

## Ideographs of Resistance and Identity Construction in the Kenyan Political Autobiography

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### Abstract

*The avalanche of autobiographies that are produced in postcolonial Kenya calls for sustained interrogation and analysis of the narratives created to elucidate those murky aspects of the colonial past and post-colonial present which may resolve the conundrum of failed independence. As the past studies on autobiography have shown, the autobiographical genre, and especially the political strand, has become a strong statement for resistance against hegemonic discourses that continue to inform national discourses in Kenya. This paper interrogates the Kenyan postcolonial leadership and the ways in which it is dramatized in the Kenyan political autobiography. Specifically, the paper interrogates Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's **Not Yet Uhuru**, Raila Odinga's **The Flame of Freedom** and Bildad Kaggia's **Roots of Freedom** to show that there is a discursive shift in the Kenyan political autobiography; a concerted effort to move away from themes of failed independence to constructing ideographs of resistance within the frameworks of class suicide espoused by Antonio Gramsci. The paper argues that Jaramogi, Kaggia and Raila use these ideographs of resistance to construct their senses of selves as Moses (Jaramogi), Joshua (Raila) while Kaggia sees himself as the black Messiah. The paper rides on textual analysis to contend that the authors of these texts negotiate and challenge terrains of history, ideology and class to present their authors as unparalleled nationalists. Leaning on a critical look at the production of such narratives, which are largely based on personal participation and observation, this paper interrogates and preserves authoritative data of the Kenyan past and present which is more vivid and accurate, than the annals, chronicles and other forms of modern historiography. Historians from earliest times have recognized that the closer such records were to the phenomena described in both time and place, the more their potential value as reliable sources for information.*

**Keywords:** Class suicide, ideographs, Joshua, Messiah, Moses.

### Introduction

The Kenyan political autobiography is a new phenomenon, and has not received a strong literary attention. However, as Indangasi (1993) argues, the autobiographical genre is not just an I-narrative seeking to tell the writer's life story, but rather a narrative that aims at communicating a higher truth by interpreting reality with acumen and intelligibility. He stresses that besides seeking to answer the question 'Who am I', autobiographies are 'propelled by an impulse to light [unjust] institutions' (Indangasi, 1993: 116). In the same vein, Mwangi (2002: 12) posits that autobiographies use impulse as a tool for resistance. It is in this terrain that this paper undertakes to interrogate how the Kenyan political autobiography employs ideographs of resistance and how their writers don themselves the garbs of intellectualism. The paper argues that when the Kenyan autobiography is examined within the frameworks of the nation's politics, nuances of subalternity and resistance are unveiled.

Gramsci (1971) and Althusser (2001) reason that class power rests not only on the economic level and on the simple capture and smashing of the dominant state apparatus, but is highly dependent on the legitimacy the class gains from subordinate classes in civil society through effective ideological struggle therein. Revolutionary change, they assert, resulted

from the dynamics and tensions of economic contradictions grounded in the mode of production. More specifically, the contradictions of the relations of production and forces of production, coupled with the economic contradictions of antagonistic classes in the realm of production was said to determine every qualitative transformation of the institutional fabric and the ideological formation of the social system in crisis. This notion of social revolution brought about an ultimate implication for capitalist society; namely, the so-called ‘cataclysmic’ interpretation of capitalist crisis; capitalist society would inevitably collapse as a result of its own economic laws and contradictions of increased proletarianization and pauperization (Gramsci, 1971; Williams, 1977). It would appear that this crisis would only be resolved through the decisive capture and smashing of the state apparatus by the proletariat, which would enable the revolutionary class to hold legitimate power.

It is within these frameworks outlined that this paper argues that the leader has to use specific ideographs that would assist him to smash the state apparatuses that hold people back. Thus, this paper reiterates that the leaders examined here utilize these ideographs in order to acquire acceptance from the proletariat. The leaders thus commit class suicide. This paper builds on these assertions by these Marxists to interrogate the thinking that weave Odinga’s, Raila’s and Kaggia’s autobiographies together.

Resistance to hegemony is a running theme that weaves through the three autobiographies. It will be recalled that each society develops a language that reflects a certain sensibility. From that language, certain terms which according to McGee (1980) ‘contain a unique ideological commitment’ and are ‘one-term sums of an orientation’ (7) emerge. For McGee, ideographs help to identify the discursive means for political control. Leaders who link policy and decisions to ideographs access the predispositions of audiences and thereby increase understanding and acceptance. The three leaders use terms with deep ideological meaning in order to advance a new national ethos. This paper argues that Jaramogi’s *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967), Bildad Kaggia’s *Roots of Freedom* (1975) and Raila Odinga’s *The Flame of Freedom* (2013) use specific ideographs of resistance. One of the ideographs of resistance used in the three autobiographies is freedom or *Uhuru* in Kiswahili.

The term *Uhuru* or freedom is an ideograph of resistance which cuts across the three autobiographies. That is why this paper argues that the three leaders use intertextuality to construct particular senses of selves; that is, while Jaramogi perceives himself as Moses, and Raila constructs for himself the identity of Joshua, Kaggia sees himself as the black Messiah. These names are hived from the Bible representing some of the important leaders among the Israelites.

### **Jaramogi and the Crafting of the Mosaic Image**

This paper sought to examine the ways in which the three leaders-cum-writers use the autobiographical genre to imagine and construct their senses of self. This construction is based on particular types of polity that are informed by the kind of ideographs that these leaders employ in their autobiographical texts. The paper achieves this objective primarily through the medium of the autobiographical materials provided in *Not Yet Uhuru* by Jaramogi Odinga, *Roots of Freedom* by Bildad Kaggia, and *The Flame of Freedom* by Raila Odinga. The construction of the self in this study is explored within the frameworks of subalternity, which is a feat that underpins the three autobiographies.

The paper locates several ideographs that the three autobiographers have used in their texts to construct their senses of self. The term ideograph was introduced by Michael Calvin McGee, specifically his 1980 article, ‘The Ideograph: A link between Rhetoric and Ideology’. McGee defines ideographs as ‘one-term sums of an orientation’ (McGee, 1980: 7). From this definition, ideographs represent a broader orientation, a whole sum of meanings, and a ‘unique ideological commitment’ (McGee, 1980: 7). Ideographs are therefore ordinary

language terms that function as the ‘building blocks of ideology’ (McGee, 1980: 7). To illustrate the concept, McGee (1980) introduces examples such as equality, rule of law, and freedom. While these terms live and appear in everyday discourse, ideographs are also descriptive terms for social human conditions. The use of ideographs by a leader serves a particular goal and as such, they are a ‘vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behaviour or belief’ (McGee, 1980: 6).

Ideographs live in language and are found in both elite discourse and the everyday talk of a community. Therefore, in order for ideographs to function, there has to be public rhetoric that is agreed upon and shared by the entire community. This ‘collective language’ may have different meanings in public and private spaces; however, its public meaning ‘constitutes social narratives for public action’ hence the necessity that members within the community share a commitment to the linguistic elements of ideographs (Condit, 1999; Connelly, 2012; Enoch, 2012; Kelly, 2014; Potter, 2014). The titles of the autobiographies of Jaramogi, Kaggia and Raila, make use of the ideograph freedom or *Uhuru*. This paper argues that these leaders use these ideographs to construct a selfhood that is acceptable to the suffering people.

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga honed his self-image symbolically. The symbolic creation in his autobiography begins immediately with its title. The phrase ‘Not Yet Uhuru [No Freedom]’ refers to the illusion of the independence achieved in Kenya. It is a deeply felt conviction that Kenya’s independence was hollow and Jaramogi felt the need to turn around this state of affairs. The autobiography does not foreground his birth and formal education but rather his education at the feet of the elders. Actually, the title he gives to his chapter one is: ‘At the Feet of the Village Elders’ (Odinga, 1967: 1-16). After being weaned by the village elders, Jaramogi writes about his entry to politics and how this opens his eyes on ‘The White Hand of Authority’ (Odinga, 1967:30-60) and the ‘Rejection of Patronage’ (Odinga, 1967:61-75). The arrangement of these chapters constructs a leader who is informed of the political terrain of the Kenyan nation. He concludes the book with a summary of what he terms as the ‘Obstacles to Uhuru’ (Odinga, 1967:253-315). The fourteen chapters that make up Jaramogi’s autobiography read towards this conclusion: obstacles to *Uhuru*. In the chapter, Jaramogi provides a roadmap to an economically vibrant and a politically freer society which is anchored on the rule of the law.

Of course Jaramogi is talking of the larger themes that affect the nation; however, in talking of these grandeur themes on the nation, he is also involved in a mythical rearranging of his life. Jaramogi chooses to see himself as a leader of a very special sort - as the Biblical Moses who was to lead the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. It will be recalled that although according to God’s plan, Moses was to lead Israelites to Canaan; he could not reach Canaan because of fallibilities on his persona. The choice of the self-image of Moses is important in discourses of liberation and subalternity. Jaramogi in his autobiography thus sets out to evoke his Mosaic self as a suitable image of leadership for a people leaving colonialism behind but needing guidance for a new order. This image for Jaramogi becomes a tool for resistance, and because many Kenyans would appreciate the call of the Biblical Moses, the Mosaic idea becomes an ideograph of resistance.

Locating the Mosaic ideograph within the frameworks of resistance, this paper problematizes the notion of liberation amidst theodicy, visibility, and poverty in Exodus 1–15. The study puts themes and concepts of liberation into literary perspective. *Not Yet Uhuru* chronicles the life of a leader who like the biblical Moses, aimed to liberate Kenyans from the bondage of neocolonialism, poverty and the Pharaohnic leadership under Jomo Kenyatta and later, Daniel Moi and beyond

In chapter five entitled ‘independence through business?’ (Odinga, 1967: 76-94), Jaramogi begins by observing that ‘I was convinced that to start the battle against white

domination we had to assert our economic independence' (Odinga, 1967: 76). Here, the white man acquires the qualities of Pharaoh because of tendencies to oppress, intimidate and destroy. It is also noteworthy that Jomo Kenyatta also acquires the Pharaohic qualities after independence, according to Jaramogi. Thus, just the way Jaramogi leads a revolution against the white man in Kenya, the same methods could be used to remove bad leadership in the country and thus open gates for an all-round development.

Another issue that Jaramogi dons his Mosaic garbs to deal with in *Not Yet Uhuru* is to deconstruct the misrepresentation of the Luo people as extravagant, self-centred, and exhibitionists. He reasons:

We Luo had also to assert ourselves among the other peoples of Kenya. I was haunted by the view which other Africans had of the Luo people. I had been hurt at Makerere by the accusations of fellow students from other tribes that the Luo were extravagant, self-centred, and exhibitionist; that they used their money for show and not to save to improve themselves.... (Odinga, 1967: 76-77).

In the mythologisation of Jaramogi's persona, *Not Yet Uhuru* locates the quest of liberation from the Luo tribe. Jaramogi had to imagine the Luo community as a microcosm of Kenya's society. To lead Kenya to freedom, Jaramogi had first to start from his Luo community. This is the reason he proposes using business as a liberatory tool. His emphasis on business as a means of liberation prompts Ndi (2017: 12) to argue that 'Jaramogi was a wealthy capitalist, [while] Jomo Kenyatta was a poor socialist'. The same line of thought had also been noted by Ndogo (2016) in his dissertation, *Narrating the Self and Nation in Kenya Autobiographical Writings* where he argues that in *Not Yet Uhuru*, Jaramogi creates an imagined nation as a community of economic empowerment. In this imagined community, the ethnic group is a microcosm of the larger political community.

Jaramogi's liberation methods read into Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his essay *The 'Banking' Concept of Education*, Freire passionately expounds on the mechanical flaw in the current system, and offers an approach that he believes medicates the learning-teaching disorder in the classroom. The flawed conception, Freire explains, is the oppressive 'depositing' of information (hence the term 'banking') by teachers into their students. But, according to Freire, a 'liberating' educational practice (his problem-posing method) negates the unconsciousness of those in classroom roles, and no false intellectual stimulation can exist within that practice. Jaramogi's use of the Luo community to give humanity to the whole of the Kenyan nation acquires a messianic dimension and can largely be located within Freire's frameworks. The Luo community comes out as the Israelite community. The humanization of the Luos, and in extension Africans, leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization of Africans by the Whiteman. According to Freire's formulation, this is not only as an ontological possibility but as a historical reality and as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she may ask if humanization is a viable possibility. Within history in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of his/her incompleteness.

Jaramogi uses *Not Yet Uhuru* to launch a battle against colonialism through what he calls 'Peasants in revolt' (Odinga, 1967: 95-122). Discourses of liberation are appreciated more by the peasants. Through the autobiography, Jaramogi creates an exodus to find hope, strength, and inspiration to resist and overcome. Exodus inspires some to confront and overthrow tyranny, others use it to generate and preserve tyranny; to justify oppression and domination. Themes of oppression and liberation are both evident, emerging from the nature

and use of power in Exodus. Careful considerations of these topics are critical to keep Exodus from becoming a narrative of conquest. The Mosaic identity serves to portray Jaramogi as the leader of the peasant revolution in Kenya. However, as the leader, Jaramogi has to create Luos subjectivity. For a long time, the Luos were the ‘Other’, the misrepresented, ‘the lazy and slack’ (Odinga, 1967: 92). By writing *Not Yet Uhuru*, Jaramogi debunks this misrepresentation.

The Mosaic identity that Jaramogi aims to allot himself can be deciphered from the debunking of the Luo (mis)representation. As the Biblical Moses passed the onus of leading the Israelites to the Promised Land to the young Joshua, likewise Jaramogi aims to pass the mantle to the Kenyan youth.

### **The Flame of Freedom: Receiving the Mantle in Joshua’s Fatigues**

The idea of ideographs can also be deciphered in Raila Odinga’s *The Flame of Freedom*. It is important to note that *The Flame of Freedom* and *Not Yet Uhuru* are symbolically interrelated. Intertextuality becomes a major style that cut across the two texts. Intertextuality is a word coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, who has written much on this topic. This word has a broader meaning in today’s context than the theories she expounds in her seminal work on intertextuality which are ‘word, dialogue and novel’ (Shakib, 2013). Her notion of Intertextuality refers to the literal and effective presence in a text of another text. ‘A text’, according to her, ‘is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another’ (Allen, 2000). Kristeva writes that horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important factor: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read (Kristeva, 1986). In Bakhtin’s work, these two axes, which he calls dialogue and ambivalence, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin (1981). *The Flame of Freedom* borrows a lot from *Not Yet Uhuru*. Both texts are anchored on liberation. While Raila chooses freedom in the title of his autobiography, Jaramogi had earlier preferred the Swahili version of freedom which is *Uhuru*.

While the paper has interrogated how *Uhuru* constructs an image of Moses in Jaramogi, *Freedom* creates the image of Joshua in the persona of Raila. Although Raila began constructing this image earlier in his political career, it is in the 2017 general elections when the Joshua identity was accepted for public consumption. The Canaan journey signifies a break away from the Egyptian slavery. It is noteworthy from the foregoing that this journey was started by his father Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, whose death coincides with the death of the biblical Moses in the bible. Moses, after fighting a protracted battle with Pharaoh, and miraculously crossing the Red Sea, could not reach Canaan, but his disciple Joshua could. Thus, when Raila Odinga in his autobiography revisits this Canaan journey and dons himself with Joshua’s garbs, the reader hopes for the completion of the journey that Moses began. He avers:

In my view, the decisive event in the Old Testament is not the creation but the exodus, through which the people of Israel are freed from Egyptian slavery. The scriptural record is found in the fifth chapter of the Book of Exodus, which begins with this dialogue between Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, and Moses and Aaron, the Israeli leaders: “...Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness... (Odinga, 2013: 112).

As already stated, this ideograph had begun earlier on in *Not Yet Uhuru* where Jaramogi portrays Kenyatta’s leadership as a semblance of the gerontocratic pharaoh who

could not kick out poverty, disease and ignorance and thus open the gates for an all-round development. The journey to Canaan therefore becomes paramount ideograph for the oppressed Kenyan people.

It is interesting how these leaders-cum-writers construct the titles of their autobiographies: *Not Yet Uhuru*, *The Flame of Freedom*. *Not yet Uhuru* denotes a failed independence. The freedom that Kenyans sacrificed for so much was hollow and despite the country's declared independence, the government led by blacks was as oppressive as the colonial government. This alludes to the fact that the Kenyan people are still not yet free from an oppressive force. To discern this, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga must have been more intellectually predisposed than any other leader in the Kenya African National Union (KANU).

One prominent youth Jaramogi seems to be talking about here is his son, Raila Odinga. The journey to Canaan is advanced by Raila in his autobiography. In his introduction he writes:

As I began my campaign for ODM's presidential nomination, my vision for Kenya remained the same as it had always been: finally achieving the dreams of our founding fathers, eliminating poverty, ignorance, disease and bad governance from our society and establishing a viable, democratic state at ease with itself and its neighbours (Odinga, 2013: 300).

The dreams of the founding fathers in the above quote reads into the hopes that Jaramogi, the biblical Moses, had for the Kenyan nation. As already argued, Kenya was experiencing the same travails that the Israelites were facing in the wilderness. Raila likens this to poverty, ignorance and disease. By highlighting this unholy trio, Raila urges the masses to march forward towards Canaan. He is the one holding the flame of freedom, leading the masses. In fact, in *The Flame of Freedom*, Raila is 'The Flame of Kenya's Freedom'.

The *Flame of Freedom* is a text that catalogues what Raila has done towards Kenya's full independence. Its thematic concerns pick up from where Jaramogi concludes his observations as regards the 'Obstacles of Uhuru' (Odinga, 1967: 253-315). The writing of freedom signifies that the journey to independence is not yet over. Kenya's journey to the realisation of a full meaningful independence takes a symbolic movement from Egypt to Canaan, from the land of bondage to the land flowing with honey and milk.

Raila starts the odyssey of constructing the Joshua identity earlier in the book. In the prologue, he passionately writes:

'Kenyans!' I appealed. If today you feel the same passion I feel for our country; if you want the same things I want, the same things I have fought for all my life; if you share my dream, if you share my will, if you share my determination; if you want us, as a nation, to grow into what our forefathers dreamed of; if you love your families and want the best for them; if you yourself have a dream of being the best you can be- WE CAN WIN! (Odinga, 2013: 4).

This kind of rhetoric is not only passionate but also assuring for the oppressed people. It speaks to them and becomes a rallying call for a political revolution. The repetition of the conditional clause 'if' in the speech portrays the fact that the oppressed Kenyans have to make a decision to start the journey to Canaan. It is the Kenyans who have to decide. By

using this conditional clause, Raila cleverly avoids falling in the dictatorial tendencies that he accuses the postcolonial Kenyan leadership as harbouring.

What follows this call is the ideograph 'Kibaki Toka' which was an anti thesis of yet another ideograph 'Kibaki Tosha' in the run-up to the historical 2002 general elections when NARC coalition, riding on populism, destroyed KANU's forty years rule in Kenya. Whereas 'Kibaki Tosha' ideograph served to consolidate power among the other ethnic groups against the Kalenjin, with 'Kibaki Toka' ideograph, Raila aims to consolidate the power to the oppressed people irrespective of the tribe.

In Kenya, it seems that the spiritual and the political inform one another. In constructing the image of Joshua, Raila aims to portray to his enemies that he possesses unparalleled spiritual/occult powers. The journey to Canaan has metaphorically been achieved and thus, Kenya 'has come to birth'.

### **Kaggia the Black Messiah**

Bildad Kaggia's autobiography *Roots of Freedom* (hereafter referred to as *Roots*) resonates so well with the construction of the figure it imagines – a messianic leader for the black community. The title uses the ideograph of freedom to give a tantalizing and hopeful foundation upon which the Kenyan nation was to be laid. However, with the path being lost by leaders who had been given the mandate to lead in 1970s when the autobiography was first published, the need for a black messiah was felt as urgent as ever. Therefore, this paper argues that Kaggia's autobiography is immersed in politics of spirituality with the aim of constructing the image of a black messiah in the person of Kaggia.

The concept of Messiahship resonates well with the masses, and Kaggia constructs this grandeur image to dazzle the reader and in a way obliterates the towering myth that had been consumed by Kenyans that Jomo Kenyatta was indeed that Messiah. In *Roots*, Kaggia deconstructs Jomo Kenyatta as the Messiah and fashions his image to become such a Messiah. He begins this construction by constructing an abandoned hero motif:

I was born in 1922 at a place called Dagoretti where my father was living when he married my mother. My father had left his home district of Murang'a as a young man to work around Nairobi [...] about two years after I was born, my father took a job as a watchman and a messenger which required him to live in a lonely place...(Kaggia, 1975: 1).

Among the four autobiographies interrogated here, it is Kaggia's that follows a common way to tell the story of an ancient hero's childhood. When accounts such as Oedipus, Romulus and Remus, Heracles, and the Biblical Moses are examined, it becomes clear that there is a common childhood pattern, which can be called the abandoned hero motif. This study notes that Kaggia's childhood has parallels to the ancient stories and the writer uses his autobiography to construct for himself an identity of a saviour.

After savouring on where he was born and that 'my father was a poor man' (Kaggia, 1975: 9), Kaggia delves into his awareness of racial discrimination in the Kenyan society. It will be recalled that an epic hero is born when there is lack. This lack drives the hero into looking for solutions that affect the society. According to *Roots*, Kaggia was born into obscurity and faces untold suffering because of the system that denied Kenyans and Africans in general full humanity. He writes:

[W]hen you see the D.C. you must take off your hat! You must have manners', he shouted at me. I took off my hat and very embarrassed, I

apologized. Then he drove off...this incident plus the chief clerk's episode opened my eyes. It did not matter what position one held; what mattered was colour...all Africans from labourer to chief clerk were the same to Europeans and Asians. They could be ordered about, even when they were not on duty. This was the beginning of my enlightenment about the racial barriers among Africans, Europeans and Asians. I became reserved in my conversation with Asians and Europeans, and cultivated friendships with African clerks (Kaggia, 1975: 19).

This awareness of the presence of racial discrimination in Kenya energizes him to swing into action with the sole aim of liberating the people. This liberation is not located in Kenya alone but even when he is scripted into the Second World War, he and other Africans face discrimination.

The identity that Kaggia constructs for himself is that of a black messiah. In chapter six of *Roots*, Kaggia writes on how he could liberate the minds of Kenyans, which according to him was the main reason why the European's supremacy discourses thrived. Explaining why he quit the Kenya African Study Union (KASU), he observes:

I decided that what was needed in Kenya was education: to educate the Africans about their rights and to inform them of the injustice of the treatment of Africans by the colonialists. KASU was under the thumb of Mathu, and Mathu was under the thumb of the colonial government, the symbol of colonial oppression, so KASU was not suited for my task. A more militant and a more independent organization was required (Kaggia, 1975: 54).

This formed the turning point in liberation. The hero, Kaggia, had obtained the knowledge that was needed to obtain independence for his people, the Kenyans. It was he, and not Jomo Kenyatta, who was the black messiah who carried the people's aspirations on his shoulders. For Kenyatta and Kenyan nationalists, it was an attempt to create a cultural space and establish a difference from colonialism. This cultural space or difference is not a wholesale rejection of colonial modernity but rather a strategic use of it, which made the nationalist discourse quite different from the discourse of Mau Mau.

As we have argued, Kenyatta's position regarding Mau Mau was opportunistic. On the one hand, he was not in the inner circle of the Mau Mau decision-making process, but he clearly approved of the worries and anxiety that were caused by Mau Mau activities. At the same time, he was quite vocal, and at the urging of the colonial authorities denounced Mau Mau in clear terms. While Kenyatta's stand on Mau Mau during the emergency was ambiguous, his stand became quite clear after independence when, as the country's first president, he began a wholesale denouncement of it.

In *Roots*, Kaggia portrays Jomo Kenyatta as a false hero, and also a false saviour who people followed without questioning. According to Mutie, Mang'oka and Chemwei (2015), Kenyatta's own ruse to mythologise himself started early in his political career. The narration of Kenyatta's voyage to England in 1929 as the representative and spokesperson of the Kikuyu people in their fight against the colonial government launches the use of myth to depict Kenyatta as the champion of the people of Kenya. As captured in the narrative part of *suffering without Bitterness* (Kenyatta, 1968: 21-193), from overseas, Kenyatta carefully fed the myth of his political significance and achievements. Not surprisingly, as Muigai (2004: 202) notes, Kenyatta eventually became more important in Kikuyu politics than any of his Kenya Central Association (KCA) superiors; Jesse Kariuki and Joseph Kang'ethe. He even threatened to eclipse Harry Thuku, the leader of the East African Association (EAA), which

transformed itself to KCA in 1923, who was still in detention (Kinyatti, 2008: 54). As Throup (1987: 33) notes, it is myth-creation that propelled Kenyatta to ascend to the position of the chief propagandist of KCA, the position that he was able to use so skilfully to create a Kikuyu sub-nationalist ideology that legitimised the accumulation of land and capital by the proto-capitalists of KCA within the framework of a revitalised traditional mythology. In the narrative part of *Suffering without Bitterness*, the narrator creates Kenyatta's life as a myth because of the inherent power of myth to captivate the imagination of the masses, and hence as a strategy for assuming and maintaining power.

Therefore, in *Roots*, Jomo Kenyatta was not the Messiah people were waiting for, it was Bildad Kaggia. As the Messiah, Kaggia stands tall among the other inmates famously known as the Kapenguria Six - Achieng Oneko, Fred Kubai, Paul Ngei, Kungu Karumba, Bildad Kaggia, and Jomo Kenyatta. Kaggia (1975: 128) denounced the court chosen interpreter for having animosity against the Kikuyu and for writing books condemning Mau Mau. Kaggia argued that Leakey was putting words in the mouth of prosecution witnesses to the extent of substituting a 'yes' for a 'no' in the testimony (Kaggia, 1975: 128). After Defence Counsel Pritt confronted and termed Leakey a 'partial interpreter'; he left the courtroom and refused to return (Kaggia, 1975: 129). Here Leakey definitely helped by his knowledge about Gikuyu Language and customs, unlawfully attempted to help the British with this knowledge. It would seem that while Jomo Kenyatta provided the political face for black political aspirations, it was Kaggia who actually organised many to continue the armed struggle against the British, following the execution of Dedan Kimathi, the movement's leader, in 1957. According to *Roots*, this therefore makes Kaggia the hero, and Jomo Kenyatta, an imposter.

This explains why, as the Messiah, Kaggia soon became disillusioned with the endemic corruption in the new government. He openly condemned the actions of many of his old comrades, accusing them of frittering away the gains of independence and lining their pockets with money meant for the poor. He was labelled a communist and in 1964, was hounded out of the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU), along with Odinga, who was the country's vice president. The two men formed a New Leftist party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU). Kaggia's defection was seen as a betrayal by Kenyatta, who Kaggia said, had tried to bribe him with an offer of land. Just as the Messiah, Kaggia spent his last days in the Nairobi slums, among the poor he had served as a freedom fighter and political campaigner.

## Conclusion

In a way of conclusion, this paper interrogates a question that was elided in the discussion. How do these leaders, who have been at the echelons of power, qualify to be subaltern? Particularly can these leaders qualify to be or represent the subaltern? The study has shown that these leaders do not qualify admission to the school of subalternity. They held and continue to hold elevated offices, far above what the common man can imagine. However, in writing an autobiography, the writer is able to achieve the goal of committing a class suicide and donning the subalternity garbs. In these garbs, the study has shown that the leader is able to represent the subaltern. It is noteworthy that these leaders want to be understood as subalterns for peculiar selfish interests.

In donning the subaltern garbs, these leaders construct particular senses of selves that bridge the spatial distance between them and the would-be followers. For Jaramogi, the image of the Biblical Moses serves his interests to take the subaltern to Canaan. The same can be said as regards to Jaramogi's son, Raila. For Raila, the identity of Joshua serves him well owing the failed journey that his father had started. The identity of Joshua should serve his interests of continuing with the journey that his father was not able to complete. However,

although Jaramogi wants to be understood as the Biblical Moses, Raila (Joshua) and Kaggia (a black Messiah) cleavages are always discernible in the very art of construction. It is noteworthy that not all prodigal sons are as genuine in their repentance as in the biblical story. Their autobiographies thus do not succeed in expunging the ghost that always slip out the persona, in form of the Freudian personality slips, and show their audiences who truly these leaders are.

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