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Alcohol Abuse: Is the Central Region of Kenya Smarting from the Breach of Mau Mau Oaths?

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Abstract

The article sets out to examine the correlation between the drinking problem that has beset youth of Central Kenya and the oaths that were taken by residents in the region in the wake of the struggle for socio-political and economic independence (in 1950s). It is worthwhile to recall that the *Mau Mau* philosophy discouraged the abuse of drugs, and especially alcohol. It was the belief that the breach of oaths spelt calamity. The youth might disassociate themselves from beliefs of their fathers and forefathers. However, since most of them are Christians, nominal or practical, they should be awed because the bible has it that, ". . . I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation . . ." (Deuteronomy 5:9). Characteristically, the communities in Central Kenya share many aspects of culture, especially beliefs and religious practices. For example, breach of oaths was a taboo. The article seeks to establish the connection between the high degree of alcohol abuse to the violation of oaths that the *Mau Mau* (freedom fighters) patriots took before and during the State of Emergency (1952-1960). Certainly, anything taboo was ominous. *Mau Mau* agitated for independence, and more importantly, the return of land, the bond that bound together the living, the dead and the unborn. Land was seen in our indigenous society as sacred and it was not to change hands in any way. *Mau Mau* took oaths to the effect that whoever breached it would attract catastrophe, including death. In view of this, the article would seek to establish if the drinking problem in the Mount Kenya (central) region is a consequence of breaching *Mau Mau* oaths.

Key Words: *Mau Mau*, drinking, alcohol, abuse, oath, curse, religion

Introduction

In Central Kenya, alcohol was culturally used during and/or for religious ceremonies. It was a requirement in marriage and cleansing ceremonies. Traditional liquor was used in every communal activity, ritual or ceremonial. It was poured as libation, and as a symbol of communion with the departed spirits (Kenyatta, 1938:21, 23-25, 301). In contrast to what the situation stands today, there were no alcoholic drinks for sale before colonialism. No young man would drink liquor before he was ritually initiated into partaking of it (Kenyatta, 1938:27f). Initiation of young men into the use of liquor was a religious ceremony. *Priesthood* was not a formalized office, but was the duty of elders to carry

out religious activities.¹ The idea of sin is more in the psychological realms than in the physical demesne (Gathogo, 2019:7). The *sinful* person is, therefore, ever carrying the guilt with him or her wherever he/she goes. The weight of the guilt eats into the person's conscience thereby, making such a person suspicious, suffer low self-esteem and loss of confidence. A cleansing ceremony was necessary to heal the conscience of the *sinful* person. This feeling of guilt could be collective also, hence the sin of the community (cf. Nehemiah 1:4b- 11).

Methodology

Methodologically, oral interviews involved persons who either fought the Imperialist and his/her native collaborators/loyalists, or witnesses who suffered hostility of the colonial administration in the villages or detention camps. These detention camps are better termed as concentration camps. However, names have been changed for ethical reasons. Mount Kenya region and Central Kenya are interchangeably used throughout the a

Effects of violation of oaths

This section will seek to highlight the effects of the violation of oath contents. *Mau Mau* leadership was strongly opposed to indulgence in alcohol while in pursuit of the cause for independence. This claim is informed by Jomo Kenyatta's speech at the Kenya African Union Meeting at Nyeri, July 26, 1952 where he said, "We want self-government, but this we will never get if we drink beer. It is . . . making our people fools and encouraging crime. . ."² Most of the leaders in the movement had taken part in the WW II and had the experience that, ". . . alcohol lowers inhibition and makes the drinker unafraid . . . (Chukwu, 2003:62), which would lead to recklessness. "In the Gikuyu society, oath or ordeal was the most important factor . . . controlling [life]. . . On the one hand, the fear of it prevented people from giving false information and helped to bring the offenders to justice through *guilty conscience and confession*" (Kenyatta, 1938:223). The community believed that going against the prescribed oath resulted into a curse not only to the partaker, but also for the progeny. It is not difficult, therefore, to infer that youth in the country, particularly in Central Kenya, have deviated from life as it was lived by their forefathers, thereby attracting a curse. In the speech cited above, Jomo Kenyatta went on to say, 'It (beer) causes your bones to weaken and if you want to increase the population of Kikuyu people [*Andu a Nyumba*], you must stop drinking."³ Alcoholism has rendered the institution of marriage a religio-social concern.

The practice today is mainly "come-we-stay." This means that the part that alcohol played in "appeasement of spirits of the departed" when *njohi*, a traditional liquor, is no more.⁴ Though they might pretend not to be aware of consequences of violating *Mau Mau* oaths, they carry the guilt in their minds. In order not to suffer the burden of guilt, they have to drown this guilt in alcohol.⁵ Many people in the region have sold their parcels of land, an integral part of the ancestral land. Sale of ancestral land contravenes the will and spirit of what *Mau Mau* fought for. The customary practice that governed sale of land before colonization demanded the involvement of clansmen in such

¹ Elders became handy on such occasions and performed religious ceremonies such as sacrificing to *Ngai*.

² At this time the colonial government accused Jomo Kenyatta of being the leader of *Mau Mau*.

³ Commonly cited speech in social conversations.

⁴ The community believed that spirits had a part in the stability of families. Pouring out libations was appeasement of spirits and involved them in deliberations on marriage/wedding.

⁵ A. Shorter & E. Onyancha cite reasons that lead youth into drug abuse.

transactions (Kenyatta, 1938:38). Such an act invited catastrophe whose only cure was a cleansing ceremony, no longer performed these days (Interview, Ngiri K, 12.2.2020). Failure of undertaking the ceremony would be a prescription for a curse, which can manifest in the form of disaster/disasters for the people. The problem of drinking in the region is a calamity, a disaster that threatens extermination of a generation (Interview, W. King'ore, 15.1.2019).

The high degree of alcohol consumption in Central Kenya could be a manifestation of the *Mau Mau* curse; as most elders hypothesize.⁶ The youth, however, argue that they have nothing to do with what their forefathers believed and did. They reason that their curses and taboos ended with them⁷. If the youth understood what curses are, this destructive indulgence in alcohol and other drugs of addiction could not have been there in the first place (Interview, G. Gicuki, 3.4.2019). A curse is as substantial a danger to the deaf man as is a stumbling block to the blind, for he cannot take 'evasive action' by appealing to the more potent blessing of Yahweh. The deafness and blindness referred to here are not the physical ones. They refer to socio-spiritual conditions that appear to have been occasioned by apathy on the part of parents and grandparents to impart knowledge pertaining to *Mau Mau*, their philosophy, and the ideologies they stood for; what their prescriptions and proscriptions were. Because of the deafness and blindness, the youth grope about in life completely ignorant of the curse of the gallant fighters of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army.

Land-the most valuable gift from *Ngai*

People around the Mount Kenya region believed that land was the most valuable gift from *Ngai* (God). The invaluable attachment that Agikuyu (anglicized Kikuyu) have on land is almost concretized in the following statement: "Take from a Gikuyu his cattle, he will tolerate it; take his wife, he can still bear it; but if you take his land, he will fight you" (Baur, 1994:477). Kenyatta argues similarly in the following statement:

The Gikuyu consider the earth as the *mother* of the tribe, for the reason that the mother bears her burden for about eight or nine months while the child is in her womb, and then for a short period of suckling. But it is the soil that feeds the child through lifetime; and again after death it is the soil that nurses the spirits of the dead for eternity. Thus the earth is the most sacred thing above all that dwell in or in it. Among the Gikuyu the soil is especially honoured, and *an everlasting oath is to swear by the earth* (Kenyatta, 38:21).

In this case, "*an everlasting oath*" refers to the *swearing by the earth*, a phenomenon that informed the administration of *Mau Mau* oaths. Swearing on oath by earth was in a way putting life and death before those communities involved in the activities of the movement (cf. Deuteronomy 30:15). The concomitant taboos deterred people from any act that would be construed to be desecration of *the mother of the community* (Interview, Mugo N, 10.6.2020).⁸ Mugo went on to tell this researcher that sale of land unilaterally, that is without the involvement of clansmen, according to the customs and traditions of the community, is taboo.

The oath that *Mau Mau* took would not have been complete without a participant swearing by savoring and/or tasting the soil, in the way a cook would do (Kenyatta, 1938:299). Interviewed oath administrators and partakers, who were still alive by the time of research, have strong belief that the phenomenon of extreme abuse of alcohol and other drugs/substances, among them *miraa* (khat),

⁶ Elders Gacingiri, Gatimu. Mwangi, Ngiri, Murage in an interview (3.4.2019).

⁷ Youth in the region do not believe in curses and taboos.

⁸ The corruption that shrouds land transactions in the region is real desecration of mother of the community. Many people have died because of illegal land transactions.

bhang [marijuana or Cannabis sativa],⁹ and *muguka* (a type of khat) is evidence of breach of oaths (Interview, Gatimu, Kambo, Mugo, Wangari, 22.9.2019). It could be the psychological effect resulting from disobeying the contents of the oaths that their parents and grandparents took. The disobedience might lead to a cycle of calamities. Interviewed survivors, of the horrors of the *Mau Mau* uprising, express the fear that, although they are consciously aware of their commissions and omissions, it will be difficult to convince them to undergo the cleansing ceremony. The youth hide behind education and Christianity, though most of them are nominal Christians.

Mode of conducting oathing

The way the oathing ceremony was conducted was awe inspiring, if not outright threatening. Most of those freedom fighters who had taken the oath could hardly divulge the content, leave alone the accomplices.¹⁰ J. S. Mbiti underscores the importance of taking oath by stating thus:

Oaths range in seriousness: some are meant to bring about death if they are broken, others cause temporary pain or misfortunes of one type or another. The belief behind oaths is that God, or some power higher than the individual will punish the person who breaks the requirements of the oath or covenant. Like curses, oaths are feared and many are administered ritually at great expense (1969:212).

Mau Mau's oath was serious business, which explains why, despite crude weapons, members of the movement were ready to face the imperialists, their superior war machine notwithstanding. The researcher's father was in detention and he confirmed this in his sharing with the researcher. He cautioned, "Son, the experience of the ordeal we underwent in detention, would refresh the excruciation. Let the experience remain behind. We were bound on oath never to reveal contents of the oaths we took and, this was the reason we were detained in camps of torture where many of us were beaten to death for refusal to betray the cause" (interview, Gachoki K,1960).¹¹

Sample the awe-inspiring content of an oath below, as noted in J. M. Kariuki's works:

I speak the truth and vow before God,
And before this movement,
The movement of Unity,
The movement which is put to the test
The Unity that is mocked with the name of '*Mau Mau*',
That I shall go forward to fight for the land,
The lands of Kirinyaga that we cultivated,
The lands which were taken by the Europeans
And if I fail to do this
May this oath kill me,
May this seven¹² kill me,

⁹ Cannabis sativa is a species of the Cannabaceae family that includes both marijuana and hemp varieties. Sativa strains tend to thrive in warmer weather, with most strains originating in countries located near the equator, such as Colombia, Mexico, Thailand, and Southeast Asia. Cultivated throughout recorded history, cannabis sativa is harvested for its fiber, seeds, and oil, which have been historically used for industrial, nutritional, and medicinal purposes. Today, sativa cannabis strains still grow wild throughout many humid and tropical areas of the world. Sativa strains are known for being extremely pungent due to a distinct terpene profile that produces aromas that can range from fruity, citrus, and sweet to earthy, piney, and peppery.

¹⁰ Two of the researcher's uncles were *Mau Mau*, one of whom was a general.

¹¹ This researcher was in standard three.

¹² The number seven (7) is bad omen among Agikuyu.

May this meat kill me (Kariuki, 1963:26).

Factors that make the situation worse

The curse arising from disregarding, or even rubbishing, the content of *Mau Mau* oaths and what administrators said and did, might have affected people in Central Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta had prophesied what would happen to the community in his speech at Nyeri, yet the community went ahead to ignore the warning, "*Beer harms us and those that drink it do us harm . . .*" The family is no longer what it used to be. It is not unusual to find a family of drunks, from father, mother and children. Drinking has become so pervasive that society *has accepted it as part of normal life*. Drunks of all ages are seen staggering home any time of the day (Gachoki, 2015:17). The abuse has become institutionalized in the region. It is a common sight for adults pissing in the market place in the full glare of women and children, a behavioural pattern only permissible among people with mental problems. Local diviners and medicine-men attribute this abnormal behaviour to the "*Mau Mau* curse" (Interview, Wanjiru K, 15.1.2019).

The national and regional leadership enhance

Drinking in the region has become a big problem, indeed a disease that requires socio-medical intervention. Both levels of leadership have been overwhelmed by the drinking menace. This is manifest in the practice of leaders collecting bribes from the illicit brewers.¹³ *The don't-care- attitude* of these leaders suggests a collective sick mind of the society. It would be unimaginable for a normal mind to ignore sale of poison to people.¹⁴ Oath taking controlled bribery and corruption. That leadership overlooks breaking of the law by people who make and sell illicit brews, heightens the belief, among survivors of the colonial times, that youth are under the *Mau Mau* curse. Their Ignorance of the contents of the oath has sunk the youth into the abyss of alcoholism besides abuse of other drugs (Interview, Kimiti. N, 7.11.2020).

The church- members club

Elders wonder whether *Mau Mau* were right in saying, "*Gutiri Muthungu Na Mubea*" (There is no difference between the settler and the priest) (Baur, 1994: 479). *Mungururio* oath for the unity of all members in the region. Therefore, though most of the Christians were *loyalists*, they were part of the community and by contamination, they were also affected by the oath. Elders in the community believe that Church leaders have refused to preside over burial services of dead Christians, if the dead were *inactive or nominal*, because breach of the oath did not spare them. *Preaching the word should be free, yet the word has become commercialized* (Matthew 10:8)¹⁵. The dead that priests refuse to bury, therefore, have failed to pay their "membership fees." Corruption, a socioeconomic cancer, that has affected every social institution, is the best evidence of the negative impact of the curse. The church is not exempted. The bug of the curse has bitten the church too. One *Mau Mau* oath administrator (Interview, Mugo N, 10.6.2020) later turned traitor, confided to this researcher that all members of his family are dead. He visited a *muraguri* (diviner) who *confirmed his fears that he lost his family because of violating the oath*. He laments that, despite accepting the Lord Jesus as his

¹³ Culture of giving bribes to administrators and law enforcers has perpetuated abuse of substances.

¹⁴ The government should authorize investigation into the issue of alcoholism and particularly production and consumption second generation alcohol.

¹⁵ Jesus' caution to his disciples, ". . . Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8b).

personal Saviour, and having testified how he betrayed *Mau Mau*, the society views him with suspicion.¹⁶

"... Alcohol affects brain functioning by its capacity to interfere with the biological system of chemical messengers which is all the time regulating the balance between activity and inactivity in brain cells and brain circuitry" (Edwards, 200:9). The youth of Mount Kenya Region are sick. Under the influence of alcohol, "there is no sin but some have committed it in their drink; and if there be any that a drunken man does not commit, it is not because he would not, but because he could not. He had not an opportunity... For a man in such a condition has no sense of the difference between good and evil: for 'wine' as the prophet speaks (Hosea 4:11), 'has taken away his heart.' His reason, his understanding, his conscience, is gone; and therefore, all sins are alike to him. Hence it is that their sin never goes alone, but has a train of other sins always following it, insomuch that it cannot so properly be called one single sin, as all sin in one" (Edwards, 2000:37).

Alcoholism has replaced the Lord *Ngai*. Elders in the community believe *that the blood of the Mau Mau warriors is upon the heads of the rebellious generation* (Interview, Gacingiri, Mugo, Kambo, Murage, 3.4.2019). The elders posit that the many murders, cases of divorce, the sky-rocketing corruption... and many cases of immorality are indicative of separation from *Ngai*, the God of *Mau Mau*. Hosea says, "... They will engage in prostitution but not increase, because they have deserted the Lord to give themselves to prostitution, to old *wine and new*, which take away the understanding of my people..." (Hosea 4:10f). Jomo Kenyatta alluded to what Hosea says on (population) increase when he said, "... [If] you want to increase the population of Kikuyu you must stop drinking" (Kenyatta in his speech at Nyeri, July 26, 1952). Those that witnessed activities of the movement, and are still living, blame the social evils around the Mountain, as perpetrated by all, including *servants of God*, upon lack of understanding. Abusing alcohol and other drugs of addiction has softened their brains. All people suffer from the negative effects of the violation. The community wonders as to who will intervene if the *servants of God* have fallen victim to the curse.

One bishop (name withheld, and now retired) once told this researcher, "it is reported that in your diocese the vice of drunkenness is too frequent, so that not only that some clergy do not hinder it, but they themselves indulge in excess of drink and force others to drink till they are intoxicated. (Volunteered information, a retired bishop from the Western Region of Kenya, talking of one of the dioceses in Central Kenya, May 23, 2010).¹⁷

Mental disorders require the intervention of psychiatrists and psychologists.

This researcher heard of a narrative where a committed Christian was taken ill for a long time.¹⁸ The Christian was unable to walk to church and the minister had to take Holy Communion to her at home and yet, when the committed Christian died and the minister was approached to preside over her burial service he refused. The pastor reasoned that the dead Christian had stopped going to church. Another incident involved the case of suicide of a mentally sick lady who was a very active member, actually the treasurer, of Mothers Union—a union that brings together women for the purpose of giving service to church. Both the archdeacon and the local vicar could have nothing to do with arrangements for the burial.¹⁹ It took the intervention of the psychiatrist who was treating her to

¹⁶ All *Mau Mau* traitors have not been accepted in the community. Most of those still living have taken refuge in East African Revival Movement.

¹⁷ The bishop was the guest speaker during Diocesan Education Day.

¹⁸ This narrative was given by a lay reader who served with the accused minister.

¹⁹ This kind of behaviour underlines the significance of learning more about mental illnesses.

encourage this researcher to ensure involvement of the church in the burial services of the two Christians. The diocesan bishop was out of the diocese, but the office had to make arrangements for the interment of the remains of the deceased in full church rites.

Most of the survivors of the rough, harsh and inhuman life in the concentration camps during emergency, became surfeited with the *religion of the white man* to such an extent that some used pages of the bible to roll in tobacco leaves (*kiraiku*) into cigarette. The researcher interviewed one such man, the late Murage Gichuki, who could not hear of anything to do with Christianity. Murage pensively muttered that, "*Many of us left Christ and Christianity in the colonial concentration camps*" (Interview, Murage Gichuki, 3.4.2019).

The curse has not spared the religious ministers of the *white man's religion* even. Quite a number of these ministers have one foot in the bible (read church) and the other in the *secular world*. This claim is informed by the fact that the researcher was approached by two quacks masquerading as prophets with the intention of extorting money from him.²⁰ The two incidents took place in one of the counties in Central Kenya. Both of the *prophets* could not shake hands since, they argued, doing so would have conducted taboo (*mugiro*) and/or curse (*kirumi*) from the other.

A pastor under the curse was arrested reportedly having had impregnated two of his biological daughters. In the same county a mother strangled her own son to death in the guise of exorcising him.²¹ Many survivors of the colonial emergency period who were either active members of KLFA (Kenya Land and Freedom Army) or took the oaths, hypothesize that such evils, arise from going against the requirements of *Mau Mau* oaths.

Sacredness of land

The belief among the *Gikuyu* that all life pivots on land underscores its sacredness to Central Kenya citizens. It did not take long before the "natives" showed their anger and displeasure following the dispossession of their land by the colonialists. This is what Jomo Kenyatta said long before the state of emergency came into force in 1952:

When the missionaries came we had the land and they had the Bible in their hands. They told us to pray, closing our eyes. When we looked up again, we had the Bible in our hands and they had—land (Baur, 1997:477).

This was a "prophecy." The Bible is, presently, firmly in the hands of residents around the Mountain (Kenya) as some "pastors" mislead their flocks.²² The native clergy has surpassed his predecessor, the colonial/white one, in extorting money from the congregants by misusing the Bible. Christianity has evolved into a mint for the unscrupulous leaders whose major objective is not the gospel but making money.

A feature in the Daily Nation of September 24th, 2020 reads, "*Christians pay heavy price for Church's thirst for cash.*" In the debate the feature goes on, "it's no secret . . . that millions of shillings, exchange hands within the so called 'prosperity gospel' churches." Church leaders in some of these churches distort the text in Isaiah 1:19.²³ Part of those interviewed by the researcher posed the question, "Are the leaders of the sects the only Christians, who are willing and obedient, to eat the best from the land?" Many of these pastors are filthy rich and yet surrounded by the wretched of the

²⁰ Feigning performing miracles is a tip of the iceberg of corruption in the church.

²¹ Media were awash with news of the two incidents that took place in one county in the region.

²² They disregard Jesus' warning, ". . . [If] anyone causes one of these little ones. . . it would be better to have a large millstone . . . around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea (Matthew 18:6).

²³ If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land.

earth, to borrow from Frantz Fanon in his book of the same title. Masses have realized that some of these *pastors* are using the bible for the wrong purpose, therefore, many followers are either staying away or refuse to be exploited.

Such leaders mislead in the sense that they use the Bible to hoodwink the unsuspecting followers in order to fleece them of their hard-won possessions. Many families have broken up as a result of wrong teachings; distortion of bible texts to suit the pastors at the expense of the followers.²⁴ The Bible has become the tool to destroy rather than build; to impoverish rather than enrich economically and spiritually; the tool to petrify rather than edify; the tool to snuff out life rather than give it. The elders in the region believe strongly that *Mau Mau* curse is working in the region. They cannot imagine a man in sexual relationship with another man. A few of the elders expressed disbelief that a normal young man could marry a woman his mother's age. However, they conclude that it is one sign of end times, the result of engaging in taboo. Wanjiru King' ore (Interview, 15.1.2019), a *Mau Mau* survivor, revealed to this researcher that, despite being a great grandmother, drunken young men had severely made sexual moves at her.²⁵ She believes that such a high degree of moral decadence arises from breach of *Mau Mau* oaths.

Sacrilege or Ignorance?

Roman Catholic Church teaches that disrespect to anything regarded sacred or revered is sacrilege. Desecration of a house of worship thus describes sacrilege. The research in connection with *taboos* revealed that Agikuyu had isolated groves regarded as sacred. Sacrifices took place in such groves under *Migumo* trees, also regarded sacred. National sacrifices were offered to *Ngai* in the sacred groves (Kenyatta, 1938:36). Nobody could cut a tree or help self for this would prescribe taboo. (Interview, Mugo N, 10.6.2020). Stealing in the name of church, cheating in the name of service in the Lord's vineyard, immoral acts . . . , all of these are sacrilegious acts. This suggests that pastors who enrich themselves by fleecing the poor and unsuspecting masses lead sacrilegious lives. Exploitation of the poor is evidence that humanity has left humankind. Over-indulgence in alcohol and other substances of abuse has softened the minds of abusers to such an extent that they have become mentally sick. Mental cases are heartless to the feelings of others. Mental illness is a psychological condition engendered by guilty conscience; ignoring *Mau Mau* oath, its contents and concomitant taboos should by youth in the region requires review.

One renowned Kenyan, who is also a committed Christian (a Church Canon) once said, "Most of the pastors today serve not because they are called by God, but due to monetary reasons." This partly explains why some of them commit every sin in total disregard of where they are, even inside the church.²⁶ The Canon went on with the narrative whose objective was to show why the church is not the institution it used to be formerly. He for, example theorized why the youth can hardly stick in church. The Canon reasoned out that their role models are not in the church. Those supposed to provide models, he went on, beat them in every imaginable sin. The Canon lamented that he too, found it torturous to go to church when his heart was bleeding because of the behaviour of some pastors that he knew.

²⁴ At times bodies are kept for long awaiting pastors to bring the dead to life, cf. the case in Nakuru.

²⁵ In recent years a young man surprised Kenyans when he married a renowned wealthy widow who was a *Mau Mau* activist. The sorry thing was that when his mother learnt of the union, she died.

²⁶ The renowned Christian (a lay Canon) and a high rank retired civil servant was not happy with the conduct of affairs in the church.

Impact of the curse has taken root such that youth have no fear of *Ngai* as it was with their fathers and grandparents before the struggle for independence and administration of oaths. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the prolific writer, almost foretold the coming of the sacrilegious time. In one of his books, *Petals of Blood* (1989:88), Ngugi notes:

The missionary traversed the seas, the forests, armed with the desire for profit that was his faith and light and the gun that was his protection. He carried the Bible; the soldier carried the gun; the administrator and the settler carried the coin. Christianity, Commerce, Civilization: The Bible, the Coin. The Gun: Holy Trinity . . .²⁷

This cannot be the Holy Trinity. It is unholy trinity. The religious activities that followed after the end of the struggle for land and political independence cannot qualify the 3Cs to be Holy Trinity; neither can the Bible, the Coin and the Gun. The last two only improve the first one—the Bible—to be a better tool to desecrate the holy—creation of sacrilege. The first C Stands for Christianity. Many owe their western form of education to Christianity. However, despite this blessing, the new religion brought with it a curse; it fossilized culture. It pushed out of the culture taboos and left the residents with new taboo—the Decalogue. Interestingly, the new set of taboos did not generate as much fear as did the cultural ones. It meant that they could breach the new taboos at will, since the undoing of the *mugiro* (calamity or disaster prescribed by the breach) of the new taboos incurred no expenses. Undoing/cleansing traditional taboos required slaughtering of animals and brewing of liquor (Jomo, 1938:224f), but undoing breach of the new taboos takes confession/repentance only.

Commerce, the second C, introduced businesses that were not with community earlier on. Prostitution or sex commercial workers would have been taboo in the communities. It was taboo for any person to engage in sex before he/she was married (Kenyatta 1938:155-160).²⁸ Commerce introduced, institutionalized and promoted the trade among communities in the region. Women engaged in prostitution in exchange for rounds of ammunition. Commerce thus introduced a dimension of trade that formerly was taboo (Kariuki, 1963:34). Civilization introduced another abominable taboo judging by the traditional standards; homosexuality; better talk of sodomy, was real anathema among Mount Kenya communities (Gathigira, 1972:105). Gathigira (*Op cit*), goes on to say that, if it ever happened for whatever reason, the men involved in the traditionally and culturally evil act, would be forced to fight until one of them died. The act of sodomy was serious taboo. The curse has made things worse. Homosexuality, that is, sodomy and lesbianism, is no longer an imaginary act in the communities. The youth are in it today (Gachoki, 2015:32f). Homosexuality is real and part of the commercial undertakings.²⁹

Civilization, the third C, strengthened the second C. Civilization, in a way, demonized every cultural and traditional practice; to be civilized, one had to become an *ape* of the white man and his ways. It led to the production of *blackened* white men and women behaviorally (Watene, 1974:38,46). The Bible is used by the *cursed* to lure people to their doom. Many unsuspecting and blind followers have found themselves in the deep of socioeconomic to one self-styled pastor's cunning and surrendered his title deed. The zealot was promised that in less than a year he would get land seven times the size of the land he surrendered to facilitate construction of a church building for the new

²⁷ See also Julius Gathogo, "Settler-Missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya and the Land Question," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol 46, No 2, (2020), pp.1-20.

²⁸ *Ngwiko* (intensive fondling) was, however allowed, but no penetration would be entertained. Any man who could have penetrated would be ridiculed in songs composed to discredit him. It would have made it difficult to get a wife in the community.

²⁹ In a study this researcher undertook in 2009, homosexuality was found to be practised in the region.

sect, a cult really. The man got no land and he ended up in court. The case is still dragging on with the man and his family living landless as the Bible-wielding pastor wallows in stolen wealth.³⁰

Elders say that the curse has produced dangerous thugs who have used the second element of Ngugi's unholy trinity: the gun, to unleash hell on innocent Kenyans, to rob, maim and kill; brother turned against brother. Violation of the *Mau Mau* oaths has engendered a situation akin to that Prophet Ezekiel talked of: "You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock."³¹ This is the situation on the ground especially with the newly formed religious groups, better described as cults, what really they are. Most of them (sham pastors) are islands of wealth in the ocean of poverty in the name of service to God and his people.

The third element, the coin has become the most effective of the three—the Bible, the gun and the coin—in creating animals out of humanity. The coin keeps the rich at the top in the society. It has not only become a god, but also the *brain*. Money has become the brain, which might explain why the quality of services offered in public offices is of poor quality. Merit no longer matters, but money does. Since violation of *Mau Mau* oaths, even Christians, most of whom are nominal anyway, have followed Jesus' warning: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."³² Because of the evils that have been committed by fanatics in the name of religion, Richard Dawkins wonders, "Imagine . . . a world with no religion. Imagine no suicide bombers . . ., no Israel/Palestine wars [all in the name of religion]. Imagine a world without shiny suited bouffant-haired televangelists fleecing gullible people of their money [shouting themselves hoarse and dry saying], ('God wants you to give till it hurts') . . . (Dawkins,2006:1); sheer exploitation of the poor! That is the situation the unsuspecting victims of the *Mau Mau* curse are in. All the myriad religious business outfits purporting to peddle the gospel, are actually competing for the meagre income of the desperate followers who are continually cheated that their tomorrow would be better depending on how much *one would sow*. That is why they are all out to give until it hurts. Many go without meals. An only son of one such gullible follower died because his mother could not buy food lest she had nothing to sow the following Sunday. The mother told the dead son (the late Joseph Karani (not real name) to take water and, by faith, believe it was food. The unfortunate boy was a pupil of this researcher at a place he is not willing to divulge for reasons of privacy and security. The mother caused the death of her only son in order to *sow* following brainwashing by sham pastors, perhaps in the hope that she would get another child and much more.

The researcher investigated why many Christians were more attached to material than to God. Representative elders (Gacingiri, Mugo, Murage, Wangari, Wanjiru) were in agreement that economic insecurity and corruption dictate that no time should be wasted and that, going to church is no longer a priority and, therefore, because of the curse, some Christians have chosen to serve Money. It is no wonder then that, before one is recruited for whatever office, one has to *worship* god money. It won't be surprising, therefore, that the country is served by mediocre officers because money has taken the place of *brains*. In some cases, placement in secondary schools is determined by the ability to pay. He who pays the highest amount of money is assured of the best school for his child. Since they picked on money, it has become the *necessary evil*. Elders claim that independence only enabled neo-colonialism to replace the imperial one before it, a perpetuation of domestic slavery.³³

³⁰ The man who was cheated is known to this researcher. The researcher taught his children.

³¹ See Ezekiel 34:3-4

³² See Matthew 6:24

³³ For the poor and their families to survive they have to toil and moil in the property of the haves.

Majority of the materially poor are indeed *slaves* by choice. It is the only way they can put food on the table. The situation has engendered high degree of promiscuity, simply put, prostitution (Bakwesegha,1982:16). Most of Central Kenyans forgot to worship their God (*Ngai*) the way they knew how, and settled on the *god* the white missionaries and imperial colonialists left behind. The problem is more deep-rooted than it appears. The curse is made worse by religious ministers who are part and parcel of the taboo. According to the interviewed elders, many of these ministers are taboo in themselves. Some walk to church from elsewhere rather than from home, and possibly having spent the night with another person other than the wife or husband. This is against what is demanded by both Christian and traditional beliefs, a sure recipe for calamity and/or disaster.

Sociologists hold the view that culture is die-hard, meaning that it is not easy for one to shake off the ways of the culture one was born and grew up in. It is this characteristic of culture which leads to that strong belief which affects somebody's psychological functioning after violating taken oath. Gathogo and Njogu in their book, *Chui wa Mararo* (2019:7) allude to this when they say:

It (oath) was set as a psychological preparation for everyone to prepare for a major contest.

Nobody can divorce self from his conscience, indeed his psychology. Once one vows to undertake a project, but without sufficient cause abandons it, one carries a guilty conscience around. Such failure usually leads to stress and/or depression. The couching of the oath as stated earlier on in this article, instills fear in the partaker. If the dictates of the oath are not fulfilled, the sense of guilt stalks the person to the grave, unless he is cleansed as per the procedure of the community concerned. The oath was a simple and brief demand for obedience, for example as couched here below:

Ungigakararia witiitwo (If you ever argue when called)

Ungikarega Watho wa Mutongoria Waku (If you ever disobey your leader)

Ungigetwo Utuku Urege (If called upon in the night and you fail to come)

Urorio ni Muma Uyu (May this oath kill you)³⁴

It is observed elsewhere in this article that no level or amount of education would remove basic traits of one's culture from one. One would always be subject to fears associated with taboos and pertinent superstitions. In this regard, no matter the degree of pretense, the evils that Central Kenya people perpetrate against the spirit for which *Mau Mau* fought and died, will haunt them and their descendants until . . . The violation has caused death among the youth and it would continue, could be, to extinction of the community unless some measures to rid the region of alcohol and drugs of abuse are taken. While some of the youth in the region are zombies, people dead alive, many have died physically; and yet many more are in the process of dying socioeconomically, spiritually and physically.

Community in the Region is Threatened

From *ndemi na mathathi ithaka* was ours, nobody can *tunya* us.³⁵ (Jomo Kenyatta).

Ndemi and *Mathathi* are the earliest age-sets among the Gikuyu. The statement by the first president of the land can therefore, be translated as: From time immemorial the land was ours, and nobody can deprive us of the same. People of the region have sold land to even to outsiders. Jomo Kenyatta is with the spirits of the departed (ancestors); he is one of the uncountable ancestors. Elders

³⁴ Some perspectives on the *Mau Mau* Movement Special Issue of Kenya Historical Review Vol.5 No. 2 1977 p.219

³⁵ www.wazuri.co.ke

that still value culture and customs told the researcher that, breach of sayings of the departed freedom fighters and the contents of the oaths they took, spell doom for communities in Central Kenya. J. M. Kariuki, one of the most renowned populist politicians Kenya, in particular, and may be (East) Africa in general, has ever known had this to say after taking the Batuni oath, the type taken by those who were going to war (Gathogo and Njogu, 2019:7; Kariuki, 1963:30f):

This second oath was stronger than the first and left my mind full of strange and excited feelings. My initiation was now complete and I had become a true Kikuyu with no doubts where I stood in the revolt of my tribe. . . . Although there was no clause in the oath which forbade me to go to church or to remain a Christian, ever since the time of my first oath (*mungururio*, which was *mass oath for the unity of the community*) my belief in the God of Christ had been fading and I no longer went to church services without an ulterior reason.

The feeling could not have been with the late J.M. Kariuki alone. His was a representative feeling. Many must have had the same feeling. *Mau Mau* survivors and ex-detainees still alive, corroborate J.M. Kariuki's observation and they insist that *Christianity is business*. It has already been stated that the church has been reduced to a members' club. If most of Christians share the feelings of the late J. M. Kariuki, then they go to church with ulterior motives. Most of the church leaders hang around in their churches and/or ministries because they are their business outfits.

Though innocent and unsuspecting congregants go to church, they still carry superstitious mind that prescribes fear for them that, failure to go to church amounts to disobeying the *servant of God*, and therefore, committing sin. Sin is the curse that would exclude the sinner from heaven; from the presence of God. The researcher dares say that, every religion has elements of superstition in its beliefs and practices. *Oxford Advanced Learner's (English) Dictionary* defines the word superstition as "a belief that some objects or actions are lucky and some are unlucky, based on old ideas of magic. *Macmillan English Dictionary* defines the term in a way closer to religious beliefs: a belief that things such as magic or luck have the power to affect your life. Christians of all shades have special and personal reverence for the Bible. This is because most of them believe that the Bible contains divine powers that keep Satan and his agents at bay.

Roman Catholic faithful believe in powers in the rosary just as Muslims believe that their equivalent of rosary (tasbehi), keeps (destructive) *jinn*s (spirits) away. Superstition and taboo are closely interrelated. According to Yusufu Turaki (2006:74f), "taboos govern numerous aspects of social, cultural and religious life. . . . They govern such things as sacred places, *land use*, . . . what animals may be eaten, marriage and procreation, relationships with ancestors" In the same book Turaki cites Steyne in defining taboo thus:

"Taboo is the place where the spirit world meets social and religious custom. Taboo enforces the concept of the sacred. It is a prohibition against touching, saying, being or doing something, for fear of harm being inflicted by the "mystic dangerousness of a particular object," or supernatural power. Certain objects, persons, places, and times are forbidden because they are associated with supernatural powers" (Turaki, 2006:7).

Unscrupulous religious leaders pretend to invoke curses and taboos to force obsequious following from adherents. The behaviour keeps traditional elders away. In other words, such leaders are treated as deities. The word of such leaders (call them cultists) is law. The adherents are ready to do anything in order *not to commit sin by disobeying*.³⁶ The fearful aura these leaders exude subdues their followers to practical slaves, objects for exploitation. Fear of the curse has disarmed them against oppression. They have become not the proverbial sheep (Psalm 44:22), but they are treated like *sheep*

³⁶ In some parts in the region, religious leaders convinced families to sell land because the world was about to "end."

literally.³⁷ These *flock eaters* masquerading as apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors would go on impoverishing the poor masses unless the leaders facilitate for cleansing. The negative impact of oath violation might desolate the community through alcohol and abuse of other drugs. Older citizens in the area affirm that the communities suffer because they have ignored oaths taken during *heka heka* (do things faster due to curfew during emergency period).³⁸ Elders warn that unless communities revisit the goals and objectives *Mau Mau* stood, and fought for, and address them for the benefit of all residents, alcohol and abuse of other drugs would be with them for a long time.³⁹

Availability of alcoholic drinks and other drugs

In the late 1990s to early 2000s, in the region where this research was undertaken, secondary schools (and a few primary schools) experienced wide-spread riots that caused massive destruction to school property. The riots necessitated formation of a task force to establish causative factors and propose a solution or solutions. The task force was formed and it worked in 2000 to 2001. In their findings, drug abuse was the main cause of the disturbances.⁴⁰

The high and destructive consumption of alcohol in the region also prompted NACADA to undertake a study on *ALCOHOL USE IN CENTRAL PROVINCE OF KENYA, A BASELINE SURVEY ON MAGNITUDE, CAUSES AND EFFECTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND INDIVIDUALS, December 2010*. The study found out that over 80% of the population aged 18 years and above consumed second generation alcohol. The lowest level of alcohol use in the region is 51.5% and the highest stands at 75.4%. In their conclusions they recommended that measures be in place to control and regulate production, sale and use alcohol.

Negative effects of the violation are so pervasive that even young girls are not spared from partaking of drug abuse orgies. These sprees take place during occasions the youth have baptized *bashes*.⁴¹ In the course of the researcher's stint as education secretary in charge of A. C. K. sponsored secondary schools and youth polytechnics in Kirinyaga diocese (Kirinyaga County), a good number of students from the lowest grades to the senior most, were down with alcoholism. They blamed it on the parents whom they accused of supplying not only the liquor, but other drugs of abuse as well. The act was contrary to the cultural and traditional wont; not giving beer to children. Elders cannot be convinced that the heavy consumption of alcohol is not the effect of violation of *Mau Mau* oath. Whatever is happening in the Central Region should not surprise those that know how drugs affect the mind of the abuser.

Alcoholism is a disease which manifests itself chiefly by the uncontrollable drinking of the victim, who is known as an alcoholic. It is a progressive disease which, if not treated grows more virulent year by year, driving its victims further and further from the normal world, and deeper and deeper into an abyss which has only two outlets: insanity or death (Edwards,2000:99).

The curse would continue to wreak havoc in the area. One needs just to take a walk anywhere in Mount Kenya Region and count the number of the youth who are not in touch with their mind. They are insane on their way to physical death. As a result of the disease-alcoholism, most of the young men

³⁷ See Psalm 44:22

³⁸ The *Swahili* corruption for the *Gikuyu* phrase *hika hika* (do (things) faster).

³⁹ Elder Phinehas Thuu, a local member of *Kiama Kiama*

⁴⁰ Ministry of Education Science & Technology, Report On Causes, Effects and Remedies of Indiscipline in secondary Schools in Central Province (2000-2001), pp.1,14,19,30.

⁴¹ Bash is loaded with new meaning—riotous or rebellious orgies of dancing and doing drugs. The orgies include indiscriminate sex.

die unmarried. The married, and are in the habit of abusing drugs, die young and leave behind many young widows with children half orphaned.⁴² A good number of these half orphans join the club of hobos. They are hobos in that they are landless, in fact homeless, since their fathers, and their grandpas before them, sold their parcels of land. The future for the youth is bleak. For them to steel their nerves in preparation to face the uncertainty in life, they have to drink, chew *miraa* (*khat*), smoke *bhanga* and abuse hard drugs, such as cocaine, heroin . . . , too.

. . . Some people drink to escape from life which has become difficult or unbearable. Once deeply swilled, the drinker loses the will power and freedom of choice. His ability of reasoning is weakened (Jong, 1984:17).

The state of mind, engendered by alcoholism, borders on madness, which is the reason for so many cases of domestic violence and patricide in Central Kenya. The behaviour of this kind—drinking to a state of behaving like an automaton such that one would not know what one does or happens to one—is proof of spiritual and moral decrepitude (Gachoki, 2015:15). Due to the high rate of alcoholism and other addictions, the community has become acultural. The people have no culture. They adapt to any culture they interact with. That is how they use whatever drug which comes their way. Some people appear religious, but their actions paint the correct picture of who they are—irreligious.⁴³

Dangerous ingredients used in the manufacture of alcoholic concoctions

Alcohol is potentially a poison in several different ways. . . . It can produce hangover—a state ranging from mild fragility to a thumping headache, nausea, . . . ghastliness, . . . Death by alcohol overdose occurs rather easily when the drug is mixed with sedatives, tranquilizers or opioids such as methadone or heroin, and many a sad fatality has happened that way (Edwards, 2000:10f).

Hangover either slows down productivity or disables the victim completely.⁴⁴ People in these categories become economic dependents or are reduced to thieves for them to finance and sustain their addiction. Where this study took place many people have died as a result of alcohol overdose. A number of youth have died in their drinking dens (Gachoki, 2015:19-23). The youth in Central Kenya have been exposed to low quality alcoholic drinks, which are usually laced with substances never ever known to be fit for human consumption. Some of these harmful substances include methanol, *bhanga*, fertilizer, alkaline battery contents and even sisal juice, which make them potentially poisonous (Oketch,2008:19f). Imbibing of alcoholic drinks laced with such poisonous elements affects the health of the drinkers, thereby depriving them of energy. Most of them cannot be of use economically, a condition which directly reduces production of both services and goods in the region. The consequence, of course, is poverty.

Distilled spirits did terrible damage to the indigenous people of North America, and were an item of barter in the slave trade with Africa . . . (Edwards,2000: 6).

Premising on what is observable in Central Kenya, alcohol is the easiest way to reduce numbers, and the imperialists deliberately introduced it in order to subdue the native. Over-indulgence in alcohol weakens reasoning, thereby making them malleable providers of cheap labour. Abusers have been

⁴² In some areas in Central Region women have held peaceful demonstrations demanding control of illicit brews and peddling of drugs.

⁴³ James in his epistle says, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

⁴⁴ One senior civil servant became so deeply alcoholic that his low appetite made it impossible for him to finish an egg. He died in his office.

weakened to such an extent that decisions have to be made for themselves. Alcohol has reduced them to puppets. This is the chief reason that boys are not getting married due to the fact that *alcohol is doing terrible damage to the indigenous people of Central Kenya*. How much does the world hear of Red Indians of North America? The answer lies in the use and abuse of alcohol. How regularly does the world read of the Aborigines of Australia? Again the answer is in the history of their drinking alcoholic beverages that came with the settlers. Should the trend of interacting with alcohol and other drugs of addiction go on unabated, the history of the natives in Central Kenya might be different in a few years from now.

Conclusion

He [God] will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse (Malachi 4:6).

The Old Testament ends with a curse. Inferring from what is happening in Central Kenya: over-indulgence in drugs, and especially alcohol, the number of zombies (deadwood) in the region, the high degree of promiscuity, the rising numbers of bachelors and single parents and the unexplained murders of people of all ages, *Mau Mau* Movement ended with a curse. Should this be the case, investigation is necessary to look for ways of curing the negative effects of the curse.

Communal teachers-cum-counsellors would be of vital significance in helping people in Mount Kenya region to realize that abusing alcohol and other drugs transforms a person into a beast, despicable and worthless. One only needs to traverse the region to see that drunkenness is the father and mother of all evils.

The researcher shares Yusufu Turaki's observation that, "African leadership has had a major contribution to the woes of Africa . . . The leadership has . . . led Africa into ruin. No doubt, the African who himself is human contributes substantially to his problems" (Turaki, 1997:14). If the administration and law enforcers did their work seriously, production and sale of illicit brews, sometimes laced with *poisonous* ingredients, the harm now witnessed could not have been. This researcher is not morally well placed to blame the addicts since he, not only believes, but also knows that they are sick and the place of many of them is in the rehabilitation centre (hospital). The curse would go on impacting negatively through generations until and unless the residents discover how to undo the effects of *Urorio ni muuma uyu* (May this oath kill you).

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Kambo Mwai, a renowned oath administrator, later arrested and detained, September 22, 2019

Kinoti Ngwa, an oath administrator, November 7, 2020.

Mugo Kibocha, an oath administrator turned traitor (*Gakunia*-Kikuyu for a small sack). Traitors wore sacks with small holes for the eyes in order not to be seen as they pointed out the betrayed, and hence the name *Gakunia* (singular), *Tukunia* (plural), May 26, 2019.

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Murage Gichuki, a detainee, January 13, 2019.

Ngiri Kimanga, a *Mau Mau* sympathizer, not detained but suffered with others in the village, February 12, 2020.

Wangari Muruithia, a woman *Mau Mau* leader of the rank of Brigadier, in charge of supplies in Mount Kenya Forest, arrested and detained, January 13, 2019.

Wanjiru King'ore, a traditional diviner/medicine-woman, January 15, 2019, she was *Mau Mau* sympathizer who used to advise the fighters of the safe times to venture out of their hide-outs, when to attack, when it was unsafe to visit villages.

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