

The unsung Mau Mau heroes who fought for independence.

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When the history of self-rule is told, not many get to mention the defiant Mau Mau general known as Kurito ole Kisio, a Maaasi who led freedom fighters in Narok, the county that is the venue of this year's Madaraka Day celebrations. **TORTURED WIFE** To date, very little has been written or documented about General Kisio, a fighter who destabilised the British colonialists so much that they captured his pregnant wife and tortured her until he was lured out of his hideout and killed.

"His valour would later see his then pregnant wife, Miriam Enekurito, become the first person to be arrested for collusion with the Mau Mau. She was tortured until Kisio was killed in 1954," activist and historian Shiraz Durrani writes in his book *Mau Mau and its Legacy of Resistance to Colonialism and Imperialism 1948-1990*. So far, the book launched last year has the largest number of pages dedicated to the history of General Kisio.

Interestingly, his story and that of the contribution of the Maasai freedom fighters only covers three pages out of over 400. Until the book was published, very little had been documented about the general and other Mau Mau freedom fighters who commandeered the freedom struggle. "There was a deliberate effort to ensure that the stories of these great men were not told.

A few individuals who tried to research on the Mau Mau like Maina Wa Kinyatii were jailed," says Kimani Waweru, the in-charge at Ukombozi Library, which is collaborating with the Mau Mau Research Centre in a new effort to tell the freedom fighters' story. It took the national government 40 years to recognise the Mau Mau as a legal movement.

The organisation had been proscribed on August 12, 1950. **HEAVY PRICE** The then Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Kiraitu Murungi, declared the Mau Mau a legal movement on July 31, 2003. As governor of Meru, Mr Murungi has named two streets in the town after Field Marshal Baimungi Marete and General Musa Mariama. There are renewed efforts to retell the Mau Mau story.

One such an effort is the Museum of British Colonialism, which says that it wants to create a more truthful account of British colonialism. "Founded in 2018, our work is driven by the belief that there are not only major gaps in Britain's understanding of its own history of imperialism, but that this understanding needs to be reframed to acknowledge the deeply negative and traumatic effects of the Empire globally," the Museum says.

The institution seeks to present a more factual account of the Mau Mau emergency, one of the most brutal but least known episode of Britain's colonial history. At the Kenya National Archives, research into the Mau Mau activities has overtaken enquiries on other subjects.

"People want to know what happened, how it happened and the fate of the freedom fighters especially the men who led the war," Mau Mau freedom fighter and historian Maina Macharia offers. Despite their sacrifices in the liberation struggle, there is still no elaborate documented list of the Mau Mau generals, men and women who paid a heavy price for what we now carelessly enjoy.

DANGEROUS LIVES However, snippets of their interesting and dangerous lives are found in many books among them *Mau Mau: Heroes or Villains?*, *History of the Hanged*, *Mau Mau From Within*,

Kenya's Freedom Struggle, Six Mau Mau Generals, The Last Mau Mau Field Marshals and Mau Mau in Action. Enquiries have shown that Mau Mau probably had between 50 to 100 generals during their entire insurgency.

They include Dedan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge, Macharia Kimemia, Mbaria Kaniu, Muraya Mbutia, Ndungu Gicheru, Kimbo Mutuku, Njata Kagiri, Ole Ngaviani, Kago Mboko, Hituchi Kabutu alias Kariba, Gitau wa Ng'ang'a alias Matenjagwo, Mohammed Kinuu, Waruhiu Itote aka China, Enock Mwangi, Itina Itheri, Kahiwa Itina, Kibira Gatu, Gikonyo Kanyungu, Ndungu Giceru, Makinya Nguthiru and Muriuki Kamotho alias Tanganyika. The others are Kitura, Ihuura, Njatu, Achira, Njagi wa Ikutha alias Kubukubu, Baimungi, Mwariama, Kamami, Kamwamba, Mukura, Gateru, Simba, Kassam, Mutune, Kitura, Ihuura, Muhimu, Rui, Ruku, Gatamuki, Wanjota Kavote, Muchori, Kibeera and General Ndaya.

There was also Muthoni Kirima, Salim Mugira, Gititi Kabutu alias Kareba, Mubia Mang'ongi alias Jericho, Hika Hika, Gathia Gachiri alias Kabiu, Jacinta Kabika Mwariama alias Nkobias, M'Murungi M'Kobias alias Kanyanga, Gacheru Gathogo alias Gathaka, Mutonyi Nguyo alias Waihenya and Jonah M'Ituruchiu M'Itunga commonly known as General Gachienja. BURIED ALIVE General China was leader of Mount Kenya Forces.

General Tanganyika, who aligned himself to the Hika Hika Battalion, was the man who led the raid on the home of a white settler known as Gray Leakey in October 1955. The raid brought fame to Mau Mau and the freedom fighters took the captured Leakey to the forest and buried him alive. It is reported that even the Queen of England pleaded with them to return his body to his family they never did.

As one of the most hunted men by the colonialists, he escaped arrest for three-and-a-half years until April 10, 1956 when he was captured as his unarmed fighters were looking for food in the forest. No bullet was fired.

He was later sentenced to death. General Kubu Kubu also known as Njagi wa Ikutha, was the most respected freedom fighters from the Embu community.

General Kariba, who was an oath administrator in the Nyeri district, was known as the most courageous leader in Nyeri and led the Hika Hika Battalion after the Capture of General China. General Mathenge carried out the most sophisticated attack during the Mau Mau Emergency after they raided the Naivasha Police Station, broke into the armoury and carted away weapons in two lorries.

They also freed 173 prisoners.