other in their cultural characteristics. These were *Thaai* and *Mungiki*. The *Thaai* group had been there before the coming of *Mungiki* in the early 1990s, but it was only understood as a religious group.⁶⁷

Thaai's main objective was to return to the Kikuyu traditional way of life, in what they termed as *gucokia ruui mukaro* (Kikuyu phrase meaning returning to the old ways of life). Most of the people who joined the group wanted to worship their traditional God - *Ngai wa Kirinyaga* and at the same time search for their lost traditions. The people who joined the *Thaai* group were predominantly the poor both young and old. They believed that the only way to get out of their poverty was to return to their traditional God. The *Thaai* group worshipped facing Mount Kenya as Kikuyu believed that *Ngai* lived at the top of Mount Kirinyaga (Kenya).⁶⁸

Around 1997 and 1998, the name *Mungiki* came into being. The people of Kigumo did not differentiate the *Mungiki* and *Thaai* groups mostly because of their cultural similarities. With time, there were notable differences between the two groups that were depicted in the rendition of their activities. The *Thaai* group members drank alcohol while *Mungiki* strictly prohibited alcohol consumption. The *Mungiki* group though

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⁶⁷ **Ibid.**

⁶⁸ **Ibid.**

entertained sniffing of tobacco as Kikuyu elders used to do. Most of the *Thaai* members were elderly people and only pockets of youths while *Mungiki* was dominated by the youth. By the year 1999 the *Thaai* group had completely been assimilated by the *Mungiki* group which intensified the importance of fighting alcohol consumption and return to the Kikuyu traditional way of life.⁶⁹

The *Mungiki* group performed rituals at their designated shrines. They took oaths as a way of total commitment to the group and as a recruitment procedure. In Kigumo, the *Mungiki* group made Githembe (one of the areas in Kahumbu Location) their offices under very tight security. This is where they continued to administer oaths to their new members.⁷⁰ Most of the recruits did not know what the group was to transform into. Some even regretted why they had joined the group. They felt remorseful that they had put their parents and families into danger and agony. It was a matter of time and they could lose their lives either to the police or their fellow *Mungiki* members. If they were reported to the police they could be shot dead. If they left the group, their fellow *Mungiki* members could label them as betrayers and murder them. They felt trapped into an unending unwanted commitment. One regretful *Mungiki* member explained:

I regret why I joined *Mungiki*. My mum cries every day.
Now I have gone through every ritual in this group and
I cannot get out of it. If I get out, they will kill me and
probably my family too.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Oral Interview with, Gaitho, a peasant farmer, Kigumo Shopping Centre, 27th August, 2009. ^

⁷⁰ Oral Interview with, Wanja, a local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

⁷¹ Oral Interview with, Kamau, a regretting *Mungiki* follower, Turuturu Shopping Centre, 25th August,

What had started as a religious movement turned gradually into an economic based group as it targeted the idle poor youth in the area as recruits in extortion endeavours. Kigumo people started to realise the changes in *Mungiki* as the group started to harass them. The *Mungiki* group created their own code of laws which included female genital mutilation as a way of 'going back' to Kikuyu traditions. When the group started to perform female genital mutilation by force, it was clear to the people of Kigumo that the group was no longer religious but wicked. *Mungiki* adherents also started to force people to remit protection fees.

There are different groups of *Mungiki* in Kigumo. There are those who are purely religious and do not involve themselves in "criminal activities". Though this group does not involve itself in "crime", at one time it killed one of its members because he had started to involve himself in robbery. There are some groups which drink beer and their girl members wear trousers. In contrast there is another group which does not drink beer, do not allow girls to wear trousers but sniffs tobacco.⁷³ These different groups though have been constituted for the survival of the larger *Mungiki* group. Through exhibition of different characteristics of the different groupings within the larger group, *Mungiki* in Kigumo has been able to camouflage and therefore has survived.

The membership of *Mungiki* in Kigumo is not limited to the youth although the youth are the majority. There are elderly men of about 65-80 years who help to offer *Kirira* -

⁷³ . Oral Interview with, Wanja, a local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

Oral interview with Wanjiku and Mwaura, both workers at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

Kikuyu traditional education and expertise in oathing ceremonies. There are also elderly women who help in the circumcision of girls.⁷⁴

The *Mungiki* members are concentrated in the areas where there were high numbers of Mau Mau fighters. This shows the influence of the Mau Mau history on the young people. They argue that those who fought for independence were never rewarded and instead those who had collaborated with the colonial administration like the home guards received rewards in form of land and high ranking jobs. "I have casually noted that this area had a high number of Mau Mau fighters due to its proximity to Nairobi and Aberdare Forest. Where freedom fighters came in large numbers, *Mungiki* members are also in large numbers. I have also noted that the group is thriving well in areas where it has societal sympathy like in Githima and Muthithi. For example the Makomboki people refused the *Mungiki*. In January 2008 they torched the suspected *Mungiki's* houses and drove them out of their villages. This is the reason why Makomboki area does not have *Mungiki* activities".⁷⁵

Githima and Muthithi areas have the biggest open air markets in Kigumo District. Because of these big open air markets, the areas have great opportunities of making money through protection rackets and extortion. The people of these areas embraced *Mungiki* because the group first came as liberators from frequent robbery. Later the group started to levy "taxes" on their agricultural produce. On the other hand, Makomboki area without a major open air market was one of the last areas to capture the interest of

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Oral Interview with one of the provincial administration officials, Kigumo District Headquarters, 7th October, 2009.

Mungiki. By the time *Mungiki* activities spread to Makomboki, the people of the area had known *Mungiki* as an unwanted group. They were ready to oppose it.⁷⁶ Several factors have influenced the development of the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo.

2.6.1 Factors Influencing Kigumo Residents to Join *Mungiki*

The emergence and growth of the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo District is a systematic process brought about by several factors which influenced the youth to join the group. They include: poverty, idleness and laziness, forceful recruitment, search for self esteem, propaganda and peer pressure.

Poverty is one of the major factors that forced the youth to join *Mungiki*. The youth form the majority of the poor people in Kigumo because of unemployment that has mostly hit them. Since the population in Kigumo depends heavily on agrarian economy, poverty is as a result of crop failure and fall of giant cash crops like coffee and tea.⁷⁷ Most of the upbringing of children, provision of basic needs and payment of school fees was met from coffee and tea sales. In the early 1990s, coffee and tea prices decreased bringing about reduced income. The resultants were school drop outs because the parents could not afford to pay school fees for their children.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the population grew dramatically making arable land scarce. Basic needs like food and clothing were not readily available like before.⁷⁹ One *Mungiki* follower at

⁷⁶ *ibid.*
⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

Muthithi narrated how poverty pushed him to join the *Mungiki* group. "My parents are very poor. I dropped out of school in Standard 6. For me, *Mungiki* gives daily bread. In our organisation you will not lack something to eat. We take our share after offering protection; if it weren't for us there would be many robberies. Probably, I would have been a thief."⁸⁰

Idleness and laziness pushed the youth to join *Mungiki*. Most of the young people who dropped out of school could not be employed in white collar jobs because they could not meet the qualifications. Because of their laziness, they were not willing to engage in manual jobs. To them, *Mungiki* became a viable economic venture.⁸¹ School drop-outs and leavers in Kigumo could be seen playing cards, gossiping or admiring passing vehicles in the shopping centres. Many others could be seen at *Matatu* stations and market places strolling aimlessly. Most of these ended up in the *Mungiki* group.⁸²

The youth have been forcefully recruited into *Mungiki*. Some of the young people were denied their rights to visit shopping centres unless they joined *Mungiki*. If they were found, they were abducted and forced to take the oath. Beatings after abduction were used to force the young individuals to take oath. *Mungiki* members usually snatched young boys at shopping centres and took them to Githembe, their offices. They forced them to drink *muuma* and threatened them with death if they reported the matter to anyone.⁸³ They would also approach villagers using threats forcing them to offer their

⁸⁰ Oral interview with Njoroge, a *Mungiki* follower, Muthithi Market, 20th February, 2010.

⁸¹ Oral interview with Wanja, a local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

⁸² Ibid.

Oral interview with, Mwaura, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

young family members as recruits.⁸⁴ The abducted boys were later trained on how to extort money and at the end of the day remit the day's collection to the *Mungiki* offices where they got their pay.⁸⁵

Young boys in primary and secondary schools joined *Mungiki* in pursuit of self esteem and independence. They joined the group so that they could be feared by their peers and the whole community. The fact that they were *Mungiki* adherents gave them a class which was above certain community norms. In this case, they could not be harassed by older boys or even adults. Parents could never dictate them on how to behave or to perform certain domestic chores. They became independent, a feeling that raised their self esteem.⁸⁶

Propaganda has been used by *Mungiki* members to lure ignorant youths into joining the group. Young boys were swindled into joining *Mungiki* after being promised a lot of wealth. Joshua refused to progress with his education after Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations to join the lucrative *Mungiki* group. The young boy dreamt of wealth after joining *Mungiki*. He had been misled that there was land that was going to be inherited and distributed to all individual *Mungiki* members.⁸⁷ This indicates that *Mungiki* took advantage of young people's ignorance to lure them into joining the militia by 'assuring' them a 'wealthy future'. Some of the youth were deceived that there were plots of land in Kigumo town and Nairobi which belonged to their forefathers and for years

⁸⁴ Oral Interview with one of the provincial administration officials, Kigumo District Headquarters, 7th October, 2009.

Ibid.

⁸⁶ Oral Interview with, Gathuri, a local carpenter, Gachocho Area, 27th August, 2009.

⁸⁷ Oral Interview with, Wanjiru, a tailor, Gikoe Area, 27th August, 2009.

they had been illegally owned by the rich people. These rich people had stolen their inheritance.⁸⁸

The youth in Kigumo joined *Mungiki* as a result of peer pressure. The need to gain acceptance by a certain group of peers lured young people into following their friends into *Mungiki*. In order to fight solitude, young people wanted to be associated with certain fashionable groups. One *Mungiki* member narrated;

It was my friend Kinyua who introduced me to *Njaama* (a name that is used by the *Mungiki* members to refer to themselves) He was my classmate and my best friend. We used to play football together for our school. When he joined, I followed him.⁸⁹

There is another unique factor that influenced girls to join the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo. Girls unwittingly fell into the trap of *Mungiki* membership through marriage to *Mungiki* members.⁹⁰ They unknowingly married *Mungiki* members. "The *Mungiki* members cannot stay with a wife unless she joins the group. If she refuses, she is killed. To avoid this, the newly wed wives out of fear follow their husbands' orders and join the group."⁹¹

2.7 CONCLUSION

The emergence and development of *Mungiki* in Kigumo District is as a result of failure of both the state and the society to address the socio-economic needs of the youth. With the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), political instability in the

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁹ Oral Interview with, Karanja, a *Mungiki* member, Gikoe Area, 27th August, 2009.

⁹⁰ Oral interview with, Mwaura, a worker Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

⁹¹ *Ibid*.

1980s and 1990s in Kenya, employment opportunities for the youth were decreased leading to a high number of unemployed youth. Poverty levels rose leading to inability by parents to offer basic needs and education for their children. Most of the children who dropped out of schools formed a wealthy pool of ready recruits into militia groups. The state and the society were unable to offer solutions to the problems affecting the youth thus giving the youth an opportunity to indulge themselves in militia groups.

In Kigumo failed agrarian economy and scarcity of arable land as well as unemployment made most of the youth to search for alternative ways of economic survival. Most of the youths joined the *Mungiki* group with an intention of gaining socio-economically after they dropped out of school. They also wanted to fill the socio-economic void that the state and the society had failed to address.

CHAPTER THREE

MUNGIKI ACTIVITIES IN KENYA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two, I examined the historical development of *Mungiki* in Kigumo District. The group's development was governed by certain factors depicted in their activities. The activities of *Mungiki* are mainly socially, politically and economically oriented. Though the *Mungiki* group has social and political interests, the economic one overrides the latter two. Primarily, *Mungiki* adherents involve in political and social activities to camouflage, enhance their continuity and at the same time to gain economically.

There is increasing evidence that the *Mungiki* group has various activities in rural areas undertaken to achieve certain objectives.⁹² However, the activities of *Mungiki* in the rural areas are quite different from urban ones since they are guided by the rural environment. This chapter argues that *Mungiki* activities in Kenya are fluid to enhance the group's survival but these activities differ in different environments. This chapter explores the activities of *Mungiki* in Kenya in general and Kigumo District in particular. The chapter helps to understand why and how the group undertakes its operations within rural areas.

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Amos Kareithi and Boniface Gikandi, "In Kigumo, the Proscribed Sect Rules by the Fist", *East African Standard*, 10th June, 2007, p. 5.

3.2 GENERAL ACTIVITIES OF *MUNGIKI* IN KENYA

The activities of the *Mungiki* group can be placed into three dimensions: social, political and economic. These three dimensions have been exhibited in the group's activities both in urban and rural areas. Oathing ceremonies depict social oriented activities which are mostly in rural areas. *Mungiki's* involvement in political conflicts, which mostly are ethnic based in cosmopolitan urban areas like Nairobi demonstrate that they have been manipulated by the political elite. Extortion activities in both urban and rural areas are a means to achieve their economic objective. To *Mungiki*, extortion is a way of balancing the wealthy and the poor as well as a means of gaining income.

3.2.1 The Social Oriented Activities of *Mungiki*

Traditional Kikuyu religion is the foundation of the *Mungiki* group. The religious activities by the group are mainly practiced to induct new members and mobilise the existing ones. With time, some of *Mungiki* leaders and adherents have shifted from their traditional Kikuyu religion into Christianity and Islam to camouflage and evade government's arrests.

Mungiki argue that traditional religion would unite and mobilise the Kenyan masses to fight against the yoke of mental slavery, which they claim was introduced by Christianity and colonization.⁹³ *Mungiki* argue that the liberation of the masses from mental captivity must come through a complete turn around to indigenous ways of life, in particular

⁹³ „ Grace Wamue, "The Politics of the *Mungiki*", *Wajibu: A Journal of Social and Religious Studies*, Vol. '4, No. 3, 1999, p. 6.

culture and religion. All ethnic groups in Kenya should therefore denounce foreign faiths, especially Christianity, and revert to traditional beliefs and practices.⁹⁴ The ceremony of reversing to traditions is referred to as *kigongoona* (ceremony of spirituality) which, according to the *Mungiki* group was lost with the introduction of Christianity. Since that time the Kikuyu, like all the other people of Kenya, have lost their spirituality, and the whole country has been tarnished by foreign worship.⁹⁵

This loss of the African religion has in turn brought about many social, economic and political problems. *Mungiki* blame Christianity for creating serious divisions among the Kikuyu, which has annoyed *Mwenenyaga* or *Ngai* (God in Kikuyu). In this case, *Mungiki* calls the Kikuyu and the other people of Kenya to adopt traditional religion.⁹⁶ As an indispensable condition for any change, *Mungiki* calls for the teaching of *Kirira* (African indigenous values). Each ethnic community should be taught their religious values and how they can mobilise people in times of need. A case in point is the role played by the Kikuyu religion during the Mau Mau struggle against colonial oppression.⁹⁷

The teaching of African traditional values should lead to *guthera* (socio-religious cleansing ritual). This consists of traditional rites of denouncing foreign cultures and faiths. *Mungiki* advocates for a more genuine and practical belief. Christianity, according to them, has never been beneficial to Africa, since it has always been used as an instrument of oppression.⁹⁸

' Ibid.
' Ibid.
' Ibid.
' Ibid,
' ibid.

The *Mungiki* fraternity is adamant in its denial of the accusations that its members engage in oath-taking and forced female circumcision, as well as taking Africans back to savagery and barbarism. They readily defend their belief as ideal for development, by arguing that neither the Japanese nor Chinese abandoned their religion or culture, and yet they have attained high economic development. Equally, Africans should have been allowed to keep their religion and culture. The *Mungiki* see the accusations against them as part of a smear campaign in order to disparage them."

Mungiki's religious practices are entrusted in shrines. These shrines are situated in rural areas with the most important one being Mukurwe wa Gathanga (the mythical origin of the Kikuyu). This shrine is located in Murang'a, specifically in Kiharu Division. Other shrines in Murang'a are Gaturi Market¹⁰⁰ and Kianjai village shrines.¹⁰¹ On 12th December 2008, Ndura Waruinge the then National Coordinator of the *Mungiki* group organised his own congress at Mukurwe wa Gathanga to inaugurate the Kirinyaga Kingdom.¹⁰² This move demonstrated *Mungiki's* growing impetus for involvement in politics because the date coincided with the thirty fifth *Jamhuri* (Independence) Day. The move symbolised the induction of *Mungiki* government. At Mukurwe wa Gathanga, *Mungiki* followers chanted Mau Mau songs, recited traditional prayers and hoisted their

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

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Grace Wamue, "Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines through *Mungiki*", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.100, No. 400, 2000, pp. 453-467, p. 465.

¹⁰¹ Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49, p. 41.

Grace Wamue, "Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines through *Mungiki*", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.100, No. 400,2000, pp. 453-467, p. 465.

flag with the strict warning that they would not tolerate disruption of their religious activities by the government.¹⁰³

Mungiki's symbolic colours are red, green between two blacks and white, in that order, from top to bottom. Red symbolizes blood; black the African people; green stands for land; while white is a symbol of peace. According to the *Mungiki* group, black people are shamefully disunited in their own land. (That is why green separates the two black colours). As a result, there is a lot of bloodshed in Kenya through ethnic conflicts, accidents and crimes symbolised by putting red at the top of their flag. This disunity has been blamed on the adverse effects of Christianity and capitalism on the African states. To achieve unity and peace, *Mungiki* advocate a return to traditional outlooks and practices.¹⁰⁴

Even though religion is perceived as the platform for recruitment of new members in *Mungiki* and bonding of the existing ones, it has been used as a tool of attaining acceptance in the society. It has also been used in camouflaging in the attempt to push *Mungiki's* economic and political objectives. The initial importance of religion to *Mungiki* was through time disregarded as political involvement and economic ventures proved to be more rewarding to the group. Religion was therefore used as a tool of political empowerment and as a means to escape arrests by the government. This is evident in the religious developments in the group which saw some of its leaders join Islam and Christianity, religions which they had disregarded before.

;'' *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Grace Wamue, "The Politics of the *Mungiki*", *Wajibu: A Journal of Social and Religious Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1999, p. 7.

On 2nd September, 2000, at a ceremony held at Mombasa's Sakina mosque, thirteen *Mungiki* leaders converted to Islam. These were the National Coordinator, Ndura Waruinge who was renamed Ibrahim, the Chairman, Maina Njenga who was renamed Mohammed, provincial coordinators Waithaka Wagacha who got the name Hassan, Kamau Mwathi who was renamed Mohammed, Kimani Ruo who was renamed Hussein and Wangari who represented women, was renamed Khadija.¹⁰⁵ In a few following months, hundreds of ordinary *Mungiki* followers, especially in Nakuru, converted to Islam, enrolled in Islamic classes and received books and other materials containing the basic literature on Islam from Kenya's Muslim community.¹⁰⁶

The conversion to Islam by *Mungiki* leaders and some of the followers was a move to gain support from the Muslim community in times of harassment by the government. This was evidenced by Waruinge's statement during the conversion ceremony when he asked the government to stop harassing *Mungiki* members as they had converted to Islam. In turn, Muslim Imams warned that the harassment of *Mungiki* members was to be seen as an insult to Muslims worldwide.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, *Mungiki's* conversion to Islam was not accepted by all Muslims. It led into a strong opposition from moderate Muslims and supporters of the ruling elite from the Coast who accused the group of using Islam as a hiding place away from government's harassment.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003. pp. 25-40, p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Nation Correspondent, "Outcry on *Mungiki* Converts", *Daily Nation*, 6th September, 2000, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Nation Correspondent, "*Mungiki* Members Censured", *Daily Nation*, 21st December, 2000, p. 16.

Mungiki leadership did not show consistence in Islam as after some few years, all of those who had been converted to the religion stopped their commitment to it or joined Christianity. In November 2003, Ndura Waruinge became a Christian and at the same time a pastor. He got saved at Neno Evangelism Centre led by Pastor James Maina Ng'ang'a.¹⁰⁹ The conversion to Islam and later to Christianity by some leaders and followers was a great contradiction with *Mungiki's* belief of advocating for a complete return to indigenous beliefs and practices. This clearly indicates that *Mungiki* uses religion to escape government's persecution as well as to gain acceptance from the general public. In summary, *Mungiki's* religious oriented activities are used as a survival technique by the leaders and followers of the *Mungiki* group.

3.2.2 The Political Activities of *Mungiki*

Mungiki's involvement in politics has been a means of aligning the group to the political side that could protect *Mungiki's* interests. It has also been used as a means of gaining income as *Mungiki* members are hired by the political elite to extend their (politicians) political dominance. At the same time, *Mungiki* adherents criticise the widespread political oppression, poverty and violence experienced by Kenyans at the hands of state agents.¹¹⁰ *Mungiki's* involvement in politics is a give-take affair where they give support to a particular party or individual politician in anticipation of gaining economically. The

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¹¹⁰ Otsieno Namwaya, "Mungiki Sect Leader Sees the Light", *East African Standard*, 2003, p. 8.
¹¹¹ Grace Wamue, "Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines through Mungiki", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.100, No. 400,2000, pp. 453-467, p. 465.

group though is not loyal to any political side but shifts its support from one political side to another as long as they are gaining economically or enhancing their survival.¹¹¹

The *Mungiki* group has actively been involved in Kenyan politics. The group has either supported their members to run for parliamentary and civic seats or backed certain candidates of their choice. During the 2002 general elections, *Mungiki* through their National Coordinator Ndura Waruinge announced that they would back KANU and a number of its candidates, including the then Vice-President, George Saitoti and Cabinet Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, for top posts.¹¹² The *Mungiki* group threw its weight behind KANU and a number of its candidates during the crucial KANU national elections which were at the same time KANU-NDP merger ceremony. Ndura Waruinge declared that *Mungiki* would not support the opposition. He criticised the opposition alliance made up of Charity Ngilu, Mwai Kibaki and Kijana Wamalwa, predicting that the alliance would fail because all the partners were power hungry. Waruinge also pledged *Mungiki's* support for the Vice-President George Saitoti to capture his Kajiado North parliamentary seat.¹¹³

On 3rd March, 2002, *Mungiki* organised a fundraising function in Nyahururu, Laikipia District and invited Uhuru Kenyatta as the guest of honour. The fundraiser turned into a campaign for Uhuru, at which ten thousand *Mungiki* members launched a campaign to support him. The Nyahururu function had been organised at an expenditure of more than one million Kenya shillings, a show of economic power. This emphasised Waruinge's

¹¹¹ Oral interview with one Central Kenya ex-M.P., Nairobi, 20th August, 2009.

¹¹² Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49, p. 46.

¹¹³ Ibid.

warning to Kenyans not to underrate the *Mungiki* group, as it had people and resources sufficient enough to change Kenyan politics.¹¹⁴ In the Nyahururu meeting, *Mungiki's* National Chairman, Maina Njenga, declared that he would contest for the Laikipia parliamentary seat on a KANU ticket. His ticket was later nullified even after winning the nomination leading to protests by *Mungiki* members who escorted Njenga in a fleet of fifty vehicles to the Electoral Commission offices in Nairobi.¹¹⁵

The involvement of the *Mungiki* group in KANU's politics demonstrated a cordial relationship between the ruling party and the group. For their survival, *Mungiki* adherents supported the ruling party KANU and hoped that it would win the 2002 elections. The then President, Daniel Toroitich arap Moi allegedly had warm relationship with the *Mungiki*. The then M.P. for Ndaragwa in Nyandarua District, Thirikwa Kamau protested in parliament on 13th March, 2002, that Moi was hosting members of *Mungiki* and holding discussions with them on an undisclosed agenda.¹¹⁶ Around the same period, the late Kihika Kimani, the then M.P. for Molo in Nakuru District, organised high-profile public defections to KANU of what he described as 'repentant *Mungiki* members'. Kihika appealed to the Kikuyu to help the government to crush the *Mungiki* group for 'engaging in crude defiance of the authorities'.¹¹⁷

Mungiki's involvement in politics became increasingly evident when they supported Uhuru Kenyatta in presidential elections of 2002. The group members claimed that their

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Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75, p. 64.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of the Moi Succession in Kenya, 1987-2002", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, pp. 25-49, p. 47.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

endorsement of Uhuru's candidature was based on generational interests rather than ethnic affiliations. *Mungiki's* Chairman and spiritual leader, Maina Njenga argued that the group's political agenda was to campaign for youthful leaders and phase out the older generation.¹¹⁸ This was meant to justify their support of Uhuru Kenyatta but it was also a direction towards their survival. On nomination day, hundreds of thousands of *Mungiki* youths came in buses and mini-buses, donkey-carts and on foot, descending on Nairobi streets from all directions in a procession that caught many Nairobi residents by surprise.¹¹⁹ Uhuru Kenyatta though publicly distanced himself from *Mungiki* and denied covertly soliciting *Mungiki's* support in his presidential bid.¹²⁰

In its pursuit of survival and development, the *Mungiki* group involved itself in ethno-political conflicts. The KANU government in 2002 allegedly struck a deal with *Mungiki* that allowed the group to take over the most profitable *matatu* routes to Nairobi's Kayole, Dandora, Huruma and Kariobangi estates, in return of their support of KANU's presidential candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta.¹²¹ In the taking over of the *matatu* routes and protection areas, *Mungiki* caused havoc. On the night of 3rd March, 2002, around three hundred alleged *Mungiki* youths terrorised the residents of Kariobangi North Estate. They killed twenty Kariobangi residents and injured thirty one. The attackers targeted only residents of the Kisumu Ndogo and Nyayo neighbourhoods of Kariobangi which has a

¹¹⁸ Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75, p. 63.

Njuguna Waweru and Philip Mwakio, "Uhuru Now Defends *Mungiki* Adherents", *The East African Standard*, 26th August, 2002, p. 12.

Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75, p. 63.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 64.

high population of the Luo community.¹²² The Kariobangi attack was purportedly politically instigated.¹²³

The politics of survival by *Mungiki* continued even with the removal of K.ANU from power in 2002. *Mungiki* schemed on having a relationship with the most probable winner of 2007 elections. Due to ethnicity and the trend of opinion polls, the *Mungiki* group was in a dilemma on whether to support PNU or ODM. Just before the December 2007 general elections some *Mungiki* leaders were allegedly taken to State House by senior security officials. With President Kibaki's campaign team in panic over the trend of the opinion polls, PNU officials allegedly reached out to *Mungiki* with overtures to secure their support.¹²⁴ ODM officials also purportedly held a meeting with the *Mungiki* leaders so as to secure their support in the general elections.¹²⁵ To *Mungiki*, dealing with both PNU and ODM was a way of enhancing their survival as well as gaining economically.

In summary, the involvement of the *Mungiki* group in politics is an avenue of enhancing their survival and development as well as gaining economically. Its participation in politics though has brought about political violence. Although *Mungiki* has been involved in politics for its survival, it has mainly been used by the political elite to further their political aspirations and at the same time safeguard the already acquired political power.

¹²² David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555, p. 532.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 533.

¹²⁴ Mutuma Ruteere, *Dilemmas of Crime, Human Rights and the Politics of Mungiki Violence in Kenya*, Occasional Paper 01/08, Kenya Human Rights Institute, 2008, p. 23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

3.2.3 The Economic Activities of *Mungiki*

The involvement of the *Mungiki* group in income generating activities whether legal or illegal has been a means of survival. Though most of the money allegedly end up in individuals' pockets, without finances, the operations of the *Mungiki* group would not be effective. The *Mungiki* group has been involved in both legitimate and illegitimate economic activities. The legitimate economic activities have been overtaken by the illegitimate mostly because the latter need a lot of commitment, hard work and patience - virtues that are not common with *Mungiki* adherents. *Mungiki* followers are interested in quick returns hence their involvement in extortion. The group of *Mungiki* members in the late 1990s was hardworking, generous and honest.¹²⁶ They had various farms the Rift Valley, for instance in Ng'arua they had turned a twenty acres of land into maize and livestock farming. The *Mungiki* followers were generous; they shared their produce with their visitors and friends.¹²⁷ The *Mungiki* group has also been involved in poultry farming in Kitengela.¹²⁸

The state takes the blame in the extortion activities by *Mungiki* adherents. It is alleged that the state allowed *Mungiki* to establish extortion activities and protection rackets.¹²⁹ In 2002, these extortion activities were allegedly exercised with full knowledge of the government. To gain *Mungiki* support after the denunciation of the group by KANU's presidential candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta, the government aided *Mungiki's* controversial

¹²⁶ Grace Wamue, "Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines through *Mungiki*", *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol.100, No. 400, 2000, pp. 453-467, p. 466.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75, p. 70.

Oral interview with one Central Kenya ex-M.P., Nairobi, 20th August, 2009.

takeover of the most profitable *matatu* (public taxi) routes to Nairobi's Kayole, Dandora, Huruma and Kariobangi estates, whereby it extorted daily levies from drivers, touts and taxis.¹³⁰ The state tolerated criminal elements within the *Mungiki* group to step up collection of protection money from households in insecure estates and to indulge in carjacking, armed robbery and, to a lesser extent, gun-running activities.¹³¹

The aim of 'tax collection' was to secure the group's existing sources of funds and devise and execute new fund-raising techniques. Ensuring control over profitable *matatu* routes and terminals was the most important source of funding. Apart from contributions willingly offered by some drivers who were still members of the sect, the movement was also taking as much as KSh200 from drivers forcefully, intimidating those drivers who refused to cooperate by showing them their guns. *Mungiki* netted millions of Kenya shillings per month from the routes and terminals where it exercised control.¹³²

Another economic activity was collection of protection money, made possible by the collapse of public security under Moi leadership. *Mungiki* squads extracted protection money from households and businesses in certain estates to 'maintain security' in parts of Nairobi. In Mathare, Mlango Kubwa and St. Teresa's estate in Eastleigh, *Mungiki* members demand KSh50 a month from every household. In Mathare slums, the group changed its name to *Wazalendo* ('patriots'), posing as security agents. Besides protection money, *Mungiki* also made tens of thousands of shillings from making illegal electric

¹³⁰ Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, "Power to Uhuru: Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2002 Elections", *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, No. 418, 2005, pp. 51-75, p. 64.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 65.

¹³² Ibid, p. 69.

connections from power lines to houses and charging monthly fees of 100 to 300 shillings to residents. At one point, *Mungiki* members, determined to occupy any opening in the informal sector by force, frequently invaded *Wakulima* (farmers) market in Nairobi, demanding to take over the loading of goods onto vehicles.¹³³

Mungiki members were also required to pay one shilling everyday, delivered to the sect's national leaders every month. *Mungiki* squads also coordinated a set of high-level criminal activities collectively described as *gutaha* ('raiding'), ranging from armed robbery to carjacking. *Mungiki* was linked to escalating cases of the hijacking of public transport vehicles where passengers were robbed of their money and belongings and stripped of their clothes.¹³⁴

Money collected by the members from different sources went into paying the salaries of those members who were involved full time in the group's duties; contributing to the chairman's kitty; purchasing weapons for members, including guns for senior members (*njama*); and finally, a share went to bribe the government's security system, particularly *Mungiki's* police collaborators.¹³⁵ In 2008 and 2009, the *Mungiki* group has been accused of abducting individuals especially from economically well-off families and later demanding for ransom.

¹³³ **Ibid.**

¹³⁴ **Ibid, p. 70.**

¹³⁵ **Ibid.**

3.3 SPECIFIC *MUNGIKI* ACTIVITIES IN KIGUMO DISTRICT

The activities of *Mungiki* in Kigumo District are primarily economic unlike in Nairobi where the group has also been involved in inter-ethnic political conflicts besides

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extortion. The activities of *Mungiki* in Kigumo are guided by the social, political and economic environment in the area. The main aim of *Mungiki* group is to gain money from the socio-economic activities of Kigumo people. The *Mungiki* group activities in Kigumo have been primarily for their economic enhancement and survival. As long as an activity is giving them quick income, they would indulge in it. One informant reported that, "These people are not interested in politics. They do not want any political seats but they indulge in political campaigns just to gain money, nothing else!"¹³⁷

For their economic enhancement and survival, the *Mungiki* adherents in Kigumo have targeted the both social and agrarian activities. The *Mungiki* group has targeted the individual and communal income generating activities within Kigumo District to get a percentage of the income. The group has been involved in protection rackets, extortion of money from shopkeepers, *matatus*, house 'tax' as well as demanding a share of farm produce from farmers. The *Mungiki* group has also targeted social areas and events like arbitration of domestic conflicts for a fee. *Mungiki* adherents in Kigumo District argue that they are offering security to the community and therefore the demand for payment for their services. For every household, *Mungiki* members ask for any amount of money at any time depending on the financial status of the individuals in that household.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ David M. Anderson, "Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya", *African Affairs: - The Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 101, No. 405, October 2002, pp. 531-555, pp. 532, 533.

¹³⁷ Oral Interview with Wanja, a local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

The matatu industry has also been extorted by *Mungiki* followers. *Matatus* that ply different routes within Kigumo have to part with some levy. Those who did not comply with *Mungiki* rules have been either chased away and denied from plying the route or killed.¹³⁹ "You have to pay tax to this group. The consequences of not paying are serious. Many defiant *matatu* men have ended up dead," said a scared resident.¹⁴⁰ Along some routes like Karugia other *matatus* were ejected from service by *Mungiki* adherents and afterwards the group installed their own *matatus*.¹⁴¹ For any new *matatu* to operate, the owner had to pay a fee of forty thousand Kenyan shillings.¹⁴²

The *Mungiki* group has targeted the tea growers in the tea growing zones bordering the Aberdare Forest. During the period of receiving tea bonuses, the *Mungiki* adherents visit individual homes asking for 'their' share.¹⁴³ To the local people, *Mungiki* adherents harvest where they had not planted. "These people are very lazy, imagine they even wait for your chicken to lay eggs and then they come for them, you milk your cow and they want to carry all of your milk!"¹⁴⁴ Narrated one of my informants angrily.

There are other targeted avenues in the agrarian economy. The *Mungiki* group has taken over the distribution of some agricultural produce by levying 'taxes' on any agricultural product passing 'their roads' to the market. They levy taxes on women carrying bananas, donkey carts and vehicles transporting farm produce to the market. They also engage in

¹³⁹ Mwangi Muiruri, "Mungiki Behead Two in Maragwa", *Kenya Times*, 3rd June, 2003, pp. 1, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Amos Kareithi and Boniface Gikandi, "In Kigumo, the Proscribed Sect Rules by the Fist", *East African Standard*, 10th June, 2007, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Oral interview with Wangare, a second-hand clothes business woman, Kigumo Area, 29th August, 2009.

¹⁴² Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

Z *Ibid*—

¹⁴⁴ Oral interview with Mwaura, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

loading and offloading of agricultural products in transporting vehicles for a fee.¹⁴⁵ However, in 2008, an attempt by the *Mungiki* group to take over Muthithi Market was foiled by the police. The *Mungiki* group had placed leaflets in Muthithi area warning everybody operating in the Muthithi Market to be paying taxes to them, failure to which they would be killed.¹⁴⁶

The *Mungiki* group has aimed at any kind of business to get money through extortion. Even mobile businesses operated by people who do not necessarily come from Kigumo but pass with their vehicles selling their products, are levied. One herbal doctor from Thika who used to stop at Kigumo and Kangari shopping centres to sell his products was threatened with death if he would not have paid a monthly fee or a weekly fee every Thursday. *Mungiki* members posed as patients buying drugs and later threatened the herbal doctor. They even marked his car's number plate for future reference. To continue with his business the herbal doctor had to come into an agreement with the *Mungiki* members to be remitting a monthly fee of 5,000 shillings.¹⁴⁷

Mungiki extortion activities have not been limited to economic activities. They have also extended their extortion to social activities that have the potential to bring income, for instance payment of bride price where they demand for a percentage of the payment.¹⁴⁸ Kigumo elders narrated how they had been forced to pay a tax each time they received

¹⁴⁵ Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

;;;ibid.

Oral Interview with Wanja, a local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

bride price.¹⁴⁹ The group has targeted *kamweretho* - a ceremony mainly by women where they make a group to visit each others' parents and offer them money and gifts in return of blessings. *Mungiki* would visit a particular home after *kamweretho* and ask for a percentage of the money that was contributed or all of it.¹⁵⁰

In Kigumo, women groups have not been spared. "Every time we meet as women to raise money, we have to set a certain amount aside for the sect," one woman narrated. "The gang appears from nowhere to collect taxes." She narrated of how in 2006, her group held a fundraiser for their group only to be confronted in the evening by young men who demanded a share.¹⁵¹

The extortion activities were extended even to boys who usually visited the shopping centres and those who underwent initiation. Small boys had to pay 100 shillings as license fees to be allowed to visit trading centres. Those who failed to pay were beaten up. During initiation period in December, boys who had just undergone mandatory initiation rites were barred from venturing out of their homes until they paid up a fee of 500 shillings.¹⁵²

The *Mungiki* group 'taxed' members of Kigumo society according to their social status. For instance, those buying land in the area were regarded as rich and had to part with a

¹⁴⁹ Amos Kareithi and Boniface Gikandi, "In Kigumo, the Proscribed Sect Rules by the Fist", *East African Standard*, 10th June, 2007, p. 5.

Oral interview with Mwaura, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

Amos Kareithi and Boniface Gikandi, "In Kigumo, the Proscribed Sect Rules by the Fist", *East African Standard*, 10th June, 2007, p. 5.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

high 'taxation'. A cross-section of villagers who talked on condition of anonymity said they have been making these payments to the sect for the last seven years. "Someone who puts up a house must pay a certain fee according to his/her social status. Those who had permanent commercial building in a trading centre paid as high as 8,000 shillings per month. The amount is determined by size and value," narrated Mwangi Kimani, an elder. "If you intend to construct a house, you must pay up. If you do not, your construction materials will be spirited away. You have no one to report to," narrated a victim.¹⁵³

This social status notion seemed to extend to those who were regarded as educated. Those who were educated were charged a higher protection fee than those who were not. *Mungiki* group members introduced a fee for the protection of university graduates. They argued that those who are educated up to the university level are very important individuals in Kigumo. They are the one who would become the political leaders. They also see an aspect of income in an educated person and therefore find it to be a good opportunity to extort that person and his/her family. The *Mungiki* members ask for a certain fee during the graduation ceremony in the village and a monthly protection fee to offer 'special security' to the graduate.¹⁵⁴

Criminal activities have been a way of eliminating opposition against the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo. Apart from protection rackets and extortion of social and economic activities, the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo has also been involved in criminal activities, for instance assassinating certain targeted individuals who oppose their extortion practices. Such

Oral interview with Mwaura, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

individuals are perceived as hindrance to *Mungiki* economic empowerment and therefore 'deserve' to be eliminated. In most cases, these targeted individuals include business people, *matatu* drivers and conductors. Individuals in certain households who refuse to pay protection fees or 'house taxes' have also been targeted. In June 2007, two people were killed for failing to pay a daily protection fee.¹⁵⁵

Murders by *Mungiki* are systematically articulated to send a message of fear to those who oppose the group. One of the provincial administration officials in Kigumo said that the *Mungiki* adherents do not just kill; they kill terribly to send a message of fear and terror. For instance in Kigumo, those who have opposed the activities of *Mungiki* have met their deaths through skinning, chopping off of their private parts and beheading and then placing the head of the victim on a pole in a strategic place where passers-by would get a clear view. Using such methods, the *Mungiki* group has managed to instill fear to the people of Kigumo forcing them to obey their 'rules' and pay 'taxes'.¹⁵⁶

Mungiki adherents have been involved in robbery. They have carjacked passengers robbing them their valuables. Along Kangari/Kigumo/Kaharati route a *matatu* was carjacked and the driver and conductor were dragged into a maize plantation and murdered. Ironically, the passengers were forced into a nearby church and robbed off their valuables.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ People Daily Reporter, "Human Blood in *Mungiki* Oathing", *The People Daily*, 4th June, 2007, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Oral Interview with one of the Provincial Administration Officials, Kigumo District Headquarters, 7th October, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Mwangi Muiruri, "*Mungiki* Behead Two in Maragwa," *Kenya Times*, 3rd June, 2003, pp. 1,4.

A large *Mungiki* membership pool enhances manpower to be used in extortion activities. The *Mungiki* group has been involved in the recruitment of new members to strengthen their membership and also enhance more economic opportunities in terms of subscription fees, monthly membership renewal fee and more human resources who could bring more income through extortion activities. The recruiters took advantage of unemployment to recruit primary school leavers. For every two new members they recruited, they received 2000 shillings. This gave the recruiters the impetus to hunt for new recruits.¹⁵⁸

A provincial administration official narrated that the *Mungiki* group has tried to recruit at a very high rate to be able to sustain the group. Their aim is to expand their extortion base through recruitment of more human resources. They have therefore approached villages using threats and forcing school children to join them.¹⁵⁹

The *Mungiki* group's activities include socio-cultural events. The *Mungiki* involve themselves in girls' initiation cultural practices, a practice normally known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The older women in the *Mungiki* group are the ones who undertake the circumcision of girls. Young girls are captured and forced to be circumcised or they voluntarily offer themselves. The initiates are taken to a special place in the forest where they are taught on the Kikuyu culture and how to be faithful to the *Mungiki* group.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸

Standard on Saturday Reporter, "Life in the Hands of Lords of Illegal Government", *East African Standard*, 14th March, 2009, p. 25.

¹⁵⁹ Oral Interview with one of the Provincial Administration Officials, Kigumo District Headquarters, 7th October, 2009

¹⁶⁰ Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

Most of the *Mungiki* activities in Kigumo are negative and illegitimate. Majority of my informants said that there were no positive *Mungiki* activities in the area. Nonetheless, one of my informant hinted that the group members have at some instances helped the local community. At a security meeting at Kangari, one of the *Mungiki* members stood up and assured the Kangari residents that the group would take care of their security issues. He told the residents that they could count on *Mungiki* to be secure. As a result of this, there was considerable security improvement in Kangari. Another example is a situation where the *Mungiki* members helped to put off fire which was burning a house in Kigumo.¹⁶¹

3.4 CONCLUSION

In Kenya in general the *Mungiki* activities are centred on the economic achievement and survival of the group. This explains why the group's activities are fluid in a manner that the group would always shift their allegiance to where they find as the most suitable place for their survival. The shifting political and religious stand by *Mungiki* leaders and followers describes their survival techniques.

The *Mungiki* has been an active group in Kigumo since the early 1990s. Its activities are predominantly economic, that is, everything that they do is geared towards economic achievement. To achieve their economic goals, the *Mungiki* members in Kigumo have concentrated in extortion activities where they have levied taxes on the residents of the area. Due to the agrarian economy that is predominant in Kigumo, most of the extortion

is centred on agricultural activities besides the *matatu* industry. Most of the agricultural products are levied when they are being loaded to transporting vehicles, when in transportation to the market, when being offloaded and after the exercise of buying and selling in the market. There are also rural socio-cultural practices that have shaped the behaviour of the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo District. These are the cultural payment of bride price, *kamweretho*, and women groups and gatherings. These practices that are unique to the rural setting have natured a unique rural *Mungiki* group.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF *MUNGIKI* ON KIGUMO DISTRICT RESIDENTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three I discussed the activities of *Mungiki* in Kenya in general and Kigumo District in particular. These activities have had extensive impact on the local residents of Kigumo thus leading to the discussion in chapter four. *Mungiki* activities have had a great impact on the social, economic and political status in Kigumo. It should be noted that the impact is not limited to the non-actors (those who are not *Mungiki* members), but it cuts across even to the adherents of the *Mungiki* group. The security of the area has been affected thus affecting the economic activities, education, society unity and day to day activities of the general public. The politics and government structures have also been impacted upon.

This chapter will be divided into three subtopics: social, economic and political impact of *Mungiki* activities in Kigumo. It informs on how men, women, the youth and the children have been affected in short and/or long terms by *Mungiki* activities. It also informs on how the activities of the group have impacted upon the operations of provincial administration concerning security of the area. Documentation of this impact will be a great contribution to scholarship as it expounds upon the aftermath of rural militia activities in Kenya.

4.2 SOCIAL IMPACT OF *MUNGIKI* ACTIVITIES ON KIGUMO RESIDENTS

Mungiki activities in Kigumo have affected the social status, mannerisms and structures of the area residents. Kigumo residents have lived in fear leading to breakage of family and communal ties, diminishing of freedom of speech, deterioration of discipline in children, impediment of normal running of school and performance of students, migration of people from the area to other safer places and the interference with religious activities.

The psychological fear of *Mungiki* is clearly notable in the mannerisms of Kigumo residents. The *Mungiki* adherents have instilled fear through beheadings and threats to those who seem to oppose their activities. The people of Kigumo either totally refuse to talk about the group or opt to talk in low tones. A woman at Turuturu shopping centre was very frightened when I told her that I wanted to ask her a few questions on *Mungiki* activities. She feared for her life and opted not to give me any information. All she said was that she did not want to die.¹⁶²

The fear of *Mungiki* has interfered with freedom of speech. The parents in Kigumo have taught their children to never talk to strangers because of the fear of being labelled as *Mungiki* betrayers. The people of Kigumo have chosen silence to survive the wrath of *Mungiki*. The more they keep quiet, the more the *Mungiki* group continues to extort them, threatening their serene secure environment and instilling terror in them. Children have been conditioned to keep quiet in fear. This has in turn affected their social skills. "How can you talk to a stranger? Are you tired of living? Don't you know your mouth can cost"

¹⁶² Oral interview with Wangechi, a shopkeeper, Turuturu Shopping Centre, 25th August, 2009.

you your life? It is better to remain silent," notes Peter Kimani.¹⁶³ These kinds of warnings have time and again been used to install fear in children in Kigumo.

The fear of *Mungiki* has negatively affected the freedom of speaking out the problems facing Kigumo residents. One informant agreed to give me information only after a long explanation of my motive. He gave a condition that I was to observe anonymity. He informed that most of the people would not agree to offer the information I was looking for.

Where do you expect to get that information? People here are afraid of *Mungiki* and would be very difficult to get them to talk about it. Not everyone can agree to talk about it, even me, it's only that I have understood that you want a degree at the university, but you university boys.....¹⁶⁴

The fear of *Mungiki* is not limited to those who are non-members of the group. In my interviews with one of the *Mungiki* followers, I noted that the fear of reprisals have kept the followers of *Mungiki* glued to the group even when they felt that they wanted to quit. One regretful *Mungiki* follower said that he would want to leave the group but he feared for his life and that of his family.¹⁶⁵ This psychological fear that people of Kigumo have lived in, have denied them the freedom of speech and a happy life. They have been conditioned that somebody is following them and this has affected free interaction on matters of their security. The social ties in the community that had once related closely

¹⁶³ Amos Kareithi and Boniface Gikandi, "In Kigumo, the Proscribed Sect Rules by the Fist", *East African Standard*, 10th June, 2007, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Oral interview with Ciira, a local peasant farmer, Kiiriangoro, 29th August, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ Oral interview with Kamau, a regretting *Mungiki* follower, Turuturu Shopping Centre, 25th August, 2009.

with each other have been broken. This fear in turn has given *Mungiki* a viable atmosphere to continue with their activities.

The fear that *Mungiki* has instilled in the members of the society have affected communal ties and families' unanimity. People have tended to keep away from certain families who are believed to have their children as *Mungiki* members. These families are feared and have been perceived as perpetrators of violence. Children from families that do not condone *Mungiki* activities are advised by their parents to never associate with the '*Mungiki* families'. Most parents fear that such associations would lead to their children joining the dreaded *Mungiki* group. One single mother of two boys 10 and 12 years of age, fears for her two sons' lives. She guides them on who to associate with or not.¹⁶⁶

Families have tended to be individualistic because of mistrust between them. Since one does not know whether his/her neighbour is a *Mungiki* member, they have chosen to completely disassociate themselves with them. The old practices where one would borrow a *jembe*, salt, or even fire from the neighbour have already changed. The people of Kigumo have tended to do their own things as individual members thus killing communal ties. Even when one is attacked by *Mungiki* adherents nobody comes out to help because of fear of reprisals.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Oral interview with Njambi a civil servant and a single mother of two, Turuturu, 25th August, 2009.

¹⁶⁷ Oral interview with, Wanjiku and Mwaura, both workers at Kigumo District Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

The fear of *Mungiki* reprisals has led to deterioration of discipline in schools. Some of the pupils in primary schools who are *Mungiki* members use their membership in the group to threaten their teachers. This has in turn brought about indiscipline in schools thus affecting normal schooling. The *Mungiki* adherents carry paraphernalia like *kinya kia mbaki* (a small tobacco gourd) and sniff tobacco even in the classrooms. At one primary school at Turuturu, a teacher had taken away a pupil's tobacco gourd after she found him sniffing tobacco during lessons. The teacher was threatened through short messaging service to return the tobacco gourd and on top of it pay the student ten thousand shillings failure to which she would have faced death. The teacher could not raise the money prompting the head teacher to call for a mini-fundraising amongst the staff and paid the pupil the ten thousand he had demanded.¹⁶⁸

The fear instilled in teachers making their lives insecure has forced them either to leave the profession or get transfers to other areas that do not have *Mungiki's* presence. In this case, most of the experienced teachers have left the area thus affecting effective teaching. After the Turuturu incidence where a teacher was threatened by a *Mungiki* pupil, teachers have been asking for transfers out of '*Mungiki* areas'.¹⁶⁹ This in turn has impeded rendition of quality education lowering it to detrimental levels.

The recruitment of children into *Mungiki* have destabilised the relationship between parents and their children. Some children in families have started to disrespect their parents especially after they (children) have been recruited into the *Mungiki* group. The children have started to disregard their parents' orders and advice. The moment the

¹⁶⁸ Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo District Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

parents discipline them, the children call their *Mungiki* comrades who threaten the parents or even beat them up. At Karega, a son who had been being beaten up by his father out of his disobedience called the *Mungiki* comrades who threatened his father with death. From that point, the child became even more undisciplined and yet the father could not intervene.¹⁷⁰ This kind of indiscipline has brought about a crop of a disrespectful generation which does not only disrespect their immediate parents but also the elderly in the community.

The fear of *Mungiki* has forced migration of some people from their ancestral land to other areas. Some of the Kigumo residents have migrated to Nairobi fearing for their lives after receiving threats or to evade *Mungiki* 'taxation'.¹⁷¹ Because of fear, people who worked in Nairobi but made trips to check on their families every weekend, completely migrated to Nairobi with their families.¹⁷² Since urban life is more expensive than rural one, most of these forced migrants live in economic hardships, in crowded estates, water shortages and other problems associated with urban areas.

Due to the fear of *Mungiki*, the work of the Church in guiding the local Kigumo people spiritually has been hampered. To *Mungiki*, the Church contradicts the traditions and teachings of the group. *Mungiki* also perceives the Church as a hindrance towards the expansion of the group. The pastors and priests have been warned by the group not to talk ill against the *Mungiki* group. The Church's work is to talk about the evils in the society and giving remedy through religious teachings. This work of the Church has been destabilised by the *Mungiki* group who have threatened to kill all men of God against

¹⁷⁰ Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

their activities in the area. One pastor had been threatened making him to flee his home for a few months. This was as a result of land disagreements between the pastor and the church neighbour. The church neighbour had hired the *Mungiki* who threatened to kill the pastor. Upon his return, he had to promise the *Mungiki* group that he would not claim any piece of land from his neighbour and also paid a welcome back fee.¹⁷³

Away from the church leaders, the congregation also has lost their freedom of worship. For example church members cannot pray loudly against the evils of *Mungiki*. One informant joked that, "*guku ndungikumithia Mungiki waniriire, utarakimenya kana ucuio muriganitie ni wa kiama kiu.* " (here we do not pray loudly against *Mungiki*, you don't know whether your neighbour in the church is one of them).¹⁷⁴

4.3 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MUNGIKI ACTIVITIES ON KIGUMO

RESIDENTS

Mungiki activities have really affected the economic standards of Kigumo residents. The loss of life of the young people in the area has led to diminishing manpower and productive human resources, a component that is vital in any economy. The transport industry has been hampered with investors pulling out leading to loss of job opportunities. The extortion activities have made the people of Kigumo not achieve the full potential of their businesses. Nevertheless, some individuals in the *Mungiki* group have made wealth out of extortion thus improving their economic standards.

¹⁷³ Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

¹⁷⁴ Oral interview with Mwaura, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

Mungiki activities have affected school completion. Most of the recruits are young people who are schooling. In most cases, the recruits of *Mungiki* drop out of school in the pursuit of lucrative 'extortion business'. In this case, most of the productive members of society become an economic burden to the same society.¹⁷⁵

Deaths have a great impact on those who are left behind. When the only bread winner in a family dies, the family members who are left are bound to suffer. Not only does death bring sorrow and suffering but it also creates a security void especially when husbands and fathers leave their families without somebody to protect them. *Mungiki* activities in Kigumo have led to deaths of those who oppose their activities. This has brought not only sorrow and pain but also economic hardships to the families of the deceased. The killing of *matatu* operators by the *Mungiki* adherents along Kangari/Kigumo/Kaharati route left an economic gap in their families.¹⁷⁶

The loss of life caused by shooting down of *Mungiki* followers has caused loss of the young generation and able manpower in Kigumo. Most of those gunned down are the productive human resources of the society-the youth. When such youths die, it is not only a loss to the deceased families but also a loss to the society. Some young people have also fled their homes in fear of being gunned down by the police. Young people who would have produced the needed manpower to help the society die hence the loss of such required services. One informant argued that even at the market most of the business

¹⁷⁵ Oral interview with Wanjiru, a tailor, Gikoe Area, 27th August, 2009.

¹⁷⁶ Kage Njoroge and Nicholas Waitathu, "Mungiki Killings; How It Happened", *The People Daily*, 3rd June, 2007, p. 1.

people are old people. The young people have not been involved in most of the economic activities in the market.¹⁷⁷

The fleeing of people from Kigumo is not restricted to those running away from *Mungiki* atrocities, even *Mungiki* adherents flee from police arrests. Most of them fled after the government intensified the hunt for *Mungiki* members in the years 2003 - 2007.¹⁷⁸ Most youths who were not followers of the *Mungiki* group also fled police arrests because most of them were labelled as the group's members. In many homes, old and sickly parents who depended on their children's help were left to suffer alone. They could not be able to perform the chores like tilling land, planting and harvesting like their children used to. In this case, many went hungry while others depended on hired labour which further strained their economic levels.

The economic activities and structures have really been affected in Kigumo. *Mungiki* extortion activities have deteriorated Kigumo's economy by chasing away investors while enriching certain individuals in the *Mungiki* group. The transport industry has been affected to a point that *matatu* owners have either complied with the extortion thus hampering their economic growth or completely leaving the transport industry that had been for years offering them income. The extortion is not limited to transport industry but also to other businesses.

¹⁷⁷ Oral interview with Wanja, local hawker, Turuturu Area, 25th August, 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Mwangi Muiruri, "*Mungiki* Behead Two in Maragwa", *Kenya Times*, 3rd June, 2003, pp. 1,4.

This extortion has chased away potential investors within the area who opt to invest in other areas away from *Mungiki* interference. As a result of extortion, Kigumo people have been left poor. Jobs opportunities that had been created by those who were chased away by *Mungiki*, for instance *matatu* owners were lost. This has complicated the issue of idle youth forcing some of them to join *Mungiki* to make a living through extortion. A former *matatu* owner narrated that he quit transport business after the sect increased renewal fee from Kshs 50,000 to Kshs 200,000.¹⁷⁹

The extortion exercise by *Mungiki* adherents has led to the economic development of certain individuals in the group as well as the *Mungiki* group in general. *Mungiki* have taken over some *matatu* routes where they have placed their own *matatus* and those of their sympathisers. This has in turn enriched *Mungiki* adherents who have been economically uplifted. Private vehicles using '*Mungiki* routes' have to pay protection fee in some areas of Kigumo. Through the wealth *Mungiki* members get from extortion, the group has been able to sustain itself by buying weapons and paying court fines for their arrested members. For instance, *Mungiki* took over Karugia-Turuturu route, chased away other investors and placed their own *matatus*.¹⁸⁰ This kind of investment has ripped income for the *Mungiki* group.

Mungiki adherents have earned income by setting up Kangaroo courts to 'solve' family disagreements for a fee. There are cases where women have hired *Mungiki* members to discipline their husbands if they beat them or if they are having affairs outside the marriage. Men have found themselves before Kangaroo courts where they are harshly

¹⁷⁹ Standard on Saturday Reporter, "Life in the Hands of Lords of Illegal Government", *East African Standard*, 14th March, 2009, p. 25,

¹⁸⁰ Oral interview with Wangare, a second-hand clothes business woman, Kigumo Area, 29th August, 2009.

sentenced and fined. The main aim of *Mungiki* in the establishment of Kangaroo courts is to gain economically. They do not have the interest in maintaining family values. As a result of these courts, many families have broken up. In some families, the spouse that is affiliated to *Mungiki* usually has taken control of the family; the spouse has 'colonised' their partners to an extent that they even beat them up.¹⁸¹

The families of those who leave the *Mungiki* group and flee Kigumo District have been left in trouble. When a member of a certain family departs from *Mungiki* membership, that particular family is harassed through beatings to reveal the whereabouts of their child. The *Mungiki* argue that the family must have influenced their child to leave the group and also helped him/her to flee to a safer place. The family also is forced to pay certain monthly payments to repay the loss of a member who had been resourceful to the group. At Kangari, there is a family that has lived under threat as *Mungiki* members keep on fining them heavily because one of the ex-members was from that family. This has in turn depreciated that family's income.¹⁸²

4.4 POLITICAL IMPACT OF *MUNGIKI* ACTIVITIES ON KIGUMO

RESIDENTS

Mungiki activities have not impacted upon the political arena in Kigumo. This is because their interest has been to gain economically and not political emancipation. However, *Mungiki* adherents have instilled fear in the area politicians making them remit 'tax' every month. This has made people who have had interest in politics to withhold their

¹⁸¹ Oral interview with Wanjiku, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

¹⁸² Ibid.

ambitions. The normal running of government structures, for instance the provincial administration has also been affected.

Mungiki extortion is not limited to those who have established businesses in Kigumo. The group's adherents have taken a percentage of income even from those who are employed in public sector and private companies. They have even attempted to 'tax' the politicians by forcing them to commit themselves to remitting a certain amount of money from their earnings every month. Former Kigumo M.P. Kihara Mwangi was once seized by *Mungiki* in the attempt to force him to be submitting a certain amount of his income. The M.P. with his colleagues was ambushed by *Mungiki* members who were armed with AK 47 rifles, forced them to take oath and to be remitting Kshs 6,000 per month.¹⁸³

The fear of *Mungiki* has undermined the state security structures. The provincial administration has not been able to fight insecurity. The *Mungiki* militia activities have not been an easy task for the provincial administration to halt because nobody really wants to give information because of fear of *Mungiki* reprisals. There is so much that the provincial administration does not know about *Mungiki*; for instance the top officials of the group in Kigumo are not known. Some provincial administration officers also fear *Mungiki* and do not move forward to curb the growth of the group. On top of it all, the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo does not respect the lower officials of the provincial administration. For instance at a burial ceremony at Karega they threatened the sub-chief of the area before introducing some of their junior members. They told the sub-chief to

¹⁸³ Saturday Nation Team, "How *Mungiki* Forced Oath on 10 MPs", *Daily Nation*, 9th June, 2007, p.

report to the government every word they spoke that day and they were in no fear of anyone.¹⁸⁴

Mungiki members have been threatening politicians in Kigumo to extort them. Communication technology has been very useful to *Mungiki* in dispensing their extortion activities. They usually acquire contacts of politicians and wealthy people in Kigumo and threaten them using short messaging service. Out of fear most of politicians and wealthy people just pay off a certain amount of money. During the 2007 elections one of the candidates for the councillor's seat in Kigumo was threatened to pay ten thousand shillings or face death using short messaging service. With the help of Safaricom and the provincial administration, the *Mungiki* member was arrested.¹⁸⁵

4.5 CONCLUSION

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The impact of the *Mungiki* activities in Kigumo District has touched all aspects of the community. The community has been affected economically, socially and even politically. The most profound impact is the socio-economic one where members of Kigumo District have been affected psychologically through fear to an extent that they cannot freely undertake income generating activities. This in turn has aggravated the poverty levels in the area. The most affected lot is the youth who form the majority of both the perpetrators of conflict and the victims. The youth who have joined *Mungiki* have been feared at the same time disrespected out of their involvement with *Mungiki*. Their education has been hampered as they have dropped out of school to join *Mungiki*.

¹⁸⁴ Oral interview with Mwaura, a worker at Kigumo Education Office, Kigumo Area, 8th October, 2009.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Moral institutions such as marriage, family, the school, the church as well as the whole community have been negatively affected. However, some individuals have gained from *Mungiki* activities as they reap money from extortion thus enhancing their economic development.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study examined the unique characteristics of rural militias in Kenya in general and Kigumo District in particular. The period of study was between 1987 and 2008. The argument of the study was that the development of militias and their character is determined by local socio-economic environment in which they operate. In this case, rural militias for instance *Mungiki* in Kigumo exhibit unique characteristics which are different from urban militias'. This is due to the differences in socio-economic activities in both settings. To explore the characteristics of rural *Mungiki* in Kigumo, this study explored the history, the activities as well as the impact of *Mungiki's* presence on Kigumo community.

This chapter draws conclusions based on findings of the study which has been evaluated within the theoretical approach of Fluid theory of Militias. The conclusions that have been arrived at can be generalised to explain the characteristics of the rural *Mungiki* in other areas of Central and Rift Valley provinces.

After the field analysis of the rural *Mungiki* in Kigumo District, this study concludes that the nature and activities of militias as well as their impact on the residents of the areas they operate in is determined by the socio-economic environment in that particular area. The emergence and development of the *Mungiki* in Kigumo was based on the socio-economic activities in the area. *Mungiki* in Kigumo started as a religio-cultural group which later became economic oriented.

Gani Yoroms' Fluid theory of Militias which argues that militias emerge as a result of social and economic problems within a state, hold true for this study. Several factors which are intertwined with the socio-economic problems in Kigumo led to the development of *Mungiki*. Poverty as a result of unemployment, school dropouts, scarcity of arable land due to high population increase and cash crops failure in the 1990s influenced the youth to join *Mungiki* for economic gains. Social factors such as pursuit for self independence from parental rules, propaganda, peer pressure and marriage of girls to *Mungiki* members search for self esteem, idleness and laziness also influenced the development of the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo.

This study has shown that the activities of *Mungiki* in Kigumo are mainly economic oriented and are based on the area's agrarian economy. Unlike in the cosmopolitan urban areas where the *Mungiki* group has been involved in ethno-political conflicts, the *Mungiki* group in Kigumo operates in a mono-ethnic environment and the conflicts that have arisen in the area are not ethnic based. *Mungiki* in Kigumo has been involved in extortion activities mainly in the agrarian economy as well as rural social activities.

The group has extorted money from market traders, farmers when harvesting their produce and transportation of farm produce to market. The group has also extorted money from social activities and ceremonies like during *ruracio* (payment of bride price), *kamweretho* (a women's group activity where they visit their parents and offer them presents), merry-go-round activities, university students' graduation ceremonies and fundraising events. *Mungiki* have also been involved in ritual activities like oathing and

circumcision of both boys and girls. They have also been involved in criminal activities like assassinations of their perceived enemies, abduction of persons to gain ransom and armed robbery. The *Mungiki* group has also set Kangaroo courts to arbitrate on marriage matters for a fee.

The motive behind the *Mungiki* group's 'taxation' of economic and social activities in Kigumo is to build an economic base upon which the group can develop. Economic power has been very crucial to the expansion of the group. *Mungiki* adherents in Kigumo have used money to pay their recruiting team, the religious individuals who deal with oathing and paying for fines for their colleagues who get arrested. They have also used their economic power to invest in the transport industry by buying *matatus* and placing them along '*Mungiki* routes'.

Even though *Mungiki* collect a lot of money through extortion, there are economic inequalities within the group. *Mungiki* leaders gain the biggest share of the group's resources, while most of the youth who are involved in day to day extortion activities gain the smallest share. This explains why some individuals in the *Mungiki* group have economically developed while most of the adherents remain poor. There is an aspect of some individuals in the *Mungiki* group taking advantage of the poor youth lot for selfish personal gains.

This study found out that *Mungiki's* activities in Kigumo have impacted on the area residents both positively and negatively. *Mungiki* members who have been involved in'

extortion activities have been able to uplift their economic status to an extent of establishing their own investments, primarily in the *matatu* industry. The general public in the Kigumo District have lived in fear of *Mungiki*. The fear of *Mungiki* has forced some residents to completely migrate to other areas, especially Nairobi. Community unity and family ties have been broken as a result of fear of *Mungiki* members within the society.

Education in Kigumo has deteriorated as some teachers fled *Mungiki* extortion; some students who are *Mungiki* members have threatened their teachers with death thus causing indiscipline in schools. Extortion activities have forced investors to close down their businesses while probable investors fear investing in the area. This has further led to poor living conditions due to poor economy in the area. The agrarian economy has heavily been impacted upon; many farmers have opted not to keep cattle or chicken because of the fear of extortion. In summary the economic activities in Kigumo have been hampered by the *Mungiki* group leading to poor living conditions of the area residents.

The operations of the government structures in Kigumo District have also been impacted on. The *Mungiki* group has threatened provincial administrator inflicting fear in them. This has in turn led to inefficiency in cracking down of *Mungiki* as an outlawed group. The communication structures within the provincial administration have been affected. The chiefs have been threatened with death if they dared to report illegal activities of

Mungiki in their locations. This has led to the development of the *Mungiki* with great impunity.

In summary, the study on rural militias in Kenya taking the case of *Mungiki* in Kigumo as an example is an attempt towards the understanding of unique characteristics of rural militias. In the development and operations of *Mungiki* in Kigumo, this study found out that the nature of rural militias is determined by the socio-economic activities of the society.

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APPENDIX: AN INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Respondent (s)

I am a student of the University of Nairobi, Kenya. I am carrying out a research on the **Rural Militia Groups in Kenya: The Case of *Mungiki* in Kigumo District, 1987 - 2008**. This research is purely academic, carried out in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Armed Conflict and Peace Studies. I request you to provide the relevant information that would help make this research successful. Confidentiality and/ or complete anonymity would strictly be observed if requested by the informant(s). Thank you in anticipation.

PART A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name	Age
Sex	Date of interview
Location	Division
District	Province.

PART B

1. Would you please give the economic, social and political activities in Kigumo District?
2. What constitutes *Mungiki* in Kigumo District in terms of membership?
3. What do you think are the causes of *Mungiki* emergence?
4. How did they emerge in Kigumo?
5. What do you think *Mungiki* members want to achieve?
6. What activities do they involve in to achieve their objectives?
7. Do these activities have an impact on themselves, the people of Kigumo or the government administration? If yes, how?

Thank you for your cooperation.