A BIOGRAPHY OF “FIELD MARSHAL” MUTHONI KIRIMA OF THE
MAU MAU MOVEMENT, 1930- 2015

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the Requirements for the Award of the Master of Arts Degree in History of Egerton
University

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 2016
DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

DECLARATION
This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other Institution.

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Registration No: AM11/2335/09

RECOMMENDATION
This thesis has been presented for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my wife, Hilda Jebichii Kinyua, and daughter, Nini Wangui Kinyua, for their unwavering support and patience through the resource and time engaging research process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the almighty God for his enormous blessings showered upon me and the guidance he has constantly given me. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge Egerton University for the opportunity granted to undertake my studies. I wish to express my sincere gratitude and acknowledge my supervisors: Prof. R. M. Matheka and Dr. B.K. Onyancha for their guidance and help throughout this research. The skills and knowledge that I have gained are things that I will take with me into my next professional endeavor. I look forward to whatever challenges that come my way knowing that I am prepared to take them on. Lastly, I appreciate Muthoni Kirima for allowing me to write her biography and all Mau Mau veterans who gave me invaluable information on my research subject.
ABSTRACT

Many studies have been carried out on the Mau Mau Movement but women leadership in the movement has generally been overlooked. This biographical study of Field Marshal Muthoni Kirima aimed at filling the gender gap in studies on the movement’s leadership. The main objective of the study was to examine Muthoni’s life, emphasizing her role in the movement as a leader and combatant. The scope of the study was the colonial and post-colonial period in Kenya. Extensive literature review was done along the following broad themes: Muthoni’s early life, her contribution to the movement, role of women in Mau Mau in general, autobiographies by former Mau Mau fighters, biographies on Kenya’s historical figures and theoretical review of preceding studies on the Mau Mau. The study was informed by the Great Woman Theory, a variant of the Great Man Theory. The study used the Patriarchy Theory to examine the role of gender in role allocation among the forest fighters. Descriptive Research Design was used to collect data on Muthoni’s early life, her contribution to the Mau Mau movement and her life after the movement. Primary data was collected through interviews with Muthoni, Mau Mau Veterans, family and other people with credible information about her; focused group discussion with Mau Mau veterans; as well as review of Mau Mau memoirs. Archival sources were used to corroborate field data. Secondary sources were used to complement primary data. Collected data was processed and analyzed through coding process, verification and conclusion drawing. Field research was carried out in Nyeri, Nyandarua and Laikipia Counties. The County of Nyeri was the main research area as it lies between Mount Kenya and Aberdares forests, the battle field for the Mau Mau and Muthoni’s residence. The study found out that women contributed to Mau Mau leadership and in combat despite a strong patriarchal establishment that sought to keep them out of these roles through stereotypes and taboos related to the woman body. Although Muthoni is the only known female to have sustained the guerilla spirit until 1963, her claim to the rank of Mau Mau field marshal in her own right attracts sharp criticism from her contemporaries. The study found out that Muthoni was not a Mau Mau Field Marshal in real sense but believes she deserves the title for her service to the movement up to 1963.
Nonetheless, she is a true Mau Mau heroine and a patriot worth emulating. The findings were disseminated descriptively.

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIPCK</td>
<td>African Independent Pentecostal Church of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>District Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICFTU</td>
<td>International Confederation of Free Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAR</td>
<td>Kings African Rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAU</td>
<td>Kenya African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCA</td>
<td>Kikuyu Central Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFRTU</td>
<td>Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLFA</td>
<td>Kenya Land and Freedom Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNA</td>
<td>Kenya National Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNHREC</td>
<td>Kenya Human Rights and Equality Commission</td>
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<td>LSK</td>
<td>Law Society of Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCEA</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church of East Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZANU</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union</td>
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Biography:** Study of the life of a person with emphasis on a particular event.

**Field marshal:** The highest rank in the Mau Mau movement. It was borrowed from the British military anization in which it was second only to the commander-in-chief. Promotion to this rank required extraordinary military achievement, especially wartime, by a general.

**Mau Mau:** A guerilla movement that fought for independence in Kenya. Some members of the movement prefer the military title Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA). Some scholars claim that Mau Mau was an anagram of *Uma Uma* (which means get out! get out!). Today the movement is popularly known as the Mau Mau, a word that has no meaning in Kikuyu.

**Movement:** A social movement that seeks enhanced political autonomy.

**Pseudo-gangs:** A group of former renegade Mau Mau who were used by the colonial government to infiltrate the movement. These were Mau Mau who either surrendered or were arrested by the colonial forces.