

**TANGAZA COLLEGE
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**THE *MUNGIKI* MOVEMENT: A PASTORAL
RESPONSE**

Moderator

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Baccalaureate in Theology

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Table of Content

DEDICATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
STUDENT DECLARATION	iii
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Limitation of the Study</i>	3
<i>Approaches to Mungiki Movement</i>	4
<i>Objectives of the Study</i>	4
CHAPTER ONE	6
AN OVER-VIEW OF MUNGIKI MOVEMENT	6
1.0 Introduction	6
1.1 The Origins of Mungiki	6
1.2 Membership and Social Activities of the Mungiki Movement	10
1.3 Economic Involvement of Mungiki Followers	14
1.4 Politics of Mungiki	15
1.5 Religious Aspects	16
1.6 Conclusion	23
CHAPTER TWO	25
MUNGIKI MOVEMENT: CHARACTERISTICS, FACTORS UNDERLYING ITS UPSURGE AND CHALLENGES IT POSES	25
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 Definitions	26
2.3 Characteristics of a Cult or a Sect	27
2.4 Reasons That Attract the Youth to Cultic Movements	28
2.4.1. Distress and Crises	28
2.4.2. Deprivations and Disillusionment Among the Youth	29
2.4.3. Increase in Population	30
2.4.4. Accelerated Urbanization	31
2.4.5. Intense Competition at School and in the Areas of Employment	31
2.4.6. Political Manipulation	32
2.4.7. Disruption of Family	32
2.5 The Challenges of the Cults	35
2.5.1. Ignorance	35
2.5.2. Understanding and Addressing the Reality of the Youth	36
2.5.3. Integrating the Agikuyu Religious World View with Christianity	37
2.5.4. Doctrinal Deviations	38
2.5.6 The Challenge of the Ex-Mungiki Members	39
2.6 Conclusion	40

CHAPTER THREE	42
TOWARDS A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE MUNGIKI MOVEMENT.....	42
3.1 <i>Introduction</i>	42
3.1.1 Dialogue.....	43
3.1.2 Education and Catechesis	43
3.1.3 Conversion and Fight Against Injustice	45
3.1.4 Inculturation (Gaudium et Spes 58).....	46
3.1.5 Small Christian Communities (SCCs)	47
3.1.6 Youth Empowerment	48
3.1.7 Economic Policies Relevant to Africans	48
3.2 <i>Synthesis</i>	49
GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY	55
<i>Books</i>	55
<i>Church Documents</i>	56
<i>Articles in Magazines and Journals</i>	57
<i>News Papers</i>	57
<i>Electronic Sources</i>	57
<i>Oral Sources</i>	58
APPENDIX I	59
APPENDIX II	60
APPENDIX III	61
APPENDIX IV	62
APPENDIX V	63

DEDICATION

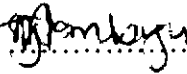
To my Mum and Dad and all parents who raise their children in an authentic Christian faith.

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I the undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources as cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed 

James Wambugu

Date: 31 January 2005

The Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed 

Dr. Zacharia W. Samita

Date: 31 January 2005

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the Mungiki movement and other religious movements in Kenya which are oriented towards traditional beliefs and practices is a startling phenomenon. The history of religious development demonstrates that cults are born in relationship to the secular conditions. For that reason, the context which triggers their origin is worth investigation.

The new religious movements are interesting, not because of their doctrines, but because of the societal factors that give rise to the phenomenon and the group dynamics that exist within such organization.¹

Founders of these new religious movements (NRMs) argue that there is something wrong with the world. This is because recent advances in technology and growing social, political and ecological awareness have sharpened people's perception of the contemporary global crises. Science and materialism are perceived to have suffocated and stifled both the human spirit and attempts to experience the divine. Organized religions such as Christianity and Islam appear to have overregulated and possibly distorted the innate human desire for genuine spirituality or religiosity.

By and large, the society seems to be undergoing a transformation. A new world is being born which is apprehensive about the future, thus giving value to traditional cultural practices. We may rightly assert that religious movements based on traditional beliefs and practices are the "signs of African Renaissance."² After a century of colonization and alienation of Africa by the Western world coupled by endemic

¹ G. D. CHRYSSIDES, *Exploring New Religions*, 1.

² Cf. J. N.K. MUGAMBI, *African Christian Theology*, 107.

socio-political and economic problems, the Africans seem to be reasserting their identity in the process of re-thinking their solutions.

The emergence of the cults such as the Mungiki is a sign of the time that cannot be underrated. Revealed is an inter-play between Africa and the Western world, inspired by the need to restore the cultural dignity. It expresses and demands answers from the Western world, answers which must be political, social and religious. Governments, the Church and other bodies have the task of formulating the terms on which the answer must be couched.³

Just like the biblical prophets arose to address social, political and economic distress in Israel, it is probable that, the new religious awakening is a prophetic sign calling for freedom and liberation of the displaced, poor and oppressed in the slums who are members of such religious groups. This prophetic call was embraced by African scholars such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka, among others in the middle of the 20th century. Incidentally, these distinguished writers were educated and influenced greatly by Christianity. Indeed, most of their writings are a reaction to Christianity. However, they ascertain that the Western influence is the genesis of the problems in Africa. For this reason, they urge Africans to restore their identity by going back to their traditional roots. Although there is deep awareness of the African identity, it is really difficult for the Africans to completely sever links with the Western world.

Subsequently, the resurgence of expression of African Traditional Religion is a conglomeration of beliefs from diverse religious sources. Such sources are re-interpreted in favor of the African context which offers an alternative spirituality

³ Cf. V. LANTERNARI, *The Religion of the Oppressed*, vii.

from the traditional religion. Traditional Christian theology, which is essentially a quest for religious truth, could assume that Mungiki and many other similar groups, has little claim to any serious theological debate. However, the influence of the Mungiki and other related movements is a challenge. In fact, it is a force to reckon with especially, on the pastoral level.

The emergence of Mungiki has brought to the fore challenges that cannot be ignored amidst many people, especially the youth, who have found it meaningful and satisfying. As a matter of fact, it calls for a clear, reflective and critical Christian response. The response should be devoid of emotional outbursts, inaccurate representations and wild accusations.⁴ Even if the movement ceases to exist, its influence will survive among many people. This makes it an important subject of study. This work surveys the emergence of Mungiki and the challenge it poses to Christianity. The work is geared towards contributing to the ongoing debate on the relationship between cultic movements and the challenges they pose to Christianity.

Limitation of the Study

The Mungiki Movement is an unfolding phenomenon. There is scarce systematic documentation about the group. Most of the literature is available through interviews and media coverage besides very limited thoroughly researched works. During my research, the police force was in hot pursuit of Mungiki followers. On the other hand, the Mungiki adherents continued to brutally assassinate the Mungiki

⁴ Cf. J. A. SALIBA, *Christian Response to the New Age*, 191.

defectors. This volatile situation hindered access to voluntary information from followers.

Approaches to Mungiki Movement

There are three basic approaches to the Mungiki Movement. The first approach is propagated by government officials. It grossly simplifies the issue. Owing to their office and commission, the officials are interested in peace and order. They view Mungiki as a nuisance that should be ruthlessly disbanded or suppressed. The second approach is propagated by the Church. It basically condemns the movement, its beliefs and practices, accusing its adherents of immorality and belittling them as collaborators in a grandiose satanic conspiracy. But the fact of the matter is that the movement has raised pastoral concerns in the Church and pertinent issues in the society.

The third approach is from professional ethnologists. These include Peter Kagwanja, Grace N. Wamue and David M. Anderson, among others. Basically, they view the movement as a climax of crisis situations affecting African societies. They associate the emergence of Mungiki movement to deleterious Western civilization. In so doing, they have deductively recognized some meaningful solutions to this crisis situation.

Objectives of the Study

1. Analyze the historical epoch, beliefs and practices of Mungiki.

2. Establish the reasons that render the movement to be treated with contempt by the members of other religions, government administration and general public.
3. Analyze the pastoral challenges the movement poses to the Catholic Church in central Kenya.
4. Endeavor to offer some pastoral solutions to the Mungiki-Christian conflict.

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVER-VIEW OF MUNGIKI MOVEMENT

1.0 Introduction

The Mungiki movement depicts mixed connotations to many Kenyans. To some, it is synonymous with hostility and violence. For others, Mungiki is a religious group that aims at the liberation of the Agikuyu of Kenya. However, many of the sect adherents remain ignorant of its origin and objectives (*Daily Nation*, April 6, 2004, 12). There is obscurity with regard to the formation and the goals of the Mungiki which has made the movement a subject of national concern. Some people suggest that the movement should be exterminated. Others feel that it should be encouraged because it promotes African cultural values and practices. Although the, "information on the ideological and political dimensions and heritage is still scanty, hazy and often glossed over by analysts,"⁵ our concern in the first section of this first chapter is to establish the origin and the goals of the Mungiki. To venture into these two aspects, we attempt to explore the origin, social, economic and political aspects of Mungiki.

1.1 The Origins of Mungiki

Mungiki is a classical Gikuyu word that is probably derived from the word *muingi*, which means the masses or many people. The term Mungiki thus could imply that all people are entitled to a particular place of their own in the ontological world. Mungiki could also be translated as: 'We are the public', an expression referring to the

⁵ P. M. KAGWANJA, *The Mungiki Ethnic Violence and Politics of Succession in Kenya. Facing Mt. Kenya or Facing Mecca? 1987-2002*, in *African Affairs* 102, 2003, 25-49.

rights of a social class that feels acutely deprived and marginalized in a rapidly globalising world."⁶ Two tentative theories have been advanced by social analysts to explain the formation of Mungiki. The first theory links the formation of Mungiki to a purely liberation movement. The theory asserts that "Mungiki is a brainchild of a woman who was a teacher and a girlfriend to a prominent politician in Rift Valley. The woman had a conviction that, Kenya is not yet *Uhuru*."⁷ The slogan 'not yet *Uhuru*' was borrowed from late Oginga Odinga (one of the Kenya's founding fathers). Literally, it means that Kenya was yet to attain independence despite the Africans being in control of the country. "Those who share this opinion believe the group was an offshoot of *Mwakenya*, an underground movement formed in 1979 to challenge the Kenya African National Union (KANU⁸)."⁹

The second theory links the formation of Mungiki to a prophetic calling of two young Gikuyu men from Rift Valley (*Daily Nation* 6, April 2004, 12): Maina Njenga and Ndura Waruingi. They claimed to have received a mysterious call to lead Agikuyu back to their roots. Maina Njenga, arrested 2003 and put in police custody to face murder charges, is also the spiritual leader of the movement. He dramatically narrated his calling in an interview.

⁶ Cf. P. M. KAGWANJA, The Mungiki Ethnic Violence and the Politics of Succession, Facing Mt. Kenya or Mecca? in *African Affairs* 102, 2003, 25-49.

⁷ C. KINYUNGU, How Woman Teacher's Idea Gave Birth to the Mungiki Movement, *Daily Nation*, April 6, 2004, 12.

⁸ A political party that spearheaded the struggle for independence in Kenya. It remained in power till 2000 when National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) democratically won the election. Its reign of thirty nine years marked the height of corruption, political assassination and general bad governance.

⁹ J. K'AMOLO, Mungiki- A Mysterious sect a thorn in the Flesh, in *African Church Information Service*, Feb. 3, 2003, 9.

He was in secondary school and during a class, a dove allegedly descended on his head. He chased it away but it adamantly refused to go. The other students ran away leaving Maina alone (that's when the message was passed to him). Maina got into a trance and suddenly a beam of light envisaged him with words written in bold letters in the background. As he tried to make out the words, a loud and clear voice read the bold words out: "This is the voice of the Almighty God. I have heard the cries of my people. I am going to liberate them". When he got home, he could not sleep as the event reechoed in him. Later in the night, his room was suddenly filled with light and a person in traditional gear whom he recognized as Waiyaki, one of the prominent traditional Gikuyu rulers, exhorted him: "Be ready for the great mission". This was the mission to lead Agikuyu back to their roots and liberate them from oppression. In the same experience, he also had a chat with the great Agikuyu ancestors who confirmed his immense task (*Daily Nation*, 6 April 2004, 12). From that experience henceforth, Maina had the confidence and absolute conviction that he had a sacred role to play among Agikuyu.

Ndura Waruingi, formerly the National Coordinator of the Mungiki, emerged asserting his role in the liberation of Agikuyu. The duo asserted that they had a high calling to lead the Mungiki movement and indeed all the Agikuyu back to their roots. However, he later on defected from Mungiki to become a born again Christian.

It has been argued by social analysts, that the glorification of the Gikuyu culture in the writings and activities of Gikuyu intellectuals, particularly Jomo Kenyatta and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, has conferred on the Mungiki an ethnically exclusive cultural radicalism¹⁰.

¹⁰Cf. P. M. KAGWANJA, Facing Mt. Kenya or Facing Mecca? in *African Affairs*, 25-49.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has been singled out by some analysts as one of the most influential authors that triggered the emergence of Mungiki, especially through his books, *The River Between* and *Weep Not Child* that render a distinct ideological slant to Gikuyu culture.

The movement came into the limelight in the late 1990s, when reports started flowing in about suspicious looking youths, donning dreadlocks, taking oaths, and engaging in strange prayers. In the name of indecent mode of dressing, they publicly stripped naked ladies wearing miniskirts and long trousers, and violently demanded for the practice of female circumcision. They would engage police in fierce running battles, and on a number of occasions, violently raided police stations to free arrested members.

Mungiki followers regard themselves as *thuna cia Mau Mau*, the offspring as well as a rebirth of Mau –Mau. Indeed,

There are striking parallels between the two movements. Just as Mau Mau drew the bulk of its support from squatters disenchanted with the agrarian tyranny in colonial Rift Valley, Mungiki draws its support from thousands of people displaced by ethnic clashes¹¹

Further, "Mau Mau mobilized its support among the urban lumped-proletariat against colonial social economic injustices".¹² Likewise, the Mungiki solicit and enjoy support from the down-trodden in the society. Mungiki leaders believe that the Mau Mau movement did not achieve its goal; hence its mission remains incomplete. It is because of this that Kenya is defenseless in the face of neo-colonization by the forces of

¹¹ T. KANOGO, The Problem of the Squatters and the Roots of the Landless: Historical Perspective in *Wajibu*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1999, 19-22.

¹² Cf. P. M. KAGWANJA, Facing Mount Kenya or Facing Mecca? In *African Affairs*, 25-49.

international capitalism: Kenya today is controlled by the International Monetary Funds, the World Bank, the Americans, the British and freemasons.¹³

1.2 Membership and Social Activities of the Mungiki Movement

Mungiki comprises the youth aged between 18 and 40 years, many have left the established Christian churches to join the movement. However, there are exceptional cases of those members who are between 40 and 60 years. "Most of these people are victims of the ethnic conflicts that erupted on the eve of the 1992 multi-party General Elections in Kenya"¹⁴. Majority of these people are Standard Eight and Form Four school leavers who have lost their stake in the status quo. In other words, members of the group have little or no personal identity, making them an easy target of manipulation and control. Consequently Mungiki is a movement of the poor, dispossessed and landless against the oppressive landlords, corrupt urban land grabbers and the tyranny of the ruling elite.

Initially, the aim of the Mungiki was to sensitize people against the evils of the government, accusing it of fuelling the ethnic clashes. The sect "administered oaths to its members during the time of clashes in the hope that they would become united in fighting back their attackers."¹⁵ In the Gikuyu traditional community, *muma*, oath was the most important factor in controlling the court procedure and resolving disputes between parties. People feared an oath. They believed that failure to uphold the conditions of the oath led to dire consequences. Basically, it served two purposes. On

¹³ Cf. Ibid., 40.

¹⁴ G. WAMUE, The Politics of Mungiki, in *Wajibu* vol.14, No. 3, 1999, 9. Cf. [http: www.bluegecko.org](http://www.bluegecko.org)

¹⁵ G. WAMUE, Revisiting our Indigenous Shrines Through Mungiki, in *African Affairs*, 100 (2001), 453-467.

one hand, “the oath bound one psychologically, thus preventing people from giving false witness.” Thus it helped to bring the offender to justice through imparting guilty conscience and subsequent confession. On the other hand, it ruled out bribery and corruption and ensured impartial or unbiased judgment.”¹⁶ For example, the Mau Mau successfully managed to use the oath to solicit active and passive support of united Agikuyu during the struggle for independence. In the same footing, the Mungiki administer the oath as an effective means of welding its adherents into a unified people with a sense of solidarity.

The group is regarded to be anti-social for many reasons. For instance, its teachings are viewed as obscure and running contrary to the large communities’ ideals: for example, the demand for female circumcision and polygyny, among others. Only those who have undergone the Mungiki initiation rite can perhaps understand these activities. The initiation to the group ritual is a long process that a prospective Mungiki adherent undergoes. It begins by a trip to one of the shrines situated in Laikipia, Ngarua and in Nairobi, at Mukuru Kwa Reuben. As the ritual proceeds, one is undressed and given a severe beating by the patrons. This ushers in other rituals,¹⁷ including baptism with water mixed with tobacco. Finally, the oath is solemnized by the following vows:

- Never to reveal the secrets of the movement,
- Never to commit adultery,
- Never to disobey the rules of the sect,
- Never to take alcohol or smoke cigarettes but to take snuff instead,

¹⁶ J. KENYATTA, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, 223.

¹⁷ The ritual and oath procedure was explained to the author by Maina Githanji in Dandora Phase III on 4, April 2004. Maina was forcefully initiated in the movement, but later defected.

- Be ready to kill anybody including the parents if required to do so by the sect,
- To follow the steps of Mau Mau heroes without fear.

This process, however, is irrevocable, which means “once a person is initiated, as a Mungiki, he/she will remain a Mungiki forever; backsliding can lead to death.”¹⁸

Mungiki adherents have always attempted to conceal their identity in public. However, one can easily recognize them from the crowd because of their dread-locked hair. They carry small clubs (*rungu*), greet in traditional Gikuyu way, and respond “*Thaai*”¹⁹ (peace). Mungiki adherents also prefer talking in their mother tongue, that is, Gikuyu language. Further, they chew pieces of sticks which some regard as an alternative to the use of toothpaste, viewed by them as a Western product. Chewing pieces of sticks is a visible sign of the Mungiki’s anti-Westernism.

Mungiki has its own governance structure in form of *kangaroo*²⁰ courts that can even order death. At the top are six elders called *muzebu*, responsible for administration of oaths to new members.²¹ The *muzebu* also arbitrate on conflict between members from the same area. They have the authority to judge on any matters within their jurisdiction and can only refer special cases to the sect leaders. The spiritual leader of the Mungiki has authority to order the elimination of a member as punishment.

¹⁸ Author’s interview with Nderitu wa Githambo in July 6, 2004, in Dandora phase III.

¹⁹ Significantly in the distant past, *thaai* was a ritual invoking the deity in time of social need: during drought, famine and epidemics.

²⁰ An informal court that arbitrates, to reward the innocent and punish the offender in the Mungiki Movement.

²¹ Authors interview with Nderitu Githambo in 2004.

According to their teaching, Mungiki aims at recapturing the lost paradise of the Agikuyu. This is the “reestablishment of a Kirinyaga Kingdom and the restoration of the Gikuyu power.”²² Basically, they argue that the grand Westernization project has failed. They blame the older generations for the loss of the said paradise. Older generation, the Mungiki would argue, rebelled against the warning given by the famous Gikuyu prophet, Mugo Wa Kiburu. The latter is believed to have warned Agikuyu in the past against opening the door to the Westerners and their practices. Indeed, they did not heed Mugo’s warning but instead accepted the White people and their culture.²³ Subsequently, the Agikuyu disappointed *Ngai* who in turn, is now unleashing punishment on them. This is advanced as one of the reasons behind the loss of Agikuyu paradise.

Mungiki members believe that the paradise was a place devoid of diseases such as *Mukingo*, AIDS, poverty and other ills in the society. The “original sin” in this context was as a result of the immediate parents imbibing the western influence. To revoke this curse and retain peace and prosperity among Agikuyu, the Mungiki vehemently call for the return to traditional roots. This includes female circumcision, offering sacrifices, and worship under the *mugumo* tree and facing Mount Kenya during prayers, among others. The call by the Mungiki to return to the past has made many Kenyans view the group as retrogressive. In return, the Mungiki have responded through violence directed to the larger community.

²² C. KINYUNGU, Birth of Mungiki, *Daily Nation*, 6 April 2002, 13.

²³ D. M. ANDERSON, *Revealing Prophets Prophecy in East Africa History*, 241.

1.3 Economic Involvement of Mungiki Followers

Though it is alleged that there are affluent people in the Mungiki movement, the majority are low-income earners in the *jua kali*²⁴ sector. Many of whom reside in the sprawling poor residents, Eastlands' section of Nairobi. The group strongly resents accumulation of massive wealth by a few Kenyans, especially the ruling elites. They argue that this is done at the expense of the masses that are thus made landless and jobless.²⁵

To keep the movement running, the Mungiki forcefully took control of the *matatu* terminus, the waste disposal industry and security roles within the estates. Each member is called to contribute a shilling each day for the same cause. "In a very practical way, the Mungiki oppose unfair and unjust practices in the society by sharing among themselves the few resources that they have."²⁶ By so doing, "the Mungiki are nostalgic about recapturing the mythologized pre-colonial egalitarianism image and social order"²⁷ that is alleged to have permeated the traditional Agikuyu community. They blame the Europeans who they accuse of immensely contributing to the economic woes experienced in Kenya and Africa at large. The Europeans allegedly, have strategically colluded with the predatory ruling elites in Africa in order to exploit Africans. This is demonstrated in such policies like structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that have compounded the existing economic hardships in Africa.

²⁴ Appropriate technology on small scale, also called "hot sun"

²⁵ Cf. G. WAMUE, Revisiting our Indigenous Shrine Though Mungiki, in *African Affairs*, 454, 154.

²⁶ Ibid., 460.

²⁷ D. M. ANDERSON, Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya, in *African Affairs*, 2000, 101.

a paradigm shift or rapture, "*ituaka*,"³⁰ where leadership was to be assumed by a young man. To achieve this rapture, Mungiki was to be ready to fight and selflessly sacrifice for this course. Failure to uphold the prophecies, their prevailing situation of poverty, unemployment, and diseases among others would sink irredeemably.

As a sign of clear political leaning, the sect members also assign different meanings to things that are popularly known. For example, the word Kenya according to them means Kenya National Youth Association. And they also have their own flag marked with different symbolic colours. These are

Red, black, green, black, 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.³¹

1.5 Religious Aspects

Mungiki adherents claim to be notoriously religious. Though many people express doubt whether the movement is religious, Mungiki asserts that God is their Chairman and their decision maker. According to Agikuyu tradition and spirituality, "*Ngai* who provided everything to the Gikuyu people lived in the sky though he frequently descended in the highest peak in Gikuyu land for example Mt. Kenya."³² This is the same *Ngai*, whom the members of Mungiki claim gave each ethnic group ample land with plenty to eat and has always been on the side of Africans. They, therefore, say their prayers facing Mt. Kenya.

³⁰ A tradition Gikuyu ceremony, performed to hand over the responsibility of an ethnic group from one generation to another.

²⁸ G. WAMUE, *Revisiting Our Indigenous Shrine Through Mungiki*, in *African Affairs*, 465.

³² S. BOTTIGNOLE, *Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity*, 38.

According to the Mungiki, the solution to the Gikuyu problems can only be found through a return to traditional ways of worship. They argue that since Western religion has been used to oppress Africans, Africans in turn have no choice but to use their religion to liberate themselves. Accordingly

They readily defend their belief as ideal for development, by arguing that neither Japanese nor Chinese, abandoned their religion or culture, and yet they have attained high economic development. Similarly, Africans should have been allowed to keep their religion and culture.³³

Mungiki religious practices, coated by the philosophy of African traditional beliefs have been quite attractive to young people who feel disillusioned by the Western influence. Such youth have been easily targeted by Mungiki because of poverty, identity crises and other diverse problems that they have continued to face. However, though they claim to recapture the Agikuyu religion, the larger society have expressed fear owing to the fact that Mungiki followers are alleged to be involved in some practices that are violent and alien to the Gikuyu religion. For instance, the Gikuyu religion was all-inclusive. All members of the society were called to know and indeed participate in worship. However, Mungiki is sectarian in the sense that the group is limited to a few and with esoteric teachings and objectives. This contradicts the Gikuyu traditional religion. Besides, the traditional religious worship was presided over by elders, yet, the Mungiki youth are the ones conducting rituals. Snuff-taking was not part of the worship. If anything, it was for elders, not youths. Traditional Agikuyu community, unlike the Mungiki, did not support violence, which was usually only, resorted to as a

³³ G. WAMUE, Mungiki Politics, in *Wajibu*, Vol. 14, No 3, 1999, 10.

last measure. Although elders carried ceremonial *rungus*, clubs and walking sticks, they were not meant for war.

Mungiki purports punishment using *rungus* and other crude weapons as it did to the law-abiding citizens allegedly on 7 January 2003 because of voting in (NARC). This is contrary to the Gikuyu tradition, where the *kiama*, a council of elders would thoroughly investigate a crime and appropriately pass a fair sentence. In this case, nobody was punished for having a contrary opinion as in the case of the law-abiding citizens as referred to earlier on. These are amongst the reasons that lead other Gikuyu related religious groups, for instance, *Hema Ya Ngai Uri Muoyo*, Tent of the Living God to reject a proposal by the Mungiki to unite and form a bigger movement. Indeed, Mungiki is a splinter group of *Hema ya Ngai wi Muoyo*. The split emerged because the latter, according to a Mungiki view, was not revolutionary enough.³⁴

Mungiki adherents sought to have close ties with the Islamic faith to the extent of taking Islamic names as a sign of conversion. However, this was a disguise by the Mungiki adherents in their grand plan to extort money and support from the Muslims in Kenya as well as to conceal their identity. Unfortunately for the Mungiki, the Muslims, through their superiors disowned and accused the Mungiki of double standards. A study of Kenya's history reveals that the resistance movement resorted to Islam, a strategy of self-camouflage in the face of repression. My interviews with its leaders support the view that this was a circumstantial and natural political choice available to the sect in Kenya's radical Islamic wing, the *Shiites* that has also been facing similar

³⁴ Cf. P. M. NYAMBARI, *The Spirits Have Returned! The Rise of Neo-Traditionalism in Nairobi*, Unpublished, 2004, 16. Cf. G. WAMUE, *Revisiting Our Indigenous Shrines Through Mungiki*, 455.

political repression by the Kenyan state.”³⁵ To that effect, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslim’s (SUPKEM) Chairman, accompanied by Muslim scholar Sheikh Mohamed Sheikh warned that Muslims would not allow a few people to play around with Islam pretending they were converts. He noted that, “it was pointless for people to think they could use Islam as a ‘hideout’, adding that Muslims were watching such people day and night.”³⁶

Mungiki Movement is diametrically opposed to Christianity. Its anti-Christian disposition originates from their radical understanding and interpretation of parts of the scripture. One such portion is Matthew 10:6, “I came for the lost sheep of Israel.” According to some interpretation among Mungiki adherents, Christ has nothing to do with the Agikuyu, because, in their interpretation of the above Bible reference, His coming was for the Israelites, not other nations. They argue that Jesus cannot save the Agikuyu for the simple reason that he is not related by blood or any by other way.

They further argue that Christianity, through the Bible, has resulted in mental enslavement which Agikuyu and many other Kenyan communities must get rid of. The Bible, which they refer to as *gikunjo*,³⁷ has been used, they maintain to confuse and delude Africans. As a result, most Kenyans do not see the hypocrisy demonstrated by the Christians. Obviously, the Mungiki position reflects a literal interpretation of the scripture. Nevertheless, although Christianity abhors injustice and the Church leaders have condemned injustices, it is a fact that there have been massive forms of injustice and other ills in Kenya committed by people, majority of whom claim to be Christians.

³⁵ P. M. KAGWANJA, Facing Mt Kenya or Facing Mecca?, in *African Affairs* 28.

³⁶ REPORTER., Mungiki Members Censured, *Daily Nation*, December 21, 2000, 14.

³⁷ Literally meaning: tying, imprisoning, binding, enslavement or conditioning.

Basically, there is nothing more opposed to Christian principles than injustice. In the following paragraph, Diane B. Stinton explains this contradictory phenomenon:

The way I look at the Christian scene vis-à-vis all the difficulties we face, as nation-the fact that when you go into government circles you encounter people who say they are Christians. You go into business they are there! Private enterprise and so on, you will find people who claim to be Christians, who therefore claim to know Christ. And yet what they do in day in and day out six days of week, apart from Sunday going to service, there is no indication that they have met Christ or that he means anything to them. And that is what I find rather disturbing. In other words, I don't think Christians are making difference. And you have to ask whether they actually know this Jesus Christ at all.³⁸

According to the Mungiki, since God does not support corruption, it follows that the corrupt Christians do not worship God.

In spite of condemning of Christianity, the Mungiki constantly refer to certain sections of the Old Testament, especially those related to Yahweh's liberation of his people against oppressors. They also quote the Bible sparingly when they want to prove a point, or to demonstrate that the Christians do not abide with it. They also subscribe to certain rituals in the Bible, which they find relevant to Africans and traditional beliefs.

Mungiki members have tried to mobilize the Kenyan masses to fight against the yoke of mental slavery, introduced through religion and colonialism. Subsequently, Agikuyu should establish and retain links with *Ngai* their God just as the Jews continue worshipping their God. "They also extend their call to denounce Western culture and religion to all ethnic groups in Kenya and to observe *kigongoona* (spirituality), which,

³⁸ D. B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa*, 41-42.

according to them was lost with the introduction of Christianity.”³⁹ This has in turn brought about many social, political and economic problems, for example, moral decay, poverty, diseases, unemployment and political upheavals, among others.

Mungiki implores Agikuyu and other people of Kenya to adopt their own traditional religion and worship in the manner of their ancestors. As an indispensable condition for any change, Mungiki advocates for the teaching of African indigenous values. This is referred to as *kirira* which is a stage of sensitization on the consequences of abandoning African culture and religion. Each ethnic community should be taught its religious values and how to mobilize its people in the time of need. A case in point is the role played by the Gikuyu religion during the Mau Mau struggle against colonial oppression. “*Kirira* should lead to a cleansing ritual known as *guthera*”⁴⁰. This consists of traditional rites, denouncing foreign culture and religion. Mungiki advocates for a more genuine and practical religion. Christianity, according to them, has never benefited Africans. It has always been used as an instrument of oppression and disunity.

The Mungiki challenge the divine mandate of Christianity. This is made evident in their numerous campaigns called *chiungano*, meetings. Herein, they theologically challenge Christianity by arguing that exploiters and oppressors cannot preach the good news of liberation. Christianity is branded as blasphemous since its adherents do not practice what they preach. Some Mungiki apologetics have given equal resentment by stating that:

It should be remembered that the group is among the positive religious political movements, which have sprung up because of the failure of

³⁹ G. WAMUE, Mungiki Politics, in *Wajibu*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1999, 15.

⁴⁰ G. WAMUE, Revisiting Our Indigenous Shrines, 461.

Christianity and Islam to redeem the masses from oppression, greed, materialism and nepotism. Moreover, the leaders of the churches are too rich and elitist to help Kenyans. The Mungiki sect helps fill up the religious vacuum. In Kenya's independent struggle, cults such as Gikuyu independent Churches and *Dini ya Musabwa* united various tribes against a common foe. Today it is Mungiki that plays this role.⁴¹

The cases of Mungiki defectors have brought an absolutely new picture of the entire movement. The fact that the government has provided amnesty to the Mungiki defectors has acerbated the defection. Besides, the defection of the Mungiki national coordinator Ndura Waruingi and his conversion to *Neno* (Word) Church has revealed the strength of the movement. This is in the sense that other leaders have come to the fore-front in place of Ndura Waruingi and other defecting leaders. It has been argued that Waruingi defected when he realized that his leadership ambitions could never be realized in the Mungiki movement. Although from the Bible, there are examples of people who were converted after having been completely anti-Christ like Paul, it is hard to establish whether Waruingi really got converted. Probably, it is another strategy to camouflage in order to attain his ambitions. Through the massive defections, the secret teachings of Mungiki movement have been exposed. In a discussion with a Mungiki defector in Dandora, the defector expressed his regrets for joining Mungiki. Since his defection, he has joined a Pentecostal church and now regarded himself as a preacher in the making. This sudden conversion is also a cause of concern.

Mungiki defectors are living under fear of being executed by Mungiki diehards. "The defectors have been forced to abandon the warmth of their homes and instead, seek shelter in city lodgings as they play cat-and-mouse game with the sect's killers who

⁴¹ www.nationaudio.com/news/dailynation/13062000

are trying to hunt them down.”⁴² Some of the defectors are now seeking help to leave the country for fear of death threats from Mungiki diehards. The larger society has also stigmatized the defectors. For instance, most of the defectors have been evicted from residential areas because the neighbors feel insecure. Close allies of the defectors desert them while the stigma continues to affect their career. This is a clear demonstration that the society dreads those alleged to be Mungiki followers.

1.6 Conclusion

Section 78 (1) of the Kenyan constitution has provided room for the religious groups and other associations:

no person shall be hindered from enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, or freedom both alone or with others, in public and private, to propagate his religion or belief or worship, teaching practice and observance except with his/her own consent.

However, there is more to the Mungiki movement than meets the ordinary eye. There has been a general feeling that religion has been utilized for political reasons. The movement regards the government and the mainstream churches (for example, Catholic and Anglican) as its enemies. In turn, church leaders have trivialized the Mungiki as a satanic movement, “out to cause chaos and anarchy with their retrogressive teaching.”⁴³ Certainly, Mungiki cannot be suppressed by use of excessive police force as employed by the government or by condemnation. A more meaningful and honest solution can be found which is different from the government

⁴² C. KINYUNGU, *Murdered: Sect Members Who Said No to Mungiki*, in *Daily Nation*, June 19, 2004, 13.

⁴³ J. AKOLO, & J. WANGUSI, “Mungiki Acts Wont be Tolerated – Abong’o”, in *East Africa Standard*, October 4, 2000, 38.

approach. Above all, following the general metamorphosis of the movement, it has become increasingly clear that Mungiki is a pseudo-religious, pseudo-political and quasi-military organization. It expresses the hopelessness that has been created by deteriorating complex social, political and economic situations. More importantly, Mungiki movement is made up of the marginalized members of the Gikuyu community that are looking forward towards the establishment of the Kirinyaga Kingdom.

CHAPTER TWO

MUNGIKI MOVEMENT: CHARACTERISTICS, FACTORS UNDERLYING ITS UPSURGE AND CHALLENGES IT POSES

2.1 Introduction

The Church has a prophetic call to study the signs of the time in every context. This is a realization that the Spirit of God is at work to bring about the redemption of people in places where the Gospel has been embraced and among those who have never heard the Gospel.⁴⁴ By so doing, it continues to plan on how to be relevant to the real needs in the present times as well as the future.

The emergence of Mungiki in Central Kenya is a forceful sign of the time that the Church cannot ignore if it is to continue to be relevant in the region. In terms of numbers, Christianity is rapidly spreading, but so does injustice, corruption, theft and other social ills previously unknown in the community. A bishop in an AMECEA meeting admitted, “Although Christianity has made great progress in Africa, it also faces problems and challenges. In big cities, like Accra, Lagos, Nairobi and Kampala, the relevance of Christianity and even of Christ is being seriously questioned.”⁴⁵

The presence of Mungiki is an example of questioning and a new challenge to the Church in Kenya. This section attempts to study the challenges posed by the Mungiki in Central Kenya. The reflection commences with a brief discussion on the general study of the sectarian groups with special reference to their origins and the mission.

⁴⁴ C.f E. P. DEBERRI & J. E. HUNG, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 4th Edition, 18.

⁴⁵ E. A. OBENG, Ministerial Formation For an Effective Church in Africa, in *Pastoral Care in African Christianity*, Ed. Douglas W. Waruta, 13.

2.2 Definitions

The terms sect and cult are interchangeably used in this work. The two terms, however, are somewhat derogatory and seem to imply a rather negative value judgment. Instead, one might prefer to use neutral phrases like 'new religion', 'unconventional', 'movement' or 'fringe'. The truth of the matter, however, is that:

The cults or a new religious movement presents diverse and complex organizations whose significance cannot be gauged without reference to the social, cultural and religious situation. Consequently their nature, characteristics, significance and the implications cannot be summarized in, much less determined by a single narrow definition.⁴⁶

Subsequently, different groups of scholars would give varied meanings depending on the nature of study they are undertaking. For example, a psychologist would differ from a sociologist and a theologian would also give a different definition altogether.

The word cult is derived from Latin *cultus* which traditionally implied a specific form of worship or a ritual within a religious tradition. For this work, the term cult is defined as "any religious group with distinctive world view of its own derived, but not identical with, the teaching of a major world religion"⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ J. A. SALIBA, *New Religious Movements*, 1.

⁴⁷ J. E. MCGUIRE, Education Effort and Plans, in *Cults, Sects, and the New Age*, Ed. James J. Le Bar 100.

2.3 Characteristics of a Cult or a Sect

A sect is a close-knit community, which denounces the goals of a dominant culture and opposes social authority passively or actively. It has a strong held esoteric belief system and a high level of social cohesiveness. Its members are deeply influenced by the groups' behavioral norms. "The cult members impute a transcendent role to their leader"⁴⁸ and relate to him or her like doctor and a patient. They brainwash and curtail the freedom of the adherents. An all-powerful tyrannical leader initiates and closely monitors the activities of the members with the aim of totally controlling the adherents.

The members of the group have little or no personal identity, hence become an easy target of manipulation and control. Basically, there are different types of cults or sects. They include destructive cults, which advocate violence, and "benign" cults, which are considered to be relatively harmless even though their teachings and practices may be out of step with societal or theological norms. There are also commercial cults that are geared towards faking prayer to extort money from the client also called "fake-it-till-you-make-it" groups, the "pay-to-pray" or "pay-more-to-advance" variety, one-on-one cultic relationships, corporate cults, pseudo-religious cults and pseudo-political cults, among others. Mungiki is a small highly visible and violent reverse cult that embarked on African Traditional Religion forms of spirituality having been dissatisfied and indeed disenchanted with Western Christendom. It carries the bits and pieces of the traits manifested by a majority of cults. "Church history stipulates that sects have been in existence since the beginning of Christianity."⁴⁹ For example, early centuries of the

⁴⁸ M. GALANTER, *Cults, Faith Healing and Coercion*, 197.

⁴⁹ S. GALILEA, *Catholics and the Sects*, 5.

Church were marked by uprisings of cults including Gnostics, Manichaeism and “Knights of Templar,”⁵⁰ among others.

2.4 Reasons That Attract the Youth to Cultic Movements

Amongst the most vulnerable groups to the cults are youth. However, many people find it hard to understand the factors and motives that lead young adults to abandon a traditional and respected religious faith community in order to accept an apparent unorthodox ideology and to be committed to unconventional religious life style. The decision to join these movements is always premeditated. In his own words, Saliba asserts that:

Most of the individuals who join the cults had already embarked on spiritual or religious quest before they ever came into contact with the movements. They are therefore not passive bystanders who have been unwittingly lured into a new religious movement.⁵¹

2.4.1. Distress and Crises

Distress, crises situations or general vulnerability can produce needs and inspiration which become basic motivations for turning to sects. For example, cults are likely to emerge, “a time when the values of society are felt to be inadequate in addressing major issues. Individuals are more prone to join if they are unhappy or are facing situational problems or chronic distress and if they have limited ties to family and friends.”⁵² Seemingly, the cults are vents through which the society absorbs or manages the conflict. This problem is more acute especially in Africa, even though

⁵⁰ G. D. CHRYSSIDES, *Exploring New Religious Movements*, 59.

⁵¹ J. A. SALIBA, *Perspective on Religious Movements*, 126.

⁵² M. GALANTER, *Cults, Faith Healing and Coercion*, 197.

many Africans have embraced Western Christianity. “In times of danger (such as drought, war or calamity) the traditional religious activities are revived in order to meet the demands of the time.”⁵³

The same case applies to the Agikuyu, despite Christianization they still seek recourse to our traditional religious practices. According to Be’neze’t Bujo:

In existentially critical situations, even the intellectuals and the loyal churchgoers return to their fore fathers’ practices. Apparently to them the challenges of the existential problems cannot be solved within a technologically oriented society or within the Church of foreign origin.⁵⁴

Bujo’s statement makes apparent the true nature of the Mungiki movement. It is a movement that came up as a result of distress. It is intrinsically driven by the inherent nature of an African to turn back to traditional beliefs and practices as a remedy to crisis situations.

2.4.2. Deprivations and Disillusionment Among the Youth

An overview study of the youth in our society gives a glimpse of the disillusionments they face. The youth are inspired by the hope that they will create a better world than their forebears and the fear that they will make things worse⁵⁵. Besides, the youth are also motivated by an urge to become independent in terms of socio economic status. Thus, they believe socio-economic and political autonomy will liberate them from the need to depend on their parents in meeting their daily requirements and in making decisions.

⁵³ J. S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd Edition, 17.

⁵⁴ B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 1.

⁵⁵ Cf. A. SHORTER & E. ONYANCHA, *Secularism in Africa*, 100-114.

However, in the process of transition from childhood to adulthood, the youth have faced some unprecedented social, political and economic constraints. These dramatic changes arising from the material and social conditions of existence in a particular society have been accelerated by:

- Extraordinary increase in population.
- Urbanization.
- Technological revolutions in communications and information processing and dissemination.
- The culture of violence.
- Unemployment.

In this environment, the established behavior and advice of the older generation is rendered irrelevant. Consequently, these circumstances have led to the disorientation of the youth, which is a major consequence of secularization.

2.4.3. Increase in Population

As a matter of fact, the youth are the fastest growing segment of the population. The population increase has brought serious social, economic and demographic implications in the Central Province, like the rest of Kenya. A growing population puts a strain on our economic and the social resources which in the long run result into increased unemployment. While the youth form the majority, the society has

denied them access to ownership and to means of production. Subsequently, the youth do not participate in the production of the society's means of livelihood.⁵⁶

2.4.4. Accelerated Urbanization

The youth are vulnerable to radical changes that have occurred in recent times. These changes have incapacitated the parents' ability to meet the material needs of their children, especially in rural areas. In addition, the rural neighborhood does not offer the variety of jobs needed to develop their talents. Because of these constraints, many of the youth migrate to urban centers to look for desired better economic options. This results in ever-decreasing job opportunities and subsequent indulgence in crime related activities. Some of the youth indulge in sexual immorality thus exposing themselves to unwanted pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), including the dreaded HIV/ AIDS. Alcohol and drugs are readily available in many places. The propensity of young people to experiment with such substances is frequently exploited for financial gain.

2.4.5. Intense Competition at School and in the Areas of Employment

Competitions for job opportunities and training has increased tremendously and those who fail to acquire jobs may be psychologically damaged and perhaps even contemplate suicide. This state of hopelessness among the unemployed

⁵⁶ J. LEBULU, Youth in the Threshold of the Year 2000, The Church and the World Hope in the Youth, in *AFER*, Vol. 31, No.1, 213.

young people frequently encourages them to engage in immoral behaviors. These can be described as a form of survival tactics or escapism.

2.4.6. Political Manipulation

The youth are also easily manipulated by state policy making powers in the implementation of any political agenda. Undoubtedly, Mungiki came to the limelight of controversy as a result of manipulation by the politicians. They are alleged to have perpetrated political assassination and as a result, they have acquired a bad name. It seems that the original idea was very religious oriented. However, with the manipulation or interferences by politician it ended up being a pseudo-militia group. Consequently the manipulation by politicians has caused immense disillusionment since it has also frustrated their original goals.

2.4.7. Disruption of Family

The traditional society was based on kinship system. Basically, it had a well structured system that handed down values, norms, and patterns of life. However, due to socio-economic changes, the family has disintegrated as evidenced by the alarming number of divorce cases, cohabitation and single parental-hood, among others. This makes it difficult for children to receive proper initiation into the way of life adapted by the society. In the real sense, there is a disharmony between social, political, economic and cultural changes. The culture lags behind while other aspects, that is, social and political structures have massively changed.⁵⁷ Without proper family and

⁵⁷ Cf. J. LEBULU, *The Youth on the Thresh-hold of the Year 2000*, *AFER*, 217.

societal security, the youth have been seriously frustrated by unprecedented changes they are facing.

In the long run, the disruption of normal family relations, intense competition at school and in the area of employment creates considerable stress that induces violence among the youth. In this breath,

As long as people are ignored, as long as they are voiceless, as long as they are trampled by the iron feet of exploitation, there is danger that they, like children, will have their emotional outbursts which will break out in violence in the streets.⁵⁸

Subsequently, the youth want to vent their frustration on society and give forcible expression to their feelings. In this regard, the Mungiki movement appears to offer human warmth, care and support in small and close-knit communities to many disillusioned youths. This serves:

... to provide the re-socialization of the marginalized youth, the new community gives them free social space. Here they can find shelter, psychological security, and solidarity. In this new association they create a new world, a new existence for themselves, a way from harsh and brutalizing realities of the former existence.⁵⁹

The 1986, Vatican's report on cults, sects and NRMs outlined the various needs and inspirations that render people to join these groups as follows:

- Quest for belonging.
- Search for answers.
- The search for wholeness.
- The search for cultural identity.

⁵⁸ M.L. KING, *Where do we go From Here: Chaos or Community?* 112-113.

⁵⁹ SECAM, *New Christian Movement in Africa and Madagascar*, 17.

- The search to be recognized and special.
- Search for transcendence.
- The need for spiritual guidance.
- The need of participation and involvement.

According to the document, these are genuine needs and inspiration of the human spirit and the Church should strive to provide the opportunities for their fulfillment.⁶⁰

By and large, these are factors that have prompted many youths in the Central Province to join the Mungiki movement. The movement has remained attractive to the youth because of its claim to bring liberation as well as restore life and dignity to the youth. The Mungiki Movement and other similar cults galvanize and help the youth to overcome self-doubt and self-abasement. Membership in this movement promises a realization of full humanity, faith, hope and courage to continue struggling, in spite of all obstacles and costs. For example, the Mungiki has transmuted the hope for spiritual Kingdom of God held up by the Scripture, into the Kirinyaga Kingdom, which implies that political, social and cultural autonomy and progress may be enjoyed now on earth. Coupled by great enthusiasm in the dedication and commitment to the ideals of the movement (that is liberation of the Agikuyu people) the young find it irresistible. However, the fact that some percentage of those who join Mungiki defect after a year or two suggest that this movement does not always deliver what it claims to promote and leave some of its members disappointed. The seemingly attractive features and promises

⁶⁰ Cf. *Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and NRMs*, 1986, No, 10-19.

creativity, ecstasy, freedom to flow with experience), undermine those very qualities, which form the essential nature of womanhood.¹⁰¹

Both, male and female are victims of this situation. Whether we are male or female, we all possess a feminine and masculine dimension we more or less are conscious of. Both are needed at personal and societal level alike.¹⁰² The feminine points to the power of the heart; the masculine is focussed on the head. While the masculine articulates the need to dominate and control, the feminine extols the inner freedom of "letting be" and "letting go." The feminine consciousness is essential for going meaningfully through the process of pain, disorientation, and ecstasy that marks every new becoming.¹⁰³ The feminine can live with chaos and change; it does not suffer from the male obsession for law and order. Indeed, it believes that the chaos can be life-giving and highly creative.¹⁰⁴

This integration is a life process. We are called to grow in consciousness, honesty, and courage and to struggle with this duality in us, trying to integrate this inherent tension. According to O'Murchú learning to embrace the chaos, acknowledging its cultural and personal impact, and striving to integrate its effect on

¹⁰¹ O'MURCHÚ, *Reclaiming Spirituality*, 109

¹⁰² As we are emerging from a protected era of masculine consciousness, there is a need felt for complementarity. Integration of our masculine and feminine consciousness is called for. Before though any integration on conscious level becomes possible both men and women have to get in touch with their contra-sexual side, their invisible partner that constitutes their unconscious shadow-side. Many men are not aware of the invisible partner they host, their anima, and likewise many women are not aware of their animus as they constantly feel threatened by the male world and are not inclined to embrace this part of themselves. If men and women are not in touch with their opposite pole, they will have difficulty relating with someone of the other sex in a mature and fruitful way.

¹⁰³ O'MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition. Making Sense of a Changing World*, 97.
"The evolutionary shift which we are going through defies rational explanation. The masculine frame of mind cannot grasp nor "control" what's going on. The feminine stance that is more in touch with the unconscious and hidden energies of the psyche is very urgently needed at this time."

"The current transition is from a dominant male-power image (top-down) "bossy mentality", "isolation" to the emerging female-enabling image (from the centre out) "inclusive mentality", "togetherness."" O'MURCHÚ, *Our World in Transition*, 103

¹⁰⁴ "So, our rational mind needs to embrace intuition and imagination; the anthropocentric will to power needs to learn the wisdom of non-violence; we need to come home to a deeper awareness that everything within and around us is alive." O'MURCHÚ, *Evolutionary Faith*, 200.

2.5.2. Understanding and Addressing the Reality of the Youth

As pointed out, the social and economic context of the youth has triggered the emergence of the Mungiki cult. This means that those people who have joined the movement should not be seen as problems but as people who need to be understood.⁶³ The real cases are poverty, injustice, exploitation, marginalization and isolation of the youth, among others. Consequently, many youth have lost their sense of belonging. In turn, they vent their anger by joining the Mungiki. As any other cult, Mungiki is not a panacea to the problems in the society. This is because it does not have the means to solve the problems. Although the Church has been on the forefront in addressing social, political and economic problems, there is need for more concerted efforts, based on clear and distinct understanding of the issue at hand. More specifically, factors that trigger emergence of cults should be addressed in more pragmatically. This presupposes that, if the churches are serious about responding to the new religious wave, they have to make deliberate plans and policies that address the social, political and economic ills that undermine human lives.⁶⁴ “We need the holy anger of Jesus that overturn tables”⁶⁵, to bridge the gaps between the rich and poor.

⁶³ Cf. Meeting for African Collaboration (MAC), SECAM, *New Religious Movements in Africa and Madagascar*, 21.

⁶⁴ Cf. A. U. NEBECHUKWU, *The Prophetic Mission of the Church in the Context of Social and Political Oppression in Africa*, in *AFER*, Vol. 33, No. 5, 275.

⁶⁵ J. M. WALIGGO, *The External Debts in the Continued Marginalization of Africa*, in *Marginalized Africa*, Ed, Peter Kanyandogo, 53.

2.5.3. Integrating the Agikuyu Religious World View with Christianity

The Church in Central Kenya has the immense task of presenting Christ to people by first of all integrating into its teaching, the aspect of the Agikuyu religious world view. As a matter of fact, the faith Gospel and dualistic spirituality has brought a major set back in integrating the Gospel into the Agikuyu spirituality. The faith Gospel is so illusive to an extent that it attributes problems of poverty and health, among others, to lack of faith in Christ. Subsequently, the Gospel is presented in such a triumphant and partisan way. This has in turn impoverished and even distorted the following of Jesus. "To be poor is to have sinned or to lack in faith." ⁶⁶ On the other hand, the dualistic spirituality has ostensibly permeated in the Church for a long duration and its effects are still evident. The principle behind dualism asserts that, matter is of no value whereas the spirit is of value. This form of spirituality calls for a flight from the world, which is perceived to be evil. Besides, it is permeated by a conviction that everything which one lacks in this world shall be achieved in the future.

Many of the problems in Central Kenya and Kenya in general, are rooted in political and economic exploitation. However, the faith gospel and dualistic form of spirituality ignores the political and economic causes of poverty and reduces everything to a question of faith. It is individualistic since it ignores the general population. This is in the sense that non-Christians cannot enjoy abundance, as the fruits of Jesus' sacrifice belong only to the believers. It follows that faith is an individual possession which leads

⁶⁶SECAM, *New Christian Movement in Africa and Madagascar*, 14.

to individual success. Certainly, this theology undermines the community, the very fabric of unity. In this connection, Gustavo Gutierrez asserts that:

... any spirituality limited to minorities is today under heavy crossfire. It is challenged on one side by the spiritual experiences of the dispossessed and marginalized and those who are committed in the struggle for liberation. Out of this experience, has come the inspiration for a popular and community quest of the Lord that is incompatible with elitist models.⁶⁷

The resurgence of Mungiki is a challenge that demands reverse from individualistic trend to communal spirituality. Above all, it seeks for commitment and solidarity with the poor and marginalized in the society.

2.5.4. Doctrinal Deviations

The Church has systematized ways of operating. These include well stipulated dogmas of faith and liturgy. The sects have simple phrases that explain their belief. Considering that the sect's followers are small in number, it is possible to allow participation by all adherents in planning, leadership and worship.

They do not have strict catechetical formulation, like the mainline churches. There are no complex dogmas to understand. Especially for young people who are put off by a series of instructions or intellectual hurdles of one kind or another.⁶⁸

The vast majority of Kenyans, who are today consigned to the fringe of life, will hardly embrace a religion solely for its intellectual content (for example, in doctrines). According to George Ehusan, "religion for our people who are largely on the edge of society is a matter of satisfaction or hunger, freedom or slavery, safety or fear,

⁶⁷ G. GUTIERREZ, *We Drink from our own Well*, 14.

⁶⁸ A. SHORTER, *New Religious Movement*, 77.

be understood.”⁷⁰ Above all, the Church should help the ex-Mungiki in the reintegration into the community. However, there are some cases where the ex-Mungiki members have received death threats from the cult members. As a result, there is need for involvement of the government for protection of the ex- Mungiki members.

2.6 Conclusion

The phenomenon of cults or sects is double-edged in the sense that they challenge the Church as well as offer an opportunity to rethink on how to lead Christian life. This is an observation that is amplified by Saliba:

They offer an excellent opportunity for the Christians Church to better understand and execute its mission, to adapt and react more meaningfully and relevantly to the changing needs, problems, and conditions of the modern age, and reform, reevaluate itself in the spirit of the Gospel.⁷¹

This chapter has treated in length the subject of cults and sects. A fundamental observation is that there are varied reasons that promote the emergence of cults. These aspects are apparently lacking in the church. Owing to the fact that the Mungiki is still an unfolding phenomenon, our Christian response should be more of a pastoral than a doctrinal issue. The cults are not a threat to the Church but a stimulant to more efficacious pastoral approach. It is apparent that Christians have been involved in projects geared towards human development. These include, construction of schools and hospitals, fight for human rights and against vices like corruption and slavery, among others. However, the resurgence of Mungiki has prompted the question, “What have we not done that the young in our community have renounced the Church and

⁷⁰ W.M. K. BURTNER, Helping the Ex-cultist, in *The Cults, Sects and Other New Movements*, 63.

⁷¹ J. A. SALIBA, *Perspectives on New Religious Movements*, 192.

opted for traditional religious worship?” This question triggers a response from the Christians and subsequent practical suggestions that could enable them to resolve the conflict. Our next chapter grapples with this question in an attempt to give practical solutions.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE MUNGIKI MOVEMENT

3.1 Introduction

Having established the challenges posed by the Mungiki movement to the Church, this chapter now attempts to give pastoral proposals and practical recommendations in response to the Mungiki conflict. The Scripture text below marks the basis of this chapter's discussion;

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (cf. Luke 4:16-21).

Jesus scandalized the rich, the powerful and the influential people of His time because, contrary to their expectation, He showed greater solidarity with the poor, the weak, the simple, the lowly, the neglected and the forgotten people.

When crucified between two criminals Jesus ended as he had lived in solidarity with the society's victims rather than with society's success. His crucifixion disclosed a privileged place where we should expect the self revelation of God among the world failures and victims.⁷²

Subsequently, in this milieu, Christians are invited to continue actualizing the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. This is more specifically in our society, which is clogged with poverty that has its roots in oppression, exploitation and other socio-economic imbalances that inspire the emergence and evolvment of groups such as Mungiki.

⁷² G. O'COLLINS, *Contemporary Christian Insights, Interpreting Jesus*, 95.

3.1.1 Dialogue

The churches' response to Mungiki and similar movements has largely been characterized by a mixture suspicion and intolerance. However, a Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium* 16, has succinctly affirmed that there is a ray of truth in the other world religious and social movements. Consequently, the Christians should establish that ray of truth, which may be found in the Mungiki movement. This can be done in an atmosphere of dialogue, which should be practical and sincere. Dialogue remains indispensable even in the face of the difficulties arising from conservatism or aggression of Mungiki adherents. An approach that employs dialogue can only succeed if the Christians abandoned the superiority attitude and other preconceived ideas about the Mungiki movement. Such negative attitudes only yield condemnation, confrontation and rejection. More importantly, the church should rededicate most of its time to listening in order to realize the positive values of the Mungiki movement and the Gospel that heals. From an open and fruitful dialogue, the dynamics and the various aspects of the movement can be grasped to avoid generalization and mistaken pastoral response.⁷³

3.1.2 Education and Catechesis

“In our contemporary African society, education has become so closely associated with literacy that many people cannot think of an illiterate person as being educated.”⁷⁴ This contemporary view of education is anemic when compared with the

⁷³ Cf. J. MOLTAM, Dialogue, in *AFER* Vol. 33, Nos. 1&2, 74.

⁷⁴ J. N.K. MUGAMBI, *African Christian Theology*, 105.

indigenous education where literacy was not an integral part of education. The major concern of traditional society was to inculcate and transmit survival values and good character that helped an individual to face the challenges of life. There is need for a review in our education system to make it holistic and integral in order to impart knowledge that can help the youth not only in passing exams but also mould the character to enable them face contemporary challenges.

Catechesis is equally important particularly in the Catholic Church. Many Christians regard the last sacrament of Christian initiation as the completion of their Christian education, instead of the beginning of an active life in the Church. In this context, the knowledge of their faith remains anemic, immature and confined to initial catechesis. Subsequently, the members are easily duped into the Mungiki movement because of its seemingly superior education, that is, *kirira* which explains the cause-effect and the solution to problems facing the society. Basically, these teachings are hardly new or original. Rather, they are also found in the Christian teaching. The catechism should adapt to the present time by imparting knowledge about the cults and their various deceptive means of wooing the youth. By so doing, the young generation will be well equipped with the word of God. On the other hand, they will be forewarned about the dangers of joining the cults. The catechesis should bring awareness about their identity, the meaning of their lives and encourage the virtues of honesty, fidelity and responsibility in the Christian life.

3.1.3 Conversion and Fight Against Injustice

Christians in different parts of the world have been massively affected by scandals, which the media has exposed to an astronomic magnitude. For example, gay marriage, pedophilia cases, “miracle babies”⁷⁵ and injustices such as discrimination against women among others have characterized the church in many parts. These scandals have given Christianity a bad reputation. Consequently, there is need for conversion. Bishops, pastors, nuns, brothers and theologians need to abandon the perception of the Church in terms of power and privileges that portrays them as elites in the society. They should identify with the weak, vulnerable, and powerless in the slums, unemployed, workers in factories, victims of violence and oppression, among others. When they give authentic witness to the disadvantaged people, the perception of Christianity and the work of God will be viewed in a new dimension, and the Gospel of Christ will be “listened to with new ears”.

Many of the Africans’ social, political and economic problems are not accidental. Instead, they result from exploitation and oppression. In response to this, the Church in Kenya has done well since it has identified consistently with truth, freedom, human rights and solidarity. However, the Church’s participation in social transformation has always remained in large measure on the level of social analysis that is unaccompanied with illustrious social action. As a result, the youth are beginning to wonder if church leaders are not accomplices, in the grand design to impoverish,

⁷⁵ This is a syndicate that was unveiled by the detectives. It involved Bishop Gilbert Deya, it is alleged that he could pray for childless women to conceive and deliver miraculously. Although the case is still under investigation, it is highly suspected that Deya ministry is a syndicate of kidnapping and trafficking babies oversees in the name of miracles.

subjugate and oppress them. Christians are the light of the world and should thus be the voice of the voiceless and the defender of the weak. There is need for the Church to respond in more practical ways to the preferential situation in our time. Active non-violence could be a better option in fighting against injustice in our time.

3.1.4 Inculturation (Gaudium et Spes 58)

Although Christianity has spread in Central Kenya, some people still associate it with Europe and America, the continents where the early missionaries came. The efforts to give Christianity an African character by incarnating the Good News to the specific cultures, for example in rituals and sacred objects, among others, have not fully attained the desired objectives. Nevertheless, the Western form of worship and doctrinal orientation is in many ways foreign to Africans. “Its foreignness is a drawback because it means that Christianity is kept on the surface and it is not free to deepen its roots in all areas of African life and problems.”⁷⁶ This is implicitly buttressed by the emergence of Mungiki, especially in its renunciation of Christianity. Much more needs to be done to inculturate Christianity through, “the on going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures”.⁷⁷ Re-examination of inculturation in the light of Agikuyu culture and traditions is indispensable at this point in time. In this connection David Barrett rightly noted that, “solutions to these problems will only be found when the rich resources of the African initiative, creativity and spirituality are brought to bear on these problems in a way which has not hitherto been attempted.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ J. S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, 183.

⁷⁷ A. SHORTER, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 59.

⁷⁸ D. B. BARRET, ed., *21 Studies from Eastern and Central Africa, Initiatives in Religion*, 183.

3.1.5 Small Christian Communities (SCCs)

The Mungiki movement has continued to attract the youth by offering warmth and a place of refuge in time of distress in small knit groups. Similarly, the SCCs act as an indispensable tool in the transformation of the Church and as a means of caring for the youth who are disillusioned or distressed. Ideally the SCC was meant to enhance the local Church in becoming self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting.⁷⁹ However, although the notion of SCCs has developed over the years, it has not yet matured. As they meet week after week, they reflect on scripture. In most cases, these reflections have little meaning in their local environment.⁸⁰ Besides, they are dominated by the older generation. This makes the youth to find the SCC unhelpful to their plight. It is also symptomatic that some priests have not fully come to grips with recognizing and reorganizing the structures of the Church at grassroots level in the model of the SCCs. As a result, some Priests ignore the SCCs or regard them as a threat. In so doing, it is a major obstacle in the development of the local church.

The SCCs should not only be nice prayer groups which meet regularly, but should also be prophetic communities, linked to conflicts resolution, struggles for positive social, political and economic changes.⁸¹ Above all, the leaders of these groups should be trained in internal and external conflicts resolution arising in the community. Furthermore, there should be programs that could be attractive and effective in dealing with problems facing the youth.

⁷⁹ AMECEA Bishops, Planning for the Church in East Africa in the 1980s, in *AFER*, 16/1 and 2, 1974.

⁸⁰ Cf. J. KELLY, The Evolution of Small Christian Communities, in *AFER*, Vol 33, No 3, AMECEA, 119.

⁸¹ Cf. E. E. UZUKWU, *A Listening Church*, 119.

3.1.6 Youth Empowerment

The youth should be empowered by allowing them to access the means of production. They should be given the opportunities to participate in formulating policies that directly affect them. In that way, they will be equipped and motivated to take an active role in the communities in which they live besides participating in the process of community development.

3.1.7 Economic Policies Relevant to Africans

Africa is still a shadow of foreign policies and structures as demonstrated by emphasis on Western democracy, World Bank policies, and IMF's demands and SAPs. These policies are formulated in the West while they affect the entire world. Implementation of these policies has resulted in more social and economic problems than gains because they do not resonate with social, political and economic reality of Africa. Commenting on these policies, our author further rightly asserts:

From the devastating effects of IMF and the WB programs in Africa and the Third World, especially beginning in 1980s, development issues must never be withdrawn from the cultural, religious, political, economic, ecological and theological domains. So much is clear from the intervention of Catholic bishops at the Synod for Africa and their plea for forgiveness of the debts.⁸²

The Africans continue to be in a peripheral position in the world, being victims of exploitation, poverty and starvation. The Western world was associated with introduction of colonialism in Africa. Consequently, some have interpreted the dictatorial SAPs as contemporary neo-colonialism based on economic manipulation.

⁸² E. E. UZUKWU, *A listening Church*, 86.

The role of these bodies in re-colonization of Africa, coupled with the unfair trade agreements of GATT and the World Trade Organization, leaves the impression that the predatory attitude of the Western towards Africa has not changed. How else does one explain the attitude of these organizations, established by the United States and Britain to rebuild the world financial system and international trade after the Second World War, in describing such death-dealing peals for Africans?⁸³

This is the glaring and severe reality in the rural and urban rural areas, for example, Eastlands of Nairobi where the majority of the Mungiki members reside. The WB and IMF, the master planners of the SAPs, should be considerate of the imbalances and injustice caused by their policies. They should give their policies a human face by addressing specific needs of the developing countries.

On the other hand, it is evident that these SAPs, might never benefit the Africans as they are geared towards benefiting the Western countries. This presupposes that the Africans will perpetually be oppressed by the policies in as far as they are formulated in the West. African nations must re-think their roles in the globalizing world. Formulation of friendly and African based policies by African intellectuals and economists, could be the ultimate solution to this problem.

3.2 Synthesis

Mungiki is an amorphous movement that keeps adapting to new strategies for survival amidst hostile administration, suspicious general public and inquisitive scholars. These complexities make it difficult to develop precise strategies for an effective pastoral approach towards the Mungiki Christian conflict. Apparently, the suggestions offered by this work cannot be considered as ultimate and exhaustive

⁸³ Ibid

resolution strategies for the Mungiki conflict. Subsequently, there is need for new innovations, which could really solve the conflict between the Mungiki and the Christians.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, we embarked on laying the background of the problem, that is, the proliferation of NRMs in different parts of Kenya as well as in the world. While the upsurge of these movements is a startling phenomenon to scholars, the social, economic, political and religious factors coupled by African Renaissance have remained the major causes of their emergence. Subsequently, a study of these movements will inevitably demand addressing most of these factors.

In the second chapter, the resurgence of the religious movements is discussed at length, using Mungiki movement as the case study. The origins, mission and objectives of Mungiki have been examined. Undoubtedly, the work reaffirms that socio-economic, political and religious manipulation and exploitation forms the basis of the movement. The youth become easy prey since they are the worst hit by the above conditions. Their vulnerable position which denies them access to accumulation of wealth and social status explains why they constitute the majority members of Mungiki.

Seemingly, the Mungiki movement is perceived by its members as a tool for the much needed liberation of the Agikuyu. This liberation, according to Mungiki, can be achieved through violent renunciation of the Western religion and practices. In the circumstances, it is correct to state that Mungiki movement serves as a stimulant which activates people to rise against oppression and struggle for their total liberation. Its members blame other parties for causing their plight. First of all, they accuse Westerners for brain-washing and subsequently exploiting Africans politically,

economically and socially. Secondly, they accuse the older generation for naively imbibing Westernization.

Although there is freedom of worship in Kenya, the larger public holds the Mungiki movement in contempt. Mungiki adherents violent conduct and weird political involvements prompted the government to out-law it as a movement. On the contrary, history informs the present that violence can never be justified as a means to solve problems. In this regard, revolutionist Martin Luther's advice given in part, is appropriate:

A great social change must be non-violent. If one is in search for a better job, it does not help to burn the factory. If one needs more adequate education, shooting the principal will not help. To destroy anything, person or property, cannot bring us closer to the goal that we seek.⁸⁴

Following the threat from the government, the Mungiki members have gone underground, while continuing to recruit new members secretly. Mungiki members seem to advocate violence as a means to achieve their objective. The truth is that the "spiral of violence initially launched by injustice (as in the case of Mungiki origins) will never stop until injustice; the mother of violence is rooted out."⁸⁵ Their ideal but ultimate objective is the restoration of the mythologized Kirinyaga Kingdom, a kingdom devoid of the present socio-economic and political injustices, which will bring all the Agikuyu together.

Apparently, there is grain of truth in the Mungiki explanation of the causes of the current social injustices. However, their interpretation of Christianity as an already glorified community, which is devoid of sin and error, is entirely wrong.

⁸⁴ L. LOKOS, *House Divided: The Life and Legacy of Martin Luther King*, 462.

⁸⁵ Cf. J. O. ODEY, *The Days of the Jackal*, 38.

Seemingly, most Christians have also condemned Mungiki without proper understanding of the movement. Although the cultural tradition of those who introduced Christianity to Africa may be irrelevant for the needs of Africa today, the Bible and Jesus cannot be irrelevant. This is a truth that the Catholic Church should address by fully incarnating the Good News of liberation to all, that is, the Mungiki and the Christians alike.

The third chapter provides a detailed examination of various characteristics of cults or sects. Remarkable characteristics of the cults are the profound use of rituals, shrines and spiritual elitism or esotericism. Particular individuals such as the founder or the leader have 'prophetic powers', serving as indispensable links in the spiritual chain. These individuals possess powerful personality that hypnotize and control the adherents. On the basis of these characteristics, Mungiki movement has positively been identified as a cult.

Crises such as political oppression, economic depression and other social upheavals such as violence and youth disillusionment are the main causes of cults. These conditions contribute to feelings of insecurity and accentuated or revived religious fears and needs. Although the highlighted factors spring from social inequalities, there is an authentic search for God, especially by those who wish to correct disorders and meaninglessness in life. Based on this understanding, the Mungiki movement is a sign of the time and a challenge to the Church in Central Kenya. In response, the Church Kenya should carefully study the causes of the movements to

enable it address the needs of the followers with a view to offer suitable solutions available in Jesus teaching.

The fourth chapter has offered practical suggestions on the pastoral perspective regarding Mungiki conflict. As observed, the Church is challenged by the very fact of its mission to be compassionate with the poor such as those who have joined the Mungiki movement. Just as Christ identified with the oppressed, so should the Church approach the oppressed Mungiki adherents with love and understanding. Among the practical solutions offered to resolve the Mungiki conflict include: more commitment to dialogue, SCC education, inculturation and empowerment of the youth. In addition, African leaders have to shape their political and economic destiny by formulating policies that are in line with the reality of the continent. By so doing, the Africans will be free from the predatory Western formulated policies and will subsequently have a voice in the fast globalizing world.

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APPENDIX I



Njenga



Waruinge

The two Mungiki founder members who claim to have received apparitions to lead the Agikuyu back to their traditional cultures and practices.

APPENDIX II



Photo/ File

A suspected Mungiki adherent sniffs away. Chemicals from India used to lace the snuff were found following a police raid on a clinic at Mukurwa kwa Reuben. The chemicals will be handed over to the Government Chemist for analysis.

APPENDIX III

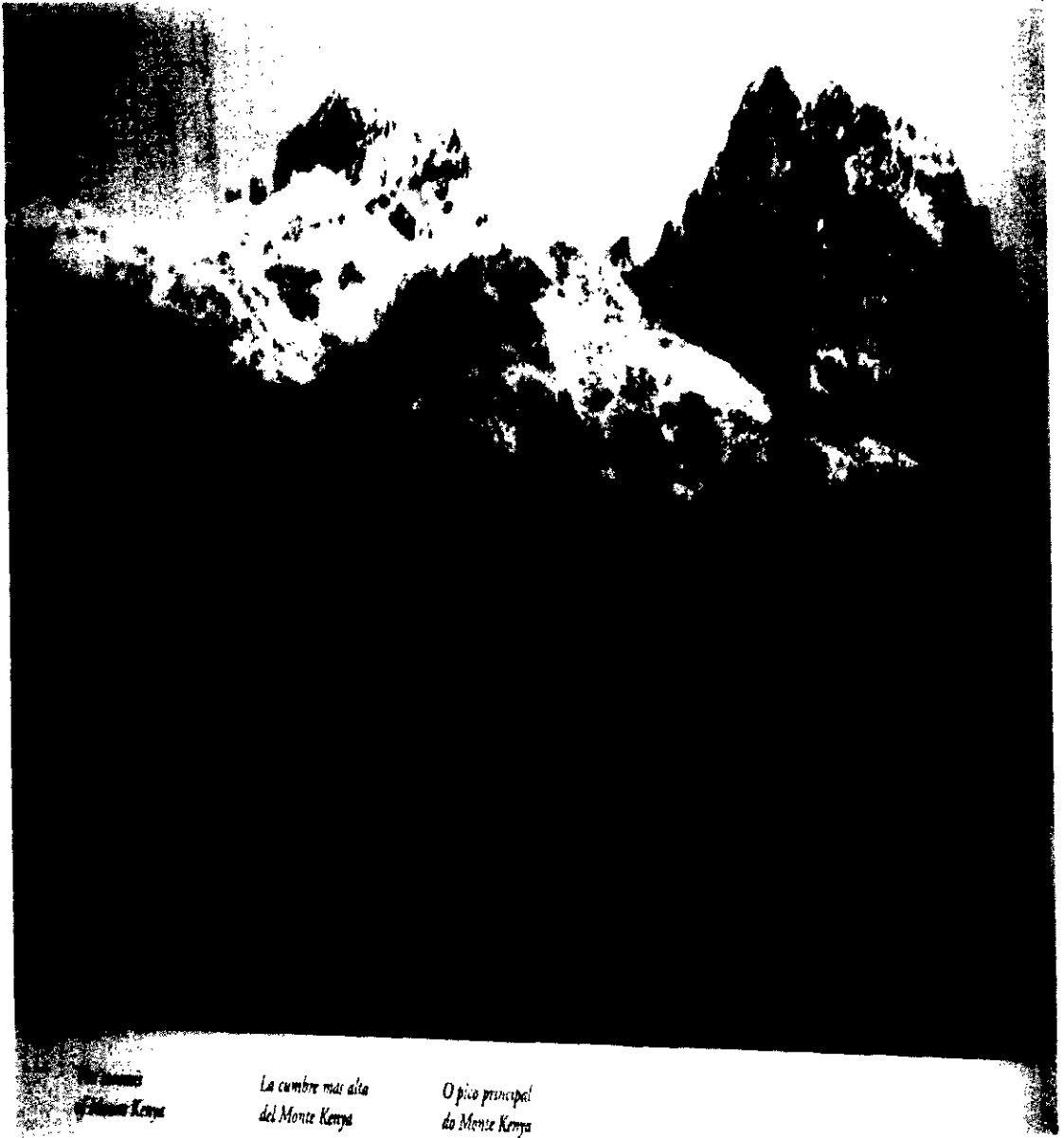


Some Nairobi defectors have said that on Racecourse Road in Nairobi they suspected to be a member of the sect's hit squad that is targeting them for elimination. A school headteacher's idea gave birth the dreaded movement.

They met at a hotel in Nairobi connections with the sect.

Among the group are prominent and sponsors has been accumulating wealth by establishing illegal businesses.

APPENDIX IV



A picture of Mount Kenya, Mungiki adherents pray facing this mountain.