

Miradi Bubu ya Wazalendo: A Postcolonial Reading

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Abstract

This article is a critique of Gabriel Ruhumbika’s novel: *Miradi Bubu ya Wazalendo* (1992) using the broad principles of postcolonialism. We examine the theme of colonialism and its effects on the people of Tanzania, and the various stages of the struggle for liberation. We also investigate the stumbling blocks to total liberation and the building of ujamaa. This paper is partly motivated by the fact that the work in question is one of the most outstanding historical novels in Kiswahili literature.

Key Words: *Critique, Miradi Bubu, Postcolonial*

Introduction

As a historical novel that deals with the colonization and decolonization of Tanzania, *Miradi Bubu ya Wazalendo* easily lends itself to postcolonial analysis. It is necessary to clarify from the outset that in the words of Mongia, (1966) “Postcolonial refers not to a simple periodization but rather a methodological revisionism which enables a wholesale critique of Western structures of knowledge and power” (p. 2). This clarification is necessary because the term in question has elicited raging controversies which we do not intend to get into. One point of contention has been whether or not “post” refers to “subsequent to”, and, therefore, implies the period after colonialism. Mongia – in the words quoted above – asserts that no such periodization is intended. Among other things, postcolonial theory deals with the ways in which writers from societies that are emerging from imperial domination portray the effects of imperialism. The products of such writing have been termed “postcolonial literatures” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, p. 2).

In the following pages, *Miradi Bubu ya Wazalendo* is analysed on the principles of the postcolonial theory. It is hoped that the analysis will demonstrate that Ruhumbika’s work is a postcolonial novel. The dominant themes of colonization and decolonization are discussed and the impact of colonial rule and the policies of the new African administration are dealt with. A deliberate effort is made to show that although the novel celebrates the attainment of uhuru, there is no dichotomy between the colonial and postcolonial epochs. As Amuka (2000) argues, the postcolonial era did not signify the end of classical colonialism. This is mainly because political independence did not bring to an end the colonial system. In other words, independence merely introduced a few cosmetic changes in the political realm.

Colonial Rule

The historical setting of the novel is between 1945 and 1985. As the story begins to unfold at the end of the Second World War, we get a picture of the colonial system and its adverse effects on the African subjects. Under colonial rule, the rights of Africans are trampled on and they are subjected to the worst forms of racism. According to Said (1993), colonialism and racism go hand in hand. He says: "Almost all colonial schemes begin with an assumption of native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent" Thus the white colonialists regard themselves as the epitome of humanity and civilization while the African subjects are the opposite or "others". This act of "othering" is one of the means by which colonialists justified their brutality against the colonized. In the novel, we read about the Makonde of Mozambique fleeing from the brutality of Portuguese colonialism by crossing the border into Tanzania. But even in Tanzania where they join locals working in sisal plantations owned by white settler farmers, conditions are extremely bad.

African labourers in the sisal plantations work under a system of indentured labour. This is a contractual arrangement which bound one to work for a period of one, three or even four years in a particular plantation. The contract took away all the rights of the labourer, turning him into a virtual slave. We are told:

Na siku hizo, mtu akishaandikisha manamba ya mkonge...mpaka hapo manamba yake ... itakapokwisha, huyo mtu alikuwa mfungwa wa huyo tajiri wa kigeni.... Na manamba ilikuwa ni sharti aishi kwenye kambi ya shamba la tajiri, alikuwa hana ruhusa ya kutembelewa na mtu, hata mkewe, na alikuwa hawezi kukanyaga nje ya shamba la bwana wake bila idhini ya huyo tajiri. (p. 9)

And in those days once you signed a contract to work as a migrant labourer in the sisal plantation...until the end of the contractual period you became a prisoner of the foreign employer....And it was a must for the labourer to live in the labour camp with no permission to be visited even by a wife, or leave the camp without the employer's permission. (my translation)

In the labour camp, a tough taskmaster ensures that the labourers are mercilessly exploited for the benefit of the white plantation owner. There are no health facilities at the labour camp despite the fact that there are frequent accidents where the victims sustain serious injuries. The terrible neglect of the workers is illustrated in the episode involving Mzee Jabiri. On a Saturday in the sisal plantation owned by a Greek settler farmer named TumboTumbo, a tragic accident occurs while he is away enjoying himself in Tanga.

The victim is Mzee Jabiri. He accidentally steps on a sisal stem from which he has just cut the leaves. Then he falls down, and his head is pierced by a piece of metal that was buried in the ground. The foreman struggles to nurse him as he awaits his boss to take the injured man to hospital. As usual, TumboTumbo will be away till Monday. In the meantime, there cannot be any medication since the nearest hospital is fifteen miles

away. On Monday, TumboTumbo returns and reluctantly takes Mzee Jabiri to hospital. The poor fellow is thrown at the back of a lorry which is driven at top speed on a very rough road for fifteen miles. Consequently, Mzee Jabiri's head injury deteriorates and he sustains more injuries. He is pronounced dead on arrival at the mission hospital. The white settler farmer does not show even the slightest concern for the injured worker, and were it not for the foremen's insistence, he would not even bother to take him to hospital. As we see, even when he finally does so, he handles the injured worker so roughly that he literally kills him. After committing the heinous crime, TumboTumbo throws Jabiri's dead body into the farm sewer.

The horrifying cruelties that TumboTumbo subjects his workers to were typical of the way white settler farmers treated Africans in the colonial system. At this juncture, it is necessary to elaborate the importance of settlers to the colonies. First of all, imperial powers such as Britain and France established colonies in Africa and elsewhere in order to strengthen their economies by exploiting the human and natural resources of their spheres of influence. One such resource was land. In East Africa, British settler-invaders expropriated prime land from its African owners and established large-scale farms or plantations which were put under cash crop cultivation. Tea, coffee, sisal and pyrethrum were some of the most preferred cash crops. In Tanzania, sisal was the main cash crop in the area where part of the novel under discussion is set. The settler farmers used cheap or free (forced) African labour on their farms whose products were exported to the metropolitan country. The metropolitan industries, therefore, prospered by exploiting cheap raw materials from the colonies. Sometimes the settler farmers or their children were recruited to serve in the colonial administration. In a nutshell, the settler phenomenon resulted in great loss and suffering to the natives. In addition to losing their land, they were enslaved to work for the settlers on the same land. The resultant bitterness was one of the main factors that drove Africans to start the struggle to liberate themselves. But before we turn to the fight for independence and decolonization in general, there is another aspect of settler farming that we need to discuss.

Cash crop cultivation by the settler farmers resulted in ecological imperialism. This means that the introduction of foreign crops like sisal altered the physical environment of colonized societies to the disadvantage of the indigenous inhabitants. First of all, the cash crops tended to replace traditional food crops leading to famines. Secondly, since Africans were forced to work in the settler farms, they had no time to cultivate whatever was left of their land. Thirdly, some of the cash crops required pesticides which contributed to the emergence of new diseases in the tropics. On the whole, ecological imperialism was as harmful as political, economic and cultural imperialism – all of which were experienced during colonial rule.

Decolonization

Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, (1998) define decolonization as follows:

the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved (p. 63).

Two salient points can be abstracted from this comprehensive definition. One, decolonization is a monumental process that takes a lot of time and effort. Secondly, political independence does not signify the attainment of decolonization. One inference that can be drawn from the two points is that we can talk about degrees of decolonization. Decolonization is not easy to achieve and it can even fail.

In the novel under discussion, the national liberation struggle that spearheads decolonization in Tanzania is preceded by isolated instances of resistance. This takes place in the settler plantations where as we have seen, African workers are subjected to the most inhuman treatment. We are told that workers often protested mistreatment by their employers by staging strikes. Although the strikes were brutally suppressed by the use of armed police, they inflicted heavy losses on the settler farmers. The settlers lived in fear of such strikes and tried to avoid situations that could instigate them. This is the fear that the foreman in TumboTumbo's plantation exploits to make him agree to take Mzee Jabiri to hospital. He scares TumboTumbo by telling him that workers all over the plantation are discussing Mzee Jabiri's condition and they might cause trouble if he is neglected and dies (p. 15).

There are two types of characters who constitute the major players in the national liberation movement. One category is that of ordinary people who suffered under colonial rule. Saidi Jabiri is the exemplification of such people. He is the son of Mzee Jabiri, whose tragic death in TumboTumbo's plantation we have talked about. Saidi starts working in the plantation with his father when he is barely ten years old. Later he goes to Dar es Salaam where he works as a domestic servant in the house of an Indian shopkeeper. It is at this time that he joins the liberation movement. The conviction that guides his actions is that fighting colonialism and achieving *uhuru* is the only way to end the misery, exploitation and oppression he has suffered all his life. The second type of freedom fighter is the educated African who is a product of the colonial education system. Examples of such an African are Nzoka and Nyerere. Nzoka joins the struggle for *uhuru* in Mwanza after studying up to Standard Ten. He views politics as an alternative route to joining the bourgeois class after failing to advance his colonial education to a higher level. Like Saidi, he later moves to Dar es Salaam to work under Nyerere.

First, we shall examine Saidi's contribution. After his father's death, he is assisted by Munubi – the foreman at TumboTumbo's farm – to go to Dar es Salaam. While in the hands of Bibi Ntwara who is Munubi's relative, he is employed in lowly jobs as a houseboy and later shop attendant. It is at this time that TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) is formed. This is the party that spearheads the fight for independence

under the leadership of J.K. Nyerere. The party headquarters in Kariakor is not far from where Saidi lives and works. The formation of TANU creates an immediate impact as far as the struggle for independence is concerned. Its platform of liberating Africans is so appealing that after its launching in the capital, its message spreads quickly throughout the country:

Ikawa hapo jijini, na hatimaye pote nchini, kwa wananchi wote, kitu cha kuzungumzia na cha kuwaza ni kimoja tu: TANU na siasa yake ya kupigania uhuru wao.(p.45).

It happened that in the city and eventually all over the country, for all the people, there was only one thing to talk and think about: TANU and its platform of fighting for their independence. (my translation)

Saidi joins the movement's Youth League. He sacrifices his time working at the party headquarters for free. Initially the party had no money to employ staff, so it entirely relied on volunteers like Saidi. So Saidi would work at the Indian shop for five days and spend the whole of Saturday working for TANU. When Nyerere notices Saidi's diligence and commitment, he directs that he should be employed to work full time for TANU. Although the party cannot even pay him the same amount he was paid by the Indian employer, Saidi agrees to leave his job and work full time for it. His back-breaking job at the party headquarters is a combination of being a messenger, cleaner and errand boy to all the party officials. It is quite clear that Saidi does not do all this for pay but as a contribution to the struggle for independence.

We now turn to Nzoka. He is the son of a Sukuma peasant farmer from Mwanza region. His father takes him to school to prepare him for a better life. Within a few years, Nzoka proves himself to be a highly capable and ambitious student. He dreams of going to Makerere College and then, to Europe. His admiration for the colonialists, especially their language and education is made sufficiently clear. Nzoka's education comes to an abrupt end when he reaches Standard X. He fails to get a First Class in the Territorial Standard X examination, and this means he cannot proceed to a higher level. Opportunistically, he joins the liberation struggle. In telling about the rise of Nzoka, the author ensures that the reader does not lose sight of the historical context. The time when Nzoka acquires sufficient education to launch his political career is in the 1950s. This was also the time when the struggle for political independence in many parts of Africa was in top gear. Ghana led the way in the decolonization of Africa with its leader Kwame Nkrumah who became a source of inspiration to many Africans engaged in the liberation struggle. Nzoka is so full of admiration for Nkrumah that he changes his name so that it resembles that of his idol. It is instructive that the type of education Nzoka receives is one that was designed by the British colonial government to serve its own interests rather than those of the African subjects. It was meant to create an elite group of Africans who were immersed in British culture. Eventually, such "black Britons" were recruited into the colonial system. Rodney (1972) makes an apt observation on this phenomenon in the following words:

The main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans. In effect, that meant selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole (p. 240).

Frantz Fanon (1967: 46-47) makes a prophetic warning about the role of the products of such a system in sabotaging decolonization especially in cases where the national liberation movement has not been accompanied by violence. Nzoka turns out to be the kind of “native intellectual” Fanon had warned about. Initially, Nzoka – like his comrade Saidi – works tirelessly for TANU, recruiting members, disseminating the party policies and running errands for Nyerere. He ends up becoming one of Nyerere’s most trusted assistants. The TANU leader holds Nzoka in great esteem because of his enthusiasm, commitment and mobilization skills. Hence he opens all possible opportunities for him to advance his political career. Somehow, it never occurs to Nyerere that Nzoka is an opportunist and a hypocrite.

Unlike Kenya where there was an armed wing of the national liberation movement (commonly known as Mau Mau), the Tanzanian process of attaining independence was entirely civilian. This underscores the importance of TANU and the invaluable role of Nyerere – its head. Nyerere, who is the political star in several episodes in the novel, is portrayed as the quintessential patriot, nationalist and mobilizer. Moreover, he is a paragon of morality and a visionary. It is quite clear that Nyerere is in a class of his own since none of the other leaders – people he appoints to hold key public posts – are seen to follow his example. Nzoka is one such appointee.

The colonial government made spirited attempts to delay independence but Nyerere pressed on with his agitation for *uhuru* and the formation of an African government. Since the country was a UN Trust Territory, the TANU leader travelled to New York on a number of occasions to present his case for early independence. The UN supported his proposals and the new governor – Richard Turnbull – who was posted to Tanganyika (as Tanzania was called then) from Kenya had a good working relationship with Nyerere. Elections were held in 1961 and TANU won easily. Nyerere formed government and became Chief Minister. The novel under discussion relates how he demonstrated extraordinary leadership by resigning and leaving the post of Chief Minister to another TANU stalwart – Rashid Kawawa. His intention was to spend all his time preparing the country for full independence and a republican system. This was achieved the following year – 1962. Nyerere became the first president of the republic. He moved to State House from the humble party headquarters. Saidi, his indispensable messenger, agreed to go with him. Nzoka who had recently returned to the country from further studies was appointed the president’s advisor on political and internal affairs (pp.100-101).

The question that arises at this juncture is what *uhuru* meant for the ordinary people who had suffered under colonial rule and how it changed their lives for the better. We turn to the condition of plantation workers after independence to answer this question. But before we do that, it is worthwhile to ponder over the existence of such

plantations – still owned and run by white settler farmers – even after independence. As we saw earlier, the settlers grabbed the land from Africans, hence displacing them. After independence, the natural expectation would be that the land would be redistributed to its true African owners. However, this does not happen, and it is the first sign that *uhuru* is a sham. Turning to the condition of the plantation workers, we see that one of the positive things that independence brings is that their enslavement by their settler employers is brought to an end. Henceforth, the settler plantations farmers are required to respect their rights.

Unfortunately, there are still cases of racism and the violation of the rights of Africans. This is exemplified in the trial of Munubi. He is humiliated and provoked by his new boss and he kills him in self-defense. He is arrested, arraigned on a charge of murder and sentenced to death. The court room audience and the general public perceive injustice in the ruling. The general consensus is described as follows:

Ni kwa sababu tu mshtakiwa ni mtu mweusi na aliyeuawa ni Mzungu na majaji wetu wenyewe ni Wazungu watupu. Angekuwa aliyeuawa ndiye mweusi na mshtakiwa ndiye Mzungu pasingekuwa na hata cha kesi (p.37).

It is only because the accused is a black person and the victim is a European and our judges are still all European. If the victim was black and the accused white, there would not even be a case at all. (my translation)

Ironically, it is President Nyerere - the freedom fighter and champion of the rights of Africans who signs the warrant to execute the death penalty. Thus he unknowingly endorses the injustice perpetrated by the court. On the whole, therefore, what *uhuru* achieves for the common man is quite modest.

The *Ujamaa* Experiment

Before discussing the *ujamaa* phenomenon, it is necessary to note the historical event of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964. This happened a few months after Zanzibar had gone through a violent revolution that overthrew the Sultan's government. The union gave birth to the United Republic of Tanzania with Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere as president and Abeid Amani Karume (former president of Zanzibar) as vice-president. Three years later, the historic Arusha Declaration was made. We are told:

Lengo kuu la Azimio lilikuwa ni kufuta unyonyaji na kujenga usawa utakaoleta maendeleo haraka kwa wananchi wote (p.52).

The main aim of the Declaration was to get rid of exploitation and to build equality which will bring development quickly to all the citizens. (my translation)

This quotation confirms what we said earlier, that independence achieved very little. It neither ended exploitation and inequality nor did it deliver development. This is what the leadership of Tanzania, particularly Mwalimu Nyerere, realized and decided to chart a new path for the country. The Arusha Declaration was basically a set of

policies meant to guide the country in building socialism and self-reliance. The policies were contained in a document titled: “The Arusha Declaration and TANU’s Policy of Socialism and Self-Reliance”. Davidson (1978) describes the style in which the content of this all-important document was presented as “vigorous and simple Swahili addressed to the whole political community” (p. 34). This underlines the use of the national language for political mobilization and the creation of a national common purpose. Nyerere called his brand of socialism *ujamaa*. It was based on African traditional culture especially the extended family system, equality and the obligation of all able-bodied people to work. Capitalist structures were to be dismantled through nationalizing private firms. Moreover, leaders of the party and government were to be barred from engaging in activities geared towards enriching themselves at the expense of the people.

Nyerere’s bold step to experiment with a new homegrown socio-political and economic system intended to replace the colonial system represents one of the greatest achievements in the decolonization of Africa. The goals of *ujamaa* were revolutionary and noble; its policies were realistic and tailor-made for the Tanzanian situation. However, the whole project required a high caliber of patriotic and visionary leadership which (apart from Nyerere) Tanzania lacked. This is one of the biggest challenges that faced the *ujamaa* experiment.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the introduction of *ujamaa* was part of the process of decolonization. The question that arises is whether or not the *ujamaa* experiment was successful. The novel under discussion grapples with this question. Ruhumbika chooses 1981 – fourteen years after the Arusha Declaration was launched as the time to assess the achievements of *ujamaa* policies which Nyerere’s government had set out to implement. The failure of *ujamaa* to create equality and improve the lives of common people is illustrated through the lives of the two main characters – Saidi and Nzoka. The former sinks deeper and deeper into poverty no matter how hard he works. The latter, on the other hand, gets wealthier and more powerful by manipulating the system to his advantage. In other words, he uses his position not to serve the people – as is expected of him – but to enrich himself.

Nzoka’s meteoric rise to power, prestige and wealth begins when President Nyerere appoints him to head the largest state corporation which is one of the products of the nationalization policy. His appointment means that enormous resources are placed in his hands, and he wields tremendous power. From the time he is appointed, no one fails to notice that this is a new Nzoka. He no longer treats those under him with respect:

...*akawa anaendesha watu kwa ukoloni wa Bwana TumboTumbo na dharau ya tajiri wa kibaniani* (p. 106).

... he started pushing people around in the colonial manner of Mr. Tumbo Tumbo and the disdain of a Banian employer. (my translation)

Moreover, Nzoka adopts a high lifestyle. He marries several wives, has endless affairs with different women, and amasses great wealth. As he entrenches nepotism, plunders public resources and runs down the state corporation he heads, he pretends to be following Nyerere's example. Hence when Nyerere builds his own house in Msasani, Nzoka follows suit although his hypocrisy is evident, in the sense that he does not have the latter's noble intentions. Nyerere's action is in line with the policy of self-reliance. It is also an act of leading by example which is meant to encourage other leaders and government officials to build their own houses rather than rely on government quarters. Nyerere's project is financed through a personal bank loan and not public money. Achebe (1983) refers to this remarkable trait of modesty and austerity in his character as a most effective way of instilling patriotism (p. 17). In contrast, Nzoka uses the huge amounts he has stolen from the public to build his house. The loan of seventy-five thousand he takes from the bank is a smokescreen to hide his thievery since the house he constructs costs over three million in the end.

The African bourgeois class exemplified by Nzoka creates a neo-colonial system in which its members are the new masters. Their subjects are the poor underpaid workers like Saidi who have no means of enriching themselves by stealing from the public purse. The plight of this class is described in the following words:

Tanzania hiyo ya mwaka wa 1981...ilikuwa Tanzania tofauti sana na Tanzania iliyosheherekea Azimio la Arusha mwaka wa 1967. Hasa kwa watu wa kawaida kama Ndugu Saidi...ghafila mambo yalikuwa yameharibika kiasi cha watu wa kawaida kama Ndugu Saidi kutoweza kumudu maisha tena....Na kila hatua iliyochukuliwa na serikali ili kurekebisha mambo ilizidi kufanya mambo yawe magumu zaidi (p.61).

That Tanzania of 1981...was very different from the Tanzania that celebrated The Arusha Declaration in 1967. Particularly for poor people like Comrade Saidi...all of a sudden, things had become so bad that people like Comrade Saidi could not cope any more....And every step the government took to find solutions made the situation even worse. (my translation)

Living conditions became unbearable with the disappearance from the market of basic commodities such as maize and wheat flour, rice, sugar and bread. The government intervenes to cushion the poor by opening special shops in designated areas where the commodities in question are stocked and sold at reasonable prices. However, this is sabotaged by government officials who steal, hoard and sell them in the black market at prices that are beyond the reach of the poor. By 1985 the economy had collapsed completely. The economic hardships facing the poor had reached unprecedented levels. While the ordinary people wallow in poverty, political leaders and their relatives are not only comfortable but they continue to prosper. A telling example of this state of affairs is given concerning the supply of meat. The government nationalizes the private firms dealing with trade in meat so as to ensure that the people – instead of a few capitalists – benefit financially and also have a constant supply. However, the initiative backfires because it is sabotaged by top leaders. They steal and

hoard the meat that government entities are trading in, leading to their collapse. Subsequently, they start their own businesses to trade in the same meat. It is in such circumstances that Nzoka opens a butchery in Dar es Salaam which is run by his in-laws in collaboration with Asian businessmen. It is notable that corrupt leaders beat the TANU rule that bars them from engaging in private businesses by putting their businesses in the hands of their relatives.

To highlight further how the leaders are immune from the hardships that they have plunged the country into, the happenings on the education front are described in detail. We are told that majority of the parents can no longer afford to educate their children beyond standard seven. On the contrary, Nzoka's children have no difficulty whatsoever in pursuing education to the highest level. In 1985 his eldest child is admitted to study economics at Oxford University in the UK. Somehow, the child is exempt from the rule that bars people from going abroad to study for courses that are locally available. Moreover, the government pays all the fees for Nzoka's child.

The novel ends with Nyerere's tour of Dar es Salaam to meet the people and bid them farewell on his retirement. Despite the economic havoc wrought by his *ujamaa*, he is warmly received wherever he goes. To a large extent, *Miradi Bubu ya Wazalendo* is an appraisal of the *ujamaa* experiment and its leadership. The unequivocal verdict is that *ujamaa* was a failure, largely because of the failure of leadership. Nyerere alone could not make *ujamaa* successful, while the other leaders were busy looting public resources. Davidson (1978) attributes the failure of *ujamaa* to two related problems. Firstly, the impossibility of introducing change "within and against a neo-colonial culture and structure"; secondly, the unwillingness of the privileged class (the Nzokas) to surrender its privileges (pp. 331-332). In effect, it is futile to attempt, through peaceful means, a piecemeal restructuring or replacement of the colonial system. The reason for this is that the bourgeois beneficiaries of the system will always fight back to ensure that such attempts do not succeed. This vindicates Frantz Fanon's contention (1967) that the surest route to decolonization is violence. He asserts that the proof of success of decolonization "lies in the whole social structure being changed from bottom up." (p. 27). This can only happen after a successful armed struggle has defeated the colonialists. Tanzania did not follow this route, and this is why decolonization stalled in spite of Nyerere's laudable efforts.

Conclusion

Miradi Bubu ya Wazalendo is a fictional rendering of the history of decolonization in Tanzania. The novel is quite faithful to the history of that process to the extent that it gives a truthful account of Mwalimu Nyerere's contribution. Despite the promise of a new dispensation by the leaders of the national liberation movement, the uhuru they claimed to have brought meant very little for the common people. The Arusha Declaration was another attempt to decolonize Tanzania but, it also achieved very little due to poor leadership. It is not unfair to conclude that the leadership of Tanzania was not equal to the enormity of the task of decolonization. This is not a situation that is peculiar to Tanzania but one that is common in most postcolonial African countries.

Ruhumbika's realism and faithfulness to history is sullied by the fatalistic streak that runs through the novel. The phrase *Mungu alimjalia* (god granted him/her) is pervasive. The import of it is that the lives of the characters are predestined and there is nothing they can do to change the situation. By extension, all attempts to attain decolonization were predestined to fail. This idea is reinforced by the title of the novel which may be translated as "the patriots' futile projects." The projects in question are related to decolonization. It is misleading to suggest that decolonization is impossible or that there must be divine intervention for it to succeed. As we have seen, Frantz Fanon has provided the formula.

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