

MAU-MAU REBELS' DOCTOR IN MOUNT KENYA EAST FOREST (1952–1960): RETRIEVING THE REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY OF MILTON MUNENE GACHAU

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ABSTRACT

The Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), otherwise known as Mau-Mau revolutionary movement was formed after returnees of the Second World War (1939–1945) ignited the African populace to militarily fight for land and freedom (*wiyathi nai thaka*). John Walton's theory of reluctant rebels informs this article theoretically, as it is indeed the political elites who inspired this armed struggle. To do this, they held several meetings in the capital city of Nairobi, drew the war structures from the national level to the sub-location level, especially in the central region of Kenya, and tasked locals with filling in the leadership vacuums that were created. In view of this, the article seeks to unveil the revolutionary history of the Mau-Mau medical Doctor, also known as Major Judge Munene Gachau (born in 1935), whose contribution in the Kenyan war of independence (1952–1960) remains unique. This uniqueness can be attested to by considering various factors. First, he is one of the few surviving leaders who joined the guerrilla forest war while he was relatively young. Normally, the Mau-Mau War Council did not encourage people below the age of 25 to join the rebels in the forest of Mt. Kenya, Aberdare Mountains and/or other places. Nor did they encourage adults past the age of 35 to join as combatants in the forest fight. Second, he is the only known Mau-Mau rebel in Kirinyaga county of Kenya to have gone back to school after the war had ended, traveled abroad, and studied up to a Masters degree level. Third, Munene Gachau belongs in the category that joined the rebels while still relatively educated and eventually got promoted to the rank of Major, upon being confirmed as the Mau-Mau Doctor.

Keywords: Major Judge; Mau-Mau Doctor; Mau-Mau Movement; Mau-Mau Oath; Reluctant Rebels; Revolutionary history



INTRODUCTION

The Mau-Mau Doctor, Munene Gachau, aka Major Judge, was born in 1935 at Kianguenyi village in Kirinyaga, Kenya. He was among the few Mau-Mau leaders who went back to school and sat for a post graduate degree (Masters degree) after the war had ended. When the researcher interviewed him on 17 January 2014, he was the National Organizing Secretary of Mau-Mau Original Trust, a post he held from 1998. As his fellow rebels launched lightning guerrilla attacks in some targeted villages, he was their medical doctor while in their forest hideouts. When rebel forces attacked hospitals, looking for medicine, he is the one who handled such stolen medicines so as to ascertain their authenticity. Sometimes he would treat the injured Mau-Mau rebels with African traditional medicines. When Reuben Kinyua Kaara (1912–1953), the then nurse and laboratory technician at Mutira Anglican Mission was killed in 1953, when rebels were searching for medicine, Major Judge handled the stolen medicine after it was brought to him for verification (Gathogo 2013).

Major Judge was a very close friend of Sergeant Manegene (officially known as Manegene Kimutwa) from Mutira-Ndia. In turn, Sergeant Manegene, also called Mr Kimutwa, was a trained teacher working at Mutira Primary School. He was the brother to another feared Mau-Mau rebel, Charles Makumi Kimutwa. While teaching at Mutira mission Primary School, Mr Kimutwa had taken the Mau-Mau oath and was spying for the rebels who were already in the forest. When he realised that government forces were trailing him in order to arrest and subsequently torture him for his role in the rebellion, he gave his pupils homework and retreated to the forest where rebels operated from. Interestingly, the school belonged to the Anglican Mission (the Church Mission Society). Sadly, the learners waited in vain for their teacher who never turned up at all. From some of the sources that the researcher consulted, Sergeant Manegene was killed near Major Judge's home, Kianguenyi of Gicugu constituency on 1 October 1953. According to this source, the two were initially together in Kianguenyi reserves when the colonial forces ambushed them after a tip-off from informers. Others who were present during the Kianguenyi ambush of October 1953 were Sergeant Maithoma Kenya (real name Kibara) from Rwamburi-Kabonge, Private Marigi from Kabuti-Gicugu, and Private Kirucu from Karaini-Ndia among others. Major Dr Judge (also called Keriri) managed to escape with injuries after he gave out a he-goat to some people who were blocking his escape route. It is not clear whether Sergeant Manegene was involved in the raid at Mutira Anglican Mission dispensary when Reuben Kinyua Kaara was killed. Nevertheless, the raid was well coordinated by the top Mau-Mau leadership within the then Embu district.

WHY USE PSEUDONYMS?

The reason why Milton Munene Gachau (Major Judge/Doctor Keriri) and other rebels used pseudonyms was to intentionally conceal their real names and avoid being noticed

and eventually captured. In the case of Major Dr Judge, he was educated at Mugumo primary school. For his nursery school, he first attended Gitumbi Primary School at Inoi location, Ndia division; where he was taught by Stanley Gatimu, the then head of the school. Geographically, Kianguenyi, his village home in Gicugu division neighbours Ndia division. People living along the Ndia-Gicugu borders share markets such as Kangaita, Kianguenyi, and Gitumbi. As he travelled to Gitumbi Nursery School Munene Gachau, in his childhood days would follow Daniel Gituru (later teacher) who was an older boy. Daniel Gituru is the father of the School Principal of Karaine Secondary School, Boniface Chomba.

Gachau's mother, Wawira wa Gachari was Mzee Gachau wa Kagunga's second wife. Wawira was the daughter of sub-chief Gachari wa Kang'uru from Kimunye. As Gachau grew up, he did not like some of the British policies of ensuring that every chief or sub-chief was compulsorily made to give out men who were to fight alongside the British forces in the First World War (1914–1919). As Gachau's maternal grandparents gave out their own sons to fight in Ceylon, Burma and other places against Germans, Major Dr Judge could not comprehend the reason behind this. And since Chief Gachari had four wives, who in turn had many sons, he gave out his many sons to participate in the so-called European wars of supremacy. One of them, Murigi wa Gachari did not return in 1919 after the war had ended but died in the battlefield in the sub-continent of India. Indeed, this informed Major Dr Judge's approach to politics that culminated in his role in the Mau-Mau rebellion (1952–1960). Again, when it came to rewarding ex-World War 1 soldiers, only their European counterparts were credited. As a result, various statues of honour were erected across the country in honour of the Kenyan-European soldiers who fought in the "Great War", while African ex-soldiers were ignored altogether. Such talks were rife as Munene Gachau was growing up in the rural Kianguenyi village. Thus, Dr Keriri's Mau-Mau politics were largely and formatively informed by such injustices meted on the African populace.

MUNENE GACHAU'S SCHOOLING

As Milton Munene Gachau, also known as Major Dr Judge first attended Gitumbi Nursery School for two years, 1944–1945, he would travel for long distances, as he crossed over the neighbouring Ndia division, from Gichugu division. Such were early preparations for the tough times ahead—although he was oblivious of what was happening. In 1946 he started attending Mugumo Primary School in Gichugu division and completed Standard 1. He proceeded up to standard 3 in 1947. From Mugumo Primary School, he went to Kathirigo Independent School from 1948 to 1949 for classes 4 to standard 5. In turn, the school which was within Kianguenyi area is one of the African Independent schools that were closed down in 1952 by the government, following Mau-Mau disturbances and the formal declaration of the state of emergency by the colonial Governor Evelyn Baring (1903–1973). Baring was also the Governor of Southern Rhodesia from 1942 to 1944; and Governor of Kenya from 1952 to 1959. His reign as the British Governor

was marked by the Mau-Mau revolt. In June 1957 Baring passed on to Alan Lennox-Boyd a secret memorandum, which was written by Eric Griffiths-Jones, the erstwhile attorney-general of colonial Kenya (The Guardian 2011). The memorandum described and justified the abuse and torture of Mau-Mau detainees. Baring supplied a covering letter accompanying the memorandum that asserted that inflicting “violent shock” was the only way of dealing with Mau-Mau insurgents. In view of this, the closing of the African-initiated schools was a form of Baring methods of intellectual torture.

After a short stint at Kiambatha Primary School, Major Dr Judge (Gachau) proceeded to Mutige primary school, where he sat for his Common Entrance between 1949 and 1950 for class 5. He did his standard 6 at Salvation Army at the City of Nairobi, where they had evening classes. He would attend the East African College during the day and the Salvation Army school in the evening. The East African College was near the present-day Tea Room area in the City of Nairobi. The building was called Wanza Mansion and was on the second floor. The building belonged to Indians. It is here that he studied up to standard 7 until 1951. Then standard 7 was the highest junior secondary school qualification (Matene 2014).

In targeting the Kikuyu community, which hosted the Mau-Mau insurgencies, the government abolished private schools; including the East African Colleges. This was before Gachau sat for his final examination—indeed another form of torture. Additionally, constant military swoops in the city of Nairobi that targeted members of his Kikuyu ethnic group became the order of the day. In short, the Kikuyu were not welcome in Nairobi. In turn, the East African College gave them letters confirming that they were educated, but they were not given the much-needed certificates. It is from there that Gachau began to pursue education through correspondence studies with the British Tutorial College between 1951 and 1952. He studied English, Mathematics, and History at junior secondary school level (Form 2).

After the State of Emergency was declared by the erstwhile Governor Sir Evelyn Baring (1903–73) on 20 October 1952, Gachau returned to the village and continued to study from home. At Kianguenyi the local colonial administration did not like young educated returnees from the city of Nairobi as they were perceived as politically dangerous—hence the spoilers of the rural society. They would be accused of reading and sneaking in newspapers written by Gakaarawa Wanjau such as *The Unity of the Kikuyu, How Colonialism was doing Harm, Wasyawa Mukamba*’ (meaning “The Voice of Kamba” ethnic group) by veteran freedom fighter Paul Ngei, among other “enlightening publications.” Gachau confided in this researcher (on 17 January 2014) that one of Hon Paul Ngei’s publications criticised his own Kamba ethnic group of Kenya for behaving like cows who were being milked and drained silently by the colonial government without raising a protest voice. In this publication Hon Ngei urged the Kambas to talk rather than remain silent. It also praised the Kikuyu community for speaking up, as opposed to Kamba people, who didn’t speak against colonial injustices.

Despite being held under suspicion by the local Kianguenyi colonial authorities, Gachau continued with his education until emergency rules of 1950s made it impossible

for him to study. He however, managed to reach Form 2. Generally, locals returning from Nairobi during the emergency days were hated. They were perceived as “political poison” carriers. Their homes would be ambushed and ransacked from time to time—and sometimes false accusations would be levelled against them.

In an interview with the researcher on 17 January 2014 Major Dr Judge Keriri and his elder brother Miano wa Gachau recalled a visit of a team of Heka Heka platoon from the neighbouring Nyeri district (now a county) to Kianguenyi, his home village in March 1953. By then Mau-Mau oath administrators had virtually administered the oath to every adult—as failure to take the oath amounted to a death penalty. A few Christians refused but were killed [by Mau-Mau rebels] one by one, as the killing squad retreated swiftly to the forest. Indeed, everyone in the entire Embu district (as both the current Kirinyaga and Embu counties were one big district from 1933 to 1963), who never took an oath, except children, was a Mau-Mau suspect by 1952. The coming of the Heka Heka platoon team from the neighbouring Nyeri district acted as a morale booster (Matene 2014).

As tension reigned high, young men and women heightened their dances, using coded languages. One of these dances was called *wakaruri*, while the other was called *wakariara*. *Wakaruri* used to say, “I have captured a *wakaruri* animal with various colours and strips. This animal, with strips and many colours, is a smelly animal known by both the District Commissioner and the government” (Gachau 2014). In attempting to interpret the song, we should point out from the outset that the song was an attempt to reveal a coded secret to the disenfranchised African populace; and that the message was specifically for them. They had to ensure that the colonial government never knew exactly how oath administration was going. For the oath administrator, they used the song, whose language was coded to recruit the youth. The song was meant to prepare people for the revolution geared towards Kenya’s political liberation.

With regards to the *wakariara* dance, a car ring (*karing’aring’a*) was used to play the song. The song and the dance were used to entice the youth to take the Mau-Mau preparatory oath of loyalty in preparation of the big war ahead. Both songs or dances (*wakariara* and *wakaruri*) were thus used to recruit people to take an oath, whose rallying cry was that they would support the liberation movement up to the hilt. According to Major Dr Judge, when the Mau-Mau high command learned that younger people were reporting those who took an oath to the colonial authorities, it resolved to scare them by warning them that there would be dire consequences to their actions. In addition, they were expected to undertake the oath as well. This complicated matters when taking an oath was extended to children.

THE RECALLING OF MUNENE GACHAU BY THE WAR COUNCIL

On 17 March 1953 Gachau was recalled by the Mau-Mau council of Kabare location. It was led by Ndambiri wa Karuga. Karuga was accompanied by Njigoya wa Kamonde,

among others. Major Judge (then Munene wa Gachau) was requested to be their Secretary—first, because he was very educated by the standards of the time. Second, although he was too young, at barely 18 he was seen to be politically mature. Third, although he had not taken the Mau-Mau oath, he was also known to assist the Mau-Mau rebels through writing. Fourth, they also knew that Gachau remained a wanted man held with suspicion by the local authorities, primarily because he had come from Nairobi, where freedom activities were being cooked. Indeed they were convinced that whatever he did, supporting or not supporting the rebels, he would still be fixed or jailed under fabricated evidences.

True to the observation of the Mau-Mau War Council, in his local Kabare location, Major Dr Judges' father was ambushed, arrested and harassed by the colonial forces in 1953 as they searched for his rebel son. It was his mother, Wawira wa Gachau who advised him to go in hiding. He afterwards played a hide-and-seek game until he finally joined the forest fighters. As the Kabare location Mau-Mau rebel's Secretary, Munene wa Gachau [Major Dr Judge] used to record the oath takers' names, clan names, family names, villages, sub-locations and so on. Indeed the rebels used the same administrative structures that the colonial government had put in place in order to ease their administrative work. In so doing, their well-kept data could tell them which sub-location, location, Division and so on had the largest or smallest number of rebels. These demographics would help them monitor the ongoing operations without much ado (Mucungu 2014).

Munene Gachau as a Forest Fighter

On 24 April 1953 the Kabare Mau-Mau War Council decided that Milton Munene Gachau, later Dr Keriri, and also Major Dr Judge, was to serve the nation from the forest and eventually represent Kabare location. By then the leader of the neighbouring Nyeri's Heka Heka platoon General China had been shot in the leg at Kariti, near Sagana Town of the present day Kirinyaga county. This happened when the visiting General was walking with Murage wa Kabutu, the local oath administrator. From there General China was swiftly moved by the Mau-Mau rebels and subsequently hidden in the house of Kabuthi wa Njine in Mbeti sub-location, Inoi location of Kirinyaga, where he was treated and fed until his leg healed. Interestingly, he had been carried from Kiini location near the border of Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties to the Mbeti sub-location near Embu county—an indication that the rebels were united for a course, irrespective of the diverse districts of origin. General China was being treated by one trained nurse, Kibuga wa Ngari. Ngari had taken the binding oath but had not retreated to the forest (Mucungu 2014). He was only sneaked into the respective homes where the General was being shuttled so as to nurse his bullet wounds.

Critically important is to appreciate that anyone who had taken the Mau-Mau oath became a member of the group automatically—as the oath-takers pledged to do or go where the local or national War Council told them to go. Obedience to the War Council

included sometimes obeying orders to kill the enemy, retreating to the forest, taking up arms, working from reserves among other expectations (Maceru 2014). Certainly, the nurse who treated General China was working for the colonial government as a nurse—although he could sneak from time to time to nurse Mau-Mau rebels whenever the need arose. In view of this, he could occasionally sneak to the forest to treat wounded combatants whenever he was called to do so. Major Dr Judge was greeted by such high profile encounters at the initial stage of retreating to the forest in April 1953.

Undertaking the Mau-Mau Oath

On 17 February 1953 Munene Gachau took the Mau-Mau oath. He was barely 18 years old. At this stage, it is important to briefly consider the various types of oaths undertaken by the rebels:

a) *Mungururio oath*

This type of oath was for everybody in reserves. It was set as a psychological preparation for everyone to prepare for a major contest.

b) *Mbatuni oath*

This was an oath for those who were going to war. It was a sacrament of strengthening (*umiriria*) and indeed, the second oath for everyone.

c) *Mtogo kwa Mtogo oath*

This was set for only a very few people and was only taken in the forest by the Mau-Mau rebels. It was meant to ensure that only the combatants understood certain military and coded languages and phrases. It was never given to the reserve people. In addition, it encouraged combatants to fight with more confidence. In using the coded words, *Mtogo kwa Mtogo*, they also used other phrases such as *Kahenri kwa kahenri*, among others. By employing these codes and phrases the rebels wanted to preserve the uniqueness of their organisation. *Kahenri* meant razor blade; while *Mtogo* meant the gun. By using such repetitive phrases, the coded language implored the rebels to come and fight whenever the situation demanded so.

d) *Muma wa Gikundi Oath*

This type of oath was administered to war committees/councils. It was geared towards ensuring that some secrets were not shared out even to fellow junior fighters. This oath was also known as the *atongoria oath*. Sometimes, it could be decided, “let’s have another oath now that we have grown weary, hence, we do another one.” It was still a form of *Mbatuni* oath or *Mbaara* oath. This meant that the person taking an oath was

now ready to join other rebels in the forest, whenever he or she was called upon or advised by any of the various War Councils formed to do so. This was a special kind of oath for forest fighters and was never administered to the reserve.

Munene Gachau and General China

On 24 April 1953 Major Judge, heading to the forest as a fighter, was taken to the then Heka Heka (of Nyeri district) platoon's overall head General China. When the General saw how young he was, at barely 18, he was moved by his determination. The General then counselled the young man (Gachau 2014):

Rather than die, young man, come and remain with us, as a fighter. We can't help you besides telling you to join us as forest fighters; you will be killed like a goat by the colonial forces; better be here in the forest with us. Here, you may kill one of the enemies before you are finally killed. So mine is a caution: either be with us and die with us, or be found in the reserves and be killed like a goat.

Indeed Milton Munene Gachau had been taken to the house of Kabuthi wa Njine when the injured General China was taken there after a shootout at Kariti near Sagana town in Kirinyaga county. At that time General China spoke directly to Milton Munene Gachau (Major Dr Judge) and encouraged him to join them in the guerrilla war that was waged from the local forests; rather than wait for death in the reserves, considering that he was targeted by the colonial authorities.

In making the above scaring statement General China was simply lecturing the young Gachau that the rebel movement (the Mau-Mau uprising) was nothing but a sacrificial assignment; a phenomenon where, even though death was inevitable, fighting for their children and possibly securing a future where freedom reigned was the ultimate goal. In view of this General China and the Mau-Mau rebels looked forward to a world where adults would not be dehumanised by racism, colonialism and its resultant discrimination and segregation, being compared with dogs, and where adult men would not be called boys or children by their European counterparts.

In the forest Gachau was taught to make home-made guns, using bicycle pipes. This home-made gun was known as *gatua-uhoro* ("the decider"). Characteristically the home-made gun was a strong gun, noisy, and could even shoot down planes—although its performance was better when shooting on ground level than when shooting upwards. As Milton Munene Gachau learned the ropes or got acclimatised, he was promoted by the War Council to the rank of sergeant in January 1954—because as one of the relatively educated persons, he knew the geography of the region better than most of the rebels. Second, he had taken or led soldiers from Kirinyaga to the present-day Meru county to meet their counterparts in Nyambene hills, among other places. Third, whenever they had a geographical issue, the rebels would say, "look, there is a young man who clearly understands the terrain." Fourth, upon joining the combatants on 24 April 1953 he was first trained as a nurse or a person that administers first aid. He finally became in charge

of the medical services—a level that was equivalent to an army Major—hence he was now called Major Dr Judge within the forest ranks.

Milton Munene Gachau was trained as a nurse by Major Dr Kang'ethe from Thika. Kang'ethe was previously a Clinical Officer in Thika town but originally came from Fort Hall district (present-day Murang'a county). He was a registered nurse and only joined the forest fighters after he was threatened by the colonial authorities after he had taken an oath. He was a bit older—hence in 1954 he trained Milton Munene Gachau, who was later known as Major Judge. Before then Munene Gachau was trained by Major J. Christo (real name, Kamuku). Major Dr Kang'ethe came from the neighbouring Murang'a platoon from Fort Hall district, which borders on Kirinyaga county to the South. This platoon from Fort Hall district had around the same time launched an attack on Kangema petrol station, burnt it down during the battle of Kangema in 1953, and fled through Kariti near Sagana town through Nyeri districts' Heka Heka platoon, and entered Kirinyaga county. Major Kang'ethe was joined in Kirinyaga by Major Ruku, who had come from Nyeri's Heka Heka platoon to assist the Embu's (including Kirinyaga) Haraka platoon to set administrative structures, rankings, and revive the morale of the fighters.

One critical incident that proved to be life threatening for Major Dr Judge (Gachau), in his encounter with the colonial forces happened on 1 October 1953. This was six months after he had joined the Mau-Mau rebels as a forest fighter. By then he had hosted rebels from Meru, Nyeri, Fort Hall (now Murang'a county) in his home village, Kianguenyi. It is here that they were ambushed and he was shot by one European soldier, although the two shots did not penetrate deep. His swollen leg was later treated by Major J. Christo (Kamuku), the then rebel nurse. Subsequently, Major Judge took over as head of the medical department from Major J. Christo. This was after Major Christo (Kamuku) was killed by the government forces shortly after he had successfully led the killing of the Mutira Anglican nurse Reuben Kinyua Kaara (1912–1953) in early November 1953 (Maceru 2014).

Munene Gachau (Major Dr Judge) was captured on 6 January 1956 in the Mount Kenya forest side of Gicugu or Gichugu division. This happened after some Mau-Mau rebel soldiers who had surrendered but pretended to be genuine rebels entered the forest and tricked him and eventually captured him. Sadly for him, they were dressed in Mau-Mau outfits—hence he could not understand their new mission. He was first taken to Nyeri district (now county) near King'ong'o prison. He was captured with other rebels such as Nubi (real name Ngarari wa Mwaniki). As a captured rebel he changed his name, thereby making it hard for home guards to recognise him. Struggling to identify him, the colonial home guards reported that Dr Keriri also referred to as Major Dr Judge did not come from Nairobi—hence he was not radicalised. At Nyeri capture centre they were talked out of engaging in the senseless war and were convinced that the war had ended a long time ago. They were asked why they would remain in the forest and “yet you are human beings and not animals?” Consequently, Kikuyu Radio announced that Major Dr Judge and others had been shot.

Further at Nyeri's King'ong'o prison Major Dr Judge's name was changed to Kariuki wa Murang'a so as to dissuade a European trigger-happy killer by the name Asher from killing him. Asher was a European settler who hated Mau-Mau rebels with a passion. The renowned Kenyan musician Joseph Kamaru has sung about his brutality. He refers to him as Bwana Asher, Son of *Waitina* ("buttocks"). At this time, the European settler-farmers had joined the Special Police Branch in order to deal with the rebels in the toughest way possible, as rebels threatened their farming activities. Considering that Major Judge was a targeted and blacklisted person, Asher could definitely have killed him.

Of importance to note is the fact that by September 1955 the colonial Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring had decreed that once a Mau-Mau suspect had been captured it was no longer necessary to kill him or her, but interrogate him or her with some measure of torture. Nevertheless, the blacklisted ones were to be killed. Thus, Major Dr Judge fell in the category of those that had to be killed. After escaping death in the Nyeri camp Major Dr Judge was deported to the Embu Centre for Mau-Mau. He was later taken to Yatta detention camp to be rehabilitated, as Mau-Mau rebels were treated as people who were mad but with "treatable madness." The role of the Moral Rearmament (MRA) in reconciling and counselling Mau-Mau detainees came in at this juncture. MRA was formed in London in 1938 by Rev. Frank Buchman to arm Europe morally as the Second World War (1939–1945) was about to take place, and was led by Nahashon Ngare-Rukenya (1930–1936) in the Kenyan context. Rukenya (1930–1996) was an ex-Mau-Mau detainee who converted to MRA's ideals while in Athi River detention camp in 1955. Upon his release in September 1958, he was allowed to visit various detainee camps to offer counselling to Mau-Mau rebels before their eventual release. Ngare later contested the Ndia parliamentary seat in 1974 and 1979 respectively. He also contested the present-day Kipipiri parliamentary seat in 1969 in the present-day Nyandarua county; although without success. His involvement in MRA helped in pacifying the warring Kenya and probably stopped the Civil War from taking place.

At Yatta, "Counsellors", who were mainly Ngare-Kukenya's MRA team would speak to Mau-Mau rebels about how to live with people after their release. Major Dr Judge was finally released in September 1959 but remained under house arrest for some time. He had to report to the local village administrator (Chief) on a weekly basis. He was officially released in 1961 and was no longer required to report to the local Chief. In his bid to be reconciled with society after stints in the cold forest and in various detention camps Major Dr Judge married Eunice Wambura the daughter of Naftaly Nyaga from Kithure, Ngariama location in 1959. Together, they bore eight children.

MAJOR DR JUDGE'S ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE

Munene Gachau was first a member of the Anglican Church. In 1946 he attended Sunday school at ACK in Mugumo. At the height of political nationalism, he joined the

African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) and even studied in their school in Kathiringo from 1948 to 1952. After his release from the Mau-Mau detention camps in 1959, he returned to the Anglican Church and was baptized in 1962. Owing to his past encounters—that is, being in the Anglican Church with his family raised much suspicion, as most of their former “enemies” were leaders of the Church. Certainly the war created mistrusts between former combatants and the collaborators who have led the Anglican Church in the locality for a very long time.

MUNENE GACHAU GOES ABROAD TO FURTHER HIS STUDIES

After his release Major Dr Judge (Gachau) was able to obtain a passport after changing his name. He went to Czechoslovakia in 1962 to further his studies. One wonders how possible is it that an ex-Mau-Mau was able to get a scholarship to further his studies—and what he studied, and who awarded him the scholarship? Major Judge was fortunate to have Hon. Josiah Mwangi Kariuki (popularly known as JM) in his corner, who was by then the Private Secretary of the released leader of the African people, and later President Jomo Kenyatta (1889–1978), who helped him, together with others to secure scholarships. JM approached the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to give them scholarships as Kenya was moving towards political independence. UNESCO is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN). Its role is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter. It is an heir of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (UNESCO 2007). UNESCO pursues its objectives through five programmes: Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, and Communication/Information. Its aim is to “contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information” (UNESCO 2014).

After his scholarship was successfully processed, he had to travel to Cairo, Egypt, as he aimed at his final destination, Prague University in Czechoslovakia. He also had to change his name as he was blacklisted. Indeed the name change made it possible for him to acquire a passport. It is said that even after Kenya had obtained independence Mau-Mau rebels remained an isolated lot, owing to the fact that they were viewed with suspicion. Considering that most government offices were managed by the former collaborators, the plight of the rebels remained tricky. In addition, the so-called collaborators had managed to educate their children, while children of the former rebels were generally tossed out. The case of Major Dr Judge remains a unique case of a rebel who went back to school after stints as a Mau-Mau forest fighter, and indeed following his release from colonial jails.

Upon arrival in Czechoslovakia in Central Europe Major Judge enrolled at Prague University where he was a student until 1969; when he graduated with a Masters degree in Economics. On his return to Kenya he was employed in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry at the Embu Office. Later in 1972 he was transferred to the Nairobi Office, still serving under the same Ministry. He explained during his interview with this researcher that he had retired on public interest in 1973 after he refused to enter into corrupt deals with some senior government officials. In denying the corrupt lot in the new African government a chance to loot, he was accused of insubordination, inefficiency, and such other vices. In short, the die was cast. In 1974 he went into private practice as a financial consultant in Nairobi but quit after he realised that there were various attempts by the corrupt cocoons to trail him, who were intent on sabotaging him. He joined Zaikon Secondary School, a private school owned by Indians in Kathiani in the present-day Machakos county. He left Zaikon to join Nunguni Secondary School from 1976 to 1979. The two schools were owned by the same people.

In 1979 he joined Kilungu Mixed Secondary School and taught Economics for two months. This was the first public school to employ him. Here he encountered negative ethnicity when the locals said, “we cannot employ you, you don’t come from this area. We now have our own son who has an Economics degree.” He left Kilungu to join Mutituni Secondary School (St. Valentine at Mutituni), a private school, also managed by Indians who owned Zaikon and Nunguni Schools (1979–1982). After Kilungu he first joined Kikima High School in Mbooni in 1979. He became the Headmaster until 1981 when the Indian owners sold the School to another Group. Because he did not agree with the new owners’ manner of doing things he returned to Mutituni Secondary School when the old management took him there. He joined Wahundura Secondary School in Kangema in the present-day Murang’a county in February 1983 until 1994 when he retired. At Wahundura he taught Kiswahili and General Paper for A-Levels. The school did not offer commercial subjects. At Wahundura he was employed by parents (i.e. the local board management that runs the school) up to his retirement.

After retirement in 1994 Major Judge returned home in Gacigi Estate, Kianguenyi village, Kirinyaga county; and since he was not allocated any piece of land during the 1957 exercise; as he was still in detention and was also a blacklisted person then, he requested his brother Miano Gachau (1931–) to give him a piece of land. Miano gave him three quarter of an acre where he stayed with his family since then—hence he could not do much farming and therefore did not prosper agriculturally. Furthermore, considering that his tenure as an employee was shaky and that he was always viewed with suspicion everywhere he goes, owing to his past as a rebel; and also earned a meagre salary, he could not afford to acquire property. Although he was able to educate his eight children up to Form 4 (O-Levels), with some getting employed and others undertaking personal duties, they could not however, acquire quality education, owing to his unstable and poorly paying jobs. He was however, recalled by the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) in 1997 and assigned the duty of a Location-al Supervisor up to 2002.

THE FORMATION OF EMBU (AND KIRINYAGA'S) HARAKA PLATOON

After Nyeri's Heka Heka, the Embu platoon, formed in May 1953, became known as Haraka platoon. It was formed after General Kassam, General Chui wa Mararo, and Mucira wa Kamuri (coded name Gicinga) from Ngariama among others, met to deliberate on the idea. General Ndaya, Kabingiriti, and General Kubukubu had returned to the then Embu district much earlier and eventually joined the nearby existing platoon, the Heka Heka of the then Nyeri district. To some, General Ndaya from Kabonge is the real force behind the formation of the Haraka platoon but again he was killed very early in 1953. Nevertheless, he first teamed up with Nyeri's Heka Heka platoon as the rebels made advances in the then Embu district. Kabingiriti and Kubukubu, who initially initiated the Mau-Mau leadership, culminating into the formation of Haraka platoon were from the present day Embu county.

In April 1954 Major Dr Judge saw the subdivision of the giant Haraka platoon of the larger Embu district, which now produced three groups—that is, the Kimuri (Gicugu) platoon under General Kassam Njogu, alias Batiriwa Njogu; Kariba (Ndia) platoon, which was headed by General Chui, while Haraka was left in the Embu side of the then district under General Kubukubu, alias Citroen. It is noteworthy to appreciate that despite the various platoons, the rebels remained united for a course across the region. For instance, General Kubukubu of Embu and Njee Kambo of Kathambi-Ndiawere were always seen together and loved to live in a spirit of comrade-ship in the Mutira-Kirinyaga side of Mt Kenya forest. Further in the Kimuri platoon, Major Dr Judge of Kianguenyi-Gicugu lived in a spirit of comrade-ship with Major J. Christo (real name, Kamuku) from Kiamaina-Ndia, who first taught him first aid courses in administering medicines, together with Abdullah (real name Gacuthi wa Mucira).

In his recollections, Major Dr Judge (Gachau 2014) recalled that after being sent by the Mau-Mau national council from Nairobi in June 1953, together with Kassam and others, General Chui wa Mararo went on to marry and eventually had one child. This looked strange as Mau-Mau rebels were not keen on having families and raising kids during war times. He recalls that General Chui wa Mararo was cautioned against going back to his wife in the wee hours of the night because in the Kikuyu culture it is a taboo to be returning to ones' wife during the entire period of war. Indeed, every rebel had to avoid going to his or her spouse for sexual advances a week before the war started, otherwise, they believed that one would be caught up by the enemy team or lose the war altogether.

Another memorable incident for Major Dr Judge is an incident that happened in 1956 when the Mau-Mau rebels were coming from the present day Meru county. As soon as they reached the River Thuci that marks the border of Embu and Meru counties, they found that they had been waylaid. It is from there that they fought hard and eventually General Chui wa Mararo, who led the rebels then, outsmarted the colonial forces.

General Chui, whose light-skinned face resembled those of the Europeans picked the military Cap that belonged to the European Soldier who led the government side and wore it. For one who is too brown, he looked like a European head of the mission, and as he reached Thumaita area near the present-day Thumaita Tea Factory of the present-day Gicugu division of Kirinyaga county, he was saluted by Home Guards who fought on the side of the colonial authorities. *Bwana, karibu, Bwana Karibu* (“Welcome, Sir, Welcome Sir!”). It is from there that General Chui, with his superior firearm, shot at several colonial home guards to death.

Major Dr Judge (Gachau) also recalled hearing the last counsel from General Chui wa Mararo, following the end of the Meru battle of 1955 noted above. During the Meru battle of 1955, where rebels from the present-day Kirinyaga, Embu, and Meru counties combined and fought together, General Chui’s team endured eight days of hunger. As they returned from Meru under military surveillance in both air and the land, the operations did not allow them to eat, save for some wild fruits. As they dodged the air and land surveillance they returned to Kirinyaga county thirsty and worn out. Those were the days when the colonial government had already succeeded in almost wiping out the rebels by use of all sorts of crude methods. On the way they ate wild fruits and hid under trees and river caves. Major Dr Judge recalls that only once in eight days did they eat food after planes dropped tinned food by mistake. It was foggy, the ground was not visible, and the colonial forces were not sure in this end of the 1955 incident, who was taking the food they were dropping from the plane. By then General Chui wa Mararo was the Commander of the Mau-Mau forces during the Erskine Operation of 1955. The Gicugu leader of Kimuri platoon, General Nene wa Gikungi had already been captured. He was later released after detention at Hola camp in 1958. He died in 2006. From June 1955 the government had released a propaganda urging the rebels to surrender—that they should come out of the forest, and that they would not be harmed. Nevertheless, if a Home Guard killed any returning Mau-Mau rebel he would be given Ksh 300 (about \$3) per head. This was a huge amount of money in those days, as few people in the country earned one third of that money. Hence, a story is told of how General Chui wa Mararo was captured after he was shot once on his leg, but when the colonial Home Guards discovered that he was not yet dead, they pierced him several times so as to ensure that he was dead, in order to benefit from his death (Gathogo 2014, 102–120)

After the battle of Meru in 1955 General Chui, for the first time, admitted that they were losing to the colonial government; and went on to tell a group of six people, who included Major Judge that he planned to return and operate from a forest near his home area (Kamuiru-Ndia) and would be hiding in the hills and bushes along the area in Kamuiru-Mugaya in Kirinyaga county. He went on to invite them to see the logic that even the British government itself was “ending the war.” In reference to the upcoming national elections of 1956 General Chui said, “look, even politically, Africans are being invited to vote in the forthcoming elections for members of the legislative council” (Gachau 2014). By this, Gen Chui was referring to the general elections that were held

in Kenya between 25 September and 2 October 1956. There were further elections in March 1957 for eight African constituencies—the first in which Africans would be elected. The 1956 elections were open to Europeans and Indians. In the 1957 elections, where Africans participated—Bernard Mate (Central), Ronald Ngala (Coast), Tom Mboya (Nairobi), Oginga Odinga (Nyanza Central), Masinde Muliro (Nyanza North), Lawrence Ogunda (Nyanza South), Daniel Arap Moi (Rift Valley), and James Muimi (Southern/Ukambani) were elected. As a demonstration of how Africans yearned for independence, the voter turn-out for Africans in the 1957 elections was 78.5 per cent (Kenya Legislative Council 1957).

Nevertheless, Gen Chui's foresightedness was not immediately understood by the six rebels who were listening to his "lecture." Indeed, it sent shock waves among his colleagues. Why? He was their best fighter then; he was the one with a Bren gun that could make multiple shots, although he only had six cartridges left. The rest had none—hence, he was their only saviour who was leaving the sheep that he was shepherding. When they protested his decision, he insisted that the war is being lost on both sides. In other words, he told Milton Munene Gachau (Major Dr Judge), Sergeant Kionoria (Muciri wa Rui), Njiru wa Mubuta and others while in Gicugu division, at the Mutheri forest, upper part of River Thiba, between the Rivers Kiringa and Thiba that they had to explore other strategies.

After finally leaving he was killed in May 1956 at a mushy area near Riakiania town along the River Rwamuthambi. However, by January 1956 Major Judge and the others who listened to Gen Chui's lecture had been arrested and taken to King'ong'o and other Kenyan prisons after they were betrayed by the surrendering soldiers. They heard about Gen Chui's killing six months later while they were in prisons. From what they heard after General Chui was shot in the leg he was put in a police Land Rover (On Her Majesty Service—OHMS) vehicle as he was writhing in pain. One home guard realised that he was not yet dead. He used a kitchen knife to cut him severely until he died. Why? The idea was to fetch the Kenya shillings (300) that the government was giving to any home guard who would kill a Mau-Mau rebel.

CONCLUSION

The article has surveyed Milton Munene Gachau, the Mau-Mau "Doctor" who was popularly called "Judge" by his fellow rebels while at the Eastern side of Mt Kenya forest during Kenya's war of independence (1952–1960). In choosing to join the combatants in the forest fight at a tender age of 18, Gachau had surrendered his life for the course of freedom much earlier than his comrades (1935–1953). Like the rest of the combatants, he had to dodge arrests, bombings, shootings and also had to risk starvation and disease while fighting in this guerrilla warfare. The article has established his uniqueness in that he was able to reconstruct himself at an individual level, went abroad after he was captured by the colonial forces and his subsequent release and indeed led a relatively productive life as a peasant-farmer, civil servant, public officer and a teacher among

a host of public duties. The article has also demonstrated the strong organisational management of the Mau-Mau revolutionary rebels right from the villages to the forests where they operated from. Despite poor military training, the determination to fight the colonial government inspired various liberation movements in Africa and beyond. As Kenya marked her 54th year of independence (1963–2017), the critical role of Major Dr Judge (Milton Munene Gachau) reappears as a patriot who took a high risk, together with others, in order to set his country free. Certainly John Walton's (1984) hypothesis that rebels only strike when incited by the local elites is clearly confirmed in this article. Indeed, it was the returnees from the Second World War (1939–1945) who incited the locals to take arms against colonial injustices.

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